

**Office of the Ombudsman
Office of the Information Commissioner
Ireland**

Strategic Plan 2010–2012

June 2010

Table of Contents

Section	Page Number
Executive Summary	2
1 Introduction	6
Background and Context for the Strategic Plan	
Objectives and Scope of the Strategic Plan	
The Strategy Development Process	
Internal & External Analysis	
2 Environmental Context	10
External developments	
Consultation	
3 Future Strategic Direction	15
Introduction	
Our Vision	
Outcomes	
Strategic Objectives	
4 Implementation Plan	23
Implementation Process	
Action Plan	
5 Key Performance Indicators	29
Introduction	
Appendix	
Consultation Feedback	

Executive Summary

Introduction

This Plan represents the fourth such review and re-setting of strategic objectives by the Office of the Ombudsman (incorporating the Offices of the Information Commissioner (OIC) and the Commissioner for Environmental Information). The period covered by the Plan, 2010-2012, has the potential to be the most challenging yet faced by the Office; it is envisaged that the workload will increase significantly while considerable constraints on our resources, both staff and non-pay, are anticipated. Nonetheless, this Plan sets out a broad range of new and demanding policy and process initiatives designed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of achieving the Office's vision of "*a public service that is open, fair, accountable and effective*".

Our Strategy 2010 - 2012

Feedback

The Plan places a strong emphasis on a number of key outcomes: enhanced quality and expanded range of services to our clients, greater positive impact on the administrative practices of public bodies, more effective and efficient use of resources; all underpinned by a re-aligned internal structure and improved business processes. Much of the detailed content of the Plan is derived from formal consultations with all of our staff and feedback from stakeholders. Arising from this process a number of key issues emerged:

- Further work is required to increase public awareness about the role, functions and responsibilities of both the Office of the Ombudsman and the OIC,
- The Office needs to ensure all human and financial resources are utilised appropriately to deliver greatest effect,
- The Office must explore new ways of delivering excellent services to all users, and

- The dynamic and challenging environment in which the Office will operate in the coming years will demand clear and strong leadership at all levels across the Office.

High Level Goals

The format of the Plan is broadly similar to that used before in that it establishes the Vision and Mission of the Office, makes explicit the main environmental factors influencing the development of the strategy, and identifies the specific objectives that the Office should set in order to achieve its Vision and Mission. However, in this iteration, the Plan focuses particularly on policy implementation and sets out, in some detail, the specific actions that are required to deliver on these objectives, outlines how we will measure the extent to which these objectives have been accomplished, and how they have contributed to the achievement of the overarching high-level strategic goals and outcomes.

In essence, these high-level goals and outcomes can be summarised as follows:

Improving standards of public administration across the public service

Central to the role of both the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Information Commissioner is the need to ensure that standards of decision-making and engagement with service users across the public service are comparable to international standards of good practice. Through multiple approaches we will attempt to engage with all stakeholders e.g. Government, Oireachtas, service users etc., to improve significantly the standards of administration in public bodies.

An Office, fit for purpose, to deliver services, fairly, efficiently and effectively to our customers

In line with the recommendations contained within the OECD review of the Irish Public Service and the Report of the Task Force on Improving Public Services, we recognise the importance of ensuring our internal capability matches our ambition to improve

standards across the public service. We therefore intend placing considerable emphasis on enhancing our internal systems, processes and capabilities to meet these needs.

We also want to ensure that all who need to know about us do and can readily access our services. In particular, we aim to secure widespread public awareness of our role as Ombudsman in relation to health and social care issues.

Key Objectives

Underpinning both outcomes we have identified a number of key strategic objectives for the period 2010–2012. These objectives are specific statements that clearly identify what both the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Information Commissioner (OIC) want to achieve under each outcome:

Outcome	Strategic Objectives
<u>Ombudsman</u> Improved Standards of Public Service Administration	To achieve measurable improvement in standards of public service delivery and fairness
	To promote the active support of the Oireachtas and Government to enable the office to function effectively in the public interest
	Focus on complaints & investigations that identify systemic maladministration
	Develop, very quickly, appropriate metrics to measure the beneficial outcomes of complaint handling, investigations and other initiatives
<u>OIC</u> Improved Standards of Public Service Administration	To foster better FOI decision-making by public bodies
	To ensure correct application by public bodies of the Freedom of Information Act
	To increase public awareness of Access to Information on the Environment Regulations
	Develop appropriate metrics to measure the outcome benefits of reviews dealt with, investigations and other initiatives and satisfaction rates among our clients
Office is fit for purpose to deliver services, fairly, efficiently and effectively to our customers	To ensure our structure, systems and processes support the achievement of our strategy
	Optimise the use of our human, financial and technical resources to ensure the cost effective delivery of our strategy
	Ensure all staff have the necessary skills and competencies, and are motivated to deliver a quality service to our customers
	Ensure all who need to know about us do and can readily access us

Implementation

These key objectives are disaggregated into a number of sub-objectives, the achievement of which will be measured against set, quantifiable and time-bound key performance indicators that are variously applicable at organisational level, section level and at individual level. In this way, the Strategic Objectives identified in the Plan are routed directly into the work of individuals via the Senior Management Team, Unit

Business Plans and individual performance contracts (Role Profiles). These Indicators have been the subject of discussion and consultation with all staff.

The successful implementation of previous strategic plans has been largely due to the dedication of the staff of the Office to its values and goals and to the unstinting commitment of the staff to ensuring that the work of the Office has been performed to a very high level. In challenging times, this dedication and commitment is required more than ever.

Introduction

About Us

The Office of the Ombudsman is an organisation comprising three key bodies that are central to bringing about increased openness, transparency, accountability and enhanced efficiencies in Irish public life: the Office of the Ombudsman, Office of the Information Commissioner (incorporating the Commissioner for Environmental Information) and the Standards in Public Office Commission Secretariat.

The Office of the Ombudsman is primarily concerned with fairness and soundness in the public service: this is achieved mainly through investigating individual complaints, recommending redress as appropriate, and by the identification of systemic administrative issues. The Office of the Information Commissioner's functions relate primarily to adjudicating on applications under the Freedom of Information Acts and by identifying systemic failings in relation to the operation of the Acts by public bodies. In addition, the Information Commissioner is also the Commissioner for Environmental Information (CEI) since 2007; the additional workload currently being absorbed by the staff of the OIC. The focus of the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPOC) is the oversight of the Ethics and Electoral legislation, the spirit of which is to ensure accountability and high standards in Irish public life. The SIPOC Secretariat also services the requirements of Referendum Commissions when operational.

The three Offices each carry out separate and distinct statutory functions: nonetheless they function as a single amalgamated agency under one Vote and one Accounting Officer and a corporate management board which manages the Organisation, while, at the same time, protecting and preserving the statutory independence and functions of each of the constituent parts. Each Office has its own staff complement but the finance, human resources and information technology functions are shared between all three Offices.

The Standards in Public Office Commission staff were included in the consultation process as a result of their physical location within the Ombudsman's Office and SIPOC's operational relationship with the Office of the Ombudsman (staff provision and back office supports). However, SIPOC is an independent statutory body and has undertaken a separate strategy review. As such, this Review is concerned only with the Offices of the Ombudsman and Information Commissioner.

In terms of the Review itself, given the dual responsibility the Ombudsman holds for both the Office of the Ombudsman and Information Commissioner and also the close working relationship that exists between the two Offices, not only have individual strategic objectives been identified over the course of the next three years but also opportunities for joint strategic initiatives.

Office of the Ombudsman

Established under the Ombudsman Act, 1980, the core activity of the Office of the Ombudsman is the examination and investigation of complaints about administrative actions, delays or inaction adversely affecting persons or bodies in their dealings with government departments, local authorities, the Health Service Executive and its agencies and the postal service. The Office also investigates complaints relating to certain functions of public bodies covered by the Disability Act, 2005.

A further significant extension of the Ombudsman's remit is envisaged under the Ombudsman (Amendment) Bill currently before the Oireachtas. When enacted, the Bill will extend the Ombudsman's remit to most areas of the wider public service, including the state agency sector. Among the other areas for inclusion are the third-level education sector, the Vocational Educational Committees and FÁS.

Currently, the structure of the Office is such that it has several divisions, each with its own distinct operational responsibilities and expertise. The complaints examination divisions are Civil Service Section, Local Authorities Section and Health and Social Welfare Section. The Head of each division, a Senior Investigator, reports directly to the Director General or the Ombudsman/Information Commissioner, as appropriate. In

addition, a Shared Services Unit supports the operations of the organisation as a whole. Each division comprises a number of Investigators at Assistant Principal level and a support unit comprising a number of staff from Clerical Officer to Higher Executive Officer level.

Office of the Information Commissioner

Established under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, 1997, the role of the Commissioner is to review (on application) decisions made in relation to FOI requests and to make binding new decisions. Her role is also to keep the operation of the Act under review with a view to ensuring maximum compliance among public bodies; to encourage the voluntary publication by public bodies of information on their activities; and to prepare and publish commentaries on the practical operation of the Act. The Information Commissioner is also the Commissioner for Environmental Information (CEI) which involves broadly similar functions to that of the Office of Information Commissioner. All references in this document to the Office of the Information Commissioner (OIC) relate also to the Commissioner for Environmental Information unless otherwise stated.

The structure of the Office is such that it has two teams of investigators, each reporting directly to a Senior Investigator. A single support unit comprising staff from Clerical Officer to Higher Executive Officer services both teams.

Objectives of the Strategic Plan

The primary purpose of this strategic plan is to provide a blueprint to focus our efforts over the next three years on further developing the services and capabilities of the Office of the Ombudsman and the OIC (hereinafter referred to jointly as the “Office”). It will serve to clarify and streamline where we as an organisation fit within a changing sector and the role we envision for ourselves over the next three years.

Our Strategy for 2010-2012

- Establishes the Vision and Mission of the Office,
- Makes explicit the main environmental factors influencing the development of the strategy,
- Determines the specific objectives that the Office should set in order to achieve its Vision and Mission,
- Examines the specific actions that are required to deliver on these objectives,
- Outlines agreed appropriate means to measure the achievement of all future strategic priorities, and
- Helps prepare the Office for future challenges in implementing and achieving the strategic goals of the organisation.

The Strategy Development Process

The strategy development process consisted of three key steps, which are summarised in the diagram below.

Description	Objective	Output
Step 1: Environmental analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collect relevant background data• Examine the Office's strategic focus• Conduct an extensive internal consultation process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shared understanding of the Office's current internal and external environment• Key messages on the future strategic priorities for the organisation
Step 2: Develop a "Vision" statement, identify strategic priorities and develop strategic objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish assumptions for discussions• Complete a SWOT and PESTEL analysis• Develop a shared Vision statement for the Office• Develop an initial view of the priority areas and strategic objectives for the Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agreed assumptions for developing the content of the strategy• Agreed Vision Statement• Initial view of strategic priorities and objectives• Issues and areas requiring clarification and further development

Description	Objective	Output
Step 3: Implementation Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify Strategic Objectives for each Priority Area Develop specific Action Plan to deliver on each of the Strategic Objectives Develop clear Implementation Framework including Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed Strategic Objectives Detailed “SMART” Actions with appropriate KPIs identified Agreed Implementation Plan to support the delivery of all strategic priorities and objectives (including responsibilities and timeframes)

The Strategy Document

We have articulated an ambitious future plan for the Office through our new Vision, Outcomes and associated Objectives and have developed an Action Plan which details how we will strengthen our existing capabilities and develop new expertise.

The plan is designed to be realistic and attainable and all aspects are complementary to the original premise of the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Information

Environmental Context

Introduction

This section outlines the key external and internal factors that have influenced the development of our strategy and those we consider will most likely impact on its delivery in the future.

External Factors

OECD Review: “Towards an Integrated Public Service”

In April, 2006, the Taoiseach, commissioned the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to review the Irish public service. The Report entitled “***Towards an Integrated Public Service***”, published in 2008, recognised that Ireland’s Public Service has been progressive in seeking to modernise itself and improve openness and service quality. The report stressed that the key reforms that have taken place to-date in the Irish Public Service have been inward orientated, focusing on improving internal processes and structures including:

- Building capacity at individual and organisational levels,
- Improving service delivery,
- Developing organisational and individual performance management ,
- Establishing governance procedures,
- Creating greater transparency,
- Improving consultation, and
- Increasing the use of evidence based policy making.

