



# **Proving Our Value:**

## **The Gloucestershire Action Research Project**

**Final Report to South West Forum**

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## Contents

Executive Summary .....	5
1. Introduction .....	8
2 Our Approach to the Research.....	10
2.1 Introduction .....	10
2.2 Partnerships and the research structure.....	10
2.3 The Evolution of the Research Approach .....	11
2.4 Phase 1: Scoping, seeking outcomes and drafting the Tool .....	13
2.5 Phase 2: Piloting the tool and evidencing impact .....	14
2.6 Conclusions .....	15
3. Phase I: Scoping activities and seeking socio-economic outcomes.....	16
3.1 GL11.....	16
3.1.1 Brief overview of GL11 .....	16
3.1.2 Seeking economic outcomes of three recent GL11 projects .....	16
3.1.3 Moving onto economic outcomes .....	19
3.2 Fair Shares Gloucestershire .....	23
3.2.1 Brief overview of Fair Shares and of time banking.....	23
3.2.2 The work of Forest Fair Shares .....	24
3.2.3 Exploring the outcomes of Fair Shares.....	25
3.2.4 Conclusions from Phase 1 of the Fair Shares research.....	27
3.3 Gloucester City Centre Community Partnership (GCCCCP).....	29
3.3.1 Brief overview of GCCCCP .....	29
3.3.2 Evolution of the casework and methods employed .....	29
3.3.3 A slight change of tack .....	30
3.3.4 Developing a 'Theory of Change' for Greyfriars Bowling Green.....	31
3.3.5 Assessing the impacts of Project Orienteer using an SROI approach.....	34
3.3.6 Stakeholders in Project Orienteer .....	34
3.3.7 Inputs and outputs of Project Orienteer .....	35
3.3.8 Outcomes and their spatial referencing .....	37
3.3.9 Indicators and Financial Proxies for Project Orienteer .....	39
3.3.10 Assessing Deadweight, Attribution, Displacement and Drop-off for Project Orienteer .....	43
3.3.11 At last! Computation of the SROI ratio for Project Orienteer .....	44

4. Methodological reflections and introduction to our SRA tool .....	47
4.1 Early lessons that were learned .....	47
4.2 Developing our Social Return Assessment (SRA) tool .....	50
5. Phase 2: Piloting the SRA tool and evidencing impact .....	52
5.1 GL11: The Cam-Unity Research .....	52
5.1.1 Seeking to Forecast the Likely Outcomes of the ‘Cam-Unity’ Project.....	52
5.1.2 Defining Outputs and Outcomes of the ‘Cam-Unity’ Project.....	53
5.1.3 The Early Impact of GL11’s ‘Cam-Unity’ project .....	55
5.1.4 Reflections on Prospective Use .....	56
5.2 Fair Shares Gloucestershire .....	57
5.2.1 How easy was applying the draft tool to the Fair Shares case study?.....	58
5.2.2 The impact of Fair Shares Gloucestershire.....	58
5.3 GCCCP: The Fielding and Platt Research .....	64
5.3.1 Exploring the change.....	64
5.3.2 Measuring the change .....	66
5.3.3 Valuing the change.....	67
5.4 Lessons learned from the piloting exercise .....	71
6. Conclusions and Recommendations .....	73
Appendix .....	78
The Social Return Assessment (SRA) tool .....	78

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

This research project was one of five sister projects commissioned by South West Forum under the Proving Our Value (POV) programme between 2011 and 2013. Each project was designed to evidence impact and to help develop analytical tools whereby Social Purpose Organisations (SPOs) might better clarify the outcomes of their work and thereby proclaim more successfully their social value.

Our particular project has focused on three local community development organisations in Gloucestershire:

- Gloucester City Centre Community Partnership (GCCCP) (voluntary organisation covering the Westgate ward of the city)
- Fair Shares Gloucestershire (time bank with several branches in the county)
- GL11 (community project based in Cam covering the GL11 postcode area)

### The Action Research process

One academic researcher was assigned to each partner organisation for the duration of the project and on-going support was provided throughout by the Gloucestershire Association for Voluntary and Community Action (GAVCA). GAVCA were instrumental in forming the partnership and in disseminating the process and findings to the county's Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS).

Broadly, the work comprised a range of collaborative and experimental 'action-research,' with the academic researchers and local partner organisations working closely together. It fell into two phases, each lasting several months. First was a scoping phase, focusing on a total of six recent projects undertaken by the three partner organisations. Then, after our provisional formulation of a preferred hybrid model which we termed the 'Social Return Assessment', a second phase involved testing and developing its application in the context of three further projects pursued by the same partner organisations.

### Development of the Social Return Assessment (SRA) tool

This tool, sequentially developed and tested during the second phase of work, comprises three stages:

- Stage A..... Exploring (and describing) the Change
- Stage B..... Measuring the Change
- Stage C..... Valuing the Change

The idea was that not all users of the tool would attempt to proceed through all three stages, but would instead be guided as to the level of sophistication that they would require. Namely -

- Level 1: would comprise *only* Stage A
- Level 2 would comprise Stage A *plus* B
- Level 3 would comprise Stage A *plus* B *plus* C

In piloting the tool, it would also on one case (GL11) be applied prospectively rather than retrospectively – in other words an attempt would be made to identify the likely or intended outcomes of a project just getting underway, rather than the actual outcomes of a project already completed.

## Summary of the main findings

The project has revealed the nature of the impact of small voluntary and community organisations to be both varied and significant. Over the course of the research – which sequentially developed and tested methods for evidencing impact whilst revealing that impact through ‘live’ projects – a range of outcomes were uncovered, especially around aspects such as health and well-being, social and personal capital and community cohesion. A summary of the main outcomes that were revealed through the research process is provided below.

Organisation	Project / area	Revealed outcomes
GL11	Development and deployment of volunteers	Increased readiness to take up paid employment Increased volunteering; personal capacity and confidence and improved service delivery locally
	Facilitation of employability courses	Improved confidence to apply for jobs and pursue education and training Increased employment (mainly part time)
	Try to Remember	Improvement in quality of life and sense of self-worth in dementia sufferers Improvement to personal care plans through the influence of poetry Personal development (broadly defined) of carers and volunteers
	Cam-Unity	(‘Projected’ rather than ‘revealed’ outcomes) Improved mental well being Increased interaction and support for vulnerable people Increased trust and belonging in the community Increased volunteering and sense of good neighbourliness
Fair Shares	Gloucestershire (Newent)	Improved mental health Reduced social isolation and increased support Increased sense of security, belonging and general well-being Improved skills and confidence through volunteering and interaction
	Gloucestershire (Gloucester)	Improved support networks and social circle Improved confidence and self-esteem Improved emotional well-being Improved sense of belonging in community Increased pool of community volunteers
GCCCP	Greyfriars Bowling Green	Improved mental health Improved confidence and self-esteem Increased trust and community cohesion Increase in youth volunteering and intergeneration activity Reduction in juvenile crime
	Project Orienteer	Improved physical health and weight loss Increased social interaction Local income generation through contracting Training in the sport of orienteering
	Fielding and Platt	Increased resilience and self esteem Increased supportive relationships Increased sense of trust and belonging Development of IT skills Increased emotional well being Increased competence, engagement and purpose Increased efficiency and funding sources for voluntary and community sector Increased capacity building and volunteering

A number of attempts were made to evidence outcomes through quantitative measures, and benefit-investment ratios were calculated for two of the GCCCP projects. These showed a societal return of approx. £1.50 - £4 for every £1 invested, in turn providing a broad indication of the potential scale of impact being delivered by community projects in the county.

Ultimately the nature of an organisation's activities will of course determine the nature and extent of its impact but nevertheless the extent of well-being related impacts revealed through this project is particularly striking. In this way the findings reinforce those of similar studies which have shown the community and voluntary sector to be fostering real change to people's quality of life and mental well-being, albeit in many cases indirectly, and often as an incidental benefit to the processes of volunteering and ensuing social interaction.

## **Conclusions and Lessons learned**

A key lesson for *Social Purpose Organisations* is that the *process* of undertaking an impact assessment is in fact as (if not more) important than the findings of that assessment. A central reason for this is that the process of identifying and mapping *outcomes* can help SPOs to better understand what their objectives are, and how they can be best achieved.

However far users of the SRA tool may choose to go along the spectrum of possibilities, its application has great potential value – not least for the social purpose organisation itself, beyond simply 'proving their value'. In accordance with fostering a better understanding of objectives, an outcomes-based assessment can help an SPO to argue its case for project funding, to better manage its projects (most notably by insisting on an outcomes-driven work programme), to develop the awareness and skills of its staff and volunteers, to better understand the reach and needs of its stakeholders, to collect and store information that will really be useful, to effectively monitor and evaluate what it does, and to better and more convincingly communicate the value of its work to funders, partners and local communities.

We would recommend that impact assessment be considered as early as possible in the life of a project, organisation or tranche of activities, and that a monitoring and evaluation framework is put in place at the outset to help provide a roadmap for impact assessment, and the tools and information required for it to be undertaken. Keeping succinct records and putting straightforward systems in place to record data in the early stages of project design will help to streamline the process and ease the burden on personnel undertaking the assessment.

Experience from the POV project would indicate that an impact assessment is best undertaken as some sort of collaborative exercise involving an organisation's own staff / volunteers, other stakeholders and (if resources allow) support from a consultant with a degree of detachment and appropriate analytical experience.

To *funders and commissioners* we would recommend that the provision of appropriate assistance to local SPOs contemplating an outcomes-focused analysis, for example through local infrastructure organisations such as GAVCA, is likely to be highly beneficial to the sector. However, the pressure on staff and volunteer time is indeed great, and it is important to be aware of this when seeking impact evidence. In any case, qualitative case study evidence of impact can in some cases be just as valuable as quantitative measures or metrics and this can often be more manageable, especially for smaller organisations.

## 1. Introduction

The Gloucestershire Action Research Project was one of five sister projects funded under the Proving Our Value (POV) programme, all involving various forms of action research to evidence the impact of the community and voluntary sector, and to develop tools to help social purpose organisations (SPOs) undertake their own impact assessments. Whilst the project described here has adhered to this overarching goal of the programme, the journey along the way has not been a linear one, but rather has been characterized by the many twists and turns often associated with Action Research – developing and testing ideas, problem solving, overcoming both pragmatic and intellectual barriers, and ultimately finding solutions through ‘learning by doing’.

Action Research is commonly construed as a participatory, reflective process of progressive problem solving that is led by individuals working with others in teams to improve the way they address issues and solve problems. Facilitated, assisted and guided by the researchers, the social purpose organisations were thus able to play to a role in developing and testing their own tool designed to identify and understand their economic and social value through an iterative process of learning, understanding, implementation, interpretation and dissemination. Over the course of the project the research team was also able to obtain valuable peer review from the Research Development Group (RDG) chaired by South West Forum and comprising all five POV research teams together with the University of Bristol. Quarterly meetings of this group proved invaluable to the successful design and implementation of the methodology as it developed, and played a role in helping to shape and guide the research approach as it evolved.

In order to tell the story of how the action research unfolded and a new impact assessment tool developed, the report is structured around the two main phases of work, each taking around 12 months to complete. The first involved some initial scoping of activities and priorities followed by various impact exercises drawing principally on the existing tools at the disposal of the research team. Following a period of reflection whereby the structure and content of the new tool was clarified, a second phase of work sought to develop and test it, whilst simultaneously revealing the nature and scale of socio-economic impact arising through small scale community and voluntary organisations.

The project set out to achieve the following aims:

- To develop, test, refine and seek to integrate two approaches to the valuation of the economic impact of small voluntary / community organisations.
- To establish and value the economic contribution of the three Gloucestershire SPOs within a defined geographical area and over a defined period.
- To skill the three SPOs in the identification and valuation of the economic impact of their activities.
- To assist the three SPOs in planning future activities in light of the identified benefits.
- To produce a guidance pack to enable the three SPOs and the wider voluntary and community sector to value and interpret their economic impacts on an on-going basis.

The three SPOs participating in the action research were:



**Gloucester City Centre Community Partnership (GCCCCP)** - a social purpose organisation covering the Westgate ward of the city of Gloucester. It is an independent, voluntary resident-led organisation formed to reflect the views of the local community in all things affecting their lives through positive and constructive actions.

**Fair Shares** - the UK's first time bank. Time banks are community based projects which meet everyday needs through the exchange of time, skills and opportunities. This SPO runs eight time banks in Gloucestershire, has worked with prisoners and runs a county wide time bank supporting families and disabled children.

**GL11 Community Project** - an SPO based in Cam, Gloucestershire. It provides a wide range of services to the local community including baby care and toddler sessions, educational and training opportunities, social events and youth groups. At the time of the study (and since) GL11 was small (one full time and three part time staff) though substantially supported by three volunteers.

In addition the project benefited greatly from the involvement of **Gloucestershire Association for Voluntary and Community Action (GAVCA)**, who not only helped to broker the successful relationship between the three SPOs and the research team but also provided valuable advice and feedback to the research team at critical points throughout the project and helped to ensure that lessons were learned across the research teams. GAVCA also ensured that findings were disseminated across the county and will be making the resulting impact tool available way beyond the life of the project.

At the outset the research team opted for a mixed methods approach that would aim to capture and interpret both quantitative and qualitative information and to facilitate that capture and interpretation by the SPOs long after completion of the project. The proposed methodology sought not only to identify the value generated but to trace its impact on the community or geographic area that the SPO serves. It aimed where possible to quantify the various forms of value through:

- the adaptation of an existing largely qualitative framework based on the Economic Outcomes Tool previously designed by a member of the research team for use by Rural Community Councils (RCCs)
- the use of an adapted LM3 (local multiplier) approach, quantifying sub-regional income and employment effects.

Both approaches were based around methods successfully developed and implemented in pioneering work by members of the research team. However, in the event, assimilation of these two approaches was only attempted in the first phase of the study. For a number of reasons documented in this report, the research team pursued the development of a tool based on the Cabinet Office-recognized Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework. The resulting Social Return Assessment (SRA) tool was designed to provide a user-friendly method that could be readily implemented subsequently by the non-specialist SPO community.

Both phases of the research (see sections 3 and 5) not only enabled a process for developing and testing the ensuing Social Return Assessment (SRA) tool, but also provided some valuable evidence of the impact that small community and voluntary organisations are having in the county. This evidence appears throughout both main sections of the report, and is summarized in Section 6. An introduction to the SRA tool can be found in section 4, and the tool itself (together with its accompanying workbook) can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

## 2 Our Approach to the Research

### 2.1 Introduction

This section explains our approach to the research and how it evolved throughout the project. First and foremost, it was always designed to be collaborative action research. There are a number of definitions of action research but here it is taken to be research undertaken at least in part by practitioners and aimed at both practical and research outcomes. In this case, the research involved professional researchers from the CCRI working with paid workers and volunteers from Social Purpose Organisations (SPOs) to achieve outcomes beneficial to the SPO sector in general, and in particular a tool to enable SPOs to demonstrate their value. Section 2.2 explains the research structure and the partnerships that were formed.

Section 2.3 describes how the research approach, and in particular the basis of the tool, developed over the two-year life span of the project. The project involved two phases with phase 1 devoted to scoping the three SPOs with which we worked, identifying their outcomes and devising an initial version of the tool. Phase 2 then consisted of piloting the tool, adapting it and evidencing the impact of the projects studied. Sections 2.4 and 2.5 below describe phases 1 and 2 of the project respectively.

### 2.2 Partnerships and the research structure

The approach was always to work *with* the voluntary and community sector rather than simply to study it. This was essential as the object of the research was to produce a tool that was both useful to and useable by voluntary organisations. Consequently, the research was structured round ongoing collaboration with the Gloucestershire Association for Voluntary and Community Action (GAVCA) and three Gloucestershire SPOs and was designed to facilitate two-way learning between the academic and voluntary sector. We were also helped by an Advisory Group who gave valuable advice and feedback at key stages of the research.

The three SPOs were chosen to represent a variety of community development initiatives within the county. As described in the Introduction, they were:

**Gloucester City Centre Community Partnership (GCCCP):** a voluntary resident-based organisation carrying out a number of projects in the City of Gloucester;

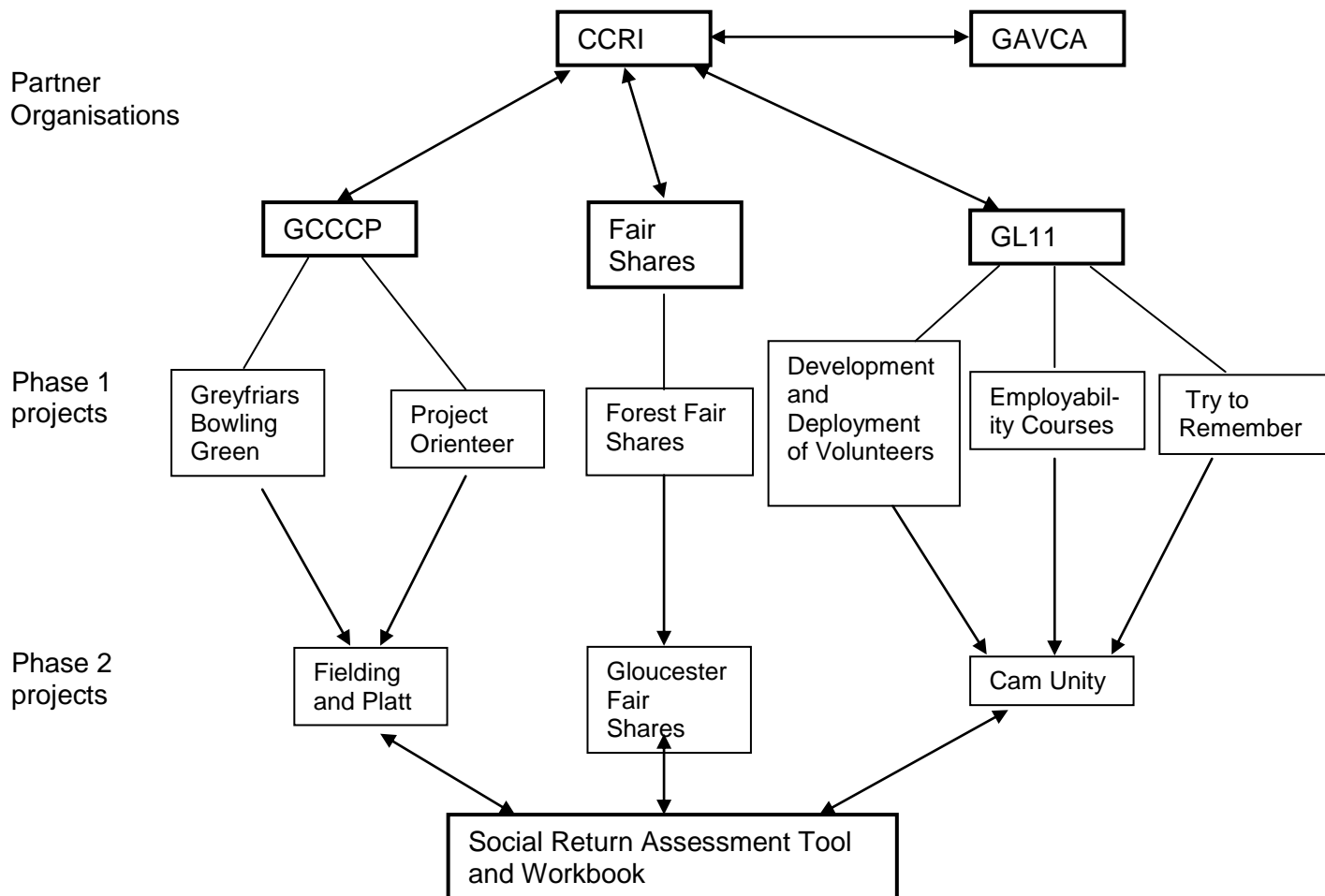
**Fair Shares:** a time-bank based organisation with branches in different areas of the county;

**GL11:** a rural community development organisation carrying out a number of projects to benefit residents in the GL11 postcode area.

The three members of the CCRI research team each worked with just one of the SPOs and chose one or more of their projects to study in more detail. These initial case study projects comprised phase 1 of the research, which is described in more detail below. The results of the case studies guided the first drafts of the tool and were fed into Phase 2 of the research, which was focused on with an additional project from each partner organisation. These results in turn led to the modification of the tool and associated workbook. The research structure can be seen in Figure 1 below.

Sections 2.4 and 2.5 below give an overview of phases one and two of the research. Detailed descriptions of each case study can be found in Chapter 3.

**Figure 1: Project structure**



### 2.3 The Evolution of the Research Approach

The focus of the research evolved considerably during the two years of the project. This section explains that evolution and the approach eventually used. Our original intention was to ‘focus on the economic impact of locally focussed ‘community development’ initiatives’.

Two approaches to defining the outcomes of local projects provided our initial starting point, with the intention being to combine them in some way:

- the largely qualitative **Economic Outcomes tool**<sup>1</sup> (so called because it was developed by CCRI and colleagues at Hull University in 2005 to help clarify the economic outcomes of the work of England’s Rural Community Councils)

<sup>1</sup> Moseley M, Owen S, Johnson P, Craig G, McNamee S and Wilkinson M (undated), Rural Community Value: Assessing the Impact of the Work of Rural Community Councils, The University of Gloucestershire and the University of Hull

- the more familiar and essentially quantitative **LM3 tool**<sup>2</sup> (Local Multiplier 3) originally developed by the New Economics Foundation (nef), which seeks to estimate the local income and employment impacts of the activities under review.

However, during carrying out of Phase 1 of the research several things became apparent:

- The academic researchers had as much to learn from the SPOs as they had to learn from us.
- The main impact of the SPOs was almost certainly not economic but social, impacting mainly on the wellbeing of participants. Hence, any attempt to measure only the 'economic' impact would vastly underestimate the total impact and value of the organisation.
- The SPOs had very little spare capacity (time or money) to carry out evaluations.

As a result of the second point above, the focus of the project was changed from measuring the economic impact to measuring the total impact. At the same time the research team became interested in the use of two other tools.

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental-Wellbeing Scale<sup>3</sup>  
Social Return on Investment (SROI)<sup>4</sup>

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale provides a fairly straightforward way to measure changes in well-being over time. Participants have to indicate their response to fifteen well-being statements. Of course, to gauge improvement, the well-being scale obviously needs to be administered on two separate occasions, 'before' and 'after'. It was used in the research with Fair Shares.

The Social Return on Investment (SROI) tool was devised by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) to indicate total impact in economic terms through the use of proxies for non-economic impacts and so to produce a ratio of return to investment. Thus, the focus of this research moved from measuring 'economic impact' to measuring 'total impact expressed in economic terms'.

The third point above meant that the researchers had to carry out more of the work themselves than they had originally intended. More importantly, it meant that, if the tool was to be useful to SPOs, it needed to be simple to use and sparing of resources. This resulted in a decision to break the tool into three levels of complexity as explained later. The SROI tool in its purest form was felt to be too complex and time-consuming to use in its entirety. However, it was difficult to simplify and still achieve a single impact figure or ratio. Consequently, it was decided to devise a tool that could be applied at three levels depending upon need and available resources, with a flow diagram guiding users on the decision as to which level to use.

Finally the tool was further adapted as a result of feedback from voluntary organisations following the first launch event.

