

PERFORM

An Outcomes Approach for Infrastructure Organisations

Guidance and tools for using **PERFORM**

COGS, 235a London Road, Sheffield, S2 4NF
0114 2554747 mail@cogs.solis.co.uk
www.cogs.uk.net

Contents

1. Introduction to PERFORM

2. The Outcomes Approach

3. Vision and High Level Outcomes

4. Planning for Outcomes

- Introduction
- Stage 1 – Identify stakeholders and how to involve them
- Stage 2 - Review context and organisation rationale
- Stage 3 - Identify relevant intended outcomes in relation to the high level outcomes; identify outcome indicators
- Stage 4 - Identify organisational aims and objectives; review indicators; plan activities

5. Assessing Outcomes

- Introduction
- Stage 5 - Gather and record information and evidence
- Stage 6 - Analyse information to: inform annual work plans ; and evaluate and review infrastructure strategy

Appendices

- Example of a one page briefing note to explain PERFORM to staff, trustees and other stakeholders
- Follow up: The Performance Hub

Please note: **PERFORM** has been developed through a consultation, discussion and piloting process. Many of the examples included in this document are taken from the piloting organisations. Further information is available in the **PERFORM** “Development Report” and “Case Study Findings from the **PERFORM** Pilot Organisations”.

1. An Introduction to PERFORM

What is **PERFORM**?

PERFORM is a framework and planning and assessment tool for use by organisations providing infrastructure services to the voluntary and community sector. Infrastructure refers to the support functions and organisational structures necessary for voluntary and community sector organisations to operate and deliver effectively. For example, this could include advice and support around volunteer development, development of constitutions, business plan development etc.

PERFORM is a framework to help infrastructure organisations plan and review those functions which specifically relate to infrastructure provision. Its purpose is to help develop and implement an outcomes based approach to strategic planning and review.

PERFORM is not a quality standard but a self-assessment tool which should be seen as complementary to existing quality assurance models and standards.

The **PERFORM** framework and tool:

1. Provides an introduction to the concept of outcomes and their role in strategic planning
2. Identifies four 'High Level Outcomes' for VCS infrastructure. These are broad statements of what we would see if we achieved the vision of a **strong, diverse and vibrant voluntary and community sector**. These high level outcomes relate to the collective purpose of infrastructure organisations and the functions they perform.
3. Outlines stages through which infrastructure organisations can use these high level outcomes as a starting point to develop and review their own infrastructure strategy. *See flow chart on page 5.*
4. Provides resource materials to assist you in working through these stages including:
 - Processes and participative techniques for strategic planning
 - Examples from infrastructure organisations that have piloted **PERFORM**
 - Sample worksheets for recording information

The **PERFORM** framework focuses on infrastructure functions but acknowledges that there are a range of additional activities which may be undertaken by infrastructure organisations. These activities and services may be frontline services which fill a gap in the voluntary and community sector and are often vital to the sustainability of the organisation.

Who should use **PERFORM**?

PERFORM can be used by all voluntary and community sector organisations whose purpose includes the provision of infrastructure functions to the voluntary and community sector. This includes 'specialist' organisations that are providing support to a particular 'sub-sector', or offering a specific area of expertise.

PERFORM can also be used by networks and consortia in developing a co-ordinated approach to infrastructure provision.

Why use **PERFORM**?

PERFORM clarifies the purpose and functions of VCS infrastructure organisations.

An outcomes based approach is useful in designing relevant strategy and is increasingly being adopted by the public sector as well as by the voluntary and community sector. The development of **PERFORM** was funded through the ChangeUp programme as one initiative to support performance improvement in voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations.

A critical element of the **PERFORM** approach is stakeholder involvement in the development of infrastructure strategy. Use of this approach will help to ensure that your strategy is driven by actual and potential users needs; ('users' refers to your members and constituents).

Organisations who piloted draft **PERFORM** material identified the following benefits:

"It helps us to define infrastructure – and our funders thought so too."

"Developed a greater understanding of the role of the organisation."

"Helped to define how our organisation can make a difference."

