
BEST VALUE SELF-ASSESSMENT – PROGRESS UPDATE FOR 2022

PURPOSE

1. This paper provides a summary of the key changes in the Best Value Self-Assessment completed annually and presented to the Audit & Compliance Committee for **noting**.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

2. SFC has a duty to comply with the principles of Best Value. Under the terms of the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000, Accountable Officers have a specific responsibility to ensure that arrangements have been made to secure and evidence Best Value. The Boards of public service organisations have a corporate responsibility for promoting the efficient and effective use of staff and other resources in accordance with the principles of Best Value.

BACKGROUND

3. Best Value provides a common framework for continuous improvement in public services in Scotland. The definition of Best Value is:
 - to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in performance whilst maintaining an appropriate balance between quality and cost; and
 - to have regard to economy, efficiency, effectiveness, the equal opportunity requirements and to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
4. The Scottish Government has identified seven ‘themes’ with specific characteristics, which a Best Value organisation should be able to demonstrate. If the organisation is unable to fulfil that requirement it must be able to demonstrate a plan to achieve attainment.

KEY MESSAGES

5. SFC completed a detailed self-assessment in 2021 identify 14 actions for improvement. This paper provides an update on those actions.
6. The 2021 self-assessment identified that Best Value in SFC was well-developed in 85% of the 75 characteristics (Chart 1), which was an improvement from the 2017 self-assessment (83% of characteristics as well-developed).

SELF-ASSESSMENT 2021

7. Senior Management in SFC confirmed that all 75 characteristics were well-developed, except for 11 areas, resulting in 14 actions being agreed and presented to the Audit & Compliance Committee on 19 August 2021.

