

Measuring Social Value: A new approach to measuring impact of Youth Employment Programs

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This note is part of a series of [Solutions for Youth Employment \(S4YE\)](#) knowledge briefs to promote a culture of innovation, learning and evidence-based decision making among youth employment practitioners.

Social value is a way of measuring the impact of an intervention on the wellbeing of different stakeholders, beyond economic outcomes. Youth employment programs can use social value approaches to capture and quantify the full range of outcomes and impacts that they create, such as improving health, reducing poverty, enhancing social cohesion, and contributing to sustainable development. This can help to demonstrate the value for money and the positive difference that the programs make, as well as to identify areas for improvement and innovation.

One way to measure social value is to use the Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework. It compares the investment cost of an initiative or service with the measured or expected outcomes, using monetary values to represent the benefits and costs. It calculates a ratio that shows how much social value is created for every unit of investment. SROI also involves engaging with the stakeholders of the initiative or service, such as beneficiaries, funders, partners, and society at large, to understand and value their perspectives and experiences.

This knowledge brief describes how [The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation \(the Foundation\)](#), an international charity and licensing body of The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award (the Award); a Non-Formal Education and Learning framework for young people aged 14-24 years old, uses the SROI framework and has developed a social value methodology (SVM) to measure the impact that the Award has on its stakeholders, such as Award holders, adults who support Award delivery, and wider society.

The SVM considers five social value impact categories: improved employability and earning potential, improved physical health and fitness, improved mental health and emotional wellbeing, increased engagement with charitable and community causes, and increased social cohesion.

Measuring Social Value: A new approach to measuring impact of Youth Employment Programs

1. Introduction

Social value is the relative importance that people place on the changes to their wellbeing that result from an intervention, such as a program, policy, or service.¹ It is a way of measuring and demonstrating the impact of the intervention on different stakeholders, such as beneficiaries, funders, partners, and society at large, beyond economic outcomes.²

Youth employment programs provide young people with opportunities to develop skills, gain work experience, and access jobs. They also have wider social and environmental effects, such as improving

¹ [What is social value? — Social Value International](#)

² [Measuring Social Value \(ssir.org\)](#)

health and wellbeing, reducing poverty and inequality, enhancing social cohesion and civic participation, and contributing to sustainable development. Conventional methods of evaluation often overlook or undervalue these effects, focusing on the financial returns and costs of the programs.

By using social value approaches, youth employment programs can capture and quantify the full range of outcomes and impacts that they create. This can help to demonstrate the value for money and the positive difference that the programs make, as well as to identify areas for improvement and innovation. Social value measurements can also help to communicate the impact of the programs to various audiences, and to engage them in a dialogue about the goals and priorities of the programs.

One way to measure social value is to use the Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework³. It compares the investment cost of an initiative or service with the measured or expected outcomes, using monetary values to represent the benefits and costs. It calculates a ratio that shows how much social value is created for every unit of investment. SROI also involves engaging with the stakeholders of the initiative or service, such as beneficiaries, funders, partners, and society at large, to understand and value their perspectives and experiences.

This knowledge brief describes how The [Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation](#), measures the impact of The Award, a global Non-Formal Education and Learning framework for youth⁴, using the SROI. This brief will share the outcomes of applying the SROI framework to the Award, as well as recommendations for other youth organizations interested in measuring and enhancing their social value.

2. What is The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award?

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award (the Award) is a Non-Formal Education and Learning framework supporting young people to find their purpose, place and passion in the world – through physical activity, skill practice, voluntary service, and a team-based Adventurous Journey. Founded in 1956, the Award operates in more than 120 countries, where the globally recognised accreditation is available to all 14 to 24-year-olds, inclusive of all backgrounds, locations, cultures and abilities. Today there are consistently over a million young people taking on the Award's challenge to believe in the power of their potential, make a difference in their community and take control of their future. The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation is the international charity which drives and supports the Award's global activity and growth through a *social franchise* model (Figure 1). Working in partnership with organizations and governing bodies, the Foundation oversees the licensing of Award operators around the world– including schools, youth groups, employers and custodial institutions.