The OECD Report recommended that Ireland extend its reform agenda to move towards increasing focus on improved outcomes and outputs for service users through the establishment of a more integrated, networked, performance-focused Public Service. Specific recommendations laid out in the Report centred around four key themes and included recommendations under each. The following table outlines these themes and associated recommendations.

Theme	Key Recommendations
Ensuring Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase flexibility and managerial delegation, supported by strengthened staff performance management. • Improve Human Resource Management (HRM) capacity and strategic capacity in HRM. • Invest in the development of senior management leadership and capacity
Motivating Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce a performance culture by linking performance information and decision-making processes. • Establish dialogue between departments and agencies. • Create a more coherent performance approach. • Improve quality of performance indicators and information. • Improve performance through competition. • Move from micro to macro spending controls and increase budget flexibility

	and transparency.
Moving towards Citizen Centered Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain focus on service quality. • Renew e-government efforts with a focus on reinvesting benefits into improved service quality. • Join-up e-government across government. • Continue to foster an open Public Service.
Strengthening Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise the reform programme throughout the Public Service. • Improve Public Service responsiveness. • Review the government “agencification” framework. • Refocus on whole-of-government objectives.

Transforming Public Services Programme

In response to the recommendations and findings in the OECD Report, as well as developments in relation to public finances in the interim, the Government appointed a Task Force to develop its ‘*Transforming Public Services*’ Programme. The stated objectives of the actions identified in the Task Force report are as follows;

- To achieve improved performance by organisations and individuals,
- To create flexibility in deployment of peoples, assets and other resources,
- To identify the precise transformation agenda in each sector and engaging and mobilising the necessary actors,
- To achieve greater efficiency, effectiveness and economy, and
- To build capacity for ongoing transformation.

The actions identified as imperative to developing a more integrated service outlined the report included:

Theme	Actions
Motivating Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of output targets that allow the performance of individual organisations and groups of organisations to be measured • Extension of individualised systems of performance management throughout the whole Public Service

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening of existing systems
Citizen Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of additional information and participation channels for an increasingly engaged and active citizenry. Greater collaboration across government in order to provide better service delivery to users of public services.
E-Government/Shared Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater utilisation of e-government to drive integrated service delivery and collaboration between different organisations and sectors. Combination of central, enabling projects and citizen-centred initiatives in the Health, Local Government, Education and other sectors.
People & Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinforcement of public service values and of a system-wide identity to facilitate the creation of a Senior Public Service Planned mobility and development to develop a unified labour market across the Public Service
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased devolution of authority and responsibility between the different levels of Government, More extensive use of networks to mobilise actors across the Public Service to address cross-cutting issues and for sharing best practice.
Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the mandates, governance arrangements and resourcing needs of Agencies to clarify the expected achievements of agencies

Public Service Agreement 2010-2014

In response to increasing industrial unrest within the public service Government and representatives from all Public Sector Unions are currently examining ways to work together in the coming four-year period to build an integrated public service.

The potential impact of increased or even current levels of industrial unrest on the implementation of the Office's strategy is acknowledged and it is recognised this will need to be carefully monitored if the Office is to deliver on its strategic objectives.

Internal Issues

The organisation currently has an agreed staff complement of 102. In terms of its management approach, public sector modernisation principles have consistently been applied e.g. customer-

focused activities, strategy formulation, goal setting and performance measurement and management. In this regard, annual programme and sub-programme business plans are implemented to deliver on agreed strategic objectives, to respond to shifting demand priorities and to deal with operational/reputational risks that might emerge from time to time. The actions and desired outcomes identified in the business planning process are, in turn, recorded in individual action plans and in organisational and sectional risk registers, all of which are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.

However, there is no doubt but that external developments have the potential to impact on the current resource capacity of the Office. Recognising the importance of obtaining staff input on both these and other potential factors an extensive staff engagement exercise was fundamental to the strategy development process. A three-strand approach was adopted:

1. Seven grade-based focus groups drawing on staff from across the Office and one section-based focus group with a mixture of all grades identified a number of key internal factors falling to be addressed in the Strategy Review,
2. One-to-One interviews with the Ombudsman, Director General and all senior managers within the Office (10 interviews), and
3. An online staff questionnaire that achieved a response rate of 85% (see findings at Appendix).

Key Findings:

- It was acknowledged all staff continually display a high degree of professionalism and expertise in discharging their duties,
- There was a sense that further work is required to increase public awareness about the role, functions and responsibilities of both the Office of the Ombudsman and the OIC,
- It is recognised that the Office needs to ensure all human and financial resources are utilised appropriately to deliver greatest effect,
- It was considered essential that the Office focus its attention on delivering

excellent services to all users,

- The dynamic and challenging environment in which the Office will operate in the coming years will demand clear and strong leadership at all levels across the Office

Summary of Environmental Analysis

The key messages arising from the extensive internal consultation together with the hugely important external developments have combined to play a significant role in influencing the thinking around the future direction of the Office over the next three years.

In particular, significant time and attention has been given to considering the Office's level of preparedness to cope with the likely increasing demand for the Office's services in the coming years as complaints rise in line with increasing pressures on the public services. On the assumption that the Office will face resource difficulties similar to those experienced across the public service, the management team recognised the importance of radically reviewing the manner in which services can be delivered in the future.

It was further acknowledged that the pending Ombudsman Amendment Bill, which will increase the number of bodies for which the Ombudsman is responsible, will place added pressure on internal resources and this needed to be factored into all thinking.

Future Strategic Direction

Introduction

In developing our strategy we have used the following structure to shape our thinking.



Definition of Terms:

- **Vision for the Office**
The Vision is a short statement that clearly describes what the Office wants to achieve over the next ten years
- **Outcomes**
An Outcome articulates an “end-state” the Office wants to achieve within the lifetime of this strategy
- **Strategic Objectives**
These specific statements clearly identify how we propose to go about achieving our Vision over the coming three-year period
- **Actions**
These are detailed SMART¹ activities to be pursued to achieve or support the completion of our outcomes and objectives
- **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**
KPIs are quantitative and qualitative indicators associated with particular objectives and actions. KPIs are included to allow us to continually measure progress in the implementation of our strategy

¹ Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timebound

Vision of the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Information Commissioner

A public service that is open, fair, accountable and effective

Our Vision Explained

In striving to achieve openness, fairness, accountability and effectiveness across all parts of the public service we remain committed to our core purpose of independently assessing whether public service decision making processes are being applied in a proper and equitable manner. However, we recognise the challenge of ensuring these practices are consistently displayed across all public services and more importantly the central role the Office has to play in supporting the achievement of this.

Outcomes & Objectives

In delivering on our Vision over the course of the next three years we have identified two key Outcomes or “end states” we want to achieve:

1. Improved standards of public administration across the public service

Central to the role of both the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Information Commissioner is the need to ensure that standards of decision-making and engagement with service users across the public service are comparable to international standards of good practice. Through multiple approaches we will attempt to engage with all stakeholders e.g. Government, Oireachtas, public bodies, service users, etc., to improve standards of administration.

2. An Office, fit for purpose, to deliver services, fairly, efficiently and effectively to our customers

In line with the recommendations contained within the OECD review of the Irish Public Service and the Task Force's Report on Transforming Public services we recognise the importance of ensuring our internal capability matches our ambition to improve standards across the public service. We therefore intend placing considerable emphasis on enhancing our internal systems, processes and capabilities to meet these needs.

Underpinning both outcomes we have identified a number of **Strategic Objectives** for the period 2010–2012. These Strategic Objectives are specific statements that clearly identify what both the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Information Commissioner want to achieve under each Outcome.

Office of the Ombudsman

Outcome	Strategic Objectives
Improved Standards of Public Service Administration	To achieve measurable improvement in standards of public service delivery and fairness
	To promote the active support of the Oireachtas and Government to enable the office to function effectively in the public interest
	Focus on complaints & investigations that identify systemic maladministration
	Develop appropriate metrics to measure the outcome benefits of complaint handling, investigations and other initiatives

Our Objectives Explained:

The Office of the Ombudsman will work to improve standards of public service delivery and fairness

Through our complaint handling processes we will continue to strive to ensure our services are provided efficiently in a fair and equitable manner. We acknowledge the challenges this will present in the coming years as we attempt to deal with and assist

the many new organisations that will come under the remit of the Ombudsman Office following the passing of the Ombudsman Amendment Bill expected in the near future.

The Office of the Ombudsman will promote the active support of the Oireachtas and Government to enable the Office to function effectively in the public interest

We recognise the critical role the Oireachtas and Government must play in ensuring that all public services are discharged in a fair and equitable manner. We equally recognise our role in supporting the Oireachtas and Government through constant engagement, providing input into relevant policy discussions and using appropriate fora to convey our opinions on relevant matters of public interest.

The Office of the Ombudsman will focus on complaints and investigations that identify systemic maladministration

Given the inevitable demands on our resources we recognise the need to ensure we focus our attention on areas that deliver the maximum benefit to the public and in so doing highlight areas of particular maladministration. This will require us to be more strategic in our approach to complaint handling and in the selection of issues for more detailed investigation. Similarly we acknowledge the role we must play in supporting the public service bodies responsible for the largest numbers of complaints in an effort to alleviate potential problems at source.

Develop, very quickly, appropriate metrics to measure the outcome benefits of complaint handling, investigations and other initiatives

The Plan contains a number of objectives and indicators with regard to ensuring that identified actions take place as intended. Overlaying this is a need to assess whether these objectives and actions deliver the outcomes intended and, indeed, the appropriateness of these objectives and indicators. The Ombudsman's Office will design and implement meaningful evaluation measurements to determine, as best it can, the overall impact of these interventions.

Office of the Information Commissioner

Outcome	Strategic Objectives
Improved Standards of Public Service Administration	Focus on timely, efficient and legally sound resolution of review applications received
	To foster better FOI decision-making by public bodies
	To ensure correct application by public bodies of the Freedom of Information Act
	To increase public awareness of Access to Information on the Environment Regulations
	Develop appropriate metrics to measure the beneficial outcomes of reviews dealt with, investigations and other initiatives and satisfaction rates among our clients

Our Objectives Explained:

Focus on timely, efficient and legally sound resolution of review applications received

The OIC recognises that its core objective and function must continue to be the correct and timely carrying out of reviews and their conclusion through settlement or formal, binding decisions as appropriate. The OIC intends to continue to identify and implement changes in its practices to improve our performance in handling cases.

The Office of the Information Commissioner will work to foster better FOI decision-making by public bodies

In attempting to improve standards of FOI decision-making the OIC continues to acknowledge its role to work with public service bodies to inform, educate and support them on an ongoing basis on good practice standards and approaches.

The Office of the Information Commissioner will work to ensure the correct application by public bodies of the Freedom of Information Act

In addition to its supporting role, the OIC will also identify, and bring to the attention of public bodies, instances of incorrect application of the FOI Act. The OIC will also use its investigatory powers to report to the Oireachtas on the practices and procedures used by public bodies to operate the Act in doing so. In addition, the OIC will identify best practice and any areas requiring improvement.

The Office of the Information Commissioner will work to increase awareness of the Access to Information on Environment Regulations

Following the designation of responsibility for the Commission for Environmental Information to the OIC in 2007, the OIC recognises the need to address the limited awareness that exists among the public on these matters. Working with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government it is the intention of the OIC to identify means to further improve public knowledge of the purpose of the regulations.

Develop appropriate metrics to measure the beneficial outcomes of reviews dealt with, investigations and other initiatives and satisfaction rates among our clients

The Plan contains a number of objectives and indicators with regard to ensuring that identified actions take place as intended. Overlaying this is a need to assess whether these objectives and actions deliver the outcomes intended and, indeed, the appropriateness of these objectives and indicators. The OIC will design and implement meaningful evaluation measurements to determine, as best it can, the overall impact of these interventions.

Under this Outcome both Offices will work respectively to improve the effectiveness of each organisation.

Outcome	Strategic Objectives
Office is fit for purpose to deliver services, fairly, efficiently and effectively to our customers	To ensure our structure, systems and processes support the achievement of our strategy
	Optimise the use of our human, financial and technical resources to ensure the cost effective delivery of our strategy
	Ensure all staff have the necessary skills and competencies, and are motivated to deliver a quality service to our customers – this will include the development of a suite of metrics to measure the effectiveness of any initiatives taken in this regard
	Ensure all who need to know about us do and can readily access us

The Offices will ensure that their structures, systems and processes support the achievement of our strategy

The successful implementation of our strategy requires an appropriate organisational structure, underpinned by proper systems and processes to deliver on our strategy. Given inevitable resources constraints in the coming years, ensuring our practices are efficient and effective will be critical to us successfully achieving our strategic objectives.

