

**CORPORATE ASSESSMENT FINANCE DEPARTMENT BELB**  
**June 2004 by BELB Team**

**1. Leadership**

(a) Leaders develop the mission, vision and values and are good role models.

**0** \_\_\_\_\_ **50** \_\_\_\_\_ **100**  
*no* *some* *clear* *comprehensive*  
*evidence* *evidence* *evidence* *evidence* *evidence*

**Strengths**

- Corporate Plan in place
- FMT/SLT in place
- Business plan aligned with corporate plan
- Good leadership by section managers
- Regular section meetings
- 5 board procurement strategy in place
- Procurement Excellence Model process carried out twice
- HOD has communicated his values to the members of FMT
- There is clear evidence of the above strengths

**Areas for improvement**

- Some sections LMS, Accounts, Management Accounting feel excluded from the department
- The lack of face to face communication in some sections with senior management needs to be addressed
- Communication needs to be improved eg a 3/4 post in management accounting was advertised in the paper before staff were notified

(b) Leaders are personally involved in developing management systems, implementing them and continuously improving them.

**0** \_\_\_\_\_ **50** \_\_\_\_\_ **100**

**Strengths**

- SLT/FMT/section minutes
- Appraisal
- IIP – action plans
- Managers involved in corporate assessment exercise

**Areas for improvement**

- Mgt structures and systems have broken down in some areas eg some sections don't get FMT minutes – gap between senior management and operational staff
- Need to sustain IIP (see 3a)
- FMT meetings need to be more frequent and regular
- Gap caused by the absence of the management accountant needs to be addressed to ensure that LMS, accounts and management accounting are supported and have access to senior management

(c) Leaders are involved with customers, partners and community representatives.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 100

**Strengths**

- New TSN strategy developed and subject to consultation
- Good practice for budget holders ref procurement
- Financial accounting ran a schools visitation programme
- Joint board contracts in place
- Representation on central procurement directive's procurement practitioners group
- Representation on the environmental committee

**Areas for improvement**

- Consultation strategy should be adopted and more systematic customer consultation developed
- Finance needs to engage more proactively with budget holders eg budget holder training last took place in 2001
- Finance should ensure that they have access and participate in the board's training for new principals
- Need to develop and implement an on-going training programme for customers and stakeholders

(d) Leaders motivate, support and recognise the people who work for them.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 100

**Strengths**

- IIP accreditation and thank you dinner
- Section heads support and recognise staff
- HOD personally recognises and thanks staff
- Staff given additional training on job evaluation due to the perception that job evaluation appears not to work well for finance staff

**Areas for improvement**

- Staff development needs to be applied consistently across the department
- The future role for job evaluation should be reviewed
- The completion of the restructuring within the department needs to be addressed

## 2. Policy and Strategy

- (a) The department's policies and strategies reflect the needs and expectations of its stakeholders.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 100  
*no* *some* *clear* *comprehensive*  
*evidence* *evidence* *evidence* *evidence*

### Strengths

- Schemes and procedures in place to meet the needs of customers eg LMS scheme
- Regular meetings with funding departments
- Key stakeholders are identified and well defined
- Outcomes of corporate consultations, screenings and EQIA are well established
- Procurement excellence model identified customer focus as weak area especially as data was not available. This is currently being investigated on a five board basis

### Areas for improvement

- Policy and strategy within finance needs to be focused on what stakeholders need from the department

- (b) The department's policies and strategies are based on sound information.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 100

### Strengths

- Strategy developed to target social need in Belfast
- Department has contributed to the review of MIS within the organisation
- Key strengths and areas for improvement have been identified under the business excellence model and IIP. There is clear evidence of action plans having been developed

### Areas for improvement

- Procurement needs access to C2K in schools
- Action plans developed under the business excellence model and IIP need to be reviewed to ensure they have been achieved and are sustained

- (c) The department's policies and strategies are developed, reviewed and updated.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 100

### Strengths

- Policies and strategies are aligned to the corporate plan and finance has supporting role to ensure board policies are delivered
- Department's policies and strategies are reviewed and updated at least annually eg finance scheme

