Social Impact Framework Review

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Acknowledgements

List of Abbreviations

AHRC	The Arts and Humanities Research Council
NICE	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
ONS	Office National Statistics
REA	Rapid Evidence Assessment
RCT	Randomised Control Trials
SROI	Social Return on Investment

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Executive Summary

Artistic and cultural experiences are intrinsically valuable in their own right, but they also have the potential to lead to broader positive outcomes on individuals' cognitive and social development as well as for the community more broadly. Understanding of how to effectively measure the social impacts of art and cultural participation is important for several reasons including:

- **improving existing or developing new creative practices or programmes;**

- **helping to share learning and good practice within and across organisations.**

- **demonstrating to a funder or commissioner the potential impact of an initiative or investment.**

- **in the development of a business case for new projects, programmes or initiatives**

- **for strategising and understanding how well organisations are delivering against their mission.**

There are, however, a number of practical and conceptual challenges associated with measuring social impact. This review explored some of these issues and aimed to stimulate discussion and generate ideas about how organisations and individuals across the sector can measure the social impact of their work. The review consisted of the following research activities:

- **A literature review drawing on Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) techniques including an explicit search strategy and critical framework appraisal approach.**

- **In-depth, exploratory interviews with arts and cultural organisations, investors, and organisations that develop social impact frameworks.**

- **An online survey exploring the views towards, and practical engagement with, social impact frameworks of by arts and cultural organisations.**

- **Follow up qualitative interviews with a sample of arts organisations that responded to the survey**

Across the arts and cultural sector, organisations draw on an incredibly diverse range of approaches and mediums in their work. They work across a broad range of settings and seek to achieve a wide range of outcomes. Some focus on a specific issue or group of people, such as those that focus on the therapeutic and well-being benefits of participation. Other projects seek broader community goals working to enhance social cohesion or tackle social isolation. This diversity shows the wide-ranging benefits arts and cultural experiences can have but also provides a challenge for the sector in how these benefits are measured and communicated effectively.

The acceleration towards arts and cultural organisations wanting to demonstrate the impact of their work appears to be borne out of a shift in approach to the distribution of public funds. New Public Management as an approach sought to modernise public sector management by setting targets, monitoring outputs, and auditing performance. This led to organisations aligning their objectives to certain policy areas and progressively attaching more to economic and social agendas to benefit from larger budgets. This has led to an environment where arts and cultural organisations may feel compelled to make the case for funding beyond simply promoting cultural engagement and aesthetic experience.

Social impact frameworks have been widely used to help capture, understand, and communicate the social outcomes relating to participation in arts and cultural experiences. These frameworks seek to provide a practical resource that enable organisations to develop and improve processes and procedures for exploring the impact of their work. They also try to increase the transparency and rigor with which measurement is completed.

Findings from the online survey indicated that almost four out of five (79 percent) organisations responding to the survey indicated that they had sought to measure the social impact of their work. Most commonly, frameworks were used to communicate the value of organisations' work and served as a tool to help organisations improve the impact of the work they did. As such, the value of measuring social impact can be seen for both internal drivers, such as those aimed at making refinements to projects or initiatives to improve outcomes, as well as external ones, including to advocate their work and its value to others and to attract funding.

The review found that there has been a proliferation of approaches, frameworks, guidance and support surrounding social impact measurements and that this can sometimes be confusing and bewildering for some arts organisations.

The challenges associated with social impact measurement were explored both through the literature review and the primary fieldwork conducted as part of this research. The main conceptual challenges identified included those associated with the robustness of some social impact frameworks; establishing causation between the activities and any improvements to social outcomes; the sensitivity of measurement frameworks to the full expanse of aesthetic experience; and the coherence between activities and outcomes.

Some of the key practical challenges arts and cultural organisations face include the resource that social impact measurement demands including both time and costs associated with some frameworks. Funder requirements was also cited as a key challenge, particularly where funders stipulate the use of a specific framework or measurement tools. This was particularly challenging where organisations attracted funding from a range of sources and were required to evidence impact using different tools. The capability of organisations was also found to be a key challenge organisations face given the range of skills and expertise needed to confidently measure social impact.

One of the key findings emanating from this review is the varying degrees of engagement arts and cultural organisations have with social measurement tools. For the majority, impact measurement was referred to by consultees in the context of reviewing a certain project or intervention. Whilst there are examples of some organisations embedding social impact measurement within their operation and overall mission, there was consensus that a shift towards embedding social impact measurement throughout organisations' delivery is the right direction of travel.

Stakeholder consultations suggested that, whilst there was a place for off the shelf frameworks, for most organisations there was value in developing bespoke frameworks that fully align to an organisation's overall mission as opposed to a particular intervention or project. In this regard, it was suggested that theory-based approaches, such as Theory of Change or Logic Mapping, would be a valuable first step for many organisations and using this to support the identification or development of specific measurement tools.

An important next step for the sector is to consider not only measuring social impact as a tool for advocacy and fulfilling funding requirements, but also as a tool that supports internal assessment of performance, refinement of approaches and provides insight and learning around an organisation's performance.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Artistic and cultural experiences, whilst containing intrinsic value in their own right, do have the ability to promote positive outcomes for individuals and the community more broadly. Participation and engagement with the arts can support an individual's cognitive and social development. It can also increase a person's sense of connection to place and community, expanding and deepening an individuals' social networks.

Accurately determining and mapping the relationships between objectives, activities, experiences, and outcomes is key to understanding, researching and communicating the impact of arts and cultural initiatives. Understanding impact is important for artist or cultural organisations for several reasons, including but not limited to:

- **improving existing or developing new creative practices or programmes.**

- **helping to share learning and good practice within and across organisations.**

- **demonstrating to a funder or commissioner the potential impact of an initiative or investment.**

- **in the development of a business case for new projects, programmes or initiatives**

- **for strategising and understanding how well organisations are delivering against their mission.**

There are, however, several conceptual and practical challenges to measuring social impact. It is difficult, for example, to distil the full expanse of aesthetic experience into a single Likert scale from unsatisfied to satisfied. Practically, evidencing impact is challenging and resource intensive for organisations.

Understanding the role, potential and barriers to social impact measurement is key to informing debate and discussions on how it can more effectively support individuals and organisations across arts and culture. This research seeks to explore these issues, whilst also providing a practical resource for arts and cultural organisations.

1.2 Research Objectives

This research is intended to inform a range of activities currently being undertaken by Arts Council England. This includes supporting and informing arts and cultural organisations to engage in social impact measurement. For more information on the Art Council England's current approach and the support that is available, click here.

The aim of this review is to stimulate discussion and generate ideas about how organisations and individuals across the sector can draw on social impact measurement in their work. The objectives of the review are to address and explore:

- Which frameworks are currently being used by the sector, including those in England and internationally. This is discussed in the Mapping Frameworks section and summarised in section 7.

- The views and perspectives of individuals and organisations in arts and cultural sector towards social impact measurement. This is explored in the section Social Impact in Practice.

- What barriers, including practical constraints, do organisations and individuals face in engaging with social impact measurement? This is explored in the section on Practical Challenges.

- How different commissioners and funders view the role of social impact measurement in making decisions about which organisations or services to fund. This is also explored in the section Social Impact in Practice.

In addition, the research also seeks to provide a comprehensive library of frameworks available to the sector. This is intended to provide a practical resource to assist organisations, investors, and policy makers in understanding and drawing on social impact frameworks in their work. Together, the review aims to:

- Map and review existing frameworks that explore social impact.

- Share understanding of methodologies and measures used for assessing the impact of projects, interventions, and programmes.

- Assess the comprehensiveness and quality of each existing framework, highlighting strengths and weaknesses.

- Develop recommendations on possible approaches or future research that could support the development and refinement of social impact frameworks.

These objectives are explored in detail in section on Mapping Frameworks. For factsheets summarising key characteristics of a sample of the frameworks, see Appendix 1.

1.4 Approach

In addressing these aims, the review team drew insights and information from a range of sources, including:

- A literature review drawing on Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA)[1] techniques including an explicit search strategy and critical framework appraisal approach.

- In-depth, exploratory interviews with arts and cultural organisations, investors, and organisations that develop social impact frameworks.

- An online survey exploring the views towards, and practical engagement with, social impact frameworks of by arts and cultural organisations.

