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Evaluating community facilities in local government: Managing for service enablement

Nicola Brackertz and Russell Kenley

Abstract

Strategic management of facilities is now generally accepted best practice. Appraisal of facility performance has developed correspondingly and financial measures are no longer seen as the prime indicator of success. Holistic models that include the processes supporting fulfilment of an organisation's strategic aims are now considered to provide more appropriate measures. Recent focus in the service-oriented context of local government authority (LGA) facility management has particularly turned toward such models. This paper discusses the issues and inherent tensions arising from the strategic measurement of local government facilities in a service delivery context. It is argued that outwardly the strategic objective of service delivery is common to the private and public sectors, but fundamental differences in the desired outcomes and responsibilities of the two sectors require different solutions. Even if one accepts the current trend in 'balanced' performance measurement, differing parameters in the private and public sectors impact on the design and evaluation of performance measures, especially in relation to process, efficiency, strategy formulation and responsiveness of the organisation to customer needs. If a facility is considered to be an enabler of processes that lead to desired outcomes, these differences must necessarily affect the design of facility performance measurement tools. The research with eight LGAs, reported here, supports the need for a new model for the evaluation of community facilities applicable in the local government context. Using stakeholder-based focus groups, the need was identified for a service-oriented model, where the facility is understood as the intersection of aspects of service provision, physical building substance and the community utilising the facility.

INTRODUCTION

In Australia and around the world, local governments are faced with tightening restrictions on resources, with simultaneously increasing demand for effective and accountable services, coupled with diminishing public trust. Local government authorities (LGAs) hold a large number and variety of facilities, ranging from modern to heritage buildings, including state-of-the-art multipurpose facilities as well as single-use facilities. Their primary function is to

accommodate the services that LGAs deliver to their communities. Each of these facilities is a drain on financial and physical resources and in order to justify expenditure, LGAs must be able to demonstrate their benefit to the community. The management of LGA facilities is thus increasingly complex and must adapt to these changing pressures.

Strategic facilities management

The discipline of facilities management has undergone a significant shift over the past decade and has developed an increasingly sophisticated understanding of its role within the organisation. Strategic management of facilities is now generally accepted best practice. Appraisal of facility performance, too, has developed along these lines and financial measures are no longer seen as the prime indicator of success. More holistic models that consider how facilities enable the processes that support the fulfilment of an organisation's strategic aims are now considered to be appropriate. Focus has now turned toward the adoption of such models in the service-oriented context of LGA facility management (FM).

Service delivery in the public sector

This paper discusses the issues and inherent tensions arising from the strategic measurement of local government facilities in a service delivery context. It is argued that, even if outwardly the strategic objective of service delivery is common to the private and public sectors, there are fundamental differences in the desired outcomes and responsibilities between the two. Even if one accepts the current trend in 'balanced' performance measurement, differing parameters in the private and public sectors impact on the design and evaluation of performance measures, especially in relation to process, efficiency, strategy formulation and responsiveness of the organisation to customer needs. If the facility is considered to be an enabler of processes that lead to desired outcomes, these differences must necessarily affect the design of facility performance measurement tools. In the public sector, for example, service delivery is closely tied to notions of governance and fulfilment of user needs, not merely in relation to user satisfaction, but also in respect of equity and accessibility of the service.

To establish the context of LGA facilities, issues of strategic management and performance measurement are reviewed, as are the implications for facility performance evaluation. Differences in the roles and responsibilities for delivering services in the private and public sectors are discussed. Current tools for facility performance measurement of local government services are dominated by a private-sector customer-oriented management model, whereby the community is treated as the user or customer of the service. This means that issues of governance, political management and responsiveness to the community's service needs are taken into account primarily in a top-down manner at the level of strategy formulation and planning, rather than at the user interface. In other words, they generally do not impinge at the level of FM.

A new model to evaluate facilities performance

Research with eight LGAs suggests the need for a new macro model for the evaluation of community facilities applicable in the local government context. In this service-oriented model, the facility is understood as the intersection of aspects of service provision, physical building substance and the community utilising the facility. Logometrix, as the model is termed, uses a balanced approach that incorporates service, community, financial and building related measurements.

STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Strategy and performance measurement go hand in hand in modern management. Strategic management centres on determining the long-term goals that affect the entire organisation. These choices about the nature and direction of the organisation are juxtaposed to the 'lesser' operational decisions.[1] In line with ideas about scientific management developed by Frederick Taylor, strategic choices about the organisation are considered to be a senior management function, thereby separating 'thinking' from 'doing', and creating a level of management that directs the organisation, but has little involvement with the operational side of business. In this way, strategy is conceptualised in terms of strong leadership and the separation of decision making from operational execution.[2] To overcome the divide between strategic objectives and operational goals, the two are linked through a process of planning. Traditional approaches, however, such as the corporate planning initiatives that were popular from the 1960s to 1980s, are now regarded as too inflexible. Rather, to allow the organisation to respond to an environment that is in constant flux, strategic management and plans are now considered to be a *process* of continual and incremental adjustment, as embodied in Mintzenberg and Waters' concept of emergent strategies.[3] In real life, ideas and practices of strategic and scientific management are generally closely linked.[4] Consequently, strategic management is generally associated with ideas about efficiency, which in turn affects the implementation of strategic and accompanying operational plans.

Multi-dimensional performance indicators

With the rise of strategic management, performance indicators have been adapted from primarily financially based measures to embrace multidimensional approaches. Traditional measures derived from costing and accounting systems are limited as the sole tool for performance evaluation, as they are historical, lack strategic focus, are not externally focused, and as such provide limited information appropriate to management decision making. Furthermore, financially based measures lack the ability to reflect aspects of service quality and customer satisfaction. Perhaps the most influential of the 'new' approaches to performance measurement in recent times has been Kaplan and Norton's 'balanced scorecard', which balances four perspectives of performance (customer perspective, internal perspective, innovation

and learning perspective, financial perspective) in relation to desired strategic outcomes.[5]

Another important concept in performance measurement is the distinction between results and their determinants. Fitzgerald *et al.* list competitiveness and financial performance as the two key areas of results, while quality of service, flexibility, resource utilisation and innovation are determinants.[6]

Performance measures as management aid

Within a strategic framework the role of performance measurement is to report on processes and outcomes of individual business units. On a higher level, measurements can be used to assess whether strategy directives do in fact lead to the achievement of desired strategic goals. Using a feedback loop, strategy may then be revised accordingly before the next cycle of performance measurement takes place, in a process of incremental strategy adjustment.[7] Performance measures also have the ability to influence behaviour and decision making, thereby making them a key factor in the implementations of strategy and business plans, by promoting consistency of behaviour and decision making.[8] It is because of their ability to influence behaviour and monitor processes and outputs, that performance measures are often seen as the primary mechanism to control strategy implementation.

FACILITY PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

Developments in strategic management and performance evaluation have not gone unnoticed in the field of facilities management. On one level they have caused facilities management to take a more comprehensive perspective on its role within the organisation, as an enabler of strategic objectives.[9] This has led to the development of ideas and practices of integrated facilities management.[10] Accompanying this has been a suite of models that link facility performance to the achievement of desired business outcomes.[11] This is an important shift, because it means that facilities are no longer reduced to the role of providing space as needed and operating within a set of financial parameters, but are now seen as organisational process enablers. For service businesses this has meant that facilities have to be considered in relation to their contribution to service delivery. In effect, this means that a facility is the intersection between the physical building structure and the service delivered from it (see Figure 1).

In attempting to bring together the service and building aspects of the FM function, a number of models have been developed.

Performance measurement tools

Hinks and McNay, for example, have developed a *management-by-variance* tool which assesses the effectiveness of the FM function by linking to its (internal) clients' requirements.[12] The key to the study was the identification of a set of bespoke performance indicators using a Delphi methodology, which can be used by the premises department to evaluate their performance realistically for their internal customers. This approach takes a significant step in the direction of acknowledging the importance of the effects of FM
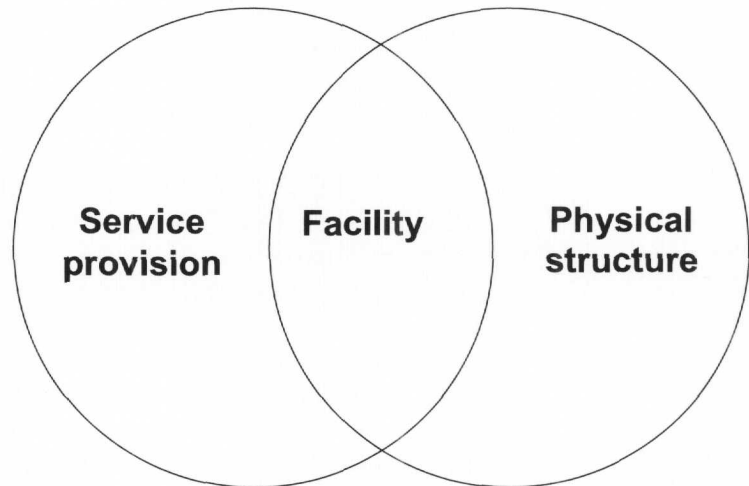
Figure 1: Facility areas