### Areas for improvement

- Development of contingency plans to address key risks
- Need to work with sponsoring departments to improve the planning process and planning cycle

- (d) Clear processes are in place to deliver policy and strategy.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 100

**Strengths**

- Corporate governance structure eg reports to GP&F committee
- Monthly reports to schools and budget holders
- Business plans
- LMS scheme
- Curriculum reserve

**Areas for improvement**

- Review relevance and effectiveness of information provided to stakeholders

- (e) The department's policy and strategy are communicated to everyone.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 100

**Strengths**

- Clear channels of communication within the department between SMT→SLT→FMT→Section meetings
- FMT minutes
- Minutes of section meetings

**Areas for improvement**

- Overall awareness of relevant finance policies and strategies needs to be more effectively communicated to stakeholders
- Communication should be consistent across all sections within the department

**3. People**

(a) Plans to manage and develop people are in place.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 100  
*no evidence*                      *some evidence*                      *evidence*                      *clear evidence*                      *comprehensive evidence*

**Strengths**

- IIP action plans developed
- Training plans and training evaluation in place
- Appraisal undertaken for all staff
- Finance department induction booklet developed and issued
- Restructuring undertaken in some sections within the department
- Best value review of accounts completed

**Areas for improvement**

- Need to sustain IIP
- Tools to manage and develop staff need to be fully utilized and consistently applied
- The completion of the restructuring within the department needs to be addressed

(b) The department identifies and develops people's skills and abilities to meet organisational needs.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 100

**Strengths**

- Workforce plan developed
- Training and development plans in place
- Appraisals are inline with individual objectives and organisational needs
- Staff contributed to working groups e.g. induction, corporate standards & IIP
- Individual, team and organisational learning opportunities are well embedded

**Areas for improvement**

(c) The department encourages people to develop and improve.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 100

**Strengths**

- Achievement of IIP
- Operational staff support each other and work well together
- FMT feels empowered
- Sections feel they work as teams
- Oracle system makes department more inter dependent and some sections have adapted better than others. A joint board action plan has been developed to address these issues

**Areas for improvement**

- Budget holders need to be made more accountable
- Information to some sections needs to be improved to facilitate decision making and empower staff
- All sections need to be able to feel part of the departmental team
- The strains between some sections need to be addressed
- Senior managers need to communicate to all relevant staff any decisions or correspondence that has an impact on their work or the work of their section

## ELB INQUIRY

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(d) Communication in the department is effective.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 100

**Strengths**

- Good informal structures
- Good communication at operational levels
- Intranet
- Internet
- E-mail
- Consultation and communication strategies
- Association of CFO minutes circulated to members of FMT
- Inter board procurement officer group minutes circulated to members of FMT and procurement staff

**Areas for improvement**

- Horizontal communication between members of FMT needs to be improved
- Need to ensure that LMS, accounts and management accounting have the facility to raise issues at FMT
- Information needed to do work is not always coming down from FMT which needs to be addressed

(e) The department rewards, recognises and cares for its people.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 100

**Strengths**

- There is clear evidence of good employment practice, social and cultural activities, family friendly policies, facilities and services are available for staff within the department and throughout the organisation
- Health care and home computer initiative being developed

**Areas for improvement**

**4. Partnership and Resources**

(a) The department identifies and develops partnerships with strategic bodies.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 100  
*no evidence*                      *some evidence*                      *clear evidence*                      *comprehensive evidence*

**Strengths**

- Key external partners are clearly defined and identified
- Procurement participate fully in CPD working groups
- Five board CFO, AFO/DCFO, Procurement officers and Accounts officers meetings occur regularly
- New Opportunities Fund, Belfast Regeneration Organisation and Peace II examples of good income generation

**Areas for improvement**

- There is a need to improve communications/partnership working with DEL
- There is a need to influence the funding partners to better meet the needs of the board

(b) The department manages its finances effectively.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 100

**Strengths**

- Oracle financial system is in place
- Monthly reports are sent out
- Annual audit/annual accounts
- Monthly reports to GPF

