

Community Facilities and Open Spaces Levels of Service Development

For Southland District Council, levels of service were prepared by Xyst for a range of assets within six activity areas:

1. Parks and Reserves (Open Spaces)
2. Cemeteries
3. Public Toilets
4. Community Centres
5. Community Housing
6. Water Structures (wharves and jetties)

Benefits of a robust level of service approach include:

- Consistency of service delivery
- Mechanism for changing levels of service and addressing disparity
- Significant financial lever to control costs or accelerate expenditure
- Strategic hierarchy on which to base development of subsequent plans, financial reporting structure, asset hierarchy and service standards

To assist in driving a “user experience” approach to levels of service, the six activity areas were further organised into 12 categories, reflecting a mix of assets and services that support the intended experience. These levels of service were designed to provide comprehensive direction to asset managers so that they are able to deliver the desired levels of service through appropriate acquisition, design, development, maintenance and operation of the facilities and services.

Manapouri Foreshore Vegetation Management Plan

Southland District Council (SDC) was undertaking a review of the Manapouri Foreshore Reserve Management Plan (2003) which provided for height management of vegetation on the reserve. Although some work on vegetation had been carried out, there had been little ongoing height management particularly in the areas identified as “retained/managed bush”. An itemised programme of works was required to:

- enable maintenance of the vegetation in the foreshore reserve to protect view shafts;
- maintain heights in retained/managed areas within acceptable limits; and
- protect trees and vegetation in identified copses and other protected areas.

The project was undertaken by Xyst in two separate stages:

Stage 1 – Vegetation data collection

This involved several visits to Manapouri and collection of data about trees and shrubs located on the reserve using the GIS Cloud Mobile Data Collection App. The data collected included GPS location, species, photos, age class, condition, maintenance actions and priority. Trees were either assessed as individual specimens or as groups as appropriate.

Stage 2 – Maintenance plan

This stage used the data collected in Stage 1 to prepare a report outlining maintenance actions required to achieve the outcomes identified in the Reserve Management Plan and resource consent.

Contract Performance Auditing

Nelson City Council engaged Xyst to carry out contract performance auditing. Xyst has developed an inspection template using a mobile app that allows performance against a set of performance measures from contract specifications to be scored from 1 to 5 and to produce an overall percentage score for each location. Activities audited include grass maintenance, gardens, annual beds, roses, trees, furniture, paths, roads and other hard surfaces, litter collection, etc.

A report is produced for each site that includes images and provides detailed score for each site features as well as an overall score. Responses that score a 1 or 2 were flagged for immediate attention. Analysis of results can identify the most frequently flagged items which helps to identify patterns of poor performance.

This method is completely objective and provides a useful back-up for contract managers when they need to deal with poor contract performance.

Waikato Tree Inventory data collection

Using a mobile data collection tool (GIS Cloud) Xyst collected data about the identity, age, condition, location and maintenance requirements of every Council tree in the Waikato District. Data (including images) is collected in the field

and uploaded to a cloud-based database from where it can be exported in various formats for import directly into Council's GIS system and used for maintenance scheduling and asset management.

In this project, we started with a spreadsheet from a previous data collection exercise that we were able to import into GIS Cloud as the basis for a map and data collection project. The new tree data was added seamlessly and mapped alongside the original data.

Open Space Maintenance Specifications

In 2016 Xyst Ltd established a working group of parks industry colleagues representing both the client and contractor interests, to explore the need for an industry standard approach to the documentation of service delivery specifications. Based on the endorsement of this group, Xyst then approached New Zealand Recreation Association (now Recreation Aotearoa – RA) to facilitate a shared industry approach to funding this project.

Xyst represented by Alison Rawley, Brian Milne and Chris Rutherford led the development of open space specifications for New Zealand with the support of the industry working group, Sport NZ and RA.

RA formally engaged Xyst to develop a set of specifications for parks and open space operations and maintenance. The specifications cover a range of parks operations including garden, lawn and tree maintenance, litter and refuse, cleaning, parks asset maintenance, cemetery operations, pest

management, revegetation and security. The number of service level indicators for each maintenance activity ranges from one to five, with the majority of activities having three. A star rating system is also used, with 5 stars representing the highest service level for each operation.

The specifications are applicable to a range of service delivery models whether outsourced, council-controlled organisations or direct in-house delivery. They address the issue of “reinventing the wheel” each time an organisation chooses to develop a new service specification or contract and provides a standard modifiable solution to developing a service specification. Specifications are complemented by a sensible, measurable and standardised quality assessment system that is based on outcomes.

