

# Improvement Planning Guidance

## Introduction to Improvement Planning

Self-Assessment has many potential benefits. Essentially Self-Assessment is a means to ensure that your service plans contain relevant and valuable medium-term (i.e. up to one year) improvement projects. This enables organisations to focus their resources and attentions on achieving tangible changes in the way the organisation works, which will in turn lead to improvements in the outcomes achieved.

## Principles of Improvement Planning

Improvement planning involves prioritising the key areas for improvement and identifying the improvement projects that will make the greatest difference. The improvement plan should contain a small number of 'breakthrough' improvement projects, rather than many minor actions or incremental improvement tasks relating to parts of the organisation. At first this may seem counter-intuitive, as many areas for improvement will have been established during the Self-Assessment. Remember that people will often (and should be encouraged to) go away from the Self-Assessment and amend their team and individual plans as a result of learning from the discussions. Remember also that "awareness is curative"<sup>1</sup> – people often alter their own behaviour merely as a result of becoming more aware of how they are doing.

The improvement projects should achieve sustainable change. This is achieved by focusing the projects on tackling root cause, changing the organisation's management system changes and embedding the changes into process documentation, team and individual goals and training and development plans.

Where possible the improvement projects should be allocated to Improvement Teams, which are given the complete responsibility to plan and implement the improvement action. Ideally, these teams should comprise staff involved in the particular process at all levels.

Project management techniques should be used to plan and implement the improvements, including identifying defined outputs, clear start and finishing times, milestones, pilot projects and defined outputs. Improvement tools could also be used, including scenario planning, cause and effect analysis and creativity tools.

Implementing improvement projects involves people changing their working behaviour. Therefore consideration needs to be given to how this change is managed. This could include piloting, training, one-to-one and group Coaching or mentoring (i.e. people passing on their experience and knowledge to other people on a one-to-one basis).

To ensure effectiveness of this plan it is important that it is not seen as an "add-on" to the organisation. It must be seen as the integral element of service plans. Therefore it is important that the Self Assessment programme is co-ordinated with your planning cycle.

The improvement plan must be a working document, which enables the organisation to focus its resources and attentions on changing the way it works, which will in turn lead to improvements in the outcomes achieved.

---

<sup>1</sup> Source: Timothy Gallwey – Inner Game of Work

## An Example of an Improvement Plan

NOTE: In this example the Improvement Teams are responsible for agreeing and planning the specific actions

Ref	Improvement Project	Improvement Leader & Team	Project start date	Planned completion date	Links to strategy	What we have achieved
IP1	<p><b>Improve the organisation's strategic approach</b></p> <p><u>Project output:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear performance outcomes established for the Partnership, based around increased participation, increased pathways for sport and increased volunteering</li> <li>• Performance measures and targets directly linked to these outcomes</li> <li>• Clear and compelling change goals established</li> <li>• Clear links to the CSP strategy and Council strategy</li> <li>• Centres base their programming, marketing and improvement planning on the strategy</li> <li>• Facility Development Plans based on the outcomes</li> <li>• A strategy review and development process in operation</li> </ul> <p><u>Ideas:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a benchmarking partnership with Othershire Council in relation to setting outcomes</li> <li>• Investigate a Balanced Scorecard approach as a simple way of organising strategy</li> </ul>	<p>Julie Smith</p> <p>Fred Jones</p> <p>Jane Thomas</p> <p>John Peters</p> <p>Peter Perkins</p>	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2008	30 <sup>th</sup> September 2008	Strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3	

Ref	Improvement Project	Improvement Leader & Team	Project start date	Planned completion date	Links to strategy	What we have achieved
IP2	<p><b>Improve the involvement of all staff and partners in improvement activity</b></p> <p><u>Project Output:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-functional improvement teams, including representatives from Partners set up for each improvement project with responsibility for 'PDCA'</li> <li>• A system in place for establishing which people will be involved in which teams</li> <li>• A system in place for capturing and using people's improvement ideas</li> </ul>		1 <sup>st</sup> April 2008	30 <sup>th</sup> September 2008	Strategic objective 2 and 4	
IP3	<p><b>Improve performance measurement and review</b></p> <p><u>Project Output:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A system in place for collecting and collating performance information relating to the performance measures</li> <li>• A system in place to measure customer, partner and staff satisfaction</li> <li>• A system in place for analysing the performance information in relation to historical trends and internal targets</li> <li>• Review of performance trends built into the Self Assessment process</li> </ul> <p><u>Ideas:</u></p> <p>Investigate a Balanced Scorecard approach to reviewing performance</p>		1 <sup>st</sup> July 2008	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2009	Strategic objectives 1 and 3	

