

Institution: University of Gloucestershire		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 13 Architecture, Built Environment and Planning		
Title of case study: Forging real world impacts for organisations, communities and individuals through the evidencing of social value for the public and third sectors		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: Aug 2011 – Dec 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Paul Courtney	Professor of Social Economy	2002 – present
John Powell	Principal Research Fellow	1992 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: Aug 2013 – Dec 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No.		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Evaluations have been carried out utilising developed SROI-based tools to gather evidence of social value generated by a range of funded projects and programmes for third sector organisations and public bodies in England. This has led to improvements in the content, design, management and delivery of programmes, in turn providing tangible benefits to service users in terms of well-being, health, employability and life skills. Findings have fed into the design and delivery of future UK and EU policies and programmes, and provided an evidence base to secure additional funding, in turn securing further real world impacts to communities, economies and service users.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>This case study relates to a programme of work led by Professor Paul Courtney, between 2011 and 2020, the genesis of which was a Lottery funded project commissioned by South West Forum in 2011-13 to evidence the impact of smaller voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations in the face of the Public Services (Social Value) Act of 2012, which was part of the Coalition government's drive for austerity and a 'Big Society'. Subsequent conceptualisation of social value as an evaluation framework and development of Social Return on Investment (SROI) based tools for the capture, measurement and monetisation of this value enabled the systematic monitoring and evaluation of a range of policies and programmes with direct relevance to organisational management and delivery, and of direct interest to funders and commissioners of related programmes.</p> <p>Underpinned by an original peer reviewed conceptualisation of Social Value, a Social Return Assessment (SRA) tool [Publication R1] was developed through an action research programme whereby it was simultaneously implemented and tested. The tool enabled the systematic capture and measurement of a range of psycho-social outcomes pertinent to VCS activities, such as</p>		

well-being, self-realisation, skills and confidence. It was then used by the VCS in Gloucestershire to help evidence impact and was disseminated widely by SWF through their partner network. This same social value model and SRA tool were subsequently applied in an evaluation of the Somerset Village Agents programme, and in two research projects involving members of the Growing Health network: development of an evaluation framework for Hulme Community Garden centre in Manchester, and an SROI of the Garden Organic Master Gardeners programme - the latter in collaboration with Coventry University - funded by the Tudor Trust and Garden Organic respectively.

Working with Dr Colin Baker of the School of Sport and Exercise, the social value model and SRA tool were then conceptualised and operationalised further into a unique context-based evaluation framework developed for use in community health to evaluate the £2m Active Together programme in Gloucestershire in 2014-16. Concepts, frameworks and findings were reported in publications R2 and R3. The same evaluation framework was then applied to the case of employment inclusivity in the monitoring and outcomes-based evaluation of the £6m Big Lottery and ESF funded BBO Going the Extra Mile (GEM) programme (2016-2021).

Conterminously, Courtney together with Dr John Powell, led other evidence based policy, programme and project evaluations between 2013 and 2018 which featured SROI and the principles of the aforementioned frameworks and suite of tools. This work engaged many more stakeholders and informed the development of policy and practice across the public and third sectors, and included: Predictive and evaluative SROIs of Axis 1 and 3 of the Rural Development Programme for England funded by Defra in 2013 and again in 2015-16 – selective elements of the framework, model and findings from both studies are reported in publication R4; and a uniquely combined SROI-CBA model in the extensive evaluation of the Rural Community Energy Fund (RCEF), funded by Defra and DECC between 2014 and 2017, and reported in the peer reviewed research report R5.

3. References to the research

[R1]. Courtney, P. (2018) Conceptualising Social value for the Third Sector and Developing Methods for its Assessment. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal for Voluntary and Non-Profit Organizations*, 29 (3) pp. 541-557. (Listed in UoA 13 REF2).

[R2]. Baker, C. and Courtney, P (2018) Conceptualising the Wider Societal Outcomes of a Community Health Programme and Developing Indicators for their Measurement, *Research for All*, 2 (1) pp. 93-105. (Listed in UoA 13 REF2).

[R3]. Baker, C., Courtney, P., Kubinakova, K., Crone, D., Billingham, D. (2020) Assessing the broader social outcomes of a community health programme through a social-ecological framework, *International Journal of Health Promotion and Education*, 58 (3), 137-151. (Listed in UoA 13 REF2).

[R4]. Courtney, P. and Powell, J. (2020) Evaluating Innovation in European Rural Development Programmes: Application of the Social Return on Investment (SROI) Method, *Sustainability*, 12, 26-57. (Listed in UoA 13 REF2).

