

The Quality & Impact Project is a national project aimed at helping social enterprises to find the tools and resources to prove and improve their quality and impact. We are researching, developing, piloting, and rolling out 'tools' or methods to help social enterprises in their efforts to strengthen their businesses and demonstrate the 'added value' they generate for customers, communities, funders and other groups.

Welcome to the first edition of **imPROVEit**. This news bulletin was launched to promote both new and established ways of demonstrating the impact of, and building the quality of social enterprises, support organisations, other organisations in the social economy, and businesses that have a social mission.

We'll strive to provide you with the most recent developments, news and views from your colleagues in the sector, and information about coming events that focus on 'proving and improving'. We hope to hear from you about how this news brief can be of best use to you and your colleagues – and you can tell us what your organisation has been 'proving and improving' and how... we'd love to feature your work right here.

Happy summer!

[Lisa Sanfilippo](#)

Editor

Martin Cooper

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In this issue...

Hot topics

- [Show Me The Money!](#) Green Apprentices in Merseyside tried out SROI (social return on investment) to demonstrate impact in terms policy and procurement officers understand.
- [Take Off!](#) Co-ops UK launch Key Social and Co-operative Performance Indicators in the 'Theatre of Dreams'.

The news round

- [Coming Attractions](#): Conferences and training events for your diary.
- [You Heard It Here!](#) News from the 'proving and improving' front, and general social enterprise goings-on.
- [Send us **your** news!](#) We'd love to hear from you.

Show me the money!

Q & I roving reporter Jessica Bridges Palmer interviewed Kevin Griffin, the Executive Director of Green Apprentices in Merseyside to find out what it was like to be 'SROI-ed' as part of nef's (the new economics foundation's) pilot of the tool. **Social return on investment (SROI)** is one new way of looking at the value that social enterprises and other social economy organisations add to the public sphere. SROI provides a way of comparing the investment in an organization (usually public or philanthropic) with its impact in terms that the



Government and other funders can best understand – money!

Green Apprentices's mission is to give "high quality work experience, quality training and quality support to people who have been out of work, to improve their employability and help them to secure sustainable jobs".

JBP: How did you get involved with measuring SROI?

KG: I had known and worked with Jeremy Nicholls for a while, and he knew we work with long-term unemployed people and that we get over a hundred people per year back into employment. He knew that we would have the sort of numbers and systems in place to collect information, as you must have when you have government programmes investing in you.

JBP: We know it helped us to work with you to learn more about SROI for social enterprises — was it useful for you?

KG: It is very important to show value for money in government-funded work, and this was us going a step further and establishing best practice. It's more about long term assessment, about the value that we're adding overall. I think getting all the information together and looking at it in that way is useful, maybe more so in the medium and long term than in the short term.

It was a lot of number crunching for us at this phase but I think it's more about the culture shift. It's a shift to focusing on people's longer term quality of life and useful skills and assessing our success against that. It allows us to systematically evaluate and show that it's not just about getting people back into work, but [in the long term] what's their quality of life like? Are they earning more?

JBP: You say this is about you pushing for best practice in this area, but is there external pressure right now to account in this way, a demand for this kind of information?

KG: It's about a culture shift towards working towards and assessing these kinds of outcomes in the whole organisation. It's a selling tool for us, we can say, "we know!" when we know what our impacts are. There's not external pressure as such; we are being proactive, and we want to innovate. It gives us the edge.

JBP: Having used SROI, and I think it did require a lot of data collection, do you find it practicable? Would you change anything about it?

KG: It is a lot of numbers and formulae, but I think that is part of the process that has to happen. It's not so much that it's difficult as that is was all new to us. It takes a while to get into the systems, to learn it all. I wouldn't really change it, it just takes a while to learn it and embed the process.

JBP: What potential "market" do you think there is then for this kind of tool in the UK?

KG: I think the potential is huge. It's about finally being able to be objective. It makes the difference when you're preparing reports or bids for Treasury or government. It's important for us to be able to show the ongoing success of people 12 months down the line; the quality as well as quantity of our programme; to build that in to the return on the investment. It's a must – giving us an edge over organisations that are mediocre! It's an excellent selling tool.

Read more about the findings from the trials of **nef**'s method of calculating SROI at www.neweconomics.org/gen/newways-socialreturn.aspx where you can download the free report, *Social Return on Investment: Valuing What Matters*.

If you would like to pilot SROI in your organization, write to Jeremy.Nicholls@neweconomics.org

Co-ops KSCPIs take off!