The Offices will ensure optimal use of human, financial and technical resources to ensure the cost effective delivery of our strategy

The increasing need for further budgetary constraints places an even greater emphasis on the importance of us carefully managing and monitoring the use of all internal resources. It further demands that we examine opportunities to make better use of technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our services.

The Offices will ensure all staff have the necessary skills and competencies, and are motivated to deliver a quality service to our customers

Delivering a quality service to all of our customers is central to all that we do: it is incumbent upon the Office not only to ensure that all staff possess the necessary skills and competencies to achieve this objective, but also that they share and understand our commitment to high quality standards of customer care.

The Offices will ensure all who need to know about us do and can readily access us

Given the nature of our services it is important that all people accessing public services understand what we do and also the range and type of services we provide. We further recognise the importance of ensuring we are accessible to all sectors of society regardless of location or circumstance.

In particular, there will be specific targeting of the Health area, and particularly the areas of health and social care with a view to increasing public awareness of our role in that area, and generating a significant increase in complaint numbers. The aim is to secure widespread public awareness of the Office's effective role as Ombudsman for health and social care matters.

Summary

Working towards the achievement of our Vision and delivering on the Outcomes listed above represents a significant challenge for the Office given the dynamic environment and challenges we face, however we recognise the importance and impact of the services we provide to members of the public and are confident that the expertise and commitment of staff in both offices will ensure these objectives can be met.

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Process

The Ombudsman/Information Commissioner and the Director General, in conjunction with the senior management teams in both Offices, will have overall responsibility for ensuring the successful implementation of the plan. Working with staff and other key stakeholders we will work to deliver our objectives through the following activities.

Action Plan

This section outlines the high level Actions that will be completed by the Office of the Ombudsman and the OIC to deliver on the previously discussed strategic objectives.

Office of the Ombudsman

Outcome: Improved standards of public administration across the public service	<u>Objective:</u> To improve standards of public service delivery and fairness	
	Action	Timeframe
	Ensure complaints are dealt with properly, fairly and impartially in a timely manner	Ongoing
	Collate examples /evidence of poor public service delivery and unfair practices for further possible investigation	Quarterly
	Develop a strategy to liaise with and support new public bodies coming under the remit of the Ombudsman's Office	Q3 2010

Outcome: Improved standards of public administration across the public service	<u>Objective:</u> Promote active support of the Oireachtas and Government to enable the Office function effectively in the public interest	
	Action	Timeframe
	Identify opportunities for the office to promote the agenda of engagement for Oireachtas support for the Ombudsman	Ongoing
	Engage with Government on the formulation of policy in relation to Ombudsman Offices	Ongoing
	Monitor media, academic and professional landscape for opportunities to promote agenda	2 articles per annum
	Host conferences/ seminars e.g. long stay care	2 by Q4 2012

Outcome: Improved standards of public administration across the public service	<u>Objective:</u> Focus on complaints & investigations that identify systemic maladministration	
	Action	Timeframe
	Identify and undertake systemic investigations	2 per annum
	Develop criteria to identify complaints suitable for investigations	Q3 2010
	Develop a mechanism to manage the investigation process with a view to increasing the number of investigations (structure, process, evaluation)	Q3 2010
	Identify and target public bodies performing particularly poorly and implement a support campaign to address maladministration	As appropriate (max. of one per annum)
	Review effectiveness of investigations and support campaign	Ongoing

Office of the Information Commissioner

Outcome: Improved standards of public administration across the public service	<u>Objective:</u> To foster better FOI decision-making by public bodies	
	Action	Timeframe
	Take a random sample of decisions made by public bodies and comment on them	Q1 - 2011
	Where appropriate, include relevant commentary on public body decision-making in OIC decisions or in separate commentaries	Ongoing

Outcome: Improved standards of public administration across the public service	<u>Objective:</u> To ensure correct application by public bodies of the FOI Act	
	Action	Timeframe
	Clearly identify, and bring to their attention, mistakes made by public bodies	Ongoing
	Develop a framework/criteria to identify appropriate Section 36 Investigations	Q3 2010
	Share information (best practices, lessons learned, etc) through various fora, e.g., FOI officers networks	Ongoing

Outcome:	<u>Objective:</u> Focus on timely, efficient and legally sound resolution of review applications received	
	Action	Timeframe

Improved standards of public administration across the public service	Identify where delays and difficulties arise in acceptance, screening , allocation and investigation of review applications and revise procedures where necessary	Ongoing
Improved standards of public administration across the public service	<u>Objective:</u> To increase public awareness of the Access to Information on Environment (AIE) Regulations	
	Action	Timeframe
	Publish all decisions made under AIE regulations	Ongoing
	Share information on the rights of public and role of public bodies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seminar contributions - Publication contributions - Presentations 	Ongoing
	Include a summary of AIE decisions in Annual Report	Annually
	Draw public attention to the Act through the development of a public awareness plan	Q3 2011
	Collaborate with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop and sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department 	Q4 2010

Office of the Ombudsman & the Office of the Information Commissioner

These actions relate to joint objectives for the two Offices

<i>Outcome:</i>	<u>Objective:</u> To ensure our structure, systems and processes support the achievement of our strategy	
	Action	Timeframe

An Office that is fit for purpose to deliver services, fairly, efficiently and effectively to our customers	Undertake an external review of the organisation's structure and processes to enable full delivery of our strategic and operational objectives, including implementation of the Ombudsman Amendment Bill. This review will be done in tandem with an internal review of the business and communications possibilities of enhanced web and e-government initiatives.	Q3 2010
	Develop and implement a uniform section business planning process in a consultative manner resulting in documented measurable outputs and clarity around each individuals role in the achievement of the plan	Sign off of plan for Q4 2010 and each year thereafter

Outcome: An Office that is fit for purpose to deliver services, fairly, efficiently and effectively to our customers	<u>Objective:</u> Optimise the use of our human and financial resources to ensure the cost effective delivery of our strategy	
	Action	Timeframe
	Proactively manage and recognise the performance and contribution of staff in the delivery of the office's objectives	Ongoing
	Develop new and improve existing financial metrics that measure the ongoing efficiency of the organisation	Q2 2011
	Identify and deliver opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery and internal processes through IT	Ongoing

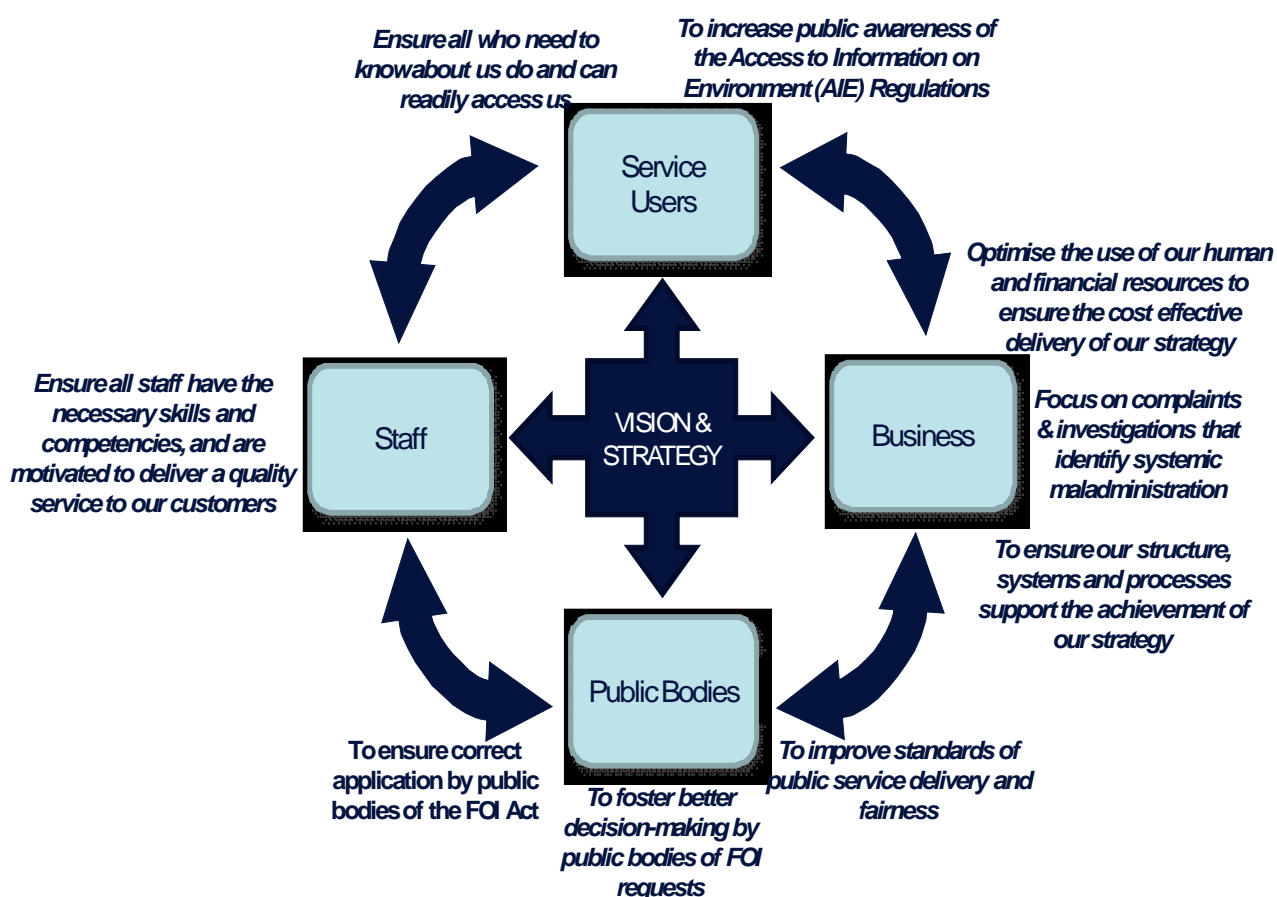
Outcome: An Office that is fit for purpose to deliver services, fairly, efficiently and effectively to	<u>Objective:</u> Ensure all staff have the necessary skills and competencies, and are motivated to deliver a quality service to our customers	
	Action	Timeframe
	Undertake a Training Needs Analysis to identify particular skill and competencies requirements to implement our strategy	Q4 2010
	Review the operations of the MAC to improve management and leadership within the organisation	Q3 2010

and effectively to our customers	Increase staff collaboration and engagement through consultative processes, such as Section meetings (pre-MAC), case conferences	Q2 2010
	Develop a mechanism to: (a) establish quality service delivery and output standards; (b) monitor on an ongoing basis; (c) continually refine standards	Q3 2011
	Refine customer service surveys to ensure they improve customer feedback data resulting in improved customer service	Ongoing post Q1 2011
	Examine internal and external opportunities to fill skill requirements	Q4 2010
Outcome: An Office that is fit for purpose to deliver services, fairly, efficiently and effectively to our customers	<u>Objective:</u> Ensure all who need to know about us do and can readily access us	
	Action	Timeframe
	Measure general awareness and functions of the office amongst all sectors of society	Q1 2011
	Develop and implement a strategy to increase complaint numbers generally with particular emphasis on the areas of health and social care	Q3 2010
	Devise and implement higher profile regional visits to raise awareness of the relevance and importance of the Ombudsman and the Office amongst the public and local public services	Q3 2010
	Monitor all means of external engagement (e.g. Regional visits, support campaign etc.) to assess their effectiveness and impact	Ongoing
	Identify and begin to roll out new ways for the public to access and interact with the office e.g. Technology/New Media, physical access, etc., and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Office's websites in terms of service and business objectives.	Q2 2011

Key Performance Indicators

Introduction

This section of the Strategy outlines the **Key** Performance Indicators (KPIs) that have been developed. They will play a key role in monitoring the achievement of our outcomes and strategic objectives over the period 2010–2012. This diagram shows how the KPIs are inter-linked between service delivery and internal resource development and utilisation.



Service Users

Under this heading we have identified a number of key targets or indicators to help us monitor how efficient and/or effective our services are considered to be through the eyes of our customers or clients. In particular, we have identified the need to ensure greater levels of public awareness and understanding about what the Office of the Ombudsman and the OIC can and cannot do in order to utilise our resources appropriately.

