

# Measuring Community Outcomes to Prioritise Actions and Funding

## Case Study: Key Research's Community Perceptions Index

**Community Outcomes have been established by Territorial Authorities and Regional Councils nationwide under the Local Government Act 2002. The Act also requires the measurement of progress towards each Community Outcome.**

Given the significance accorded to Community Outcomes any measurement should look to prioritise the Outcomes in terms of action or funding. LTCCP's include proposals for the development of new and existing services and logically the plans should establish a starting point. To enable the prioritisation of actions and funding, the measurement of Community Outcomes should provide realistic and actionable recommendations.

To maximise the usefulness of a Community Outcomes measurement model, it should not only provide information on the community's satisfaction levels with the Outcomes, but also on which are perceived as relatively more important and how close they are to being achieved – in the eyes of residents.

Market research consultancy Key Research has developed the Community Perceptions Index (CPI) which measures the performance of Community Outcomes. The model was successfully piloted in partnership with Tauranga City Council (TCC) in April/May 2006. It has three key benefits:

- 1 - It determines the priorities for action funding assistance or support,
- 2 - It determines where each Outcome/Goal sits in terms of relative importance to the community,
- 3 - It determine how far away from ideal the Outcomes/Goals are at a certain point in time.

The CPI concept was designed to measure community perceptions across each of the goals assigned to each Outcome. TCC has developed eight Community

Outcomes with 41 assigned goals. For example, for the Outcome – (*Tauranga City is*) Easy to Move Around – the assigned goals include:

- Being able to travel from one place to another in the expected timeframe;
- Making the most of our road network and planning for the future;
- People can move around the city safely and comfortably;
- The way we move around the city is environmentally sustainable.

The measurement at the ‘goal level’ allows the direct evaluation of the actions and goals established to realise Community Outcomes.

The CPI establishes three classes of goals in the process of data collection: “Must Have” goals, “Nice to Have” goals and “Indifferent” goals. The classes of goals represent the level of ‘meaning’ which each goal carries for a resident. That is, what may be a Must-have goal for some residents will be Nice-to-have for another and similarly may even be an indifferent goal for other residents. While the selection of “indifference” indicates the absence of meaning of a goal, respondents regard a “Must Have” goal as critical for the quality of life they expect in the city. Goals which are classified as “Nice to Have” goals by respondents are not perceived to be as important as “Must Have” goals, but still add to the community’s quality of life.

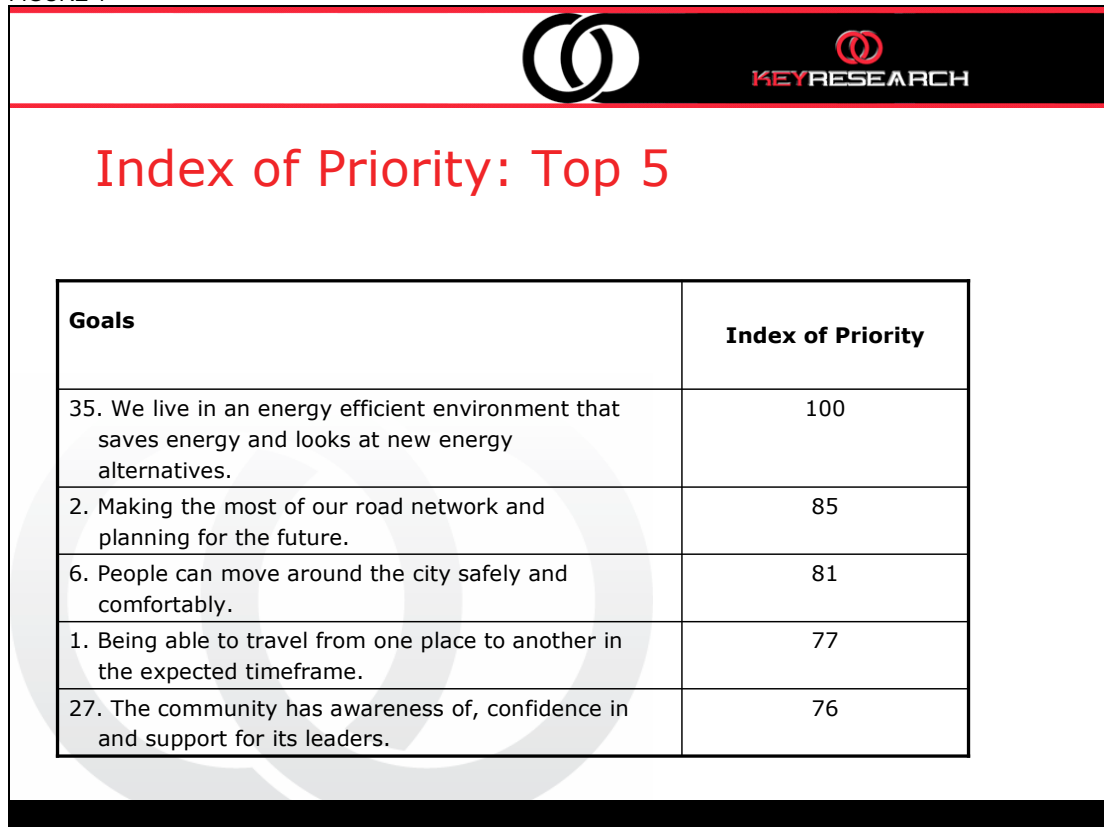
After the collection of data is complete each of the goals are measured across the following four key indices:

- Index of Importance;
- Performance Index;
- Distance from Ideal Index;
- Index of Priority.