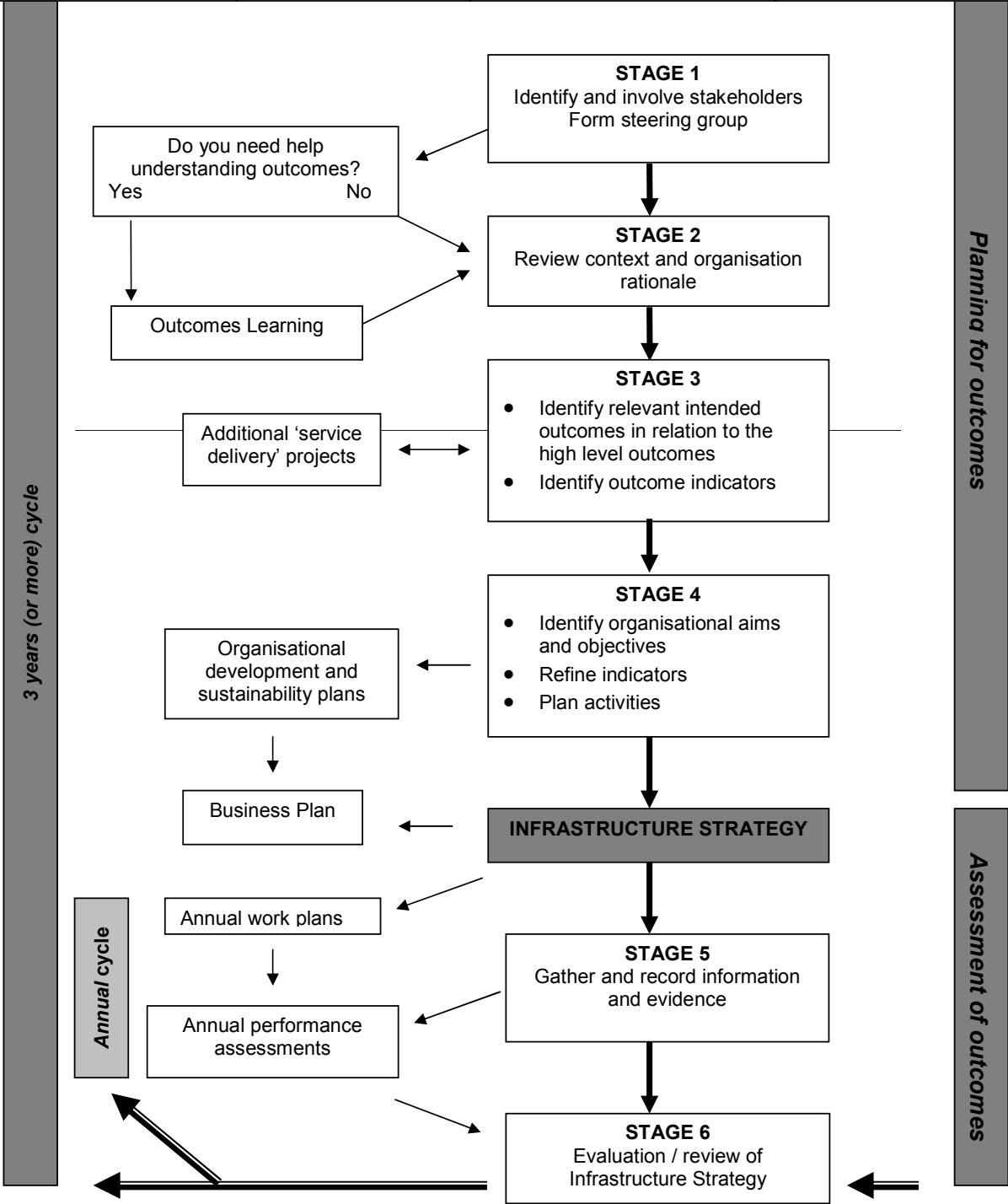
"Helped to identify areas that needed development and strategic thinking."

"Looking more carefully at how we engage users and identify their needs."

When to use **PERFORM**

PERFORM is a framework and planning and assessment tool and is likely to be introduced at the point when you are starting to prepare a new strategic plan, say every three to five years. It should feed into your business plan and will directly inform annual work plans and help you to measure performance.

Vision			
A strong, diverse and vibrant voluntary and community sector			
VCOs are skilled, knowledgeable and well run	VCOs network and collaborate	VCOs reflect and promote diversity and equality	VCOs influence policies and programmes
Sector support and development	Sector collaboration and co-ordination	Sector diversity and equality	Sector influence and representation



PERFORM
An outcomes approach for infrastructure organisations

2. The Outcomes Approach

Outcomes are the changes and benefits that happen as a result of the delivery of services or activities. In an outcomes approach, outcomes are identified at the start of the planning process as the intended changes and benefits that you aim to bring about in the voluntary and community sector (or a particular sub sector). These then inform the aims, objectives and activities of the infrastructure functions of your organisation.

If an organisation hasn't engaged with outcomes working before, time needs to be invested in ensuring some collective understanding as a starting point. You may wish to arrange for some outcomes training or facilitation as an introduction to implementing **PERFORM**.

For many organisations such an approach is a new way of looking at things and can present quite a challenge. One organisation has described this approach as like "looking through the other end of the telescope". You start by stepping outside of 'this is what our organisation does', and look at the big picture of what is needed. You can then focus on what you can contribute to this infrastructure picture - rather than starting with (existing) internally defined organisational aims and objectives relating to your infrastructure provision.

Your organisation can gain a clearer focus by working towards outcomes based on the priorities of your users. A significant aspect of **PERFORM** is the involvement of a range of external stakeholders (in addition to staff and trustees) in identifying what your users need, and the consequent desired organisational change. Assessing your performance against outcomes will also involve you gathering and evaluating information about your effectiveness, which may be particularly useful for your funders.

3. Vision and High Level Outcomes

The PERFORM framework begins with a vision.

A strong, diverse and vibrant voluntary and community sector
(Vision Statement)

The PERFORM framework identifies four broad high level outcomes which help to achieve this vision.

High Level Outcomes	Functions
VCOs are skilled, knowledgeable and well run	Sector support and development
VCOs network and collaborate	Sector collaboration and co-ordination
VCOs reflect and promote diversity and equality	Sector diversity and equality
VCOs influence policies and programmes	Sector influence and representation

A vision is a long-term aspiration that you want the work of your organisation to contribute to in some way. The PERFORM vision is drawn from the development process that informed ChangeUp.