[R5]. Courtney, P. and Powell, J. With Ricardo AEA. (2017) *Monitoring and Evaluation of the Rural Community Energy Fund*. Final Report to Defra and DECC. (This report was externally peer reviewed by specialist academics at the University of Exeter at the instruction of Defra and DECC. Given this, and the originality of the combined CBA-SROI approach, it is considered to be at least 2* quality. A copy can be supplied on request).

4. Details of the impact

The process of evidencing social value has led to tangible improvements in the content, design, management and delivery of eight publicly funded projects, programmes and related policies, in turn leading to real world benefits for target communities, participants and service users. In parallel the evidence itself has enabled clients to secure additional funding to continue and extend their projects and programmes, thus extending and magnifying these real world impacts. The tools and evidence generated by the research has enabled clients to convince their funders and commissioners of two things: 1) the return on investment the funding will have in terms of social value generated for individuals and communities; and 2) the systems and processes they have in place to monitor and evaluate this social value on an on-going basis.

The knowledge and experience gained through CCRI's development of a Social Return Assessment (SRA) tool for smaller VCS organisations under **Proving Our Value** helped South West Forum build their impact measurement capacity and become accredited as a provider under the Cabinet Office 'Impact Readiness Fund' in 2013/14 and 2014/15. They subsequently won funding to support six organisations to carry out further impact measurement activities and expand the breadth of their service to beneficiary communities. Subsequent application of the tool equipped the Community Council for Somerset with solid and relevant information "in the language of commissioners", demonstrating the value for money of the project and securing expansion of the **Somerset Village Agents**, improving the health and wellbeing of an additional 2,000 individuals a year - worth an estimated £5.2m in social value and cost savings to the state according to the original value for money estimates derived through the tool.

The **Active Together Programme** (ATP) evaluation directly informed the design, delivery and evaluation of subsequent projects in Gloucestershire between 2015 and 2020, such as the 'Growing Our Communities Fund', the 'Children's Activities Fund' and another on Adult Social Care. A total of 494 new grants all operating on similar principles to the ATP and worth £1.5m are estimated to have generated up to £10.9m in health, wellbeing and social impacts for beneficiary communities according to the original Active Together SROI estimates. This evidenced-based shift towards smaller funding pots for local groups has led to new ways of working collaboratively with communities in terms of grant provision and has enabled GCC to broker new, improved and trusted relationships with the VCS. This has now become firmly embedded in the ways the Council operates and they have expanded into other thematic areas. More recently this cultural shift - stemming directly from lessons learned through the ATP evaluation - has fed into the design and delivery of GCC's Covid Recovery Fund.

The process of developing a theory of change model for the **Going the Extra Mile (GEM)** project helped design the induction and exit interview processes, underpinning delivery of 365 paid employment placements and 120 education and training placements by Dec 2020 for socially excluded participants, and satisfying the strict auditing requirements of the ESF and Big Lottery. The subsequent evaluation has also been used to systematically and periodically

improve the management and implementation of the programme and the operation and development of the voluntary sector partnership (involving over 50 VCSE organisations locally), and hence the substantial employment and quality of life benefits provided to the cohort of 1,668 participants registered up to Dec 2020. Evaluation findings “were fundamental” in helping to secure an additional £2.8 million from the Big Lottery-ESF BBO Programme to extend the project for a further two years (2019-2021), reducing social exclusion and improving psycho-social outcomes for a further 540 participants and leading to a further 227 employment and training placements between Jan 2019 and Dec 2020. This is worth an estimated £3.8m in social value alone when applying the SROI metrics.

The Garden Organic **Master Gardener Programme** used the SROI evidence provided by the CCRI to secure ongoing funding from Public Health departments as well as to promote the benefits of the training and mentoring education work. This has led to the programme being recommissioned in two locations and commissioned in six further locations in England and one in Wales. It is estimated that at least 6,000 individuals have experienced improved health, wellbeing and employability as a result of the programme continuing, worth over £10.5m in health, well-being and social value.

