The Culture and Sport Improvement Toolkit

Guidance on Scoping and Planning

April 2008

1   Introduction

1.1   This document will assist organisations to:

- Develop a clear scope for the Self Assessment and improvement activity
- Develop clear plans and methodology for the Self Assessment and improvement activity

1.2   Experience has shown that taking the time to develop clear scope and plans not only makes the Self Assessment more effective, it also saves a considerable amount of time.

1.3   This guidance is not mandatory; it merely reflects good practice.

2.   Planning the Process

The organisation should identify a person to plan and coordinate the Self Assessment and improvement planning process. This person should develop a project plan in discussion with other leaders.

The starting point is to arrange a session to brief relevant leaders, including the elected members, on the concepts of CSIT, Self Assessment and improvement. These leaders will become improvement 'champions' and will provide vital support and impetus for improvements.

This should be followed by a session to establish the scope of the Self Assessment and to identify the Self Assessment Team (see the section on Establishing the Scope).

The Self Assessment method should be discussed and clearly established. At its simplest the Self Assessment will involve a small Self Assessment Team working through each Theme. It may be that different teams are invited to carry out an assessment and then these are brought together to create a composite view (e.g. different teams for each service). Alternatively different teams could be invited to assess specific Themes and then bring them together.

The means of collecting evidence should be planned, particularly the process of obtaining 360 degree feedback from corporate leaders, core staff, internal and external partners and customers where this is not already available (see the section on Collecting the Evidence). Critical information should be available in an easy-to-understand format at the Self Assessment sessions.

The number, timing, dates and content of Self Assessment sessions should be planned, ensuring that the process is not too time-consuming and that energy, momentum and involvement is maintained throughout. It is recommended that each session last between 3 to 4 hours. Experience has shown that Self Assessment for culture and sport organisations will take at least 12 hours (e.g. 4 sessions of 3 hours) and should be completed within 3 weeks. This timescale helps to focus the team on high-level approaches (there is no time for trivia). These sessions need to be planned into everyone's diaries. It is essential that all team members are able to attend.

A separate session (normally half a day) should be arranged for improvement planning. It is recommended that the Self Assessment Team carries out the improvement planning in order to maintain ownership.

Self Assessment and improvement planning is designed to be an annual cycle. The organisation should plan, agree and document a process for future Self Assessment, along with interims review of improvement progress (e.g. quarterly).

3. Establishing the Scope

3.1. The project manager and culture & sport managers should decide which services will be included in the scope. However the Self Assessment is not an assessment of the service; it is an assessment of the function involved in delivering the services (regardless of which department they are in).

3.2. The Culture and Sport Improvement Toolkit is designed for organisations and partnerships providing public culture & sport services. It could be applied to:

- A range of local authority culture and sport services (these might be in various departments)
- A single service (e.g. sport, arts, museums, etc)
- A local authority culture & sport department
- A management partnership (e.g. with a Trust)
- A wider cultural partnership

3.3.   The exact scope of your Self Assessment will depend upon your requirements and the nature of your services and organisation. However the following principles should be applied:

i.   The potential value of the Self Assessment grows as the scope widens; this has to be balanced against the increasing time and complexity

ii.   When deciding which services will be included, view the service through 'the eyes of the customer', rather than from the perspective of your organisation's structure

iii.   Include all local authority functions involved in delivering the identified services, even if they fall into different departments; remember to include the support functions (e.g. finance and HR departments)

iv.   Include contracted management partners (e.g. grounds maintenance contractors and sport and recreation contractors) where these are involved in delivering and developing the services

v.   Some organisations include other external partners in the scope; consider the benefits of this, bearing in mind the added time and complexity. Partners outside of the scope can still input through surveys and consultation, etc

vi.   Ensure that all of the functions included in the scope of the Self Assessment are represented on the Self Assessment Team; this Team will collectively assess how well all of the different functions are working together to deliver, develop and improve the service

vii.   You do not need to assess all of the functions/organisations in the scope against all 8 Themes; for example you might only apply the Customer Service Theme to the ground maintenance contractors or the Resource Management Theme to the finance department; therefore you could have different Self Assessment Teams for each Theme

viii.   Note that the functions included in the scope of the Self Assessment are known throughout the CSIT documentation (including this document) as **the organisation**

ix.   Throughout this process of defining the scope, remember to "keep the end in mind": the success of the approach can only be judged by how the organisation improves

3.4.   Having established the scope of the Self Assessment, It is necessary and extremely valuable to define:

- Who are the leaders (these are not necessarily just the managers)?