The following two sections describe the two phases of the research.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.proveandimprove.org/tools/localmultiplier3.php>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.healthscotland.com/scotlands-health/population/Measuring-positive-mental-health.aspx>

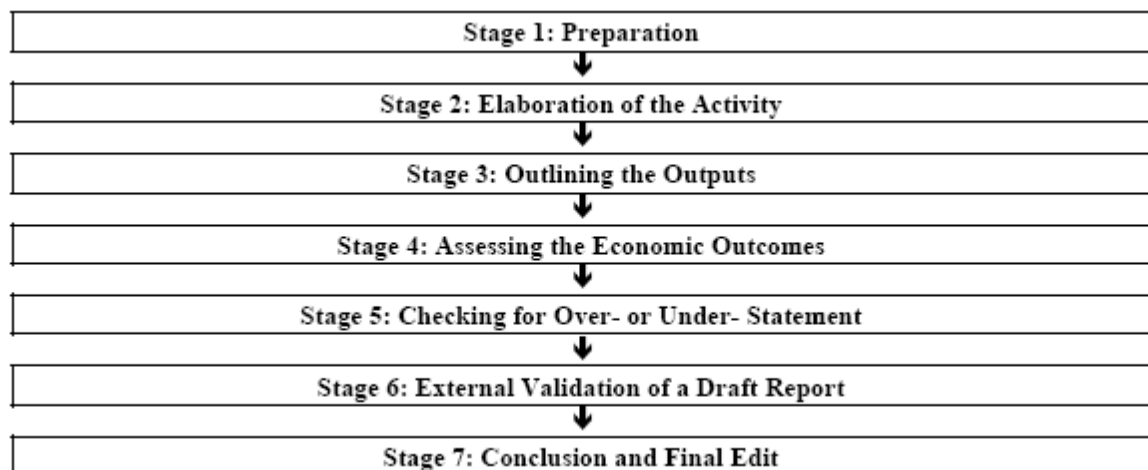
<sup>4</sup> [http://www.nef-consulting.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/A-Guide-to-Social-Return-on-Investment-2012-edition.pdf?utm\\_source=nef+consulting&utm\\_campaign=](http://www.nef-consulting.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/A-Guide-to-Social-Return-on-Investment-2012-edition.pdf?utm_source=nef+consulting&utm_campaign=)

## 2.4 Phase 1: Scoping, seeking outcomes and drafting the Tool

The two year life-span of the project allowed for a period of initial investigation to evolve into a more systematic investigation of the outcomes of the case study projects. It also allowed the impact tool to evolve and be amended in the light of new evidence. As mentioned above, the research comprised two main phases. Phase 1 is described below and phase 2 in the next section.

Phase 1 of the research was based on the RCC Economic Outcomes Tool. This tool consists of seven stages as set out in Figure 2 below:

**Figure 2: The Seven Stages of the Economic Outcomes Tool**



(Moseley et al (undated) p.35)

Phase 1 of the present research followed the first three stages above, followed by an assessment of the 'total' outcomes of a project, rather than solely its economic outcomes, plus the initial drafting of the first two levels of the tool. Thus it comprised five stages:

1. Preparation
2. Elaboration of activities
3. Outlining the outputs
4. Assessing the outcomes
5. Beginning to draft the tool

Stage 1 consisted of identifying the organisations to work with and deciding on pilot projects. It was essential that the SPO partners had the enthusiasm and capacity to work with the researchers. Additionally, we wanted a variety of organisations with different characteristics. The organisations were identified and approached through GAVCA. One of the three University researchers was then assigned to each organisation. The projects to be studied in detail were then chosen as a result of discussions between the SPO and the researcher.

Stages 2 and 3 involved the researcher finding out more about the activity in question through discussion with workers and volunteers at the SPO. Stage 4 comprised a more detailed study of the organisation and its records and interviews with stakeholders carried out either by the researcher or by SPO workers and volunteers.

The precise form of phase 1 varied between the specific partner organisations and case study projects. In most cases it was carried out mainly by the CCRI researchers

in consultation with and with help from the partner SPOs. Although the process was largely qualitative, quantitative data was collected where possible. The results were based upon a combination of informal discussions with project organisers and participants, existing SPO records and surveys carried out by the researchers and/or the SPOs. In the case of Fair Shares, the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale was introduced at this stage. The detailed process employed for each case study is described in section 3.

In each case a report was produced on the outcomes of each project which included:

- description of the project;
- ‘theory of change’ showing the project outputs and the outcomes to which these led and how these relate to different stakeholders;
- some quantification of the outcomes.

The final stage of Phase 1 was the production of the first draft of a tool, later called Social Return Assessment, based on the principles of SROI but able to be used on three different levels as described in the next section.

## 2.5 Phase 2: Piloting the tool and evidencing impact

Phase 2 of the project involved piloting the draft tool with a different as-yet-unstudied project of each of the three partner organisations. Again this was done differently with each organisation. The tool was designed to be used at any of three levels reflecting the degree of detail that the partner felt most appropriate:

Stage A... ‘Developing a ‘Theory of Change’

Stage B... ‘Measuring the Change’

Stage C... ‘Calculating the Return on Investment’

Level 1 comprises *only A*

Level 2 comprises *A plus B*

Level 3 comprises *A plus B plus C*

It was decided to test to Level 3 only in relation to the GCCCP Fielding and Platt Project, our other two pilots going no further than Level 2 as shown in Table 2.1. Furthermore, the tool was designed to be used either in advance of a project to predict, or at least look forward to, the outcomes or retrospectively and evaluatively to measure the outcomes of an existing, recent or continuing project. Consequently, it was decided to use one of the projects, GL11’s Cam Unity, to test a predictive application, whilst the other two were retrospective/evaluative in character.

Table 2.1: Projects used for Piloting the Draft Tool

Organisation	GL 11	Fair Shares	GCCCP
Project	Cam Unity	Gloucester Fair Shares	Fielding and Platt
Level	2	2	3
Predictive or evaluative?	Predictive	Evaluative	Evaluative

In the case of Gloucester Fair Shares, the piloting was done by the SPO workers - the time brokers - with the help of a workbook devised by CCRI. This provided useful

feedback on the ease of use of the tool and how it could be improved. In the other two cases, the piloting was done collaboratively by the researcher and the SPO staff. As a result of this piloting, both the tool and the workbook were modified and simplified as explained in Chapter 4. The recommended tool in its final form can be found in Appendix 1 and the workbook is in Appendix 2.

The piloting of the tool also necessarily involved evidencing the impact of the projects. These impacts are described in Chapter 5 of this report. In the case of the predictive study, it was not possible of course to evidence the impacts of the project as it was only just beginning and outputs and outcomes had not been generated. However, it was possible in that case to at least identify various beneficial impacts of the case study exercise itself.

## **2.6 Conclusions**

This project has evolved with our (the researchers') increasing understanding of SPOs. The collaboration and mutual learning between academic and voluntary sectors has guided the project throughout and enabled the adaptation of the methodology and of the tool to better fit the needs of the SPOs. Phase 1 enabled researchers to get to know their partner SPOs and perform an initial assessment of the outcomes of the projects studied. It also guided the production of the initial draft of the tool. Phase 2 enabled the tool to be piloted and consequently revised and an overall assessment of the three different projects that were examined in that stage.

A more detailed description of each of the three partnerships and the projects studied in Phase 1 of the research can be found in the next chapter.

## **3. Phase I: Scoping activities and seeking socio-economic outcomes**

This chapter describes Phase 1 of the research undertaken with each of the SPOs in turn. Section 3.1 covers the research with GL11; Section 3.2 the research with Fair Shares; and Section 3.3 the research with GCCCP. Each section follows a broadly chronological approach for each activity in turn, covering the evolving methodology as well as the findings, before drawing general conclusions from Phase 1 of the research.

### **3.1 GL11**

#### **3.1.1 Brief overview of GL11**

GL11 is a voluntary organisation, launched in 2002 with the aim of addressing social and economic disadvantage in the Cam and Dursley area (the GL11 post code area). Its mission is to improve the quality of life and life chances of local people mainly through a programme of education and training and the provision of drop-in support groups. It has a small staff and spacious premises in Cam, works in close partnership with training providers and provides a warm and non-threatening ambiance which users of its services clearly find congenial and supportive.

The 'Proving our Value' research undertaken with GL11 had two components run sequentially. First (November 2011 to July 2012) was an exercise to seek the economic outcomes of recent GL11 projects. Second (January to July 2013) was an attempt to forecast the likely outcomes intended to flow from a new community development project for local people with mental illness or learning disabilities, the so-called Cam-Unity' project.

In each case the work involved the researcher and the GL11 chief executive and her staff working closely together. Seeking the 'economic outcomes of recent GL11 projects' involved about ten visits to the GL11 offices, each of 2 to 4 hours, to interview staff, volunteers and clients and to study files – and also several interviews with partner organisations. Seeking to 'forecast the likely outcomes of the Cam-Unity project' involved six such meetings and again the perusal of much file material and the exchange of working notes between researcher and chief executive.

#### **3.1.2 Seeking economic outcomes of three recent GL11 projects**

After some discussion the following three projects were examined in turn;

- the Development and Deployment of Volunteers by GL11, 2010 – 2012
- the Facilitation of 'Employability Courses' by GL11, 2009 – 2012
- the Facilitation by GL11 of the 'Try to Remember' project, 2008 - 2010

This selection of projects for detailed study reflected the variety of GL11's recent work and likely availability of information, both written and oral.

With regard to each, and building on the earlier work by CCRI on the impact of England's Rural Community Councils, our aim was to seek evidence of



- increased or improved local business activity
- the creation or protection of employment
- the progression of trainees / learners into paid employment or self-employment
- improved or increased human and social capital
- the avoidance or delay of expenditure incurred by the state
- positive and helpful influence upon other agencies engaged in local development

(i) GL11 Activity 1: the Development and Deployment of Volunteers

It is important to note that the first GL11 activity under scrutiny was not 'volunteering' as such but the 'development and deployment of volunteers' since that was the GL11 activity. Encouraging a volunteer culture in Cam is part of GL11's mission. It sees

- benefits to the individual, with paid jobs in the vicinity very few in number and a readiness to take up paid work when opportunities do arise
- benefits to the community, with GL11 and other local voluntary bodies better able to deliver their services effectively with volunteer support.

GL11 has encouraged volunteering in a number of ways, including assessing the skills and potential of would-be volunteers, inducting and training volunteers by running training courses (e.g. 'Map to Your Future' and 'Introduction to Volunteering' – each run over several weeks), seeking to place volunteers either in GL11's own activities or elsewhere locally, supervising and supporting volunteers in GL11 and producing an occasional newsletter '*Volunteer News*'. Until January 2012, GL11 had its own 'Volunteer Coordinator' to facilitate all of this though her work was subsequently subsumed into a broader community development worker post.

Our research on the outputs and outcomes of this support for volunteering was restricted to volunteering for GL11 itself (data for those who went on to volunteer elsewhere was unfortunately not available). As for their 'outputs' the volunteers have delivered administrative support, building maintenance, gardening, help with running support groups for the community and with local events, help with fundraising etc.

The research focussed as far as possible on the 12 months to February 2012. It involved the perusal of GL11 documentation including reports to the Lottery and other funders, extensive interviews with staff past and present and with a sample of the volunteers themselves. Questions were asked about both the training / development of the volunteers and their subsequent work, and the benefits accruing both to them and to the organisation and its wider community. Little of this lent itself to quantification, though data extracted from the volunteers' signing-in sheets indicated that over the 11 months to February 2012 they had delivered 769 person-hours of work to GL11, an average of 70 hours per month.

What had all this done for the local economy whether directly or indirectly? Answering this question involved appraising all the evidence of the interviews and documentation (especially with regard to the volunteering outputs as summarised above) and setting all of that alongside the list of six categories of possible economic impact specified earlier. It was clear from an early stage that a major part of any such impact would relate broadly to the 'development of Cam's human capital' and this theme was carefully probed in the questioning.

(ii) GL11 Activity 2: the Facilitation of 'Employability Courses'

Delivered by Stroud College on the GL11 premises, and facilitated by GL11 in various ways, the 'Employability Courses' began in 2009 with a course of six sessions. This became a rolling programme with 16 subsequent repeats by spring 2012. The aim has been to help Cam residents made unemployed or facing redundancy to appreciate the transferability of their skills and to develop their confidence and ability to present themselves to a prospective employer. Emphasis has been placed on their writing convincing CVs, developing basic IT skills, performing online job-searches and 'selling oneself' at interviews. Courses now comprise four three-hour sessions and a small class size – typically of four people. By the end of April 2012, 74 people had undertaken the course; allowing for some repeat attendance this suggests a true figure of some 60 individuals.

Since its inception, GL11 has provided facilities for the training sessions, marketed and promoted the course, shared with Stroud College the recruitment of participants, given them one-to-one support, provided volunteering opportunities for some of them, and provided other courses and activities in the same building, which many have availed themselves – relating for example to IT, mathematics, English and money management.

File data indicate that over the two years 2009 and 2010, there were 31 participants on the courses of whom five had proceeded to paid work, eight had become active volunteers and ten had gone on to other educational activity – clearly positive outcomes for them. This picture was confirmed in a telephone survey in April 2012 of 12 past participants spread over all four years (not a random survey but one targeting some of those with whom GL11 had maintained some contact). Three reported that they now had a part-time job, four were volunteering and three had taken further training courses.

Asked 'what have you accomplished since the course?' ten interviewees responded as follows;

- back to work now - working part time as a driver
- more confident, went on to do a computer course at GL11
- unemployed but much more confident and happy to put myself forward for interviews
- gone on to further education with GL11, on computer courses
- improved confidence, now understand what employers are asking of you when writing a CV or job application
- now employed part time, mornings only
- still working with youth groups, more confident and independent
- attended other courses; now employed with my partner
- began doing volunteering with GL11, would try to apply for job
- still unemployed but trying to get employment

How of all this translates into 'economic outcomes' is considered later in this report.

### (iii) GL11 Activity 3: the Facilitation of the 'Try to Remember' project

This project comprised an 'arts based intervention in the care of people with dementia' running from autumn 2008 to autumn 2010 with some follow up in 2011. The main aims of the project were:

- to improve patient care and the emotional and physical health of the dementia patients involved

- to reduce the quite considerable number of GP surgery visits by people with dementia and by their carers.

Thus there was from the outset an implicit quasi-economic objective concerned with the better use of resources, in addition to that of improving personal well-being. Undertaken in partnership with two local GP practices, and supported by Lottery funding, the Project engaged with 75 patients in various settings - residential care homes, a day centre, a GP surgery and private homes.

In each case a poet worked with individual clients to help them create at least two poems in some way relating to their own experiences. This involved one-to-one reminiscence sessions and also read-back sessions spread over four to six weeks. Volunteers were recruited to support this work with each of them undergoing training in listening skills and encouraging reminiscence (three training sessions in all). In all over one hundred family members, volunteers and professionals were actively involved.

GL11 was the principal instigator, 'architect' and manager of the project. Its work included the initial formulation and resourcing of the project; the identification of local care homes and professionals who might be involved and ongoing liaison with them; the development of data bases of potential clients and of volunteers; the recruitment of the poet / writer; the personal involvement of a GL11 project officer in each residency and home visit; organising training workshops for staff and volunteers; and (later) setting up a social group for older people with dementia.

Our research on the apparent outcomes of this project relied largely on annual project reports, articles in a learned journal by the project protagonists, interviews with the project manager and an email exchange with a local GP who was much involved. Given the sensitivity of the subject and their vulnerability there were no interviews with patients or any scrutiny of their files.

As for project outputs, the following were mentioned or alluded to in the various documents or suggested in interview;

- some improvement in the quality of life / mental stimulation / sense of worth of (up to) 75 elderly people with acute memory loss or dementia
- some influence of the poems (indeed of the whole Try To Remember activity) upon the personal care plans of many of the clients, and possibly of other older people beyond those directly involved.
- some 'development' (however defined) of some staff members of the care homes, some volunteers and some carers - to an extent that is not clear.

### 3.1.3 Moving onto economic outcomes

Having briefly outlined what seem to have been the main 'outputs' of the three GL11 initiatives under scrutiny – 'outputs' meaning broadly 'specific actions or practical projects undertaken' - we now go on to try to define their principal 'outcomes' or 'changes resulting from the activity or project', more specifically those of an economic nature. Voluntary and community bodies are often reluctant to argue that having a positive impact on the local economy is a principal goal for them – when their mission is more social in character – but the hypothesis in this research is that their economic impact can often be considerable and that demonstrating it should not be neglected.

With that in mind we turn now to the six categories of 'local economic impact' that previous work by the CCRI research team found useful; they were listed without comment in section 3.1.1, above. They are not mutually exclusive but provide a pragmatic framework when asking the question; did the three recent GL11 projects (i.e. volunteer-support, employability courses and 'try to remember') actually deliver tangible economic benefits to the local area? While it has not been possible to quantify any such impact, enough evidence was assembled and reviewed to suggest that some such impact clearly occurred with regard to the following;

- the progression of trainees / learners into paid employment or self employment
- improved or increased human and social capital
- the avoidance or delay of expenditure incurred by the state

In contrast it seems that there has been little tangible impact in relation to the other three specified 'channels of economic impact' namely;

- increasing or improving local business activity
- creating or protecting employment
- having a positive and helpful influence upon other agencies engaged in local development

In short, the three GL11 projects did not involve significant purchases of materials or services from local businesses; they did not overtly create or save local jobs, and they did not in some tangible way positively support other local development agencies. None of that was part of their function. But they did have a positive effect upon the other three economic desiderata.

Thus as far as helping jobless people back into employment is concerned, GL11's support for volunteers certainly achieved that for several people who progressed on to its own payroll. Unfortunately no tracking was possible of GL11 'trainee volunteers' who went off to volunteer elsewhere and might have moved on subsequently to paid work, but anecdotal evidence suggest that some did so. Thus GL11's former volunteer coordinator recalled an ex drug addict who had had some of her children taken into care. She brought the remaining child to GL11's Toddler Group, stayed to help the group and went on to play a central role in running it. She then did a child care course and a counselling course and went on to do voluntary work for a local Trust, becoming in due course an employee. "She then moved away and we haven't seen her for two years...this is quite a common story"

As for the subsequent progression into employment of the 60 or so participants in GL11's 'employability courses', there has clearly been some modest success here, though it is hard to say how much. A 'guestimate' based on the limited survey evidence reported earlier is that perhaps one in five participants were, three months to three years after their course participation, in some sort of paid employment, most commonly of a part-time nature. It is impossible to say, of course, just how far this may be attributed to the training courses that they had taken, but the clear spur to self-confidence must have helped to some degree.

In contrast GL11's support for the 'Try to Remember' project is unlikely to have spurred any tangible progression into employment. That was not its function of course.

Moving on to 'improving or increasing human and social capital' and taking 'human capital' to mean very broadly 'individual people construed as potential economic

resource' then clearly a great swathe of GL11's work has been beneficial. Interviews by the researcher with several of GL11's current corps of volunteers pointed clearly to the development of skills, knowledge, confidence, self esteem and attitudes that had taken place. This seems to be particularly true of those whose involvement with GL11 has embraced both some volunteering and participation in one or more of the training courses regularly on offer (e.g. in basic IT, maths, English and, as noted, in preparing to re-enter the job market). Even the 'Try to Remember' project, aimed as it has been at improving the quality of life of people too elderly and too ill ever to work again, has played its part; as explained earlier a considerable number of volunteers involved in that project, as well as professionals in the health care sector, have been challenged and arguably 'developed' in some way by their involvement in that project

In short, the pool of Cam's human capital has undoubtedly increased as a result of GL11's work in recent years. To some extent that is also true of Cam's social capital', taking that term to mean broadly 'social interaction and trust construed as an economic resource'. Bringing people together in collaborative groups, both formal and informal, and over several years, should not be underestimated as a contributor to Cam's economic potential. GL11's own board of trustees and its various youth and toddler groups provide cases in point. The pity is that it is impossible either to quantify or formally value this capital.

As for the 'avoidance or delay of expenditure incurred by the state' this was certainly one of the hoped-for outcomes of the 'Try to Remember' project; people suffering from dementia, and their often seriously stretched carers were making demands on the GP service which were putting a serious strain on its resources. There is at least an indication that some progress in this respect has been achieved; certainly an email exchange with one local GP who has written on this subject in learned journals, has indicated that thanks to the 'Try to Remember' project many of the carers of his dementia patients were now making less frequent visits to his surgery – but he was unable to quantify the change that had occurred.

The research also produced some anecdotal evidence at least that the involvement in its training courses of a number of local people who hitherto had had little or no formal education was having beneficial effects on their parenting skills – freeing up some of the staff time taken up by the area's formal caring services. Again, no quantification was possible.

### Summary of section 3.1

This section has examined three specific projects run by GL11 in recent years. They have related to the development of volunteers and volunteering, skilling unemployed people as they try to re-enter the job market, and, via an arts-based intervention, improving the quality of life of people with dementia

#### 1. Evidence of impact from GL11

It is clear that, taken together, this work by GL11 has:

- generated benefits for non-employed local residents especially by enhancing their basic skills, sense of self-worth and readiness for employment or volunteering
- generated benefits for GL11 itself as a community development agency – through the use that it makes of its trained volunteers, in various administrative and support work capacities
- increased both the human and social capital of the area
- reduced some of the pressure on local state-funded agencies, especially the health and social services, by piloting an innovative way of addressing the needs of confused and elderly people

#### 2. Implications for development of the impact tool

The work reported in this section has various methodological implications potentially relevant to the 'Impact Tool' to be developed at a later stage. In particular:

- the research has shown the value of the close collaboration over several months of the senior staff of a VCO and a researcher with experience and expertise in impact assessment. Neither party, working alone, would achieve as much.
- to undertake a rigorous *post hoc* evaluation of a project's effectiveness in delivering intended outputs and outcomes, the collection and recording of relevant data should begin when the project itself begins.
- the range of possible social and economic outcomes arising from the work of a VCO will be varied and numerous. These will also need to be 'brainstormed' and listed at an early stage – what in a later section we call 'developing a theory of change'
- the process of doing an impact study like the one reported here is likely to be as valuable to the VCO as the tangible product of the research.
- much of the data set out in this section is qualitative rather than quantitative, so one lesson must be 'beware excessive concentration on those parameters which can be formally measured'.

## 3.2 Fair Shares Gloucestershire

This section describes the research done with Forest Fair Shares based in Newent which contributes to Phase 1 of the project. Phase 2 of the research is described in Chapter 5.

### 3.2.1 Brief overview of Fair Shares and of time banking

Time Banking is based on the principles of co-production, (Boyle and Harris, 2009<sup>5</sup>; Slay and Robinson<sup>6</sup>, 2011). “Co-production means delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours. Where activities are co-produced in this way, both services and neighbourhoods become far more effective agents of change.” (Boyle and Harris, 2009, p.11)

Co-production involves:

- ‘Recognising people as assets, because people themselves are the real wealth of society.
- ‘Valuing work differently, to recognise everything as work that people do to raise families, look after people, maintain healthy communities, social justice and good governance.
- ‘Promoting reciprocity, giving and receiving – because it builds trust between people and fosters mutual respect.
- ‘Building social networks, because people’s physical and mental well-being depends on strong, enduring relationships.’