## Leading and Challenging Improvement Planning

Following Self-Assessment and Peer-Led Challenge, a separate workshop should be organised to focus on planning improvements. This workshop should involve the Self-Assessment Team (to sustain and develop ownership of the improvements) and other members of the management team.

The following questions will help you to lead and challenge the improvement planning workshop. Use the questions as necessary depending on how the discussions progress. Remember that the goals are to stimulate discussion among all team members and challenge and refine people's thinking. Do not judge any of the responses. Summarise the responses on a flipchart so that everyone can see.

### Step 1: Identify key themes and improvement priorities

- What are the threads running through the improvement areas?
- What are the threads running through the strengths?
- What are your improvement priorities? What makes these priorities?
- How do they support the council's priorities?

### Step 2: Establish the improvement projects

- What improvement projects are you currently working on?
- What are the underlying causes of the areas for improvement and key themes?
- Which few improvement projects will tackle most of these areas for improvement and key themes?
- Which improvement projects will provide the opportunity for some 'quick wins'?
- Which improvement projects are most exciting for you?
- Given your resources, which improvement projects will you be able to complete?
- What makes these improvement projects so important? How will they benefit your organisation?
- To what extent are these improvement projects in line with your improvement priorities?
- In what way do these improvement projects help to achieve the organisation's change goals?
- What effect will achieving this improvement project have on other areas for improvement?
- What would happen if you didn't make this change?
- On a scale of one to 10, how committed are you to this project? What would it take to move you to a 10?

**Step 3: Establish the output of each improvement project**

- When the improvement project is completed, what will have changed? (Be more specific!)
- How will you measure your success?
- How will you measure your achievement along the way?

**Step 4: Identify improvement teams for each project**

- Who will lead the improvement project? (this person will be responsible for achieving the above output). How will you engage them in this project?
- Who would we like involved in the improvement team? (these are the people who will help make the changes). How will you engage them in the project?
- What is the improvement team responsible for achieving?
- Who else needs to be consulted?
- Who knows a lot, or has a lot of experience in this area?
- What extra resources do you need to complete this improvement project?

**Step 5: Identify a start and completion date for each project**

- When do you want to complete this improvement project?
- When do you want to start working on this improvement project?

**Step 6: Capture ideas relating to the project**

- What doesn't work about the current situation? What currently works well?
- What ideas do you have relating to this improvement project? (What else?)
- What could be done?
- What could you do if you had more time or money?
- What organisation would be worth learning from? What would it do in this situation?
- What would a 'world class' organisation do to improve in this area?
- Who would have some good ideas?
- What are the barriers to making the changes? How will you overcome these barriers?
- I have seen this work elsewhere.... can I throw it into the mix?

**Step 7: Document the improvement project, output, improvement team leader, improvement team, start date, planned completion date and any ideas for action**

- Who is going to produce the improvement plan document?
- To whom will you distribute the improvement plan?

**Step 8: Incorporate the improvement plan into existing plans**

- How will this improvement plan be incorporated into existing service / business plans?
- What other improvement projects need to be included in the plan?
- Who will communicate the improvement plan to the senior management team and elected members, and develop their ownership and support for the projects?

**Step 9: Communicate and implement the plan**

- To whom will you distribute the plan?
- How will you communicate the plan?
- How will you ensure that people understand the plan?
- How will you ensure that people want to use the plan?
- How will you ensure that the plan is a live, working document?

**Step 10: Review progress**

- How and when will you monitor progress with each improvement project?
- How and when will you review the effectiveness of the action?
- What will happen as a result of the review?