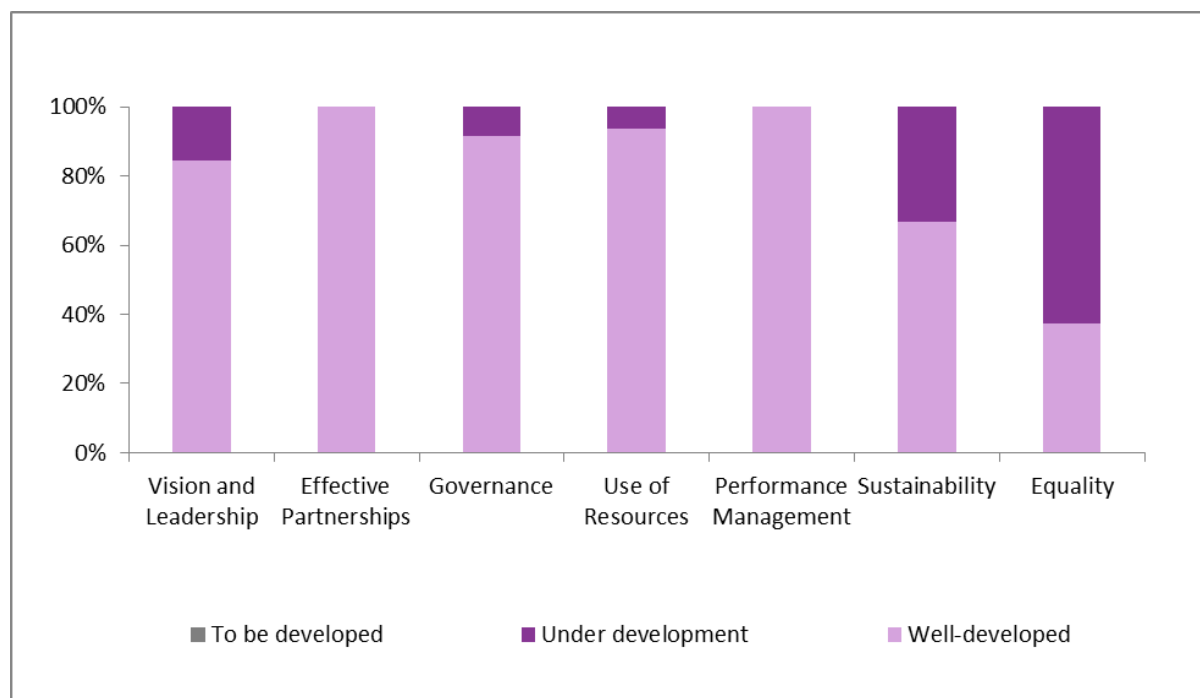


Chart 1: Summary of self-assessment completed in 2020-21

PROGRESS UPDATE FOR 2022

8. Updates on all actions to address the 'under-development' are provided in Appendix I.
9. Overall, good progress continues to be made to address areas for improvement, and no material issues or areas of non-compliance have been noted.
10. Areas that remain strong include Vision and Leadership and Effective Partnership which continue to be an area of management focus, with work progressing well on the refreshed Strategic Framework and National Impact Framework.
11. An ambitious programme of transformation has commenced which will continue to embed a culture of continuous improvement across SFC.
12. The area with the most actions was Equality and Inclusion, both within SFC and across the wider institutions. Significant improvements have been made in this area, including the agreement of an Improvement Framework for the National Equality Outcomes (NEO), which is part of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Equalities Human

Rights Commission (EHRC). Further detail is in Appendix I.

13. We will look to incorporate Best Value characteristics into key areas of the Operating Plan for 2022- 2027 which will enable regular updates on compliance, as part of ongoing monitoring.

RISK ASSESSMENT

14. The risks associated with a failure to adopt a culture of continuous improvement are material and would result in challenges to efficiency and the effectiveness of the delivery of services.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ASSESSMENT

15. The Best Value review covers specific areas of Equality and Diversity and includes actions to address areas identified for improvement.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

16. The update has no direct financial implications.

PUBLICATION

17. This paper will be published on the SFC website.

RECOMMENDATIONS

18. The Audit and Compliance Committee is requested to note the progress updates and target dates for actions.

FURTHER INFORMATION

19. Contact: Lesley Aitkenhead (Assistant Director Risk, Governance and Compliance), email: laitkenhead@sfc.ac.uk.

APPENDIX I – SUMMARY OF AGREED ACTIONS FOR AREAS OF “UNDER-DEVELOPED” BEST VALUE (SELF-ASSESSMENT COMPLETED AUGUST 2021)

Theme	Best Value Assessment	2021	Actions	Action Owner	Progress Update	2022
Vision & Leadership	That executive and non-executive leadership are involved in setting clear direction and organisational strategy (sensitive to the context in which the organisation is working) and that there is a mechanism for internal scrutiny (by both executive and non-executive leadership) of performance and service outcomes.	Under-Developed	1. We will develop our Board and executive monitoring of the performance of the sectors and of outcomes in the context of the proposals in our Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability, including for a National Impact Framework.	Director, ALO	Work is progressing on the Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability, including the implementation of new approaches to institutional engagement and performance monitoring.	31 Dec 2022
	That there is an explicit and systematic approach to integrating continuous improvement into everyday working practices and involving all staff in developing the organisations approach to Best Value.	Under-Developed	2. We will consider whether there is more that we can do to support a culture of continuous improvement within the organisation with principles of Best Value.	Director, Finance	Best Value will be included in the Operating Plan for 22-27, with an update provided to the Audit & Compliance Committee in June 2023.	30 Jun 2023
Theme	Best Value Assessment	2021	Actions	Action Owner	Progress Update	2022
Governance & Accountability	That the approach to Public Performance Reporting is balanced, enabling the discharge of statutory requirements together with provision of concise, relevant and accessible reporting of information that is useful for the public and other stakeholders, including information on the use of	Under-Developed	3. We will continue to develop our approach to communicating and reporting to stakeholders and the wider public.	Director, PIA	Work to develop current systems and processes for data analytics, with increased provision of insightful reporting, is ongoing, but dependent	31 Dec 2022

	financial resources.				on the recruitment of data skills.	
Theme	Best Value Assessment	2021	Actions	Action Owner	Progress Update	2022
Use of Resources	That the organisation ensures that it has the organisational capacity to implement its plans, makes full use of its staff and that any relevant statutory and professional responsibilities of its staff are appropriately supported through an appropriate policy of continuous professional development (CPD).	Under-Developed	4. We will continue to implement our organisational strategy aimed at strengthening our capacity and capability.	Deputy Director People & Transformation	Good progress continues on our Transformation Programme, including a workstream, focused on organisational design. Regular progress updates will be provided to the Board on the Transformation Programme.	31 Dec 2022

