# SROI guide for public procurement

## Summary

The *SROI guide for public procurement* provides a framework for procurement staff, commissioners and funders on how to use Social Return on Investment (SROI) as part of the process of developing, delivering and evaluating arts-based education and cultural activities. It aims to provide this information to, *inter alia*, procurement and commissioning teams, funders, finance staff, human resources departments, professional development teams, those responsible for equality and diversity policy, and those concerned with ensuring corporate social responsibility.

SROI is a useful way to understand and show the value created by arts-based education and cultural activities, especially the changes that are overlooked or hard to measure. While highlighting the value of cultural literacy on social cohesion and inclusion, the guide outlines the benefits, implications and practical steps of the SROI calculation process to demonstrate value created, or to be created, by policies and projects geared at increasing cultural literacy.

The guide is aligned with the *Art Works for Change* toolkit for educators (D6.2), building on the *Theory of change (ToC) framework for social cohesion* (D1.3) and *SROI model for arts-based education* (D1.4) of the CLiViE project.

**Public procurement and SROI**

Public procurement increasingly needs to weigh broader outcomes and impacts of the goods and services to be procured or commissioned. Procurement can also act as a force of change for stakeholders, providing effective and accessible socio-economic opportunities. However, too often the issue of how to demonstrate value-for-money in arts-based education and cultural activities leaves the sectors to be the first to experience budgetary cuts. In fact, even though many arts-based education and cultural activities claim social value, few can evidence it.

An SROI framework can be used for measuring and accounting for value, especially in relation to reducing inequality and environmental degradation and improving wellbeing by incorporating social, environmental and economic costs and benefits. SROI measures change in ways relevant to the people and organisations experiencing or contributing to it. It demonstrates how change is being created by measuring social, environmental and economic outcomes and uses monetary values to represent them allowing a ratio of 'benefits to costs'. For example, a ratio of 3 : 1 indicates that an investment of 1 Euro delivers 3 Euros of social value. SROI uses money as a common unit to convey value.

Whether qualitative issues can be quantified, translated into monetary values, and compared to each other is a matter of debate. It raises ethical and political concerns that have been addressed in the guide. But through the design, development, implementation and (e)valuation of twenty-eight case studies in arts-based education and cultural activities, the CLiViE project has demonstrated that there is considerable value in applying an SROI framework. Critically, the case studies' SROI have not been calculated for comparative reasons but simply to provide points of reflection on how to 'value' what is being done.

**SROI framework for arts-based education**

As detailed in the CLiViE's *Theory of change (ToC) framework for social cohesion* (D1.3), our approach to SROI is supported by a ToC framework underpinned by three fundamental aspects:

- Working back using our ToC from the social impact to be achieved to the design of the arts-based education activity;
- Using qualitative data from our case study pilots to support any available quantitative data;
- Co-creating the indicators that measure any SROI and 'what matters' with the case study participants.

### Key Findings

The *SROI guide for public procurement* provides a framework for procurement staff, commissioners and funders on how to use Social Return on Investment (SROI) as part of the process of developing, delivering and evaluating arts-based education and cultural activities.

While highlighting the value of cultural literacy on social cohesion and inclusion, the guide outlines the benefits, implications and practical steps of the SROI calculation process to demonstrate value created, or to be created, by policies and projects geared at increasing cultural literacy.

Based on current best practice, an SROI analysis needs to be structured around a number of key principles:

- Involve stakeholders.
- Understand what changes.
- Value the things that matter.
- Only include what is material.
- Do not over-claim.
- Be transparent.
- Verify the result.

The *SROI guide for public procurement* is aligned with the *Art Works for Change* toolkit for educators (D6.2), building on the *Theory of change (ToC) framework for social cohesion* (D1.3) and *SROI model for arts-based education* (D1.4) of the CLiViE project.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe Research and Innovation programme under grant agreement No. 101132285.

The approach applied in the CLiViE project has several distinct features.

First, each case study produced its own completed logic model, as those who are measured typically lack a voice in the construction of categories and measurements. In order to address this issue we needed to promote the co-creation of the interventions. This was especially relevant when it came to 'measuring what matters' and ascribing a 'value' to these measures.

Second, the starting point for developing the logic model for each case study was to select a high-level 'learning outcome' (as defined in the UNESCO Global Citizenship Education framework and related to the Horizon Europe call topic that the CLiViE project responded to), from which to work back to the design, develop, implement and (e)valuate the intervention.

Third, from the high-level impacts in the logic model we needed to turn to the outputs and outcomes needed to deliver them. For example, when it came to the impact of arts-based education, we looked at skills development, increased self-esteem, self-efficacy and confidence, enhanced social ties and networks, and/or improved attitudes toward school.

Fourth, one of the challenges was the need to ensure relevant data were captured for the (e)valuation and calculation of the SROI. The logic models that were prepared for each of the case studies provided the evidence base and rationale for the particular intervention being proposed.

The gathering of some relevant output data was relatively easy, such as increased attendance or participation in arts. From this it was possible to calculate the SROI on certain outcomes and impacts, such as 'increased level of volunteering' or 'reduced antisocial behaviour'. However, data on other outcomes and impacts were harder to capture for the SROI, such as 'greater trust and reciprocity', so partners needed to think about potential 'proxy' indicators, as explained in the *Art Works for Change* toolkit available on the CLiViE website.

