

SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

What is social impact?

Social impact is the positive change that your organisation has created or effected over time.

This change could be social, economic and/or environmental.

As a charity or social enterprise, creating positive social impact is at the heart of what you do and you must be able to identify, understand and capture the full value of the impact of your activities.

Understanding, measuring and communicating impact is extremely important for marketing purposes and to win new contracts and secure existing funders & customers. Impact is also central to your organisation's strategy as it helps you know whether you are meeting your mission and vision in the long-term. Your team, your funders, your clients and your other stakeholders will want to know - showing your impact makes you accountable to them.

How do you measure impact?

Your organisation probably already has an 'impact attitude' - where you are regularly thinking, talking, telling and questioning the impact you make. Building on this foundation and more formally planning, measuring and communicating your impact will help you to get to the truth about what your organisation achieves in the world. That way, you will be better able to improve it and it will also help to strengthen your organisation. You need to understand your impact to:

- gain funding
- secure investment
- win tenders / contracts
- strengthen your image and build your "brand"
- be accountable to your board and your stakeholders
- make better decisions

There are many different ways to think about your impact; however, the starting point should be asking yourself:

- What are the longer term changes for people, the environment or the economy that our organisation creates or contributes to?
- What are the most important things we need to know about? You can find this out by asking what impacts, if we were not achieving them, would stop us from meeting our mission?
- Are there any other things we need to know about - such as unexpected impacts of our activities (either positive or negative)?

- Who do we need to tell and in what form do they need to know (e.g. report, funding framework, video, flyer, talking...?)

In other words, you need to always have your social impact in mind. Plan to create it, deliver it, improve it and communicate it: it is a continuous process. Let that be your focus and use tools and methodologies presented below to help you create more impact.

A practical method to help you measure your Social Impact:

Stage One: How to source your impact

- Who do we talk to and about what?
- How do we talk to them?
- What information do we want to capture?
- How do we collect it?

Stage Two: How to analyse your impact

- What is the key information reflecting my impact?
- What are we going to do with the information we have?
- Which is the most accurate and appropriate way to analyze the data?

Stage Three: How to use and communicate your impact

- What do you want to communicate? All findings / some findings
- To who and for what purpose?
- Through which channel? What form do they need to know it?

Stage 1: Source your impact

As a starting point you will need to understand the “scope” of your impact. Charities and Social enterprises should be carefully about attributing wider changes to their activities only, as other factors may have contributed to creating these changes, or perhaps they could have happened anyway! Therefore this initial step is crucial for you to scope your organisation’s impact

Ask yourself:

- What needs do we really address?
- What long term changes are created by our organisation?
- What do I feel?

These can be of immediate help and provide the basis for the start of your measuring impact work and keep you on track.

After writing down the scope of what needs to be measured, you need then to ask yourself what data is already out there. You might have more data than you think, though you haven’t formally captured on written or digital support all of

it, you might be able to access external data or recall discussions, statements from your stakeholders. Here is what you should initially research:

- Internet / academic search
- Existing conversations you have with your stakeholders
- What do you already have? For example, phone call logs or event participant numbers, monitoring data for funders, case study interview transcripts or a mind map you drew in a meeting.

Do you already talk to beneficiaries or customers about your service or product? You can add to what you are already doing, by including extra questions or taking a baseline.

It is time now for you to start collecting raw data!

By asking good questions and gathering fuller information, you are getting a more open-ended, clearer picture:

- What question do you want to answer or what is your hypothesis? E.g. what difference does our service make to the lives of our users?
- Who you will need to approach to get the information that you need?
- What methods will you use?

| Data collection mechanism | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interviews - (what sort?) ○ Questionnaires / surveys ○ Attendance record and logs (paper registers, online- eventbrite) ○ Feedback forms ○ Minutes of meetings ○ Postcards ○ Questions in pub quizzes ○ Idea walls ○ External/third party evaluation ○ Focus groups ○ Camera / photos ○ Participant observation ○ Thought experiment ○ Mood board ○ Speech bubbles ○ Flip cameras ○ Visual journals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Look back move forward - www.proveit.org.uk/project_reflection.html ○ Outcomes stars - www.outcomesstar.org.uk ○ Online survey - E.g. www.surveymonkey.com ○ Online polls ○ Online open text box / wiki ○ Storytelling ○ Dictaphone - record interviews or record quotes ○ Suggestion box / piece of card ○ Phone interviews ○ Combine - e.g. an event to evaluate, discuss and talk, then capture photos / quotes |

Stage 2: Analyse your impact

A quick process for analysing

- Organise, consider or analyse data for themes or patterns
- Reflect on data
- Theorise or draw conclusions

Questions to investigate typically include:

- What went well? Why?
- What could have been done better?
- Why was this not as good as expected?
- What can you do to make sure this is done better next time?
- Are there any unexpected consequences of our activities (positive and negative)?
- What would have happened anyway? (Deadweight)
- How can we be sure that these changes were caused by our project or programme (Attribution / contribution)
- Were there any negative effects of our activities or have they be achieved at the expense of others? (Displacement)
- What does this mean for society / economy / environment? E.g. savings to the treasuring, impact on local economy, carbon reduction.

