

Our Social Value FAQs

A quick guide



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Introduction

At Social Value Portal, we regularly receive questions from our members, consulting clients, webinar attendees, and many others seeking guidance on their Social Value strategies or our membership offering.

Whether you are a bidder, a buyer, a business, or have a question that spans all three categories, you can explore this Social Value FAQs guide for answers to your Social Value queries.

We have tagged each question according to whether it is relevant to bidders, buyers, businesses, or a combination thereof.



1

Bidding



Bids



1

What are the key elements of a winning Social Value bid?

In our [Win more Bids Toolkit](#), we discuss all the essential components of winning a Social Value bid. It contains some of the top tips that we share with organisations through our strategic bid support offer including our 'six steps to pro' list:

1

Build the foundations

Establish a Social Value culture, strategy and policy. Understand how to measure and deliver it, then build a track record.



2

Understand the ask

Study the customer and analyse the tender requirements. Identify the evaluation criteria and know your competition.



3

Plan well

Structure the submission and clearly articulate the delivery. Identify any partners and detail remedial action.



4

Set relevant targets

Set relevant, achievable targets and use guidance for the measures. Adhere to the Social Value principles and use the right units of measurement.



5

Prove you can deliver

Instil confidence in the targets and justify your metrics. Outline delivery initiatives and highlight your track record.



6

Show you are a pro

Present professionally, using straightforward language. Be innovative and learn from experience.





2

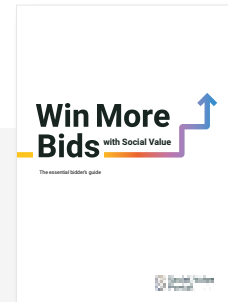
Should a Social Value commitment be something you don't currently do?

It is not enough to simply report something you already do. Social Value is about additionality: what else you do in addition to core contract requirements, or normal industry standards. It must also be specific to that contract, meaning you wouldn't be doing it had you not won the business.

One exception is if you demonstrably extend an existing program for a particular contract, because doing so creates additional more Social Value.

It is also important to remember that the Social Value commitments in your tender response must be proportionate to the contract value and related to the goods or services you are providing.

Win More Bids guide



2

Procurement



Procurement



1

How can buyers make sure that Social Value requirements are fair and effective for small and medium enterprises (SMEs)?

In principle, if a bidder can deliver the contract requirements, they should be capable of delivering the Social Value requirements too, assuming those requirements are proportionate and relevant to the contract.

But it is true that SMEs often don't have the same resources as larger bidders. Here are a few approaches that can provide support to these organisations:

- **Engage with the market:** Over the past couple of years, we have seen how important it is to bring bidders of all sizes into the process early on through preliminary market engagement.
- **Emphasise quality:** Buyers should look closely at the qualitative aspect of the proposal and the benefits that the supplier would bring to the community in response to the specific tender.
- **Provide clarity:** It is key to be clear about your needs and feed them into the individual contract.



2

How much Social Value should buyers aim to deliver per contract?

The average 'Social Value-add' – Social Value delivered relative to total contract size – is around 20% on our platform. So, for a contract value of £60,000, we might see £12,000 of Social Value delivered. But this differs significantly across sectors, with notable variance in areas like health and social care, IT, construction, facilities management, professional services, and others.

We would advise caution when it comes to mandating a particular Social Value-add as this can result in 'over-asking' and makes it more difficult to differentiate between bids. Not all opportunities are large enough to deliver a 20% Social Value-add, and some contracts deliver a lot more than 20%, so it's important to ensure that expectations are proportionate.

**Power-up
your procurement**





3

How should buyers select relevant Social Value TOM System™ Measures, and how does Social Value Portal help with this?

In our experience, many bidders welcome greater focus and clarity around what buyers are looking for and why – be it delivering on a policy objective or addressing a local need.