³ [What is social value? — Social Value International](#)

⁴ Aged 14-27

Figure 1: Social Franchise model to deliver the Award

Structure of The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award



The Award framework comprises of four sections and corresponding activities, chosen by the individual: to help young people develop transferable skills, increase their fitness levels, cultivate a sense of adventure, and volunteer in their community (Figure 2). The Award consists of three levels (Bronze, Silver and Gold) with time commitments to each section increasing with Award level. By committing a minimum of 6, 12, or 18 months each young person designs and creates their own bespoke Award program, unique to them. In 2022, over one million young people were active in their own unique Award program as Award participants.

Figure 2: The Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award Structure

Award Activities	Goals	Examples	Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence • Managing Feelings • Communication • Problem Solving • Resilience and Determination • Creativity and Adaptability • Relationships and Leaderships • Personal and Social Wellbeing • Civic Competence • Intercultural Competence
1. Voluntary Service	Participants volunteer in their communities, make a positive contribution to society, and demonstrate social responsibility.	Sports coaching, volunteering at a hospital, first aid	
2. Physical Recreation	Encourages young people to participate in sport and other physical recreation for the improvement of health, fitness, and wellbeing.	Basketball, water polo, taekwondo	
3. Skills	Encourages the development of personal	Gardening, jewellery making, singing	

	interests, creativity, or practical skills.		
4. Adventurous Journey	Enables young people to discover a spirit of adventure and gain a deeper understanding of the environment and the great outdoors.	Completing a demanding journey by foot, cycle, canoe or kayak, carrying out health surveys or health education in a remote area	<p>Award Impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved employability and earning potential • Improved mental health and emotional wellbeing • Improved physical health and fitness • Increased engagement with charitable and community causes • Increased social cohesion • Improved environmental impact • Reduced offending
5. Gold Residential Project *Only available at Gold level	<p>Aim to broaden participants' horizons through involvement with others in a residential setting.</p> <p>Participants have the opportunity to share a purposeful experience with people who are not their usual companions and work towards a common goal, set out by the participants themselves.</p>	Residential language course, voluntary work with a national park, youth camp overseas	

3. Calculating Social Value

The Foundation uses a social value methodology (SVM) to measure the impact that the Award has on its stakeholders. This approach was developed using PricewaterhouseCoopers' (PwC) [Total Impact Measurement and Management \(TIMM\) Framework](#). The TIMM Framework builds on approaches such as Social Return on Investment (SROI) Principles⁵, World Business Council for Sustainable Development's Social & Human Capital Protocol⁶ and the UK Government's Green Book on Policy Appraisal and Evaluation.⁷

Three key stakeholders experience direct social benefits due to the Award:

1. Award Holders (benefits occur during and after Award completion)
2. Adults who support Award delivery (e.g. Award staff and volunteers, e.g. Award Coordinators and Leaders)
3. Wider society (local community and organizations impacted by Voluntary Service activities)

⁵ **Eight key principles of Social Value:** involve stakeholders, understand what changes, value the things that matter, only include what is material, do not overclaim, be transparent, verify the result, be responsive. Source: [Social Value International](#)

⁶ https://docs.wbcsd.org/2019/02/Social_and_Human_Capital_Protocol.pdf

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-green-book-appraisal-and-evaluation-in-central-government>

The impact measurement considers **five social value impact categories** on these stakeholder groups:

1. Improved employability and earning potential
2. Improved physical health and fitness
3. Improved mental health and emotional wellbeing
4. Increased engagement with charitable and community causes
5. Increased social cohesion

Any positive benefit considered in the methodology is calculated through an **impact pathway (Table 1)**.

Table 1: Each Impact Category is broken down into contributing impact calculation pathways

Impact Categories	Present Value or Future Value	Beneficiary	Impact Calculation Pathway
1. Improved employability and earning potential	Present Value	Adults who support Award delivery	Increased earnings for adults associated with delivering the Award ⁸
	Future Value	Award Holders	Increased earnings
2. Improved physical health and fitness.	Present Value	Award Holders	Physical Health benefits from Adventurous Journey and Gold Residential Projects
		Adults who support Award delivery	Physical Health benefits from Adventurous Journey
3. Improved mental health and emotional wellbeing.	Present Value	Award Holders	Wellbeing benefits from increased physical activity
			Wellbeing benefits from spending time on skills
			Wellbeing benefits from increased confidence
			Wellbeing benefits from relief from depression/anxiety
			Wellbeing benefits from increased agency
			Wellbeing benefits from personal development, training course, or activity-based Gold Residential Projects
	Adults who support Award delivery	Wellbeing benefits for adults from Award training ⁹	
Future Value	Award Holders	Wellbeing benefits from increased physical activity	
		Wellbeing benefits from spending time on skills	
4. Increased engagement with charitable and community causes	Present Value	Award Holders	Wellbeing benefits from increased volunteering
		Adults who support Award delivery	Wellbeing benefits from increased volunteering
		Wider Society	Value of volunteer hours from Voluntary Service section

⁸ Some adults who support Award delivery may be paid specifically to deliver the Award when they would not otherwise have that extra income. Some adults receive raises that are attributable to Award training or other experience gained by delivering the Award.

