

# Implementing the IFCE as a “holistic” means for achieving excellence

A Case Study of the early stages of implementing the  
IFCE in the Supreme Court of Victoria

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# 1 Background

The Court began considering the International Framework for Court Excellence (IFCE) in late 2008. The Council of Judges asked the Governance Working Group to advise them on the use of the IFCE within the Court. The Group gathered information regarding the approaches in other jurisdictions and discussed the most workable approach for the Court. The Chief Justice attended the Asia Pacific Courts Conference in Singapore in October 2010 which took as its theme promoting awareness of the IFCE and returned with further information about approaches adopted around the world.

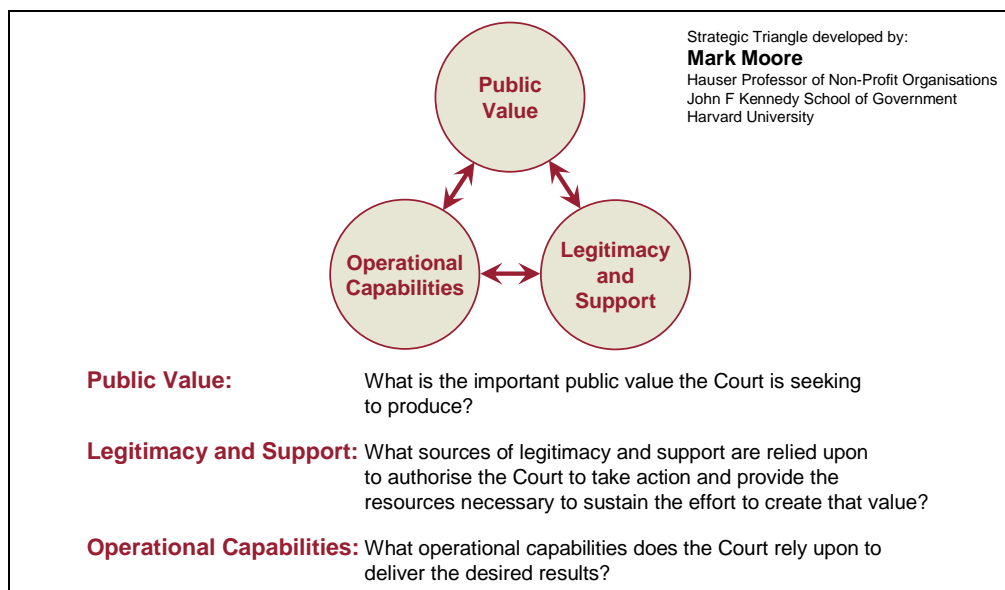
In February 2011 the Court employed a senior officer, with more than 15 years experience in implementing excellence frameworks, whose time is dedicated full time to further the Court's implementation of the IFCE. In its February 2012 meeting, and following successful use of the IFCE over 12 months, the Council of Judges endorsed the continued application of the IFCE, including routine organisational self-assessments.

It is important to emphasise that implementation of the IFCE within the Court is judiciary led. The judicial Governance Working Group has primary responsibility for guiding implementation of the IFCE. At the same time, the judicial Executive Committee routinely becomes involved due to the court-wide nature of many initiatives. Overall, judicial involvement means that one in four of the Court's judges and associate judges are actively participating in implementation of the IFCE.

## 1.1 Why Court Excellence

When introducing a new concept such as the IFCE, it can be difficult for people to understand its relevance to their organisation and where it fits within their operating environment. Recognising this dilemma, the Court used the widely known "Mark Moore Strategic Triangle" to emphasise that all government organisations, including courts, must be diligently focused on creating important public value. In particular, from a court excellence perspective, the aspect of the Strategic Triangle relating to operational capabilities becomes extremely relevant, and that is where the IFCE comes into play.

**Figure 1 - Creating "Important" Public Value**

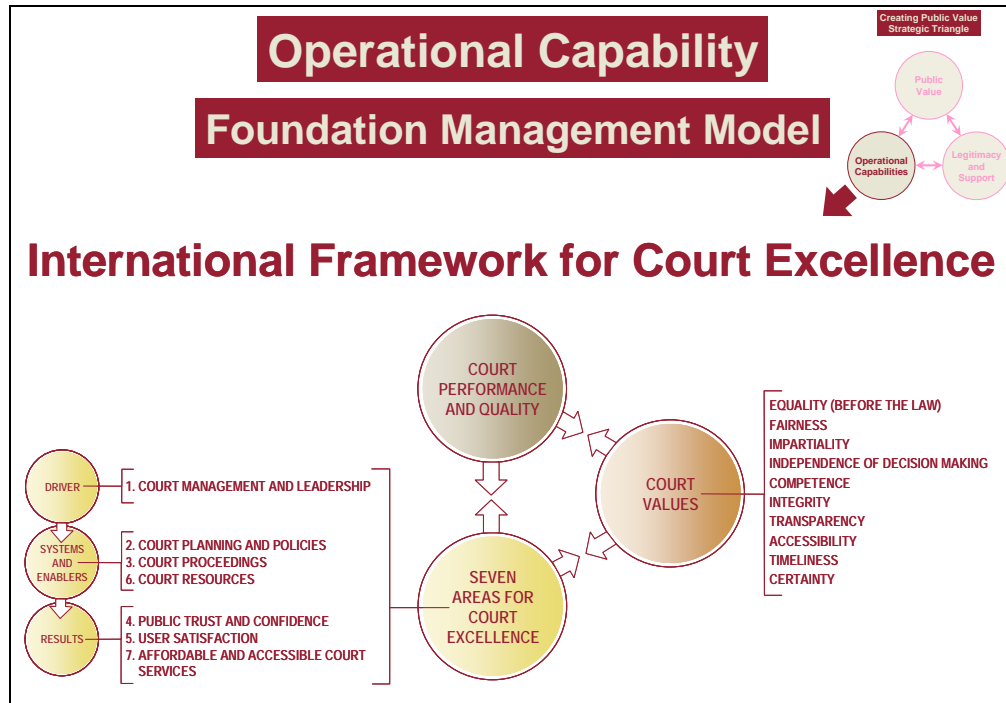


## 1.2 The Court’s Foundation Management Model

Recognising that delivering important public value is an essential outcome, the Court asserts that its operational capabilities must be second to none. Therefore, with the view to continuously improving the public value it delivers, the Court applies the IFCE as its foundation management model.

