

HOW ARE YOU MAKING A MARK?

Detailed guidance for producing Social Impact Statements



THE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE MARK
TRADING FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET

This document provides guidance on what is required in responding to how your organisation meets Criterion F of the Social Enterprise Mark:

Can demonstrate that social/ environmental objectives are being achieved



Please note: in all its forms, references to the term “social” includes all environmental interests (i.e. social purpose, social objectives, social impact).

Part 1 – [Overview of requirements](#)

Part 2 – [Communities of interest](#)

Part 3 – [How are you Making a Mark? Inputs/Outputs/Outcomes](#)

Part 4 – [Final comments](#)



Overview of requirements

When applying for the Social Enterprise Mark and subsequently at each Annual Renewal, we ask organisations to provide three “**Social Impact Statements**” in support of how they are achieving their social objectives.

These should provide an *illustration* of how you have strived to achieve your social objectives over the last operational year*.



The key word here is *illustrate*. It is not sufficient to simply describe your social purposes or objectives for any given year.

In other words, expressing good intentions, or simply confirming that you have fulfilled these intentions, is not sufficient. You must:

- Describe *how* you have fulfilled them and how you have been trying to make a difference
- Give *examples* of what you have done
- Confirm the *social benefits* for the stakeholders and areas of community interest you serve as a social enterprise

In summary - you are invited to provide a self-assessment of your recent activities and achievements.

You are asked to list your social beneficiaries and provide three statements describing your social inputs, social outputs and social outcomes. Please note the following:

- At the very least you must provide a statement regarding your social inputs.
- IT IS NOT SUFFICIENT TO SIMPLY REFER TO EXTERNAL DATA OR LINKS INSTEAD OF PROVIDING A RESPONSE TO A STATEMENT (although you may include such links in addition to your statement)
- We use these statements when promoting Mark Holders, so they should help summarise and exemplify what you do and what you consider to be your key achievements over the last year
- There is a maximum 2800 character limit (approx. 400 words) for each statement

We are not making a judgement on how much of a difference you have arguably made when assessing your social impact statements - our central interest is to ascertain that you are at least thinking about such matters and that, as a social enterprise, you are regularly reviewing what you do.

Ideally speaking, such reflection should be informing your ongoing plans in ways that will help you ensure your stakeholder and community interests continue to be sustained over time.

**If you have been trading for less than 12 months when applying for the Mark, you should endeavour to describe how you are attempting to fulfil these requirements, what specific outputs and outcomes you aspire to – please contact the helpline for further advice on 0345 5046536*



Although it is not an absolute requirement, we reserve the right to request additional evidence in support of how you are meeting Criterion F, as part of standard verification processes.



You must therefore ensure that the statements you provide are accurate and can be corroborated, either through independent verification or other evidence you can call upon.

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[Back to index](#)



Your “community of interest”

 **Who are your social beneficiaries and/or what area(s) of social benefit are you most concerned with? Who are your stakeholders?**



Before you draft your social impact statements, we ask you to confirm which groups of people, or areas of social benefit, represent your community of interest*. This helps to identify your key stakeholder groups.

 **You are asked to choose options from a pre-selected list, but if these are inadequate you may make separate entries)*

This could include groups of people who share specific social impediments or similar concerns that your social enterprise is trying to create opportunities for, help achieve a better quality of life etc.

For example:

- Addressing issues of social exclusion;
- Supporting those with social/health related disadvantages/disabilities etc
- Addressing economic disadvantage or matters of economic deprivation (i.e. helping groups of people who have barriers to employment or who suffer high levels of unemployment).
- Supporting vulnerable groups (i.e. the homeless, abused women, the elderly)

Alternatively (or in addition to), your social enterprise may be advancing the interests of particular social causes that bring benefits to whole communities of people within a set locality, nationally or even internationally. **For example:**

- Bridging gaps in social/community services;
- Addressing effects of economic deprivation;
- Environmental/conservation interests;
- Supporting charities or others who serve social purposes



You could be serving a mixture of the above interests, but **the needs being addressed should be apparent and stand out from what might be considered “acceptable” social conditions, circumstances and relationships.**



For example, simply employing people from your local community or taking on young people as apprentices – by itself - is no different to standard business employment practice. However, such activities as employing people with learning disabilities, or providing opportunities for young people in locales where there is high youth unemployment address specific social needs beyond that of standard employment relationships.

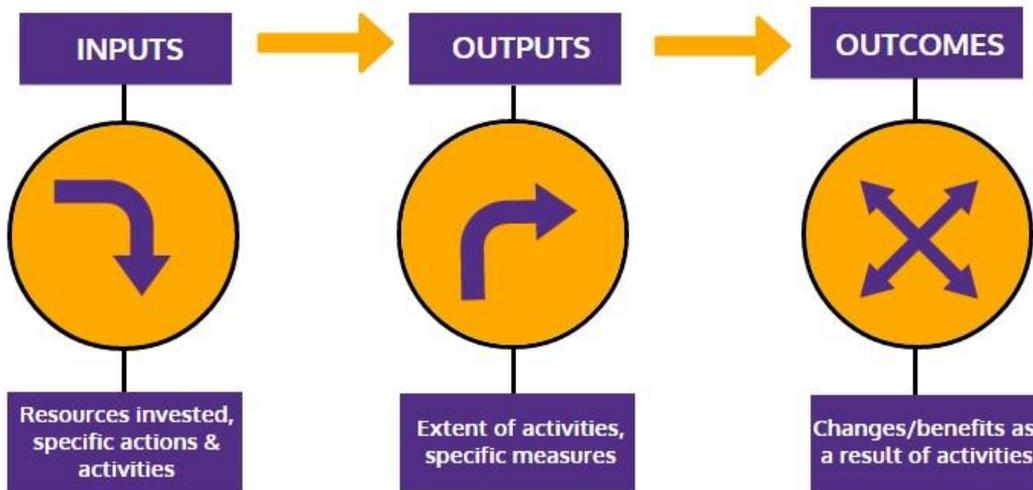


Please note: you must be able to corroborate such claims and how your purposes are concerned with genuine social needs



How are you 'Making a Mark'?