- Follow up qualitative interviews with a sample of arts organisations that responded to the survey

For a more detailed summary of how this research was completed, please see the Appendix 2 Methodology at the end of the document.

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[1] REAs are a type of evidence review that aim to provide an informed conclusion on the nature and characteristics of an evidence base, and synthesize and critically analyse what that evidence indicates. For the purposes of this review, the approach has been adapted to map social impact frameworks, the research that informs our understanding of their role and potential, and to critically appraise different frameworks against a predefined set of criteria.

2 Social Impact and the Arts

This section explores the broader context informing social impact measurement across arts and culture. It sets out the trends and developments that have informed and shaped expectations and experiences of organisation's engagement with impact measurement.

2.1 Creativity and Social Impact

Throughout human history, creativity and self-expression have been central to our cultural and social life. Art has always been used as a medium for exploring and communicating thoughts and ideas. Our understanding of the importance of creativity has only grown. Whilst recovering from tuberculosis in the early 1940s, Adrian Hill used pencil drawing as a means of exploring and expressing his complex emotions at a difficult time. Widely regarded as the founder of art therapy, Hill landed on the idea that art could heal.[2] He set out to work with people in hospital to help them use creativity as a means of supporting their recovery.

During the 1960s and 70s, movements emerged that widened our understanding of the role and potential of creativity. Across the UK and internationally, a diverse range of organisations and collectives established projects that aimed to create spaces for people to engage in artistic practise.[3] Beyond simply promoting creativity and aesthetic experience, they often sought broader social and political goals, including cultural empowerment, community development and increasing civic and political participation.[4]

Today, there is considerable diversity in the approaches, mediums, settings, and objectives of projects that draw on creativity and art as a method of engagement. There are examples of projects that focus on very specific groups of people, often seeking to address a specific issue through structured engagement. These can include initiatives that fuse artistic and therapeutic techniques to provide participants with a way of expressing themselves through their work.

Some projects seek broader community goals, and work with people in more unstructured ways. These can include projects that bring people together through creativity, aiming to develop social cohesion and tackle social isolation. Other initiatives combine different approaches and mediums to engage with different groups of people, seeking to promote positive outcomes for both individuals and communities.

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[2] Hill (1945) *Art Versus Illness*, London: George Allen and Unwin
[3] For an engaging account of the emergence of community arts projects in the 60s and 70s, see Crehan (2013) *Community Art: An Anthropological Perspective*, London: Burg Publishers
[4] For a potted history of community arts in the UK, see Matarasso (2013) *'All in This Together': The Depoliticisation of Community Art in Britain, 1970 – 2011,* ICAF

2.2 Understanding the Impact of the Arts

The expansion of arts and creativity into areas such as urban regeneration, health, and social care in the 1980s coincided with a reformulation of accountability in public policy. A shift of approach emerged in the way public funds were distributed which embraced targets, data management and measurement.[5] New Public Management as an approach sought to modernise public sector management by setting targets, monitoring outputs, and auditing performance.

The need to demonstrate impact led arts and cultural organisations to align their objectives with specific policy priorities. This served to crowd out more traditional and loftier goals surrounding the arts, including the nurturing of cultural sensibility, the human spirit and moral reasoning.[6] Cultural value increasingly became associated with delivering specific, often economic, outcomes.[7] Gray argues that this is a result of 'policy attachment' whereby the arts, which constitute a policy area with little political clout, has progressively attached to economic and social agendas, thus benefitting from the larger budgets and greater political influence.[8]

Together, this created an environment in which arts and cultural organisations may feel compelled to make the case for funding in terms beyond simply promoting cultural engagement and aesthetic experience. Therefore, methods of accurately measuring the impact of arts and culture organisations interventions became an important tool in advocating and justifying their value.[9] Alongside these trends, there was a growing concern amongst many arts and cultural organisations that debates about the value of cultural projects were too narrowly defined, articulated primarily in terms of job creation and increased economic output.[10] From this perspective, arts and cultural initiatives held potential beyond simply economic impact, emphasising more human goals such as the potential for personal enrichment and development, promoting social cohesion and community empowerment.

As debates surrounding the relative importance of the intrinsic and instrumental benefits of the arts wax and wane in the public discourse, the emphasis on robust impact measurement as a condition of funding has grown.[11] This is particularly evident in exploring the extent to which arts investment is directed, both from public and philanthropic organisations.[12] The true extent to which this trend has affected cultural and arts organisations is not fully understood. Most research in this area tends to draw on anecdotal evidence to support our understanding of the links between impact measurement and funding.

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[5] O'Brien (2013) *Cultural Policy: Management, Value and Modernity in the Creative Industries*. London: Routledge
[6] Ellis (2003) *Valuing Culture.* London: AEA Consulting.
[7] Gray (2002) 'Local government and the arts' in *Local Government Studies*, 28(1), 77–90
[8] Ibid
[9] Kelly, A and Kelly M (2002), Impact and Values, Assessing the Arts and Creative Industries in the South West, Bristol Cultural Development Partnership, Bristol
[10] Matarasso (1996) *Defining Values. Evaluating arts programmes*. London: Comedia.
[11] Galloway (2009) Theory-based evaluation and the social impact of the arts, in *Cultural Trends,* 18: 125-148
[12] Crossick & Kaszynaska (2012) *Understanding the value of arts and culture*, AHRC

2.3 Measuring Social Impact

Within these debates and trends, Matarasso's seminal 1997 study fundamentally changed the way we view and understand the contribution of arts and culture to social development.[13] The study was the first of its kind to provide a clear definition of the potential social benefits of the arts and gathered a range of evidence exploring the impacts of participation. The study raised awareness amongst policymakers and funders of the role and potential of the arts to promote social goals and this evidence base is now well-established.[14] [15] [16]Matarasso's research also established a workable methodological framework for measuring social impact. It provided practical tools to support further investigation amongst organisations, researchers, policymakers, and funders.

There has been growing interest in methodologies for measuring the social impact of the arts. Belfiore and Berrett suggest that the increase in 'impact studies' that purport to be able to measure and assess the extent to which subsidised arts have a socio-economic impact have encouraged politicians, civil servants, funders and cultural administrations to adopt a 'toolkit' mentality in the quest for a straightforward, easily replicable impact evaluation.[17]

The two key challenges associated with methodologies that seek to evaluate the socio-economic impact of the arts come under two categories. Firstly, criticisms from arts professionals are focused around the 'instrumentalization' of the arts,[18] [19] and secondly academics, who expose the methodological flaws, ideological bias and criticise the underlying advocacy purposes within them.[20] [21] [22] More recently, there have been discussions on the role and limitations of experimental designs.[23] These approaches seek to provide more accurate impact estimates by controlling for factors that may have influenced outcomes beyond the activity or performance itself.

Methods including Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) have been increasingly viewed by policymakers and funders as valuable in determining the impact of social policies and investments.[24] With their emphasis on high internal validity and procedural uniformity,

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[13] Matarasso (1997) *Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts*. London: Comedia

[14] The Social Impact of the Arts: An Intellectual History, Palgrave & Macmillan (2008)

15 'Rethinking the Social Impact of the Arts, (2007)

[16] HEARTS: The Health, Economic and Social impact of Arts Engagement, Royal College of Music (2018)

[17] Belfiore & Bennett (2010) Beyond the "Toolkit Approach": Arts Impact Evaluation Research and the Realities of Cultural Policy-Making

[18] Tusa, J. (2002) 'Thou Shalt Worship the Arts for What They Are'

[19] Brighton, A. (2006) 'Consumed by the Political: The Ruination of the Arts Council'

[20] Selwood, S. (2002) 'The Politics of Data Collection: Gathering, Analysing and Using Data about the Subsidised Cultural Sector in England'

[21] Belfiore, E. (2002) 'Art as a Means towards Alleviating Social Exclusion: Does It Really Work? A Critique of Instrumental Cultural Policies and Social Impact Studies in the UK

[22] Merli, P. (2002) 'Evaluating the Social Impact of Participation in Arts Activities'

[23] Note: Experimental designs are an approach to impact measurement that compare the outcomes of those participating or accessing an arts project, with those that did not. They are considered to give a more accurate understanding of impact as they can control for factors that may have influenced outcomes independently of a specific project or activity.

[24]Arts and Culutre in Health and Wellbeing and in the Criminal Justice System: A Summary of Evidence (2018) Arts Council England

experimental designs are considered by some as the most effective and rigorous way of establishing causality, a key component of social impact. This view has been held, to varying degrees, by influential policymakers across Whitehall.

