

Assurance Process and Assessment Criteria

April 2015

For Social Value UK and Social Value International members wishing to apply for report assurance

The Social Value UK policy is to provide assurance that will test reports for a good understanding and application of Social Value principles and process. For an SROI report this means that principle # 3 “value what matters” requires the use of financial proxies. However, the criteria set out in this document can be applied to any social value/impact report.

Process/Scope

This report assurance process seeks to assess whether or not a report shows a good understanding of the Social Value principles. **A report must meet all of the assessment criteria set out in this document in order to demonstrate a good understanding of the Social Value principles.**

These assessment criteria will be used by assessors in order to produce a final assurance statement for a report. The assurance statement forms part of the report. If a report does not fully meet the assessment criteria then the assurance statement will identify the extent to which an understanding of the Social Value principles has been demonstrated (see page 2 for more information on the Assurance Statement).

Eligibility

To submit a report for assurance the applicants will need to ensure the following:

- that their membership of the Social Value UK is current
- provide proof that the permission of the organisation to submit the report has been granted
- complete the assurance application form

The assessment will be based on two documents:

- Value Map and
- written report based on the information in the Value Map.

Multiple value maps with a composite report will not be accepted for assessment without prior discussion with Social Value UK. Applicants will need to ensure that both the value map and report contain sufficient evidence to meet the assurance criteria.

The assessment criteria set out in this document are based on the Guide to Social Value UK and any supplements to the guide published by Social Value UK.

The Assurance Statement:

A Social Value UK approved assessor will use the assessment criteria to produce an assurance statement. The statement can be one of the three set out below:

“The Value Map and Written Report are consistent with and show a good understanding of SROI principles”

Or:

“The extent to which the Value Map and Written Report demonstrate an understanding of the SROI principles and process is set out below”

Principle	Meets criteria? <i>Please delete</i>	Commentary
Stakeholder involvement	All, Majority, Minority, None	
Understand change	All, Majority, Minority, None	
Value what matters	All, Majority, Minority, None	
Only include what is material	All, Majority, Minority, None	
Do not overclaim	All, Majority, Minority, None	
Be transparent	All, Majority, Minority, None	
Verify the result	All, Majority, Minority, None	

Or:

“The Value Map and Written Report do not provide sufficient understanding of SROI principles”

1 Involving stakeholders

The important issues are:

- identification of stakeholders and a rationale for those that have been included and excluded from involvement in the process
- evidence of involvement of the included stakeholders in the application of the other principles.

Stakeholders are those people or organisations that experience change as a result of the activity and they will be best placed to describe the change. This principle means that stakeholders need to be identified and then involved in consultation throughout the analysis.

Ref.	Criteria
1.1	<i>Have representatives of all stakeholder groups considered likely to experience material outcomes been consulted about what changes for them? (this is also a criteria for forecast reports even though those representatives may not become involved in the activity)</i>
1.2	<i>Is there information on how many stakeholders from each group were involved?</i>
1.3	<i>Is there evidence to support the number involved as providing a reasonable basis for determining outcomes?</i>
1.4	<i>Does the report describe decisions about whether or not changes should be analysed for sub-groups of stakeholders where different outcomes are or may be experienced?</i>
1.5	<i>Are judgements to analyse, or not, stakeholders into separate subgroups, based on evidence that subgroups do, or do not, experience materially different outcomes?</i>
1.6	<i>Where a stakeholder group cannot be involved, does the report include evidence why this has not been possible?</i>
1.7	<i>Does the report include evidence that reasonable avenues of involvement have been considered (including involving another group to act as a proxy)?</i>
1.8	<i>Does the report clearly describe how stakeholder involvement has taken place, recognising that different groups or organisations require different approaches?</i>
1.9	<i>Is there evidence on how the involvement process has reduced the risk that those involved are not representative of the group?</i>
1.10	<i>Does the report clearly describe how qualitative data from stakeholder involvement has been gathered and recorded?</i>
1.11	<i>Are the questions presented to stakeholders included in the report?</i>
1.12	<i>Do the questions reflect an open approach to identifying outcomes, including positive and negative outcomes?</i>
1.13	<i>Is there evidence that stakeholder groups have been consulted about the value (relative importance) of outcomes to them?</i>
1.14	<i>If not are reasons included?</i>
1.15	<i>Is there evidence that stakeholder groups have been consulted about how they would evidence and measure change?</i>
1.16	<i>If not are reasons included?</i>
1.17	<i>Is there evidence that stakeholder groups have been consulted about the duration of outcomes?</i>
1.18	<i>If not are reasons included?</i>
1.19	<i>Is there evidence that stakeholders groups have been consulted about which other organisations or people contributed to the outcome?</i>