The IFCE, as shown in Figure 2, guides the Court towards achievement of its goals by offering management styles and standards that are fundamental to the delivery of a court of excellence and the creation of important public value.

**Figure 2 - IFCE - A Foundation Management Model**



The term “foundation” management model is quite significant for the Court because it establishes the IFCE as the main, or primary, management model that underpins all other management approaches within the Court. It confirms that any specific models or frameworks, for example in relation to governance or risk management or human resources, are seen as contributing to implementation of the IFCE.

In this way, the IFCE is recognised as simply “the way we do things around here”.

The Court also found it helpful to clarify at a very early stage the relationship between the IFCE and its judicial decision-making processes. The Court is very clear on this matter and has emphasised from the beginning that the IFCE does not have any bearing upon judicial decision-making processes associated with any case before the Court, nor will it impact upon the Court’s fundamental obligation to uphold the rule of law within Victoria. The Court also emphasises that the IFCE does have a bearing upon every administrative operational process in the Court that supports the judicial decision-making processes.

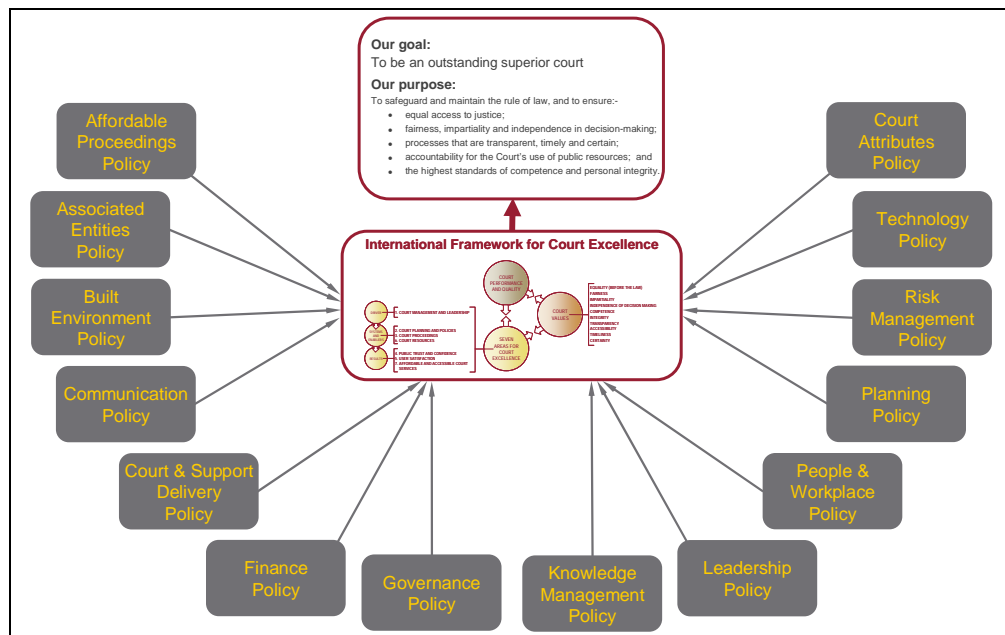
## 2 The Court's Policy Framework

The next dilemma faced by the Court in its early stages of implementing the IFCE was how to interpret the intent of the seven areas of excellence so they could be applied to its administrative operations. The solution came about in the form of a Policy Framework, as shown in Figure 3.

The Court believes that the 14 policies listed in Figure 3 cover all of the primary management issues that should be in place and functional in a high performing court. Most of the 14 policies represent fundamental management topics that can be researched or benchmarked in order to find a suitable, high quality approach. At the same time, the collective 14 policies, if implemented comprehensively, will address the intent of the IFCE.

This is an approach that has suited the culture of the Supreme Court of Victoria and melded well into existing custom and practice. While the Court puts this approach forward as an effective way of implementing the IFCE, it may not suit other courts. One of the challenges of implementing the IFCE is to design an approach that is meaningful to the organisation.

**Figure 3 - Policy Framework**



It should also be emphasised that the Court is still in the process of implementing the suite of policies and not all policies are yet fully operational. One thing the Court has learnt is that policy development, while important, is not usually urgent and scarce resources within the Court are often diverted to the urgency of day-to-day operational matters, thereby delaying work on new or improved policies.

The following sections provide an overview of the policies the Court is implementing and that it believes are having a profound impact on the quality of its operations, and on the effectiveness of its implementation of the IFCE.

## 2.1 Leadership Policy

Area 1 of the IFCE is dedicated to the topic of Court Management and Leadership. It emphasises that inspirational leadership is crucial for court success and excellence. It stresses that strong leadership is imperative in many aspects of court operations. Therefore, the Court has determined that a leadership policy is required to adequately put forward the characteristics of good organisational leadership and to describe how to apply them within the Court. To a very great extent, the success of the Court's performance objectives is dependent upon the quality of leadership exhibited within the Court.

To realise its longer-term goal of being an outstanding superior court, the Court must demonstrate both inspirational leadership and effective management skills. As shown in Figure 4, it is worth noting that the fundamental difference between leadership and management is that leadership is the business of leading people, while management is the business of managing systems and processes. The Court recognises that people at all levels of the organisation have leadership obligations, commensurate with their levels of responsibility and that most roles call for a combination of leadership and management skills. At the same time, the Court also recognises that senior roles have a very high ratio of leadership to management, having empowered others to manage implementation of processes and strategies. Leadership predominantly involves the three objectives of creating a goal and a sense of urgency, communicating and motivating and inspiring.

**Figure 4 - The Need for Leadership**

**The need for leadership:**

**Management is the business of managing systems and processes**

**Leadership is the business of leading people**

**To meet its challenges the Court must  
engage its people in innovations and reforms,  
not just managing existing systems and processes**

**Success will be dependent upon  
the quality of leadership exhibited within the Court**

Of particular importance from a leadership perspective, the Council of Judges has created a goal for the Court by endorsing the visionary and aspirational statement, known as the 'Strategic Statement'. The statement, as shown in Figure 5, clearly defines the Court's longer-term goal to be an outstanding superior court. It then articulates the Court's purpose, describing how it will achieve its goal. Further, it sets out the attributes (referred to as values in the IFCE) the Court applies as it goes about its purpose, in the pursuit of its goal. As a further example of judicial leadership, it should be noted that the Strategic Statement was drafted by the President of the Court of Appeal and one other judge. Publication of the statement internally is designed to offer guidance to judges and staff alike regarding what the Court stands for, what it delivers and how it will conduct itself, and remind them of their contribution to that objective. Ultimately, it will become a point of reference whenever judges and staff think and speak about the work of the Court.