Using the optic of an SROI analysis helped us understand how to 'value' arts-based education and cultural activities used to promote social inclusion and reduce inequality. This is considered critical for procurement and for commissioners seeking to fund work in this area.

The six main stages of the SROI calculation process are:

Stage 1: **Establishing scope and identifying stakeholders**
Establishing scope, identifying stakeholders, and deciding how to involve stakeholders will help ensure that what is being proposed is feasible.

Stage 2: **Mapping outcomes**
The Impact Map is an important aspect of the SROI analysis. For the CLiViE project an Excel template has been created, based on the SROI Network's *Guide to Social Return on Investment*. It is important to involve a range of stakeholders in constructing the Impact Map to ensure that the outcomes that matter to those who are directly affected will get measured and valued.

Stage 3: **Evidencing outcomes and giving them a value**
This stage consists of four steps: developing outcome indicators, collecting outcomes data, establishing how long outcomes last, and putting a value on the outcome.

Stage 4: **Establishing impact**
Establishing impact reduces the risk of overclaiming, and only by measuring and accounting for all factors a sense of the activity's impact can be gained. It includes an estimation of the deadweight (i.e., the percentage of outcome that would have happened if the activity had not taken place) and attribution (i.e., the percentage of outcome attributed to the activity as compared to outcomes attributed to others).

Stage 5: **Calculating the SROI**
The initial SROI ratio is arrived at by dividing the discounted value of benefits by the total investment. After calculating the ratio, it is important to assess the extent to which the results would change if some of the assumptions made in previous stages are changed.

Stage 6: **Reporting, using and embedding**
SROI aims to create accountability to stakeholders. As such it is important that the results are communicated to stakeholders in a meaningful way.

## Key Findings
(contd.)

The *six main stages* of the SROI calculation process are:

*Stage 1*
Establishing scope and identifying stakeholders.

*Stage 2*:
Mapping outcomes.

*Stage 3*
Evidencing outcomes and giving them a value.

*Stage 4*
Establishing impact.

*Stage 5*
Calculating the SROI.

*Stage 6*
Reporting, using and embedding.

## Case study SROI assessment

A worked example from the CLiViE project is outlined below. It covers the outcomes and impacts of the "HNMKY Voices of Us Communal Art Workshop" held in Helsinki. The primary aim of the workshop, targeting young people aged 14-21, was to create meaningful, lasting change by equipping young people with the skills, values, and understanding necessary to contribute to a more inclusive and culturally rich society. The intervention employed a co-created methodology developed with stakeholders and beneficiaries to ensure relevance and genuine engagement. Key activities included 15 workshop sessions, constant communication between instructors and participants, two weeks of audiovisual activities and a final restitution event, accompanied by SROI methodologies including interviews and questionnaires. Worked examples of all the twenty-eight case studies can be found at the CLiViE website under D5.1 *Calculation SROI ratio for each case study*.

**Calculating the SROI**

| Outcome / Year | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Increased engagement in creative activity and skill development | 5,100.00 | 4,080.00 | 3,264.00 | 2,611.20 | 2,088.96 |
| Increased confidence, self-expression and sense of personal capability | 2,606.80 | 2,085.44 | 1,668.35 | 1,334.68 | 1,067.75 |
| Strengthened social connections, sense of belonging and collaborative capacity | 2,129.40 | 1,490.58 | 1,043.41 | 730.38 | 511.27 |
| Improved emotional awareness, emotional regulation and emotional well-being | 1,795.50 | 1,436.40 | 1,149.12 | 919.23 | 735.44 |
| Increased future orientation and awareness of creative career pathways | 1,316.25 | 855.56 | 556.12 | 361.48 | 234.96 |
| Reduced risk of youth alienation, loneliness and associated long-term societal costs | 12,568.50 | 10,055.00 | 8,043.80 | 6,435.10 | 5,148.10 |
| **Total** | 25,516.45 | 20,002.78 | 15,724.83 | 12,392.11 | 9,786.43 |
| **SDR (3%)** | 10.000 | 0.9709 | 0.9426 | 0.9151 | 0.8885 |
| **Present Value (PV)** | 25,516.45 | 19,420.10 | 14,822.23 | 11,340.51 | 8,695.14 |
| **Total Present Value (PV)** | | | | | **79,794.44** |
| **Net Present Value** | | | | | **55,178.44** |
| **Social Return € per €** | | | | | **€ 1 : € 3.24** |

The SROI calculation demonstrates that the case study generated significant social value, with a return of €3.24 for every €1 invested. Such an SROI ratio indicates that arts-based cultural literacy education delivers substantial social returns, particularly through long-term skills development that enhances young people's prospects — validating the CLiViE project's hypothesis that such interventions foster meaningful social cohesion and individual growth.
Various stakeholder groups experienced different forms of value from the project, ranging from direct skills development and personal growth to enhanced organisational capacity and improved social ties.