⁹ As part of delivering the Award, adults will complete training courses related to working with young people as well as role-specific training, such as supervising the Adventurous Journey section of the Award.

			Value of volunteer hours from voluntary service Gold Residential Projects
	Future Value	Award Holders	Wellbeing benefits from volunteering
		Wider Society	Value of volunteer hours
5. Increased social cohesion	Present Value	Award Holders	Wellbeing from increased social cohesion

Each impact pathway represents the calculation of a specific social value benefit experienced by a stakeholder group because of a specific activity. For example, the value of volunteer hours to society due to participants’ completion of the Voluntary Service section of the Award. Each impact pathway follows the general outline shown below, which is expanded to show how the value of volunteer hours would be determined:

$$Social\ Value = Financial\ proxy \times Deadweight\% \times Attribution\% \times Displacement\% \times Drop - off\%$$

Each pathway follows a similar set of questions for understanding how many people experienced the change (e.g., how many hours they spent volunteering each week before the Award and since starting their Award) and to what extent that change was due to the Award (attribution).

For example, the calculation of the value of volunteer hours is shown below.

Financial Proxy = Many of the financial proxies used are based on the [2018 HACT Social Value bank](#), which assigns values to benefits that have also been experienced by the Award’s stakeholders, such as the annual value of increased wellbeing for young people due to regular participation in hobbies. These values are translated from the UK research into relative values of local currency, based on purchasing power equivalents. In case of volunteer hours, the Foundation uses national hourly minimum wage as a proxy where national research on the average value of a volunteer hour does not exist. Choosing this lower value of minimum wage allows the Foundation to be conservative in its estimates of value generated. Each financial proxy is assigned to the stakeholder experiencing the benefit. Many financial proxies from the 2018 HACT Social Value bank are based on the age of the person receiving the benefit. For example, wellbeing benefits from volunteering is a benefit noted for both Award Holders and adults who support Award delivery. The 2018 HACT Social Value bank has different financial proxies for those under 25 and those between 25 and 49 that are used to represent value for Award Holders and adults who support Award delivery who meet regular volunteering requirements.

Deadweight = Deadweight is described as a measure of the amount of outcome that would have happened without the intervention of the program. In the Award’s context, deadweight is the extent to which the Award participant would have experienced an outcome anyway without participating in the Award. In the case of the value of volunteer hours it would be calculated as (average # hours spent volunteering/year during Award – average # hours spent volunteering/year before Award) x portion of year spent volunteering because of the Award (e.g., 50% for Bronze Award to represent 6 months).

Attribution = Of those stakeholders who saw an increase in volunteering, on a scale of 0 to 10, what is the average portion of that change that they attribute to the Award? (e.g., 45%)

Displacement = Displacement accounts for the possibility that the outcome displaced other outcomes (i.e., that participating in the activities may prevent individuals from experiencing positive impacts

elsewhere or prevent others from experiencing positive impacts). In case of volunteering hours, as with the other pathways measure, it is irrelevant, participants' volunteering is assumed to not take away from others' ability to volunteer or to restrict the participant from other activities.