management for their customers (users). The performance-by-variance tool, however, provides a measure of the FM function's effectiveness as perceived by internal customers. It is not primarily geared towards measuring the extent to which facilities support desired organisational outcomes.

The Organisation of Higher Education Facilities Officers has developed the Strategic Assessment Model (SAM)[13] to assist FM in achieving organisational excellence through continuous improvement.[14] SAM is built around the Malcolm Baldridge Criteria for Performance Excellence[15] and the balanced scorecard. SAM uses qualitative criteria for determining levels of performance in conjunction with quantitative performance indicators. While SAM provides a comprehensive model for quality assessment, however, its performance indicators are not directly related to the organisation's desired business outcomes. Furthermore, the performance ratios used as indicators are fairly abstract, making them difficult to interpret by those who are not directly involved in the FM area.

The International Centre for Facilities has developed a method called Serviceability Tools & Methods (ST&M).[16] This works at the macro level, with a method that matches demand (occupant requirements) to supply (serviceability of buildings) in relation to the facility's ability to support/impede the strategy of the business or the functioning of its occupants. Discrepancies between demand and supply are indicated using a gap measurement. In this way, ST&M is suited to assisting in decision making at the strategic level.[17]

A strategic asset management model linked specifically to community assets in local government in the Australian context has been the Montech model.[18] The Montech model measures all the costs and benefits of holding and using community assets (including economic and social costs). While it does include considerations of

service obligations, however, it is mainly financially based, and geared towards establishing pricing guidelines for community services. It does not take into account a facility's contribution to service outcomes for the community.

FACILITY PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT FOR SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

So far this paper has dealt with issues of strategic management, its link to performance measurement and the role of facilities in supporting organisational objectives from a private-sector perspective. There are, however, a number of significant differences, both politically and conceptually between the private and public sectors, which must necessarily affect the design of a tool for performance evaluation in the sphere of local government.

Private versus public sector models

Like the private sector, the public sector has also embraced the tenets of strategic management, with emphasis on leadership, incremental adjustment of strategy, planning, and focus on efficiency and effectiveness and use of performance measurement. There is, however, growing concern about the role and applicability of strategic management practice in the public sector, where it has become closely associated with ideas of marketisation, managerialism, reduction of public accountability and diminished community participation at a local level.[19] The concern is that citizens are becoming removed from the service setting, empowered only as individual consumers with the ability to complain and 'vote with their feet' at election time, if the service is found lacking, but not the ability to shape services proactively. Council employees, too, are feeling increasingly disempowered, as they are pressured to act according to the private sector model of top-down control designed to combat bureaucratic rigidities.

Accountability and responsiveness in the public sector

In the private sector accountability is confined to economic accountability to shareholders and compliance with the law. Government, however, does not only have to be accountable economically, but also from a governance perspective. Governance refers to the interaction between the formal institutions and those of civil society. It includes such aspects as the degree of legitimacy, representativeness, popular accountability and efficiency with which public affairs are conducted.[20] This highlights the role of the citizen in the business of government organisations.

> **'Central and local government can be conceived of as an organization under the direct control of elected representatives of the public, with a mandate to deliver services (and other initiatives) which are needed by the public in a defined geographical area, whether a locality or a nation State. The representative system is defined as concerned with meeting the needs of the people in an area and not simply the provision of services paid for out of tax revenue. This is the conception of government as community self-governance.'[21]**

Consequently, citizens cannot simply be equated to customers of public services — they are both — citizens and customers. For this reason, issues of public input and participation are essential when providing government services. A purchaser/provider model simply does not capture the complex interrelationship between the community and local government, particularly respective issues of responsiveness and participation.