Context matters, however. The ask from the buyer must be proportionate and relevant for each contract, but also reflective of the needs for the community or communities it is serving. It is also worth asking whether a narrower focus on the Social Value outcomes you want will increase your chances of achieving that result.

By connecting Social Value outcomes to TOM System™ Measures, buyers can give clarity to bidders while also better measuring delivery under contract. This approach is effective whether the buyer is from the wider public sector, central government, or indeed the private sector. The TOM System aligns to the Social Value Model, enabling quantification in both tenders and contract management.

We help our members identify the right focus areas and Measures through our Consultancy team's Local Needs Analysis service, and also during onboarding, where our Social Value Advisers work with members to map key TOM System Measures.

3

Strategy



Strategy



1

How do you ensure Social Value is embedded within organisational planning?

Here are some of the approaches our members have taken to embedding Social Value in their organisations and business planning:

- Establishing Social Value as a recurring board agenda item.
- Incorporating Social Value into future budgeting.
- Restructuring their Social Value process internally, with different roles accountable for different regions and an organisation-wide commitment to logging data on our platform.
- Setting Social Value delivery targets for key personnel across the organisation.
- Creating a network to capture Social Value data, feeding it toward a dedicated individual or function responsible for correctly formatting and logging it.
- Getting the head of procurement significantly involved in Social Value, ensuring the whole function prioritises it.
- Hiring a sustainable procurement manager to ensure that Social Value never falls through the cracks when procurement managers are strained for resource.
- Taking a full 360 perspective, considering not only your own Social Value but also that of the projects you deliver and your own supply chain.



2

How can SMEs compete with larger organisations when it comes to Social Value?

Strategies for SMEs to compete with larger organisations in the realm of Social Values include:

- Using your connections to the community. SMEs often have better knowledge of local needs, organisations, and community hubs. Target these in your Social Value strategy.
- Optimising the qualitative elements of bids. The qualitative elements of a Social Value response go beyond the what, delving into the how and why of your Social Value commitments. For instance, don't just say that you will hire five apprentices and take one into full time employment – detail the groups and areas they will come from, the partners you will work with, and why you have made these decisions. This is an opportunity to tell a powerful Social Value story – also, quantitative targets are marked down by evaluators if they are not backed up a robust supporting narrative.
- Prioritising specificity and targeting. One impactful approach SMEs can take is to leverage their specialisms. An SME might be able to provide more innovative and specialist Social Value initiatives for bids than larger multi-disciplinary companies can. How can your core offering, skills, and expertise support the local community?
- Building relationships in the supply chain. Many tier one contractors have targets and programmes in place to work with SMEs. If you are an SME, you can gain access to a wider range of opportunities by connecting with these tier one contractors and showing your Social Value capabilities.

Social Value Portal's plans are designed to meet the needs of organisations small and large, starting with a basic option at a lower cost.



3 How should you approach additionality when Social Value is core to your proposition?

Additionality refers to the requirement that reported Social Value be 'additional' to the core activities of your organisation, or to the standards of the industry in question.

If Social Value is already core to your organisation's proposition, look for ways to go beyond the contract or the tender in question, while targeting areas in which you have the resources to deliver.

Take the example of an organisation whose main activity is combatting homelessness by building homeless shelters – if the contract requires the building of a homeless shelter, this wouldn't be counted as additional Social Value. However, if they established a co-located meal centre, this would count as additionality.

It's also worth remembering that if Social Value is core to your value proposition, you will have the opportunity to collaborate with other organisations – including VCSEs – with different propositions from you. Be sure to position yourself to capitalise on these possibilities.



4

Delivery



Delivery



1

What types of Social Value delivery score best?

The activities which we typically see deliver the most reported Social Value often have the following in common:

Specificity: Consider pursuing targeted and time-bound initiatives related to your organisation's core activities, rather than more general ones. For example, if you are a consultancy, you might be able to give expert advice to VCSEs. Focus on how you can respond to local needs and priorities, where relevant to the tender.