Service Users

- Raise awareness of the role and function of the Office by 50% over the period
- Ensure 75% of enquiries are relevant to the Office
- Reduce the number of invalid complaints by 10%
- Achieve an overall organisational customer satisfaction rating of 75%

Business

Given the likelihood of resource constraints in the coming years, it is incumbent upon us to ensure we are as efficient and productive as we can be. In order to facilitate appropriate levels of monitoring and support, we have identified a series of targets across the three different levels within both Offices i.e. Office-wide, Section-based, and at Individual levels.

A number of initiatives and activities will drive the delivery of these targets including closer monitoring and management of resource (human and financial) utilisation; a push to increase the number of complaints handled; a reduction in the average turnaround time for complaints; and a placing of greater emphasis on ensuring PMDS is implemented appropriately.

Business

Office Level

- Achieve an average complaint turnaround time
 - 55% within three months of receipt (Ombudsman)
 - 33% within four months of receipt (OIC)
- Financial Metrics
 - Ensure the office expenditure does not exceed REV allocation
 - Reduce procurement supplier prices by 5% on average
 - Increase efficiencies and cost savings through greater use of IT (target to be defined)

Section Level

- Deliver all sectional targets within the set resource allocation
- Achieve a 10% overall increase in complaints received by 2012 (to include an increase of 60%-100% in the area of health and social care)
- Achieve a 10% increase in complaints completed by 2012
- Achieve a 10% increase in applications for review completed (OIC) by 2012

Individual Level

- Derived from Section target and agreed individually as part of PMDS process

5.4 Public Bodies

Under this heading we have identified the key metrics we need to measure to ensure our engagement and involvement with public bodies generate result in actual improvement in standards of public administration and decision-making.

We recognise to achieve this we must not only proactively monitor their activity through targeted investigations and studies, but also equally importantly we must support them more to improve their capability to consistently deliver fair and transparent decisions to all of their respective service users.

Public Bodies

- Complete two systemic issue investigations per annum
- Complete 15 investigations of public bodies per annum
- Where required, provide one targeted support campaign per annum to a poorly performing public body
- Monitor the quality of decisions by public bodies (Section 36 investigation) - one per annum (OIC)
- OIC to provide one commentary per annum
- Increase the number of AIE requests and appeals to public bodies and to the OCEI by 10% per annum
- By end 2010 develop strategy to assimilate fully all new public bodies designated under remit by the Ombudsman Bill; some additional work will be required with regard to particular bodies.

5.5 Staff

Under this heading we identify the key metrics we need to measure to ensure our staff are properly managed and supported to deliver on the values and strategic objectives of the organisation.

To achieve this it is of critical importance to us that we ensure our workplace is one that staff feel motivated and enjoy working in. Given the increasing demands on the Office we recognise the challenges this presents. However, through the identification, supply and continual evaluation of appropriate training and development interventions together with positive leadership and management engagement with staff we are confident this can be achieved.

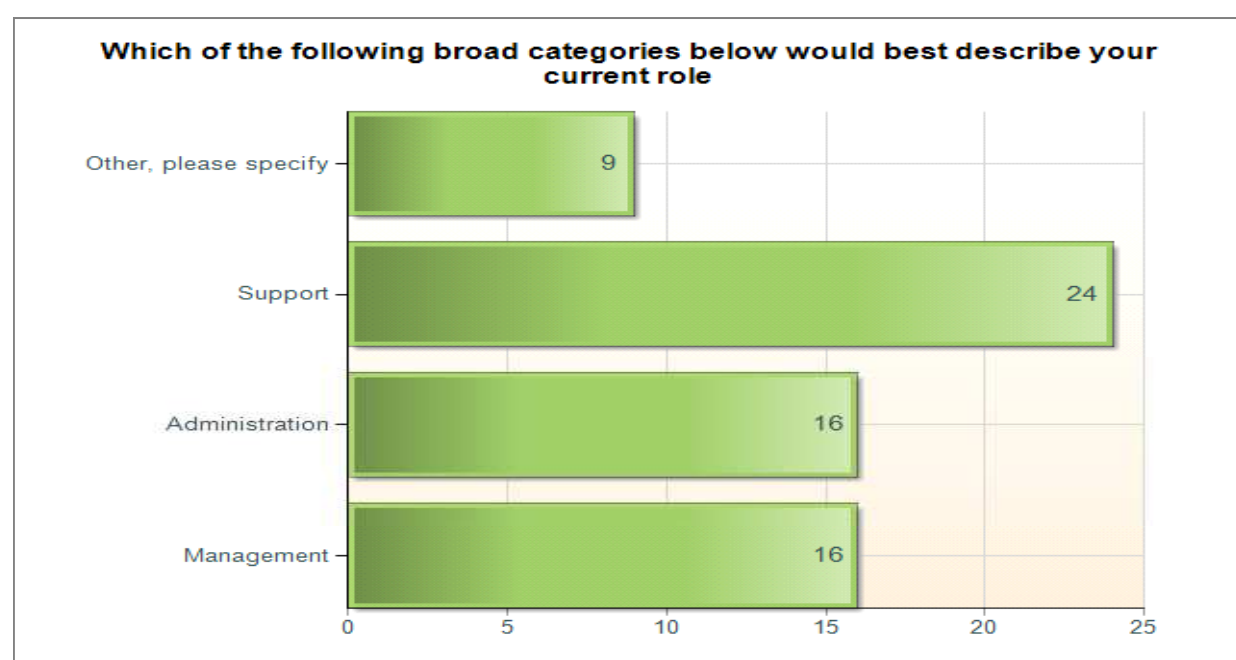
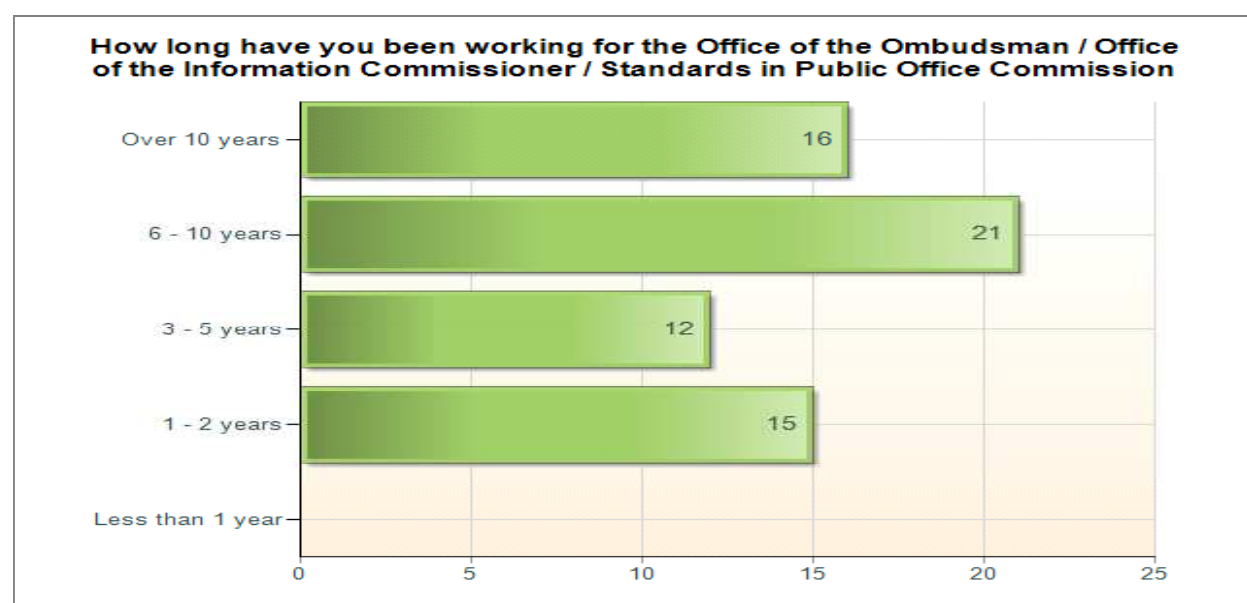
Staff

- 100% of staff understand and actively demonstrate the values and ethos of the organisation
- Achieve a staff satisfaction rating of 75% by 2012
- Allocate 4% of payroll budget per annum to the training and development of staff
- Ensure 66% of approved training requests are delivered within six months of sign-off
- All appropriate training initiatives achieve Level 3 on the Kirkpatrick Evaluation scale
- Monitor and review absenteeism levels to ensure that, over time, they remain below the civil service norm of 4%
- Develop a mechanism to achieve consistency of application of PMDS ratings across the office

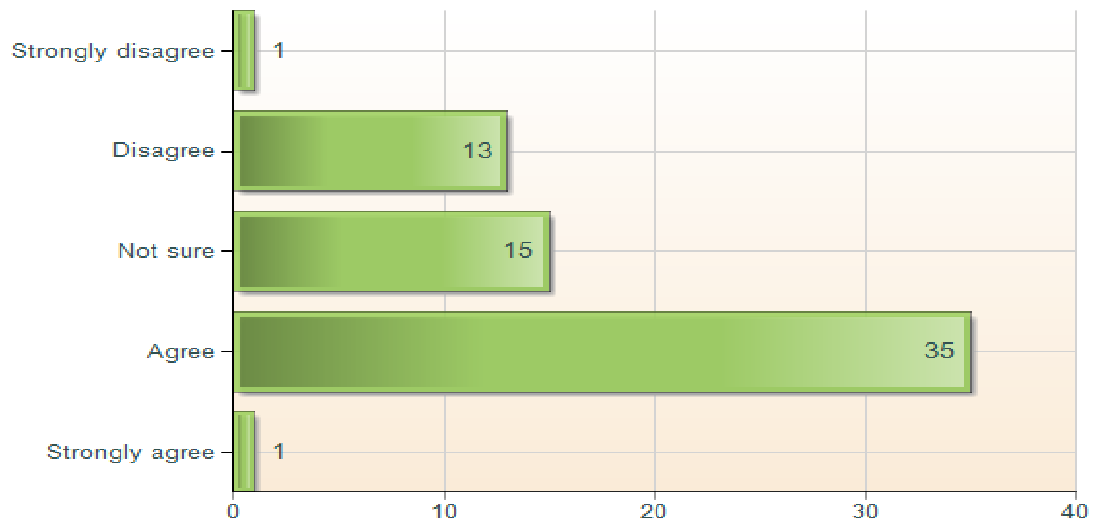
Appendix 1

Consultation Feedback

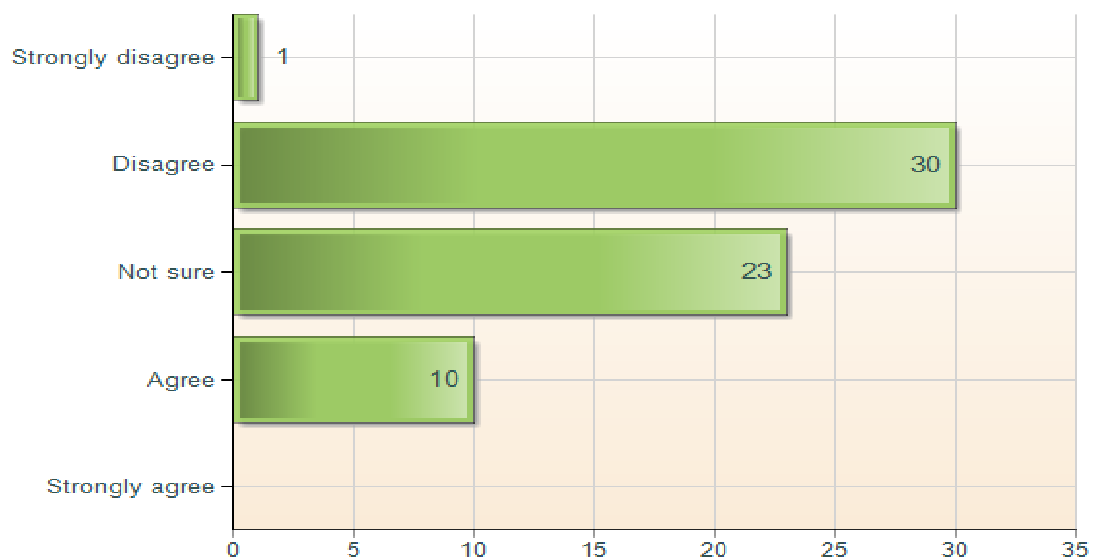
The output from the 65 completed questionnaires is provided below:

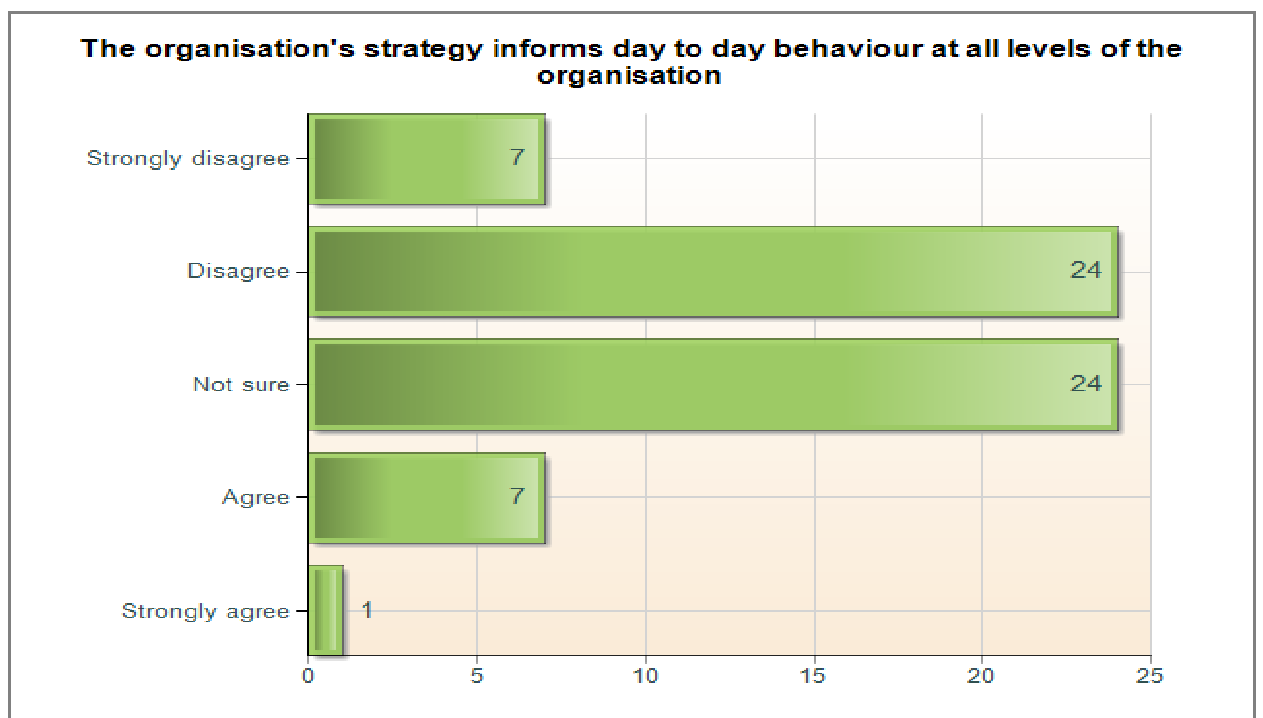


Do you think the current mission statement "confirm our position as the premier organisation for raising standards of public administration in Ireland" reflects an inspiring view of the future and is demanding but achievable

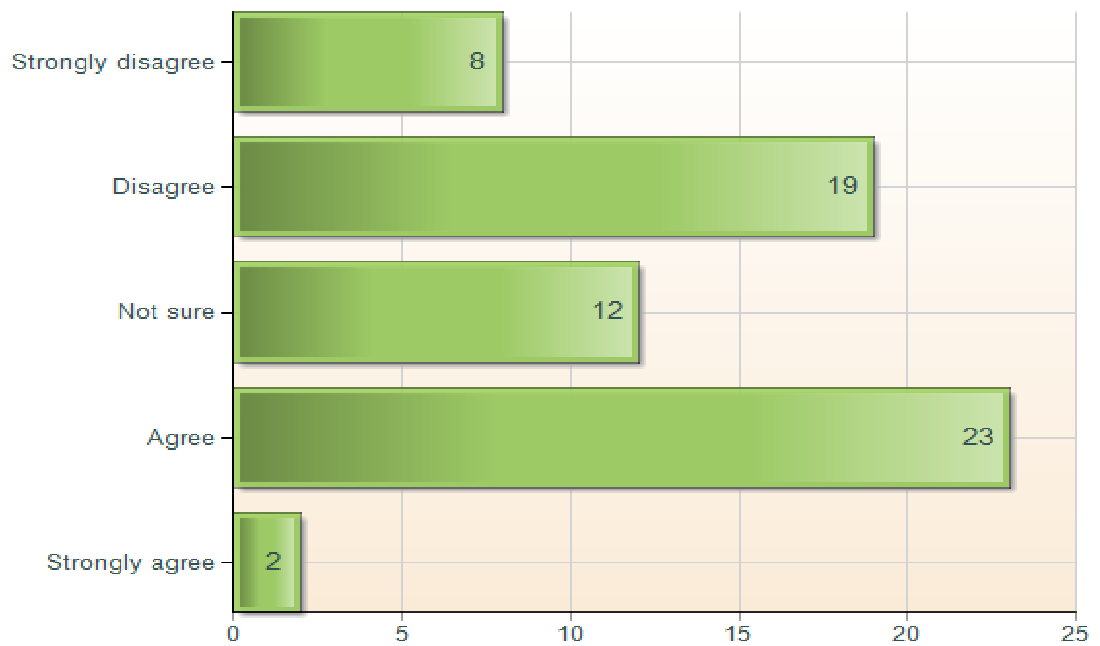


The current mission statement is reflected in clear, goals/objectives backed up by concrete measures of success and well defined time frames for attaining goals

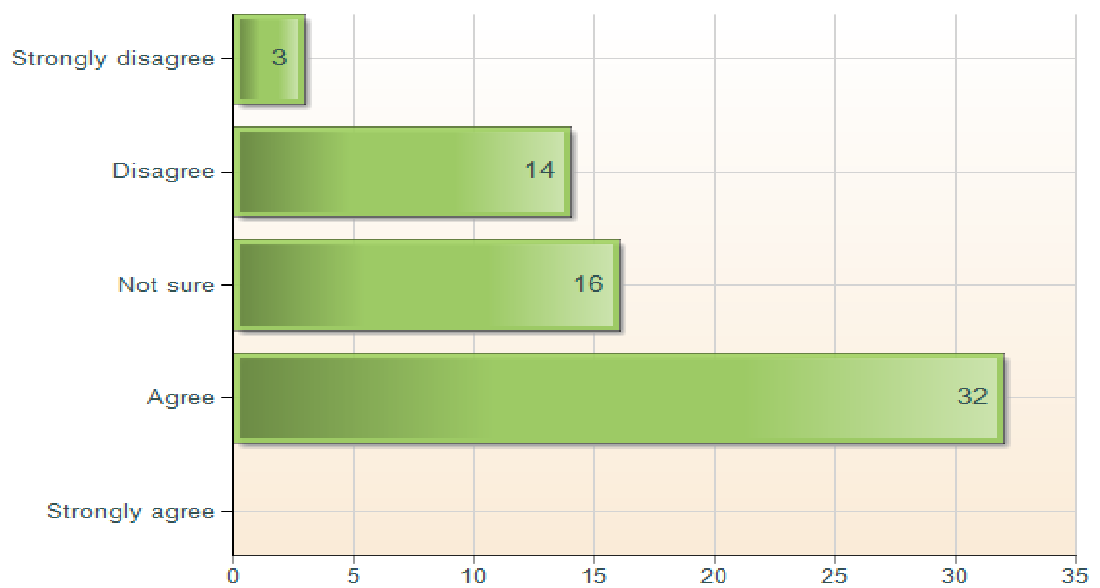


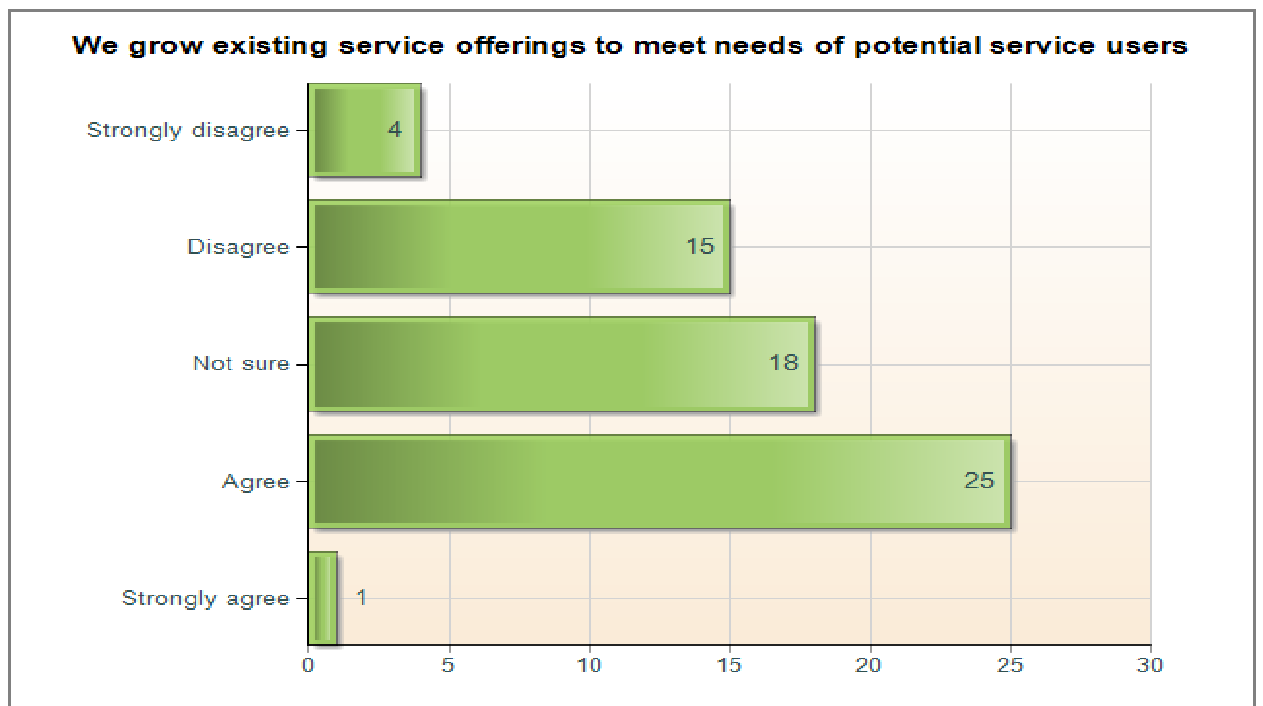
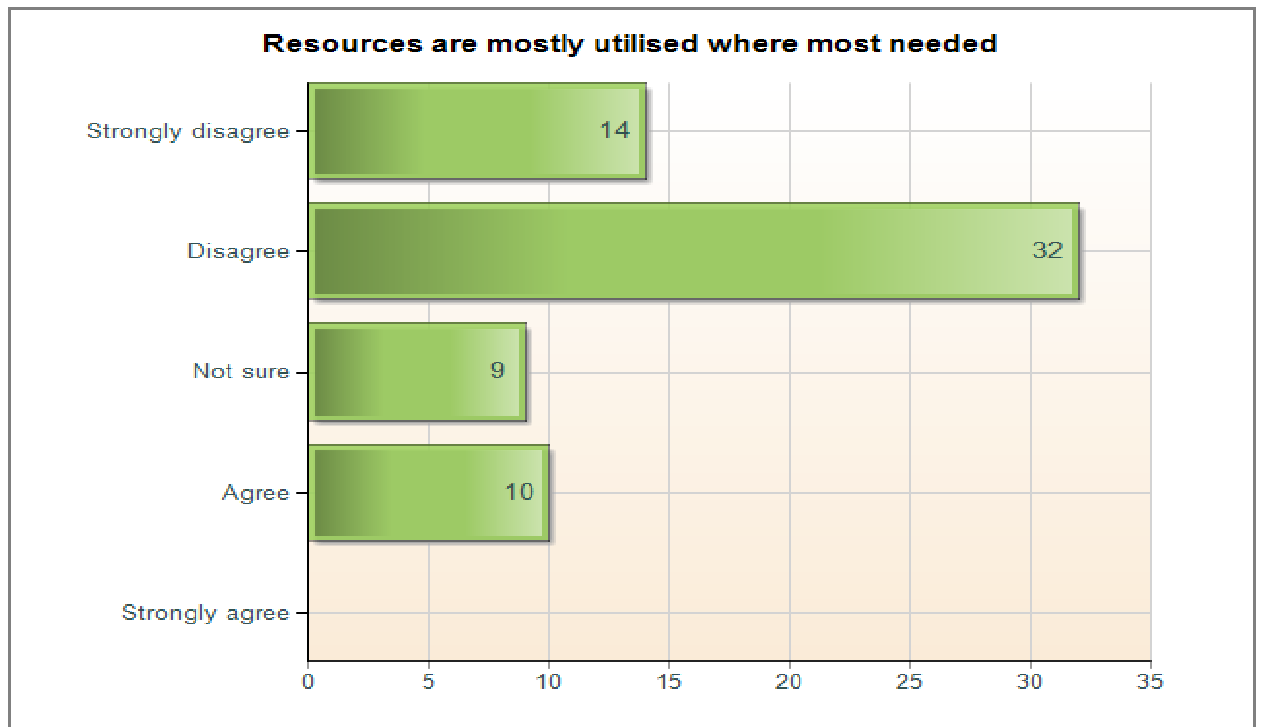