Measuring your social impact



When determining how you are making a difference, we ask people to consider three separate aspects of their performance:

Social Inputs – Social Outputs – Social Outcomes

These are each described in more detail below, but it should be stressed there is no requirement for you to “force” an answer when considering each of them. We only ask that you give each due consideration before submitting your responses.

It is possible that the way in which you review your performance means that reporting on these three areas is inextricably linked in the way you have assessed your achievements and you may therefore find your responses to each overlapping. If you feel you have already provided answers to one section in a previous one there is no need to continue repeating yourself.



At the very least, you must answer question 1 regarding your social inputs



1

Social inputs: what have you delivered in your last operational year that has a direct social purpose and how have these actions helped serve a social purpose?

In this section you should attempt to summarise what you have invested time and resources in – i.e. specific actions you have taken, ongoing activities or possibly one off events or provided physical resources that at least imply the fulfilment of social objectives.

You are being asked to describe how you have gone about serving different stakeholder interests and providing other obvious community benefits.



You should not simply reiterate your social purpose or objectives, e.g. “We provide a range of support services for people with learning disabilities to help improve their access to employment”

Your response to this question should describe *how* you have gone about fulfilling specific objectives, *what you have actually done and delivered*.

For example:

“We have run a range of training programmes and arranged work-placements for people with learning disabilities, covering life skills and vocational training in catering, retail skills, and horticulture, in order to improve independency, employability, and access to employment.”

Try to ensure that the following three points have been made clear in your statement:





2

Social outputs: what specific measures can you refer to that show the extent to which you have delivered different activities (i.e. your levels of service productivity)?

In this section you are being asked to provide details on how widely you have provided different services and activities, the breadth and depth of delivery, levels of engagement.

For example:

- Numbers of people/stakeholders who have accessed different services, received assistance and benefited from what you deliver etc;
- Recycling tonnage or value;
- Establishing new community resources for people to use;
- Increased geographical coverage or services;
- Community events arranged;
- Financial details of subsidies provided, donations made, profits distributed to social purposes

Whilst there may be clearly implied benefits, at this stage you are not necessarily being asked to assess and provide measures in this regard. If this feels more natural to do at this stage, please do (particularly if you already report on such matters in this way).

3

Social outcomes: what benefits have been achieved and/or experienced as a result of your activities?

Outcomes are the *benefits arising from your inputs and outputs*.

Answering this question provides the final link in describing how you have made a difference in people's lives, to the community of interest you serve.



It is the **"so what?"** question. You have established different services, delivered them to a range of beneficiaries - but to what specific ends? How and in what ways have people or the general community actually benefitted. What have they achieved as a result of your input?

What measures can you provide that show the extent of the difference you have made for people?

Some of these measures will be "hard" outcomes that are indicative of what may be seen as more objective social benefits or improvements.



For example:

- Numbers of stakeholders placed in permanent employment or similar end outcomes;
- Improved levels of engagement amongst targeted stakeholder groups, compared to previous years;
- Increased levels of recycling compared to previous years. Reductions in carbon emissions;
- Reduction in youth offending levels in a specific locale;
- Levels to which different stakeholder groups report specific changes and/or improvements in their quality of life

Other measures may be more subjective and personal. **For example:**

- Levels of satisfaction amongst stakeholders with different aspects of the services you have provided;
- Extent to which stakeholders believe the service you provide is worthwhile and in what ways it has made a difference to their lives

As far as is possible, when expressing outcomes you should endeavour to provide measures of difference that help define the context of benefit and improvement you have helped bring about. You may also have measures to report which specifically concern the **added social value** you have created. This might be available in the form of Social Return on Investment (SROI) analyses or similar evaluations you have conducted, but could be evident in more simple forms. **For example:**

- How you have invested in enhancements or additions to services beyond minimum contractual requirements, service level agreements and the like;
- Investment in physical resources (buildings, tools, equipment etc.);
- The employment of individuals to perform roles unrelated to income streams



The key consideration when identifying investments that equate to **added social value** is that the investment is not directly contributing or enhancing the requirements related to income generation activities i.e. they should have a distinctly altruistic character.

When identifying the social value of (or return on) your investments, always try to provide the financial measure of its worth. ***Wherever possible, compare this to the level of any profits you may have generated in the same financial year.***



This sort of comparison arguably helps define the core distinguishing feature of social enterprise, apart from other forms of social or ethical business models:



How a business trades to support social purposes at least in equal measure to any requirement to the profits it generates for shareholders or owners

Final comments

Your social impact statements can be as short or as long as you prefer but should ideally be a summary of the above considerations.

You are invited to provide any additional evidence elaborating upon your social impact statements, attaching this with the statements: this could be an annual report or other such internally produced material, independently verified reports, case studies – anything that goes into further detail or adds insight to your statements.

We publish Mark Holder Social Impact Statements on our website and may use them in different ways to promote your organisation and the Social Enterprise Mark. You should therefore give some thought to the key messages you would like to convey about your activities, achievements, and how you would like these presented.

If you have any further questions or points you would like to discuss relevant to the above and providing social impact statements, then please e-mail us on apply@socialenterprisemark.org.uk or call on **0345 5046536**.