Digital Service Standard assessment

Greater London Authority GLA-OPS - 20/6/18

About the service

[GLA Open Project System](#).

The Open Project System (GLA-Ops) enables organisations to submit and track bids for GLA funding.

Assessment summary

Standard	Met/Not met	Score (>0 = met)
1. Understand user needs	Met	4
2. Have a multidisciplinary team	Met	5
3. Use agile methods	Met	5
4. Iterate and improve regularly	Met	5
5. Evaluate appropriate tools and systems	Met	4
6. Evaluate user data and information	Met	5
7. Use open standards	Met	4
8. Test the end-to-end service	Met	5
9. Make a plan for being offline	Met	4
10. Make sure users succeed first time	Met	4
11. Build a consistent user experience	Met	5
12. Encourage everyone to use the digital service	Met	4
13. Identify performance indicators	Met	2
14. Do ongoing user research	Met	2
15. Test with senior manager	Met	3
Overall result	**Met**	**61**

Total score (Min met 15, max 75):	61
Main strengths:	GLA-OPS is an exemplar Agile project with robust process and technology. It has significant impact providing value to the GLA and its users. Significantly it now has funding to run 'as a service' rather than simply a project. This is to be commended.
Main weaknesses:	Areas for improvement are few, but continuing to conduct user research will ensure the service maintains its impact and improving performance measures will enable further demonstration of value and impact.

Visuals

HOME   ORGANISATIONS ▾   PROGRAMMES & PROJECTS ▾   PAYMENTS ▾   REPORTS   NOTIFICATIONS   ADMIN ▾

‹ BACK   **Orion Park**   PROJECT MENU ≡

Status: Draft   This project is now ready to **submit**   Project ID: **P12467**
Please complete each section and then submit.

1	2	3
PROJECT DETAILS	**MILESTONES**	**CALCULATE GRANT**
SECTION COMPLETE ✔	SECTION COMPLETE ✔	SECTION COMPLETE ✔

4	5	6
GRANT SOURCE	**DESIGN STANDARDS**	**QUESTIONS**
SECTION COMPLETE ✔	SECTION COMPLETE ✔	SECTION COMPLETE ✔

Project History ▼

Comments (Optional)

If you have any supporting comments, you can add them here.

SUBMIT PROJECT

Assessment participants

- Lead assessor : Martin Chaney
- Design assessor : Caroline Sellers / Katerina Sampson
- Technical assessor : Scott Day
- User research assessor : Michele Lambert
- Notes taken by : David Durant
- Ops Product Owner : Heath Pritchard
- Ops Delivery Manager : Nahida Miah
- Ops outsourced Tech lead : Andrew Kyle (Keytree)

GLA-Ops background

The GLA Open Project System (GLA-Ops) was created to be an in-house free-to-use grant funding and assessment platform for GLA policy teams to use as an alternative to existing similar pay-for services that often charge a percentage of grants allocated.

The system currently supports over 1,600 liv

e projects for Londoners being undertaken by 3rd party organisations which are supported by funds from the GLA.

Use of GLA-Ops is stated to be the "living contract" between the GLA and grants receiving organisations.

The system was built using Agile methodology in combination with Keytree as the outsourced development partner. User research and site analytics are used to iteratively improve the system.

The original service MVP development was started in collaboration with the GLA Housing team. This is now being expanded to create a roadmap to onboard a number of other GLA teams including related business process change and full support. Teams already lined up include Skills and Culture.

In time it is hoped that other local government organisations may also take the free open source code for GLA-Ops and spin-up their own versions of the service.

Organisations which are receiving funding from GLA policy teams that are using the service can make invoice claims through the system and receive payment with TfLs SAP implementation.

The system focuses strongly on security since it is responsible for the transfer of large amounts of money from the GLA. This includes carefully partitioned user access controls.

Users can self-register with the system but must be given roles and permissions from an admin before they can undertake any tasks. The admin roles themselves are delegated allowing associated responsibility to moved from the GLA-Ops team themselves into appropriate policy teams.