(Boyle and Harris, 2009, p.14)

Time banking enables people to do things for others and to get things done outside of the money economy. ‘Members of a time bank earn hour credits helping other members and use their credits to get help in return. A number of time banks operate across the UK. They range from neighbourhood time banks to those that work as alternative platforms for the delivery of public services.’ (Slay and Robinson, 2011, p.9)

Clearly then, the nature of time banking presents problems for assessing economic impact in that it facilitates transactions outside of the conventional economy. Whilst this is likely to have a positive effect on the quality of life of the participants, it may remove transactions from the money economy, thus presenting problems for assessing the impact in conventional economic terms. Other difficulties arise because:

- If the benefits are social and emotional as well as practical, there is a danger that trying to assess the economic impact will underplay the benefits of the time bank, most of which are not intrinsically economic;
- many other changes in people’s lives affect their well-being and may have a larger impact than the time bank.

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<sup>5</sup> Boyle D and Harris M (2009) *The Challenge of Co-Production: how equal partnerships between professionals and the public are crucial to improving public services*, NEF from [http://s.bsd.net/nefoundation/default/page/file/312ac8ce93a00d5973\\_3im6i6t0e.pdf](http://s.bsd.net/nefoundation/default/page/file/312ac8ce93a00d5973_3im6i6t0e.pdf) (accessed 4.02.14)

<sup>6</sup> Say J and Robinson B (2011) *In this Together: building knowledge about co-production*, NEF from <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/in-this-together> (accessed 4.02.14)

In Gloucestershire, the time banking initiatives are known as 'Fair Shares'. After discussion with Lawrence Hughes, the then CEO for Fair Shares in the county, it was decided to concentrate the first phase of the research on Forest Fair Shares, based in Newent. Whilst, Fair Shares is based around time banking transactions, social and emotional support for participants is seen as integral. Hence, social activities are organised to bring members together. Forest Fair Shares is described in the next section.

### 3.2.2 The work of Forest Fair Shares

#### *Background*

At the time of the research, Forest Fair Shares had three paid time brokers, one full-time and two part-time. There were about 120 members, about 80 of whom lived in or around Newent. The other 30 were spread through the rest of the Forest of Dean. Not all members were active.

#### *Overview of Forest Fair Shares Activity*

Each new member of the time bank is interviewed by one of the time brokers and the activities they can offer are recorded. Requests for help are made through the time brokers, who then match the requests with the offers. Activity is recorded using a specialist computer programme according to a set of categories some of which, such as 'event helping', are rather broad.

During the period April 1st 2011 to December 31st 2011, just over 4000 hours were traded, distributed rather unevenly over the 9 months. In terms of activity, the largest category was administration, followed by event helping and befriending.

Other significant activity by Forest Fair Shares included:

#### *Trips*

Twelve trips or activities took place over the year. Attendance on trips was encouraged by being counted as time credits.

#### *Coffee mornings*

Coffee mornings take place twice a week in the Chill Out Zone in the centre of Newent, Tuesday being the most popular day with typically about 12 attendees. Coffee and cake (made by a Fair Shares member) is provided at a small cost. The attendees are mostly regulars who know each other well but they are very welcoming to outsiders. Less frequently, coffee mornings are held in a number of locations in the other Forest towns.

#### *Newsletters*

Newsletters are produced several times a year with details of trips and other activities. They may also include news of past events and requests for help with particular activities.

#### *Work with other organisations*

Forest Fair Shares works with other organisations such as Three Rivers Housing Association and G3 which works with homeless youth in Cinderford.



### 3.2.3 Exploring the outcomes of Fair Shares

After a number of informal discussions with Fair Shares staff, it became apparent that the most significant outcomes are personal and social benefits to members rather than practical benefits in terms of help received. Consequently a decision was made to use the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale as a way of assessing changes to well-being, supplemented by a simple questionnaire to members. Although the Warwick-Edinburgh survey had been used with some members when they joined Fair Shares, it did not prove possible to use that data as a baseline. Consequently, members had to be asked retrospectively about how they felt when they joined Fair Shares.

The Warwick-Edinburgh survey together with a simple interview schedule was carried out face to face with 12 members at the coffee mornings. The members interviewed were thus not typical, but nevertheless their answers served to illuminate the outcomes of Fair Shares as perceived by some of its more active members.

Of the 12 Fair Shares members who participated in the questionnaire surveys, six were male and six female. The majority were retired. Nine lived in Newent (where the interviews were carried out) and three lived in a sheltered housing complex in Dymock (about 4 miles away). They all attended the coffee mornings (this is where they were interviewed) and all but two had been on at least one of the trips. Participants were asked what they did to earn time credits. Answers were quite varied and included working in charity shops, making cakes and befriending. Another four had not as yet provided any help.

When asked how they spent their time credits, answers were also varied but painting (of doors and garden furniture), grass mowing and lifts were most common. If they hadn't been able to use Fair Shares most would have asked somebody else, usually a family member, to do help as a favour, although many respondents were reluctant to ask for too much help from busy family members. There were two members who did not either earn or spend time credits. However, these people were still active members of Fair Shares, attending coffee mornings and trips.

Ten of the twelve members were also asked what they gained from Fair Shares and what they thought that others gained. As this information is key to the research, the answers are given in full in Table 2 below. It can be seen that, although practical help is mentioned by some, making friends and companionship are recurrent themes mentioned by all ten members with regard to themselves and by most with regard to others.

Table 3.1: Reported Gains from Forest Fair Shares

Respondent	Personal gain	Others gain
1	Insight into social networking	Don't know - get to know people
2	getting things done, social - coming here, break from looking after his disabled wife, looks forward to coming	Quite a bit - stuff done and socially
3	friendliness, trips get you out, staff are lovely	same - nice chat
4	helpful to get things done, getting to know people	same - they wouldn't come if they didn't
5	social benefits, meeting people (was new to area)	practical things for some
6	made friends	companionship
7	made new friends, something to get up and go for	Not answered
8	companionship	companionship and help
9	made friends (was new to Newent)	make friends, have a chat, do things and have things done
10	have a good laugh, social, nice to get out	practical and social

Nine members completed the Warwick-Edinburgh questionnaire to show how they felt at the time of the interviews. Five of these also attempted to show how they had felt before they joined Fair Shares. The average score of these five showed a 14% increase from 47.8 before joining Fair Shares to 54.7 at the time of the survey. Such a small number can only give a flavour of the outcomes for individual members but the results reinforced comments by the time brokers that the main benefits of Fair Shares are social and emotional.

*Evidence from an earlier study*

A 2011 evaluation of Fair Shares in Gloucestershire (Oppenheimer, 2011)<sup>7</sup> identified positive outcomes as follows:

For individual participants:

- improved mental health outcomes for participants
- support and friendship for people who are isolated
- 'participants support each other in small ways that make a real difference to well-being' (p.10)
- increased sense of security as Fair Shares is there when it is needed even for those who don't use it very often.
- Offers opportunities for volunteering 'at an informal and accessible level' (p.13)
- Learning new skills

For communities:

- 'building small, but significant, self-supporting communities within the wider community' (p.17)

For organisations:

- encouraging volunteers as they can earn time credits
- access to the Fair Shares vehicles in exchange for time credits
- credits earned by staff [and members] can be used by the organisation
- increased use of the Chill Out Zone in Newent

<sup>7</sup> Oppenheimer S (2011) *An Evaluation of Fair Shares Gloucestershire*, Fair Shares Gloucestershire

- facilitates the work of village agents [who attend coffee mornings]

Most of these advantages were seen in the present work with Forest Fair Shares.

### 3.2.4 Conclusions from Phase 1 of the Fair Shares research

The assessment of the economic outcomes of Fair Shares is not straightforward. Social and emotional benefits appear to be at least, if not more, significant than practical benefits. The two will be considered separately below.

#### *Practical benefits*

Whilst the time-banking activities have practical benefits their economic impact is very hard to establish. In some cases, they may have a negative impact in conventional economic terms if they displace activity from the formal economy. For example, if a member uses Fair Shares for a job for which they might otherwise pay it has reduced the amount of conventional economic activity. It could be argued that this is less a problem for Fair Shares than a flaw in the way we measure success in economic terms. Nevertheless, it presents a problem in assessing the economic impact of the project.

On further reflection, there are a number of possible approaches to estimating the economic impact of the time banking activities:

- A proxy could be chosen for each of the 31 categories of activity in line with the SROI approach. As some of the categories are very broad they may need to be subdivided if the records allow this.
- An alternative approach would be to cost each activity at a market rate.
- All time bank activities could be costed at the same rate – either at the minimum wage level or at an average wage level for the area. This would be the simplest approach – an important consideration as the aim is to produce a tool that is easy for voluntary organisations to use. Oppenheimer uses a figure of £12.65 an hour based on the average wage for the South West region, giving a value of £1,041,360 per annum for Fair Shares in the county. With that in mind a calculation based on the same wage level would give a figure of £51,573 for Forest Fair Shares for the year 2011/12. A calculation based on the minimum wage for adults at the 2012 level would give a figure of just under £25,000.

In addition, Fair Shares appears also to be reducing the burden on the state, for example by providing transport to hospital where this might otherwise have had to be provided by the health service. Also it may have allowed some members to remain in their own homes or in sheltered housing rather than needing more intensive care. However, these outcomes were not mentioned by interviewees.

#### *Social and Personal Benefits*

Although the sample was small, the questionnaire and Warwick-Edinburgh survey results show an increase in the well-being of a majority of the participants, which they ascribe to Fair Shares. This is described in terms such as companionship and making friends. This is not dependent upon the number of time bank transactions, as some of the members who were interviewed took little part in the earning or spending of credits but appeared to gain a lot from the social activities such as coffee mornings and trips. Measurement of social and personal benefits could have been facilitated by the use of the Warwick-Edinburgh survey with participants as they joined Fair Shares and again after a fixed period of time – perhaps one year.

An increase in social support and well-being may also reduce state expenditure, for example by the health service. It may also help people back to work after a period of unemployment or illness.

### **Summary of section 3.2**

This section has examined the work of Forest Fair Shares in Newent, and the extent to which the outcomes of timebanking are evident, and provide scope for measurement.

#### **1. Evidence of Impact from Fair Shares Newent**

- There are practical benefits to members which reduce reliance on family and friends and, to a lesser extent, the state.
- Social and emotional benefits appear to be at least, if not more, significant than practical benefits.
- Warwick-Edinburgh survey results show an increase in the well-being of a majority of the participants, which they ascribe to Fair Shares.
- This is described in terms of companionship and making friends
- The benefit to an individual is not dependent upon the number of time bank transactions in which he/she is involved.

#### **2. Implications for the development of the impact tool**

- Measuring solely economic impact would vastly underestimate the benefits of Fair Shares.
- The tool needs to include a measurement of social and emotional impact.
- Warwick Edinburgh is a useful tool to measure changes in well-being and so should be incorporated if possible.
- The Warwick Edinburgh survey would have been easier to apply and, arguably, the results would have been more reliable if the survey had been applied as members joined the time bank to give a baseline against which improvement could be measured. This highlights the need for voluntary organisations to think about impact early on when designing a project.
- The emerging complexity of the assessment pointed to the advantages of accompanying the tool with a workbook containing appropriate worked examples.

### **3.3 Gloucester City Centre Community Partnership (GCCCCP)**

#### **3.3.1 Brief overview of GCCCCP**

Gloucester City Centre Partnership (GCCCCP) is a resident led group, reflecting the views of members in everything that affects their lives. Indeed it was set up by Gloucester City Council in 2004 to represent the view of communities, and everyone who works for CCCC does so on a voluntary basis. GCCCCP covers the Westgate Ward of the City of Gloucester which (given that it covers the city centre) is home to 4,800 residents. The Ward comprises St Oswalds, Sandhurst lane, the Whole of Alney island, the whole of the city centre within the inner ring, the docks, the quays and the whole of Hempstead. It covers deprived areas through to the wealthiest areas of the city.

All residents of the ward are considered members of GCCCCP by default, and the organisation keeps in touch with residents via newsletters and local papers. Registered members who have made attempts to proactively take an interest and request information are sent a weekly update. There are currently around 500 proactive members on the email list, involved either physically or electronically. There are 3 census super output areas in Westgate ward. West Gate 1 and 3 are in the top 5 most deprived in the county, and also in the top 10% nationally. They are deprived by all measures – health, unemployment, car ownership, single parents etc. A chunk of West Gate 3 is owned by city centre homes and there are limited GCCCCP volunteers from West Gate 3, because many volunteer for the local tenants group. GCCCCP do not compete with other resident groups.

In West Gate ward there are 5 regeneration sites, 500 shops and 600 listed buildings. All projects have a specific purpose and focus and are designed very much around needed service provision and quality of life in all its guises (ranging from reducing crime, improving health and well being through to improving opportunities and life chances for young people). Since the start of the Proving Our Value (POV) project, the scale of GCCCCP's work has increased further. The work of GCCCCP therefore represents a major contribution to service provision in the city, and as such the partnership is extremely motivated to begin placing some tangible valuations on their activities, and in tandem to improve their data management and recording systems to help facilitate this.

#### **3.3.2 Evolution of the casework and methods employed**

Following some initial scoping work and two case work meetings to review progress and make some concrete plans for collecting impact evidence that would broadly reflect some of GCCCCPs main activities at the time, two projects were selected for casework during the first phase of the project:

Greyfriars Bowling Green (running April 2009-Dec 2010) - transforming a disused city centre bowling green into a facility for younger people; and

Project Orienteer (running May 2008-Jun 2009) - which aimed to provide city residents with an outdoor orienteering facility.

A further consideration was the availability of records to inform a robust impact assessment, although that said record keeping was found to be generally good in GCCCCP. It was estimated that these two projects accounted for around 10% of all

GCCCP activity over the period in which they ran. They would also provide a useful cross section across two important themes of GCCCP activity: youth work and health.

At this stage a project leader was identified for each of the case studies: Barry Leach would lead Project Orienteer (PO); Paul Courtney would lead Greyfriars Bowling Green (GBG). Other active members of GCCCP would provide support and assistance across both projects.

By the end of January 2012 Stage 1 was duly completed; information relating to timeframes for measurement, geographic scope and data sources was completed for both projects. In the case of Greyfriars Bowling Green, this was undertaken by Paul using a comprehensive file of project notes, records and invoices provided by Barry.

### 3.3.3 A slight change of tack

In early February 2012 Paul approached Barry with a proposition to make some adjustments to the plan for the GCCCP casework, both in terms of scope and methods. Following a meeting to discuss these proposals, it was agreed that two approaches would be piloted in each of the two identified projects, and once the casework team had had a chance to assess what works best and what is likely to be the most appropriate for GCCCP over the longer term, we would then proceed to implement that refined method on the third project during phase two of the POV programme.

The reasoning behind the proposed changes was twofold. Firstly, it was Paul's experience that Action Research projects often cease when a project comes to an end and the facilitator walks away. Paul really wanted the POV project to be the start of something for GCCCP, and not a means to an end. And thus structuring it this way should mean that GCCCP became more skilled, and more confident to take over in its role as self-evaluators, once POV is over.

Secondly, having started to work the Economic Outcomes tool, Paul felt that it could potentially benefit from the integration of a more structured approach to assessing and valuing outcomes. Whilst the tool provided a useful checklist and loose framework for assembling and describing the main outputs and outcomes associated with a project, the task of valuing outcomes was a little vague. It was felt that a more robust framework could actually help facilitate this.

At the same time from his attendance of the regional meetings and discussion with members from the sister projects (and in particular Bath and UWE) Paul was beginning to get a sense of the potential usefulness of the Social Return on Investment (SROI) approach to providing such a framework. Having originally dismissed it during the project planning phase as being something that small SPOs would struggle to get to grips with, he felt that its application, or indeed a simplification of it, could be worth considering in the context of the Gloucestershire project.

Having agreed to pursue the approach with GCCCP, Paul attended formal SROI training at *nef consulting* in London in March 2012 and began work on a Theory of Change for the Greyfriars Bowling Green project the following month. At that stage it was envisaged that by September an evaluative 'mini' SROI for GBG would have been undertaken, together with an empirical assessment of the outputs and outcomes of Project Orienteer using the Economic Outcomes tool.

In the event, for a number of reasons described in subsequent sections of this paper, the methodology twisted and turned once again over the ensuing months, and the resulting findings from year one of the project were in fact derived from:

A Theory of Change analysis of the Greyfriars Bowling Green project, forming the basis of a forecast SROI for completion in year two of the project; and

An evaluative SROI analysis of Project Orienteer, utilising data collected and assembled through application of the Economic Outcomes tool and subsequently entered into an SROI framework with the necessary indicators and financial proxies sourced through a mix of primary and secondary data collection.

More precise methods employed in each of the two pilot projects as they evolved between February and October 2012 are described in the following two sections.

### **3.3.4 Developing a 'Theory of Change' for Greyfriars Bowling Green**

The aim with regard to this project was to develop a Social Return on Investment (SROI) model for the re-development of Greyfriars Bowling Green into a facility for young people to use in the city centre. It was hoped that the facility would 'get them off the streets' as large groups of young people were hanging around in prominent locations in the city centre. The aim was to test the efficacy of applying SROI frameworks to the valuation of small, community based projects.

Following some preparatory work, the 'Theory of Change' work for Greyfriars Bowling Green began in May 2012. Four in-depth interviews were undertaken to explore the observed and potential outcomes of the Greyfriars Bowling Green project and how they play out over the various stakeholders over differing time frames. The stakeholders comprised two officers from Gloucestershire Constabulary who had a good working knowledge of the site, and who were actively involved in city centre street patrols, a senior representative from the Safer Gloucestershire Partnership who co-funded the Greyfriars Bowling Green project and a youth worker from Young Gloucestershire who was actively involved in the management of the facility and its youth events.

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed which would allow an open discussion and sufficient flexibility was retained to enable the schedule to be refined and adapted as necessary. All four interviews were recorded and the main points relevant to the activities and outcomes of the project to inform the Theory of Change were transcribed.

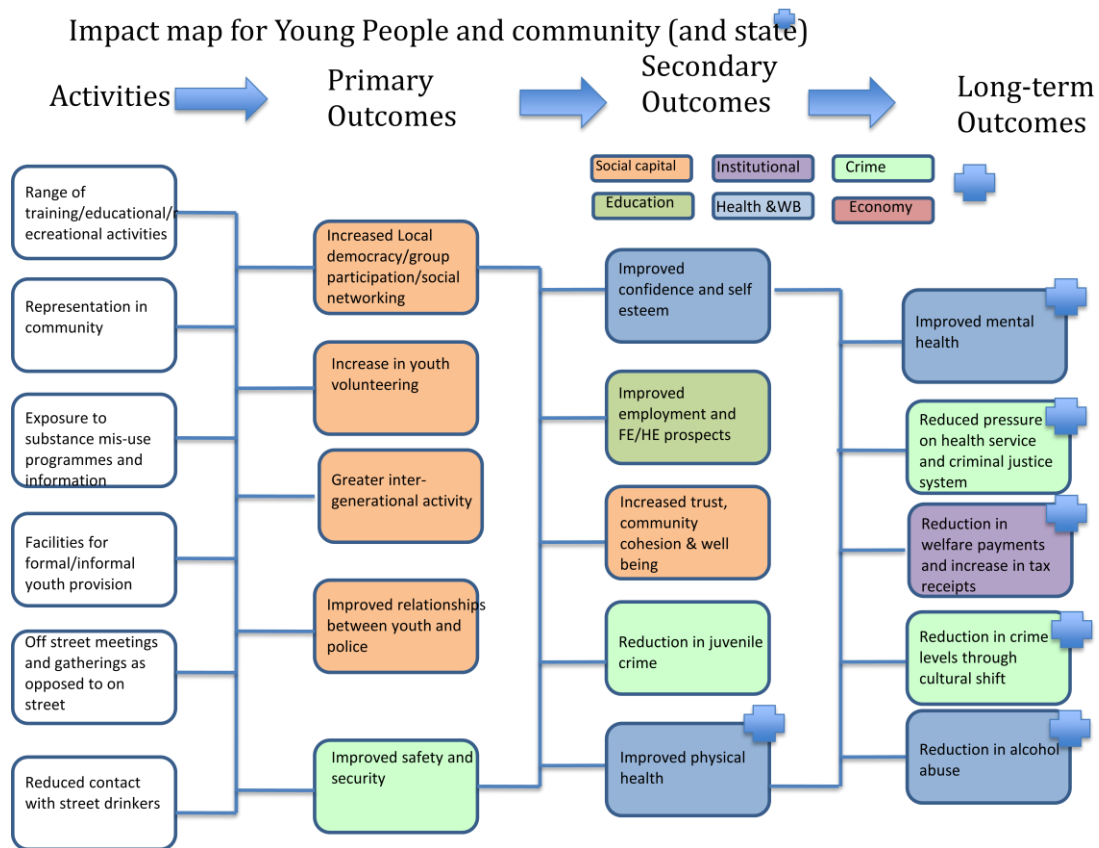
The transcriptions were first used to develop a series of flow diagrams to describe and illustrate the various outcomes and the relationship between them. The Theory of Change also helps to identify how one outcome can lead to another, and in turn enables the short, medium and long term trajectory of outcomes to be identified.

The flow diagrams indicated the journey of potential outcomes is often complex and non-linear. For example, improved employment prospects for young people arise not only through the provision of training and educational facilities, but also through team building and other life skills afforded through the facility.

Having identified and mapped out the outcomes for the various stakeholders it was then useful to begin considering which of these outcomes are material (i.e. most relevant, give a true and fair picture of the impact and that if omitted would have an impact on decision making) and which outcomes are independently valid for measurement. An important principle of SROI analysis is to avoid double counting, and in some cases two or more outcomes identified in the Theory of Change will lead to the same measurable impact, which should only be accounted for once.