Quantified, genuinely demanding performance targets exist in all areas

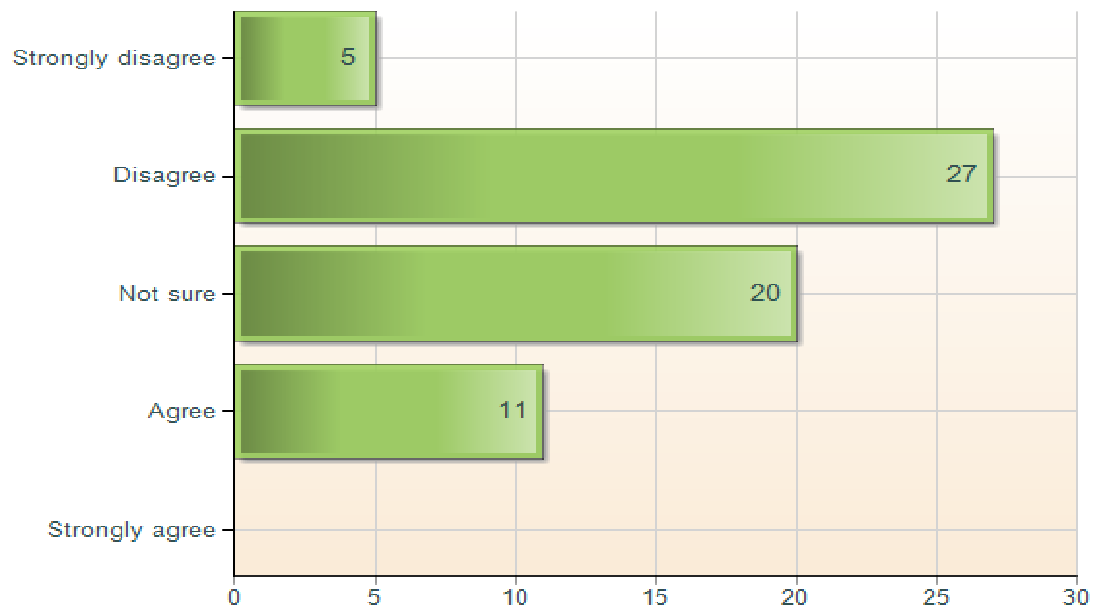


Regular review of performance targets takes place individually and collectively

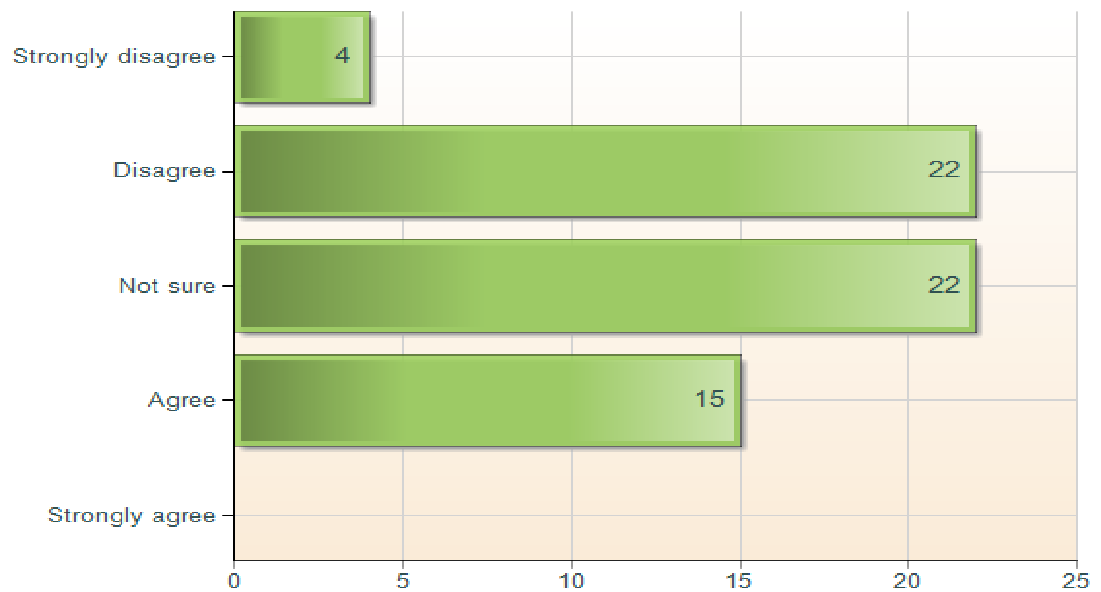




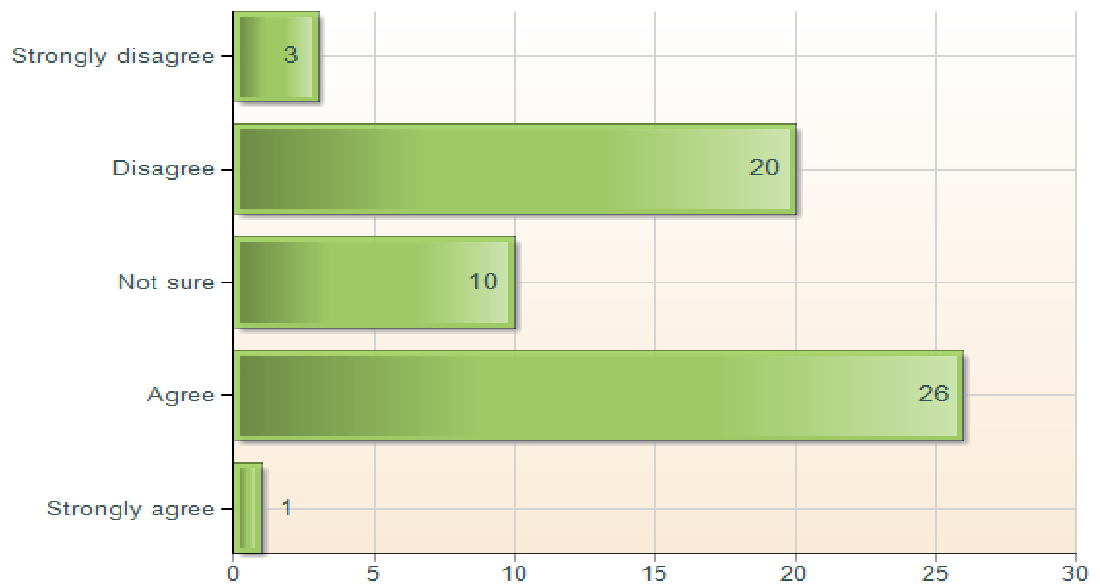
A well developed, comprehensive, integrated system is used for measuring the organisation's performance and progress on a continual basis



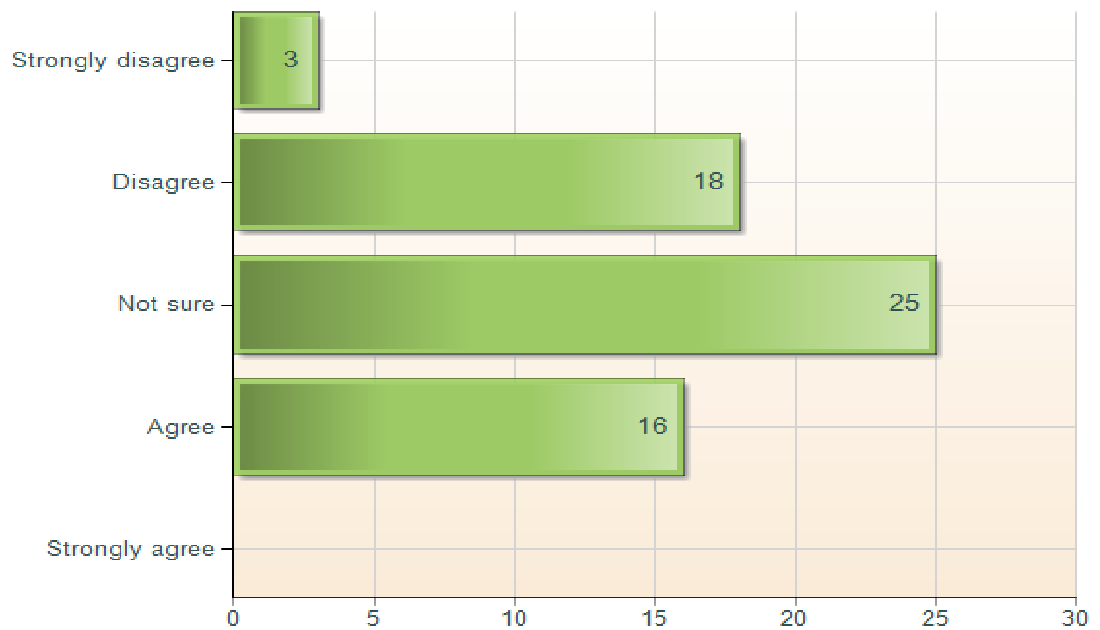
Clear, measurable and meaningful key performance indicators exist at organisational level