It is expected that as an infrastructure organisation you will be able to identify how you contribute to the vision and high level outcomes and thereby determine your functions.

Beyond outlining the vision and high level outcomes, the PERFORM framework is not prescriptive. The high level outcomes are the starting point for developing your own outcomes framework. The means of contributing to the high level outcomes is in your hands – you will determine outcomes relevant to your own context and ‘users’ within the voluntary and community sector.

4. Planning for Outcomes

The stages below outline a recommended strategic planning process your organisation can follow in order to develop an outcomes based plan. See *flow chart*

Stage 1

- Identify stakeholders and how to involve them

Stage 2

- Review context and organisation rationale

Stage 3

- Identify your organisation's intended outcomes in relation to the high level outcomes
- Identify outcome indicators

Stage 4

- Identify organisational aims and objectives
- Review indicators
- Plan activities

In order to make best use of **PERFORM** it is suggested that you consider the following guidance on each stage. This will help to create a firm foundation for effective use of the framework.

Each step is described in detail. The **IDEAS** boxes provide examples of exercise that you can use, the **WORKSHEETS** act as templates for you to use and the **ILLUSTRATIONS** provide examples of how the process has been implemented.

You will need to consider the resources required to work through the above stages in a way that effectively involves stakeholders. This may include:

- Staff time
- Costs of meetings and workshops (e.g. venues, refreshments etc)
- Possible use of external facilitators

Stage 1 - Identifying stakeholders and how to involve them

This stage is the starting point and is about those organisations and individuals that have a stake in the work of your organisation.

It is useful to establish a 'steering group' to support the implementation of **PERFORM**. The role of the steering group is to support and guide the strategic planning process. This means that it should include a senior member of staff within your organisation, or a trustee / management committee member with power delegated from the board.

It is suggested that you begin by analysing who your stakeholders are. This will help ensure that you are aware of who could usefully inform this process at particular points.

Stakeholders are likely to include:

- Those with governance responsibilities – trustees, management committee members etc
- Staff – at all levels in the organisation
- Volunteers – those carrying out unpaid roles
- Voluntary and community organisations – the recipients of your service, and possibly those eligible but not accessing your services
- Funders – local authorities, government departments, programme managers, trusts and charities
- Allied providers of infrastructure – these may be providers of generalist infrastructure to specific VCOs, or providers of specialist services across the VCS.

It is unlikely that you will be able to involve them all in the same way. You may need to consider what is the best way of involving different stakeholders. A process which results in some shared understanding of your outcomes and stakeholder endorsement is likely to pay dividends for your organisation in the long term.

IDEAS – Stakeholder analysis

- As a desk or group exercise identify the different stakeholders in your infrastructure organisation. You could write all those identified onto separate cards using different coloured cards for different categories of stakeholder e.g. funders, users, managers, staff, volunteers etc. Now consider each stakeholder category in turn and on an action plan (see below) plot which steps of the process they should be involved in and how they could be involved.
- Some people find a 'mind map' useful to help identify stakeholders.
- Organisations have used different methods of involvement for different stakeholders e.g. 'e'networks, focus groups, existing forums.