Many in the arts and cultural sector have largely resisted these developments. The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Cultural Value Project, for example, questioned the relative merits of experimental methods due to the complexity of understanding the aesthetic experience. From this perspective, a wide range of methodologies and frameworks should be applied to the understanding of the impact of the arts, including more qualitative approaches.

The latest guidance from HM Treasury on evaluation published in March 2020 would appear to support this view.[25] In an apparent shift in the Central Government's view on impact measurement, the guidance now includes commentary on theory-based and more qualitative approaches to impact evaluation alongside experimental and quasi-experimental designs. This suggests that the government increasingly views a more diverse range of evidence as important in informing decision-making.

2.4 Broader Trends in Social Impact Measurement

Another key factor informing and driving social impact measurement within arts and culture are developments and innovations from other sectors. Methodological advances in the medical and social sciences, for example, have offered new and improved approaches and frameworks for understanding and measuring impact. These developments have subsequently shaped and increased the use of impact evidence in decision making, both in formulating policy and in shaping funding trends.

In health and social care, for example, the use of impact evidence is very well embedded. There are significant institutional structures and research organisations devoted to understanding and communicating impact. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), for example, appraises impact evidence to ensure that only treatments and interventions that are found to be effective across a robust and expansive evidence-base are funded by commissioners.

The overall approach of only funding initiatives that have either demonstrated impact, or have evidence to suggest they are promising, has filtered across other policy areas and to some philanthropic organisations. The proliferation of organisations such as the Alliance of Useful Evidence (NESTA), which actively seeks a more important role for impact evidence, suggest that this trend is set to continue.

Evidence of social impact is likely to play an increasingly important role in determining government and third sector priorities and funding, now and into the future. To a lesser degree, these developments have also filtered through to public and philanthropic funding of arts and cultural initiatives.[26]

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[25] HM Treasury (2020) *Magenta Book*, HM Government
[26] Galloway (2009) Theory-based evaluation and the social impact of the arts, in *Cultural Trends,* 18: 125-148

According to a range of commentators, including those we spoke to in the completion of this research, arts and cultural organisations have to date engaged less with organisations developing frameworks and piloting new approaches to measuring social impact than those in other sectors.[27]

This presents a challenge to the arts and cultural organisations, especially those that seek to secure public or philanthropic funding to support their work. The degree to which arts and cultural organisations are dependent on funding varies significantly.[28] However many arts and cultural organisations operate in an extremely competitive funding environment. Whilst this situation is regrettable, those that can effectively investigate and communicate the impact of their work are likely to be in a stronger position to compete for funding. This notion is explored in Section 4 of this report, where it is noted that knowledge of and engagement with social impact measurement is key to securing funding.

2.5 The Importance of Rigour

Within arts and culture, debates will likely continue around the relative merits of intrinsic or instrumental outcomes, as well as the different approaches to understanding social impact. There does appear to be an emerging consensus, including in central government and amongst funders, on the importance of improving rigour surrounding impact measurement generally, and social impact specifically.

Rigour, a complex and rather nebulous concept, is perhaps best thought of in terms of the quality of the research process. In essence, a more rigorous impact assessment will result in more trustworthy findings. Within social impact measurement, rigorous approaches are more likely to generate insights that are more accurate and insightful. Importantly, rigorous approaches can also improve the predictive power of impact research – that an initiative or programme that has been found to be effective in one situation or setting may be effective in another. Whilst different frameworks or approaches that draw on predominantly qualitative or quantitative information will operate with different criteria for rigour, overall rigour is important in building confidence in social impact measurement, including from policymakers and funders.

The rigour of social impact measurement of arts and cultural initiatives is an important issue. There is a great deal of research that explores the impact of community arts, for example. Artists, practitioners, and researchers have long been interested in the impact of creativity as a means of engagement. Together, the body of research largely consists of single project evaluations with a variety of definitions and analytic frameworks.

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[27] See, for example, Crossick and Kaszynaska (2012) *Understanding the value of arts and culture*, AHRC
[28] Bagwell et al (2014) *Opportunities for Alignment: Arts and Cultural Organisations and Public Sector Commissioning*, NPC

Reviews of the literature often conclude the need for more robust research that address gaps in our understanding, including the long-term intrinsic and instrumental outcomes of participation and engagement.[29] Demonstrating causality between participation and outcomes, whilst a more controversial and difficult research task, appears to remain largely untested except for more structured approaches including art therapy.[30]

Reviews of research exploring the impact of arts and culture have also highlighted that there is often a lack of clarity about the objectives and purpose of much arts activity under investigation. Across much social impact measurement there is also an apparent lack of coherence between activities and the outcomes explored. Together, this limits the ability of arts and cultural organisations to define the nature of their contribution to policy agendas and funding priorities. This issue is explored further in Section 4.4 of the report, in discussing practical challenges involved with social impact measurement.

Social impact measurement offers ways in which to explore and communicate the importance of arts and cultural initiatives, as well as improving the experiences provided to participants and audience members. There is recognition across the sector of the pressing need to develop comprehensive, robust, and comparable methodologies and frameworks for evaluating the social impact of the arts, and in promoting and sharing best practice. This issue was raised in consultation with arts and cultural organisations as part of this research, which is also further explored in Section 4.4 of this report:

> *"You can't often measure social impact. You can track it (measurement is a very dangerous word in this field and leads to so much malpractice and wasted effort). There is also far too much pseudo science around - and impact frameworks are useful for some things and not for others. Too often people use the wrong tools for the wrong jobs."*

<div align="right">Arts Organisation</div>

> *"Ensuring we capture participants' voice through appropriate methods, consistency of data quality, clarity of focus and what to do with the data, lack of appropriate tools to measure social impact of our type of activities. Capacity to analyse findings to support forecasting and longer-term business development."*

<div align="right">Arts Organisation</div>

The next section of this report outlines how social impact measurement is defined and understood.

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[29] E.g. Scott (2009) Exploring the evidence base for museum value, in *Museum management and curatorship*, 24:3, 195-212; Azevedo (2016) The evaluation of the social impacts of cultur : culture, arts and development. *Economics and Finance*, Université Panthéon-Sorbonne; Crossick and Kaszynaska (2012) *Understanding the value of arts and culture*, AHRC; and Reeves (2002) *Measuring the economic and social impact of the arts: a review*, ACE

[30] Maujean et al (2014) A Systematic Review of Randomized Controlled Studies of Art Therapy' in *Journal of the American Art Therapy Association* 37-44;

3 Defining Social Impact

This section explores how we understand and define social impact. Definitions are important as they inform the focus of enquiry, the outcomes of interest, and ultimately how we measure and communicate the value of arts and cultural activity.

There is considerable diversity in how we understand and measure social impact. This diversity stems, at least in part, from different understandings of what social impact is. There are multiple definitions and operationalisations of social impact in practice, including across arts and culture. Whilst such diversity is to be celebrated, it can complicate the task of identifying and synthesising existing practice and the frameworks that are used to guide social impact measurement. More importantly, agreed definitions and concepts are important in building a common language and purpose around social impact measurement.

Broadly speaking, social impact is the change that individuals or organisations bring about through their activities. It is therefore concerned with causation, exploring the links and relationships between activities and outcomes. Social impact can be intentional or unintentional, as well as both positive or negative. Social impact is not a state, but a process by which people and communities respond to engagement, participation or support. Conceptually, social impact is therefore concerned with understanding trajectories, causation and attribution. In more eloquent terms, social impact could be understood as:

> *'those effects that go beyond the artefacts and the enactment of the event or performance itself and have a continuing influence upon, and directly touch, people's lives.*

Landry et al (1993)[31]

3.1 Activity in Arts and Culture

A key challenge in defining social impact is that it can encompass a diverse range of activities and outcomes. Arts and cultural organisations, including museums and libraries, engage participants in a huge variety of different activities across different settings. There is considerable diversity in the approaches, mediums, and objectives of initiatives that draw on creativity and art as a method of engagement. They may also engage people through a variety of artistic forms, including the visual, literary, performing, or combined arts.

This diversity stems, in part, from the fact that the arts and cultural sector is itself large and heterogenous. It is estimated to be made up of more than 8,500 charitable organisations with a diverse range of incomes, sizes and charitable aims, in addition to a range of organisational forms.[32] For Arts Council England itself, the National Portfolio covers 828 arts organisations of varying sizes and focus, including museums and libraries.