Irrespective of the contract type or style, the specifications provide a library of standard tasks and actions suitable for all service levels that organisations can select for use in their service specification. Individual organisations will continue to be able to define their specific levels of service using the standard specification to provide a known and accepted standard of maintenance.

Waitaki Emergency Response and Contingency Plan

Waitaki District Council contracted Xyst to develop an Emergency Response and Contingency Plan for its parks and open spaces activity. The plan provided a generic risk assessment and response for all parks and identified specific risks and prepared appropriate responses where these could be identified

at individual parks. The plan included actions around trees where these pose a risk to public safety including the need and frequency of inspections or Quantified Tree Risk Assessments. The plan also specified business continuity actions required for individual sites.

The plan included risk assessments and action plans for:

- Sudden tree failure
- Sustained power outages
- Sustained water/wastewater system failure
- Critical asset failure, eg bridges, play equipment
- Storm (flying debris, snow damage, etc)
- Earthquake
- Vegetation fire
- Tsunami
- Flooding/rain events
- Foreshore Erosion
- Land slippage
- Hydro spillage

Street Gardens and Street Furniture Levels of Service

Matamata-Piako District Council engaged Xyst to define level of service statements and guidelines at a high level for provision and development of street gardens and street furniture, and more detailed LoS for maintenance. The priority for this project was the public street or road adjacent to the business zones of the Matamata-Piako District, and entrance landscaping on State Highway 24, 26 and 27 at town entrances.

The project included:

- Levels of service for provision and development to be defined at a high level.
- LoS for maintenance to be more detailed to inform service delivery standards.
- Street gardens and street furniture (including seating, bins, drinking fountains, bollards, cycle racks, pedestrian barriers, artworks, monuments, banners, tree furniture, decorative lighting, “welcome” signage, etc).
- Street trees, medians and berms in defined priority areas.
- A hierarchy that defines up to 3 different quality standards and applies these to defined zones.

The project excluded paving, street lighting, road signs or landscaping of reserve or private land adjacent to streetscape. Mapping was not required of specific assets, however, a series of maps identifying zones for high standard, medium standard, low standard (or similar) were developed.

Recreation Aotearoa Open Space Maintenance Specifications were used as the basis for operational standards where these were referenced.

Yardstick Parks User Surveys

Yardstick Parks User Surveys were developed in around 2008 initially as a paper based intercept survey designed to target park users and measure satisfaction with a range of parks related services and features. The product was initially called Parkcheck and is still known as this by some users.

The surveys were taken online in 2015 with the development of a web-based survey application that enabled collection of surveys in the field on a mobile device with off-line capability. Surveys can be uploaded where wifi or cell phone

service is available and data can be reported immediately.

Surveys have a set of standard questions that are relatively fixed but have undergone some improvements in wording over the years. Organisations can also choose from a library of optional questions or develop and include new optional questions of their own for specific issues.

Survey results are available in online reports in much the same way as benchmarks results. However, organisations also receive a manually produced report which comprises a summary of results in pdf and word format using charts produced in excel. The report is around 30 to 40 pages long and is produced from templates in word and excel derived from previous reports.

Since going online, the survey tool has been used around 110 times in Scandinavia, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Section 17a Open Space Maintenance Service Review

Xyst worked with the Parks and Reserves team at South Waikato District Council to compare and analyse options including outsourcing delivery, in-house delivery, shared service arrangements and via a CCO/CCTO.

Child Care Centre Playground Performance Assessment

Key findings of the performance assessments, accompanied by some high level analytical commentary was completed, with each playground assigned an overall performance assessment score. Analysis included site design, play value, quantity of play items, equipment condition, safety surface condition and an assessment of remaining life of the asset.

Parks Performance Assessments

The purpose of the parks performance assessment was to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each park, from a multi-faceted holistic perspective, and particularly from the users' perspective. Recommendations to retain, change or assign (where none previously existed) service classifications for each park were made.

Playground Performance Assessment

Undertook an assessment of each playground using the Playable Space Assessment Tool, Play England 2009, which has been adapted by Xyst. The tool enabled an assessment to be made of location, play value and ancillary facilities to produce an

overall percentage score for each playground, ranking each playground to enable priorities to be identified objectively and strategically.