What then are the implications for the design of a system to evaluate the performance of local government community facilities? In adopting a balanced approach to performance measurement of local government community facilities, organisational aims must be stated in terms of service delivery, governance and financial objectives. Rather than merely control the effective implementation of strategic plans, the system should provide facility managers with information that allows them to make informed decisions about service providers' and service users' needs of community facilities.

Stakeholder approach

Critical to the development and success of an integrated model of facilities management is the contribution and buy-in of all stakeholders in facilities. That is, not only those persons who have a management or financial stake in facility performance, but service providers and the community as well. This necessity for involving organisational stakeholders to arrive at a comprehensive and representative measurement system has already been highlighted by Walters[22] and Atkinson *et al.*,[23] but has not yet been widely applied to measuring facility performance.

THE LOGOMETRIX PROJECT

Logometrix (Local Government Facilities — Strategic Performance Measurement) grew from a pilot project with one LGA in Melbourne, Australia, in 1999. The initial brief was to develop a system to evaluate the LGA's community facilities in relation to their ability to deliver services to the community for the purpose of both informing management in its decision making, but also to allow better communication of strategic needs-based decisions to the community. The Service Balanced Scorecard, which was the result of the initial research, was successfully implemented with that LGA.

Building on the pilot study, a larger, collaborative project, Logometrix, was initiated with eight LGAs in Victoria, Australia, to:

— take a balanced approach to facility performance combining building and service aspects
— provide participating LGAs with a web-enabled software tool that will allow
  • facilities to be measured in relation to desired service outcomes
  • strategic decision making about facilities
  • benchmarking of facility performance

— support best value principles to assist councils to be accountable and flexible in meeting community needs.

METHOD

Focus groups

For the first stage of the research, the eight councils took part in focus groups designed to identify information needs about facility performance across these LGAs. The rationale for this was the recognition within local government of the need for a strategic facilities management tool. While data about buildings and services were already being collected by councils, this information was often fragmented, dispersed across areas, and not readily accessible to facility managers. Furthermore, strategic planning and decision making about facilities was hampered by stakeholders' competing needs (eg, facilities managers were more focused on maintaining asset values and financial aspects of the building, while managers of services were more concerned with their ability to deliver appropriate services to the community, and councillors were affected by political considerations), which were not always clearly stated and reflected in facilities planning and performance measurement. A lack of consistent data collection and channels of communication between stakeholder groups added to these difficulties.

A stakeholder approach was used to identify how affected parties interpreted their respective LGAs' strategic missions and priorities, and what they thought should be measured about facility performance. This stage of the research is now complete and the results are reported here. Focus groups have the added advantage that they can be used to facilitate cultural change within organisations.

Stakeholders

The research design for the needs analysis identified three main stakeholder groups with an interest in facility decision making. A total of seven focus groups were conducted with representatives from each of these stakeholder groups.

— asset and facilities managers (two focus groups)
— managers of council services — aged care and disability managers, library managers, community services managers, parks and recreation managers (four focus groups)
— the community — in Stage 1 councillors, who are the elected representatives of the community and decision makers within council, were used for the community stakeholder group[24] (one focus group).

Each of these stakeholder groups corresponded to a 'segment' in focus group design.[25] With a few exceptions where persons were unavailable on the day, each focus group was composed of one person from each of the eight participating LGAs. Where persons with key knowledge about an LGA's facilities and services were not available to participate in the focus groups, one-on-one interviews

were conducted using focus group questions. Focus groups provided a good structure for representation of the stakeholder groups identified in the research design. Further, inter-council focus groups created the valuable opportunity for networking between people working in similar areas in different councils, and for new synergies to emerge in discussion as experiences and ideas diverged and merged.

Focus group aims

Focus group questions were developed to:

— test existing assumptions
— allow discussion to reveal and explore any further assumptions and issues
— be general, so as not to limit input to a narrow area
— elicit responses on the same issues from different perspectives.

Prior to conducting the focus groups, background information on each LGA was collected to establish the socio-economic context and identify council management structures; corporate plans and other planning documents provided a background to the relevant issues in each community. In addition, meetings were held with senior management staff from the assets, facilities management and services area of each LGA to inform them about the project and to assist researchers in identifying suitable participants for the focus group selection process.

Questions

The questioning route was sequenced to move from more general issues to an in-depth exploration of emerging themes. The questions for each segment were worded slightly differently (to reflect participants' role within council), but were matched on content and meaning. This was done to allow the same issues to be explored from the different perspectives represented in the stakeholder groups.