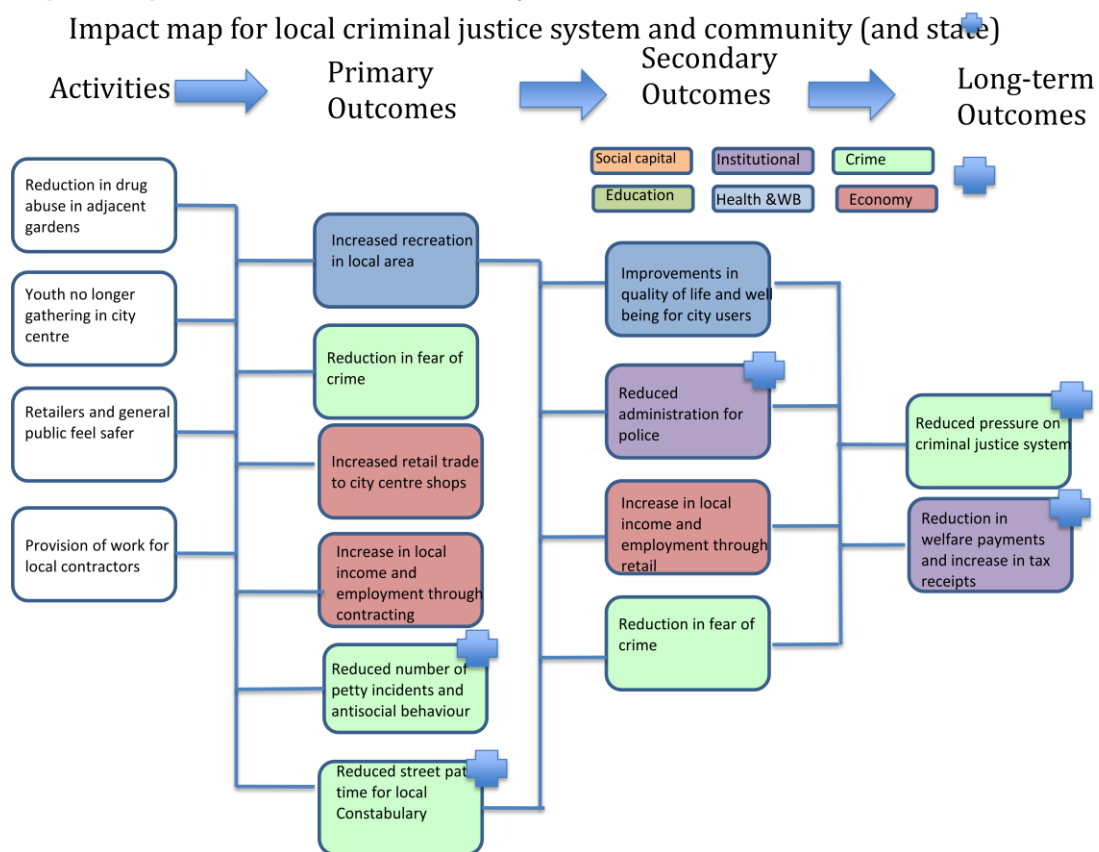
The result of this process was the construction of the following impact maps shown in Figures 3 and 4 below, which illustrate the material outcomes over the short, medium and longer term. While they represent an extremely useful tool in themselves for understanding the potential outcomes of the Greyfriars Bowling Green project for society, they are also an important pre-cursor to the empirical aspects of the SROI.

**Figure 3: Mapping the impacts of the Greyfriars Bowling Green project: (i) Impacts upon young people themselves**





**Figure 4: Mapping the impacts of the Greyfriars Bowling Green project: (ii) Impacts upon the Criminal Justice System**



In addition to providing information to help construct the Theory of Change, the interviews also revealed some insightful contextual information about the project and its evolution. As the interviews progressed it became apparent that the full potential of the facility was not yet being met due to a number of issues surrounding its management. Thus, while it was evident that the project had played an important role in reducing the number of young people ‘hanging around’ in the city centre (a key motivator for its original conception), it wasn’t as yet providing a drop-in facility that young people could use informally.

With the social and political backdrop to the use and management of the Greyfriars facility having been revealed it became apparent that, in order to stay true to the Theory of Change, only a forecast (rather than evaluative) SROI could be produced, within which there could be an evaluative element drawing on the current, more limited and structured use of the facility.

The empirical part of the Greyfriars SROI has been put on hold for now and the best way of gathering and assimilating the necessary information to feed into a forecast model is currently being explored. In any case, the next stage of the GBG project will provide a useful opportunity to review and test the role of forecast valuations in a voluntary sector context and the lessons learnt from this process will feed into the guidance produced.

### 3.3.5 Assessing the impacts of Project Orienteer using an SROI approach

Whilst the Greyfriars mini case study set out to use an SROI framework from the outset, the Project Orienteer case study in contrast, lead by Barry from GCCCP, was initially researched using stages 1-4 of the Economic Outcomes tool. Work began in April 2012 and the majority of data relating to inputs, outputs and outcomes was sent to Paul in September, following a very busy period for Barry in which a number of new and on-going GCCCP projects took up a great deal of his time. Fortunately Barry was able to draw on further (albeit limited) human resources in GCCCP to help him collect some of the information required by the tool. Over the course of this period Barry and Paul stayed in regular email contact and met up twice to discuss progress and resolve issues, principally around the definition and identification of outputs and local economic impacts.

Given Paul's experience with the Greyfriars project, and the knowledge gained through this and the SROI training attended back in March, it seemed logical to re-assemble Barry's data within an SROI framework and to attempt the computation of an SROI ratio for Project Orienteer. In addition to seeking clarification on a few issues and some requesting of additional information here and there, Paul outlined to Barry the kind of data that would be necessary in order to make some estimates of Deadweight, Attribution and Displacement in relation to Project Orienteer - factors crucial to the SROI computation, but also integral to any legitimate impact valuation.

What follows is a description and presentation of the various data assembled, both through the process of implementing the Economic Outcomes tool, and through subsequent collection and refinement of the data as requested by Paul to feed into the SROI.

### 3.3.6 Stakeholders in Project Orienteer

As SROI is very much based around stakeholder engagement, their identification happens early in the process. In fact an important part of the methodology is the identification of key stakeholder groups or individuals and the justification of their inclusion (or exclusion) from the study.

In contrast, the Economic Outcomes tool is not so explicit about the identification of stakeholders as it is more driven by the sequential identification of inputs, outputs and outcomes. The stakeholders who affect, or are affected by, the outcomes of a project are thus identified by default. Nevertheless as the data collected in relation to Project Orienteer using the tool was subsequently analyzed using an SROI framework it is appropriate to begin with a list of those stakeholders who either experience change or affect the activity, whether positively or negatively. The following stakeholder groups were identified for Project Orienteer:

Table 3.2: Stakeholder Groups Identified for Project Orienteer

Stakeholder	Interest in the project / Intended consequences
GCCCCP	To help provide city residents with an outdoor orienteering facility to promote general recreation, exercise and good health
	To develop a fixed orienteering course to improve the health of city residents
	Courses should be accessible to all, including children, young people and older people
North Gloucestershire Orienteering Club (NGOC)	To provide a fixed orienteering facility in Gloucester city to promote orienteering and its benefits
	Course designs should meet national standards for the sport
Local Community Users	Improve physical and mental health
	Provide formal and informal opportunities for exercise, fresh air and meeting people
Local Charities	Fund raising, profile raising
Gloucester City Council (GCC)	To develop some form of activity course as part of the city council plan
Gloucestershire Primary Care Healthcare Trust (GPHCT)	To address NHS Choosing Health priority areas
	To tackle health inequalities
	To reduce smoking
	To tackle obesity
Contractors and other local businesses	To improve mental health
	To provide services related to the construction, set up and management of the course and site

### 3.3.7 Inputs and outputs of Project Orienteer

The information collated here was derived through application of the Economic Outcomes tool. Although inputs, outputs and outcomes were not initially arranged by stakeholder they are presented as such here to confirm with the SROI impact map. A financial value was estimated for each of the inputs over the course of the project by drawing on Project Orienteer information collated by GCCCCP.

Table 3.3: Inputs and Outputs Identified for Project Orienteer

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Inputs</b>		
	<b>Description</b>	<b>Value (£)</b>	<b>Outputs</b>
GCCCP	Financial support	400	3 press articles and 4 radio interviews
	Project management: Planning meetings, Grant/funding applications, media and administration	450*	Raised profile: 42 invitees present including local council leader and MP.
	Volunteer support	300*	
	Course build and launch event	825	Post launch survey over 15 months required 195 volunteer hours. Quantitative survey logged 600 individual sessions.
	Post launch monitoring	1800*	
NGOC	Advice on course development, design and mapping and training sessions	60	GCCCP survey logged 600 individual sessions.
Community users			
Local Charities	Funding for public training sessions (NGOC Training)	600	
	Hire of marquee for launch event (Brunswick Square lawn Association)	200	
GCC	Grant support	2000	GCCCP survey logged 600 individual sessions.
GPHCT	Advice on course design, permission to use their licence for OS maps and health & Safety guidance	75	GCCCP survey logged 600 individual sessions.
	Grant support	5100	

Table 3.3 cont.

Contractors	Inspection and maintenance of the course for a 12 month period (in kind contribution)	1200	Provision of food, marquee and sound equipment to a total value of 580
			Course planning, mapping, printing, sign design to a total value of £2112
			Design of unique solution for problem of fixing signs to trees
Total Inputs		£13,010	

\*GCCCP use a mean £15 per hour rate to value their volunteer time.

### 3.3.8 Outcomes and their spatial referencing

Whilst a conventional SROI framework makes no provision for the spatial referencing of impacts – in other words the geographic boundaries within which outcomes and impacts may be accrued – it was a central aim of the Gloucestershire POV project to attempt an integration of the original RCC tool (the Economic Outcomes tool) with some form of spatial analysis to encompass the estimation of local multipliers to serve as indicators of local economic impact. This would draw on the principles of LM3 modeling, where by the first 3 rounds of an economic transaction in an economy are traced and simplified Keynesian techniques are used to produce income and employment multipliers arising from an initial injection of income into the economy.

Given this aim, an attempt to spatially reference the impacts arising through the expenditure on local good services was initially attempted. However, as an SROI framework was being used to analyse the information on Project Orienteer gathered through the Economic Outcomes tool it was decided to attempt a spatial reference for all outcomes described in the impact map, social as well as economic.

To operationalise this, three geographic boundaries or zones were identified as being relevant to Project Orienteer, its funders and its users:

- Gloucester city
- The County of Gloucestershire outside the city
- Elsewhere in the UK

Although an original intention at the start of the POV project was to attempt the capture of impacts within Westgate ward, for this project this was felt to be unrealistic given the size of the area for which little spatial data was likely to be available, for example in terms of expenditure patterns of local contractors.

For each of the outcomes identified for the various stakeholders, a proportion was then assigned to each of the zones, as shown in Table 3.4. The rationale for this zonal referencing of impacts is given in the last column of the table. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proportions are assigned arbitrarily and should ideally be drawn from primary data, they were discussed and moderated in discussion with GCCCP who had good knowledge of service delivery in the city.

Table 3.4: Spatial Referencing of Outcomes (Project Orienteer)

Stakeholder group	Outcome description	% City	% County	% rest of UK	Evidence / Rationale
GCCCP					
NGOC					
Community users	General improvement in health	0.1	0.8	0.1	Benefits of health improvement will be felt through the Primary Care Trust, which serves the entire county. It is prudent to assign some of this to Gloucester city but better understate rather than over state. Similarly, people are always transient so some impact is assigned to wider society.
	Help with weight loss	0.1	0.8	0.1	As for general health improvement
	Increased social interaction	0.7	0.2	0.1	According to GCCCP the vast majority of users were found to live in the city and within around 1km of the course. Thus it seems sensible to assign the majority of quality of life benefits to Gloucester city.
	Training in the sport of orienteering	0.7	0.2	0.1	As for increased social interaction
	Help with stopping smoking	0.1	0.8	0.1	As for general health improvement
Charities					
GCC	Avoidance of expenditure on creating an activity/trim trail in the park as part of their city centre plan	0.7	0.2	0.1	GCC serves the city thus the vast majority of this benefit accrues to the city itself. So as not to overstate the impact some is assigned to other two zones.
	Avoidance of expenditure on maintenance and course signage	0.7	0.2	0.1	As above

Table 3.4 continued

GPHCT	Health care savings through improved health of course users	0.1	0.8	0.1	As for general health, weight loss and smoking impacts above.
Contractors	Income (and employment) generation through provision of launch event services	0.8	0.2	0.0	All contractors and businesses that provided goods and services in relation to the project were located in Gloucester city. It is prudent to assign some impact to the county as the multiplier indicator also takes into account where wages and salaries are spent. This may not be confined to the city.
	Income (and employment) generation through course planning and design	0.8	0.2	0.0	As above

### 3.3.9 Indicators and Financial Proxies for Project Orienteer

A central element of the SROI is the identification of indicators and financial proxies for each of the outcomes. These serve different but related functions in the analysis.

Indicators can be defined as ways of knowing that change has taken place. So, in the case of an outcome relating to improvements to general health, a useful indicator is the proportion of users that have experienced or use the course to improve their health. Where possible it is always better to try and derive indicators through primary research although in many cases an SROI may demand that indicators are sourced from secondary data.

The role of financial proxies in the SROI analysis is to allow the outcomes to be monetized. But it is important to remember that SROI isn't about money; the identification and application of financial values is a way of showing the relative importance of outcomes in comparison to others. And assigning monetary values to things that don't normally have a market price is achieved through assigning proxies – or approximations – for this non-market value. The application of financial proxies to the outcomes and their indicators therefore makes outcomes comparable to one another, but, importantly allows them to be directly comparable to the initial investment that went into a project, which is generally easier to identify in monetary terms.

The process of monetisation should therefore be viewed more as a way of providing a standardized unit with which to make relative comparisons than about converting outcomes into money *per se*. But of course it has its benefits because financial value is a widely recognized and understood form of valuation in society. Likewise, funders and commissioning bodies will immediately be able to see the 'hard' return of their

investment in projects and programmes, which is likely to prove useful to voluntary organizations in leveraging further funds to pursue the aims of their organisation.

In the case of estimating the magnitude of income and employment effects arising from local expenditure a multiplier serves as a useful indicator as it will estimate the trickle-down or knock-on effects on an initial injection of income into the economy. Obtaining an actual multiplier through an LM3 analysis informed by primary data is likely to be unrealistic in addition to carrying out an SROI analysis. However, it is possible to estimate the likely income and employment effects simply by knowing where a particular business is located and the revenue it received from the project. In fact, estimating local economic effects based upon the first two rounds of transaction is recognized by NEF and others (See for example Thatcher and Sharp, 2008) as being not only acceptable given the data intensive nature of LM3 surveys but a completely reliable estimation with considerably less effort.

With the inclusion of the first two rounds in the SROI impact map, an assumed local economic multiplier then serves as the indicator on which to estimate subsequent income (and employment if the magnitude of the income is sufficient) effects. For example, if we assume that 25% of the local business income from Project Orienteer is spent locally, and that in turn their suppliers spend 25% of that income locally, the resulting LM3 multiplier would be 1.31. Rounding this down to 1.25 would be entirely comparable to previous LM2 and LM3 estimates (See for example Courtney et al 2012; Thatcher and Sharp, 2008) and in fact if anything is likely to be overly conservative. This process of deriving indicators from existing academic literature is entirely in-keeping with the SROI methodology and therefore, subject to some standard caveats, is entirely legitimate.

The indicators and financial proxies identified for the various outcomes of Project Orienteer are outlined in Table 3.5 below, together with a note of the source.



**Table 3.5: Project Orienteer Outcomes and Financial Proxies**

<b>Stakeholder group</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Indicator description</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Financial proxy description</b>	<b>Source</b>
GCCCP					
NGOC					
Community users	General improvement in health	% of users reporting primary reason for using the course	GCCCP on site user survey (Aug-Sep 2012)	Annual spend on private healthcare insurance	NEF (Average from 5 providers)
	Help with weight loss	% of users reporting primary reason for using the course	GCCCP on site user survey (Aug-Sep 2012)	Direct cost of treating obesity to NHS Scotland	SROI Network - Scottish Government 2010, preventing overweight and obesity in Scotland: A Road map to towards healthy weight
	Increased social interaction	% of users reporting primary reason for using the course	GCCCP on site user survey (Aug-Sep 2012)	Average spend on social activities for a year (Proxy for change in reduced levels of social isolation)	SROI Network - Family Spending 2009 (Used in SROI for Scottish Investment Fund)
	Training in the sport of orienteering	% of users reporting primary reason for using the course	GCCCP on site user survey (Aug-Sep 2012)	Average annual cost of gym membership in England	Secondary research - The Guardian, 20 January 2006
Community Users cont.	Help with stopping smoking	% of users reporting primary reason for using the course	GCCCP on site user survey (Aug-Sep 2012)	Cost of smoking cessation services per quitter in Scotland	SROI network - Featherstone et al 2010. Up in smoke, AHS Scotland.
Charities					
GCC	Avoidance of expenditure on creating an	Estimate budget for original activity scheme (minus the	Gloucester City Council (verbal communication)	No proxy required	

	activity/trim trail in the park as part of their city centre plan	grant support)			
	Avoidance of expenditure on maintenance and course signage	Estimate of likely costs associated with an equivalent scheme	Gloucester City Council (verbal communication)	No proxy required	
GPHCT	Health care savings through improved health of course users	*Savings for PHCT captured through outcome proxies for course users		*Savings for PHCT captured through outcome proxies for course users	
Contractors	Income (and employment) generation through provision of launch event services	Multiplier of 1.25 based on standard assumptions to estimate income effects	Courtney et al, 2012; Thatcher and Sharp, 2008	No proxy required	

### 3.3.10 Assessing Deadweight, Attribution, Displacement and Drop-off for Project Orienteer

**Deadweight** – is a measure of the amount of outcome that would have happened anyway, even if Project Orienteer had not taken place. It is calculated as a percentage.

Community user outcomes were all assigned a deadweight proportion of 0.56, implying that 56% of all benefits would have happened anyway without Project Orienteer. This estimate was obtained through a follow up survey of 6 course users (which constituted around 10% of the original user survey), which asked about the percentage of time spent exercising that was spent at the Project Orienteer course in a typical week. The average for the six respondents was 44%, thus we can approximate that 56% of all revealed impacts would have happened anyway without the course.

Accounting for deadweight in the case of Gloucester City Council was relatively straightforward as it was clear from discussions between GCCCP and the city council that no similar projects would have gone ahead without Project Orienteer. A deadweight proportion of zero was therefore assigned.

In the case of local businesses it is likely some work in the city would have come about if that provided through the Project Orienteer project had not been on offer. However, given that the sums involved are relatively small it seemed reasonable to assign a deadweight proportion of 0.25 on the basis that around a quarter of equivalent work – by financial value – would have been available anyway without Project Orienteer.

**Attribution** - is an assessment of how much of the outcome was caused by the contribution of other organisations, interventions or people. Also calculated as a percentage, it shows the part of the deadweight for which more information is available and where outcomes (or partial outcomes) can be attributed to other people or organisations.

Community user outcomes were assigned an attribution proportion of 0.34, approximating that 34% of such benefits could be legitimately attributed to Project Orienteer. This was arrived at as follows: the follow up survey of course users also asked about whether use of the orienteering course had improved their health / fitness over the last 12 months. Five out of the six respondents said it had, with one saying that it had stayed the same. They were also asked about the percentage of that improvement they would attribute to the PO course, and the mean percentage (treating the individual who saw no improvement as 0%) across the sample was 34%. Thus for all user outcomes we can approximate that 34% of revealed health / social capital related benefits can be attributed to Project Orienteer.

In the case of Gloucester City Council and local businesses it seemed entirely reasonable that all recorded outcomes could be attributed to Project Orienteer.

**Displacement** – is a measure of how much of the outcome has displaced other outcomes. For example, if the opening of the orienteering course had led to the closure of another fitness facility in the city.

Displacement is arguably the most difficult of the three concepts to approximate as there may be dis-benefits occurring elsewhere that it is not possible to reveal through

some basic primary investigation. However, in this case it seemed safe to assume a displacement rate of zero as a few enquiries with informed stakeholders revealed that the closest outdoor public orienteering course to Gloucester Project Orienteer was Pittville Park in Cheltenham, some eight miles distant. Project Orienteer was unlikely to have affected use of the Cheltenham facility and with no other similar facilities in Gloucester city there seemed no tangible reason to assign a proportional reduction for displacement in the analysis.

#### *Drop off and discount rate*

An important feature of the SROI methodology is to account for a drop-off in the value or significance of outcomes over time, and to account for the time value of money (in that people prefer to receive money today rather than later either due to risk or opportunity cost of investing elsewhere) by applying a discount rate to compute a present value. The basic rate for the public sector recommended in HM Treasury's Green Book is 3.5%.

In many cases the extent or significance of an outcome is likely either to be reduced over time (i.e. because the number of users of a facility tails off over time once the initial publicity and enthusiasm subsides), or if the same, to be more influenced by other factors or projects and so the attribution of the project is lower. Drop-off is used to account for this (and is calculated for outcomes that last more than one year) by deducting a fixed percentage from the remaining level of the outcome at the end of each year.

In the case of Project Orienteer it became evident through basic surveys that use of the orienteering course tailed off significantly in the second year, by at least 30%. Subsequent drop-off in use appears to have steadied and the course now appears to enjoy a fairly consistent level of use, albeit at a lower level. Without hard evidence it seemed reasonable to apply an annual drop off rate of 35% (0.35), although if anything this is likely to be over-cautious.

#### **3.3.11 At last! Computation of the SROI ratio for Project Orienteer**

For some the ratio is the most important and exciting part of the SROI. It certainly may be for commissioning bodies and those seeking more funding as it provides tangible evidence of the likely return to society of this funding. For many others it is less interesting – after all, SROI is essentially a story about how a project, programme or organization affects change in the world. That story is first told in words (using a Theory of Change); it is then converted into numbers to provide some hard evidence of the impact of this change. Finally, the story reverts to words once again to give it some life, interest and colour.

Having made that point, the calculation of the SROI is fairly straightforward. Table 3.6 below is a summary of the story of change for Project Orienteer summarised with a few relatively simple numbers.

Table 3.6: SROI Ratio for Project Orienteer

Value of Inputs (Investment):	£13,010
Total Present Value of Outcomes (after deadweight, attribution, displacement, drop-off)	£ 52,875
<b>SROI ratio (Benefits / Investment)</b>	<b>4.06:1</b>

So, every £1 invested in Project Orienteer has generated £4 of socio-economic value.

And in this case of our estimation of the SROI (unusually) allows a spatial breakdown of impacts according to geographic zone. Of this £4, £2.33 of value was found to accrue to the city of Gloucester. On this basis the City Council should be very pleased that they have such an active, vibrant and motivated voluntary partnership and investing in similar projects in the future seems well justified.

At this point in time GCCCP were in fact in the process of trying to secure funding for a second orienteering course in another part of the docks. Although there was great interest in enthusiasm from many stakeholders, the ones that matter (i.e. those that hold the purse strings) were yet to be convinced and it was hoped that that SROI for this first project would help this funding to be secured.

### **Summary of section 3.3**

This section has examined two GCCCP projects, one focused around youth and one around health. The primary focus during this stage of work was to explore the efficacy of applying SROI in small, voluntary and community organisations.

#### **1. Evidence of impact from GCCCP**

It is not possible to do justice to the likely range and scale of impacts arising from GCCCP activities, however the two case studies examined provide some indication of its potential breadth and depth:

- Health and well-being impacts were evident in both projects, from improved resilience and self-esteem of project participants and beneficiaries to improved physical health.
- A Theory of change for the youth projected indicated the potential outcomes for crime prevention and improved relationships between young people and the police to be significant.
- Increased social interaction lies at the heart of many revealed outcomes, especially well being.
- Reduced expenditure for the state as a result of service delivery through voluntary action is extremely prevalent through work of GCCCP. In this case reduced pressure on the criminal justice system and the avoidance of expenditure for the Local Authority and health service were credible outcomes, albeit evidenced anecdotally.
- The pilot SROI of the health project indicated that £4 of socio-economic value was being delivered for every £1 invested. Of this £2.33 was found to be attributed to the city of Gloucester.