Key Research’s CPI model measures the perceived actual performance of each goal against the desired threshold for performance of each goal. The first three indices allow the evaluation of each goal in terms of importance to the community, perceived performance and perceived distance from ideal performance as stated by respondents.

On basis of the Index of Importance and the Distance from Ideal, the Index of Priority can be calculated (Figure 1). This index offers a numerical ranking and prioritisation of the goals. The goal which is deemed to require the most attention, in this case Goal 35, is set to 100. All other goals are the indexed against this.

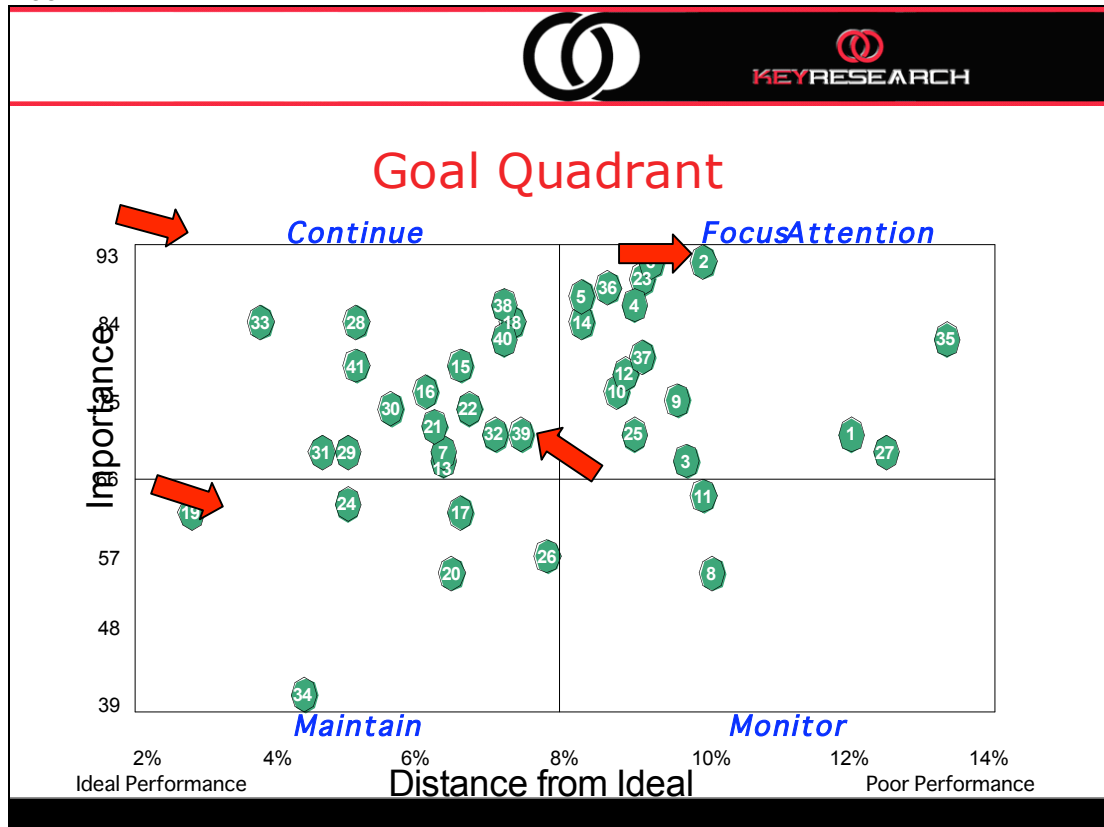
FIGURE 1



(Source: Key Research 2006)

Additionally, the CPI uses a quadrant to plot where each goal sits in terms of importance to the community and how far away from 'ideal' each goal is. It provides a graphical evaluation of the goals in terms of perceived importance and priority for action. All of TCC's assigned 41 goals are represented in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2



(Source: Key Research 2006)

The Goal Quadrant offers a comparative overview of all goals in relation to each other and assists in determining the diversion of resources and attention. For example, Goal 8 has been identified as being of low importance to the community, and as not achieving ideal performance. Goals in this category should be monitored, but should receive less attention and resources than goals with a higher stated importance level.

Goal 34 could be maintained at the current level as it has a low importance level and is relatively close to achieving ideal performance as stated by respondents. This goal should also receive less attention and resources than goals with a higher importance level, but the level of performance should be maintained.