The Council of Judges also gave approval to publish the Strategic Statement, and other material associated with implementation of the IFCE, on the Court's website. This heralds the beginning of a new era for the Court where it will strive to keep interested entities more up-to-date about its environment. Targeted audiences for external publication are the Governor, Parliament, Government, other courts and tribunals, court users, the profession and the Victorian community. The purpose of external publication is to promote an understanding of what the Court stands for and that it aspires to a very high standard and expects to be held to it. In this regard the Court is also addressing, to some extent, the intention of Area 4 - Public Trust and Confidence of the IFCE.

A journey towards court excellence is also a journey towards the strengthening of culture that prevails within the Court. Therefore, the full version of the Strategic Statement not only lists the court attributes, it also details the associated characteristics of each attribute that will be exhibited by all at the Court and, as a result of that, to an improvement of court performance and quality.

**Figure 5 - Our Strategic Statement**

## Strategic Statement

**Our goal:**  
To be an outstanding superior court

**Our purpose:**  
To safeguard and maintain the rule of law, and to ensure:-

- equal access to justice;
- fairness, impartiality and independence in decision-making;
- processes that are transparent, timely and certain;
- accountability for the Court's use of public resources; and
- the highest standards of competence and personal integrity.

**Our attributes:**  
We aim to achieve our goal and purpose through the following attributes:-

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellence</li> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Independence of Decision Making and Competence</li> <li>• Timeliness and Efficiency</li> <li>• Innovation and Change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equality (before the law)</li> <li>• Fairness and Impartiality</li> <li>• Integrity and Transparency</li> <li>• Certainty and Clarity</li> <li>• Courtesy and Respect</li> </ul>
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As mentioned earlier, the IFCE indicates that “proactive management and inspiring leadership are crucial for court success and excellence”. Building on this, the Court's Leadership Policy stresses that the role of leaders in the Court extends beyond the development of a Strategic Statement and strategies for achieving that goal; they must also align all employees in the pursuit of that goal and motivate and inspire all employees to move in the right direction.

These two latter points can only be achieved when all leaders in the Court clearly understand the message that is to be delivered, are committed to the achievement of the goal and strategies articulated in the message and are delivering that message consistently at every opportunity. Therefore, the policy includes a Leadership Message to provide Court leaders with a tool that will assist them in getting genuine buy-in from staff by presenting a pragmatic and compelling reason for being part of the Court's future.

The Leadership Message is outlined in Figure 6. It is structured in the form of responses to a series of questions that people would like answered if they are to envisage what the future holds for them and are likely to voluntarily help the Court in its endeavours.

**Figure 6 - Our Leadership Message**

## 2.2 Associated Entities Policy

The IFCE makes multiple references to entities such as court users, legal professionals, professional partners, the public, society and other partners. In order for the Court to manage its operations effectively and without ambiguity, it is essential that Court employees clearly understand all the entities that are relevant to its operations. The clustering of entities into logical groups also helps the Court to better understand and manage its operations.

The groups of entities found to be relevant to the Court, along with a definition of each entity, are shown in Figure 7. As described in the policy, the groups shown in Figure 7 are listed in order of relative priority.

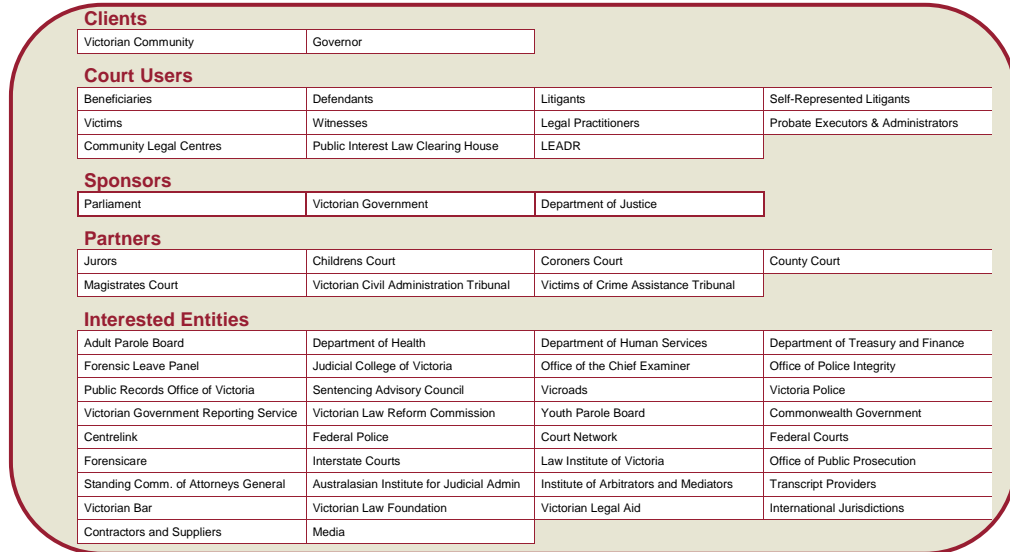
**Figure 7 - Associated Entities**

The policy includes a full strategic analysis of each entity group. It explains exactly which entities have been included in each group (see Figure 8) and the basis for that inclusion.



The policy also describes how the Court interacts with each entity group and how it measures the quality of those interactions. At this early stage of its excellence journey, the Court has not yet fully implemented all of the requirements of this policy, but, it is well advanced in many aspects.

**Figure 8 - Understanding Associated Entities**



## 2.3 Governance Policy

Governance is not explicitly mentioned within the IFCE. However, given the Court’s standing as the third arm of government in Victoria and the criticality of maintaining judicial independence, governance becomes an essential component of planning and policies associated with the Court’s administrative operations.