The system handles actuals and forecasts without the need to wait for a response from GLA Finance.

The system is compliant with the GDPR via three key design principles:
● Don't collect anything providers don't have
● Only ask for what we use
● Don't ask for same info in multiple places

Lists of projects and other information support filtering and searching. The site supports a unique intuitive "block based" UI that has consistently received positive support from users, via user research, as being clear and simple to use. Each block that users need to interact with can be filled out in any order. Data blocks can have mandatory data but the associated forms can be submitted even if that data is not known at the time. The associated block is only marked as finished when all mandatory data for that unit it supplied. Blocks are highly configurable including how many there are, what data is in them, which pieces of data are mandatory, who can access them, etc.

GLA-Ops has a monthly meeting of a Board specifically in place for this project and otherwise also fits in well with the rest of the GLA governance structure.

Detailed assessment

For the overall rating, 1 indicates the minimum level of compliance to the standard, and 5 the highest. Again, these are not terribly scientific scores, but the aim should be to identify where improvements can be made.

1. Understand user needs *Research to develop deep knowledge of who the service users are and what that means for the design of the service - find out more*	
What was good?	● The service began with an extensive discovery phase with stakeholder, potential users and subject matter experts across the GLA ● There was detailed research into existing pay-for providers in this area ● The team also spoke to "key providers" in external organisations that would use the service ● User workshops took place resulting in a full process map and an initial set of epic level user stories

	- The initial MVP was defined by prioritisation in combination with stakeholders - Since then the service has been built using Agile methodology to continuously prioritise and further break down the epics as well as add further functionality to the backlog via additional user workshops - One of the most important early outputs was an agreed common language taxonomy, which must make sense to the end user, to ensure that everyone knew what specific wording meant. This was tested through user research. - As well as active work with stakeholders and user research the team also collects feedback at monthly show and tells.
What could be improved?	- We encourage GLA-Ops to maintain a RACI for the project with people with different levels of interest in the service communicated with via different methods - e.g. a regular email update in addition to the show and tells that solicits further feedback - We suggest GLA-Ops implements functionality to allow a subset of users to be able to interact with versions of the site currently in development behind a password

Overall rating	1	2	3	**4**	5

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2. Have a multidisciplinary team
Ensure a suitably skilled, sustainable multidisciplinary team, led by a senior service manager with decision making responsibility, can design, build and improve the service - find out more

What was good?	- GLA-Ops has had a strong multidisciplinary team including:
	    ○ GLA staff: Product Owner / Service Manager and Delivery Manager
	    ○ 3rd party developer orgnisation: Two BAs (one only at project start), two front and two back end developers, a Technical Lead / developer team Project Manager, Design Lead (part time) and Service Delivery Manager / Head of Support
	- The current Product Owner is now moving to the position of Product Manager to oversee onboarding a significant number of new GLA teams to the service
	- The current Delivery Manager is moving to the role of Product Owner while also continuing in their previous role

	● The team is currently recruiting a Product Support Officer to help the new Product Owner
What could be improved?	● We encourage the team to take advantage of the new GLA Digital team User Researcher to plan further regular user research ● We suggest also regularly bringing in the the GLA Digital team Performance Analyst to act as a consultant on the systems analytics
Overall rating	1 2 3 4 **5**

3. Use agile methods
Create a service using the agile, iterative and user-centred methods set out in the Government Service Design Manual - find out more

What was good?	● GLA Ops works in two week sprints and undertakes the full standard range of Agile process ceremonies including monthly show and tells ● Comments from show and tells and other mechanisms are fed into a separate "feedback" store for review and some are then moved into the backlog ● The backlog for the service is in the open ● GLA-Ops undertook significant user research at the start of the service and now includes more for for new features or hard bugs
What could be improved?	● We suggest GLA-Ops could start live streaming their show and tells ● We also encourage GLA-Ops to move to regular user testing every sprint - but we understand the current financial and capacity issues restricting the ability to do that
Overall rating	1 2 3 4 **5**