Questioning route

Question 1 sought articulation or interpretation of council's strategic objectives in relation to participants' area of operation.

Questions 2&3 asked for examples of good and bad facilities and what the good and bad elements of these facilities were. These questions were designed to generate discussion about participants' priorities in terms of objectives without asking outright. By grounding participants' input in their own experience of what was good or bad about the facilities they used, participants were encouraged to talk freely about from their own knowledge base.

Question 4 brought together Q1 and Q2&3, and asked outright for the important measures of facility performance. This is a key question and provides the opportunity for participants to use the examples volunteered in Q2&3 to illustrate performance measures and explain why they were important.

Question 5 dealt with crucial information, communication and

procedures. Initially, this question asked about what was considered to be the most crucial piece of information required by building managers for facilities planning. Discussion in earlier groups quickly moved to underlying issues of communication between the various stakeholders — the difficulties, the processes, the realities. The question was therefore changed to address this area — the processes (or lack thereof) for communication of crucial information internally across council departments, and externally with community groups and third parties (contractors, service providers, consultants).

Data analysis

Focus groups were recorded onto audiotape to ensure comprehensive data capture. Tapes were then transcribed verbatim, omitting only participants' names and any identifying characteristics to preserve anonymity. Focus group transcripts were then imported into QSR NUD*IST, a software application that allows for qualitative data analysis using coding techniques. Transcripts were then coded according to emerging themes. In a second coding pass, codes were reviewed and refined to identify major themes relevant to the research brief.

FINDINGS

In local government the facility physically represents the place where the community, service provision and the building meet. Focus groups revealed that stakeholder groups used the term 'facility' with varying meanings, sometimes referring to the building, sometimes to the service provided, and sometimes to a combination of the two. It was therefore deemed necessary to clarify terms. The following definitions are derived specifically from the focus group participants:

Facility definition

— *Facility* includes the physical building, and the land, space, environment and communications that allow a particular service to be delivered from a location. Facility refers to the combination of service and building when the two are inextricably linked as they are in reality. It is not possible to deliver a council service without a physical vehicle. It is this combination that is referred to as facility, where
— *building* refers to the physical structure and fit-out of that structure used to house a service, and
— *service* refers to the service or programme (human element) provided from the building.

Four dimensions of a facility's performance were considered critically to support its ability to enable effective service delivery to meet community needs (see Figure 2).

Four dimensions of facility performance

The facility was seen to occupy the intersection between service provision, physical building substance, the community and financial
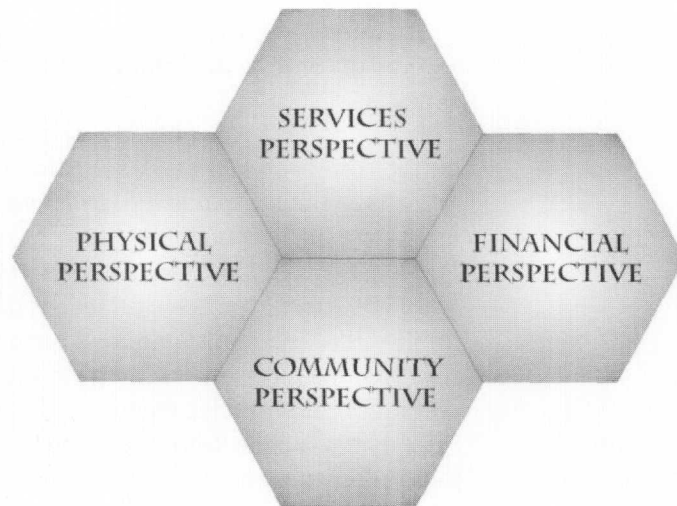
Figure 2: Perspectives of facility performance

sustainability, highlighting again the limitations of traditional measures for that are based around space and cost-related ratios. In designing a framework to evaluate facility performance in local government, each of these four perspectives must be represented.

Differing priorities of stakeholders

This was underlined by the differing emphases given to the four perspectives by stakeholder groups. While all stakeholders were guided by similar overarching objectives, differences were observed in the various groups' priorities. Service managers emphasised community access and the need for functional workspace. They were very aware that it was not possible to separate the physical building from its function. Asset and facilities managers emphasised planning and maintenance issues. Councillors stressed the political pressures on their role.