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[31] Landry et al (1993) *The social impact of the arts: A discussion document*, Bournes Green, Stroud: Comedia
[32] Bagwell et al (2014) *Opportunities for Alignment: Arts and Cultural Organisations and Public Sector Commissioning*, NPC

This diversity is to be celebrated, however it does present challenges in providing a unified definition and approach to social impact that spans the diversity of approaches and activities currently delivered by arts and cultural organisations. The implications of this were discussed with stakeholders and arts organisations and explored in Section 4.

3.2 Outcomes

An important starting point is to consider the potential outcomes of engaging in the arts. The outcomes of interest are determined, in large part, by the precise focus of arts or cultural activity under investigation. Within and across and different activities, there may be a specific set of potential impacts. These range from the outcomes for individuals as a result of participation or engagement, through to broader benefits that accrue to the community or wider society. Outcomes therefore broadly fall along a continuum from individual through to community outcomes:

Individual Outcomes ⟵——————⟶ **Community or Societal Outcomes**

Individual outcomes relate the personal benefits that accrue through participation. At the other end of the scale, community or societal outcomes are benefits primarily of value to the public or to society as a whole. In the middle there may be benefits that both enhance individuals' personal lives and have a desirable impact on the public sphere.

3.2.1 Individual Outcomes

Individual level outcomes can themselves include a diverse range of factors. Creativity as a means of engagement, whilst being of intrinsic value in its own right, has the ability to promote positive instrumental outcomes across a range of issues relating to individual health and well-being. A robust body of evidence to support the benefits of creativity emanates from art therapy. Several systematic reviews of the literature have found participation can bring meaningful improvements to people's lives, including improving mental health.[33]

Importantly, participating in the arts can assist an individual's cognitive and social development. Creativity is linked to positive brain development and health across the life course (neuroplasticity).[34] As creativity includes both making and responding to artistic forms, participation can encourage visual, auditory, and fine motor skills development and health.[35] Actively reflecting on creative experiences can encourage assimilation of new and existing knowledge.[36]

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33 Maujean et al (2014) A Systematic Review of Randomized Controlled Studies of Art Therapy' in *Journal of the American Art Therapy Association* 37-44; and Uttley et al. (2015) Systematic review and economic modelling of the clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of art therapy among people with non-psychotic mental health disorders. *Health Technology Assessment*, No. 19.18.

34 Slotnick (2012) The cognitive neuroscience of memory. *Cognitive Neuroscience*, 3(3), 139-141.

35 Webster & Wolfe (2013) Incorporating the aesthetic dimension into pedagogy. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 38(10), 21-33.

36 Willis (2008) Building a bridge from neuroscience to the classroom. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 89(6), 424-427.

In addition to the cognitive benefits of participation, participants can also develop a range of social skills. Creativity enables participants to exercise sensory and perceptual processes that can support their understanding and engagement with the world around them.[37] Creativity can also help participants explore cultural values and traditions.[38] Through making and responding to art, participants can develop a range of interpersonal skills. As a form of self-expression, for example, creativity can help people to enhance their communication and storytelling skills.[39]

Underscoring creativity is honing and mastering particular skills or mediums. This can be extremely rewarding, both in terms of creating a sense of achievement, but also in terms of building confidence. Self-efficacy, a person's sense of their own capability, can influence their perceptions, levels of motivation and performance across a range of activities, from learning at school, to parenting children, through to finding and securing work. Improvements in self-efficacy as a result of participation could have broader impacts in other areas of a person's life. High levels of self-efficacy are also considered to protect people from adverse situations or setbacks.[40]

People often engage in arts and culture not for their instrumental effects, but because they provide meaning, beauty and enjoyment. Intrinsic benefits, including experiences that are pleasurable, often drive engagement in the arts. On an individual level, engagement can nurture cultural sensibility. They can lead to responses that connect people more deeply to the world around them. They can help people explore the human condition, expanding an individual's capacity for empathy. They can offer new reference points, exposing people to difference, including peoples, ideas and cultures. Whilst more difficult to pin down and measure effectively, these are no less important in understanding the impact of the arts. They are often the underlying mechanisms within which all other benefits, including the instrumental outcomes outlined above, are derived.[41]

The conceptual and practical challenges of observing instrumental and intrinsic outcomes within social impact measurement are explored in more detail in the section on Social Impact in Practice.

3.2.2 Community or Societal Outcomes

Together with individual outcomes, arts and culture also offer potential to improve and strengthen the relationships between people. They can develop and enhance the assets and structures that enable and empower community action and participation. Arts initiatives can also help address broader concerns or challenges facing communities.

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37 Efland (2004) The entwined nature of the aesthetic: A discourse on visual culture. *Studies in Art Education*, 45(3), 234-251.

38 Habermas (1999) *Moral consciousness and communicative action*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

[39] Eisner (2002). *Arts and the creation of the mind*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

[40] Bandura and Locke (2003) 'Negative self-efficacy and goal effects revisited'. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(1), 87-99.

[41] For an interesting discussion on the importance of understanding the intrinsic benefits of participation in the arts, see McCarthy et al (2004) *Gifts and the Muse, Reframing the Debate About the Benefits of the Arts*, RAND Corporation

Community outcomes can refer to the ways in which people relate to each other. Participation in the arts offers people opportunities to engage in constructive social activities that providing an avenue for collective efficacy and civic engagement. Through the production of common shared stories and representations, creativity can provide spaces for people to reach out to others.[42] Participation can increase the collective sense of connection to place and community and expand the scope and strength of a community's social connections.[43]

Arts initiatives therefore offer the potential to make meaningful contributions to pressing social questions such as building community cohesion and breaking down social isolation. Community arts have also been applied to broader community issues, including crime prevention, improving educational attainment, and promoting healthy behaviours – outcomes that are important for healthy, thriving communities.[44]

Other potential collective benefits relate to participation across the public sphere. Place-based initiatives can increase civic participation and volunteering.[45] There have been examples in practice of arts projects that have sought to promote political participation, including in democratising urban planning. Participation can also confer broader intrinsic benefits to the community or society as a whole. Intrinsic benefits accrue to the public sphere when works of art or performances convey communal meanings and ideas. They can give voice to ideas that challenge or reinforce community identities and cultures, thereby informing, reflecting, and transforming shared meanings, social norms, and behaviours. Together, engagement can support the transmission and growth of collective intellectual, cultural, moral, and spiritual achievements.[46]

3.2.3 The Relationships Between Individual and Community Outcomes

There may also be relationships between individual and collective outcomes. These may include the broader community benefits (distal outcomes) of cumulative improvements to individual level outcomes (proximal outcomes) that may be the precise focus of an initiative. For example, if an arts-based programme in prisons effectively reduces recidivism amongst participants, then over time there are broader benefits to be accrued by the community. There may be a reduced incidence of crime and its emotional impacts, for example, as well as subsequent cost and time savings accrued to the criminal justice system that may be directed to other issues or initiatives.

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[42] Rappaport (2000) 'Community Narratives: Tales of Terror and Joy', *American Journal of Community Psychology* 28, no. 1: 1-24.

[43] Guetzkow (2004) 'How the Arts Impact Communities. An Introduction to the Literature on Arts Impact Studies', *Artwork Magazine* 59: 7-10.

[44] Salmon et al (2005) 'Implementing the Rock Challenge: Young People's Perspectives on a Drug-Prevention and Performing-Arts Programme', *Journal of Research in Nursing* 10, no. 3: 339-53.; James (2005) 'Actup!' Theatre as Education and Its Impact on Young People's Learning', Centre for Labour Market Studies, University of Leicester; Lane and Henry (2001) 'Community Development, Crime and Violence: A Case Study', *Community Development Journal* 36, 3: 212-22.; White (2006) 'Establishing Common Ground in Community-Based Arts in Health', *Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health* 26, 3: 128-33.;

[45] Stephenson (2005) 'Developing Community Leadership through the Arts in Southside Virginia: Social Networks, Civic Identity and Civic Change', *Community Development Journal* 42, 1: 79-96.