1.20	<i>If not are reasons included?</i>
1.21	<i>Is there evidence that stakeholders have been consulted about what might have taken place if the activity under analysis had not taken place?</i>
1.22	<i>If not are reasons included?</i>
1.23	For a forecast report , are there plans and recommendations in the report to ensure ongoing involvement of stakeholders in producing actual information to compare with forecast information?

2 Understand what changes

The important issues are:

- inclusion of a clear explanation of the theories of change or chains of events for included stakeholders
- statement of which outcome in each theory of change will be valued and why
- evidence to support causality in the theory of change
- the experience of all stakeholders in stakeholder groups is included

Ref.	Criteria
2.1	<i>Has the author made clear that the analysis is either a forecast or evaluative study?</i>
2.2	<i>Are the activities for which the social return is being analysed clear?</i>
2.3	<i>Is the period over which the activities occur clear?</i>
2.4	<i>Is the theory of change, input, output and outcomes, which result from stakeholder involvement, supported by reasoning to show how the results of involvement have informed the theories of change for each stakeholder group?</i>
2.5	<i>Is third party research or organisation's documented evidence that supports causality in the theory of change included?</i>
2.6	<i>If not is a reason included?</i>
2.7	<i>Have the outcomes been recorded against the stakeholder group that will experience the outcome?</i>
2.8	<i>Have unintended and negative outcomes been included in the analysis?</i>
2.9	<i>If not is the evidence that they do not take place included? (This would include evidence from other evaluations or research on similar activities. A statement that this is a forecast report is not evidence)</i>
2.10	<i>Are the outcomes in the Value Map consistent with the report?</i>
2.11	<i>Is there evidence to support the included duration of each of the outcomes after the end of the activity?</i>
2.12	<i>Is there evidence for the relevance of the indicators to the outcomes?</i>
2.13	<i>Where an indicator by itself does not give sufficient confidence about the amount of outcome that has or will occur, a combination of indicators should be used. Is there evidence that the indicators used are sufficient to give confidence about the amount of change created?</i>
2.14	<i>Is there evidence that the sample of stakeholders used to derive how much change is experienced by the stakeholder group is reasonable?</i>
2.15	<i>Is the amount of change included based on the difference between a baseline situation for the stakeholder group at the start of the activity and the position at the end of the activity?</i>
2.16	<i>If not are reasons included?</i>
2.17	In a forecast report <i>is the quantity of expected change supported by proposals for how actual data will be collected to compare against the forecast?</i>
2.18	In a forecast report <i>has evidence to support the forecast quantities of change being included? (this can include results from previous years, from other similar activities of a similar scale, from market research with people who share characteristics of expected future stakeholders)</i>
2.19	<i>Are the outcomes for all the stakeholders in a group included so that it is clear what happens to any members of a group that do not experience an included outcome?</i>
2.20	<i>Are all the outcomes in the Value Map consistent with the report?</i>

3 Value things that matter

The important issue is that the financial proxies should reflect the value of the outcomes to the stakeholder group

Ref.	Criteria
3.1	<i>Have all relevant inputs made by stakeholders been included?</i>
3.2	<i>Is there evidence to support the value of each input?</i>
3.3	<i>Where an input has not been valued has a reason been included?</i>
3.4	<i>Is the calculation of the total input or investment accurate?</i>
3.5	<i>Have all the material outcomes been given a value?</i>
3.6	<i>Is there evidence to support the choice of valuation methodology?</i>
3.7	<i>Where stakeholders have not been directly involved in determining value is there evidence that the values used are nonetheless representative</i>
3.8	<i>Is each financial proxy used relevant to the stakeholder group for which value is being claimed?</i>
3.9	<i>Is there evidence to support the choice of financial proxies for each outcome?</i>
3.10	<i>Does the calculation of the value avoid double counting, especially where more than one indicator has been used?</i>
3.11	<i>Is the calculation of the value of each outcome accurate?</i>

4 Only include what is material

The important issues are:

- is there evidence to support decisions to exclude outcomes identified from stakeholder involvement and other research?
- does the evidence show why the stakeholder group would not be expected to make a different decision in relation to the activity had the information been included?