- Which external organisations and agencies are involved in a structured partnership with the organisation to develop and deliver the services?

- For whom are the services provided? (NOTE: an important part of continuous improvement and Excellence and an area which often attracts criticism to the public sector is clear identification of the customers and what services they will receive)

- What outcomes will be achieved as a result of the services?

3.5.   The template at the end of this document will help you to develop a clear scope and to define key terms to be used in the Self Assessment.
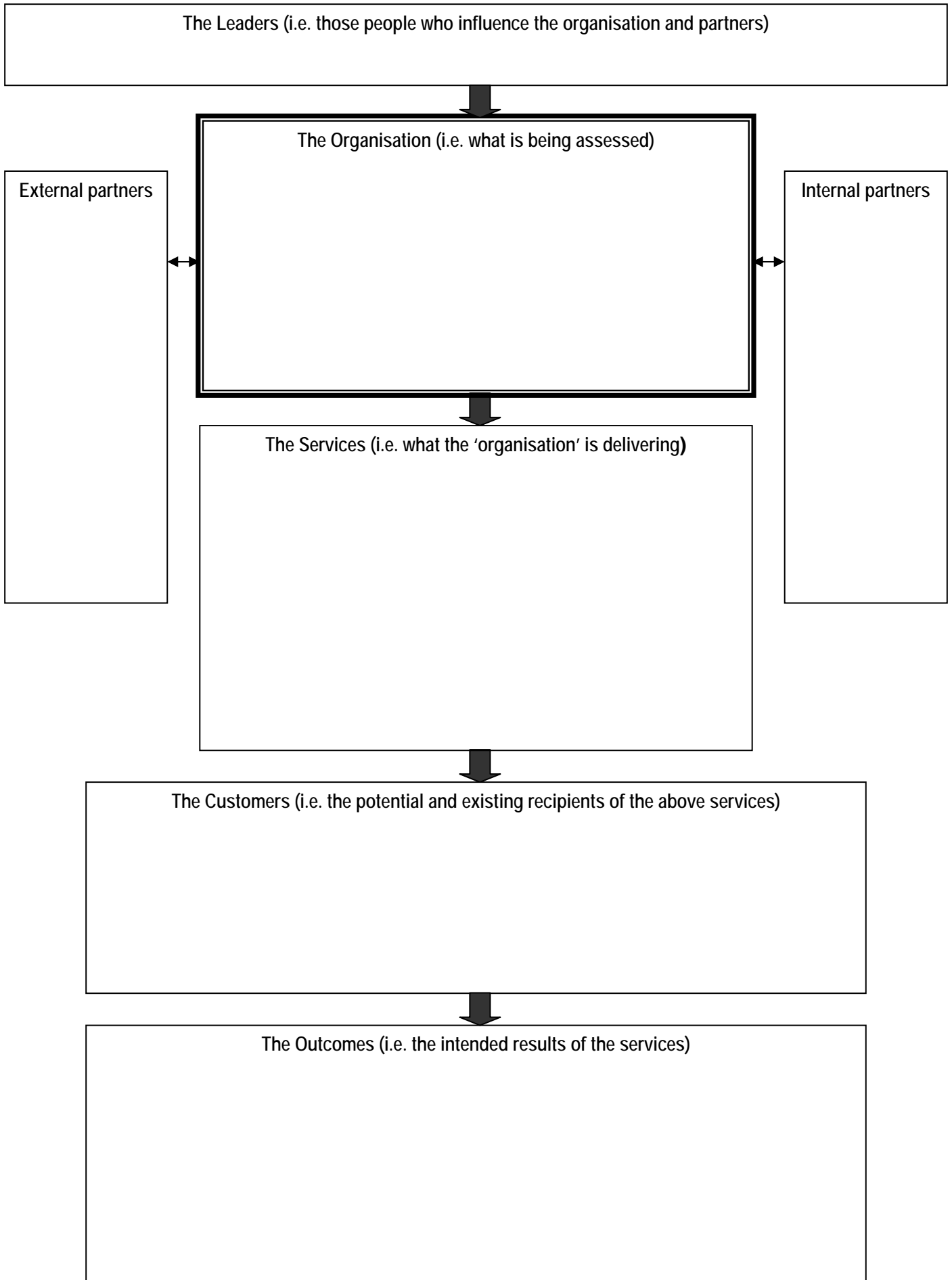