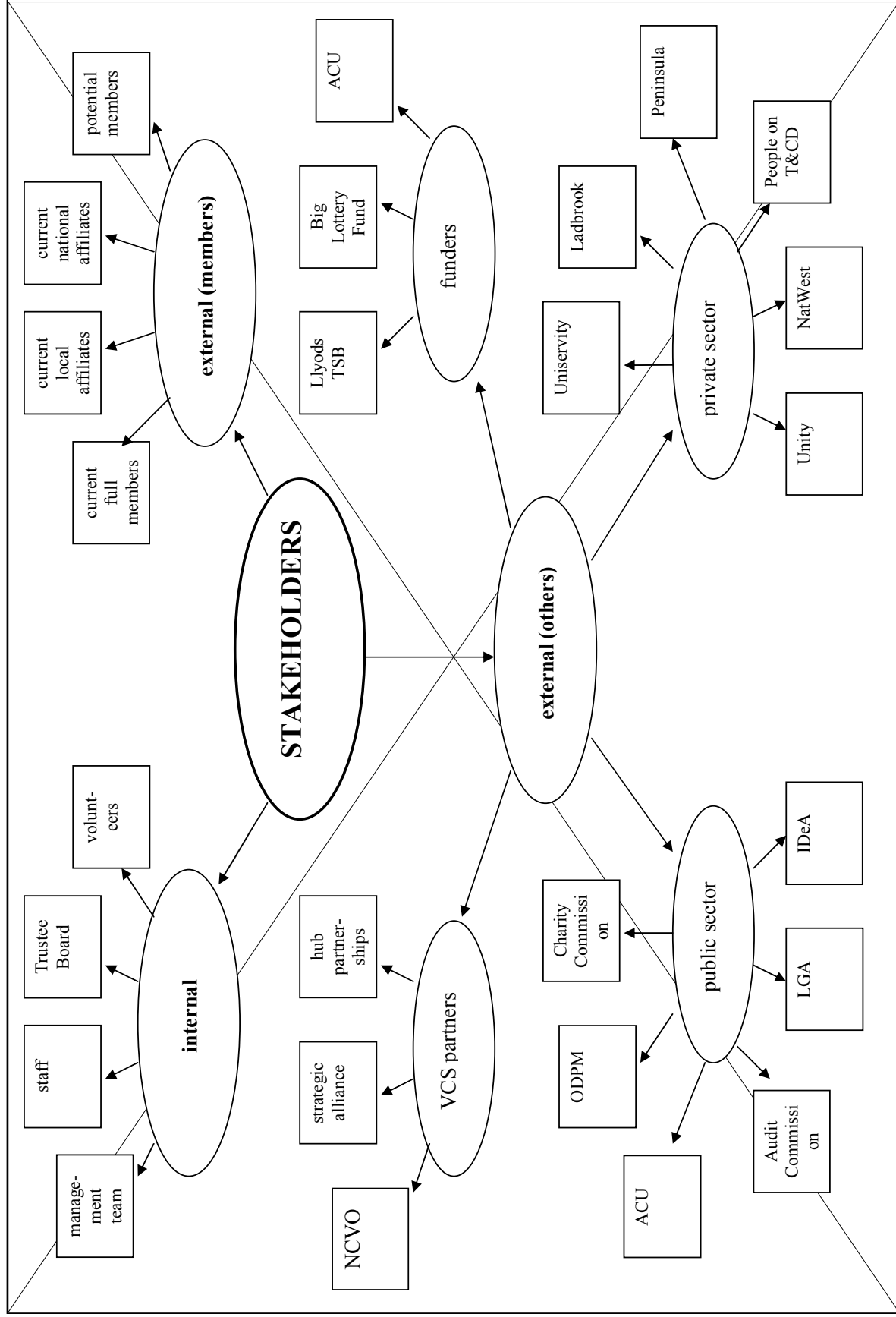
WORKSHEET

Perform Action Plan

	Process and actions	Who leads	Stakeholders to be involved	Timescale	Resources
Planning	Stage 1 Identify and engage stakeholders				
	Stage 2 Review context and organisation rationale				
	Stage 3 Identify intended outcomes; identify outcome indicators				
	Stage 4 Identify organisational aims and objectives; refine indicators; plan activities				
	Stage 5 Gather and record information and evidence				
	Stage 6 Analyse information to inform annual work plans and evaluate and review infrastructure strategy				
Assessment					



ILLUSTRATION – NACVS stakeholder mind-map



ILLUSTRATION

Perform Action Plan

	Process and actions	Who leads	Stakeholders to be involved	Timescale	Resources
Planning	Stage 1 Identify and engage stakeholders	Staff Director	Staff team, trustees	September	Time
	Stage 2 Review context and organisation rationale	Staff Director with external facilitator	Staff team Trustees Volunteers Sample of member groups 2 funders As above	October	Time £1100 for venue, refreshments and facilitator As above
	Stage 3 Identify intended outcomes; identify outcome indicators	As above	As above	As above	As above
	Stage 4 Identify organisational aims and objectives; refine indicators; plan activities	Staff Director with external facilitator	Staff team Trustees Volunteers Sample of member groups	November	Time £750 for facilitator and refreshments
	Stage 5 Gather and record information and evidence	Staff Assistant Director	Staff team Trustees Volunteers Wide range of members	Ongoing but special effort in Nov / Feb each year	Time Postage £1500 for focus group costs
	Stage 6 Analyse information to inform annual work plans and evaluate and review infrastructure strategy	Staff Director	Staff team Trustees	Annual February awayday	£1000 for away day
Assessment					

Stage 2 - Review context and organisation rationale

This stage is about exploring the context for both your users (potential and actual) and your organisation; it helps to clarify the reasons for your organisations work as an infrastructure organisation.

In order to be clear about your organisation's infrastructure outcomes, you need to consider:

- the reason for its existence in terms of supporting VCOs
- the context in which your users and potential users, and your organisation operate; social, political, economic and otherwise.

Contextual factors may include:

- **The needs of VCOs (your actual and potential users)**
e.g. their needs for accessible training programmes that meet the needs of a multi-lingual multi-cultural membership, ongoing needs analysis and service review, support on particular policy themes such as health, children and young people.
- **The “state” and health of the voluntary and community sector;**
e.g. shortage of volunteers in key areas, lack of business and fundraising skills, buildings access and management issues, growth in social enterprise, focus on diversity
- **The relevant policy and funding climate;**
e.g. development of Compact, Futurebuilders, changing funding streams, government focus on public service delivery, targeted programmes and priorities encourage voluntary organisations to be “funding-driven” – danger of “mission drift”.
- **Availability and access to infrastructure services provided by other organisations;**
e.g. targeted training schemes through Volunteer Centre, structured scheme for corporate involvement, local umbrella organisations well regarded, only infrastructure body within the district.

Other questions to consider

- What has changed for the better, or for the worse, since you last explored the environment in which you are operating?
- What do you know about the needs of your users?
- What trends can you point to regarding the number of organisations, the range of organisations, the purpose and type of organisations, the types of enquiries you receive, the obvious gaps in provision when trying to “signpost”, the recurring themes arising at meetings?
- What are the policy developments that may impact upon VCOs and their potential need for guidance, support, training, lobbying etc from your own organisation?