**Areas for improvement**

- A need for clarification of how finance staff interface with budget holders
- There is a need to change the way reports are sent out to budget holders eg budgets clearly stated on the reports
- Earmarked funds must be clearly identified and the coding structure must facilitate the above
- Budget holder accountability needs to be developed
- Budget holders need to be fully trained to allow them to discharge their responsibilities.
- Need to move from reporting to a more proactive support role
- There is a need to develop intelligent systems for forecasting and analysing
- Move away from reporting role to a consulting and challenge role
- The risk of over dependence on one member of staff for the development and maintenance of oracle financial reports needs to be addressed

(c) The department utilises its buildings, equipment and materials effectively.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 100

**Strengths**

**Areas for improvement**

- The fixed asset register is not working and needs to be reviewed and developed

(d) The department manages new technologies effectively.

**0** \_\_\_\_\_ **50** \_\_\_\_\_ **100**

**Strengths**

- There is evidence of a proactive approach within the limitations of the new technology
- There is an oracle Financial System
- Regular meetings take place between procurement and IFS to develop the POP system

**Areas for improvement**

- As the technology is complex and is not user friendly more effective focused training on IFS is required
- Problems with interfaces to link with oracle C2K, Manhattan etc need to be addressed
- The full potential of the oracle reporting mechanisms i.e. projections need to be developed

(e) The department gathers and uses data effectively in support of policy and strategy.

**0** \_\_\_\_\_ **50** \_\_\_\_\_ **100**

**Strengths**

- The board has a Financial System

**Areas for improvement**

- The current method for managing financial information needs to be reviewed to ensure that it meets the requirements of both the board and external partners
- The role of SMT in managing the board's finances and prioritizing expenditure needs to be reviewed.
- Need to review the high level financial information reported to GP&F & SMT to ensure that this is sufficient to enable them to make decisions

**5. Processes**

- (a) The department is good at introducing changes to procedures when they are seen not to be working.

**0** \_\_\_\_\_ **50** \_\_\_\_\_ **100**  
*no evidence*                      *some evidence*                      *evidence*                      *clear evidence*                      *comprehensive evidence*

**Strengths**

- There is evidence of financial processes and systems in place
- There is ad hoc reviewing of processes in sections and between sections
- Internal audit and Best value Reviews are used to review systems and processes

**Areas for improvement**

- There is a need to review all financial processes in a formal way
- There should be a mechanism in place to obtain formal feedback from users on the effectiveness of processes
- There is a clear need to develop a three year financial plan for the board
- A pro-active preventative system is required to support those schools going into deficit

- (b) The department develops systematic processes and procedures in order to deliver its policies.

**0** \_\_\_\_\_ **50** \_\_\_\_\_ **100**

**Strengths**

As above

**Areas for improvement**

- There is a need to identify, log and manage the key risks for the department
- There is a need to identify any existing forecasting models and review their effectiveness

- (c) The department is very responsive to changing its practice to meet customer needs.

**0** \_\_\_\_\_ **50** \_\_\_\_\_ **100**

**Strengths**

- There is evidence that staff are responsive on a one to one basis
- There is formal consultation on some issues on a five board basis eg the common formula
- Customer care approach operates in an informal way
- There is an mechanism within the department to follow up on finance issues within best value reports eg catering and transport
- Action plans are developed to address recommendations made in audit reports

**Areas for improvement**

- There needs to be a formal customer consultation with stakeholders
- A need to streamline documentation that is sent out to avoid duplications (LMS)

(d) The department delivers a service to customers.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 100

**Strengths**

- There is clear evidence that products and services are produced, delivered and serviced

**Areas for improvement**

(e) The department listens carefully to what its customers are saying.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 100

**Strengths**

- Procurement Elbcat Survey
- Best Value Report in accounts payable
- Evidence that management accounts will tailor reports to meet individual needs when requested
- All schools return a Annual Finance plan to LMS
- Contract comment forms
- LMS and accounts have link officers defined for schools
- There is evidence of officers working with customers on a case by case basis
- Evidence of officers participating in principal group meetings
- All contracts are reviewed with customers at the time of renewal