The SROI assessment for Defra on the **Axis 1 and 3** funding under the 2007-14 Rural Development Programme for England directly informed the rationale, focus and budget of the economic and social funding proposed for the 2014-2020 period, as evidenced in Defra’s (2014) RDPE Final Impact Assessment. Programme managers indicate that many more communities will have experienced magnified real world impacts as a result. The mid-term evaluation of England’s 2007-14 Rural Development Programme had highlighted the poor evidence base pertaining to the social impacts of schemes and CCRI’s work had subsequently addressed this for the 2014-20 programming period. The evidence (See section 5, source 9) helped demonstrate to the EC that the funds for the 2007-13 period had been well spent, which allowed the programme to be officially closed. The same SROI evidence fed into the benefit-to-cost ratios (BCRs) used in Defra’s business case to HM Treasury for match-funding for the 2014-2020 RDP, for the continuation of LEADER funding and for a new growth fund for SMEs, engaging additional communities and benefiting many more SMEs with support and services as a result. “HMT commented that they were pleased to see CCRI’s SROI evidence used”.

Findings of the **Rural Community Energy Fund (RCEF)** evaluation for Defra led directly to increased funding being made available for Stage 1 feasibility grants and the establishment of five local energy hubs providing mentoring and support for local community groups – all leading to magnified real world impacts through effective local energy projects across England. The SROI element of the evaluation formed an integral part of the business case put together to justify the continuation of the fund to the RCEF Board and to Ministers. “Without the CCRI evaluation evidence we would have struggled to justify continuing the fund”.

Social value narrative and metrics taken directly from the CCRI SROI report were included in the Crowdfunding Business case (See section 5, source 10) that raised £204,850 from 221 investors in 24 days through a match funded community share offer for **Hulme Community Garden Centre**, securing mental health and social inclusion impacts for service users. This included an interest free £50K loan to support an infrastructure expansion project. The same CCRI material was used to lever in £75K core funding over 3 years from Manchester City Council (in turn sustaining 80-100 volunteer placements per quarter, the equivalent of 1 additional FTE job per

quarter) and a £20K ESF grant to fund some 6-week social enterprise courses, with the CCRI outcomes tool subsequently used to evaluate distance travelled uplift in psycho-social outcomes for an additional cohort of participants as a result of the courses.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Independent interviews were carried out with 9 individuals across 8 commissioned projects between July and October 2019. Many interview notes refer to additional impacts that it has not been possible to document in section 4. Four interviews were followed up in February 2021 to update information about impacts. (*Denotes interviewee contact details that have been uploaded onto REF3). The sources of evidence uploaded as part of the ICS are as follows:

1. Confirmed notes (including confirmation of update summary) from the independent interview with Steve Woollett* (Formerly SWF) – to corroborate claims relating to the **Proving Our Value (POV)** project and the **Somerset Village Agents** evaluation.
2. Confirmed notes (including confirmation of update summary) from the independent interview with Diana Billingham* (GCC) – to corroborate claims relating to the evaluation of the **Active Together** Programme.
3. Confirmed notes from the independent interview with Vikki Walters* and Dave Honeybill (GCC) - to corroborate claims relating to the **Going the Extra Mile (GEM)** M&E.
4. Confirmed notes (including an update of figures to Dec 2020) from the independent interview with Jason Dunsford (GGT) – to corroborate claims relating to the **Going the Extra Mile (GEM)** monitoring and evaluation.
5. Confirmed notes (including confirmation of update summary) from the independent interview with Margi Lennartsson* (Formerly Garden Organic) – to corroborate claims relating to the SROI of the Garden Organic **Master Gardener** programme.
6. Confirmed notes from the independent interview with Justin Martin* (Defra) – to corroborate claims relating to the Rural Development Programme for England 2014-20 **Axis 1 and 3** SROI evaluation.
7. Confirmed notes from the independent interview with Helen Heat (Defra) – to corroborate claims relating to the combined CBA/SROI evaluation of the **Rural Community Energy Fund (RCEF)**.
8. Confirmed summary from the interview with Rachel Summerscales (Formerly HCGC) – to corroborate claims relating to the **Hulme Community Garden Centre** SROI and outcomes tool.

9. URL - *The Rural Development Programme for England, 2014-20: Final Impact Assessment*

This report contains a number of references to the CCRI **Axis 1 and 3** SROI research report which underpins the publication R4, and explains further how the Axis 1 and 3 work had influence in policy decisions.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/319445/rdpe-ia-201406.pdf

10. URL - **Hulme Community Garden Centre Crowdfunding page**, evidencing the raising of 204K through a community share offer: <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/hcgc> underpinned by the CCRI SROI evidence, together with the **Crowdfunding Business plan** which make specific reference to the social value narrative and metrics referred to in the business case for the share offer: <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/uploads/projects/608256/HCGC%20Business%20Plan%20or%20Share%20Offer.pdf>