- Which other infrastructure bodies are you in touch with to share and assist learning and to avoid re-inventing the wheel?

IDEAS - Organisational context

- **Context jigsaw**

You could cut out lots of blank paper 'jigsaw' pieces – shapes that will fit together – for stakeholders to fill in with their perspective on the context. These could then be clustered into theme areas. This tool could work well if you are building up a picture over a series of meetings or events with different people adding to what's already there, and it provides a visual display of your environment.

- **SWOT**

Several organisations have found a SWOT analysis useful in considering the context in which they operate i.e. identifying currently perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Most organisations are used to thinking about the context in which they operate, and will have done exercises such as a SWOT analysis to think about their Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. However, taking an outcomes approach means thinking about the context that *your users* operate in – what are *their* Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats?

WORKSHEET

Contextual Factors	
The needs of VCOs, your actual and potential members / users	The relevant policy climate
The “state” and health of the voluntary and community sector	Availability and access to infrastructure services provided by other organisations.

ILLUSTRATION

Contextual Factors	
The needs of VCOs, your actual and potential members / users	The relevant policy climate
<p>Funding and sustainability</p> <p>Organisational development / performance improvement</p> <p>Support on particular policy themes, e.g. health, children and young people, and commissioning guidelines</p> <p>Support for new groups needed</p>	<p>Government focus on public service delivery</p> <p>Moving from grants to procurement/contracts</p> <p>Local government modernisation & regionalisation (growth of Regional Development Agencies)</p> <p>Government focus on "neighbourhood" vs. "local"</p> <p>Focus on performance standards</p>
The "state" and health of the voluntary and community sector	Availability and access to infrastructure services provided by other organisations
<p>Competition (between local organisations, between local and national organisations, between generalist and specialist organisations)</p> <p>Growth in social enterprise</p> <p>Focus on diversity</p>	<p>Support for volunteering</p> <p>Patchy coverage of local infrastructure</p> <p>Effective relationships with other infrastructure bodies e.g. specialists</p> <p>using technology (e.g. web based information) effectively</p>

Stage 3 - Identify and agree relevant intended outcomes in relation to the high level outcomes; identify outcome indicators

This stage is all about the infrastructure organisation asking ‘what changes do we want to see among the organisations we support in order to achieve each of the high level outcomes, and how will we know?’

Step 1 Identifying and agreeing intended outcomes

The needs you have identified in Stage 2 should help you to discuss and reach agreement on the specific intended outcomes you would like to achieve or contribute to, as an infrastructure organisation – which in turn are contributing to the high level outcomes. The outcomes that are identified here relate to changes and consequences of your activities that occur within the sector (your users) rather than in your own organisation. They will define the changes that you hope to help to bring about within a stated timeframe.

Beware of getting into a discussion about objectives or activities at this stage. This stage is about what you would see happening in the voluntary and community sector, not what you plan to provide.

IDEA – Identifying and agreeing intended outcomes

Hold one or a series of meetings/workshops for stakeholders that you want to involve in this part of the process (this may be a further part of the same workshop held for Stage 2).

- You could start by clustering the context jigsaw pieces in relation to the high level outcomes.
- Set up stations around the room (one for each of the high level outcomes) at which the contextual information is displayed.
- In order to identify the specific outcomes your infrastructure organisation can contribute to, you might want to kick off with the question “what (changes) do we want to see in x years time in our constituent VCOs in order to achieve the high level outcomes?”
- You may need to give some examples verbally and / or to display some at the appropriate stations.
- Provide an opportunity for people to circulate either individually or in groups around the high level outcome displays and to log (using post-its) their suggestions for specific outcomes (or changes) they would like to see in constituent VCOs.
- Once everyone has had an opportunity to log their ideas, provide an opportunity for discussion and agreement (this could be started off in small groups). This may need to be tightly facilitated!

The second step of this stage is to identify indicators for each of your intended outcomes. What will tell you that you are getting there, or have got there? What will indicate that you are on the right path and will help you to assess your performance in contributing to a strong, diverse and vibrant voluntary and community sector?

People often worry about indicators not being hard enough measures and lack confidence in using them. Indicators don't have to necessarily 'prove' an absolute and attributable cause and effect but they can be used to illustrate some evidence of contribution. The key is to combine quantitative and qualitative indicators and to value indicators which rely on people's stated feelings and experiences. If the process is robust enough then including some indicators which can only be tested through anecdotal evidence for example, are useful and valid.

IDEA – Identifying and agreeing outcome indicators

For each high level outcome you are working to, divide a piece of flip chart paper into two. Place all the post-its with the agreed outcomes down the left hand side and ask the stakeholders to identify appropriate indicators on the right hand side.

These should be both quantitative and qualitative. Again you may wish to provide examples and to stimulate the exercise with a question; "how will we know if these changes have happened or are happening?"

You may want to work in pairs or groups around particular high level outcomes, depending upon the size of the group.