Detail: When you report your Social Value activities, it is important to offer a detailed account of your actions with evidence to support the data you are providing. Be careful to also use the right units of measurement for your quantitative data. This approach will help boost your Social Value scores.

Attribution: When you report Social Value activities, the activities should be attributable to you and not your supply chain or another organisation.





2

What advice can you give on ensuring we hit the Social Value commitments we set out at tender stage?

If you want to give yourself the best chances of hitting your Social Value commitments, we would advise that you:

- Make realistic commitments aligned to your organisation's capabilities.
- Engage with your contract manager to make expectations clear and establish a communication plan.
- Set aside time for Social Value – it might be that you log in and check your performance against targets every Friday morning, for instance.
- Identify data owners early and ensure responsibilities for data collection and entry are agreed.
- Meet up with your contract manager every month to report on progress.
- Get creative – for example, when working with **Solihull Council**, **Ebsford Environmental** hosted an internal competition between project teams to see who could deliver the most Social Value.



5

Measurement and Reporting



Measurement and Reporting



1

If you already have a volunteering policy in place, is that not counted as 'above and beyond'?

Within the Social Value TOM System™, volunteering activities that help the community will deliver measurable Social Value. Volunteering policies will help to facilitate this, as well as make the Social Value delivered attributable to the organisation (as it is paid volunteering time). If it is already in place, you may already be creating Social Value without measuring and quantifying it.

Regarding specific contracts, companies can record all relevant volunteering time as part of the business delivery. They can also capture a volunteering event specific to the project – for instance, a company might specify in the contract that if they win the bid, they will host a charity football event.

However, time off in lieu for volunteering or paid volunteering time offered to employees as part of internal company policy cannot be attached to a specific project, as this would not be 'additional' Social Value.





2

How should organisations operating nationally, or online, report local Social Value?

The Social Value TOM System™ framework is currently designed to measure Social Value delivered within the UK.

When it is used within a procurement setting, the TOM System helps the buyer to share Social Value priorities. Bidders can meanwhile use the framework to create an appropriate Social Value action plan. This is the case whether the contract is being delivered directly in a community or it is national or online. It is the responsibility of the buyer to ensure the Social Value requirements are reasonable for the contract type, length and value.

There are various Social Value initiatives which can be delivered virtually. Examples include remote mentoring, school workshops, and pro bono business advice sessions.

Ultimately, if your embedment in local communities is limited, the key thing is to focus on creating a robust and diverse overall Social Value offering – this can more than offset a limited local footprint.





3 Does the Social Value TOM System™ align with PPN 06/20 and the UK Government's Social Value Model?

The Social Value Model (introduced alongside PPN 06/20) only mandates a qualitative evaluation, and while it is useful in terms of procurement, it doesn't measure Social Value delivery.

That's why Social Value Portal has mapped the TOM System™ against the Social Value Model and the MACs within it. When it comes specifically to delivery, our Central Government Mapping Tool supports contract management and enables users to comprehensively demonstrate what is being delivered through the metrics within the TOM System.

This ultimately enables bidders to go beyond the 'what' and 'how' of their Social Value offer by giving an indication of scale: how much Social Value they could deliver under contract if they're successful.



6

Social Value Portal



Social Value Portal



1

Why do suppliers need to pay fees to Social Value Portal?

Where Social Value Portal manages the evaluation process on behalf of a public sector buyer, the successful bidder becomes contracted directly with Social Value Portal. The data and evidence added to the platform throughout the lifetime of the contract is validated by Social Value Portal to ensure the requirements of the procuring authority are met.

Suppliers are also able to access quarterly reporting on projects, showing progress against targets and helping to manage Social Value delivery. At the end of the contract, suppliers receive an end of project summary report, and a case study. The fee also reflects the time and resource required to develop and continually refine the Social Value TOM System™ and its proxy values, which enable standardised third-party validation.



2

What prices do you charge for membership?