[46] For an interesting discussion on cultural value and the public sphere, see Holden (2006) *Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy Why culture needs a democratic mandate*, DEMOS

3.3 The Role of Time

Time also plays an important role in shaping the social impact of arts and cultural initiatives. Social impact itself can be understood as a process in which a person responds to a work of art or a performance. A person may experience a range of emotions and physical responses during a performance or activity (concurrent impacts). They may then experience a range of feelings and emotions after the event, including emotional affect or aesthetic enrichment (experienced impacts). They may then also experience longer-term impacts, such as a sense of social belonging, health benefits or subjective well-being (Extended and Cumulative Impacts).[47]

Time also plays a role in the relationships between proximal and distal outcomes. Some community benefits, for example, only accrue once individual outcomes have become established and embedded, sometimes years or decades down the line. This creates challenges for organisations surrounding the timeframes that they have to explore the impact of their work. This is especially relevant for organisations that draw on funding initiatives are short term and not conducive to longer-term measurement. These issues will be explored in more depth in the section on Social Impact in Practice.

Across a range of areas of impact measurement, there is also broad recognition of the evolution of impact over time. There is robust empirical evidence to suggest, for example, that impacts tend to diminish over time.[48] The most effective activities or approaches are those that can sustain positive outcomes over a longer period. The phenomena of diminishing impact over time has been hypothesised within the arts. Carnwath and Brown (2014), for example, have suggested that a typical aesthetic experience can generate a strong initial impact, followed by a gradual decline, with the possibility of occasional spikes of extended impact if the work enhances subsequent cultural experiences:
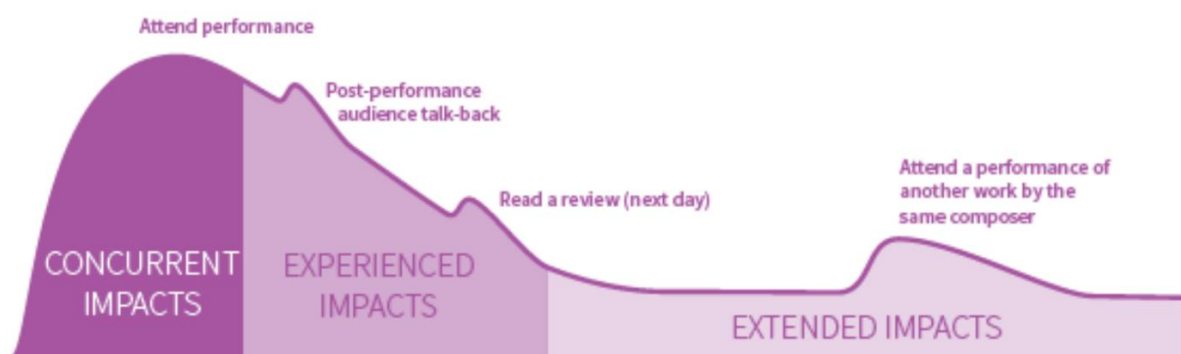
Carnwath and Brown (2014)

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[47] Carnwath and Brown (2014) *Understanding the value and impacts of cultural experiences: A Literature Review*, Art Council England

[48] Ioannidis and Lau (2001) Evolution of treatment effects over time: Empirical insight from recursive cumulative metaanalyses. in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*; 98(3): 831–836

From this perspective, it is the:

> *'Cumulative impact of a lifetime of cultural activities that may yield long-term outcomes such as a stronger sense of social belonging, an expanded worldview or a greater sense of well-being.'*

<div align="right">Carnwath and Brown (2014: 93)[49]</div>

3.4 Potential and Realised Outcomes

Together, the individual and community outcomes outlined above represent the ***potential*** benefits of participation and engagement. Not all creative experiences, however, lead to positive outcomes. Encounters with the arts are often described in terms closer to epiphany than to a simple engagement. Some experiences may in fact undermine a person's confidence, or reduce their interest, in learning and engagement with the arts. Also, positive outcomes may not be evenly distributed amongst participants; some may find the experience positive and take a lot from it - others may be indifferent.

Exploring the extent to which a participant's experience was positive, and if not establishing the reasons why, is invaluable in developing and improving arts initiatives. Further, there is an ethical imperative to do all we can to ensure positive experiences and outcomes, especially if participants emanate from vulnerable groups. Impact measurement offers a range of opportunities from which to explore and learn about people's experiences of creativity, and its value to their lives.

The next section turns to explore how definitions of social impact are implemented in practice, including within impact frameworks.

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[49] Carnwath and Brown (2014) *Understanding the value and impacts of cultural experiences: A Literature Review*, Art Council England

4 Social Impact in Practice

This section outlines how definitions and understandings of social impact are put into practice, and how frameworks can be used to guide impact measurement. It also explores the conceptual and practical challenges surrounding social impact measurement, and the views and perspectives of funders, stakeholders and arts and cultural organisations.[50] A survey was developed and distributed to organisations via Arts Council England and a total of 49 responses were achieved.[51] Following the survey, 22 semi-structured interviews were carried out with arts organisations with the purpose of exploring themes and issues identified through their survey response. The survey questions can be found in appendix 4.

Rather than being representative of the sector, the survey was designed to be illustrative and highlight issues that could be explored further through interview. As such, it is likely that there may be some self-selection bias amongst respondents with those that have experience of using social impact measurement more likely to engage with this research.

4.1 Social Impact Frameworks

Social impact represents the complex interplay between activities and outcomes, and processes that shape responses to arts and culture. Clearly defining social impact is important as it informs how impact is measured and understood. It largely determines the focus of analysis, the relative coherence between activities and measured outcomes, and ultimately how social impact is understood and communicated. Putting definitions of social impact into practice is by no means a simple task. This is because impact measurement requires a range of judgments concerning the relationships between activities and outcomes, and practical strategies for gathering, analysing, and communicating information.

One approach that supports this process is drawing on Social Impact Frameworks. They provide organisations with a structure from which to think about and actively engage with impact measurement. Depending on how prescriptive the framework is, they may outline the outcomes of interest, or provide a process for exploring and identifying the most relevant outcomes. They may also provide tools or guidance on how to collect and analyse information.

Whilst the substantive focus and approaches they contain may be different, frameworks themselves share several common objectives. They seek to provide a practical resource, enabling organisations to develop and improve processes and procedures for exploring the impact of their work. They may also seek to increase the transparency and rigour with which measurement is completed. More broadly, impact frameworks may seek to improve the generalisability of impact measurement – that is to make the results of impact measurement more useful, for example, by helping others to understand the significance of the learning generated, and to apply that learning to their own practice.

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[50] Note: A list of stakeholders engaged through this research has been included in the Appendices.
[51] Note: Of these 32 organisations were Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations. A copy of the survey tool has been appended to this report.

4.2 Engagement with Impact Measurement

Almost four out of five (79 percent) organisations responding to the survey indicated that they had sought to measure the social impact of their work. Respondents outlined a variety of reasons for drawing on social impact measurement and this is illustrated in Figure 4.1, below.

Figure 4.1: Uses of social impact measurement
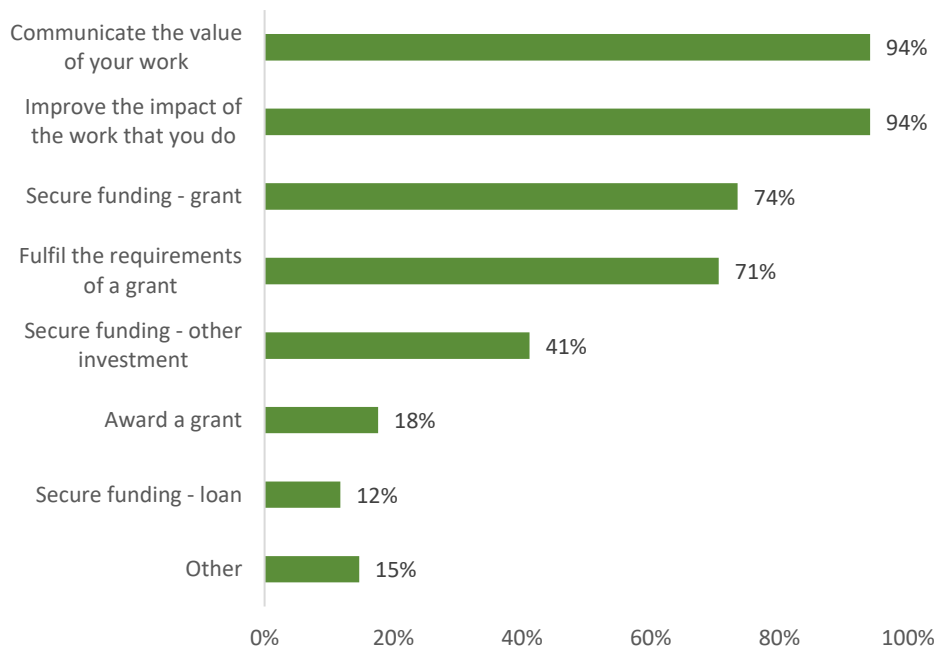
Source: Wavehill Arts and Culture Org, survey n=37

As the survey responses show, social impact measurement was most commonly used to communicate the value of organisations' work (94 percent) and improve the impact of the work they do (94 percent). This suggests that, for these organisations, the use of social measurement is valuable for both internal factors, such as those aimed at making refinements to projects or interventions to improve outcomes, as well as external ones, including to advocate their work and its value to others.