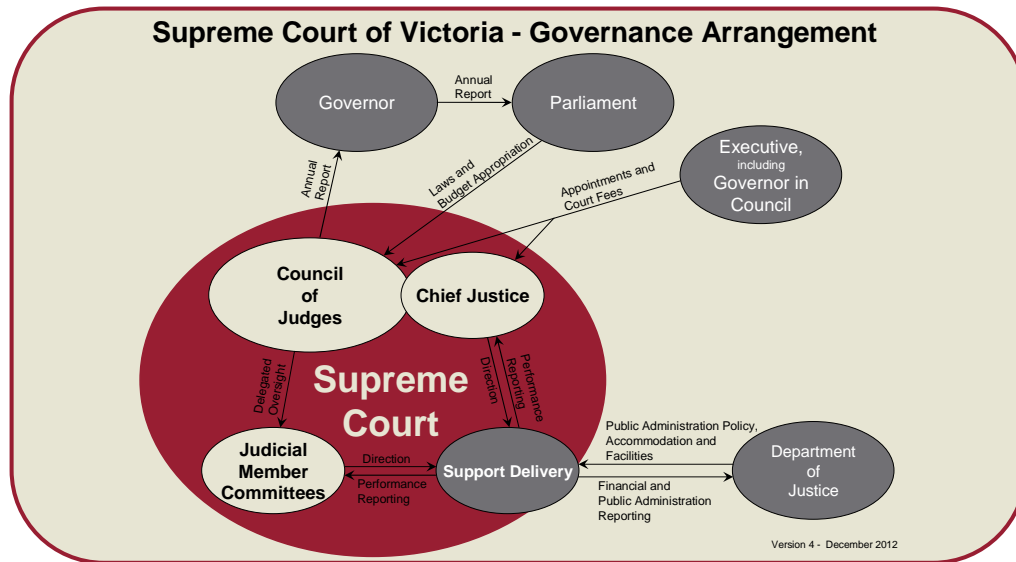
In this regard, governance forms part of the Court’s approach towards the effective implementation of Area 2 - Court Planning and Policies of the IFCE. Governance matters within the Court are monitored by the judicial Governance Working Group, often jointly with the judicial Executive Committee.

Governance is the system by which the Court is directed and managed. It influences how the objectives of the Court are set and achieved, how risk is monitored and assessed, and how performance is optimised.

The relationship of entities that form the Court’s current governance arrangement is diagrammatically presented in Figure 9. The governance policy includes a detailed description of the role, responsibilities and authority of each of the entities shown in Figure 9 so there is no ambiguity surrounding management of the Court.

It is worth reiterating that the governance arrangement shown in Figure 9 maps the reality of current relationships. To some extent it highlights the ambiguous situation that exists at the moment; a model that both the Court and Government recognise as not ideal. The Victorian Attorney-General has already indicated his commitment to the establishment of a Court’s Executive Service that will clarify much of the ambiguity that exists at present.

**Figure 9 - The Court’s Governance Arrangement**



The issue of governance has a much broader application than that relating solely to the management oversight arrangement shown in Figure 9. The majority of governance frameworks or structures are usually articulated in the form of a number of ‘attributes’ relating to processes that should take place in the good management of an organisation. They will vary to some degree depending on the organisation’s operating circumstances. The Court undertook research into governance attributes that are applicable within both the private and public sectors. This resulted in the development of a set of nine attributes, as described in Figure 10, which encapsulate the best intentions of governance within a court environment.

**Figure 10 - Our Governance Framework**

Governance Attributes	Performance Gradient									
	← Poor Performance					Excellent Performance →				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Lay solid foundations for management and oversight					5					
2 Promote ethical and responsible decision-making					10					
3 Safeguard integrity in financial reporting					10					
4 Make timely and balanced disclosure					6					
5 Recognise and manage risk					10					
6 Recognise the legitimate interests of associated entities					7					
7 Engage effective business planning					10					
8 Promote a structured and regular system of performance reporting					6					
9 Consider whole-of-system and cross-court issues					9					
<b>Overall Governance Attribute Performance</b>					<b>8</b>					

The Court has undertaken a self-assessment of its current performance against the criteria of the nine governance attributes and arrived at the ratings shown in Figure 10. Examining the Court’s performance from this perspective is an excellent way to identify areas for improvement.

## 2.4 Planning Policy

Area 2 of the IFCE relates to Court Planning and Policies. This part of the IFCE seeks to determine whether a court has short, medium and long term goals in accordance with its fundamental purpose/values, and whether it develops strategies, policies and procedures for meeting those goals. The business of establishing goals and developing strategies can be made easier if a well structured planning approach is applied.

Possibly the most significant milestone the Court has reached in its excellence journey is the development of the ‘Supreme Court Strategy’, as shown in Figure 11. The strategy, which is a culmination of two years of diligent efforts in business planning, maps out a suite of business system improvements that will enable the Court to realise its longer-term goal. Many of these improvements, such as a strategic statement, have already been implemented, while others, such as a state-of-the-art court building, have longer horizons.

Importantly, it can be seen that the Court is demonstrating leadership through a self-directing strategy and suite of improvements that will assure Victoria has a sustainable superior court extending well into the future. Again, the IFCE provides the holistic foundation that ensures the Court has applied careful consideration to all aspects of its operations in establishing the full array of necessary system improvements, as is readily portrayed in the layout of the strategy. In particular, attention should be drawn to the healthy range of improvement initiatives being applied directly to court proceedings.

The strategy forms the pivotal document that drove the business planning process for 2012-13 and it will play a similar role in subsequent years. Obviously, the strategy is just the front-piece to a complete infrastructure of projects and initiatives that will turn the Court’s plans into reality.