We offer a wide range of packages depending on your needs, size, sector, and the scope of your operations. Whether you are an SME or a multi-national, central government or local authority, we are confident we have a package to suit your needs and budget.

If you are interested in trading up or down mid contract, please contact sales@socialvalueportal.com or call us on **020 3747 6555** to discuss any change in your contract.



3

What functionalities does the platform offer?

Our platform enables you to measure and manage both your own activities and those of your suppliers. Depending on your package, you can track total Social Value per contract, asset, or against frameworks. For more details, we would recommend asking one of our experts in a discovery call.

4

What is a 'project' on the platform?

A project is the activity against which you measure your Social Value. For example, this may be delivery of a successfully tendered contract, delivery on a specific project site, a real estate asset or business unit.

Social Value can be measured across different departments or customers as their own unique entities, as a roll up of projects managed by those departments or customers, or as a combination of the two. We encourage you to think about how you want to ultimately extract your Social Value data throughout onboarding and deliver a setup that ensures compatibility with the desired reporting outcomes. Best practice to maximise reporting granularity is to enter data at the level you wish to report on.

There is a difference between 'asset' and 'non asset' projects. Asset projects are real estate such as offices, retail, housing. Non asset projects include contracts, business activities (product lines), services, divisions, individual clients or business divisions.



5

How does Social Value Portal use Local Needs Analysis to help councils identify their Social Value needs?

The purpose of a Local Needs Analysis is to gain deeper insight into the key Social Value needs and opportunities in a local area. This ensures that Social Value activities can have a real and lasting impact. It also helps councils to focus interventions on a hyper-local level; after all, needs in one area of a local authority may be different to another.

Procuring councils can use these insights to inform suppliers' bids and developers' planning applications, and as a mechanism to deliver 'place-based' Social Value.

A Local Needs Analysis may include:

- A policy review: Comprehensive review of relevant policy documents.
- Deprivation analysis: Qualitative and quantitative (often using the Indices of Multiple Deprivation) research into the forms and geography of deprivation in the local area.
- An overview of the support ecosystem: Identification of potential local community partners to collaborate with to achieve lasting change.
- A Social Value action plan: Identification of specific interventions to address local needs with relevant community partners.

Ultimately, a Local Needs Analysis should help the council, as well as their suppliers, developers and stakeholders, to prioritise the Measures they will deliver against and partnerships that they engage with.



6

Can I just buy your consultancy services?

Yes, let us know what your needs are, and we can design a consultancy programme to suit.

7

What sets Social Value Portal apart from other Social Value measurement tools?

Social Value Portal offers a complete solution to help you shape what's most important to you and your community, record and measure your contributions, and adapt your decisions to achieve the greatest impact.

Buyers: Select suppliers based on Social Value promises and manage contracts based on delivery of targets.

Bidders: Effectively integrate Social Value within bids to maximise chances of selection.

Businesses: Plan, measure and manage Social Value to engage stakeholders, employees, customers and investors.

Real estate: Support for developers, planners and local authorities to integrate Social Value into plans and schemes.

Whatever your organisation's needs, we have a solution ready for you:



Consulting



Measurement



Platform



Reporting



Support



Academy



8

Do you offer a trial account? If so, what does it include?

Yes, you can use a free trial account to explore the benefits of our platform before you upgrade to a membership. With the trial account you can:

- Look at the test record we have created for you to see what a Social Value record looks like on the platform.
- Set up new records to enter data against one postcode for up to 365 days.
- Download guidance documents.
- Check out our Units Toolkit.
- Edit or delete existing records.

However, the trial account does NOT allow you to:

- Register for tenders. To do this you would need to register using the unique link the procuring authority provides.
- Invite team members - as this is an individual account, you are the only one able to access it. For more options, check out our membership offer.
- Add data for more than 365 days or data that covers more than one location.
- Pull reports on your Social Value data. For reporting options, you might want to check out our membership offer.

To register for a trial account, [click here](#).

