

Parks and open spaces: Towards An Excellent Service

8. Guidance on TAES Validation

Supported by:



1 TAES Validation: the concept

1.1 Validation is an optional, but recommended, part of TAES, for parks and open spaces organisations, provided through the IDeA. A number of local authorities are choosing validation of all cultural services, which reduces the cost and promotes shared learning. A peer challenge process is currently being piloted as another option.

1.2 Validation is:

Review of the self-assessment and improvement planning process, including a sample assessment of the organisation against the TAES Criteria, through interviewing staff, focus groups and review of documentary evidence. This is used to improve the self-assessment and improvement plan and the future self-assessment and improvement planning process.

1.3 It is not:

- consultancy
- value judgement
- staff performance review
- criticism
- negative
- because 'we do it better'
- an audit or inspection
- trophy-hunting
- paper-chasing

and definitely not an external certification scheme.

1.4 As a result of the validation, the organisation adjusts the identified strengths, areas for improvement, judgements and improvement plan without losing ownership (it is still their work). The organisation gains insight into the effectiveness of its self-assessment and improvement planning process and the continuous improvement values and habits held by the team. The validation can also develop recognition and confidence from internal or external partners that self-assessment and improvement planning has been carried out in a comprehensive way, with an adequate degree of objectivity and transparency, and therefore that the organisation will improve.

- 1.5 The validator is a part of the self-assessment and improvement planning team, albeit a challenging one. The goal of the validator is to help complete an accurate self-assessment and value-adding improvement plan and to improve the future self-assessment and improvement planning process. This will lead to improvements in the way the organisation works and therefore to improved results for the community and for the organisation's people.

2 TAES Validation process

- 2.1 The TAES validators for local authorities are trained and approved by the IDeA. The validator is supported by a trained officer peer from a local authority in the region, to give an understanding and insight to local issues.

- 2.2 The TAES validation is divided into four stages:

- a. **Pre-assessment** – the validator reviews and challenges your planning and preparation process, particularly the agreed scope.
- b. **Post-assessment** – the validator reviews your self-assessment process, including giving a view on the accuracy of judgements in relation to key criteria. This is carried out through face-to-face discussions and focus groups involving staff and partners and a sample review of documentary evidence.
- c. **Improvement planning** – the validator reviews and challenges your improvement planning process and your improvement plan to ensure that the plan will drive and guide the necessary changes in the way the organisation operates.
- d. **Reporting** – the validator provides feedback at each stage of the process, giving you the opportunity to improve the planning, self-assessment or improvement plan and to improve the future process. At the end of the process, the validator determines whether the self-assessment and improvement planning meet the validation criteria (bearing in mind improvement action taken by the organisation as a result of the feedback at each stage) and produces the final report.

3 In summary

Validation will add value to the organisation's self-assessment and improvement planning. It achieves:

- a. an accurate self-assessment and a value-adding improvement plan**
- b. improved future TAES planning, self-assessment and improvement planning process**
- c. enhanced values and habits of continuous improvement**
- d. recognition that self-assessment and improvement planning has been carried out in a comprehensive way, with an adequate degree of objectivity and transparency**
- e. enhanced understanding of the nature of the organisation**