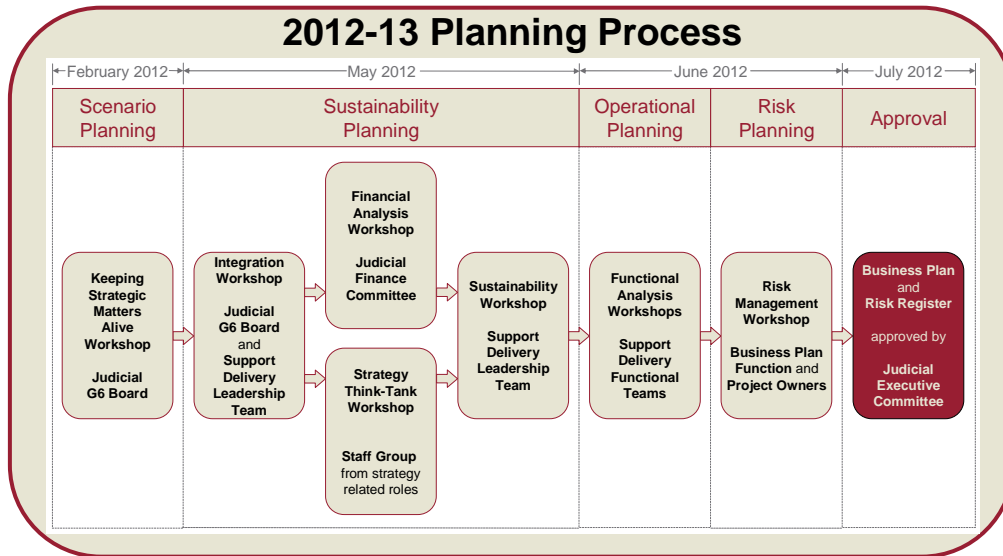
**Figure 11 - Supreme Court Strategy**



After two years of developmental work the Court arrived at a planning process for 2012-13, see Figure 12, which involved 10 judges and more than 50 staff in multiple stages that culminated in the production of the Court’s Business Plan and Risk Register.

The inclusive nature of the planning process helps to create a sense of ownership for the Business Plan throughout the Court which improves the likelihood of successful outcomes.

Figure 12 - Business Planning Process



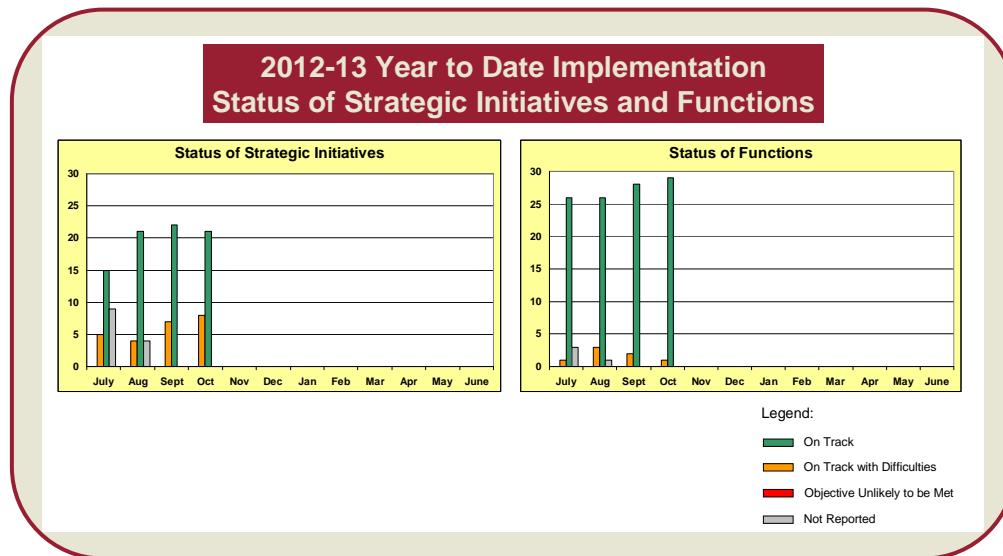
The Business Plan developed for 2012-13 contains 59 separate lines of action which are made up of the 29 strategic initiatives (as described in the Supreme Court Strategy), as well as 30 functions that exist within the five support delivery areas of the Court. An extract of the Business Plan is shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13 - Our Business Plan

Priorities	Outcomes	Functions and Initiatives	Owner	Status	Priority	Risk	Size
Supreme Court Strategy	Court excellence and public value is achieved and judicial independence is maintained through implementation of a self-directing strategy that minimises reliance on the Department of Justice and demonstrates to government that the Court has the competence to self-manage.	<b>Strategic Initiative - Communication Strategy</b> Communication needs to be a vital, integral component of all aspects of Court operations. It has direct implication for every action described in this plan, as well as routine Court functions. A lack of consideration for communication needs has been identified as a major flaw in current practices. The communication strategy includes, but is not limited to, the development of a routine Court newsletter with an internal and broad external distribution informing entities of the Court's performance and increasing their understanding of the Court, active involvement of key court user groups and partners in the planning phase of many of the actions in this plan, providing feedback to clients, court users, partners, sponsors and the community regarding actions the Court is taking in response to information the Court has collection from them; and making better use of a world-standard Court website as a fundamental communication tool.	David Ware	10	30	20	10
		<b>Strategic Initiative - Strategic Statement</b> A visionary statement serves to present a summary of the Court. It sets out what the Court stands for, what it delivers and its aspirations for the future. It embodies the character of the Court, its members and its staff. The visionary statement becomes a fundamental communication tool through which the Court is able to inform its clients, court users, sponsors, partners and the community at large about itself and its goals. When published, the visionary statement should be promoted to all judges and staff in the Court by the Chief Justice and CEO, communicated directly by the Chief Justice to key components of the legal profession, and openly published on the Court's website.	Mike Vallance	4	16	4	4
Support Delivery Functions	Court Administration Court strategy is delivering a court of excellence and administration services covering people, technology, information, communication and built environment exceed expectations.	<b>Court Administration - Executive and Strategy Management</b> CEO's Office - support delivery leadership and judicial, departmental and government liaison. Strategic Oversight - court administration operational functions. International Framework for Court Excellence - implemented as Court's foundation management model. Program Project Office - disciplines of structured project management applied to all system developments. Governance - attribute-based approach that demonstrates ability for self-directing management. Strategic and Business Planning - directs actions in alignment with strategy. Risk Management - anticipates and identifies challenges and response actions. Organizational Policies Framework - guides consistent and reliable management practices.	Mike Vallance	8	36	12	20
		<b>Court Administration - Financial Management Services</b> Financial Reporting - Executive and Finance Committees, managers, RoGS, BUFI and Annual Report. Accounts Payable and Receivable - invoices, claims, cost receipts and court fees refunds. Reconciliations - judicial library and travel allowances, employee expenses, credit cards and petty cash.	Lorena Guidos	8	36	8	16

Every line of the Business Plan has a clearly defined owner who is responsible for reporting implementation progress on a monthly basis. Business Plan owners meet every month to discuss progress and, in particular, to explore whether assistance is required for any initiatives or functions that might be experiencing any difficulties.

Additionally, summary graphs showing progress in implementing the Business Plan, as shown in Figure 14, are reported to the judicial Executive Committee every month.