## **2. Implications for development of the impact tool**

- Many outcomes lead to further outcomes in a chain of events, stressing the importance of developing an outcomes map through exploratory research.
- Exploring outcomes through theory change-type exercises are useful processes in themselves for some voluntary organisations, even if the identified outcomes are not subsequently evidenced.
- With sufficient planning and guidance, identified outcomes can be evidenced through surveys using appropriate tailored questions.
- The earlier a monitoring and evaluation framework is built into a project the easier it will be to evidence impact, not least because data and information will be more readily accessible.
- A better understanding of outcomes will ultimately lead to a better chance of achieving project objectives.
- A focus on outcomes (as opposed to outputs) will help with this.
- Identifying suitable financial proxies to monetise identified outcomes is potentially problematic for small organisations, and may not be possible for many.
- Spatially referencing impacts may be appropriate and useful for some projects, but adds a further layer of complexity that should probably be avoided.
- Attempting to capture deadweight and attribution is essential in order to avoid over-estimation of impact estimates.

## 4. Methodological reflections and introduction to our SRA tool

This section reflects on the main observations and lessons learned during the first phase of the study, and describes how this led to the development of our Social Return Assessment (SRA) tool that can be found in the Appendix to this report. In essence, three main conclusions of this interim phase led to this development: 1) that social rather than economic outcomes appeared most relevant across all three groups; 2) that the power of simply understanding and articulating outcomes was potentially as useful (if not more useful) than the actual measures of outcomes that were derived; and 3) that, more than anything, our case work partners needed a tool that was both simple and flexible enough to ensure that it would be used effectively. Each of these points is explained further below.

### 4.1 Early lessons that were learned

#### 1) Social or Economic outcomes?

Perhaps the most insightful conclusion to this first phase of work is that it proved not only difficult to uncover economic impacts across the three case studies, but that a focus on economic outcomes was potentially less useful, and less relevant, than one relating to the social outcomes.

The wider contribution of our three SPOs to wider societal and community development (and service delivery) was especially revealing, and whilst it did prove possible to identify and quantify some local economic impacts (through the contracting of activity for example), the real interest and relevance appeared to be around helping the SPOs to understand and articulate their contribution to generating benefits around issues such as health, well-being, social and human capital and general quality of life. And in recognising this, our partners were more motivated to pursue impact assessments relating to these social (or socio-economic) outcomes.

Given this, and reflecting on the SROI-based approach that had been tested on Project Orienteer with GCCCP, the research team accepted that a reorientation of the approach towards something that drew on the principles of SROI would prove fruitful during the second phase of the research. While the RCC (Economic Outcomes) tool had proved useful in getting our partners 'out of the starting blocks' to begin the process of scoping activities, inputs, and outputs, it was falling short on providing the framework for a meaningful assessment of outcomes, and on the application of metrics to these outcomes. Similarly, although the integration of spatial referencing of impacts and the use of LM3-type multipliers to estimate the magnitude of local economic impacts had proved an interesting exercise in Project Orienteer, pursuing this approach across all three case study groups was not felt to be possible, or especially helpful, given the nature of outcomes being revealed.

#### 2) The power of description

The initial experience across all three case work groups highlighted the fact that the process of documenting activities and of understanding qualitatively how those activities led to outcomes for the various stakeholders was not only less challenging than attempting some form of measurement, but was also just as useful to our partners. In fact it became evident fairly early on that the process of undertaking an

impact assessment was very useful in itself. And the principal reason for this was that it helped them to really understand what they were trying to achieve and how they were going to achieve these goals. Thus, although the research had initially set out to give our SPOs the tools to begin quantifying their impacts, the real value it seemed lay simply in documenting, understanding and articulating them.

The experience from the Fair Shares and GCCCP studies each revealed this to be the case, albeit in slightly different ways. As an organisation Fair Shares was very aware of its impact on participants' lives and the qualitative nature of this impact. In this respect, the researcher had most of the learning to do. The researcher's pre-conceptions that the most important impacts of a time bank would be practical in nature (although not economic in the conventional sense) were challenged from the outset, as interviewees stressed the social and emotional benefits which accrued as much to those helping as to those helped.

In fact, Gloucestershire Fair Shares had already produced case study evidence of its impact, some of which is included in Oppenheimer (2011). The production of case study material was limited by the lack of workers' time to undertake such documentation than by failure to see the advantages of this method of demonstrating impact.

The present research produced additional qualitative evidence of impact in the responses to the members' questionnaire and it could be argued that this evidence is more persuasive, at least to some, than the facts and figures produced by a more quantitative approach. Such qualitative evidence is certainly a valuable addition to the quantitative.

In GCCCP the same conclusion was reached in two different ways. The process of documenting inputs and outputs using the original Economic Outcomes tool had in many ways given Barry a fairly narrow view of how the impacts of GCCCP activities should be captured. The process of gathering metrics around things like the number of volunteer hours, numbers of people taking part in meetings and events, and the value of contracts, while useful, were not helping to reveal the things that we should really have been attempting to measure - the outcomes of the project.

In contrast, Paul's parallel work undertaking a theory of change exercise revealed to both parties that focussing on outcomes at the outset - rather than basic measures such as inputs - was potentially more useful. On seeing draft impact maps (See figures 3 and 4, presented earlier) for the Greyfriars Bowling Green project, Barry's immediate response was something like '*...this is what we were trying to achieve, and to see it mapped out like that is very revealing..*'. Doing a similar exercise for Project Orienteer - albeit without any form of stakeholder consultation at that stage - then allowed us to focus energies on gathering data that would allow measurement of the things that really mattered, notably the health, wellbeing and wider enjoyment of its users.

While the benefit to investment ratio produced from this 'mini SROI' exercise went on to help GCCCP secure funding for a second orienteering course in the city, the value of not going beyond a descriptive outcomes mapping exercise for Greyfriars was equally recognised. And when pooling their ideas and experience at research meetings the team realised that they needed to find a way to make standalone qualitative exercises around understanding outcomes a legitimate element of an impact assessment.



### **3) The need for simplicity and flexibility**

Of all three conclusions, this was perhaps the one reached most quickly, and the one most anticipated by the research team. From the outset it became clear that the three SPO partners would need the researchers to remain fairly hands on throughout the POV process. And a clear set of skills and knowledge would need to be imparted along the way if at the end of the project local activists were to be in a position to attempt their own impact assessment.

Skills, capacity and motivation to undertake a meaningful impact assessment were quickly recognised as being important attributes, as was the ability to keep clear succinct records about the key elements of their activities, including for example volunteer time. The GCCCP casework benefited greatly from the comprehensive files kept by Barry on each of the GCCCP projects, whilst at GL11 a greater amount of time had to be invested by the researcher in collating and summarising activity data to feed into the impact exercises.

A related element was the reason why the SPOs wanted to undertake an impact assessment in the first place. GCCCP, for example, was clear that any evidence gathered would be used to help demonstrate in legitimate and tangible terms the impact of their activities and efforts to funders, supporters and the wider volunteer community. And indeed almost as soon as evidence began to emerge this information was being fed into funding applications. In GL11 the benefits of undertaking an impact assessment became clear as much through the process of undertaking the assessment, as through the findings of that assessment. Although the process took some time to bed in to the organisation, towards the end of Phase I staff at GL11 began to recognise the power of the case work in helping them to understand better their objectives, and in turn the processes that they needed to follow (in terms of planning, record keeping and organising) if they were to demonstrate their attainment of these objectives. And perhaps most revealing was the fact that all this had been achieved without 'measuring' a single outcome.

With Fair Shares, the lack of time to undertake impact assessments was clear from the start, necessitating a tool that was simple to use and not too time-consuming. The time-consuming nature was accentuated by the need to go through questionnaires with most clients rather than simply handing them out.

The nature of time banking meant that a standard impact tool would not necessarily be appropriate and at one point it was thought that a separate version of our eventual tool would need to be produced, although in the end this did not prove necessary.

Fair Shares had accurate records of time bank transactions kept on a standard time-banking computer programme, although the way activities were classified was not always helpful. However, what was missing was base evidence that would enable an increase in well-being of participants to be demonstrated. The organisation had been interested in the Warwick Edinburgh tool for some time but it had only been used with a small number of new members.

The message therefore was clear: as well as being simple enough to be readily used by small voluntary organisations, our tool needed to reflect the various reasons why it might be used in the first place. This implied a flexibility of approach that could be tailored to individual contexts, needs and aspirations.

## 4.2 Developing our Social Return Assessment (SRA) tool

Putting all of this together and with the knowledge and ideas being gained from the regional meetings that members of the research team were attending, the seed was now being sown for what was to become the Social Return Assessment (SRA) tool - a tool which was based around the framework and principles of SROI, but would provide a greater degree of flexibility in terms of the elements undertaken, and would be more accessible in terms of language, approach and structure.

The basic premise of the tool is that it would allow for three levels of sophistication, and the choice about which level to choose would depend on the principal reasons for undertaking an impact assessment. The three levels were derived from the three elements implicit to the SROI framework - exploring change, measuring change and valuing change - and reflected our confidence that undertaking no measurement or valuation at all would still be a legitimate and useful line to pursue. Given the evident usefulness of using an impact exercise to inform an organisation's planning, record keeping and managerial activities, the tool would also explicitly allow forward looking assessments to be undertaken, as well as the evaluation of projects or activities that had already occurred.

It was decided that the SRA tool would be sequentially developed, tested and refined in Phase 2 of the action research, and that all three levels would be individually piloted to derive some meaningful evidence that could be reported as part of the project. In addition, one of the cases would use the tool to forecast impacts and so would require examination of a project that was just about to start or had only recently got underway.

The three 'stages' of work in the SRA tool are as follows, with the second and third stages adding further sophistication to stage A. In turn the three levels of sophistication may simply be termed levels 1, 2 and 3. And the choice of which level to pursue would depend on the requirements of the organisation and why they needed to undertake an impact assessment.

Stage A..... Exploring (and describing) the Change  
Stage B..... Measuring the Change  
Stage C..... Valuing the Change

Level 1: comprises only Stage A  
Level 2 comprises Stage A plus B  
Level 3 comprises Stage A plus B plus C

Following consultation with the three SPOs it was decided that GL11 should pursue Level 1 (and where possible test some elements of level 2) in its attempt to forecast the outcomes of a project that had recently got off the ground. The piloting process would more or less follow that employed in the first phase, with the researcher taking the lead and taking a back seat where this looked to be possible. Fairshares would pilot Level 2, but this time in a different geographical area so that its accessibility and ease of use could be tested by people who had not come across it before. And in GCCCP the case work team would pursue all three stages of the tool by undertaking level 3, including the production of a benefit to investment ratio for a substantial project that was reaching out to a wide community. Again, it was hoped that new individuals could be brought in to engage with and implement the tool, and that those individuals would be the primary drivers of that work.

Our experience of piloting the tool in Phase 2 is described in the following section and the final version of the SRA tool is located in the Appendix. It is also reproduced together with its accompanying workbook in a separate Annex to this report. This version reflects all amendments and refinements that were made along the way, including some last minute changes prompted by discussions with other members of the county's voluntary sector at a dissemination event convened by GAVCA in September 2013. Further detail on these refinements, and the experience of the piloting exercise can be found in section 5.4.

## 5. Phase 2: Piloting the SRA tool and evidencing impact

Phase 2 of the research was implemented differently in each researcher/SPO partnership as shown in Table 2.1 on page 16, reproduced as table 5.1 below for ease of reference:

Table 5.1 Projects used for Piloting the Draft Tool

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>GL 11</b>	<b>Fair Shares</b>	<b>GCCCP</b>
Project	Cam Unity	Gloucester Fair Shares	Fielding and Platt
Level	1/2	2	3
Predictive or evaluative	Predictive	Evaluative	Evaluative

This approach enabled the piloting of the tool to different levels and also enabled it to be piloted prospectively, in the case of GL11, as well as retrospectively, as with Fair Shares and GCCCP.

This section discusses the implementation of Phase 2 of the research in each case study in turn, before reflecting more generally on the lessons learnt from Phase 2 of the research.

### 5.1 GL11: The Cam-Unity Research

#### 5.1.1 Seeking to Forecast the Likely Outcomes of the 'Cam-Unity' Project

It was agreed by the research team that Phase 2 of our study of GL11 would in two respects have a rather different thrust from that of Phase 1. First, it would not focus exclusively on economic impacts; rather, in keeping with the principles of the 'Social Return on Investment' (SROI) framework, it would try to look at all the impacts of a project, including those of a social nature, and seek if possible to express them in quasi-financial terms.

Second, rather than look retrospectively at what impact has arisen from a past project it would look forward at the likely future impact of an existing or proposed project – i.e. the model would be applied *ex ante* not *ex post* – a focus anticipated and endorsed in the original SROI handbook.

What follows then is perhaps best construed as an attempt to undertake a 'prospective and partial Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis' of GL11's Cam-Unity project. 'Prospective' because as explained, the work has involved looking forward and speculatively at the desired or anticipated impact of that project. And 'partial' because a number of the typical stages of an SROI analysis have simply not been attempted – in particular any attempt to assign monetary values to the inputs and outcomes of the project.

This forward looking approach arose from an unexpected opportunity. At just the time that 'phase 2' of the research was being planned, (January 2013) GL11 decided to submit a funding application to the Barnwood Trust which was keen to launch a number of community development projects across the county, each aiming to

facilitate local community action addressing the problems of residents with mental health problems or learning difficulties. The researchers decided to support the GL11 bid and then, if successful, to work together, researcher and GL11 chief executive, in attempting some elements of a prospective SROI analysis. These would comprise clarifying the project's anticipated or desired project inputs, outputs, and outcomes and the links between them in a forward-looking, rather than retrospective way.

### 5.1.2 Defining Outputs and Outcomes of the 'Cam-Unity' Project

Happily the project proposal, wedded firmly to the philosophy of ABCD ('Asset-Based Community Development'), was approved by Barnwood early in March and got underway in April with its apposite title - the 'Cam-Unity' project. The project involves a 30 hours-per-week 'community builder', employed by GL11, in identifying and supporting local volunteers or 'community connectors' who work, or might in future work, to reduce the isolation of vulnerable people by strengthening social networks and by addressing negative attitudes among the wider population of Cam.

Six meetings between researcher and GL11 chief executive were held in the five months to July 2013, each lasting about one-and-a-half hours. The newly appointed 'community-builder,' was involved in three of them. To get things started, a draft guidance note relating generally to the SROI technique was written by the researcher and circulated and discussed in early February. Building on that, the subsequent meetings were devoted to the feasibility, practicality and usefulness of trying to define Cam-Unity's intended outputs and outcomes in a meaningful way, and to the related issues of just how those outputs might help generate the desired outcomes, and whether those outcomes might possibly be encapsulated and measured using proxies and other indicators.

Examples of intended project *outputs* that were discussed at an early stage included an 'asset map' of Cam, a number of trained 'community connectors', various open events to be convened by 'the community builder', plus various specific initiatives that it was hoped volunteers might undertake or facilitate.

Examples of hoped-for *outcomes* that were distilled included the increased well-being of people with mental health problems, a more inclusive and tolerant Cam community, the increased strength and value of social networks embracing Cam's vulnerable people, more informal volunteering and good-neighbourliness, and a legacy of ongoing community activity at the end of the project itself.

As for project *inputs*, the point was made that the part-time 'community builder' would not be working alone. Other GL11 personnel and their various activities, which include a host of training events, drop-in groups and the guidance of would-be volunteers, would be 'tweaked' to benefit the Cam-Unity project. But it became clear that a lot would depend on various potential partner organisations and individuals who would need to be defined and involved, and that as yet that mobilisation had not been attempted.

When it came to reflecting on 'links' – i.e. on which particular actions might produce which outputs, and how outputs might help generate desirable outcomes - this was attempted in part individually in various working notes written by the researcher and by the GL11 team, and in part collectively by brain-storming together on large sheets of paper. In this linking-up work we tried to work from the premise that to be useful every output had to have at least one 'arrow' feeding from it into an outcome (otherwise why do it?) and every outcome had to have at least one arrow feeding into

it from an intended output (otherwise how would it come about?). Thus we gradually and in tandem moved towards what the SROI literature refers to as our 'theory of change' - in effect a shorthand statement of how the project would achieve its purpose.

We then gave some consideration to 'indicators' – i.e. to ways of recognising empirically the degree of attainment of the all-important 'outcomes'. But this was not easy. Obviously the outcome relating to greater volunteer input into the lives of vulnerable people would, conceptually at least, be relatively easy to measure; it would 'simply' involve recording the number of volunteer hours put in over the duration of the project – even if in practical terms all sorts of problems might arise in attempting this. But applying indicators to most of the other outcomes would be both conceptually and practically difficult. How for example might one recognise that the well-being of some vulnerable people had actually been improved over the period of the project, or that the people of Cam in general had become more tolerant of people with disabilities, or that the Cam community had become more caring? Our initial discussion of this challenge reached no firm conclusion, just a feeling that some sort of survey of those in a position to observe this might be possible.

By April 2013 we had arrived at the following agreed listings;

*Intended Outputs of Cam-Unity (in the two years to April 2015)*

- 1 An 'asset map' of Cam – notably of the human and agency resources that might potentially be deployed.
- 2 A concise and eye-catching prospectus to help 'sell' the project to its various stakeholders and potential partners
- 3 The attendance of GL11 personnel at local community events, schools, businesses etc – to 'spread the word' and solicit support
- 4 Meetings with agencies, support workers and carers of people with learning disabilities or other vulnerabilities
- 5 The recruitment, training, deployment and support of volunteers willing to act as 'community connectors' or to address the needs and potential of vulnerable people in some other way
- 6 The training of some 20-plus people who live or work in Cam, in the principles and practice of applying ABCD – asset-based community development – in this context
- 7 The development and launch of a 'Community Charter' that would recognise people and groups committed to the ideals of the Cam-Unity project
- 8 Developing a newsletter produced by people with learning disabilities, about their experience of living in Cam
- 9 Creating and producing a short play or video – by and about vulnerable people in Cam
- 10 An end-of-project review meeting to look both back and forwards

*Anticipated Outcomes of Cam-Unity (to be achieved at least in part by April 2015)*

- 1 An improvement in the well-being and quality of life of Cam's vulnerable people and of their carers
- 2 More engagement of Cam's vulnerable people in the wider Cam community and its activities
- 3 A more caring and tolerant Cam community with regard to the needs and difficulties of people with mental health problems or learning difficulties
- 4 Increased volunteering in the sense of good neighbourliness

5 The beginning of a legacy of three kinds; (i) an ongoing partnership of local people and groups committed to continuing the ideals of the Cam-Unity project, (ii) some roll-out elsewhere in Gloucestershire of good practice developed in Cam (iii) some change in the commissioning of some health care to better recognise the ABCD approach

*Several important links – from specific outputs to specific outcomes – were suggested, for example,*

- from outputs 4 and 5 to outcome 1 (re well-being and quality of life)
- from outputs 8 and 9 to outcome 3 (re greater community tolerance)
- from outputs 3,4,7 and 9 to outcome 5 (re leaving a legacy)

But the number of potential links from outputs to outcomes was clearly legion and our work quickly produced a rather cluttered diagram not reproduced here. But it certainly showed that no intended output failed to link across to at least one desired outcome. And no anticipated outcome risked simply being wishful thinking – i.e. devoid of any action to help bring it about!

Based partly on this exploratory thinking, and of course on the original brief for the Cam-Unity project set out in the Barnwood Trust's initial call for tenders, a first-year 'Work programme' for the community builder was drafted by the GL11 Chief Executive and its implementation began.

### 5.1.3 The Early Impact of GL11's 'Cam-Unity' project

We now go on to consider what impacts this joint research exercise are actually having upon GL11 itself. As explained, our research on the Cam-Unity project was prospective rather than retrospective, so obviously it would be premature to seek at this stage tangible impact on the ground. But some actual impact of another kind is already discernible, arising as a direct result of this having been a genuinely collaborative exercise involving both an academic researcher and GL11 personnel.

Thus, with regard to this research on the Cam-Unity research project undertaken together from January to June 2013, the GL11 chief executive has suggested several ways in which our intensive reflection on outputs, outcomes and the intended links from one to the other has already generated positive benefits. It:

- helped the initial bid for funding to Barnwood by demonstrating that there would be external 'outcome-focussed' support in the framing of a monitoring and evaluation component to the project
- has helped sharpen the focus of the project – clarifying its main objectives and what would need to happen for them to be realised
- has helped suggest what would need to be monitored over the two years if progress is to be gauged; a simple information system could now be devised and put in place
- has made suggestions for the effective management of the project – for example with regard to setting and revising the work programme, enlisting outside support and managing the staff member involved
- has provided a basis for better communication -suggesting a way of explaining to partners, stakeholders, sponsors, trustees and the wider Cam community just what the project is trying to achieve and how it is aiming to do so

- has assisted staff development through the direct involvement of the project officer in pondering just what would comprise ‘success’ and how it might be achieved and recognised
- has provided a possible basis for a subsequent (retrospective) evaluation of the project in two years’ time

In short it is clear that what began as an attempt to undertake a collaborative forward-looking ‘Social Return on Investment’ analysis of one part of GL11’s work has failed to deliver a clear cut ‘result’, i.e. a clear statement of what the project outcomes will be. But it has proved to be a genuinely useful learning exercise for the community organisation involved. For example, as we were finishing this work, the GL11 Chief Executive remarked *“We weren’t really clear about what we would consider to be a successful conclusion to this project; now all this work on outputs and outcomes has made that a lot clearer.”* Indeed, our codifying of that learning exercise for other broadly similar community development agencies may prove very useful.

#### 5.1.4 Reflections on Prospective Use

Happily it is clear that there was indeed some value, to both the POV research project and to GL11 working on the ground, in attempting this forward-looking, rather than retrospective, consideration of the delivery of the Cam-Unity project. As explained, this forward looking approach had been suggested in the Guidebook to SROI and so it may be useful to reflect on how far the GL11 work respected or departed from the classic process of SROI research set out there. Table 5.2 indicates the answer to that, written as our work on GL11 drew to a close.

Table 5.2: GL11 Phase 2 work and the ‘classic’ SROI process

Stages of the classic SROI process	Work undertaken in the GL11 case study (by June 2013) regarding the Cam-Unity project
1 Initial Scoping	Some work on relevant issues, needs & assets in Cam. Some discussion of the merits of targeting both geographically (whole of parish of Cam or one sub-area?) and socially (vulnerable people generally or specifically people with mental health issues / learning difficulties?)
2 Defining Hoped-for Outcomes	Well advanced on this – as in this paper. But no consideration yet of any unintended outcomes, positive or negative.
3 Deciding Intended Outputs	Well advanced on this - as in this paper (now being taken forward by project officer in a phased work programme)
4 Defining causal links from outputs to outcomes – to give an ‘intended project impact map’	Some suggestions and discussion (as above) but not as yet drawn together in a neat ‘map’ or diagram
5 Assigning ‘indicators’ to outcomes and assembling relevant data thereon	Obviously (as this is a prospective rather than retrospective analysis) no real output and outcome data is available – but some initial thought (as above) re what indicators might be appropriate
6 Establishing the actual impact of the Project	Not appropriate in a prospective analysis
7 Assigning monetary values to the various achieved outcomes	Agreed this would be too difficult and speculative to do <u>in advance</u> of the work. Just articulating the intended outputs and outcomes was a sufficient challenge. Some unresolved discussion of alternatively setting targets.
8 Calculating the ‘Social Return on the Investment’ (the SROI)	Clearly impossible to do this in advance of the project – but some indeterminate discussion of what complicating factors could cause exaggeration or underestimation of the impact (the so-called ‘deadweight, displacement and attribution’ errors)
9 Reporting the findings to interested stakeholders and ‘embedding’ any lessons	Some lessons are already being embedded in the work programme. Communicating these to other interested parties will come later.