ILLUSTRATION

Examples of outcomes and indicators

High Level Outcome: VCOs are skilled, knowledgeable and well run	
Outcome Examples	Indicator Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VCOs have the information and advice they need to effectively develop, operate and manage their projects and activities • VCOs are more effective in meeting their aims as a result of the learning opportunities provided. • VCOs are increasingly strategic and sustainable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased knowledge of available support, services and facilities. • Number, proportion and diversity of VCOs making use of; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ information and advice services ▪ training opportunities ▪ capacity building opportunities. • Increased awareness of relevant policy developments • Number, proportion and diversity of VCOs helped to become established and more sustainable.
High Level Outcome: VCOs network and collaborate	
Outcome Examples	Indicator Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer Involving Organisations share resources • Interest groups meet together to share good practice and information for mutual support • Enable VCS lead role in children's service partnership working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency of Volunteer Involving Organisation forums and numbers attending • The number of times organisations work together and examples of collaboration • Local Children and Young People's partnership bring together existing groups and forums
High Level Outcome: VCOs reflect and promote diversity and equality	
Outcome Examples	Indicator Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced isolation in rural communities • Increased inclusion of black and minority organisations in the work of local development agencies • Staff, volunteers and trustees of volunteer involving organisations reflect the diverse make up of the communities they serve • Increase in the skills of young people who wish to participate in VCOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levels of confidence expressed by rural communities • The number of black and minority ethnic organisations reporting involvement in the work of local development agencies • Comparison between the composition of staff, volunteer and trustee groups and composition of the local community • Take up of training programmes targeted at young people • Numbers of young people active in VCOs
High Level Outcome: VCOs are represented and influence policies and programmes	
Outcome Examples	Indicator Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More effective representation of the VCS voice • Consultation code of practice is established locally • Increased voice for rural communities • Increased awareness within other sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number and range of policy responses produced • The number of groups signing up to the consultation code or practice • The extent to which rural issues are reflected in key strategies • Response to promotions and formal presentations

Stage 4 - Identify organisational aims and objectives; refine indicators; plan activities

This final planning stage builds on the previous three and is about identifying the organisational aims and objectives that will help to achieve the intended outcomes, refining the indicators and then planning the activities that have to be carried out.

Important considerations will include the capacity of your organisation, existing strategies you have in place, resources available and contextual factors identified.

Step 1 Identify organisational aims and objectives

Aims will express in general terms what you as an infrastructure organisation are seeking to do to bring about the high level outcome. The wording may be similar to the wording of the high level outcome but will be expressed as an aim for your infrastructure organisation - beginning with the word 'to'. Objectives more clearly define the different ways in which you plan to achieve your aim.

Step 2 Refine indicators

Your aims and objectives may suggest ways in which you can develop or add to your outcome indicators identified in Stage 3.

Step 3 Develop an action plan

Once you have agreed your organisation's infrastructure aims and objectives, you will need to develop an action plan for achieving them which includes the activities you intend to undertake. Consideration of appropriate activities will include experience of what has worked well in the past, knowledge of interesting and innovative practice from elsewhere as well as new ideas. The context in which you work including the nature, needs and expressed suggestions and ideas of users and potential users should all inform your plans.

IDEA – Defining aims and objectives

The purpose of this exercise is to develop and agree organisational aim and objectives related to each of the high level outcomes

- On tables (one for each high level outcome) display your context and specific intended outcomes agreed in Step 3.
- Provide blank aims cards (in one colour) and objectives cards (in another colour) on each table. Provide an opportunity for those involved to circulate around tables with the task of suggesting wording for an overall aim and objectives specific to the organisation.
- Once some suggestions have been generated ask everyone to comment on these. They can:
 1. Put a tick onto cards that they are happy with
 2. Put a cross onto any of the aims or objectives statements that they feel are irrelevant.
 3. Reword aims or objectives onto new cards to make them more specific to the organisation.
- Collectively consider and discuss all suggestions made to begin to reach some consensus.

IDEA – Refining indicators and developing action plan

Prepare copies of worksheet on page 24 for each high level outcome with agreed intended outcomes. At the end of exercise above add in agreed aim and objectives for each high level outcome. Add indicators agreed in Stage 3 in indicator column but on post-its.

Work in four groups each group focusing on one particular HLO and related organisation aim. The task for each group is to develop their worksheet by suggesting changes or additions to indicators and key activities. These can be noted in the relevant columns using blank post-its.

Provide opportunity for each group to present their ideas back to the full group for discussion, amendment if needed and agreement.

ILLUSTRATION

Example aims and objectives

These are provided just as ideas and guidance. Adapt them or develop new ones to agree a strategy for your organisation which relates to your intended outcomes. For example, if you are a volunteer centre you might want to replace VCOs with volunteer involving organisations, or if you are rural community council you might want to specify rural communities in the outcome statements.

<p>High Level Outcome: VCOs are skilled, knowledgeable and well run</p> <p>Aim To ensure the support necessary to develop and maintain VCOs:</p> <p>Objectives To enable VCOs to access relevant information, guidance and/or advice, and resources To enable VCOs to access high quality and diverse learning opportunities To support VCOs to build their organisational capacity and development potential</p>
<p>High Level Outcome: VCOs network and collaborate</p> <p>Aim To support, develop and promote networking and collaboration</p> <p>Objectives To promote and facilitate joint working To establish opportunities and develop structures for networking To broker services and shared resources for and with the sector</p>
<p>High Level Outcome: VCOs reflect and promote diversity and equality</p> <p>Aim To promote and support the development of representative and inclusive VCOs</p> <p>Objectives To promote and support the management of a diverse and inclusive sector To establish opportunities for VCOs to develop good practice on diversity and equality To monitor and report on issues of diversity and equality within the VCS</p>
<p>High Level Outcome: VCOs are represented and influence policies and programmes</p> <p>Aim To enable the VCS to have a voice and influence</p> <p>Objectives To initiate and support consultation processes that are inclusive and meaningful To facilitate VCOs' participation and self advocacy in partnerships and other multi-agency structures To promote and lobby for the common and diverse interests of the sector</p>

You may have additional high level outcomes which relate to other organisational functions, e.g. if you also provide direct services to frontline organisations. These will also need some planning, and no doubt there will be internal organisational and sustainability plans to be reviewed and developed also. These, together with the plans for infrastructure support will form your overall business plan.