**Figure 14 - Reporting Business Plan Implementation**

The Supreme Court Strategy and Business Plan are examples of the Court's alignment with the intentions of the IFCE where it suggests courts should "establish short, medium and long term goals in accordance with the Court's fundamental purposes/values, and develop strategies, policies and procedures for meeting those goals".

The monthly Business Plan owners meetings and monthly reports to the judicial Executive Committee clearly demonstrate the Court is cognisant of the IFCE's suggestion that courts should "establish a process to regularly review strategies to ensure the court is meeting its goals and that its adopted strategies, policies and procedures improve the efficiency and quality of court services".

The planning process is yet a further example of addressing the intentions of the IFCE where it suggests leaders should "actively involve staff and judges not in leadership positions in identifying challenges and solutions".

## 2.5 Risk Management Policy

As with the issue of governance, risk management is not explicitly mentioned within the IFCE. However, it is widely recognised as an essential and integral component of effective business planning, so risk management forms a further part of the Court's approach towards the effective implementation of Area 2 - Court Planning and Policies of the IFCE.

This policy is based upon the principles and generic guidelines described in Australia / New Zealand Standard AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009 Risk Management Principles and Guidelines International Standard. The policy outlines the Court's risk management objectives, governance and compliance arrangements including setting out the roles and responsibilities for risk management as well as providing authority.

The Court identifies risks as an integral part of its annual business planning process and develops a Risk Register. Risks are managed as part of the Business Plan implementation and reporting process. This establishes links between business objectives and the risks that could influence achieving them. By way of example, the fourth line of action shown in the Business Plan extract in Figure 13 includes two risks that were identified in the risk management workshop (see Figure 12) of the business planning process. The Risk Register is also updated every six months and reported to the judicial Executive Committee as a further means of cross-checking the quality of risk management.

## 2.6 Court and Support Delivery Policy

In part, the IFCE is defined as a framework of values, concepts and tools by which courts worldwide can voluntarily assess and improve the quality of justice and court administration they deliver. This suggests the Court should have a clear, unambiguous understanding of the justice and court administration it delivers and in the quality of its outcomes.

The Court undertook a thorough analysis of the justice and court administration it delivers and determined that the outcomes presented in Figure 15 accurately portray what it delivers.

**Figure 15 - What the Court Delivers**

The Court's primary outcome is '**Court Delivery**'.

In detail, it is

- **Safeguard and maintain the rule of law; and**
- **Hear and determine cases**

The Court's secondary outcome is '**Support Delivery**'.

In detail, it is:

- **Court Awarded Beneficiary Funds** (Funds in Court)
- **Registry Administration** (Principal Registry and Court of Appeal Registry)
- **The Victorian Juries System** (Juries Commissioner's Office)
- **Court Administration**

Parts of Area 1 - Court Management and Leadership and Area 5 - User Satisfaction of the IFCE raise the issue of measuring and improving performance. At various points the IFCE talks about quantitative measures of court performance as well as qualitative measures and it becomes clear that high performance within an excellent court would be monitored through both types of measures.

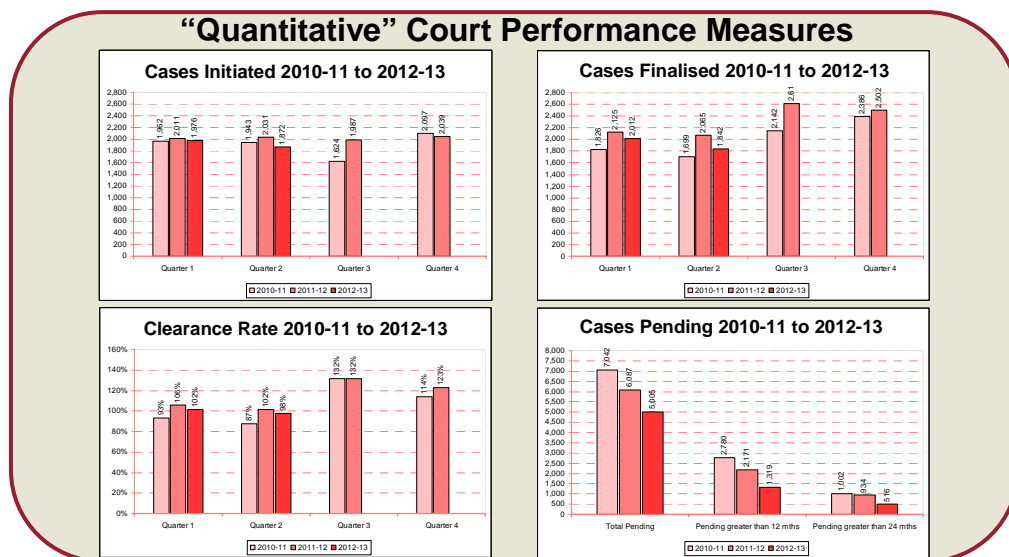
So, having established a clear understanding of what the Court delivers, the next task in further applying the intent of the IFCE was to determine how the Court could align measurement of its performance endeavours with the pursuit of its goal and purpose, as described in its strategic statement. The Court determined that the answer to this question resided within the strategic statement which defines that we aim to achieve our goal and purpose through our attributes. Therefore, it was necessary to establish those few key performance measures that would provide the Court with knowledge about its performance outcomes, and how they were contributing to the further enhancement of our attributes. It must be stressed that this suite of whole-of-court key performance measures are not the only operational aspects that are measured in order to manage the Court. At the same time, they should be those measures that provide a comprehensive picture of the value being offered by the Court.

One of the initiatives within the Supreme Court Strategy is titled 'key performance indicators' and the Court is well advanced in the development of this program that will drive delivery standards and service quality. However, the program of measures and the processes for reviewing and improving them is very much a piece of work in progress that will continue for some time to come.

It must be clearly noted that Court performance relates specifically to the primary court management functions associated with the administrative operations of the Court. In no way whatsoever does it relate to the judicial decisions made in any case being heard within the Court. In establishing key quantitative measures, the Court gave consideration to the fact that it monitors its performance from a number of different perspectives. In particular, it regards efficiency and effectiveness as the two overarching dimensions that demonstrate quality performance of its administrative operations, and the quality of achievement against a number of its attributes; for example, Excellence, Accessibility, Timeliness and Efficiency and Integrity and Transparency. In line with measures that are widely accepted nationally and internationally as indicators of efficiency and effectiveness, the Court closely monitors its performance with regard to the initiation of new cases, finalisation of cases, case clearance rates and the backlog of cases pending.