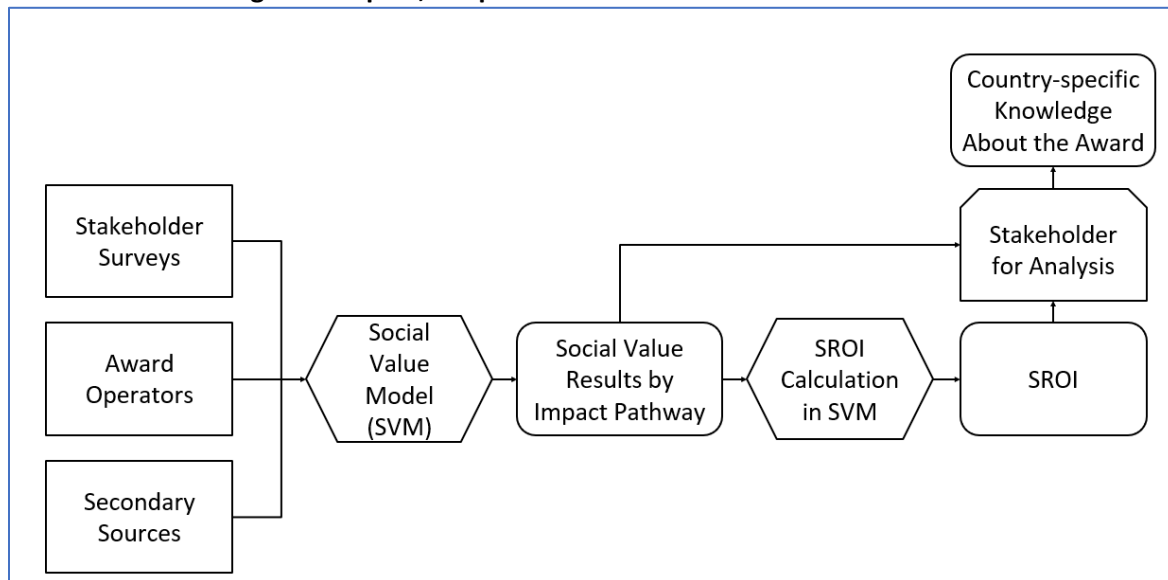
Drop-off = The lasting impact of an intervention will decrease over time. For example, while the Award causes some young people to do more exercise while they are doing the Award, it is unlikely that all of them will maintain an increased level of exercise after they complete the Award. For all social value generated after Award involvement, this decline is considered using information from Award Alumni. However, for activities that occur during the intervention (i.e., while completing an Award), the reason to maintain those activities is ever-present and drop-off is therefore irrelevant for social value generated during Award participation.

Average social value per Bronze Award for the value of volunteer hours = \$10/hour x (125 hours/year – 50 hours/year) x 50% x 45% = \$168.75/Bronze Award

Total social value for Bronze Awards due to the value of volunteer hours = \$168.75/Bronze Award x 1,200 Bronze Awards = \$202,500

Stakeholder consultations are done to determine deadweight and attribution. In each country where the research project is run, surveys are sent to Award participants, adults who support Award delivery, and Award alumni to determine how many experienced benefits and the extent to which the positive changes are due to the Award (Figure 3). For example, when determining the benefits due to regular participation in hobbies (linked to the Skills section of the Award), they are asked whether they were practicing a skill before the Award and now since starting their Award. If a positive change is seen, they ask respondents to estimate how much of that positive change is due to their Award participation.

Figure 3: Inputs, Outputs and Workflow of the Social Value model



The Foundation does not consider displacement as a factor that reduces positive impacts elsewhere, because it is assumed that the young people who participate in the program do not significantly miss out on other activities or prevent others from doing similar activities. However, the Foundation does

consider drop-off as a factor that reduces its positive impacts over time, because it assumes that some of the young people who complete the program do not continue to do the same activities afterwards. The Foundation uses survey data from its alumni to estimate how much their activity levels decline over time.

The Foundation calculates the average social value per person for each impact pathway, by multiplying the benefits of the program by the portion of people who could have experienced the benefits. The program uses operational data from its operators to determine how many people are eligible to have experienced the benefits. The Foundation only counts the value for the participants who have completed a level of the program in the analysis year and the adults who were regularly involved in the program delivery throughout the analysis year. This is to avoid overestimating the results.

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is the ratio of costs to social value for the same period. The cost portion of this ratio is determined based on the costs to deliver the Award in each country as well any additional costs to participants due to their Award participation. For example, the cost of getting to and from weekly volunteering or the cost of starting a new hobby for the skill section of the Award.

4. Latest Global Social Value Impact of the Award

The Award generated £ 762m (\$ 970m¹⁰) in social value through over 214,000 young people completing their Award and the Adults who supported their Award journey in 2022. £ 1,974m (\$ 2,513m) in future social value will be realized over the lifetimes of those young people who gained an Award in 2022, due to continued participation in physical activity, voluntary service, and skills practice.

