

2.6 Measuring performance

- Measuring your achievements is essential for securing new funding and demonstrating best value.
- The two criteria that the ODPM will use to measure performance are the Green Flag Awards and public satisfaction.
- There are a number of other measures and techniques that can complement these locally.

Once a strategy has been put into practice, its effectiveness needs to be monitored. Being able to demonstrate value for money and the quality of the outcome is essential for making the case for sustained funding. To be able to do so, local approaches need to have clear, reliable criteria for evaluating the success of strategies, investment and management plans.

Benchmarks and surveys may measure the quality or quantity of green spaces using objective targets or standards or they may measure people's perceptions and experiences (as does the Best Value Performance Indicator survey BV119e). The latter can be an excellent indicator of whether efforts have really provided quality green spaces for the community.

At a national level the Government will measure progress through the increase in areas with a Green Flag Award and satisfaction with parks and open spaces through Best Value Performance Indicator BV119e.

At the local level, partnerships will want more detailed measures of the issues relevant to their communities. Local indicators, based on their assessment of needs and opportunities and green space strategy can also be developed to consider the overall service and performance at individual sites.

Tools for success

- **The Green Flag Award Scheme** – is a voluntary peer assessed scheme supported by Government to help local authorities and other managers of green spaces benchmark their green spaces. The scheme is widely used by green space managers to guide management practices and to highlight achievements in creating high-quality green spaces across all their areas.
www.greenflagaward.org.uk
- **Local Environmental Quality Survey (LEQS)** – provides another useful means of developing local environmental management information. The LEQS looks at the things that people believe detract from the public realm – including litter, graffiti, boarded-up properties, derelict street furniture, broken pavements and vandalised amenities. Individual surveys can be undertaken by ENCAMS, in addition to the national annual survey. www.encams.org
- **Local Best Value Performance Indicators** – can be a useful performance measurement tool. The Audit Commission's electronic library contains a range of model performance

indicators that local authorities might adopt on a voluntary basis to help measure performance to improve the local environment.

www.local-pi-library.gov.uk/index.html

- **Britain in Bloom** – Organised by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), Britain in Bloom has grown into the largest horticultural campaign in Europe and every year hundreds of communities are involved, from rural villages to cities and deprived neighbourhoods. For advice on how to enter the Britain in Bloom competition and for more details of the campaign, visit:
www.rhs.org.uk/britaininbloom/index.asp
- **Performance Management, Measurement and Information project (PMMI)** – is a resource from IDeA Knowledge as part of the strategic collaboration between the IDeA and the Audit Commission. It is designed to bring performance management together in a new, more effective and more consistent way. Here you will find access to useful resources to help managers and councillors to make the most of performance management.
www.idea.gov.uk/performance

In practice

Using self-assessment to measure parks' performance

The Worcestershire Consortium is a partnership of local authorities which has used Liveability Funding to set up a self-assessment programme based on the Green Flag Award. Members of the Consortium were trained in how to use the Green Flag's "field assessment" criteria to assess each green space. Three self-assessments will be carried out, with a final evaluation at the end of the programme. A member of the liveability project team will conduct independent audits of a selected range of sites to provide a control score, which will be used to spot any variations across the programme.

The first of three reports on the self-assessment programme has been produced. It highlights key performance indicators and makes recommendations for improving services over the next two years. The aim is for all eligible parks to be up to Green Flag Award field assessment standard by the end of the programme, with some sites being entered into the award.



To back up the self assessments, a number of visitor surveys will be conducted at key green spaces. This information will then be compared to the scores from the self-assessments and analysed as part of the programme.

A secondary aim of the assessment programme is to evaluate the Green Flag Award judging procedure as a tool for measuring performance management across a diverse range of green spaces, and identifying strengths and weaknesses. The findings will be forwarded to the Green Flag Award Scheme to feed into the development of a national self-assessment tool.

Seven performance indicators have been selected through which to monitor local green spaces from an initial shortlist of 20. This set, having been tried and tested, will be sent to the Audit Commission and IDeA at the end of the programme for inclusion in their Library of Local Performance Indicators.

A series of service standards are being produced based upon the judging criteria for the Green Flag Award. Each will look at how the individual criteria break down into their various component parts and will then outline some of the key issues connected with these. To help bring public open spaces up to Green Flag status a list of the top tips for park managers will then be provided to complement the existing good practice from Green Flag Award Scheme.