**Areas for improvement**

- There is a need to establish a direct formal link with customers on a regular basis to clarify and develop roles
- There is a need to use customer information in a meaningful way to help inform financial projections
- Need to ensure that link officers with schools feed back financial issues to the finance department

**6. Customer Results**

- (a) The department surveys customer perceptions of the quality of its service to them.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 100  
*no* *some* *clear* *comprehensive*  
*evidence* *evidence* *evidence* *evidence* *evidence*

**Strength s**

- Good feedback from schools on an informal basis within some sections which have link officers identified for schools
- Best value reviews
- Procurement contract comment form
- Procurement ELBCAT survey

**Areas for improvement**

- (Refer to board consultation strategy)

- (b) The department uses indicators to measure customer satisfaction.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 100

**Strengths**

- Finance are supporting the development of the performance measurement framework
- Board complaints system

**Areas for improvement**

## 7. People Results

(a) The department surveys its people's perception of the organisation.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 100  
*no*                      *some*                      *clear*                      *comprehensive*  
*evidence*                      *evidence*                      *evidence*                      *evidence*

### Strengths

- Evidence ref: IIP results
- Planned re-assessment for IIP during 2004

### Areas for improvement

- There is a need to develop an action plan to sustain IIP within the department
- Staff satisfactory surveys need to be formalised and exit interviews with staff in areas of high turnover

(b) The department uses indicators to measure how its people are performing.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_\_\_ 100

### Strengths

- Absenteeism figures
- Appraisal and appraisal review
- Annual business plan report to GP&F
- Section meetings
- Formal and informal meetings with staff
- IIP
- On-going feedback with staff
- Workforce plan

### Areas for improvement

- Managers need to ensure that when undertaking appraisal areas of competency are reviewed

**8. Society Results**

- (a) The department surveys other people's views of its performance.

**0** \_\_\_\_\_ **50** \_\_\_\_\_ **100**  
*no*                      *some*                      *clear*                      *comprehensive*  
*evidence*                      *evidence*                      *evidence*                      *evidence*

**Strengths**

**Areas for improvement**

CORPORATE LEVEL

- (b) The department uses performance indicators to measure its impact on others in the community.

**0** \_\_\_\_\_ **50** \_\_\_\_\_ **100**

**Strengths**

**Areas for improvement**

**9. Key Performance Results**

(a) The department measures its outcomes against the targets set.

**0** \_\_\_\_\_ **50** \_\_\_\_\_ **100**  
*no* *some* *clear* *comprehensive*  
*evidence* *evidence* *evidence* *evidence*

**Strengths**

- Resource allocations plans are in operation (RAP)
- Prompt payment indicators
- Assessment and review of business plans
- Accounts audited by NIAO
- Reports to GP&F on budget eg TSN, LMS etc

**Areas for improvement**

- Information to budget holders needs to be timely and relevant
- Need to investigate if sufficient resources are available to assist schools in managing their budgets and in particular schools in deficit
- The department needs to establish a mechanism to implement the allocation of provisional budgets at the start of the year to allow for any adjustment to be made after the finalization of the annual accounts

(b) The department uses performance indicators to gauge how well its on target to achieve desired outcomes.

**0** \_\_\_\_\_ **50** \_\_\_\_\_ **100**

**Strengths**

- Compliance with contracts/lack of challenge
- Supportive role in developing performance mgt
- Production of annual accounts and annual report
- Deadline for budget to be with schools
- Measurement of the procurement strategy
- Prompt payment indicators

**Areas for improvement**

- Monthly summary income and expenditure reports are required to SMT/SLT/HODs/GP&F and budget holders to include profiling and forecasting information
- Board financial situation should be a standing item on SMT and SLT
- Monthly summary departmental reports should be issued to each department which include committed, budget, expenditure and variance information
- Need to develop systems to enable the organization to manage its finances and stay within budget
- Monitor and report performance against RAP at corporate level including improvement trends
- Systems should be developed to ensure that all budget holders including demand lead services operate within agreed budgets
- Need to develop contingencies to address increases in demand determined services