Adrian Ashton of Cambridge CDA helped Co-ops UK launch its *Key Social and Co-operative Performance Indicators* at Co-op Congress in Manchester last month, held at Old Trafford football stadium. A rousing crowd agreed to roll out 10 measures that cover impact on the

environment, member engagement in co-operative activity and professional development, ethical investments, and customer satisfaction. Adrian and fellow co-operator Ursula Lidbetter of Lincoln Co-operative Society told colleagues about the ups and downs of piloting the KSCPIs. According to Adrian:

"We've always known there's a co-operative advantage but never been able to quantify it; these indicators give us an objective way of doing this for the first time as a movement. However, one of the key challenges of piloting the KSCPI was to know what the findings meant as we had no previous data to compare them with. We successfully overcame this problem through 'benchmarking' against data from other sources to create a context for them and have become the first co-op in the UK to openly publish all our findings as part of our annual report."

With guidance included in the online version of the indicators, you can check in and see what your organisation is already keeping track of, or might want to start. For more information surf over to www.co-opunion.coop/live/welcome.asp?id=211

Coming attractions...

September

- **10/09/2004** *Social Enterprise Trade Fair, 10am-3.30pm, Old Market Square, Nottingham.*
Stalls will include: Credit Unions, Training and Theatre Services, Fruit and Veg, Clothing, Refurbished Computers, Books.
Call 0115 9155 282 or email: socialeconomy.team@nottinghamcity.gov.uk
- **12-14/09/2004** *DTA annual conference, 'Enterprise for Sustainable Communities', Moat House Hotel, Chester.*
Bringing together the country's leading community practitioners, who are using self-help, asset-building, and enterprise to transform their communities. For members of the DTA, our supporters, and other keen to learn what community enterprise is really about.
www.dta.org.uk/index2.html for more information, programme and booking form.
- **13-15/09/2004** *Social Firms UK annual conference, 'Enterprise Opportunities for Social Firms', Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne.*
Join Social Firms UK and learn about business opportunities for social firms; social franchising; procurement and tendering; training standards; social security benefits; the Futurebuilders programme; and the proving and improving tools useful to social firms and other social enterprises. www.socialfirms.co.uk or email: conference@socialfirms.co.uk
- **16-17/09/2004** *'Socialising the Global Economy', Comfact, SEN, European Network for Economic Self Help and Local Development, Hope University, Liverpool.*
How can social enterprises and NGOs gain greater influence in the globalised economy? How can values of co-operation and sustainability replace those of market fundamentalism? How can social enterprises and NGOs help to build a global movement for change?
For more information and speakers/contributors: www.sen.org.uk/events/conference.htm
- **28-30/09/2004** *'No Business Like Social Business', Cat's Pyjamas, Liverpool.*
Get unique access to some of the country's most successful social business leaders. A unique opportunity to visit seven leading edge social businesses, learn from 20 years' experience in 72 hours. This is not a boring old conference. Every session happens inside a real life business. www.the-cats-pyjamas.com

You heard it here...

Newsflash!

The Inner City 100 extends deadline to 13 August 2004. Social enterprises urged to apply!

For an application pack, click [here](#). For assistance with completing the application call The Inner City 100 Index Co-ordinator Reza Hamroun, on 0207 820 6374

The Inner City 100 is an initiative launched by **nef** to chart the fastest growing inner city companies. The Inner City 100 Business Awards have recognised that some of the fastest growing companies in urban areas are social enterprises. For more information go to <http://www.theinnercity100.org/>

There's no business like social business

This new book by Liam Black and Jeremy Nicholls aims to share “insights into how to set up successful social business ventures”, and tackle some of the thorny issues such as balancing commercial realities with your vision for social change, what happens to your community or voluntary organisation when it enters competitive markets, and, of course, demonstrating the value of the social and environmental impacts of your enterprise.

To order, email ann-marie.grimes@frcgroup.com 10 per cent discount for Q & I news bulletin readers.

Send us your news...

Post your upcoming events, publications, reports, news, proving-and-improving-related jobs, partnership opportunities, and other important goings-on here. Email us at Lisa.Sanfilippo@neweconomics.org

About the Q&I Project and team...



*The Quality & Impact Project is one of the national strands of work of the Social Enterprise Partnership (SE) Ltd., a partnership among Co-operatives UK, the Development Trusts Association, **nef** (the new economics foundation), Social Enterprise Coalition, Social Enterprise London, Social Firms UK.*

The Q & I Project is managed by Lisa Sanfilippo, with contributions from Petra Kjell, Richard Murray, Hetan Shah, and Steven Wraith. Special thanks go to our volunteers Martin Cooper and Heather Savory, as well as to Jessica Bridges-Palmer for her contributions.



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***nef** (the new economics foundation) is an independent think-and-do tank that inspires and demonstrates real economic well-being. We aim to improve quality of life by promoting innovative solutions that challenge mainstream thinking on economic, environment and social issues. We work in partnership and put people and the planet first.*



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*By supporting **nef** you become a free member of via3.net, an online resource and network that offers new opportunities for ethical businesses and non-profit organisations working for social justice and environmental sustainability to grow in strength and influence.*

www.neweconomics.org/gen/m1_i2_join.aspx

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