The graphs in Figure 16 show how the Court reports its primary quantitative performance measures at quarterly intervals and compares current year performance with that of two previous years so that trends can be considered when analysing outcomes. It is also worth keeping in mind that the Court's business analysts and judicial Court Business Group actually monitor these measures on a monthly basis to facilitate responsiveness of improvement actions.

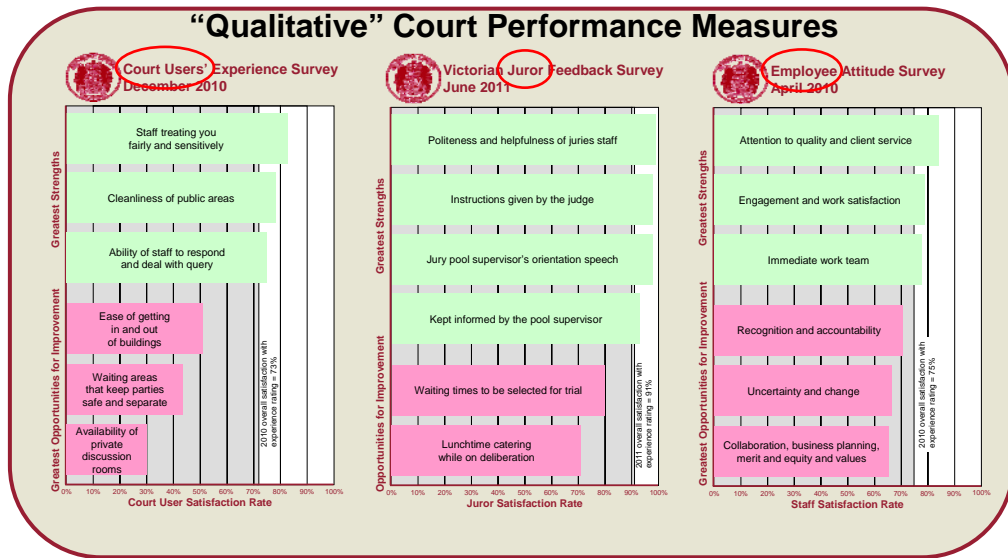
**Figure 16 - Quantitative Court Performance Measures**



With regard to qualitative performance the IFCE is quite explicit in a number of places. For example, in Area 1 - Court Management and Leadership it suggests courts establish a program of collecting reliable information pertaining to quality indicators (e.g., surveys of court staff, users, professional partners, and, the public). In Area 5 - User Satisfaction it suggests excellent courts systematically evaluate the perceptions and needs of court users and that the information will be used to improve the quality and processes provided by the courts.

In establishing key qualitative measures, the Court routinely collects data from court users, jurors and its employees and uses that data to enhance the quality of court services and further promote the satisfaction of these groups. The graphs in Figure 17 present the Court's greatest strengths (green bars) and the primary opportunities for improvement (pink bars) as perceived by its court users, jurors and employees.

Figure 17 - Qualitative Court Performance Measures



The IFCE introduces a further aspect to performance management in Area 4 - Public Trust and Confidence where it suggests that courts make information on their performance available regularly to clients, court users, partners and interested parties.

The Court has begun to apply this aspect of the IFCE to its operations by publishing the graphs shown in Figures 16 and 17 on its website. This is a quantum step forward for the Court with regard to holding itself accountable to the Victorian community and is a further example of the Court's implementation of a self-directing strategy that is being demonstrated by a transition from being court-centric to being service-centric.



### 3 Organisational Self Assessment

Throughout the journey of implementing the IFCE it is good practice to collect data regarding the Court's performance as rated against the seven areas of the IFCE. This process is known as organisational self assessment and, when undertaken at periodical intervals, helps the Court to identify areas for improvement and monitor its rate of improvement over time.

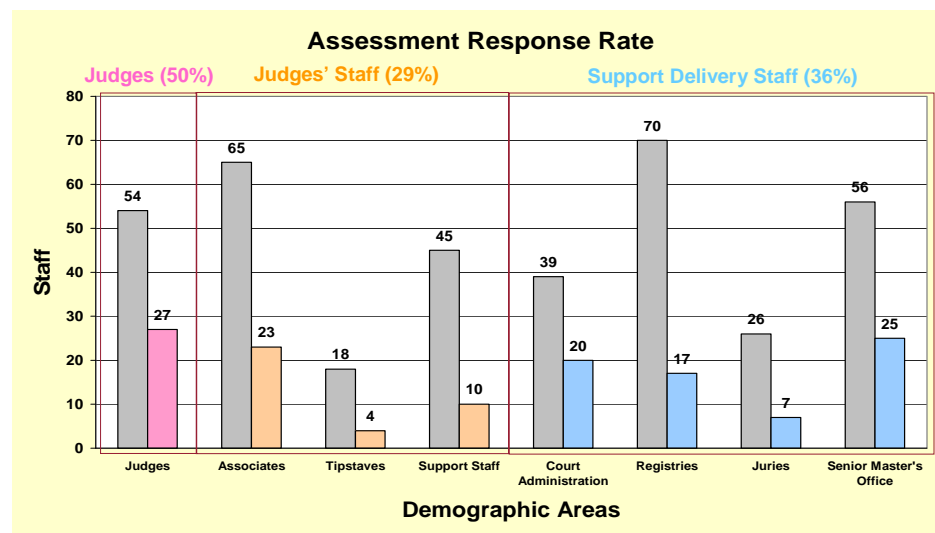
It provides information to assist in planning improvement actions and sets the foundation benchmark against which rates of improvement over subsequent years can be measured on the Court's journey to be an outstanding superior court.

A multitude of methods exist for undertaking organisational self assessments, some are fairly simple and some are extremely resource intensive and complex. In most cases, the type of assessment methodology used is in line with an organisation's understanding of the IFCE. The Court decided to undertake its first self assessment in 2011 and determined that, as it was just beginning its use of the IFCE, a fairly simple assessment methodology was more appropriate as it gave people a brief insight into the content and purpose of the IFCE without overpowering them with theory and complexity. At the same time, the process still managed to obtain people's first, instinctive reaction to relevant matters, which was a most accurate reading of their perceptions.