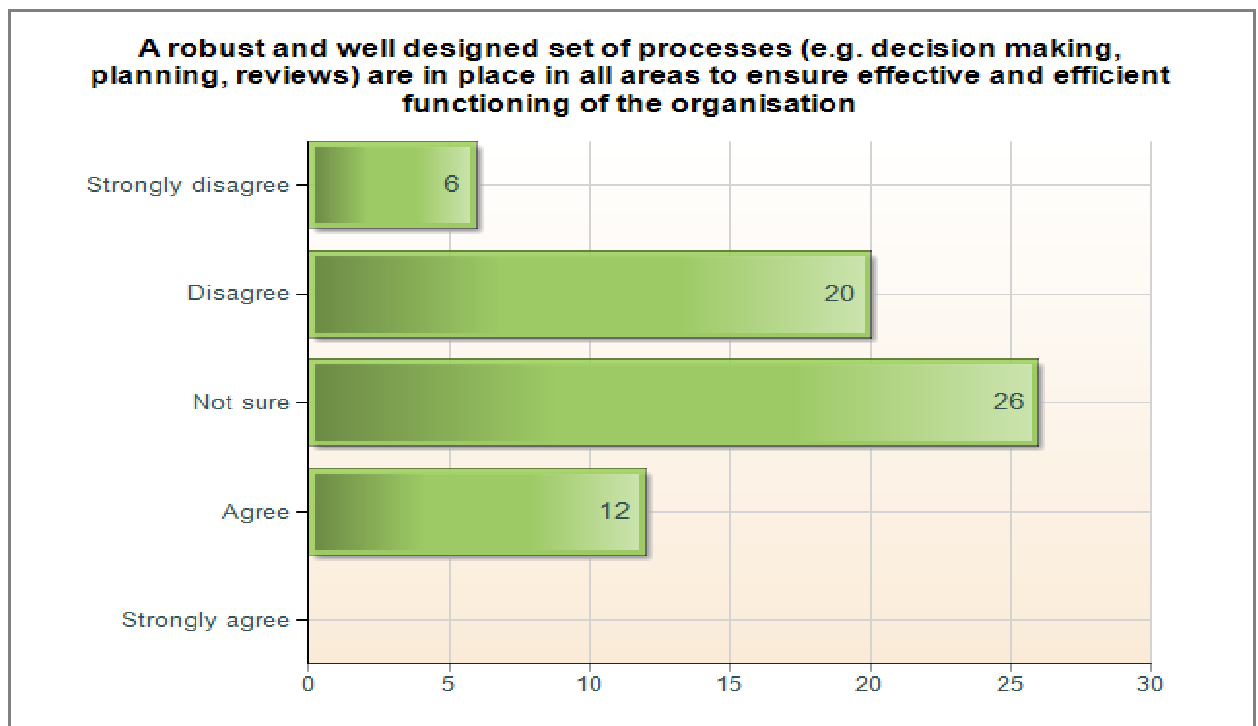
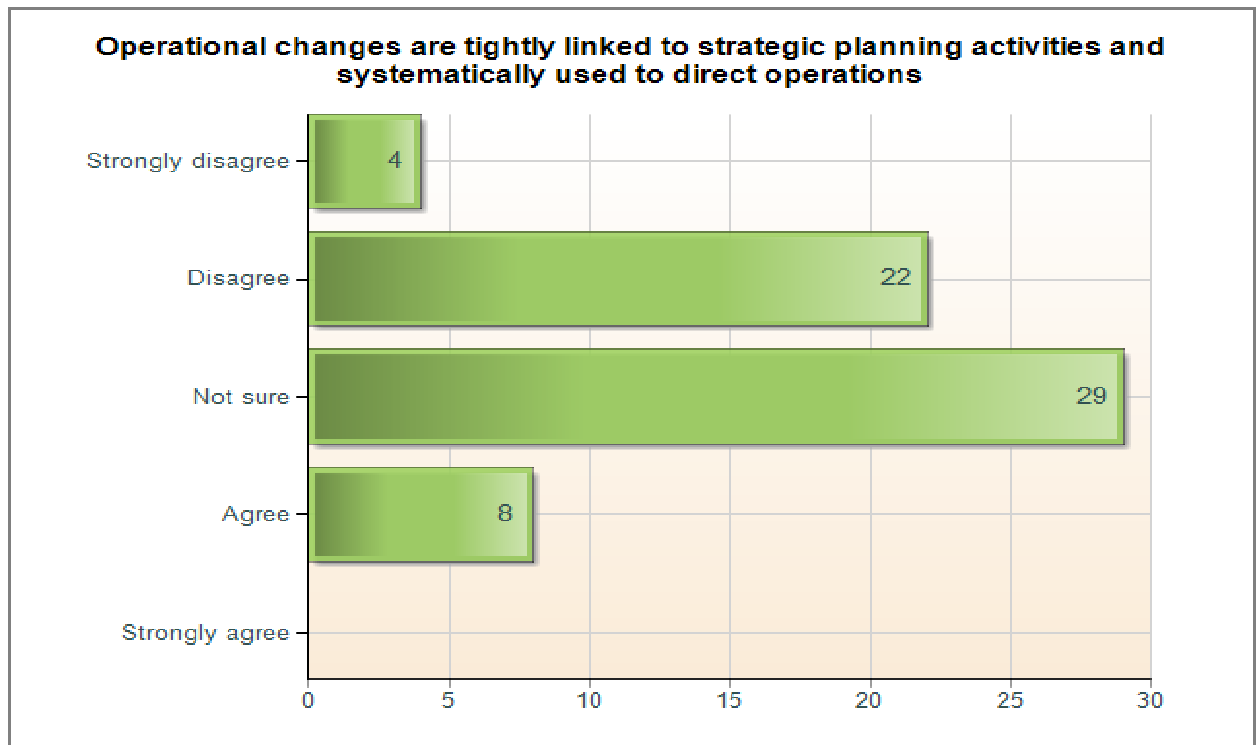


Clear, measurable and meaningful key performance indicators exist at individual level

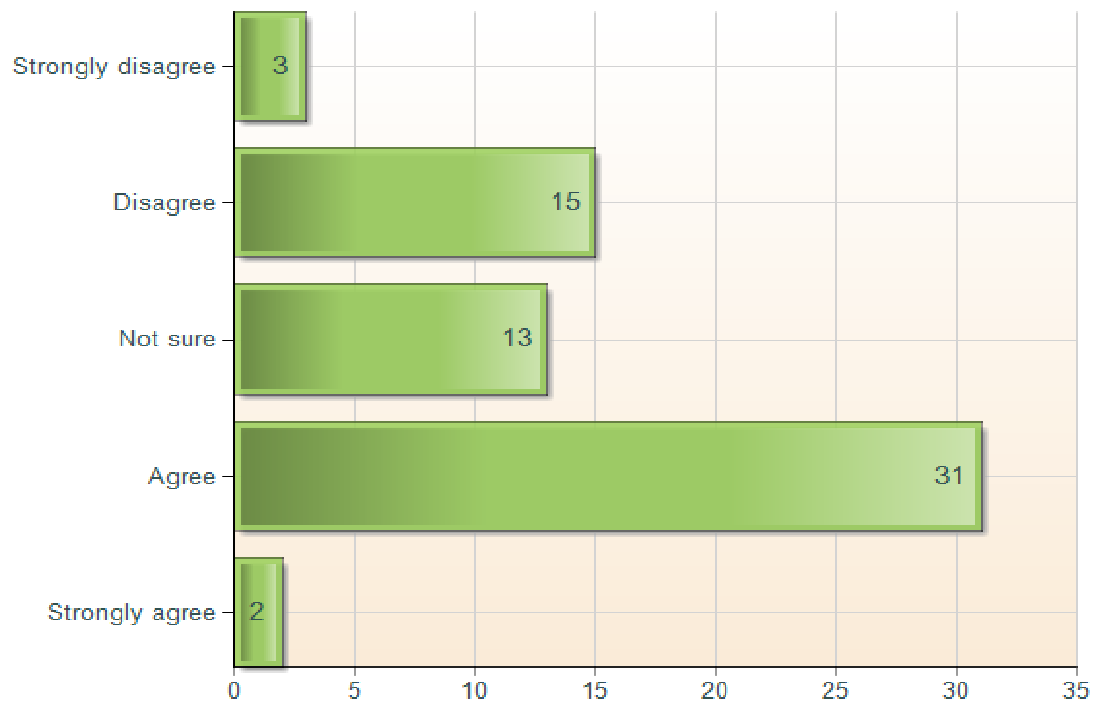


These indicators are clearly linked to strategic and business planning

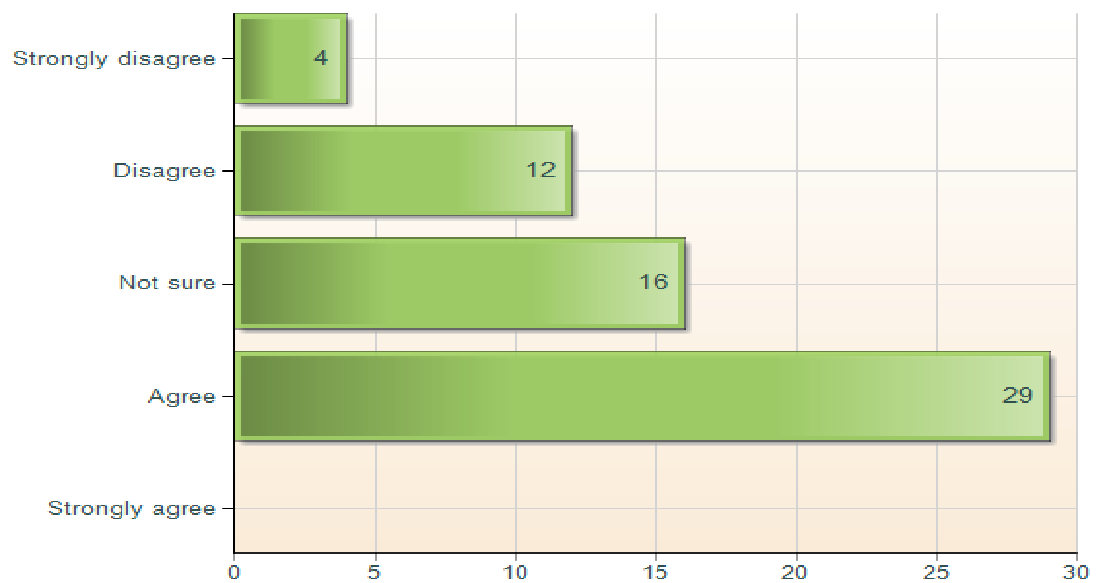




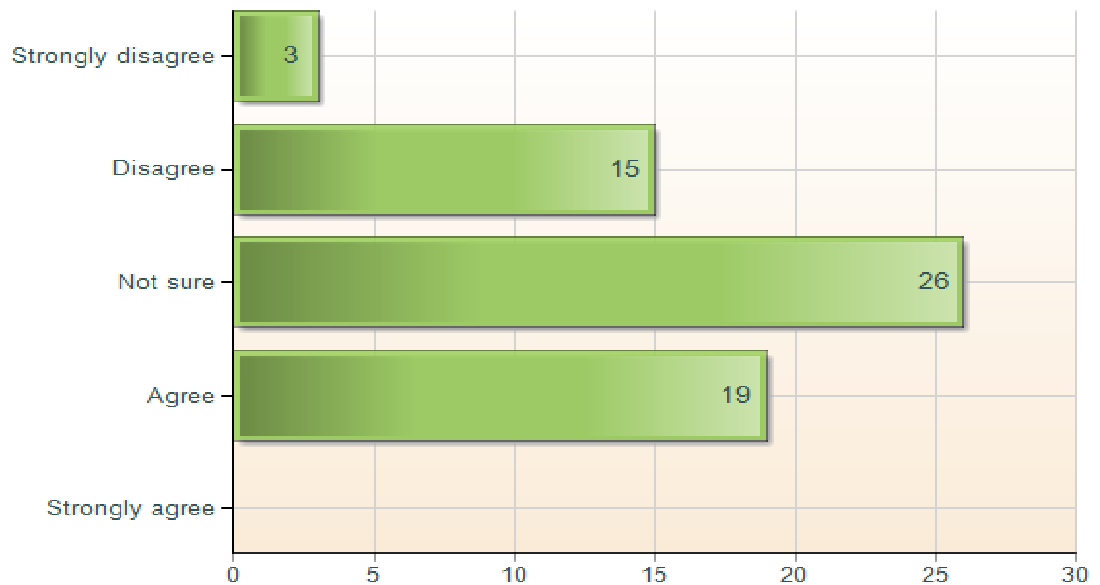
Day to day operational processes are widely known, documented and used



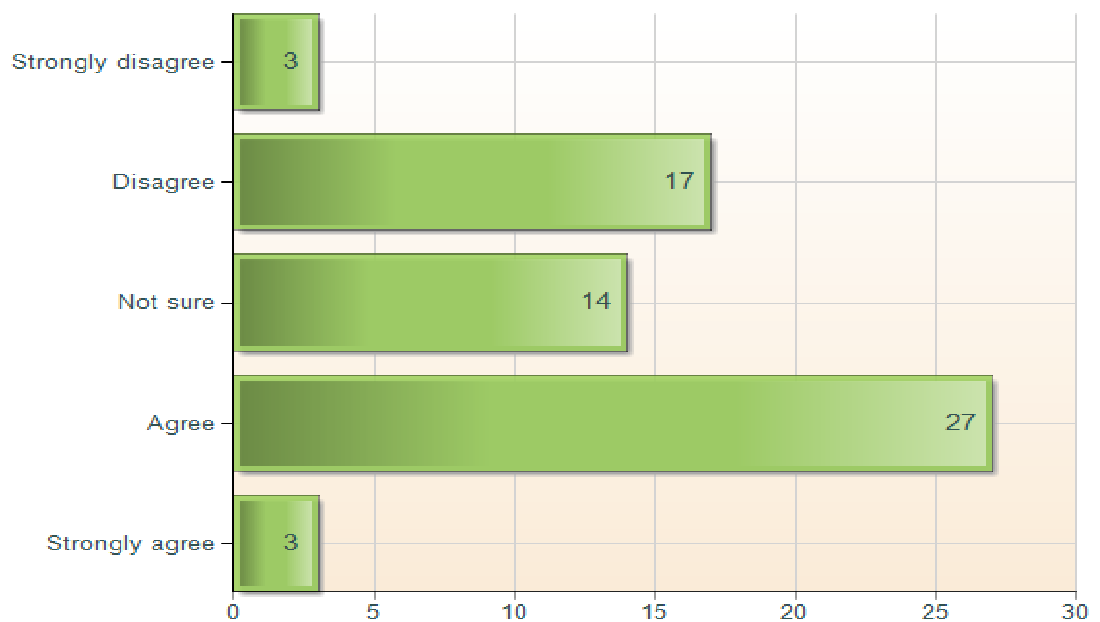
Regular planning is complemented by ad hoc planning when needed