Theme	Best Value Assessment	2021	Actions	Action Owner	Progress Update	
Sustainability	That the organisation is contributing to sustainable development by actively considering the social, economic and environmental impacts of activities and decisions both in the short and longer term.	Under-Developed	5. Implement our Framework for Action setting out opportunities for colleges, universities and SFC to contribute to achieving Scotland's just transition to a sustainable future economy and society.	Director, R&I	Good progress has been made on the Implementation of Framework for Action, which will be published in October 2022.	31 Oct 2022

Theme	Best Value Assessment	2021	Actions	Action Owner	Progress Update	
Sustainability	Living within environmental limits; respecting the limits of the planet's environment, resources and biodiversity - to improve our environment and ensure that the natural resources needed for life are unimpaired and remain so for future generations.	Under-Developed	6. Introduce a Net-Zero Challenge at SFC, including the delivery of carbon literacy training for all staff and other actions aimed at supporting SFC's contribution to net-zero.	Director, R&I	<p>Work continues to deliver our Net-Zero and Sustainability Framework, with specific actions planned for SFC:</p> <p>Increase internal leadership and coordination of our climate emergency response including staff training and engagement opportunities.</p> <p>Strengthen our annual statutory carbon reporting and carbon management plan in line with Scottish Government Guidance.</p>	<p>31 Mar 2023</p> <p>31 Mar 2023</p>

Theme	Best Value Assessment	2021	Actions	Action Owner	Progress Update	2022
Equality	SFC meets the requirements of equality legislation, has a culture which encourages equal opportunities and is working towards the elimination of discrimination.	Under-Developed	7. Act on the findings of the project from Advance HE and the research conducted by the research conducted by the SFC/Strathclyde University Intern on the persistent under-representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities at the SFC and in the sectors.	Director, ALO Deputy Director, People & Transformation	SFC published a suite of resources to recognise and respond to racism.	Completed
	SFC ensures all members of staff are informed of the organisational commitment to, and objectives for equality outcomes and that the contribution by the organisation to the achievement of equality outcomes is reflected throughout the corporate processes.	Under-Developed	8. We will regularly review our development needs and assess the impact of training interventions.	Deputy Director People & Transformation	SFC has developed a resource bank including a process for undertaking and reporting Equality Outcomes. An Interactive Teams Channel has been developed to support colleagues on equality outcomes. Further work is planned to have new forms and guidance to support EIA progress.	Completed 31 Mar 2023

Theme	Best Value Assessment	2021	Actions	Action Owner	Progress Update	2022
Equality	SFC reflects in its planning, design and continuous improvement of services that different groups within the community have different needs, which must be taken into account to allow them access to those services.	Under-Developed	<p>9. We will review our recruitment literature and application forms to remove any barriers which are known to either deter applicants from under-represented groups or put them at a potential disadvantage.</p> <p>10. We will review our selection process to ensure that all candidates applying for roles with SFC - particularly those applying for leadership of people management positions - are able to demonstrate their understanding of, and commitment to, equality and diversity, with a focus on race and equality.</p> <p>11. We will review and develop our approach to undertaking Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments, within SFC.</p>	Deputy Director, People & Transformation	<p>SFC continues to progress actions relating to equality outcomes, including improving the diversity of staff, but progress has been impacted by capacity issues during COVID.</p> <p>A revised action plan will be developed and implemented in 2023.</p>	31 Mar 2023

Theme	Best Value Assessment	2021	Actions	Action Owner	Progress Update	2022
Equality	That equality is mainstreamed into all the processes	Under-Developed	12. We will review and develop our approach to undertaking Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments, across the institutions.	Director, ALO	A revised action plan for providing assurance on the embedding of EHIA's will be developed and implemented in 2023.	31 March 2023
			13. We will ensure that our publications are accessible and support inclusion, keeping up to date with changes in equality terminology and ensuring we are mindful of appropriate representation.	Director, PIA	SFC complies with accessibility requirements for publications and website. Staff members have completed accessibility training and there is a continuous review process in place to further develop our approach.	Completed

Theme	Best Value Assessment	2021	Actions	Action Owner	Progress Update	2022
	That the organisation, wherever relevant, collects information and data on the impact of policies, services and functions on different equality groups to help inform future decisions and that it engages with and involves equality groups to improve and inform the development of relevant policy and practice.	Under-Developed	14. We will implement the Action Plan from our Memorandum of Understanding with the EHRC.	Director, ALO	National Equality Outcomes will be jointly published with the EHRC.	31 Oct 2022