COMMUNICATION

The theme mentioned most frequently by all groups participating in the project was that of communication between the different areas within council and the impact of communication processes (or lack thereof) on decision making and outcomes. Good internal communication between business units (services, facilities and asset management, councillors and the strategic planning area), as well as communication between council and the community were seen to be essential as they facilitated better planning processes, better decision making and better outcomes for all concerned. Stakeholders have to understand each other's priorities, plans and needs, but this was not always the case. Successful communication was considered to be particularly important to facilitate better outcomes in relation to:

— maintenance requests and prioritisation;
— strategic planning;
— operational planning;
— planning for new buildings;

— planning for services; and
— liaison and consultation with the community.

The latter point was considered particularly important to communicate to the public reasons for facility closures, relocations and other facility planning decisions and processes. It was also seen as important to get public input at critical decision-making points. Participants felt that this was not always managed successfully. Councils can become more accountable and maintain (or regain) public trust by being able to inform the community about reasons for councils' decision-making on facilities in terms and language the community can relate to and understand.

Reasons for poor communication

Poor decision making and communication breakdown occurred most often because frequently there were no suitable channels and processes for communication between a council's business units and the community, committees of management, and outsourced service providers. A lack of, or difficulty in, accessing relevant data to inform decision-making processes also hampered councillors, the community and service providers when making informed decisions, as well as limiting their ability to communicate reasons for decision making to affected parties. This was exacerbated because both the public and different business units within councils lacked a set of mutually understood definitions and terminology, leading to misunderstandings. Because LGAs operate within the political sphere, politics frequently overrode decision-making processes, providing less than optimal outcomes. Finally, it was felt that communication processes were too time consuming.

Use of relevant performance measures

These findings highlight the imperative that a performance measurement system must use relevant performance measures that are communicable and meaningful across stakeholder groups so that it can function as a means of communication. Rather than measuring technical details of facility performance, a few broadly based and commonly understood indicators should be used. In this way, performance indicators can be used as a management aid, rather than an instrument of control.

So rather than providing a set of indicators that are specific to each type of community facility (eg number of books borrowed from the library), what is required is a set of generic performance indictors reflecting councils' overall objectives that can be applied across the entire portfolio of community facilities. In this way, measures are linked to desired strategic outcomes in a way that is meaningful to all stakeholder groups. To make measures meaningful, a two-tiered approach must be developed, where service and performance standards are linked to indicators of actual performance.

Results from the focus group process suggest that four aspects of facility performance were considered salient indicators across all stakeholder groups, namely the facility's physical performance, its ability to enable service delivery, its meeting of community needs, and its financial sustainability.

Physical perspective

Indicators of physical performance

Stakeholders thought that the overarching objective of a facility's physical performance is the building's fitness for purpose or functionality. In reality, LGAs generally have to choose from pre-existing building stock and 'best fit' is a realistic goal. The main indicators of a physical performance were seen to be:

— *risk* and the degree of the building's compliance (current and future) with building regulations, service codes and other statutory requirements
— *building condition* internally, externally and structurally
— *flexibility* in relation to the building's structural flexibility, flexibility of the fit-out, and its ability to cater for the needs of all concurrent users
— the ability of *design and fit-out* to add value to the service, support work practices and facilitate work flow
— *IT capability* in relation to the ability to cater for current and anticipated future needs
— *environmental* impact and sustainability.

Service perspective

Indicators of service performance

A facility's ability to enable service processes and outcomes was considered important in relation to access and utilisation.

— *Access*
  • *physical access* — should measure how well the location is suited to the requirements of the service provided and how easy it is for the community to physically access the facility. This also included *disability access*.
  • *equity of access* — this represents the extent to which the facility is actually being used by those groups of the community at which the service provided from the facility is targeted. From the point of view of facility performance, the key indicator here is whether or not there are any physical impediments to equity of access.
— *Utilisation* reflects the number of people using the facility, the amount of time for which the facility is available, and the number of services offered.

Community perspective

Indicators of community satisfaction

Community satisfaction with services was considered an important indicator of how well the council was meeting its objectives to provide for community needs. Indicators include the community's satisfaction with aspects of accessibility, utilisation, suitability of physical building provisions and whether the service is considered to be value for money. In addition, measures of responsiveness to changing community needs also have to be considered, as well as community satisfaction with the opportunities available for them to participate in decision making about facilities.