4. Iterate and improve regularly
Build a service that can be iterated and improved in response to user need and make sure you have the capacity, resources and technical flexibility to do so - find out more

What was good?	● A new Mayoral Decision has just been approved to continue to fund the project 'as a service' rather than a project. ● The team has been collecting a backlog of work and hopes to use this to inform future development phases ● This backlog is periodically reviewed by the Product Owner and members of the original Agile delivery team ● The ongoing support arrangements cover bug fixes and minor feature work, such as security fixes and package upgrades

What could be improved?	N/A				
Overall rating	1	2	3	4	**5**

5. Evaluate appropriate tools and systems
Evaluate what tools and systems will be used to build, host, operate and measure the service, and how to procure them, looking to reuse existing technologies where possible - *find out more*

What was good?	- GLA-Ops is a cloud based HTML5 webapp hosted in AWS and as such requires no downloads or installations - The supplier recommended the tools / systems which met the GLA Tech Group Technical Standards. The supplier and Product Owner continue to evaluating this throughout development "Safe and secure" was a key them at all stages of selecting tools / systems - The team documentation for the service includes a set of technical standards - The technical stack for the service includes: Jax-RS (Java RESTful services) and Postgres - The technical stack used to support the service includes: Windows (the service environment in AWS), git, FindBugs, Jira, Confluence, TeamCity and Cloudwatch - Test data is created using Liquibase - JasperSoft is user for report generation - MoveIt is used to integrate with TfL's SAP system for providing payments to grant receiving organisations - The build environment chain is: developer laptops, QA environment, pre-prod (staging) and live - Performance and security testing are done regularly outside of the main build environment chain - Six monthly PEN tests are undertaken by an external company - The team has built own dashboard which flags up a number of items such as internal system errors
What could be improved?	- We encourage GLA-Ops to ensure that all documentation, build stack, etc are hosted and maintained outside of 3rd party partner environments to allow for quick and easy change of development partner - We suggest investigation of introducing some security testing into the regular build environment chain rather than relying on

		perioding PEN testing - speak to NCSC for details
		● We also suggest that GLA-Ops blog about their internal dashboard to inform and encourage other services in the GLA and local government sector to implement similarly useful tools

Overall rating	1	2	3	**4**	5

6. Evaluate user data and information
Evaluate what user data and information the digital service will be providing or storing and address the security level, legal responsibilities, privacy issues and risks associated with the service - find out more

What was good?	● Currently the only personal data kept on the system are name and email address ● GLA-Ops has a system of access control which limits which users have access to personal data ● The team works closely with the GLA Information Governance team to ensure the service is compliant to both the detail and the spirit of the GDPR ● In general GLA-Ops records information on project outcomes, not about individuals ● We understand that the GLA Skills team will shortly be starting to use the service and that at that point a detailed discovery and assessment of their user needs will take place before a series of discussions with GLA Information Governance as their requirements may involve storing more personal data
What could be improved?	● We encourage the service to introduce a "system log", accessible only to admins, which records which users have taken what actions on the system including viewing or altering any private data

Overall rating	1	2	3	4	**5**

7. Use open standards
Use open standards, existing authoritative data and registers, and where possible make source code and service data open and reusable under appropriate licenses - find out more

What was good?	● The system does not consume any data feeds in the live service. All data is entered by users. ● The codebase for GLA-Ops is published as open source but not systematically

What could be improved?	- We encourage GLA-Ops to move to a "coding in the open" model - We support GLA-Ops's desire to use external data feeds in future such as GDS's Registers and a mechanism for finding addresses from data such as postcodes - We also encourage the team to investigate the possibility of producing open data using the 360 giving format for open grants funding