Responses to the sector survey showed that 37 organisations have measured the social impact of their work, and 23 of these indicated that they had used a specific measurement approach, toolkit, or framework. The most common of these included the Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale[52] (WEMWBS) (7), Story of Change (5), Culture Counts (4) and Outcomes Stars (4).

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[52] Note: The Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scoring System is a tool that was developed to support the monitoring of wellbeing and is common in the evaluation of projects, policies or programmes that aim to improve wellbeing.

Figure 4.2: Frameworks used to measure social impact.
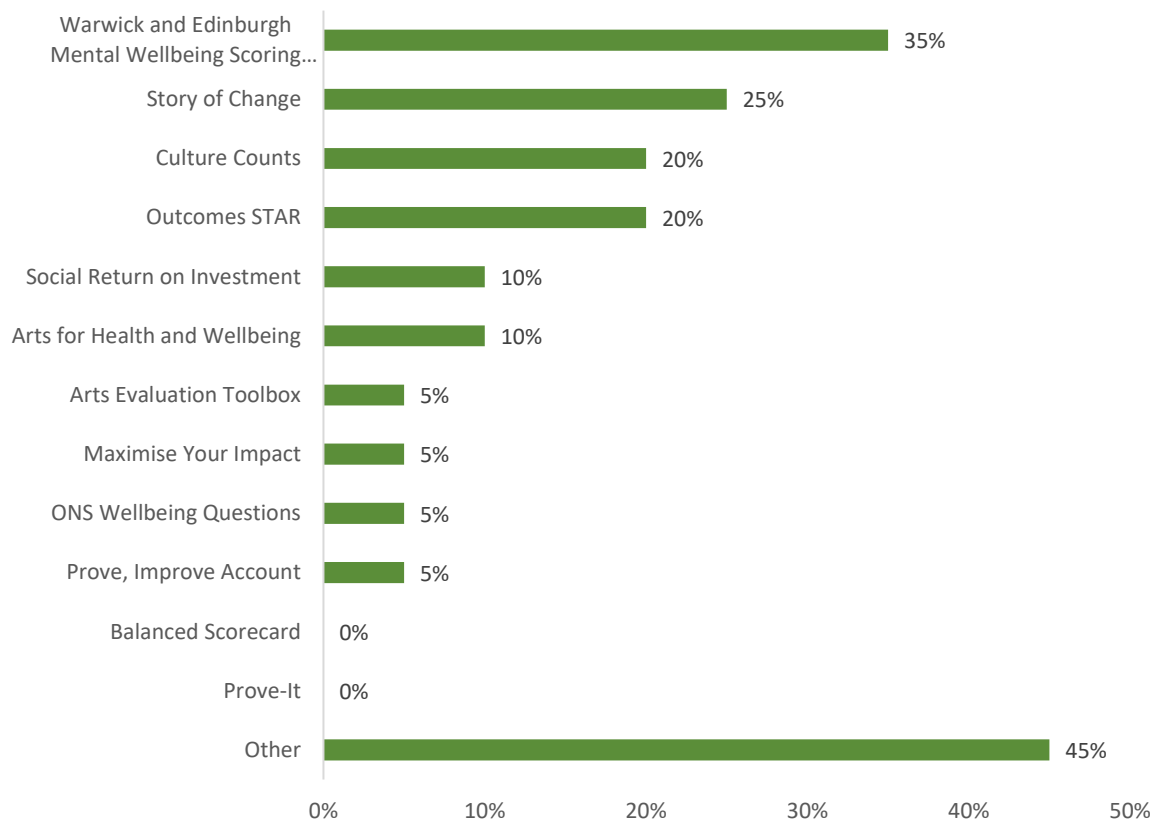
Source: Wavehill Arts and Culture Org, survey n=20

Respondents were asked to score the frameworks they had used out of ten for how helpful they found them. Generally, organisations found the tools they used to be helpful, and the average scores ranged from six out of ten (Story of Change) to eight out of ten (ONS wellbeing questions[53], Outcomes Stars and SROI). However, this data is based on a low number of responses and should be treated as indicative only.

The survey responses and follow up interviews suggest varying degrees of engagement from across arts and culture sector. Although most organisations responding to the survey indicated they had attempted to measure their social impact, there appears to be variation in the relative maturity of social impact measurement across organisations. Engagement with social impact measurement is not necessarily evenly distributed, such as amongst larger organisations or groups of organisations in the sector.

There are organisations, in particular those within the community arts sector for example, that have extensive experience of social impact measurement and have embedded social impact measurement practice within their operation. This is often where social impact is central to that organisation's vision or purpose and therefore measuring it serves an internal business purpose. Others have had to secure 'earned income' from Trusts and Foundations and so had to make the case for investment to funders seeking social outcomes.

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[53] Developed by the Office for National Statistics, these four questions ask respondents to provide a numerical response out of ten against for four questions on happiness, anxiety, life satisfaction and feeling worthwhile.

Another point raised during consultations is that there is an underlying assumption that 'validated' and 'cognitively tested' measurements tools are required and that arts and cultural organisations have to use these to have any credibility with certain funders. Whilst it was difficult to discern the accuracy of this assumption, it raises the question as to what extent funders clearly outline their expectations and requirements to prospective arts organisations around impact measurement.

Another factor affecting engagement is the range of organisations developing impact frameworks and supporting the arts and cultural sector. These include a diverse range of organisations, from Arts Council England itself, to charities themselves that focus on supporting others. This serves to create a patchwork of organisations and providers inhabiting this space which creates challenges for arts and cultural organisations navigating to different tools. Arts organisations that contributed to this research felt that the inconsistency between different funders' expectations and the smorgasbord of frameworks, tools and guidance material added to the complexity and difficulty in navigating social impact measurement.

In recognition of the challenges facing arts and cultural organisations in navigating the landscape of social impact measurement frameworks and tools, our consultations with stakeholders suggest there is a growing movement amongst funders to ring-fence budgets for funded organisations to enable them to obtain professional support from an accredited social impact measurement specialist to enable them to develop their own bespoke process for assessing impact. Other funders are seeking to support arts organisations with impact measurement by appointing evaluation professionals and/or signposting to resources of guidance.[54]

Several other considerations were raised during the consultations, including the extent to which measurement frameworks and tools were covered by intellectual property protection and what this meant in terms of securing permission to use them. Another issue was the extent to which individual frameworks are designed to be a closed system (i.e. they aren't compatible with other measurement tools and processes) or whether they can be readily aligned with other frameworks dependent on the nature of the activity or programme for which impact measurement is required. These are both important considerations when seeking to understanding the factors which may facilitate or inhibit organisations seeking to engage with specific frameworks.

4.2.1 Benefits of Measuring Social Impact

Consultees also outlined some of the benefits of using some of the above frameworks or tools. For example, when collecting data using WEMWBS or the ONS four wellbeing questions, it was suggested that these tools offered the advantage of being recognised by funders which helps when sourcing funding.

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[54] See for example: https://www.phf.org.uk/investing-in-evaluation/

There was the assumption that you had to use a validated tool so you could undertake some comparative analysis against 'national data'. Examples may include the survey questions used within the Active Lives,[55] Taking Part[56] of Community Life[57] surveys. Whilst comparative analysis can be useful, this is more often not undertaken or considered not appropriate by some organisations. The preference for the use of validated tools can often be funder driven and may create challenges for arts and cultural organisations seeking to incorporate them in their approach to measuring social impact.