## Summary of section 5.1

This section has focused on the GL11 'Cam-Unity' project which was just getting underway at the time of the research and was designed to look prospectively rather than retrospectively at its (likely) impact. The research involved close collaboration between the researcher, GL11's chief executive and the newly appointed project officer.

### 1. Evidence of impact from GL11

- we did not establish any substantive impact of the project – i.e. 'outcomes on the ground' - for the simple reason that the project had barely begun.
- that said, it was clear that the research had a significant and early impact on the development of the project. This was especially in relation to project management, clarification of objectives and targets, staff development, the development of a work programme, and communication with other stakeholders including the local community, potential partners and the funders. This was acknowledged and appreciated by the GL11 chief executive who recognised the value of the exercise in sharpening the focus of the Cam-Unity project in its early weeks and months and in skilling the newly appointed project officer.

### 2. Implications for development of the SRA tool

- this work on Cam-Unity was the only attempt made by the researchers to develop and apply an impact assessment tool *ex ante* rather than *ex post*. It confirmed the value of this – in a project development / staff development sense (see previous paragraph). The tool we eventually developed (see Appendix 1) recognises this.
- the Cam-Unity work also showed that an inability to quantify expected outputs and outcomes at the ex-ante stage did not detract from the tool's usefulness in a project development context.
- allied to that conclusion was confirmation of the need for close collaboration between an academic researcher, the VCO's chief executive and the project officer. The work required the active involvement of all three parties.

## 5.2 Fair Shares Gloucestershire

Phase 2 of the Fair Shares research was used to pilot the draft of Stages A and B of the 'Social Return Assessment' tool. After discussion with Jez Spencer, who had taken over from Laurence Hughes as CEO of Gloucestershire Fair Shares, it was decided to test the tool with Gloucester Fair Shares as they were undertaking a wide variety of activities. In order to test the usability of the tool, this stage of the research was to be carried out by Fair Shares with as little researcher input as possible.

As estimating the impact of a time bank presents particular problems, a Time Bank Version of the tool was developed (although this was later integrated with the main

tool). An accompanying workbook (to guide the time brokers through the process), and a feedback form (to enable them to report on any difficulties using the tool) were also produced. This last also asked them to estimate the time taken. The workbook contained example results from the research with Forest Fair Shares.

### 5.2.1 How easy was applying the draft tool to the Fair Shares case study?

In the event, a number of difficulties arose, and these are summarised below:

#### 1. Unsuitable language

It was pointed out that terms such as 'stakeholder' are not suitable for this type of document. As a result some of the language was simplified and the meaning of some words was explained.

#### 2. Unclear instructions

Instructions needed to be made clearer and forward sign-posting needed to be improved. The time bankers carried out interviews with 25 members but didn't realise in time that they should also have undertaken the Warwick-Edinburgh Survey. This omission points to the need for clearer signposting through the process.

#### 3. Other difficulties

It was found that, due to the literacy and confidence levels of the members, the time-bankers needed to be present when the forms were completed and many members preferred the time bankers to fill in the form for them. Whilst this might be thought to present problems of confidentiality, this did not trouble members. It did, however, restrict the number of forms that could be completed as they could only be done when the time brokers were in direct contact with the members rather than, for example, by email correspondence. Nevertheless, twenty-five forms were completed and they were reported as being easy to use 'when you see people'. The need to see people may also bias the sample as the members seen by time bankers in the course of their job may not be typical.

#### 4. Time commitment

The Gloucester time-bankers were asked to estimate how long the process had taken them. They estimated that the interviews took 10-20 minutes each. This would have been longer had they done the Warwick-Edinburgh Surveys as well. In addition, completion of the Workbook took about 3 hours, although it was not quite fully completed. The time taken was increased by the need to keep looking backwards and forwards as the workbook was completed. Thus, the process might be quicker if the examples and more explanation were included in the workbook rather than in the tool.

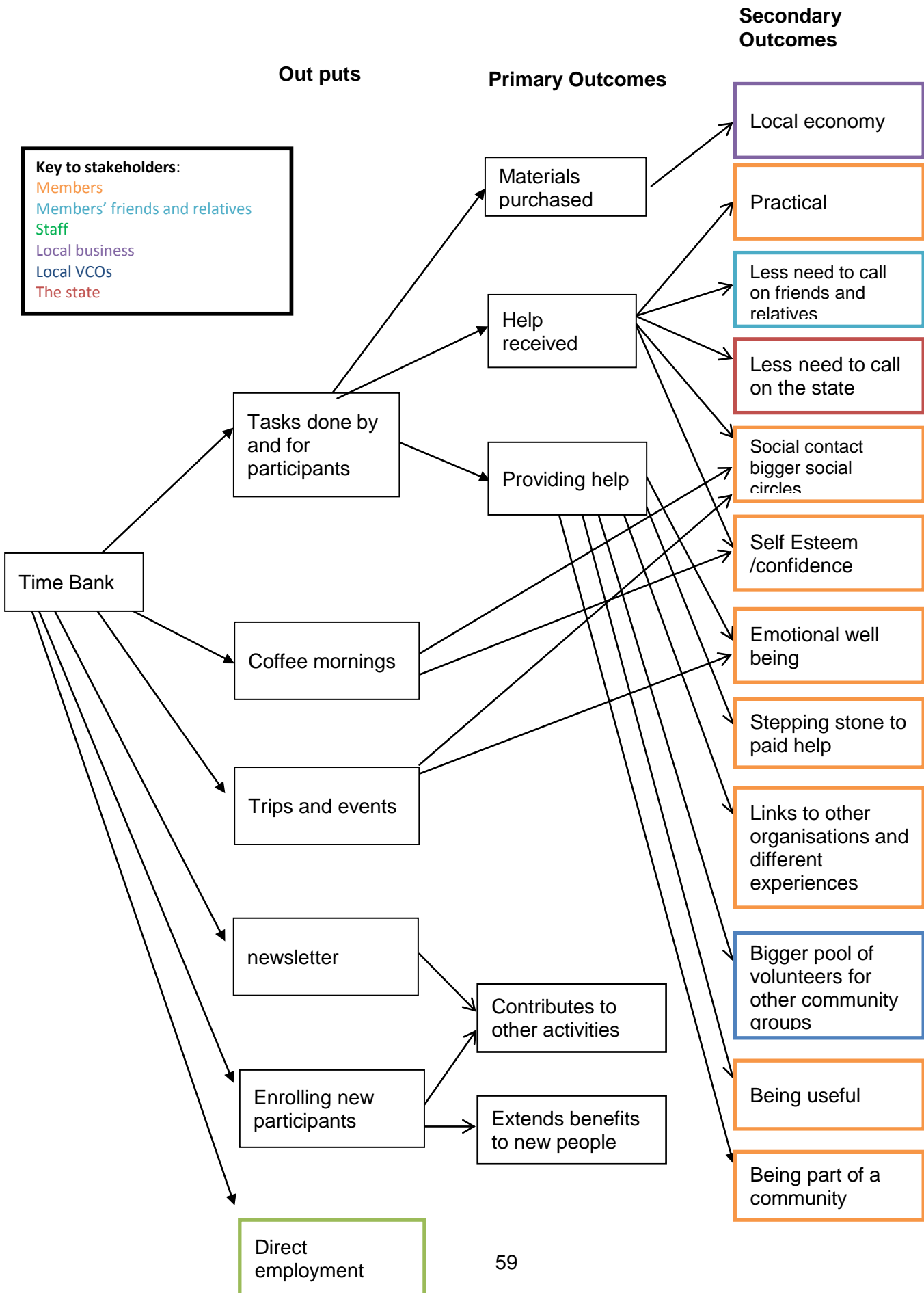
### 5.2.2 The impact of Fair Shares Gloucestershire

We now go on to consider the evidence of impact revealed through the process of validating the draft tool.

#### **Stage A: Exploring and Describing the Change**

The first part of the workbook was completed by the time brokers and a theory of change diagram was produced in line with the SROI process. This is given in Figure 5. It turned out to be very similar to the theory of change diagram produced earlier for Forest Fair Shares and it is possible that the example given was too 'leading', although it would be expected that the two organisations, both part of Fair Shares Gloucestershire, would have similar outputs and outcomes.

Figure 5: The 'Theory of Change' produced for Gloucester Fair Shares

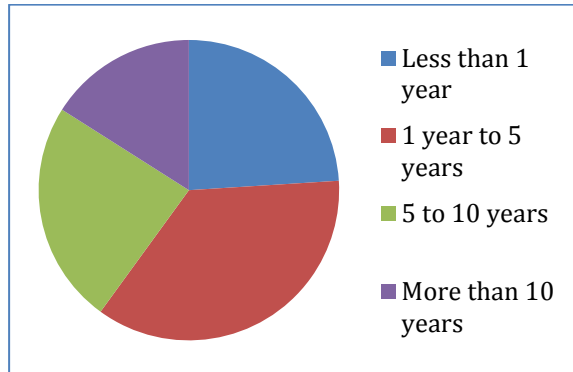


## Stage B: Measuring the Change - Survey Results

### Membership:

Of the sample of 25 members, six had been members for less than a year and at the other extreme ten had been members for more than five years, four of those for more than ten years.

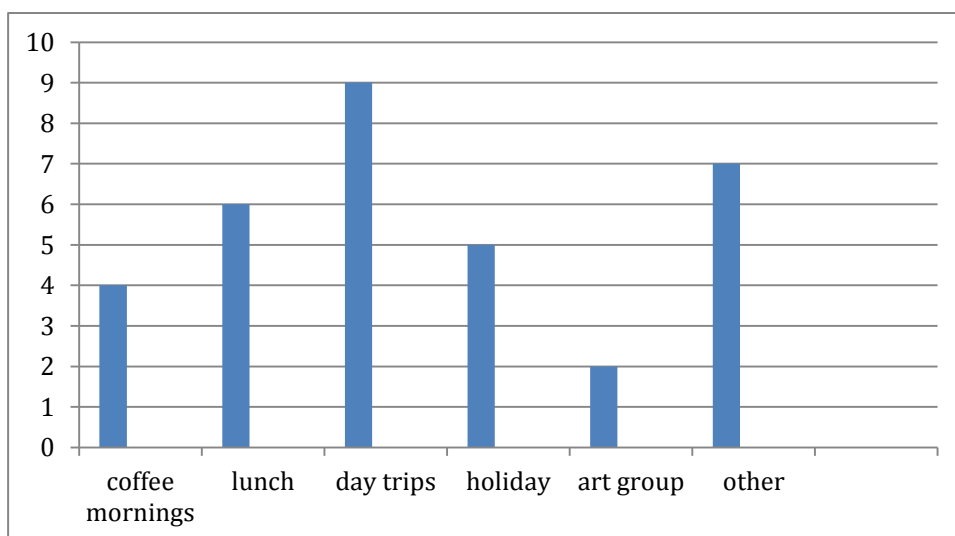
**Figure 6: Length of membership of participating members**



### Social Activities

Eighteen took part in social activities, which could be paid for with time credits. Of those who didn't take part, three were intending to at some point and one was housebound. Social activities ranged from coffee mornings to holidays, many members attending more than one type of activity. Figure 7 below shows the number of members saying they took part in each activity. The activities in the 'other' category were mentioned once each.

**Figure 7: Fair Shares Social Activities of participating members**

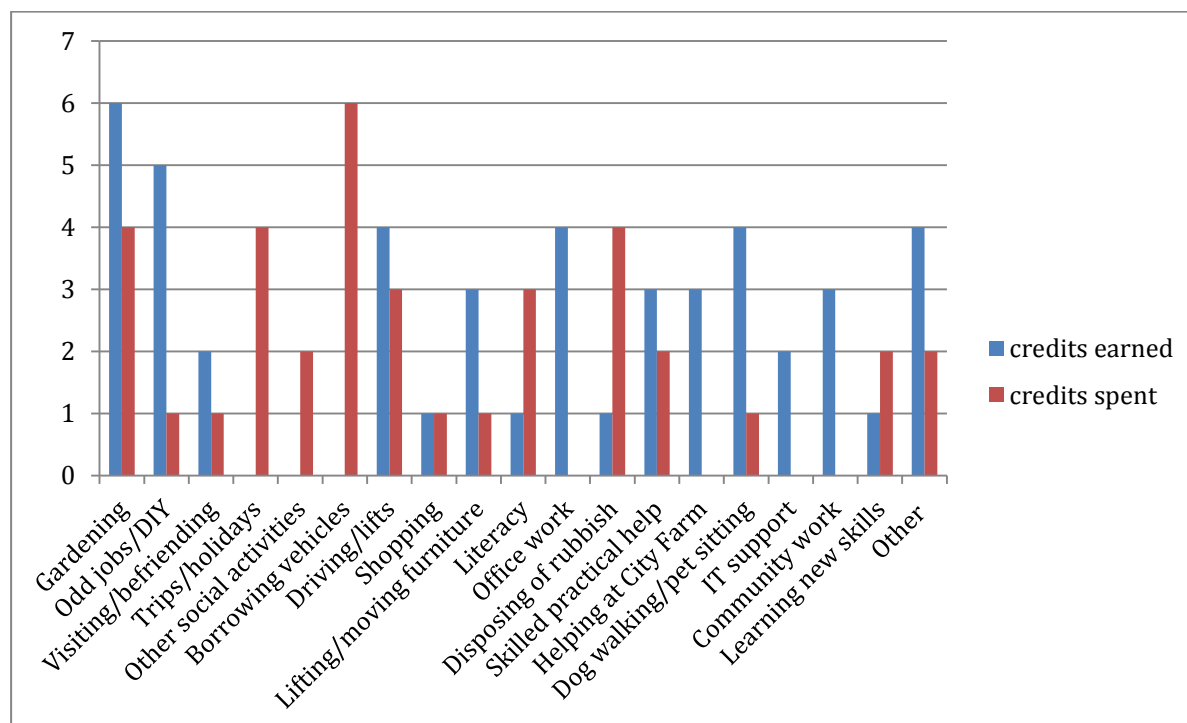


### Time bank transactions

Twenty-one of the twenty-five members surveyed both earned and spent time credits; two earned time credits but had not spent any so far; and two had neither earned nor spent credits. There were a wide variety of ways of earning and spending

time credits. The most common way of earning credits was by gardening. Credits were most often spent on social activities such as trips, holidays, coffee mornings and lunch club but the most common way of spending credits was by borrowing one of the Fair Shares vehicles, a smart car and a van. Figure 8 below shows the variety of activities. Please note that the figures are the number of members mentioning the activity not the number of credits.

**Figure 8: Ways in which credits are earned and spent**



Notes to Figure 8:

1. Lifts to do shopping were included in 'lifts' but not 'shopping'
2. Skilled practical help comprised plumbing, woodworking, painting and baking
3. IT support included teaching computer skills
4. Community work included helping with specific projects and volunteering with member organisations
5. One member included in 'learning new skills' had been sponsored to do a college course

Members were also asked how they would have managed to get tasks done if they could not use Fair Shares. The answers are shown in Table 5.2 below.

**Table 5.2: Alternatives to Fair Shares**

	Number of responses
It wouldn't be done	11
I'd do it myself	7
I'd ask someone else to do it as a favour	3
I'd pay somebody to do it	5

Note: some respondents gave more than one answer

#### *Benefits of involvement in Fair Shares*

Respondents were asked how they (as individuals) had benefited from Fair Shares. The results were overwhelmingly positive. Most concerned friendship and the positive feelings, self-confidence and satisfaction gained from helping others.

'Confidence that I matter; sense of belonging; it puts me on the map in what can be a faceless city.'

'Confidence, friends and personal satisfaction by helping others'

'What more could you ask? Meeting people, making new friends, helping people, going on trips, going on my first ever holiday'

There were a few mentions of practical help and being confident that there was someone they could call on when they had problems.

'Quite a lot, made new friends (members and staff), have a laugh, makes me feel good because I am helping other people and myself, good to know can call office if worried about anything'

Additionally, one member said that Fair Shares had helped him get back to work.

'So much and I am eternally grateful; the project has given me confidence, got me back to work after 2 years of mental illness, friends, practical skills, getting to know and help the wider community in Gloucestershire and much more.'

When respondents were asked what they thought other participants had gained, the answers were generally in line with their own gains but with rather more emphasis on gains from practical help.

#### *Additional Comments*

Finally, respondents were asked for any other comments they might have. All but seven respondents added extra comments and all were positive.

'The staff of Fair Shares are always polite and helpful'

'The concept of Fair Shares is exactly how I've always lived my life'

'It's been great since I have been in it. I have loads more friends and am really happy. Reyaz is great at driving the bus at trips. Shelley has been a godsend as she traced my family and I now have a new family and have met my brother, sister, nephews and nieces.'

'Spread organisation further especially to help elderly people'

#### **The Time Brokers Perspective**

In the work book, the time brokers were asked to complete a table showing what they considered to be the main outcomes of the project, a suggested indicator for each outcome and a data source for each indicator. The results are shown in Table 5.3 below. The next stage would have been to put values to the outcomes but this was not completed as, due to inadequate explanation in the workbook, it was unclear to the time brokers that they were expected to do this.

Table 5.3: Gloucester Fair Shares Outcomes and Indicators

Outcome	Indicator	Data Source
Receiving practical support	Number of hours of practical activity provided	Time bank database
Increased social activity	Number of hours of social events or befriending activities	Time bank database
Increased social circles	Number of different people they come in contact with through the time bank	Time bank database
Feeling useful	Reported change in how often they can or do help others	questionnaire
Increased self-esteem/confidence	Reported change through their work in the time bank.	questionnaire
Feeling more part of a community	Reported change in their views on what their community is and if or how they belong.	questionnaire

### **Summary of section 5.2**

#### **1. Evidence of impact from Gloucestershire fair Shares**

- In general the impact of Gloucester Fair Shares was very similar to that of Forest Fair Shares, although some of the activities were different.
- As with Forest Fair Shares, the most significant benefits are social and emotional.
- The social activities organised by Fair Shares were key as was the individual support offered by the time brokers.
- The Theory of Change diagram produced by Gloucester Fair Shares was very similar to that produced for Forest Fair Shares.
- Members were very enthusiastic about the benefits of Fair Shares and about the time brokers.

#### **2. Implications for development of the SRA tool**

- This trial was important in highlighting a number of problems with the draft tool.
- Some of the language of the tool needed to be simplified.
- Some explanations in the tool needed to be clearer.
- Cross referencing between the tool and the workbook needed to be made easier.
- The questionnaire proved easy to use but did need to be administered face-to-face. This has implications for the resources needed for the assessment.
- Qualitative evidence in the form of quotes from members proved to be a powerful way of demonstrating the benefits of Fair Shares.

### 5.3 GCCCP: The Fielding and Platt Research

It was decided at the outset of Phase 2 that Level 3 of the SRA tool would be piloted in relation to this case work group, which would sequentially develop and test all three elements of the tool and culminate in production of a benefit-to-investment ratio for a third GCCCP project.

Following a meeting in February 2013 the Fielding and Platt (F&P) project was identified as an ideal candidate project with which to pilot the SRA tool. Funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund, the F&P project was being run by GCCCP in partnership with Gloucestershire Archives, who were able to provide some staff time to help with the project.

The F&P project focuses on the archival heritage of a once significant industry in the city of Gloucester: that of Fielding and Platt iron founders and engineers, who were in business from 1866 to the 1990s at their extensive Atlas Works premises located at Gloucester Quays. The project aimed to create an interactive community website ([www.fieldingandplathistory.org.uk](http://www.fieldingandplathistory.org.uk)) where people could share memories and photographs of Fielding and Platt; to offer a variety of activities for volunteers to participate in including oral history recording, website management and developing learning resources; and to promote and share an archive resources for the wider community, both onsite and on-line.

The F&P Social Return Assessment project was to be led by Oliver Taylor, project manager of the F&P team, with support from Barry and other colleagues at Gloucestershire Archives. Oversight, guidance and mentoring would be provided by Paul throughout, in order that he could act as mentor whilst observing how well the tool could be used by a team not familiar with it.

#### 5.3.1 Exploring the change

The F&P research team met in April 2013 to discuss the aims and objectives of the pilot project and for Paul to introduce **Stage A** of the tool. Following a scoping exercise whereby the main activities and stakeholders that are significant to the project were identified and documented, a Storyboard exercise was undertaken by Oliver and Barry in early May. In this, they were able to make use of a forthcoming Fielding and Platt event to engage stakeholders in a participatory process to map out the outcomes in a Theory of Change (ToC).

Following advice and comment from Paul on the initial material, which was highly comprehensive in both scope and detail, an outcomes map was produced shortly thereafter (See Table 5.4), this illustrated the nature of the outcomes for the various stakeholders identified through the scoping exercise. In turn, this enabled a list of 9 principal outcomes that would go forward for measurement in the next stage of the SRA process.



Table 5.4: Fielding and Platt Theory of Change

<b>Stakeholder group</b>	<b>Approx number</b>	<b>Interim Outcomes</b>	<b>Medium-longer term Outcomes</b>
Previous employees of F&P  Previous employees outside the UK	155 (no. former employees for which contact details held)  [1364 unique website visits recorded, but no counted in SROI calculations]	Increased sense of community and social circle  Deepening of understanding and bonds with friends and family  Re-establishment of contact with old friends and colleagues  Development of IT skills through use of website and social media	Increased resilience and self esteem  Increase in supportive relationships  Increase in sense of trust and belonging
Relatives of F&P employees	25	Sense of pride in relatives  Increased understanding of family history  Deepening of understanding and bonds with friends and family  Development of IT skills through use of website and social media	Legacy to leave future generations
Volunteers	37	Increased knowledge and skills  Feelings of pride, reward and satisfaction from their involvement  Building of positive and productive relationships  Development of IT skills through use of website and social media	Increased competence, engagement and purpose  Increased resilience and self esteem  Supportive relationships  Increased sense of trust and belonging
VCS	7 GCCCP Gloucestershire Archives Friends of Gloucestershire Archives Gloucester Civic Trust Gloucester Quays Waterways Museum Friends of Waterways Museum	Increased volunteer numbers  New and increased links between sector organisations  Increased awareness, appreciation and trust by the public	Increased vibrancy and efficiency of VCS  Increased public support for VCS
Local Community	20 (Inc. relatives of Fielding and Platt families)		Increased volunteering in the community
Local Authority	-		Strengthened public profile - important but difficult to evidence
Local Economy	-		Increased visitor numbers to city – difficult to evidence and apportion

### 5.3.2 Measuring the change

**Stage B** of the SRA necessarily involved the design of a stakeholder survey to gather measurable data on each of the identified outcomes, and to provide a measure of change in the outcomes attributable the F&P project. These outcomes cohered around three main areas: Well-being, IT skills and capacity of the VCS in Gloucestershire. No existing data or evidence was identified to help develop indicators specific enough to the Fielding and Platt project to be meaningful.

A second team meeting was convened in early June in which Paul familiarised the team with Stage B of the SRA tool and talked through some example questions. This included a discussion about nef's National Accounts of Well-being and the European Social Survey Questions<sup>8</sup>, which could usefully provide the basis for a number of the questions given the emphasis on well-being outcomes in the impact map.