Overall rating	1	2	3	**4**	5

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8. Test the end-to-end service
Be able to test the end-to-end service in an environment similar to that of the live version, including all common browsers and devices - find out more

What was good?	- The develop / build / test / deploy pipeline is modern and impressive - The build environment pipeline is structured around the use of TeamCity - To date the service has over 1,000 Cucumber / Gherkin based automated tests including JUnit for unit tests and end-to-end browser tests using Selenium - Test data is created using Liquibase - Manual testing is undertaken by the 3rd party supplier and the Product Owner to check new tests have been correctly written developers - There is a limited amount of Test Driven Development - There is a limited amount of mobile testing
What could be improved?	- Firstly we would encourage GLA-Ops to blog and speak regularly about the build / test / deploy platform both within the GLA family and across the Local Government Digital community - We would encourage the team to increase the amount of Test Driven Development that is undertaken - Finally, we suggest considering the use of Browserstack, or an equivalent cloud based mobile platform testing environment, is made a standard part of the regular automated testing for GLA-Ops

Overall rating	1	2	3	4	**5**

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9. Make a plan for being offline
Make a plan for the event of the digital service being taken temporarily offline, and regularly test - find out more

What was good?	- The service has an associated 3rd party cloud based monitoring system - If the system goes down a manual "temporary offline" message is ready to be deployed - The SLA with the 3rd party development partner for critical issues in 4 hours - The service is sometimes required to be taken offline for 1-2 hours for scheduled downtime. A banner message is put in place some time beforehand to inform users. - SLA for Keytree - four hours for critical fix - Daily database snapshots are taken so even if the event of a critical failure a maximum of a day's data will be lost - There is a manual escalation process of who to inform if the site is offline for longer periods of time
What could be improved?	- We suggest that the GLA-Ops build environment pipeline could be updated to support blue / green zero downtime deployments - We query where the database snapshots are daily rather than more frequent during working hours - We also suggest automating the escalation of who is informed at times of system failure
Overall rating	1 2 3 **4** 5

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10. Make sure users succeed first time
Make sure that the service is simple enough that users succeed first time unaided - find out more

What was good?	- The service includes continuous "save as you go" functionality (similar to Google Docs) to aid use of the system - The various "data blocks" that users need to interact with can be filled out in any order - Data blocks can have mandatory data but the associated forms can be submitted even if that data is not known at the time. The associated block will be marked as unfinished. - The team continues to undertake usability testing majoritively with external users - For accessibility the site is compliant to WCAG 1 and uses a 3rd party Google Chrome tool to continue to test this - Returning to accessibility with the new suppliers - potential to work with GDS / DAC / etc
What could be improved?	- We encourage GLA-Ops to make accessibility testing part of its regular build environment pipeline - We suggest that the team speaks to GDS and/or a 3rd part advisor for advice on how to improve accessibility

Overall rating	1	2	3	**4**	5

11. Build a consistent user experience
Build a service consistent with the user experience of government digital services, including using common government platforms and the Government Service Manual design patterns - find out more

What was good?	- The current version of the site is consistently rated as very clear and easy to use by participants in user research and via other feedback - They acknowledge that the language used on the site is currently aimed at a particular "technical" user group (e.g. planning / housing / etc) and will need modification as the user base expands - The team is currently implementing a consistent response to the user clicking on the browser "back button" (often overlooked) - Following this review GLA-Ops is now in conversation with the GLA Creative team about bringing the site more into line with GLA Digital design guidelines and branding
What could be improved?	- The site does not yet fully conform to GLA design and Branding guidelines - The existing site requires a review from the GLA Digital Content team - e.g. for use of all-capital sentences and language (see above) - The site is not currently optimised for mobile as it is believed, from user research, that sections of the site will be very rarely accessed from a mobile device - We encourage the team to pursue working with the GLA Design team to be GLA-Ops more in line with the rest of the transactional sites on London.gov - We suggest that the GLA-Ops team investigate and strongly consider using front-end functionality provided in the new GDS Design System - Finally, we encourage GLA-Ops to take advantage of regular cross-government design criticism meetings ("design crits")