Generally, both the survey responses and stakeholder consultations indicated that organisations felt measuring social impact was valuable. When asked how important measuring social impact is to their work, the average response out of 10 was 7.6 with just three organisations scoring the importance less than five out of ten.

This was explored further in the follow-up interviews where, most commonly, organisations spoke about the importance of being able to clearly demonstrate the impact of their work as a key factor. Where organisations develop programmes that aim to deliver social outcomes, they indicated it was important to measure this to understand the efficacy of their work for both advocacy and for informing or refining their approach. Indeed, one theme extracted from the consultations with arts organisations was the value in understanding what aspects of an intervention or programme contributed the biggest impact on the social outcomes they were hoping to see in order to refine the design and delivery of their interventions.

Another prominent theme was the role of social impact measurement in communicating the impact of work to funders and in the justification of spending public funding. Respondents referred to the need to justify the spending of public funding on arts and culture and that being able to effectively communicate impacts is an important aspect of this.

> *"I always say I don't want evaluation to be the tail that wags the dog. It's required by funders but we mainly focus on using it for strategic planning. It helps us work out how we can be most effective and what our focus should be."*

> Arts Organisation

This was a consistent theme across the range of different organisation types that were consulted who received their primary sources of funding through different means. For example, one representative from a library service spoke about their budget being an 'easy target' and the importance of having evidence or 'proof' of the impact of their service.

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[55] http://www.activelivessurvey.org/main
[56] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/taking-part-survey
[57] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-2018-19

4.2.3 Embedding Social Impact Measurement Within the Organisation

Amongst those that were consulted, most framed their responses to questions around the impact measurement around a certain project or intervention and there were fewer responses that referred to the need to measure social impact at a wider, organisational level that incorporated an organisation's vision or mission. There were, however, a small number of organisations that indicated that this was a course of action they intended to take.

For example, one organisation had developed a bespoke system that captured the outputs and indicators that enable them to measure impact at a project level and map these out against how they contribute to the wider organisational strategy. Whilst relatively few suggested that this was the approach they had adopted, more felt that this should be their direction of travel and spoke of intentions to develop business plans and KPIs that would provide the overall framework from which to align evaluation and impact measurement.

This was also explored through the stakeholder consultations with industry bodies who felt that, whilst there is a place for an off-the-shelf framework or toolkit, for most organisations there is value in developing a bespoke framework to meet the organisation's need. For example, it was suggested that an effective approach might be developing an overriding Theory of Change before looking to see whether a bespoke tool or existing tools or frameworks would be most suitable in tracking progress from individual projects against predefined outcomes.

Arts organisations highlighted some of the barriers associated with this sort of approach and this included the internal expertise required to develop a bespoke tool, the costs associated with appointing an external organisation to support with this, the challenges around aligning evaluation with funders' requirements, and the time and capacity that would be needed to develop and implement such an approach. These are unpacked further in the following sections.

4.3 Conceptual Challenges

Overall, there are several conceptual challenges surrounding social impact measurement. These relate to the epistemological, empirical, and methodological challenges and limitations of social impact measurement. These limitations make impact measurement vulnerable to challenge from a range of different perspectives.

4.3.1 Robustness

A key issue remains the robustness of impact analyses emanating from impact frameworks. Robustness determines how confident we can be in the impact that has been described through a framework. Different frameworks will operate with different criteria for rigour. Those that draw on qualitative information will have different criteria for determining robustness than quantitative methods, for example.

The issue is the character of the knowledge and understanding that is being sought, and each approach will have its own benefits and drawbacks that need to be considered in understanding robustness. Those that employ mixed-method approaches will have different considerations again, including the relative coherence of bringing together different types of information.

Related to the issue of robustness are apparent gaps in our understanding that not all frameworks are well suited to address. From this perspective, some approaches and frameworks lack the level of detail to understand how outcomes are produced, how they relate to different types of arts experiences, and under what circumstances and for which groups of people they are most likely to occur. Without this specific information, it is difficult to judge how much confidence to place in the findings and how to generalise from them.
The issue of robustness was highlighted as a theme through the analysis of the qualitative follow-up interviews. It was suggested that whilst outputs can be much easier to capture, demonstrating social outcomes in a robust manner is much more difficult and often takes more time and expertise which comes at a premium.

For some, commissioning external evaluations was seen as one way of overcoming the challenge of robustness and was seen to add 'credibility' to findings around social impact measurement. However, external evaluations come with financial implications that mean they are beyond the means of many organisations.

4.3.2 Causation

As discussed previously, a perennial issue relating to impact measurement is the question of causation.[58] Impact is itself a causal question, including the extent to which an activity caused improvements across certain outcomes. This was also highlighted as an issue by arts organisations who raised concerns regarding how much their interventions can credibly be attributed to the impacts that are observed.

> *"Attribution [is a challenge]. It's always very difficult to say what can be attributed to our project as so much else is going on in these people's lives. We always say that this [any observed impact] may be part of wider support and potentially other interventions."*

> Arts Organisation

Many frameworks draw on methodological and analytical techniques that are limited in their ability to understand impact as a process. As a result, they have been subject to range of criticisms that serve to undermine confidence in social impact measurement from some quarters.

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[58] Note: Causation indicates that one event is the result of the occurrence of the other event; i.e. there is a causal relationship between the two events.

Some frameworks, for example, do no more than establish correlations between arts involvement and the presence of certain outcomes. Within these approaches, the impact of an initiative remains largely hypothetical, as they do not demonstrate empirically that arts experiences led to the observed outcomes. Whist causality and the arts remains controversial, it is viewed as a central concern by certain stakeholders, including some policymakers.[59]

Conversely, there are those that challenge the idea that causation is an important focus for understanding impact. Galloway, for example, has identified a tendency to emphasize methodology rather than theory as the basis of 'good evaluation'.[60] Critical discussion of social impact measurement has tended to concentrate on technical and methodological challenges, including around rigorously establishing causality – that participation in arts *causes* certain outcomes. For Galloway, the main focus should be on ontological or epistemological issues, including in exploring the purpose and focus of impact measurement, not just on how we measure it.

From these perspectives, the main issue for advancing our understanding of the impact of arts and culture is ontological; it is not research methods themselves but finding the most effective 'orientation' or 'logic of enquiry' in understanding impact.[61] From these perspectives, impact measurement should also seek to explore the meaning and benefits that an individual derives from participation in arts and culture. This is important in understanding the breadth of experience that can stem from artistic endeavour, including intrinsic outcomes that are harder to measure through casual research methods, including experimental and quasi-experimental study designs.

Proponents of this view tend to advocate a broader suite of approaches to understanding impact, including techniques and approaches from ethnography and hermeneutics, amongst others. These perspectives also tend to call for greater investment in larger scale, longitudinal research and impact measurement, and for more robust, innovative and transparent methodologies and frameworks.[62]

These sentiments were shared by some of the arts organisations interviewed who felt there was a need for a more unified and agreed approach to social impact measurement across the arts and culture sector. There was a sense that in recent years, there has been an increase in ever more complex forms of reporting and the emergence of a wide range of tools and frameworks.

> *"More and more tools and resources being lobbed at us all the time. People don't know where to begin. It's a bewildering plethora of information."*
>
> Arts Organisation

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[59] Crossick and Kaszynaska (2012) *Understanding the value of arts and culture*, AHRC

[60] Galloway (2009) Theory-based evaluation and the social impact of the arts, in *Cultural Trends,* 18: 2, 125-148

[61] E.g. Pawson et al (2004) *Realist Synthesis: An Introduction*, ESRC Research Methods Programme

[62] E.g. White and Rentchler (2006) Paper presented at the international conference on the Arts in Society. Edinburgh, UK. Towards a new understanding of the social impact of the arts.

This would appear to support Belfiore and Bennet's observation that the increase in impact tools has led to a "toolkit approach" to impact assessment where excessive simplifications are favoured due to their advocacy potential rather than the genuine attempt to explore the nature of any effects of artistic engagement.[63]

4.3.3 Sensitivity

Similar voices have also raised the importance of ensuring that social impact measurement is sensitive to the full expanse of aesthetic experience. This relates to discussions on the relative importance of exploring both intrinsic and instrumental outcomes of participation. The apparent focus of much impact measurement on specific instrumental outcomes, whilst easier to measure, is problematic in that it overlooks full range of potential benefits of participation.