Stage 3: Use and communicate your impact Proving and improving, sharing and learning

What should you communicate?

- What you have achieved - your impacts!
- How you did it.
- What you have learnt / challenges / what went wrong!

Organisations that are best at communicating their impact are the ones that can tell the stories and talk about the people whose lives they have changed. Make sure you illustrate through case studies and communicate your social impact through appropriate routes.

Make sure as well to communicate both internally and externally:

- Communicating and reporting social impact can help increase your credibility, reputation and attract new customers, funders and even investors. Social Impact should link into your marketing strategy and feed into its key messages.
- It is easy to assume that others can infer what your social and/or environmental impact is from your activities, but this is not always so

- obvious. You need to know what is working and what isn't, be able to improve it and be able to tell other people about it.
- When communicating your social impact, whether you have evaluated it in-house or have received external support to do so, it is important to be very clear about how your activities have led to this social, environmental or economic impact and to support your claims with evidence from your indicators.
 - Not only do your external stakeholders need to be aware of the changes you are making happen, but your own team should also be the first to know about it. It will keep your staff and volunteers motivated and positive about working with you. They will be able to advocate even better for your organization then.

Reporting - communicating your impact to appropriate stakeholders through:

- Annual reports,
- Social impact reports
- Social / environmental accounts
- An annual stakeholders' meeting
- Staff and trustees meeting
- Funding reports
- Marketing materials
- Fundraising materials

Tip: Whatever the 'form' communications should be targeted, purposeful, audience-focused. Information can be beautiful!

Finally learn & take action on the things that matter!

Some tools and approaches

| METHOD | WHAT IS IT? | WHAT DOES IT DO? | MORE INFORMATION |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|
| Storyboard / Impact Mapping | This is a 'theory of change' method that allows stakeholders to articulate a shared understanding of where and how an initiative brings about change. | The storyboard and impact map allow you to clarify the changes that you want to see happen. It is a simple tool that can help identify the most important things to measure. | http://www.proveandimprove.org/new/meaim/whattomeasure.php |
| Outcomes Stars | The Outcomes Star™ measures progress for service users receiving support in order to maximise independence or achieve other goals. There are different versions of the Star for different sectors (e.g. homelessness, substance misuse, | Using the mental health tool as an example, outcome areas include trust, hope, identity and self-esteem; which could be seen as being more difficult to measure. The process is repeated at regular | www.outcomesstar.org.uk |

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| | mental health and young people). | intervals, depending on the project's requirements. | |
| New Philanthropy Capital Wellbeing Questionnaire | NPC have developed a questionnaire which has been developed to measure levels of wellbeing. The questionnaire has been created in parallel with the Children's society and is being piloted with five other charities. | Use of the questionnaire involves observing children's levels of wellbeing and how it changes over time. Additionally, the tool allows for exploration of how intervention can affect different aspects of a child's wellbeing. It is stated on the website that it has been developed for the third sector to use for small cost. | www.philanthropycapital.org |
| Social Accounting and Audit | Social accounting is the process of collecting information about the activities an organisation carries out which affect its stakeholders. These activities may be intended 'outputs' or just the day to day internal operations. | Social accounting has been developed with an external, quality-assured audit process so that an organisation's claims can be credible (proved) and used to demonstrate organisational development (improvement). | www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk |
| LM3 - Local Multiplier 3 | LM3 was developed by nef (the new economics foundation) as a simple and understandable way of measuring local economic impact. | It is designed to help people to think about local money flows and how their organisation can practically improve its local economic impact, as well as influence the public sector to consider the impact of its procurement decisions. | www.lm3online.org www.nef-consulting.co.uk/en/page_149.html |
| Social Return on Investment (SROI) | SROI is an approach to understanding and managing the impacts of a project, organisation or policy. It is based on stakeholders and puts financial value on the important impacts identified by stakeholders that do not have market values. | SROI seeks to include the values of people that are often excluded from markets in the same terms as used in markets, that is money, in order to give people a voice in resource allocation decisions. SROI is a framework to structure thinking and understanding. | www.thesroinetwork.org |

For more information:

- www.proveandimprove.org
 - www.proveandimprove.org/new/meaim/developgoodindicators.php for more information on indicators and what makes a good indicator.
 - www.proveandimprove.org/new/meaim/samplendicators.php for sample indicators
- www.redochre.org.uk
- www.philanthropycapital.org (for useful reports)
- www.sroiproject.org.uk (for indicators bank)
- www.thesroinetwork.org - Social Return On Investment (SROI)
- www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk - Social Accounting and Audit Social Accounting Network
- www.cooperatives-uk.coop/Home/miniwebs/miniwebsA-z/cespis - Co-operatives UK's Environmental and Social Performance Indicators