The latest global results are based on over 7,500 data points. These include operational Award data and secondary social and economic data from 130 countries and social value survey results from 12 countries. Social value results from Ghana, India, and the Award globally have been selected for comparison (Table 2).

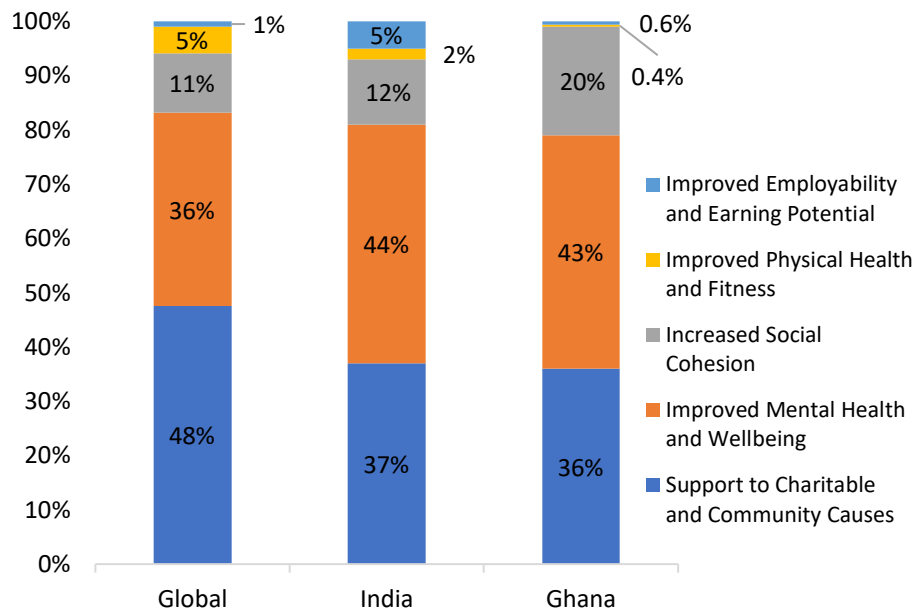
Table 2. Summary of social value inputs and results for India, Ghana, and the Award globally

Region	Analysis Year	Awards Gained	Adults	Present Social Value	Future Social Value	Social Return on Investment
Global	2022	214,091	38,742	£ 762m	£1,736m	N/A
India	2022	1,539	944	₹ 50m	₹ 200m	2.36:1
Ghana	2020	5,999	2,034	¢ 23m	¢ 188m	5.68:1

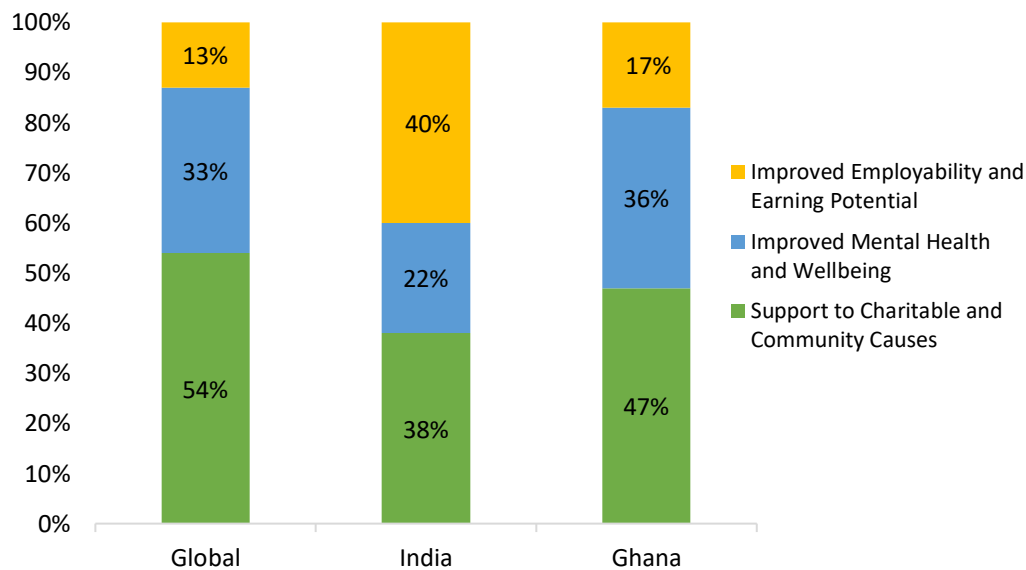
**Social value is presented in local currency in the year of the analysis. SROI is unitless.*

Social value results will vary by country due to variations in survey responses, local economics, and how the Award is delivered.