Indicators of financial performance

Financial perspective

An indication of the cost of running the facility was considered to be vital to establishing financial sustainability. While most other models of financial performance are concerned with establishing pricing structures for service provision, or measures of occupancy cost/person/m^2 and the like, focus group participants indicated that they preferred to separate the costs of running the building from the cost of running the service.

Indicator development

The indicators needed to represent each of the four perspectives of facility performance comprise tangible and intangible measures. That is, some aspects of performance can be related to quantifiable measures and outputs (such as hours of opening, number of users and costs), while others rely on qualitative judgments of needs and suitability of provisions.

Indicators for each of the four perspectives, compare facility requirements from the point of view of desired service outcomes with an assessment of actual performance. In this way, desired outcomes are identified and shortfalls can be targeted, thereby encouraging beneficial behaviours. Assessments of service requirements and facility performance will be made jointly by facility and service managers. This is an important aspect of the model, as service managers, who work at the coalface, are best positioned to make assessments about service requirements in relation to community needs. Service managers are therefore in a position to provide vital information about facilities that relate to issues of responsiveness to community needs. In utilising input from service managers, Logometrix enables contributions to facility decision making not just in a 'top-down' manner during the strategic planning cycle, but provides for ongoing feedback from the service and community base.

Service requirements versus actual facility performance

A balanced evaluation of these four perspectives is based around the trade-off between the cost of running the facility and the level of service it provides to the community. That is, a higher cost of providing the facility is justified if this results in a high service return and high levels of community satisfaction and responsiveness. The physical perspective captures current fitness for purpose, but also points towards anticipated changes in compliance, risk and the building's possible adaptability to future uses, as community needs change. The community perspective is an indication of how well the council has succeeded in its objective of meeting community needs, thereby providing a feedback mechanism.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Building on the results of the needs analysis, the second stage of Logometrix is currently in progress. Maintaining a balanced approach, the measures developed for the pilot will be refined. A benchmarking system is also currently in development. Further

exploration of indicators will take place in close collaboration with participating LGAs. An action research approach will ensure that measures maintain currency, as well as encourage learning and culture change within the organisations.

CONCLUSION

Facilities enable service delivery

Measuring facility performance is a difficult activity, especially as performance measurement systems arouse suspicions of control associated with marketisation, managerialism and 'new public management'. Performance measurement can, however, be used as a means to improve communication and facilitate better service outcomes from both the service and the building perspective, as well as respective governance. Facility managers are aware of the need to align facilities with the organisation's overall aims and objectives, but lack access to relevant information and communication processes to do so effectively. This is made all the more difficult as the facility, as an enabler of organisational processes and outcomes, sits at the intersection of the building and service delivery, thereby straddling tangible and intangible performance aspects.

Performance measurement aids communication

A well-designed tool for performance measurement can act as a management aid reconciling these tensions by clarifying objectives and terminology, and thereby making explicit roles, responsibilities and priorities as they relate to the management and operation of LGA facilities. In this way, it can serve as a bridge between the needs of service managers, the community and facility managers. In recognising that accountability in a local government context must be conceived of not merely in financial terms, FM must understand its role from a governance point of view. This entails a certain responsibility for service outcomes in so far as they relate to facility provision. Furthermore decision making about facilities has to be responsive to public needs and must be able to be accounted for in terms and for reasons the community can understand.

These issues were born out by the research undertaken for this study. Stakeholders' differing priorities and understanding of their roles showed that while all strived to deliver services to the community, their understanding of their roles within council, and of each other, often led them to tug at opposite ends of the bone, rather that being able to work in concert. The four perspectives model of facility performance measurement proposed here aims to balance these competing priorities. Some traditional measurements of facility performance are maintained, but are balanced with insights from the service area, which contributes information about accessibility and equity of services to the community, not customarily taken into account. Customer satisfaction measurements, too, extend beyond the traditional parameters and include vital governance aspects relating to the community's ability to participate in decision making about facilities.

FM has taken the hint from general developments in performance measurement. Care must be taken, however, to adapt these models sensibly and sensitively to the new context. This is especially important in the area of local government, where facility performance measurement systems should enable better service delivery, rather than being used as an instrument of managerial control. Local government has a governance responsibility to the community, and as such community feedback about facility performance should be taken as constructive input, and channels of communication must be set up between council and community to enable these processes and to account for decision making. Service managers can act as an intermediary in this case, as they are the vital link between the operational areas of council and the community for whom services are provided.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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24. The next stage of the research will include extensive consultation with the community.

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