Once you submit the form, you will be sent details via email to complete the setup of your account. If you come across any login issues, please contact support@socialvalueportal.com



Common Social Value terms and phrases

Additionality	Core to the concept of Social Value, additionality is the good you do over and above the core contract requirements.
Baseline	The minimum starting point for comparisons (for example, last year's performance, another contract of similar type/size, or first year of contract).
Carbon offset	Unlike reducing your own greenhouse gas emissions, an offset is a way to compensate for emissions that an individual, organisation, or event produces, by supporting projects that reduce or remove emissions from the atmosphere.
Central Government Social Value Model	The model sets out the Government's Social Value priorities for procurement. It includes a menu of Social Value objectives for Central Government departments (and executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies) to select from and include in their tenders. Social Value Portal's Central Government Mapping Tool connects the TOM System™ with the Social Value Model.
Circular economy	An economic system that is designed to be regenerative and restorative by minimising waste and maximising the use of resources. It aims to keep resources in use for as long as possible, extracting the maximum value from them, and then recovering and regenerating materials at the end of their useful life.
Clarification Question (CQ)	A question that can be raised by bidders, during the tender process, before the tender deadline, or by evaluators after bids have been received. CQs raised by one bidder are often shared with all bidders, to keep the process transparent. If evaluators feel further explanation is required from the bidder, they will raise a CQ which is not then shared with other bidders. Evaluator CQs are not an opportunity for the bidder to improve their bid.
Double counting	The act of counting Social Value (promised or delivered) or related financial or non-financial impacts more than once which results in overstating Social Value.
Evaluation	The critical assessment of bids based on a pre-agreed grading and scoring system. For Social Value, this is usually based on assessing a combination of quantitative targets and qualitative descriptions, or when using the Central Government Social Value Model, qualitative descriptions only.
Engagement session	Events organised by the buyer to engage with potential suppliers to check interest, define procurement needs and explain opportunities.
Local Needs Analysis	A report which identifies the needs and priorities of a particular area to allow bidders to create strategies that benefit the local community most.
Central Government Mapping Tool	A methodology, bespoke to Social Value Portal, for aligning the TOM System with the Central Government Social Value Model.
Measure	An activity that is precisely defined to enable a proxy value to be applied, thereby enabling Social Value to be calculated.
Outcomes	The objectives that an organisation is looking to achieve that will contribute to the Social Value Themes.
Place based project	A project where multiple public or private organisations within a local area, collaborate to drive long term social, economic and environmental outcomes.
Proxy value	Proxy values are developed in accordance with relevant best practice (including the Treasury Green Book) and draw on robust, verifiable data sources (such as the Office of National Statistics)."
Sustainability	The concept of meeting our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	A collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all". Established in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly, they are intended to be achieved by 2030.
Themes	The overarching strategic areas of benefit for Social Value delivery.
Third sector	Charitable organisations or VCSEs (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises).
Social Value TOM System™	The leading Social Value measurement standard in the UK, with a structure of Themes, Outcomes and Measures, created by Social Value Portal.
Units	Metrics by which Social Value measures are calculated, such as tonnes of carbon.



Get started now...

Wherever you are on your Social Value journey, here are some ways we can help:

30min Discovery Session

Book a complimentary call with one of our specialists to see how your Social Value can work harder.

[Book now](#)



Useful resources

Learn more about the movement with our resources below:

- [News and Insights](#)
- [Social Value 101 Toolkit](#)
- [Bidder's Social Value Toolkit](#)
- [Social Value Success Factors](#)
- [Buyer's Toolkit](#)
- [A Quick Guide to Social Value Legislation](#)
- [Our Success Stories](#)

[Contact us to get started on your Social Value journey](#)

The people, platform and programmes that support organisations to measure, manage and report on the economic, community and environmental benefits they contribute to society.

Join the Social Value movement.
[Book](#) a discovery call with our experts:

call: 020 3747 6555

socialvalueportal.com