Ref.	Criteria
4.1	<i>Does the report clearly explain that any decisions to include and exclude stakeholders are based on expected or actual outcomes?</i>
4.2	<i>Are judgements to exclude stakeholders prior to involvement based on evidence that a stakeholder group will or did not experience material outcomes from previous year's research on the same activity?</i>
4.3	<i>Where judgements to exclude stakeholders prior to involvement are based on third party research is there evidence that the third party research was consistent with these assurance criteria?</i>
4.4	<i>Where outcomes have been excluded from the calculation of total value is there evidence that the outcome is not relevant?</i>
4.5	<i>Where outcomes have been included as relevant but subsequently excluded from the calculation of total value is there evidence that the outcome is not significant based on value, quantity and causality?</i>
4.6	<i>Where an organisational theory of change or mission described in the report dominates the outcomes included is there evidence to support this?</i>
4.7	<i>If so is there evidence to support the case that other outcomes, positive and negative, experienced by stakeholders are not material?</i>
4.8	<i>In a forecast report, where there is more risk of the outcomes focusing on the organisation's theory of change, is there evidence that other research that might highlight other outcomes is not available?</i>
4.9	<i>Is there any reason, in the experience of the assessor, that the activity would have other material outcomes that have not been included?</i>

5 Do not over claim

The important issue is that the analysis does not overstate the value claimed as caused by the activity;

Ref.	Criteria
5.1	<i>Is the approach used to assessing 'what would have happened anyway' clear (counterfactual, deadweight)?</i>
5.2	<i>Is there evidence to support the proportion of what would have happened anyway based on this approach?</i>
5.3	<i>Is there consideration of the risk of over claiming using the chosen approach?</i>
5.4	<i>Is there evidence to support the calculation of the activity's contribution to the value claimed (or attribution to other organisations or groups of people)?</i>
5.5	<i>Is the risk of displacement considered?</i>
5.6	<i>Where there is displacement has the relevant stakeholder group affected by displacement been recognised?</i>
5.7	<i>For outcomes that last more than one period more than the activity (e.g. for a one year activity lasting for two or more years) is there evidence to support decisions on how the level of outcome may drop-off over time?</i>

6 Be transparent

The important issue is that all decisions relating to stakeholders, outcomes, indicators, values, and counterfactual; the sources and methods of information collection; the difference scenarios considered and the involvement and communication of the results to stakeholders should be explained and documented.

Ref.	Criteria
6.1	<i>Is there a summary of which stakeholders and outcomes have been excluded?</i>
6.2	<i>Is the Value Map clear and transparent and is the report completely consistent with Value Map contents?</i>
6.3	<i>Is there a summary of a sensitivity analysis that tested for quantities, values, counterfactual, attribution, displacement and drop off for each outcome?</i>
6.4	<i>If the sensitivity analysis did not cover all these is there a reason given?</i>
6.5	<i>Are all data sources in both the Value Map that do not relate to stakeholder involvement but to other sources of evidence referenced in a way that would enable the reader to refer and verify?</i>
6.6	<i>Is the data derived from stakeholder involvement related back to the process and results of involvement?</i>
6.7	<i>Are all calculations set out in a way that makes it possible for the calculation to be replicated and to arrive at the same result of social return?</i>
6.8	<i>Is the final calculation of the range of values included correct?</i>
6.9	<i>Are risks of errors discussed?</i>
6.10	<i>For a forecast report are there plans for assessing actual results to compare against the forecast?</i>

7 Verify the result

The important issue is that stakeholders have had an opportunity to review the information in the report

Ref.	Criteria
7.1	<i>Is there evidence on the extent to which stakeholders have been involved in reviewing and verifying the claims in the analysis?</i>