Paul offered to produce a first draft of the survey which would be completed and turned into an electronic survey for self-completion using Survey Monkey. A second version of the survey was also produced which could be used at Fielding and Platt events and meetings, and could be left on-site for stakeholders to complete over the summer. A copy of the F&P survey can found in Annex 3 of the SRA workbook

In the event a total of 37 surveys were completed on-line and a further 21 completed on hard copy. The effort and motivation of the F&P research team was crucial in securing this creditable response, and almost all surveys were completed in their entirety. Following conventional analytical techniques for SROI, likert scale (e.g. 1-5) data was converted into proportions in order to provide a metric of change to feed into an SROI-type model.

The results of this exercise are summarised in Table 5.5. Data on the extent to which change in the outcomes could be attributed to the Fielding and Platt project (the issue of Attribution) was also collected via the survey while data on the extent to which this change would have happened anyway (Deadweight) was estimated by drawing on secondary data sources for equivalent change at the national level. For example, 10% of the change in well-being outcomes is estimated to have happened anyway, for example through the national drive towards health and well-being improvements. Survey data indicated that only 20% of change in well-being outcomes could be attributed to the Fielding and Platt project, a conservative figure perhaps but this is preferable to risking an over estimation of impact. This information is given in the final two columns of the table.

The relatively small changes indicated in column 3 are comparable to the scores revealed through the Growing Social Capital SROI<sup>9</sup>, and reflect the nature of questioning which asked respondents to reflect on their well-being before and since their involvement with the Fielding and Platt project.

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<sup>8</sup> nef (2008) National Accounts of well-being: bringing real wealth onto the balance sheet. [http://s.bsd.net/nefoundation/default/page/file/2027fb05fed1554aea\\_uim6vd4c5.pdf](http://s.bsd.net/nefoundation/default/page/file/2027fb05fed1554aea_uim6vd4c5.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Wright, t. and Schifferes, J. (2012) Growing Social Capital: A social return on investment analysis Of the impact of voluntary and community sector activities funded by grant aid. Report for Yorkshire ad Humber Joint Improvement partnership.

Table 5.5: Fielding and Platt Survey Data

Outcome group	Outcome	Change Score	Deadweight*	Attribution*
Well Being	Resilience and self-esteem	+1.5%	0.1	0.2
Well Being	Supportive relationships	+4%	0.1	0.2
Well Being	Trust and belonging	+3%	0.1	0.2
Well Being	Emotional well-being	+16%	0.1	0.2
Well Being	Competence, engagement and purpose	+2%	0.1	0.2
Skills and development	IT Skills	+46%	0.15	0.3
Community	Sector efficiency	-	-	-
Community	Funding sources	+42%	0.12	0.17
Community	Capacity building and volunteering	+37%	0.12	0.17

\*Not included in the change score but accounted for later in the model. Displacement was not accounted for in the analysis as the initial storyboard work implied that it would be negligible.

### 5.3.3 Valuing the change

The final stage of the SRA pilot – **Stage C**- was always expected to be the most problematic in terms of the knowledge, skills and experience required in order to source and select appropriate proxies for each of the outcomes in the model. In the event this task was undertaken by Paul due to the other commitments of the F&P research team.

In this case an excellent source of proxies for the well-being outcomes were found in the Growing Social Capital SROI (See footnote 5). Details relating to the selected proxies for all outcomes are given in table 5.6. The rationale for proxy selection drew upon this, and on the knowledge and experience of the research team in undertaking previous project and programme evaluations using the SROI framework.

Table 5.6: Fielding and Platt - Proxies Used

Outcome	Financial proxy	Source	Unit	Value (£)
Resilience and self-esteem	Cost of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to build psychological resilience and self esteem	Units Costs for Health and Social Care, Personal Social Services Research Unit <a href="http://www.pssru.ac.uk/pdf/uc/uc2007/uc2007.pdf">http://www.pssru.ac.uk/pdf/uc/uc2007/uc2007.pdf</a>	Per person (p.p)	1,240
Supportive relationships	Annual value attributed to change to seeing friends and relatives most days from once or twice a week	BHPS data 1997-2003 analysed by Powdthavee (2008)	p.p pa	15,500
Trust and belonging	Annual value attributed to change to talking to neighbours most days from one or twice a week	BHPS data 1997-2003 analysed by Powdthavee (2008)	p.p pa	15,666
Emotional well-being	Value of mental health component on Quality of Life Adjusted year (NICE recommended expenditure of QALY is 30K)	Centre for Mental Health, June 2003	p.p	10,560
Competence, engagement and purpose	Additional median annual wage for employed vs. self employed people	ONS 2003 <a href="http://www.statistics.gov.uk/articles/labour_market_trends/Self_employment_Sep03.pdf">http://www.statistics.gov.uk/articles/labour_market_trends/Self_employment_Sep03.pdf</a>	p.p pa	2940
IT Skills	Cost of 3 day course in Microsoft Access at University of Reading	<a href="http://www.reading.ac.uk/ssc/n/Short%20Courses/msacces.htm">http://www.reading.ac.uk/ssc/n/Short%20Courses/msacces.htm</a>	p.p	870
Funding sources	Average size of a charitable donation in the UK	Social Impact Scotland (Ekos Consulting)	pa. per hh	372
Capacity building and volunteering	dfT estimation of business time savings. Based on Cost per year saved by organisation (based on hourly saving of 39.96, 4 hours per week)	SROI Network VOIS Database, Department of Transport	Per org	7,353

It was also necessary to establish the benefit period (the length of time that outcome change would be measured over) and 'drop off' (the speed at which attributable outcomes would decline to zero for those outcomes lasting more than one year). The majority of outcomes were assumed to last over a 5 year period, although a fairly steep decline of 25% per annum was assumed, based on qualitative data from the survey which implied that the time horizon over which outcomes could be attributable to the project would be fairly short lived.

In order to proceed to the final step and calculate a benefit to investment ratio for Fielding and Platt it was also necessary of course to gather some data around the investment made in the project and the numbers of stakeholders involved in or impacted by it. This information, gathered from the project team, is summarised in table 5.7.

Table 5.7: Investment in Fielding and Platt project

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Inputs description</b>	<b>Source / Calculation</b>	<b>Value (£)</b>
Heritage Lottery Fund	Heritage lottery grant	Programme documentation / F&P tender document	£42,900
Volunteers	Estimated 1851 volunteer hours since project inception	Fielding and Platt management team based on the following rates: 531 hours of professional time @ £50 p.h; 203.5 hours of skilled time @ £21.43 p.h; 1116.5 hours of unskilled time @ 7.14 p.h	£38,900
Friends of Gloucestershire Archives	Additional match funding	Included as part of original application to HLF ('cash contribution')	£5000
Gloucester City Centre Community Partnership	Additional match funding	Included as part of original application to HLF ('cash contribution')	£500
Gloucestershire Archives	Goods and services in kind	Work station for project officer and volunteers Venue for training workshops for volunteers Loan of digital recording equipment	£1500 £5000 £400
Coots Cafe/Waterways Museum	Goods and services in kind	Venue for Memory Day event	£200
The Quays	Goods and services in kind	Venue for Christmas Social event	£200
The Quays	This was an 'extra' contribution that we had not put into the HLF bid	Graphic display panels (£5000) and free use of shop unit for 12 months [estimate £1000]	£6000
Gloucester City Council	Funding for 2 blue plaques commemorating the site of the Factory. This was an unforeseen investment and output and not in the HLF bid.		£300
<b>Total Investment</b>			<b>£100,900</b>

Having identified a total investment of £100,900 in Fielding and Platt it was possible to complete Stage 3 of the SRA tool and compute the ratio, which provides GCCCP with a numerical summary of how the Fielding and Platt project had affected change for its stakeholder community

Table 5.8: The computed Fielding and Platt Benefit-Investment Ratio

Value of Inputs (Total Investment):	£100,900
Value of Inputs (Grant investment)	£42,900
Total Present Value of Outcomes (after deadweight, attribution, displacement, drop-off and discounted at 3.5%)	£149,197
<b>Benefit-to-investment ratio</b>	<b>1.48:1</b>
Benefit-to-investment ratio (Grant)	3.48:1

So, every £1 invested in Fielding and Platt can be deemed to have generated **£1.48** of socio-economic value. A second ratio is also calculated to indicate the return on investment of the initial Heritage Lottery grant itself. It is not, however, recommended that this ratio (which indicates a gross return of £3.48) is the one that is used to demonstrate the social value of the project as it fails to recognize the in-kind and other forms of contribution that have gone into the project, such as volunteer time. Nevertheless, a ratio such as this may be of interest to funders or commissioning bodies. And if nothing else it is an indication of the extent to which the grant has helped to lever additional investment, either actual or in-kind.

### **Summary of section 5.3**

This section has described the process and evidence from piloting and sequentially developing all three stages of the SRA tool (Exploring, evidencing and monetising outcomes).

#### **1. Evidence of impact from the Fielding and Platt heritage project**

- Three main outcomes groups were evident from Fielding and Platt: health and well-being (including, resilience, supportive relationships, trust, competence and engagement); Skills development (especially IT skills); and Community (with benefits for the sector in terms of efficiency, access to funding sources and increased volunteering)
- The project reaffirmed the importance of community projects to developing social relationships and in turn helping to derive well-being outcomes for participants and wider beneficiaries.
- Community projects can reinforce the vibrancy of the voluntary sector, in turn increasing capacity. Improved links between organisations and increased numbers of people willing and able to volunteer are potentially important outcomes, especially over the long term.
- The benefit-to-investment ratio produced through application of the SRA indicates that every £1 invested in Fielding and Platt has generated almost £1.50 of social value.
- When stripping out in-kind contributions such as volunteer time this figure rises to £3.50 as being the social return on the original grant.

#### **2. Implications for development of the SRA tool**

- Application of the tool revealed that stage A (exploring change) could be undertaken by small organisations with relatively little support, and could potentially provide the greatest organisational benefits in terms of planning and understanding better their objectives, and stakeholders. The language of

the tool needs to reflect this.

- Greater emphasis should be given to making the subsequent two stages of the tool (measuring and valuing change) more user-friendly and more easily accessible to staff and volunteers unfamiliar with impact measurement.
- It is unlikely that effective monetisation of outcomes and production of a benefit-to-investment ratio can be achieved without some form of support, either from a facilitator or from appropriate online impact sources.
- To an extent this can be overcome through development of the accompanying workbook to the SRA tool, which should provide some further detail with regard to evidencing and valuing outcomes.

## 5.4 Lessons learned from the piloting exercise

The piloting exercise proved very useful in the development of the tool. As already noted the GL11 contribution to the 'piloting exercise' was somewhat limited, restricting itself very largely to the identification and charting of the various inputs to GL11's 'Cam Unity' project and to its foreseen outputs and hoped-for outcomes. But it did usefully demonstrate that an unambiguously forward-looking application of the tool brought lots of benefits to the managing organisation – i.e. to GL11. The seven points bullet-pointed on pages 55 and 56 make this point clearly. Perhaps most importantly, it sharpened up thinking on what the project was really about and on what really had to be done to make it a success. Doubtless, hard data on real outputs and outcomes would be available at a later stage, but not yet! This was despite 'only' undertaking 'Stage A' of the Tool.

In general the findings from Gloucester Fair Shares reinforce those from the Newent study. If anything, they make the social role of the time bank and the time brokers even clearer and emphasize the non-economic nature of the time bank benefits. As a result of this the emphasis of the project has been changed as the work progressed from 'measuring the economic impact' of a time bank to 'measuring the impact of a time bank in economic units'. Thus, the SROI approach was used (as described in section 5.2) and outcomes were identified, indicators of those outcomes were chosen and measured that could then be expressed in economic terms by means of proxies. It was clear from both time banks that the major benefits are to the mental well-being of members. The Warwick-Edinburgh survey used in the Newent study proved a useful way of measuring this, although it really needs to be used when members join the time bank and then repeated after a set time period such as one year. However, it is also important to be aware that, of course, other changes will be taking place in people's lives that may contribute positively or negatively to their mental well-being. This work on Gloucestershire time banks showed that the Social Return Assessment (SRA) tool has potential in enabling time banks to assess and demonstrate their impact, but that it still needed some simplification of language and clarification of the process. In addition, the likely time commitment needs to be made clear before organisations decide at what level to attempt the assessment. The tool was revised accordingly.

Overall the pilot exercise undertaken at GCCCP involving the not-in-substantial Fielding and Platt project demonstrated the possibility and usefulness of pursuing all three stages of the tool to produce an indicative benefit-investment ratio. Although there may be cases where provision of such a metric is likely to prove especially beneficial (for example in securing additional funding), the value and context

provided by the qualitative stages of the tool also proved invaluable. As in other cases, it helped to sharpen project objectives and to think through the monitoring and record keeping processes.

The piloting certainly benefited greatly from the dedication and motivation of the project management team to evidence impact of the Fielding Platt project, although the researcher was acutely aware throughout of the need to provide support and on-going advice as the various tasks were carried out, and the time constraints which meant that additional support was required during the final, and most complex, stage of the process. This in turn demonstrates the need for sufficient resources to be made available to smaller voluntary organisations wishing to undertake their own impact assessments independent of a framework such as the one provided by this project.



## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Gloucestershire POV project has been a learning experience, indeed a voyage of discovery, for everyone involved. As is often the case in action research, it has not rigidly followed a pre-determined programme of work; rather it has evolved as various difficulties, and opportunities, have become apparent.

Effective collaborative working between the researchers and the staff, volunteers and trustees of the three case study organisations has been shown to be essential, and in this case GAVCA played a crucial role in brokering and supporting these relationships. So too has been the involvement, wherever possible, of the wider pool of stakeholders who have been affected or have had an interest in the projects and activities being examined.

The project has revealed the nature of the impact of small voluntary and community organisations to be both varied and significant. Over the course of the research – which sequentially developed and tested methods for evidencing impact whilst revealing that impact through ‘live’ projects – a range of outcomes were uncovered, especially around aspects such as health and well-being and social and personal capital and community cohesion. A summary of the main outcomes that were revealed through the research process is given in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1: Summary of Outcomes from the Gloucestershire projects

Organisation	Project / area	Revealed outcomes
GL11	Development and deployment of volunteers	Increased readiness to take up paid employment Increased volunteering; personal capacity and confidence and improved service delivery locally
	Facilitation of employability courses	Improved confidence to apply for jobs and pursue education and training Increased employment (mainly part time)
	Try to Remember	Improvement in quality of life and sense of self-worth in dementia sufferers Improvement to personal care plans through the influence of poetry Personal development (broadly defined) of carers and volunteers
	Cam-Unity	(‘Projected rather than ‘revealed’ outcomes) Improved mental well being Increased interaction and support for vulnerable people Increased trust and belonging in the community Increased volunteering and sense of good neighbourliness
Fair Shares	Gloucestershire (Newent)	Improved mental health Reduced social isolation and increased support Increased sense of security, belonging and general well-being Improved skills and confidence through volunteering and interaction
	Gloucestershire (Gloucester)	Improved support networks and social circle Improved confidence and self-esteem Improved emotional well-being Improved sense of belonging in community Increased pool of community volunteers

GCCCP	Greyfriars Bowling Green	Improved mental health Improved confidence and self-esteem Increased trust and community cohesion Increase in youth volunteering and intergeneration activity Reduction in juvenile crime
	Project Orienteer	Improved physical health and weight loss Increased social interaction Local income generation through contracting Training in the sport of orienteering
	Fielding and Platt	Increased resilience and self esteem Increased supportive relationships Increased sense of trust and belonging Development of IT skills Increased emotional well being Increased competence, engagement and purpose Increased efficiency and funding sources for voluntary and community sector Increased capacity building and volunteering

A number of attempts were made to evidence outcomes through quantitative measures, and benefit-investment ratios were calculated for two of the GCCCP projects. These showed a societal return of approx. £1.50 - £4 for every £1 invested, in turn providing a broad indication of the potential scale of impact being delivered by community projects in the county.

Ultimately the nature of an organisation's activities will of course determine the nature and extent of its impact but nevertheless the extent of well-being related impacts revealed through this project is particularly striking, and the findings reinforce those of similar studies which have shown the community and voluntary sector to be fostering real change to people's quality of life and mental well-being, albeit in many cases indirectly and as an incidental benefit to the processes of volunteering and ensuing social interaction. Our findings also reveal less difference than might be expected in relation to how the nature of an organization affects its ability to assess impact, or how those measures should be put in place. Having 'many hands to the pump' obviously helps, and larger organisations such as GCCCP have slightly greater capacity to engage in more systematic process of record keeping and to undertake data collection in support of evaluation activities. But ultimately this capacity can be driven by the motivation and abilities of one or two key individuals.

When considering the outcomes of projects, it is evident that there is no single evaluative tool that provides all the answers. Our suggested approach, that we term the 'Social Return Assessment' (SRA), attempts in its more ambitious form to produce an indication in financial terms of the net social value of local community projects. This is essentially a simplified version of the Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework with the aim of making it more user-friendly for smaller voluntary organisations, whilst emphasising the value of taking a flexible approach that accords with the reasons for undertaking an impact assessment, resources available and other context-specific factors. The SRA tool, like all its predecessors, inevitably suffers from conceptual and practical difficulties and a need to make some important assumptions around which benefit estimates are ultimately based.

Indeed in many cases, subsequent researchers and organisations may well prefer to proceed no further than a largely qualitative exposition of a project's various inputs, outputs and outcomes and of the causal links that connect them – in short to develop what has been termed 'a Theory of Change' or an 'impact map' In this spirit, we advocate that undertaking only Stage A of the SRA tool is perfectly legitimate in its

own right. Selecting which of their projects or activities an organization might pursue as 'case studies' might be determined by a number of factors, including data availability, the relative ease with which stakeholders and beneficiaries can be engaged, and of course the ultimate aim of the impact exercise. This might be to help secure additional funding in a specific area, or it may simply be to evidence the wider contribution of the organisation to the community, economy or society.

Ultimately we would recommend that impact assessment be considered as early as possible in the life of a project, organisation or tranche of activities, and a monitoring and evaluation framework put in place near the beginning to help provide a roadmap for impact assessment, and the tools and information required for it to be undertaken. Keeping succinct records and putting straightforward systems in place to record data in the early stages of project design will help to streamline the process and ease the burden on personnel undertaking the assessment.

A central finding of this study is that the *process* of undertaking an impact assessment is in fact as (if not more) important than the findings of that assessment. A central reason for this is that the process of identifying and mapping *outcomes* can help SPOs to better understand what their objectives are, and how they can be best achieved. This point became increasingly evident as the study progressed, and was emphasised by the SPO partners at the initial launch of the draft SRA tool to the Gloucestershire VCS in September 2013. Nevertheless, it remains the case that the capacity of small SPOs to undertake comprehensive impact assessments is limited. While the project helped to skill the organisation's during the course of the project in an action research setting, the limited capacity for this work to continue at a similar rate beyond the life of the POV project needs to be acknowledged.

However far users of the SRA tool may choose to go along the spectrum of possibilities, its application has great potential value – not least for the social purpose organisation itself, beyond simply 'proving their value'. In accordance with fostering a better understanding of objectives, an outcomes-based assessment can help an SPO to argue its case for project funding, to better manage its projects (most notably by insisting on an outcomes-driven work programme), to develop the awareness and skills of its staff and volunteers, to better understand the reach and needs of its stakeholders, to collect and store information that will really be useful, to effectively monitor and evaluate what it does, and to better and more convincingly communicate the value of its work to funders, partners and local communities. In short, there is real organisational value to *proving value* and the voluntary sector could do a lot worse than recognising, and embracing, this.

The focus on *outcomes* is, we would argue, paramount to achieving these wider organisational and managerial benefits. Evaluation techniques more focused on *outputs* (such as numbers of people trained or attending meetings) are not likely to benefit an organisation in the same way. But the choice of evaluation technique should of course also be determined by what it is you are trying to measure; if the aim is to demonstrate income and employment effects of activities on the local economy then the new economic foundation's Local Multiplier 3 model<sup>10</sup> is likely to be more appropriate than the SRA approach, although this is also data intensive and likely to require the support and guidance of impact specialists.

Finally it is important to stress that nothing written here should give the impression that only the economic outcomes of social or community project are valuable. Quite the reverse in fact! What we have tried to do is develop a tool for exploration and

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.proveandimprove.org/tools/localmultiplier3.php>

analysis that assimilates into one framework all of the various inputs and outcomes that pertain to particular projects. Attempting to quantify them in financial terms in part reflects the lack of any other satisfactorily comprehensive unit of measurement, and the product of any quantitative exercise of impact measurement should always be seen as a basis for informing a subsequent debate.

To use an expression coined by Oscar Wilde, we are most certainly not encouraging Britain's magnificent endowment of voluntary and community organisations to 'know the price of everything and the value of nothing'! Far from it, as the spirit of these conclusions would indicate.

## **Recommendations**

*To Social Purpose Organisations we would advocate recognition that:*

- the careful, and as far as possible rigorous, definition of the outcomes of your work, set alongside its cost, is a *sine qua non* of successful project management and of successful interaction with your various stakeholders – funders, clients, partners and beneficiaries
- the 'Social Return Assessment' set out above and executed at one or other of its various levels, may be useful in that respect
- an impact assessment is especially useful if considered before a project starts, not least in order that baseline data can be collected and appropriate record keeping be put in place to facilitate it
- such an assessment is best undertaken as some sort of collaborative exercise involving your own staff / volunteers, your other stakeholders and (if resources allow) support from a consultant with a degree of detachment and appropriate analytical experience
- attempting, even if only in outline form, a simple prospective assessment of the likely or intended outcomes of any projects you intend to undertake – and also a retrospective assessment of these outcomes at their conclusion is especially valuable.

*To funders and commissioners we would encourage an acceptance that:*

- often the major outputs of an organisation or activity may not necessarily imply a financial return, but this does not make them any less valuable. What matters is how they impact on people's quality of life (in the broadest sense)
- qualitative case study evidence of impact can in some cases be just as valuable as quantitative measures or metrics
- the pressure on staff and volunteer time is indeed great, and it is important to be aware of this when seeking impact evidence
- ensuring provision of appropriate assistance to local social purpose organisations contemplating an outcomes-focused analysis, for example through local infrastructure organisations such as GAVCA, is likely to be highly beneficial to the sector.

*And in turn we would recommend that South West Forum:*

- facilitates support for impact assessment in the south west region that is likely to prove crucial, especially in light of the 2012 Social Value Act
- considers our report alongside those of the four sister projects to see if some kind of composite recommended tool may be distilled and if so, ensures that that distillation and appropriate subsequent dissemination and support occurs
- publishes our report and those of the other contractors and promotes their discussions with appropriate external bodies, including the commissioners and funders of projects to be delivered by voluntary and community organisations.

## **Appendix**

### **The Social Return Assessment (SRA) tool**



Gloucestershire Association for  
Voluntary & Community Action

## Proving Our Value

### Social Return Assessment (SRA) tool

Assessing the impact of small community projects

Devised by Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI) in  
association with Gloucester Association for Community Action (GAVCA)

#### Acknowledgements:

CCRI and GAVCA would like to thank Gloucester City Centre Community Partnership, Forest Fair Shares, Gloucester Fair Shares and GL11 without whose help the production of the this tool would not have been possible.

## Introduction to the Tool

This SRA tool follows the principles of the Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework, which is used to measure and account for the broader concept of value.