Similarly to Goal 34, Goal 33 is relatively close to achieving ideal performance as well, but has a significantly higher level of importance which is why the current efforts relating to this goal should be continued – indicating a higher level of attention and resources than required for ‘Maintain’ or ‘Monitor’.

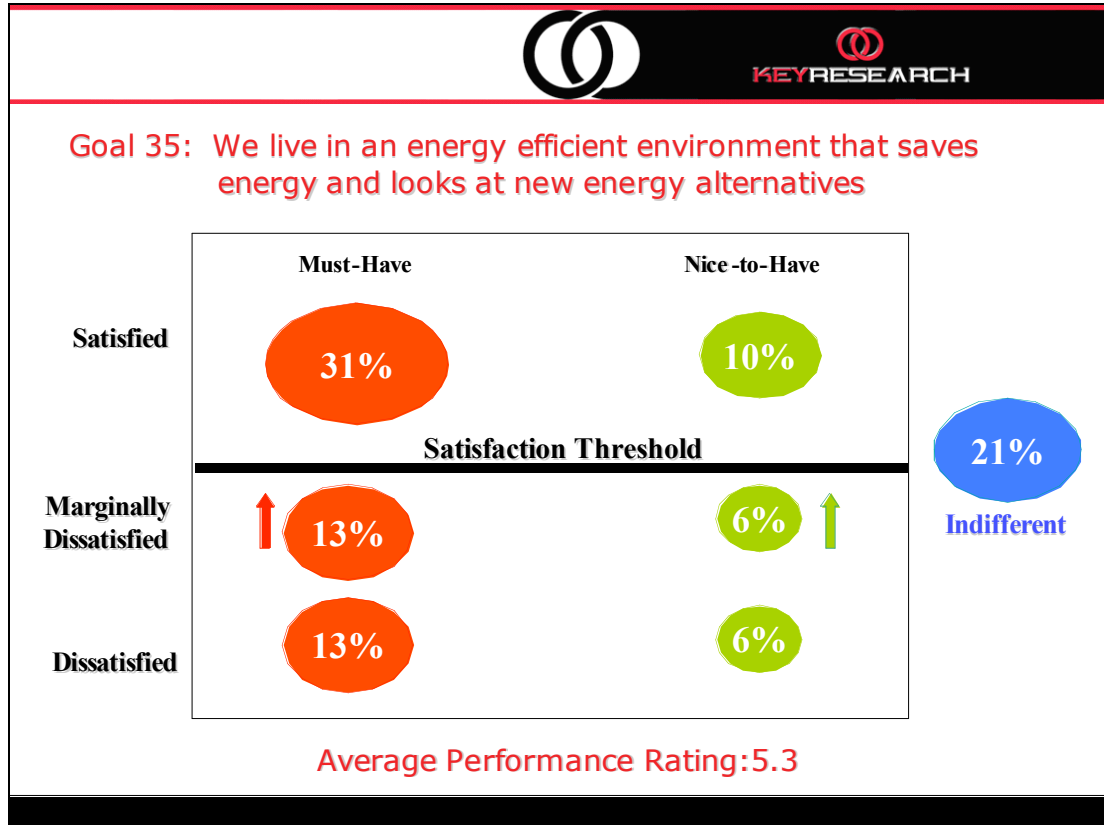
Finally, Goal 35 is perceived to have the lowest level of performance in terms of Distance from Ideal of the 41 TCC goals, but ranks fairly highly in terms of importance to the community. This goal certainly requires the most significant amount of attention and resources.

The Goal Quadrant highlights the need to focus attention on goals that are both important to quality of life, but are also perceived to be some distance from being achieved. As Figure 2 shows, there is a cluster of TCC goals located in the ‘Focus Attention’ Quadrant that through increased attention could be moved to a more ‘ideal’ performance and subsequently into the ‘Continue’ Quadrant.

The scales used in the Goal Quadrant are determined by participant responses. Goal Quadrants can be scaled to 100 for comparisons over time and comparisons with other Councils.

The Goal Quadrant along with the Index of Priority offers a comparative evaluation and overview of all goals. Each of the goals is then analysed separately in more detail. For example, Figure 3 shows that just over one in five respondents (21%) have classified Goal 35 as an ‘Indifferent’ goal.

FIGURE 3



(Source: Key Research 2006)

31% of respondents have stated that Goal 35 is a ‘Must Have’ goal and that they are *satisfied* with its performance (10% of respondents for “Nice to Have”). 13% of respondents who classified this goal as a “Must Have” goal are *dissatisfied* with its performance and a further 13% of respondents who classified this goal as a “Must Have” goal are *marginally dissatisfied* with the performance of this goal (6% respectively for “Nice to Have”).

The groups of respondents who are marginally dissatisfied offer the highest potential for a transformation to satisfied respondents. Completely dissatisfied respondents will require a higher level of improvement to reach or surpass their threshold. Each goal will have an individual graph which allows the evaluation of each goal and the possible impact of actions planned for each goal.

Analysing the goals in this manner, the CPI model can provide clear and actionable guidelines for developing new and existing services and budget projections and, hence, for working towards the realisation of Community Outcomes.