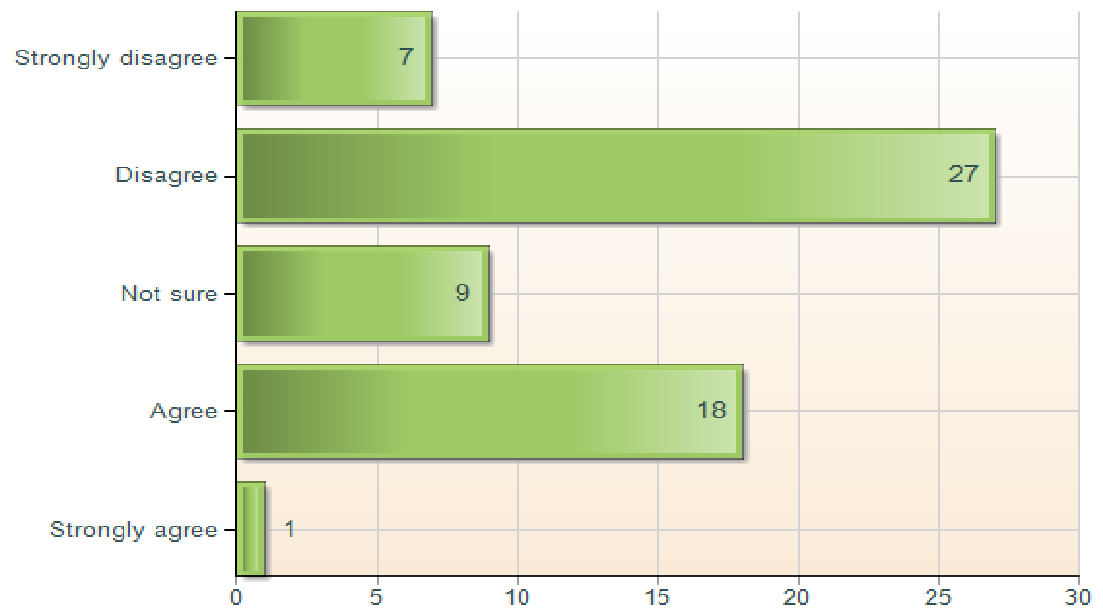
There are clear, formal lines and systems for decision making that involve as broad a participation as practical and appropriate along with dissemination / interpretation of decisions



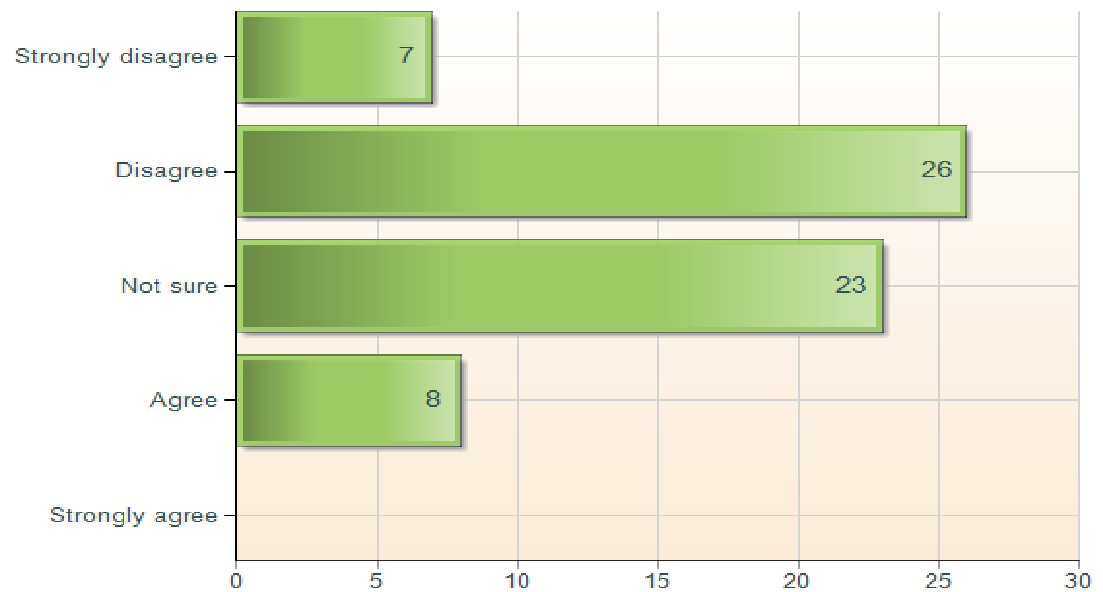
Management are actively interested in general staff development



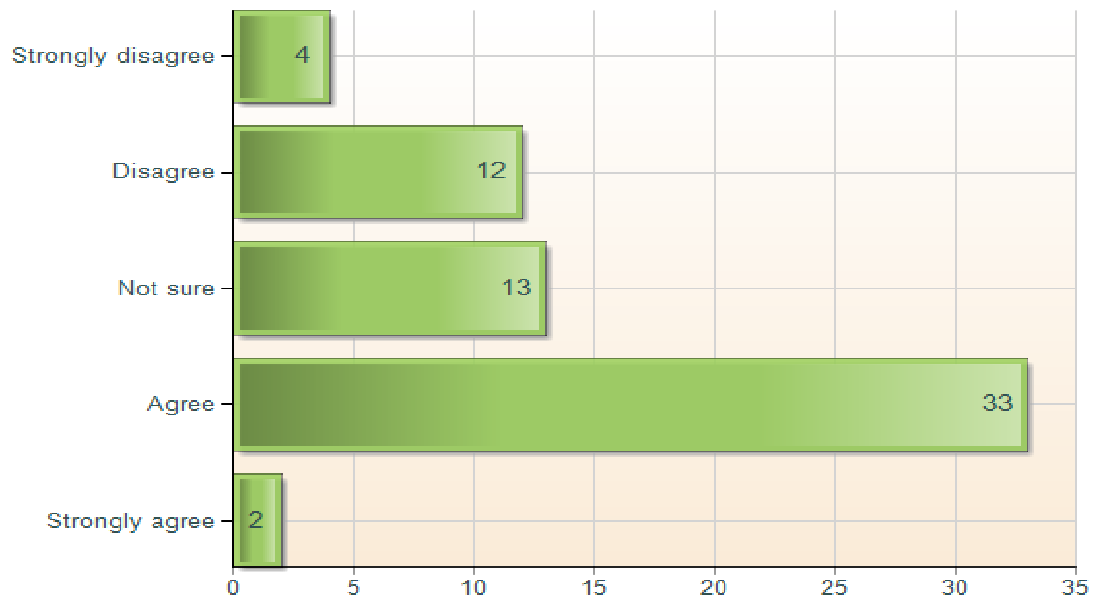
There are well designed, user friendly, comprehensive systems to capture, document and disseminate knowledge internally in all relevant areas



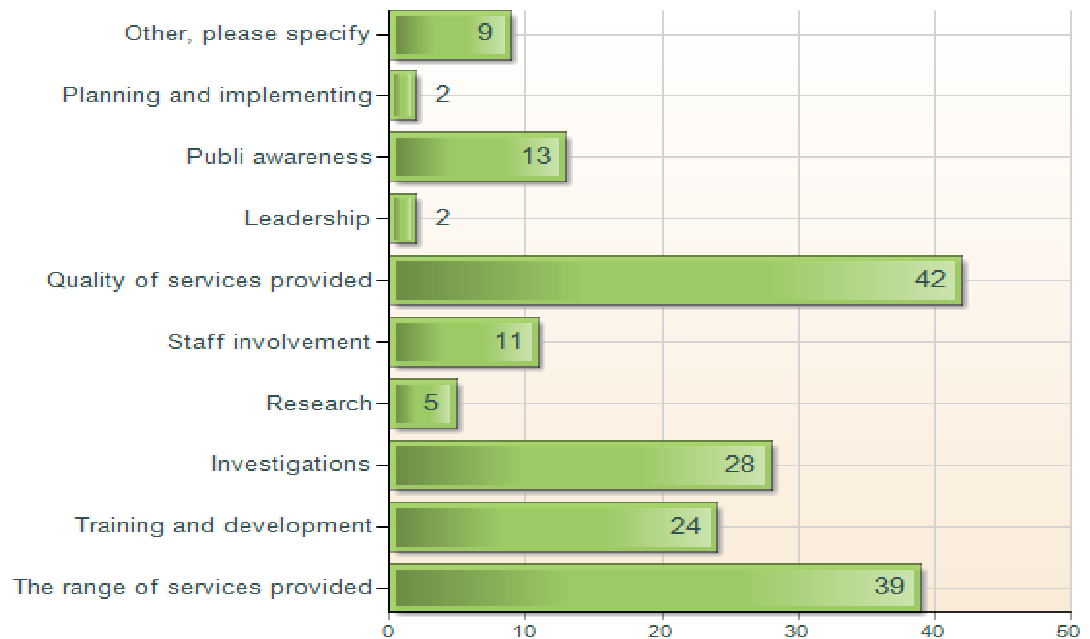
All staff are aware of knowledge management systems, knowledgeable in their use, and make frequent use of them



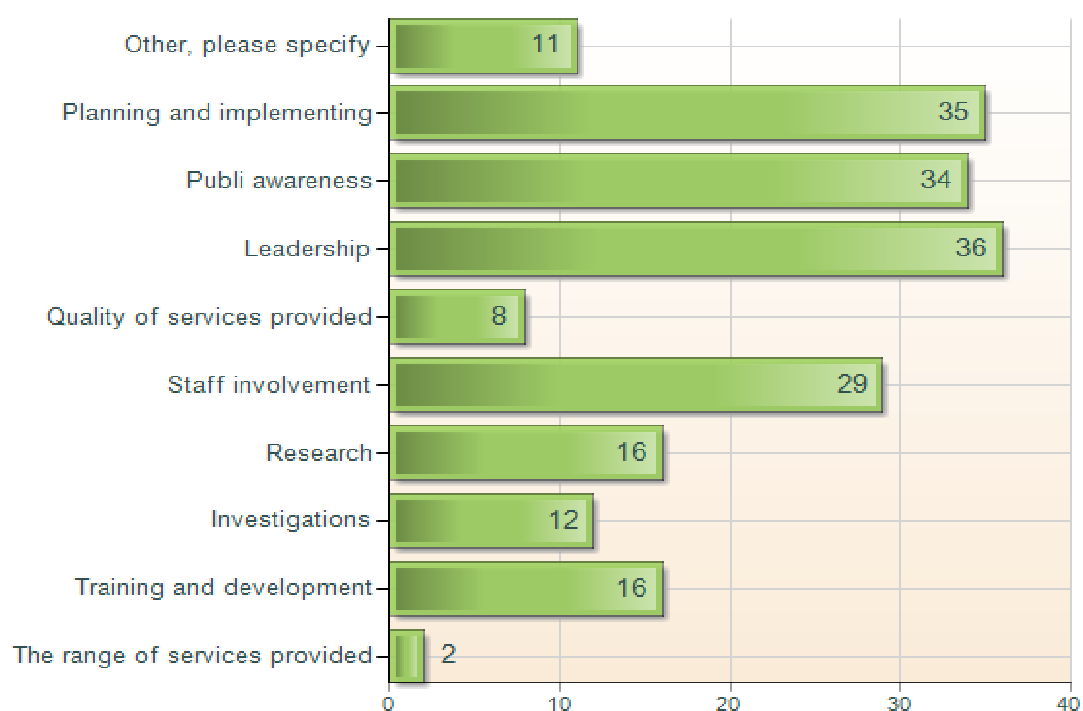
A common set of beliefs and values exist and are widely shared within the organisation



What do you think the Office does particularly well (select 3)



What do you think the Office needs to particularly improve (select 3)



In your opinion, are the current range of services provided by the Office appropriate to public n ...