WORKSHEET

High level outcome:			
Our aim:			
Intended outcomes	Indicators	Objectives	Activities

ILLUSTRATION

Vision: A strong, diverse and vibrant voluntary and community sector High level outcome: VCOs are confident, skilled and knowledgeable in running their projects and activities OrgX Core function: Sector Support OrgX aim: To ensure the support necessary to develop and maintain VCOs.				
Context	Intended outcomes	Indicators	Objectives	Activities
Dilemma re operation of OrgX v. wider income-generating projects - what is OrgX role?	Improved infrastructure for VCOs	OrgX role in county Infrastructure Development Plan identified	To work with CVS Network	To identify OrgX role in the county Infrastructure Development Plan. To achieve umbrella body membership renewal
Diversity of needs of actual member organisations and service users	Staff and volunteer development - to ensure more effective organisations	Learning needs of local VCO's met	To develop a learning strategy	Write strategy.
Potential members and service users, particularly need to attract 'hard to reach'	Increased VCS activity, networking and efficient use of resources	A sustainable base for VCO activity provided by OrgX	To plan sustainability of the OrgX Centre	Undertake full financial health check for the OrgX Centre
	Greater community involvement. Recognition of value of volunteer contribution to service delivery. Personal development opportunities for volunteers in place	Specialist Volunteering programmes' needs met	To develop specialist volunteering programmes, including employee volunteering and supported volunteering	Explore Employee Volunteering Project (conduct feasibility study)
	Increased effectiveness and sustainability of VCO's. Development of new groups and services	Local needs across the whole range of the sector, including social enterprises are met	To develop VCS support services	Run pilot VCO rural outreach service Produce a local specific funding database, with particular focus on meeting needs of small groups with lower levels of funding Liaise with Council External Funding Partnership Officer on joint working Review Newsletter and ebulletin and how they function, implement any changes required to meet users needs Review effectiveness of OrgX support role

ILLUSTRATION of PERFORM adaptation by a specialist organisation, Kensington and Chelsea Volunteer Centre (KCVC)

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

ILLUSTRATION

<p>High level outcome: VCOs network and collaborate for mutual benefit OrgX Core function: Sector Collaboration OrgX aim: OrgX will support, develop and promote networking and collaboration Specific context The need for partnership working. Change Up, SLAs coming to an end, Local Area Agreements, Procurement arrangements</p>			
Intended outcomes	Indicators	Objective	Activities
Voluntary Sector Forum having new terms of reference. Increase in collaborative work.	No. of groups/individuals attending No. of partnership/joint funding bids put in by joint working.	OrgX will promote and facilitate joint/partnership working	Facilitate voluntary sector forum Work in partnership with other infrastructure organisations. Organising or providing support for VCOs wishing to work together to learn, develop policy and campaign through all the forums ie. BME Forum, Training Network, Fundraisers Forum, Volunteer Organisers Forum, PQASSO support group, Networking Lunches, Ensure regular contact with Learning Partnership, Consortium and others.
<p>High level outcome: VCOs influence relevant policy and programme development OrgX Core function: Influencing providers, Working in Partnership OrgX aim: To increase the voice of rural communities</p>			
Intended outcomes	Indicators	Objectives	Activities
Reduced isolation of rural communities Increased voice for rural communities	Extent of involvement of different groups in articulation of need Extent to which rural issues are reflected in key strategies	Initiate and support consultation processes that are inclusive and meaningful Facilitate VCOs participation and self advocacy in partnerships and other multi agency structures Promote and lobby for the common and diverse interests of the sector	Raise awareness of the social inclusion issues that affect local communities in the county Ensure that community consultation activities take into account hard to reach groups Help, support and advise service providers and rural communities about how to consult effectively with socially excluded groups Attend meetings of all relevant LSPs within the County Be active members of relevant LSP theme groups Staff and Board members to participate in national, regional and sub regional meetings, events, seminars etc. as appropriate Broker relationships between rural communities and other groups/ agencies Co-ordinate community development initiatives between agencies Undertake research into the issues which are being raised by conducting parish plans. Use this to influence decision makers.

5. Assessing Outcomes

Introduction

The final two stages focus on answering the question “has the infrastructure organisation made a difference? “

Stage 5

- Gather and record information and evidence

Stage 6

- Analyse information to: inform annual work plans; and evaluate and review infrastructure strategy

Stage 5 - Gather and record information and evidence

This stage deals with gathering the information that will provide evidence of progress towards achieving the desired outcomes.

