



# IS YOUR SOCIAL ENTERPRISE EVALUATION-READY?

Social Enterprise Impact Lab (SEIL) Research Team



CSI Swinburne SEIL Factsheet No. 1.

## EVALUATION READINESS

Recent research mapping social enterprises (SEs) in Victoria, Australia finds that organisational capacity and cost are the biggest barriers to evaluation.<sup>1</sup> Many organisations note that impact measurement is difficult, and report being unsure how to measure impact, or evaluate it effectively.<sup>1</sup> Despite these challenges, the Map for Impact study also finds that demonstrating social impact is a core need amongst social enterprises, suggesting that “there is a need to build capacity and reduce/subsidise the costs of measuring social impact”.<sup>1</sup>

### Considering your needs and resources

Before undertaking an evaluation of your social enterprise, you will need to think through some questions such as:

- What do you want to evaluate, and why?<sup>3</sup>
- Does your SE leadership and culture support evaluation?
- Is your board supportive of measuring the organisation’s impacts?
- What resources will you need to conduct an evaluation?
- How will you access the resources you need?

### Knowledge and tools to build capacity

There are some free online evaluation resources available to support SEs in assessing their evaluation readiness and building evaluation capacity. These include:

- The Measuring Up tool from Inspiring impact (2019): <https://www.inspiringimpact.org/measuring-up/measuring-up-for-small-organisations/small-organisations-self-assessment/>
- The Prove and Improve Toolkit from New Economics Foundation Consulting (2005): <https://www.nefconsulting.com/our-services/evaluation-impact-assessment/prove-and-improve-toolkits/about-the-toolkit/>
- Support Guides from Evaluation Support Scotland (2012-2019): <http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources/ess-support-guides/>
- The Demonstrating Value Workbook from Demonstrating Value (2018) <https://www.demonstratingvalue.org/resources/demonstrating-value-workbook>

## The role of others in the SE ecosystem

- Recent research suggests that there is a role for professional evaluation organisations in actively mobilising evaluation knowledge to other actors within the social enterprise and social innovation space.<sup>2</sup>
- Funders, investors, and policy-makers have the potential to influence the direction of social enterprise evaluations, and these actors need to be aware of their power and the specific lens they might be applying in their perspective on SE evaluations.<sup>4</sup>
- If SEs are increasingly pressured to evaluate without having adequate resources or capacity to do so, evaluation activities can be fragmented, disempowering, and unsupportive of the organisation’s core mission.<sup>5</sup>

## REFERENCES

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### Other resources for further reading

- [Social Enterprise Impact Lab Blog](#) (2018-2019), Centre for Social Impact – Swinburne.
- [Evaluating Impact](#) (2019), Tamarack Institute.

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