A simple survey, in line with the sample provided in the IFCE, was mailed to all judges and staff where they were invited to voluntarily offer their feedback. The self assessment sought to gain feedback from eight demographical areas of the Court being judges, associates, tipstaves, support staff, court administration, registries, juries and funds in court. The objective of this breakdown was to allow for the possibility that feedback data could indicate improvement efforts were needed within specific areas of the Court.

The response rates achieved are presented in Figure 18. The grey coloured columns indicate the number of judges and staff in the Court and the other coloured columns indicate the actual number of judges and staff that responded to the self assessment.

**Figure 18 - Assessment Response Rate**



Court response rate of  
133 from 373 judges and staff = 36%

Legend:

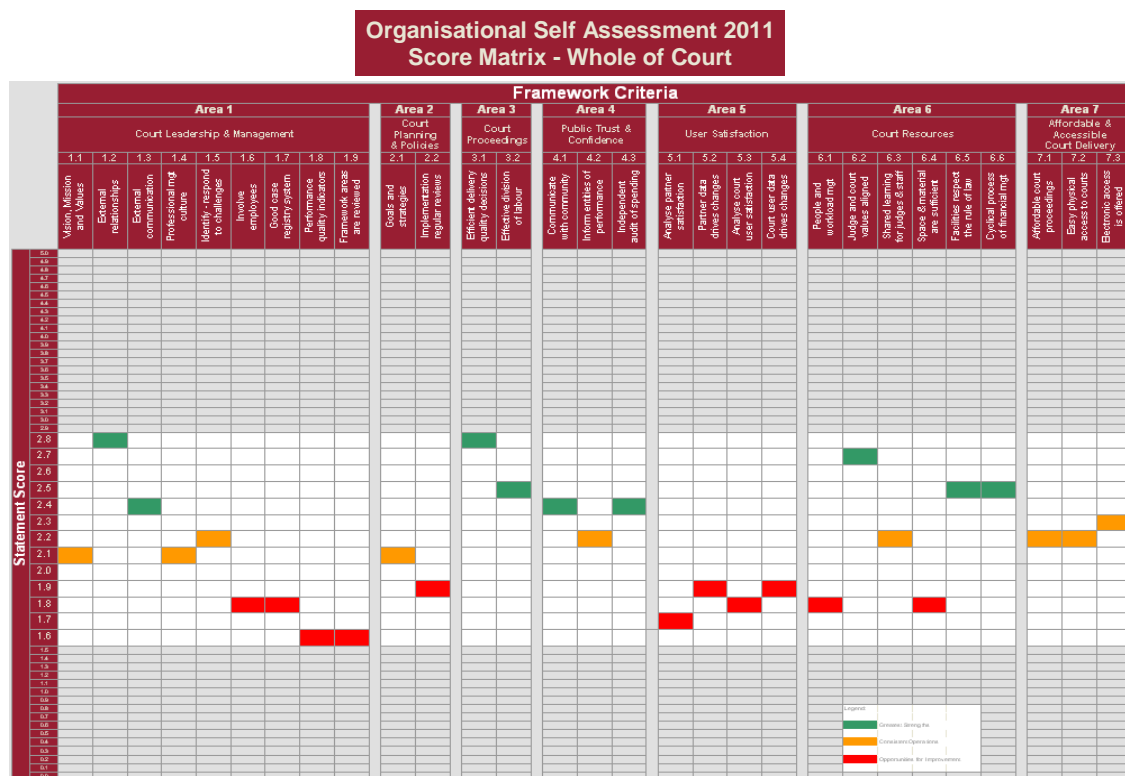
- Total number of Judges or Staff
- Number of Judges who responded
- Number of Judges' Staff who responded
- Number of Support Delivery Staff who responded

The relatively low response rates for tipstaves, support staff, registries and juries precluded any analysis of data at that detailed level because any conclusions would not have been statistically valid. Therefore, reporting of outcomes has been undertaken at the three demographic groups of judges, judges staff (associates, tipstaves and support staff combined) and support delivery staff (court administration, registries, juries and funds in court combined).

The 36% response rate is reasonably high for an organisation undertaking its first assessment against a framework that was still new to the Court at that time. If judges and staff see that the Court acts upon the outcomes presented by their feedback, these rates will be significantly higher in subsequent assessments.

The Court achieved an overall rating of 435 points out of a possible 1,000. The IFCE suggests courts achieving that level of performance have a sound, effective approach in place and that the approach is aligned with basic organisational needs. Further, it suggests the defined approach is deployed in most key areas of the organisation and that the court is achieving good performance levels as well as having favourable comparisons in some areas. The 2011 self assessment data at the whole-of-court level, as presented in Figure 19, confirms that the Court commenced its excellence journey from quite a solid footing. It also sets a foundation benchmark against which rates of improvement over subsequent years can be measured.

**Figure 19 - Score Matrix - Whole of Court**



Statistical data in Figure 19 highlights that Area 5 - User Satisfaction (a results area) appears to be the area most in need of improvement. However, one of the strengths of using the IFCE is its holistic nature where a court is able to view its performance across all aspects of its operations, not just in selected areas. Taking a holistic view of the results of the Court's self assessment, the data highlights a number of issues within Area 1 - Court Leadership and Management that are in as much need for improvement as the issues associated with user satisfaction. The IFCE describes Area 1 as the driver of the court and stresses, "proactive management and inspiring leadership in a court are crucial for court

success and excellence". Additionally, Area 2 - Court Planning and Policies (a key enabling area) did not rate particularly well. With this in mind, the Court determined it should first ensure its leadership approach and planning processes were well defined, understood and operational before too much focus was applied to a results oriented area. The outcomes of this decision can be seen in the efforts applied to the Leadership Policy and Planning Policy as described previously.

The Court also segregated the assessment data into the three demographic survey groups of judges, judges staff and support delivery staff. Analysis at this level assisted the Court in targeting some aspects of its improvement efforts into areas of greatest need.

As with all IFCE related efforts, judicial involvement occurred with the organisational self assessment. The assessment process was over sighted by the Governance Working Group and the outcomes were endorsed by the Council of Judges.

As mentioned previously, the IFCE suggests that courts make information on their performance available regularly to clients, court users, partners and interested parties. So, given that data relating to the self assessment equates to a qualitative performance measure, the Court has published the outcomes of its 2011 organisational self assessment on its website to further hold itself accountable to the Victorian community.

The Court will continue to self-assess its operations at routine intervals with the view to continuously improving the important public value it offers to Victorians.