Overall rating	1	2	**3**	4	5

12. Encourage everyone to use the digital service
Encourage maximum usage of the digital service (with assisted digital support if required) - find out more

What was good?	● Throughout the development of the service the GLA-Ops team has had a parallel focus on related business process change work ● A significant part of this has been getting stakeholders used to the concept of Agile development as opposed to handing requirements to a a 3rd party software provider who then supplies a completed product. ● Teams onboarding GLA-Ops are required to supply subject matter experts - partly to help with the development and prioritisation of new features but also to add as chief communicators and cheerleaders of the service within their organisations ● External organisations are highly motivated to work with the service, including participating is user research, as they are dependant on the grants from the GLA that the system facilitated ● Regular reports are generated using JasperSoft which are used to encourage senior managers, alongside case studies and personal recommendations, to put their teams in the roadmap of those to be onboarded in future
What could be improved?	● We encourage GLA-Ops to build a set of internal GLA champions who will proactively wish to communicate about the tool through public blogs, taking part in the show and tells, internal presentations and via their own personal networks ● We also encourage the team to openly publish the roadmap they currently have in Confluence

Overall rating	1	2	3	**4**	5

13. Identify performance indicators
Identify performance indicators for the service, incorporating existing indicators and publishing to a performance platform, if appropriate - find out more

What was good?	● The team defined a set of success measures at the start of the project in combination with senior stakeholders these included:
	  ○ Overall time to define a "operations project" - reduced to 55 from 110 days
	  ○ Time for service bug fixes to be implemented - reduced by 20 days from 40 days
	  ○ Time for page load
	● The success measures were reviewed after MVP and continue to be reviewing ongoing and regularly communicated to senior stakeholders

What could be improved?	● We encourage GLA-Ops to define success measures that highlight the corporate advantage of having such a system in house in the GLA

	● We also suggest active discussion with GLA policy teams and senior management about measurable indicators that show whether individual policy intentions are being successful ● We further encourage the team to work with the GLA Digital new Performance Analyst ● Finally we encourage GLA-Ops to put a public facing dashboard in place as part of the Mayor's open data and transparency commitments

Overall rating	1	2	3	4	5

14. Do ongoing user research
Put a process in place for ongoing user research, usability testing to continuously seek feedback from users, and collection of performance data to inform future improvement to the service - find out more

What was good?	● The team undertakes user research as required to gain feedback on the current iteration of the service and to help prioritise work for future springs ● The site is instrumented with Google Analytics to provide further assistance with those decisions
What could be improved?	● We encourage GLA-Ops to move to regular user testing every sprint - but we understand the current financial and capacity issues restricting the ability to do that ● We suggest that the service's build and deploy pipeline is configured to enable easy configuration of split A/B testing to allow multiple variants to be tested with real users and analytics then used to see what works best ● We also suggest working with a google analytics specialist to expand what information is measured on the site by introducing the use of a more details analytics package such as HotJar

Overall rating	1	2	3	4	5

15. Test with senior manager
Test the service from beginning to end with appropriate council member or senior manager responsible for it - find out more

What was good?	● There is a awareness of GLA-Ops in the senior decisions makers in the GLA including the current Chief of Staff and MOPAC's Chief Financial Officer
What could be improved?	● We encourage taking advantage of this awareness to move these stakeholders to actively promoting the service both in

	person and by providing testimonials - including via in-person usability testing ● We also encourage GLA-Ops to actively gain the support of at least one GLA Deputy Mayor and Assembly Member ● We encourage the service to ensure that good senior stakeholder relationships are maintained during the current period of GLA senior management change ● Finally, we encourage GLA-Ops to take full advantage of these relationships to help build the backlog of teams that will move onto the system - initially from within the GLA and then hopefully beyond				
Overall rating	1	2	**3**	4	5