A switch to outcomes working usually means a change to gathering other types of information – information about the difference you are making than just about the services you provide.

You will need to collect evidence based on the indicators identified. The indicators for your organisation’s intended outcomes identified in Stages 3 and 4 will provide a description of the qualitative and quantitative information it would be useful and appropriate to gather. The prime source of evidence will be the voluntary and community sector organisations within your own actual and potential users. As far as possible it will be important to build the collection of evidence into your everyday work practice.

There are a wide range of ways of gathering evidence including through monitoring systems, structured observation, interviews (telephone or face to face), workshops, meetings, surveys and questionnaires, and case studies. There are also a range of creative approaches to gathering information as part and parcel of your everyday work. It is important to note that a first assessment is likely to be gathering ‘baseline’ data to measure progress against.

People tend to worry about methods - but getting the questions right, and thinking who you need to involve are just as important. For example your potential ‘constituency’ may be wider than the voluntary and community sector who actually use your services and it will be important to gather feedback from non-users as well as users. It will also be important to, through the questions you ask, begin to not only assess changes/development within the sector you are serving but also the extent and ways in which people feel your own services have contributed to that change and development.

You will also add value to your work if you ensure that the evidence gathering processes are developmental for all stakeholders (e.g. reflective and interactive workshops can help to promote collective learning).

It is important that all of the information that you gather is related back to your intended outcomes and the strategy that you have been adopting for bringing about these outcomes. Don't forget that there are a number of benefits of such an analysis for different stakeholders. It can help to both assess progress towards intended outcomes and evaluate the effectiveness of different parts of your strategy. In so doing it will:

- provide both evidence of the need for and impact of your work to both your users, potential users and funders.
- throw light upon the respective impact of different infrastructure services and aid collective co-ordination and planning.
- inform your own future strategy by highlighting what works well, what does not work so well

IDEA – planning for collecting evidence

Start by listing all the present ways you collect evidence for monitoring and information purposes and additional methods you could consider, within your capacity. Refer to the outcomes and indicators agreed in Step 3 and consider which evidence gathering method(s) could most appropriately be used for the different indicators. Use the evidence gathering planning sheet provided to log your ideas.

WORKSHEET

Planning sheet for evidence gathering

Indicator	What information do we need to gather?	How we are going to gather it? (Do we already have it?)	Who is responsible	Timescale

ILLUSTRATION

ACRE for example, 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

Stage 6 - Analyse information to: inform annual work plans (yearly); and evaluate and review infrastructure strategy (every 3 – 5 years)

This stage is about completing the perform process by analysing the information gathered to assess progress and achievements towards desired outcomes.

The analysis of the information you have collected gives you a picture of how well your organisation is working towards achieving infrastructure outcomes. This information and analysis can be used to further develop your strategic planning process. It provides information that relates back to your organisation's context and rationale, and can be thought of as being context information in itself.

The steering group established to support and guide the Perform process can now examine the information gathered and consider how to move forward following the completion of the first PERFORM cycle. The information about progress should be fed into your discussions about performance improvement.

WORKSHEET

Analysis recording sheet

High level outcome: Our aim:			
Outcomes evidenced	Progress in achieving intended outcomes	Key lessons e.g. what activities have been effective and what less so	Implications and recommendations for future strategy and action.

Example of a one page briefing note to explain PERFORM to staff, trustees and other stakeholders.¹

What is PERFORM?

- PERFORM is an organisational development tool to help infrastructure organisations plan, assess and review their provision of infrastructure functions. It is an outcomes-focused framework to help organisations identify how well they are working towards their objectives, and the areas which may need to be strengthened to improve performance. It is **not** a quality standard. PERFORM is the shorthand name for this framework (it is not an acronym).

Why use it?

- Because it provides an opportunity to develop the organisation's strategic planning process
- Because infrastructure organisations encourage their members to use planning and evaluation tools and also need to do so themselves.

What does the framework look like?

- The framework is intended to be used for guidance rather than being rigidly applied.
- Organisations using PERFORM work through a series of stages to consider the context in which they are working, subsequently identifying the most appropriate outcomes for their organisation, and indicators for measuring progress towards these. The outcomes then form the basis of a series of objectives and activities for the organisation, but the most critical stage is identifying the intended organisational outcomes.
- When the organisation is ready to assess its performance, it does this against the indicators identified for the outcomes, rather than against specific activities or outputs. For example, we do not measure how many people attended a training course, but whether we have improved the skills of our beneficiaries.
- The PERFORM Tool illustrates some intended outcomes, aims and objectives for infrastructure organisations - but also emphasises that this is just a guide and that organisations using the framework need to identify their own.

| Trustees and staff might wish to use the framework as a starting point for strategic plan development, or perhaps consider some of the illustrations and tailor intended outcomes, aims and objectives to their work in consultation with stakeholders.

¹ This example is based on a leaflet put together by NACVS

Follow up: The Performance Hub

The role of the ChangeUp National Hub on Performance Improvement is:to bring together in one place the wealth of experience and expertise in performance improvement that already exists; to make this expertise far more accessible to VCOs; to help local, sub-regional, regional and national infrastructure improve the quality and quantity of support they can offer to VCOs; to work with funders and policy-makers to improve the environment within which VCOs operate.

website www.performancehub.org.uk