4.   Establishing the Self Assessment Team

4.1   The Self Assessment Team (SAT) or Teams will be responsible for reaching a **consensus** view on strengths, areas for improvement and judgements relating to each Theme and planning improvement projects.

4.2   Self Assessment is essentially a management tool designed to inform the organisation's service plans; therefore representatives of the organisation's management team should be included in Self Assessment Teams. In order to obtain a complete picture of the way the organisation operates and to develop ownership of improvement activity, other staff could be included.

4.3   It is recommended that Self Assessment Teams are not larger than 10 people, as consensus decision-making becomes increasingly difficult to manage and time-consuming as teams grow in size. The Self Assessment Team members could be asked to represent the perceptions of other people in the organisation.

4.4   It is important to establish a Self Assessment Team Leader, who will lead and facilitate the consensus discussions and improvement planning. This will not necessarily be the senior manager; it is often the person who has expertise in the CSIT Benchmark, Self Assessment and improvement planning, a specialist facilitator or an external Coach. It is also valuable to include a 'challenge agent' in the Self Assessment Team.   This could be the Self Assessment Team Leader, a person from another department, a neighbouring authority or an external partner.

4.5   A person should be given the role of recording the judgements, strengths, areas for improvement and the organisation's current practices.

5.   360 Feedback and other 'Evidence'

5.1.   The Self Assessment is designed to be 'evidence-based'. This means that the Self Assessment Team should consider what formal approaches the organisation has in place or planned and what are the results of these approaches. The Self Assessment is not designed to be a 'paper-chasing', 'box ticking' or 'window-dressing' exercise: documents do not have to be created "because of CSIT". The documents enhance and substantiate the Self Assessment Team's perceptions of the organisation's approaches and results in relation to the Benchmark criteria.

5.2. Some of the judgements require a 360 degree review of people's perception about the organisation. These perceptions could be obtained from surveys, focus groups or interviews. These techniques do not need to go through the specific criteria; questions should be specifically designed to suit the audience and to obtain comprehensive feedback on the services provided. Existing feedback should be used where possible, providing the source and information is fit for purpose and objective enough to base a judgement on. In some cases the Self Assessment Team's perceptions could provide sufficient evidence. It is important to remember that customer, staff and partner feedback is not necessary "because of Self Assessment" – it is part of the normal operation of any successful organisation and should be obtained and used even if the organisation is not carrying out a formal Self Assessment.

5.3. A member of staff should be given the responsibility for collecting critical documents (e.g. the organisation's strategy and feedback trends) and making them easily during the Self Assessment sessions (this does not mean producing the documents!). The evidence relating to each Criterion should be noted during the Self Assessment. Many documents will be applicable to more than one Theme.

CSIT Scoping and Planning Template

The Leaders (i.e. those people who influence the organisation and partners)

The Organisation (i.e. what is being assessed)

External partners

Internal partners

The Services (i.e. what the 'organisation' is delivering**)**

The Customers (i.e. the potential and existing recipients of the above services)

The Outcomes (i.e. the intended results of the services)

CSIT Scoping and Planning Template

Theme	Functions included in the Self Assessment (including support functions)	Self Assessment Team members	Team leader, challenge agent and scribe	Meeting dates
Leadership & Corporate Governance				
Policy and Strategy				
Community Engagement				
Partnership Working				
Resource Management				
People Management				
Customer Service				
Performance, Achievement and Learning				