At the individual level, the project generated outcomes including: increased engagement in creative activity and skills development; increased confidence, self-expression and sense of personal capability; strengthened social connections, sense of belonging and collaborative capacity; improved emotional awareness, emotional regulation and emotional wellbeing; increased future orientation and awareness of creative career pathways; reduced risk of youth alienation and loneliness; as well as associated long-term societal costs.

### Policy Takeaways

The *SROI guide for public procurement* identifies a number of next steps for procurement staff, commissioners and funders. Although not exhaustive they help ensure that key stakeholders maximise the opportunities provided by arts-based education and cultural activities:

• Promote the *Art Works for Change* toolkit for educators.

• Review how current contracts and funding for arts-based education and cultural activities are being monitored and evaluated.

• Consider at what stage an SROI framework needs to be included in the commissioning/procurement cycle.

• Identify clear objectives, detailed specification, and logistics planning for any goods and services to be procured for arts-based education.

• Ensure procurement staff understand the difference between outputs, outcomes and impacts and the wider benefits that arts-based education and cultural activities deliver.

• Balance cost and quality with wide socio-economic and cultural objectives, such as heritage preservation and community engagement.

These individual-level changes create ripple effects at the community level, contributing to reduced intercultural tensions among youth and stronger social ties in the European context. At the systemic level, the project offers a replicable model for intercultural dialogue through artistic creation, strengthening the capacity of cultural institutions to address social challenges, and making a tangible contribution to building a more inclusive and culturally rich society.

The evaluation framework incorporated both quantitative and qualitative methods to capture the full scope of change. Baseline and endline questionnaires provided quantitative measurement of attitude and behavior change, while qualitative interviews with participants captured the depth and nuance of their experiences and personal transformations. Stakeholder interviews assessed broader community-level impacts and sustainability of outcomes, and tournament observation provided real-time documentation of the change process. This mixed-methods approach ensured that both the measurable outcomes and the intangible qualities of personal and social transformation were captured in the evaluation.

From an SROI perspective, the project represents a strategic investment in multiple forms of capital. Human capital investment includes the development of skills, values, and capabilities among young people that will benefit them throughout their lives. Social capital investment focuses on building interethnic relationships and strengthening mutual understanding. Cultural capital investment enhances arts engagement and cultural dialogue among a demographic often excluded from mainstream activities. Finally, the project generated peace dividend value through reduced social tensions and increased social harmony, preventing future costs associated with social division and intolerance.

The investment areas for the SROI calculation included guest mentors' presence, rental of studios, gear, equipment, software and communication, direct salaries and event production. The return areas encompassed individual outcomes such as improved skills and enhanced wellbeing; social outcomes including community ties and reduced conflict costs; cultural outcomes such as increased civic participation and cultural dialogue engagement; and preventive value representing the avoided costs of social division, discrimination, and intolerance that would otherwise impact both individuals and the community.

## Conclusion

Procurement remains a major driver in how we provide effective services that use arts-based education and cultural activities to promote social inclusion. Aligning an SROI framework to how we commission arts-based education and cultural activities can also lead to better procurement. In short, promoting SROI can be part of an effective evaluation process that provides critical insight needed to demonstrate value.

## Methodology

The *SROI guide for public procurement* has been developed with inputs from CLiViE partners and other stakeholders based on the application of ToC and SROI frameworks in arts-based education work with young people as experienced across the twenty-eight case studies of the CLiViE project.

## References

Kemal Ahson with Grzegorz Maśloch, *D5.4 SROI guide for public procurement*. UH, Helsinki, 2026.

Anna Keune, Harper Staples, Santiago Hurtado, Gülşah Zeynep Yiğit, *D6.2 Art Works for Change: A playbook for educators to evidence the value of arts-based education for and with young people*. TU, Munich, 2026.

Kemal Ahson with Grzegorz Maśloch, *D1.3 Theory of change (ToC) framework for social cohesion*. UH, Helsinki, 2024.

Kemal Ahson with Grzegorz Maśloch, *D1.4 SROI model for arts-based education*. UH, Helsinki, 2024.

## Policy Takeaways

(contd.)

- Ensure procurement staff understand data requirements throughout the SROI process and how this can be aligned to monitoring and evaluating projects.
- Review the procurement guidelines and contract clauses in an organisation and ensure they are able to gather appropriate data.
- Include wider socio-economic criteria in the delivery of arts-based education and cultural activities and, if relevant, include in any pre-qualification questionnaire and invitation to tender.
- Ensure providers understand their data responsibilities and monitor supply chains through creating realistic key performance indicators.
- Undertake a wider impact assessment of procurement and commissioning processes related to arts-based education and cultural activities.
- Work with artists, cultural practitioners and suppliers to promote this agenda.

The Cultural Literacies' Value in Europe (CLiViE) project develops and applies a Theory of Change (ToC) methodology and Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework to increase our understanding of the value of cultural literacy through arts-based education on social cohesion.

CLiViE
Cultural Literacies' Value in Europe

For further information see
https://www.clivieproject.eu

Views and opinions expressed are those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Commission.
Neither the European Commission nor any person acting on behalf of the European Commission can be held responsible for them.