Simply measuring the economic impact of an organisation or an initiative can very much under-value its total impact. The Social Return on Investment (SROI) tool was devised by the New Economics Foundation (NEF)<sup>11</sup> as a way of measuring the total impact of voluntary and community organisations in economic terms. Non-economic impacts such as social and environmental benefits are included through the use of financial proxies. For example, the proxy for increased resilience and self-esteem could be the cost of a course to build those skills. Summing of the values enables a ratio of return to investment to be produced.

It breaks the SROI down into manageable chunks and is designed principally to assist smaller organisations, or those with fewer resources or knowledge, to assess the impact of their activities in a meaningful and user-friendly way. An SRA can be undertaken for an organisation, or any project, programme or activity. Throughout the tool the word 'activity' is used as shorthand for all three.

The SRA will allow you to capture the most important outcomes of a project or activity, and not just the things that are easy to measure. In so doing it allows the social, economic and environmental impacts to be assessed in a useful and meaningful way. And if required the value of these impacts can be compared to the initial investment to produce a ratio of benefits to investment.

The tool is based on the principles of simplicity and flexibility. Together with the associated workbook, it aims to guide users through the elements of an impact assessment that are right for them, and to provide a simple explanation of the impact calculations. The good news is that you may not even need to do these calculations! It depends on why you need an SRA, who it is for, and how it will be used.

The tool can be used in advance of the activity- i.e. as a planning tool, trying to clarify a number of issues and expectations before work on the ground proceeds, or it can be undertaken retrospectively to assess impacts which have already happened. In short it can be used to *evaluate* impacts or to *forecast* impacts.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.neweconomics.org/issues/entry/social-return-on-investment>



The tool involves three 'stages' of work, with the second and third stages providing further sophistication to stage A. Depending on your requirements, you can choose to undertake either Level 1, Level 2 or Level 3:

Stage A..... Exploring (and describing) the Change

Stage B..... Measuring the Change

Stage C..... Valuing the Change

Level 1: comprises *only* Stage A

Level 2 comprises Stage A *plus* B

Level 3 comprises Stage A *plus* B *plus* C

### **Choosing which level is appropriate for you**

This section will take you through a **selection process** to help you reach a decision about whether to pursue Level 1, 2 or 3. Selecting the right level will depend on your reasons for doing the impact assessment, the objectives of the actual activity being reviewed, and other factors such as the skills, resources and time at your disposal.

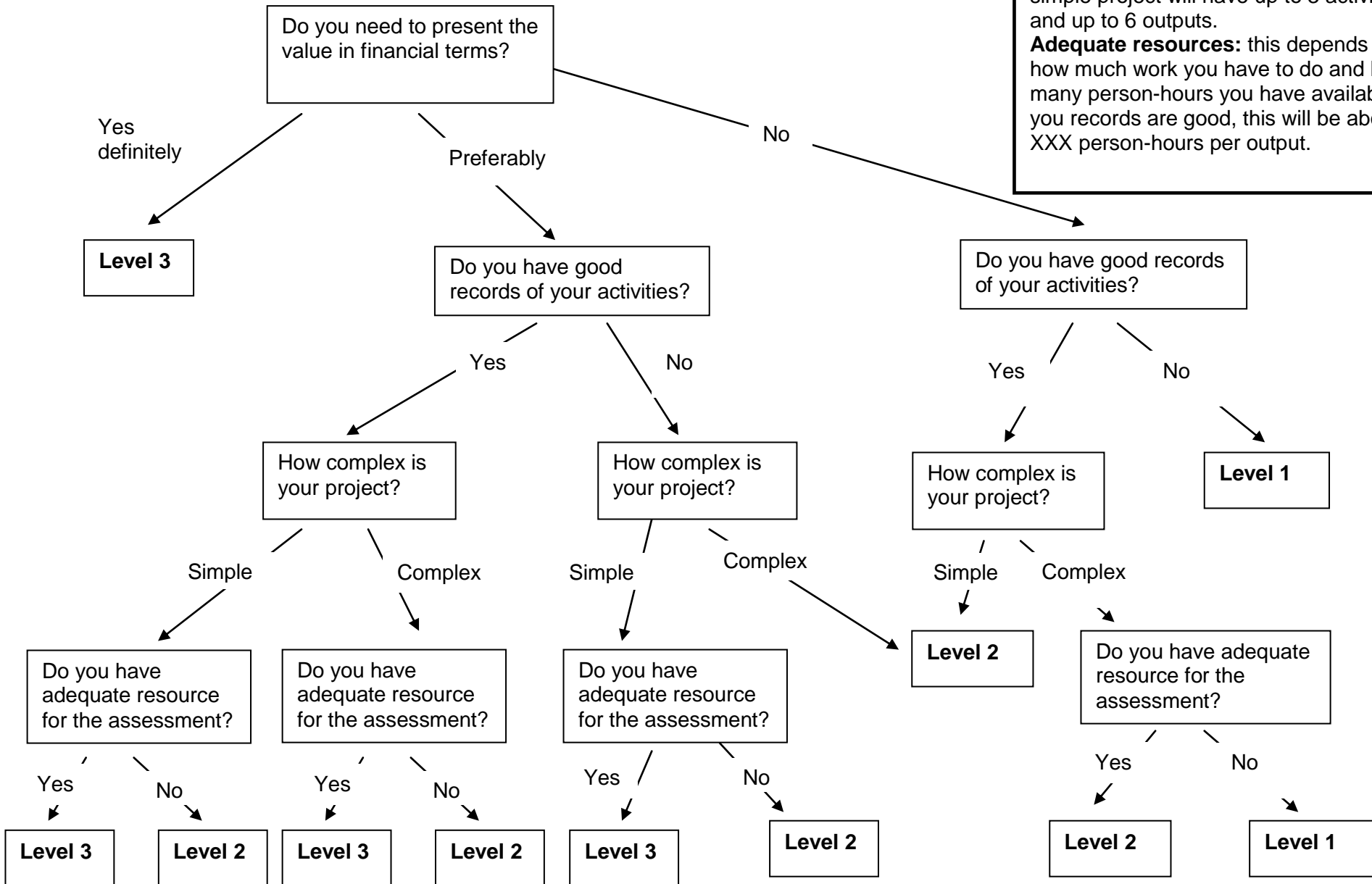
The main factors which will affect your decision are likely to be:

- The purpose for which you need the assessment - who is it for and how do you want to use it?
- What type of assessment you need - do you really need to calculate the impact or express it in financial terms, or will describing the outcomes be enough?
- The complexity of your project - i.e. the number of outputs or potential outcomes, and the numbers and types of beneficiaries
- The availability and quality of the records on which the assessment is to be based. This will largely determine how much time and effort it will take.
- The resources available to carry out the assessment (i.e. availability of person time, office and computing resources and access to project/activity data and records).

The following diagram is designed to help you choose the most appropriate level for your circumstances. Thinking through some of the issues should help you decide what Level is right for you. In addition you may want to finalise this decision after you have completed the scoping exercise that forms the first part of Stage A.

# Which Level should be pursued?

Glossary  
**Complexity:** this largely depends upon the number of activities and outputs. A simple project will have up to 3 activities and up to 6 outputs.  
**Adequate resources:** this depends upon how much work you have to do and how many person-hours you have available. If your records are good, this will be about XXX person-hours per output.



## **Stage A Exploring (and describing) the change**

In SRA the words are just as important as adding up the numbers, and describing the outcomes is a powerful tool in itself. That is the main purpose of Stage A, and it can be undertaken as a precursor to the later stages or as an impact exercise in its own right.

Stage A is divided into two inter-related tasks, the first of which involves a scoping exercise. If you are still unsure about which Level (1, 2 or 3) to pursue, you should have a clearer idea once this scoping is complete.

### **1. Scoping**

Before embarking on the impact assessment it is important to establish its scope, in other words what the assessment will cover and who will be involved. The scoping exercise should cover the following:

- a concise and broadly chronological account of what happened and who did what as the activity proceeded
- current and planned activities - which ones will be focussed on and over what time frame?
- the various stakeholders involved, and your reasons for including or excluding them
- the purpose of this impact assessment - how will it be used and who will be interested in it?
- the information collected as part of the activity or that might be needed
- whether it is a forecast or an evaluation exercise

The involvement of stakeholders is central to the process. Stakeholders are the individuals, organisations or groups who are involved in the activity or are affected by it. Of course you may not be able to reach or include all of the stakeholders you would like to, so it is important to be clear about why they have been excluded.

Pages 4 to 7 of the workbook take you through the scoping exercise.

Once the scoping exercise is complete, it should be written up as a short note (around 2-4 pages), using the above bullet points as a guide to sub-headings. You are now ready to begin the process of exploring and describing the outcomes of your activity!

### **2. Understanding what has changed, and why**

As well as being stakeholder driven, the SRA is outcomes-focussed. This next stage is all about gathering information to help you understand these outcomes,

how stakeholders might be affected and over what time frame the outcomes might play out. It is also about understanding how the outcomes might relate to each other and whether or how one outcome might lead to another.

First we need to understand what has changed for our stakeholders, and the activities and events that have led to that change. This process and the outcomes map that it produces are derived from the stakeholders who are most important or relevant.

The main aim is to develop with other stakeholders a description of what outcomes have flowed (or will flow if the assessment is a forecast) from the activity in question. By exploring and charting the various outcomes, you will be able to establish their relevance to the stakeholders and where possible how they have played out over the short, medium and longer term.

The outcomes are best captured through talking to stakeholders but where relevant or possible the process should also involve an examination of existing documents and records and those from any other sources.

Possible methods for consulting stakeholders include email surveys, telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews and 'storyboard' workshops<sup>12</sup>. In a Story board workshop, you would ask stakeholders to describe outcomes or potential outcomes, and how they think shorter term outcomes might lead to outcomes over the medium to longer term.

The Outcomes map should ideally be presented using a mixture of 'impact charts' and supporting text. The flow diagram format allows consideration of just how these outcomes have arisen, and how they might inter-relate over time. Colour coding can be used for different types of outcome or stakeholder. An example of a flow diagram can be seen on page 15 of the accompanying workbook. It can also be useful to illustrate outcomes or potential outcomes using quotes from the stakeholders.

An example of an **Outcomes map** presented as a table is given below.

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<sup>12</sup> Further guidelines on running a storyboard workshop can be found at [www.proveit.org.uk/downloads.html](http://www.proveit.org.uk/downloads.html)

### Fielding and Platt SROI - Outcomes map

Stakeholder group	Approx number	Interim Outcomes	Medium-longer term Outcomes
<p>Previous employees of F&amp;P</p> <p>Previous employees outside the UK</p>	<p>155 (no. former employees for which contact details held)</p> <p>[1364 unique website visits recorded, but no counted in SROI calculations]</p>	<p>Increased sense of community and social circle</p> <p>Deepening of understanding and bonds with friends and family</p> <p>Re-establishment of contact with old friends and colleagues</p> <p>Development of IT skills through use of website and social media</p>	<p>Increased resilience and self esteem</p> <p>Increase in supportive relationships</p> <p>Increase in sense of trust and belonging</p>
Relatives of F&P employees	25	<p>Sense of pride in relatives</p> <p>Increased understanding of family history</p> <p>Deepening of understanding and bonds with friends and family</p> <p>Development of IT skills through use of website and social media</p>	<p>Legacy to leave future generations</p>
Volunteers	37	<p>Increased knowledge and skills</p> <p>Feelings of pride, reward and satisfaction from their involvement</p> <p>Building of positive and productive relationships</p> <p>Development of IT skills through use of website and social media</p>	<p>Increased competence, engagement and purpose</p> <p>Increased resilience and self esteem</p> <p>Supportive relationships</p> <p>Increased sense of trust and belonging</p>

VCS	7 GCCCCP Gloucestershire Archives Friends of Gloucestershire Archives Gloucester Civic Trust Gloucester Quays Waterways Museum Friends of Waterways Museum	Increased volunteer numbers  New and increased links between sector organisations  Increased awareness, appreciation and trust by the public	Increased vibrancy and efficiency of VCS  Increased public support for VCS
Local Community	20 (Including relatives of Fielding and Platt families)		Increased volunteering in the community
Local Authority	-		Strengthened public profile - important but difficult to evidence
Local Economy	-		Increased visitor numbers to city - difficult to evidence and apportion

## Stage B Measuring the Change

Now we will try and measure the outcomes we identified in Stage A. To do this we need 'indicators' for the outcomes that we want to measure. Not all the outcomes will be significant enough to measure, and measuring some outcomes may lead to double counting and in turn over estimating the impact. The process of thinking about indicators should help to reveal this.

In simple terms, indicators are ways of establishing that change has indeed taken place, and its rough magnitude. For some outcomes it may be possible to capture data on more than one indicator, which can be helpful. For the outcomes identified in the Fielding and Platt example the following indicators were used.

Outcome	Indicator	Data source
Increased resilience and self esteem		
Increase in supportive relationships		
Increase in sense of trust and belonging		
Increased emotional well-being		
Increased competence, engagement and purpose		
Increased funding sources for the VCS		
Increased capacity building and volunteering		
Development of IT skills		

Page 19 of the workbook provides a different example drawn from the research with Fair Shares.

### Thinking about double-counting

When finalising your outcomes and devising indicators that will help you measure change in them it's important to think about the potential for double counting. In the above example a number of the outcomes are related to well being, but before embarking on their measurement we need to be confident, for example, that resilience and self-esteem is indeed a distinct outcome from competence, engagement and purpose.

## Measuring change using Indicators

You now need to collect the data. In some cases this will be available in your records. In other cases you may need to actively collect the data - perhaps through a questionnaire. Try to keep the number of questions to a minimum and where possible use 5-point scales (i.e. from Strongly Agree through to Strongly Disagree) to rank your responses rather than simply obtain yes/no answers. This will help you to measure the outcomes.

There are lots of resources that you can use to help you devise a simple survey. This includes the survey that was used in the Fielding and Platt study (Appendix 3) and the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well Being Scale (Appendix 4).

The workbook (on page 18) includes a table that can be used to record your indicators and their values and an example of the use of the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale can be found on page 21 of the workbook.

The results of your measurements can be summarised in the first three columns of Table 7 on page 24 of the workbook.

## Some Other Factors to take into Account

There are other factors that you need to be aware of as they may affect the accuracy of your results. These are 'deadweight', 'attribution', 'displacement' and 'drop off over time'.

- **Deadweight**

You need to consider whether the observed outcome would have happened anyway without the activity that you are evaluating.

- **Attribution**

You need to think about whether the activity you are evaluating is the only cause of the change you are measuring. Does some /much of the credit lie elsewhere?

- **Displacement**

Is the activity displacing activity from elsewhere? For example, would your volunteers have volunteered for another organisation? Does the increased economic activity in your area mean that there is less elsewhere?

- **Drop-off over time**

You need to think about whether the outcomes will decline or increase with the passage of time



Your thoughts on these issues and other possible inaccuracies can be summarised in the last column of Table 8 in the workbook.

If you go on to produce a ratio of benefits to investment in Stage 3 you will need to produce some proportional (0-1) estimates of these three things. Some example questions to help you derive this information are given in the workbook.

You are not expected to measure these at this stage but you do need to be aware of and to refer to them as they may lead to under- or over- estimation of the outcomes. The Fielding and Platt survey gives some examples of questions to capture data on some of these things.

If you are not intending to proceed to Stage C, you will now need to summarise your results and draw conclusions about the effectiveness of your activity.

## Stage C Valuing the Change

This stage only needs to be undertaken if you intend to produce a ratio of benefits to investment, similar to an SROI ratio<sup>13</sup>. For example, a ratio of 2:1 would indicate that for every £1 invested in your project, activity or programme, £2 of social value is delivered.

The most important thing to remember before embarking on this stage is that SROI is about value, rather than money. In this stage we are simply using money as a common unit to value the outcomes identified in Stage A and subsequently measured in Stage B.

The process of valuing the outcomes is referred to as monetisation. In many cases we are assigning a monetary value to things that do not have a market price (like well-being for example). In order to come up with a monetary value you will need to identify a financial proxy - or approximation - for each relevant outcome.

### Choosing Your Proxies

Some examples of financial proxies identified for the Fielding and Platt outcomes are given below (remember that it is the outcomes we are identifying proxies for, not the indicators). You can record your significant outcomes and their proxies in the first two columns of Table 9 on page 26 of the workbook. You can then complete the table by filling in the unit value of your proxies and the source of your information.

Remember that there is no such thing as the ideal proxy. As in the real market, value is highly subjective and the value of something is really only determined by what someone is prepared to pay for it, which is not the same for everybody. The process will seem daunting at first but will get easier with practice, and after a while you will find that you have built up a useful collection of proxies that you can use in more than one impact assessment.

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<sup>13</sup> See Page 2 of this tool for an explanation of SROI

### Fielding and Platt outcomes and proxies

Outcome	Financial proxy	Value (£) per unit	Data source
Increased resilience and self esteem	Cost of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy to build psychological resilience and self esteem	1240 p.p	Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU)
Increase in supportive relationships	Annual value attributed to change to seeing friends and relatives most days from once or twice a week	15,500 p.p p.a	BHPS data 1997-2003 analysed by Powdthavee (2008)
Increase in sense of trust and belonging	Annual value attributed to change to talking to neighbours most days from one or twice a week	15,666 p.p p.a	BHPS data 1997-2003 analysed by Powdthavee (2008)
Increased emotional well-being	Value of mental health component on Quality of Life Adjusted year (NICE recommended expenditure of QALY is 30K)	10,560 p.p	Centre for Mental Health, June 2003
Increased competence, engagement and purpose	Additional median annual wage for employed vs. self employed people	2,940 p.p p.a	ONS 2003 <a href="http://www.statistics.gov.uk/articles/labour_market_trends/Self_employment_Sep03.pdf">http://www.statistics.gov.uk/articles/labour_market_trends/Self_employment_Sep03.pdf</a>
Increased funding sources for the VCS	Average size of a charitable donation in the UK	372 p.p p.h.h	Social Impact Scotland (Ekos Consulting)
Increased capacity building and volunteering	dfT estimation of business time savings. Based on Cost per year saved by organisation	7,353 p.org p.a	SROI Network VOIS Database, Department of Transport
Development of IT skills	Cost of 3 day course in Microsoft Access at University of Reading	870 p.p	<a href="http://www.reading.ac.uk/ssc/n/Short%20Courses/msaccess.htm">www.reading.ac.uk/ssc/n/Short%20Courses/msaccess.htm</a>

There are also more and more proxies becoming available in the public domain. A simple Google search will allow you to take a look at previous SROI reports, and

these are a great source of financial proxies. Of course try and use up to-date proxies if you can.

Another useful source is the SROI network ([www.thesroinetwork.org](http://www.thesroinetwork.org)). This is definitely worth joining if you are doing quite a large assessment, or will be doing them periodically. The data base of proxies held by the network is growing all the time and it is worth the relatively modest joining fee to gain access to this data, and where it has been used before.

### **Calculating the Social Return**

Once you have gathered your proxies you can begin the process of combining these valuations to arrive at an estimate of the total value created by your project, programme or organisation.

This process is best undertaken using an Excel spreadsheet, and the template for how you should set this spreadsheet out is given in Appendix 5 of the work book. Tables 10, 11 and 12 on pages 29 to 35 of the workbook provide an alternative way of recording your results.

The spreadsheet template is based on the one used by nef consulting, and if you are serious about using SROI then it is well worth undertaking nef consulting's 2-day SROI training course which will teach you everything you need to know to convert your SRA assessment into an SROI. See [nefconsulting.co.uk](http://nefconsulting.co.uk) for further details.

If you are unable to attend this training then it is certainly worth referring to the latest version of SROI Network's Guide to Social Return on Investment before you attempt calculating your benefit to investment ratio. You can download a copy of this at:

<http://www.thesroinetwork.org/sroi-analysis/the-sroi-guide>

### **Calculating the initial investment**

Before calculating a ratio of benefits to investment you will need to calculate the approximate amount that has been invested in the project or programme since its inception. This investment may be financial, for example from a source of grant funding, but could also be 'in kind', for example in the form of volunteer time. The Fielding and Platt example below will give you an idea about the types of investment you might want to include.

### Investment in Fielding and Platt

Stakeholder	Inputs description	Source / Calculation	Value (£)
Heritage Lottery Fund	Heritage lottery grant	Programme documentation / F&P tender document	£42,900
Volunteers	Estimated 1851 volunteer hours since project inception	Fielding and Platt management team based on the following rates: 531 hours of professional time @ £50 p.h; 203.5 hours of skilled time @ £21.43 p.h; 1116.5 hours of unskilled time @ 7.14 p.h	£38,900
Friends of Gloucestershire Archives	Additional match funding	Included as part of original application to HLF ('cash contribution')	£5000
Gloucester City Centre Community Partnership	Additional match funding	Included as part of original application to HLF ('cash contribution')	£500
Gloucestershire Archives	Goods and services in kind	Work station for project officer and volunteers Venue for training workshops for volunteers Loan of digital recording equipment	£1500 £5000 £400
Coots Cafe/Waterways Museum	Goods and services in kind	Venue for Memory Day event	£200
The Quays	Goods and services in kind	Venue for Christmas Social event	£200
The Quays	This was an 'extra' contribution that we had not put into the HLF bid	Graphic display panels (£5000) and free use of shop unit for 12 months [estimate £1000]	£6000
Gloucester City Council	Funding for 2 blue plaques commemorating site of the Factory. This was an unforeseen investment and output and not in the HLF bid.		£300
<b>Total Investment</b>			<b>£100,900</b>

Other sources of investment might include the contributions of other goods and services in-kind. For example, your project may have been given access to a photocopier for its duration, or a local builder may have put up a fence for you without charging for his time, or materials. Although you didn't pay these items

it is important estimate their cost and include them in your list of inputs. Without including all form of investment you run the risk of over-estimating your impact ratio.

In order to arrive at the total value of all your outcomes, individual values recorded for each of the stakeholders' outcomes need to be added together. This will then be compared to the total investment in order to arrive at the SROI ratio. The accompanying workbook illustrates how you should go about this.

F&P SROI ratio	=	Present value of benefits
1.48: 1		£ 149,197
		-----
		Present value of investment
		£ 100,900

### How sensitive is your ratio to a change in assumptions?

A final step is to assess how sensitive your assumptions are in influencing this ratio. To achieve this you need to repeat the calculations but this time with some of the assumed figures (for example for drop off, deadweight etc.) varied slightly<sup>14</sup>. The value of the benefits can then be expressed as falling within a range of £X to £X, which can sound more credible to your audience, especially potential funders or commissioning bodies.

A copy of the Fielding and Platt SROI calculation is given in the workbook, and is summarised below.

### Reflecting on the results and making some recommendations

It is important to remember that, as powerful as the SROI ratio can sound, it is only a very succinct summary of the detailed description that you undertook in the previous two stages. As a last stage it is therefore important that you reflect on the findings and what they might mean for your organisation or target audience. It is equally important that the descriptive information that you compiled during Stage A is not lost and does not become obscured by the numbers and calculations that you derived in Stages B and C.

Before publicising your results, think about what the ratio might mean in the context of your descriptive findings. You may want to discuss them with stakeholders close to the organisation or project before they go any further.

<sup>14</sup> See the SROI Guide for further details: <http://www.thesroinetwork.org/sroi-analysis/the-sroi-guide>