¹⁰ Conversion of currency to USD is shown to demonstrate the scale of value in context.



1. Present value by impact type for 2022 global results, 2022 India results, and 2020 Ghana results.



2. Future social value by impact type for 2022 global results, 2022 India results, and 2020 Ghana results.

The largest contributor to global social value in 2022 was support to charitable and community causes, which included the value of participant volunteer hours and the wellbeing benefits associated with regular volunteering for both Award participants and adults who support the Award through a volunteer position. India’s largest contributing impact pathways were wellbeing benefits for adults from increased volunteering and wellbeing benefits Award participants from increased volunteering (19% and 16% of present value respectively). Ghana’s largest contributing impact pathways were wellbeing benefits

for Award participants from increased physical activity and wellbeing benefits for Award participants from increased volunteering (24% and 22% of present value respectively).

Globally, improved employability and earning potential contributed £ 231m to total future value and represented the increased earnings of participants until retirement. The further away from completing their Award, the higher the drop-off discount is applied and the smaller the portion of their increased earnings are associated with Award participation.

5. What are key challenges faced when using this approach?

Some of the key challenges faced when measuring social value impact are in the data collection process. The Award uses three main sources of information: survey data, operational data, and secondary data. Some of the key challenges faced by the team are highlighted below:

Table 3: Challenges associated with data collection

Type of Data	Key challenge(s)
1. Survey Data	Survey data is vital to understand how the organization’s work affects different people and countries. However, getting inclusive and representative responses involves some challenges, such as: translating surveys to local languages, reaching all regions and groups of Award participants, and accessing surveys for participants who lack regular access to computers or smartphones. In some countries, the survey response rate is low. To address this, local partners have tried to offer prizes or other incentives to encourage participation.
2. Operational Data	The Foundation has created an Online Record Book, where participants can record their Award activities. However, not all Award Operators use this tool for all their participants, which limits the organization’s access to more detailed online information for some countries. Instead, the organization relies on annual reports from Award Operators.
3. Secondary Data	The quality of secondary data varies widely between countries and depends on government reports and secondary research conducted in the country. Moreover, many values are country averages, such as life expectancy and income, which may not reflect the situation of those involved in the Award. The organization tries to follow the social value principle of not overclaiming and chooses the more conservative option. For instance, this may mean using the minimum wage as the value of a volunteer hour.

6. What are the main costs involved?

Project/Staff time are the major costs when using this approach. The Foundation’s Research Team has two full-time staff who dedicate approximately 30% of their time to social value projects. This includes conducting about five country analyses and a global analysis each year. Additionally, each Award Operator who participates in the project allocates 5-10% of a local staff member’s time for 6 months to a year.

The Foundation also incurs a consulting fee for engaging PwC. The Foundation decided to own the social value model and worked with PwC UK for five years to develop all the current impact pathway calculations and the global model. Initially, the Foundation also relied on PwC UK for regular review of country models during that time. To be able to run the model independently and understand all its components, the cost was higher up-front and has now been reduced to occasional consulting fees for questions or reviews of country analyses.

Conclusion

Youth employment practitioners can use the social value framework to improve their program design, delivery and evaluation, and communicate their value proposition to stakeholders. The social value framework involves four main steps: 1) identifying the stakeholders and outcomes of the program; 2) collecting and analyzing data on the changes in wellbeing that the program creates; 3) assigning monetary values to the changes in wellbeing, and calculating the social return on investment (SROI); and 4) reporting and sharing the results and the stories behind them. There are several tools and resources that can help youth employment practitioners to calculate the social value of their programs available on the [Social Value International](#) website.

To adopt a similar approach, other organizations need to consider a few key factors for suitability, such as staff time and data availability. To build a foundation of knowledge and responsibility, one or two members of staff who are able to spend time engaging, reading, and learning about social value and the theory is the first step. The next step is to ensure high accuracy in the analysis, by having data on program size, demographics, and participation, as well as the ability to survey or interview the group that experiences the social value. Online tools, such as a survey hosting platform and a participant information database, can facilitate this process. Without these online tools, more direct access to collect information in-person would be required. The analysis itself does not need to be complex, but it requires spreadsheet software and intermediate-level Excel skills.

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