Within frameworks and approaches that focus on instrumental outcomes, the legitimacy of activities, feelings or relationships that are difficult to measure in quantitative terms are potentially overlooked. Their relative value and importance may be undermined simply because they are difficult to express using conventional systems of data collection.[64] These sentiments are echoed by Moriarty (1997) who cautions against measurement being seen as the necessary guarantor of action or as the only way of validating experiences, especially those which are difficult to quantify:

> *"Much that doesn't get measured does get done – beautifully, gratefully, with vigour and pride. Children are loved, friendships are nurtured, songs are written and sung, stories are told to entertain and encourage."*

Moriarty (1997)[65]

The organisations that were consulted with through this research described seeking to have impact against myriad of complex social issues. They worked with a wide range of marginalised communities and groups to counteract discrimination, affect their sense of belonging, to overcome alcohol and substance misuse, to develop confidence and resilience and much more.

Through our consultations, it was suggested by some arts organisations that attempting to measure these phenomena often required a more complex and nuanced approach over and above what could be achieved through the use of frameworks or tools. Individuals commented that trying to measure these impacts quantitatively was troublesome, often appearing superficial or simplified and lacking robustness and rigour.

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[63] Belfiore & Bennett (2010) Beyond the "Toolkit Approach": Arts Impact Evaluation Research and the Realities of Cultural Policy Making

[64] Galloway (2009) Theory-based evaluation and the social impact of the arts, in *Cultural Trends,* 18: 2, 125-148

[65] Moriarty (1997) *Taliruni's Travellers: An arts worker's view of evaluation, The Social Impact of the Arts, Working Paper 7*, Comedia, Stroud

4.3.4 Coherence Between Activities and Outcomes

Linked to sensitivity is the issue of the relative coherence between activities and outcomes within impact measurement. Reviews have often found an apparent disconnect between the focus, objectives and methods of engagement surrounding a specific activity with the outcomes explored through much social impact measurement of arts and cultural initiatives.[66] This can have profound consequences, including the under-estimation of the true potential of specific activities or programmes.

4.4 Practical Challenges

Alongside the conceptual challenges, there are several practical issues and challenges that organisations must navigate to engage effectively with social impact measurement.

4.4.1 Resources

Social impact measurement is itself a process requiring organisations or individuals to devote time and attention. This requires a range of resources, including freeing people's time within an organisation to plan, collect and analyse data. Different frameworks may also require broader infrastructure, including software, to be able to collect and analyse information. There may be additional costs in training, purchasing licences for particular frameworks, and independently validating the results of an impact assessment.

Responses to the online survey indicate that resources pose a challenge to organisations, with many commenting that the formal frameworks are limited when capturing robust measurement. This is linked to the issue of consistency, whereby it can be felt that some frameworks are not appropriate for measuring certain impacts and consequently some may be missed.

The question of resources may also influence the level and depth of engagement with impact measurement. As discussed previously, social impact can be thought of as a process in which outcomes emerge and evolve over time. Some frameworks may require a longitudinal approach. Depending on the nature of funding that an organisation accesses, some funding is relatively short term and does not support longer-term impact measurement.

4.4.2 Funder Requirements

Follow up consultations with organisations indicated that the use of a specific framework can be stipulated by a funder or funders which can be particularly troublesome when organisations attract funding from a wide range of sources with different expectations.

The issue of appropriate data collection was expressed further in follow up interviews, whereby it is difficult to collate data required by funders whilst also ensuring the data collection is conducive to evidencing the anticipated impact.

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[66] E.g. Crossick and Kaszynaska (2012) *Understanding the value of arts and culture*, AHRC

With this in mind, survey responses expressed concern over consistency of data collection, as it was sometimes dictated but other times the onus was put onto the organisation, who sometimes lack the knowledge to effectively complete the measurement requirements in certain frameworks. For example, there was concern around how to ensure appropriate, reliable data was collected rather than anecdotal information, whilst, as mentioned, encompassing the overall impact in a way that can be broadly understood.

> *"There is wide variation in what funders look for and no single approach or model. There is a danger that any arts and cultural organisation is influenced to use a tool or measurement technique that isn't appropriate for them simply because they think a funder would assign more credibility to it."*
>
> Stakeholder Interviewee

4.4.3   Capabilities

Linked to the issue of resources is the capacity of an organisation or individual to engage with impact measurement. To varying degrees, impact measurement requires specific skills, expertise, and confidence to effectively implement. Different frameworks may require varying levels of knowledge of impact measurement, including research design skills, facilitation and data collection, and data analysis techniques.

For some organisations, these types of skills and expertise may not be widely held, if at all. The scale and capacity of an organisation may influence their ability to engage with impact measurement, especially for more process-oriented approaches that seek to embed impact measurement as a more routine operation. There are different starting points and levels of maturity in terms of measuring social impact and one stakeholder outlined the importance of organisations not trying to run before they can walk.

> *"Social impact measurement shouldn't be regarded as a standalone activity as it is likely to require a wider review of how organisations are structured and governed (e.g. what information they collect). So to be used effectively some frameworks may necessitate system change and governance (including for example internal CRM or GDPR compliance). Also organisations may differ in terms of their capacity/resources available to measure impact and this needs to be factored in."*
>
> Stakeholder Interviewee

Comments from both survey responses and follow up interviews with organisations explained that for smaller organisations for example, the expertise of evaluation is not present and whilst there may be training opportunities to mitigate this, there can be capacity challenges in implementing such learning. Further to this, there is a time lag associated with effective impact measurement and implementing such measurements into the strategy of the organisation. There is also often additional costs related to impact measurements and it has been highlighted by many that this is not something within budget, nor is it always something that is cost effective when the most effective method has not been identified. Further to this, whilst organisations may have limited knowledge regarding impact measurement owing to their own experience, this may not suffice funder requirements.

4.4.4 Confidence in frameworks

Respondents to the initial online survey were asked about their confidence in measuring social impact. Over half were confident with measuring social impact (56%) whilst one quarter of respondents were not.

Figure 4.3: How confident do you feel with measuring social impact?
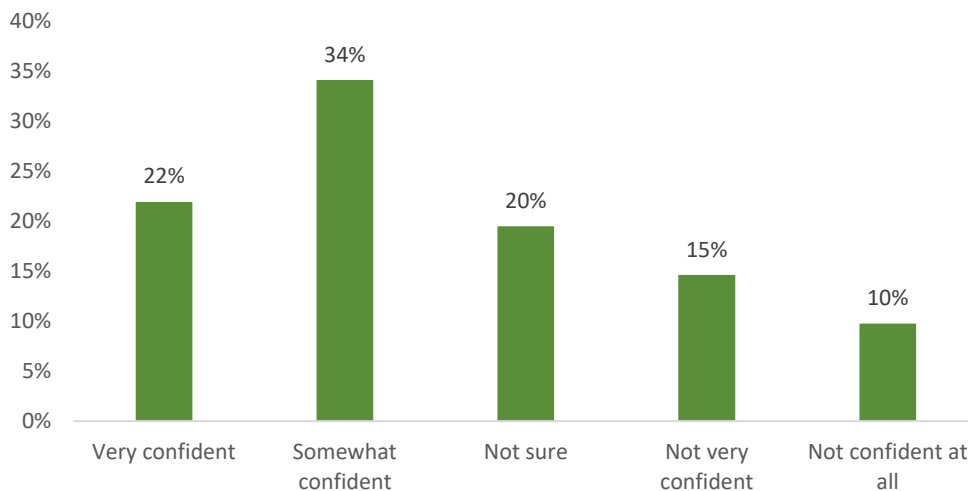
Source: Wavehill Arts and Culture Org, survey n=41

In expanding on their views, one respondent highlighted:

> *"[Provides an] Evidence base for our work, can talk confidently about what you do which can be difficult with community arts. Arts council guidance is really useful around areas of assessment and metrics. This kind of work can be bespoke so the more of insight and impact type framework the better."*

Arts Organisation

4.4.5 Training needs

Whilst over half (55%) of respondents to the survey had already received support and/or training around measuring social impact, the majority (74%) felt they would benefit from receiving further support/training. This indicates an ongoing training and support need for those currently measuring or intending to measure their social impact. Anecdotal comments suggest that training has enabled organisations to create their own tools.

> *"No formal frameworks [used] as they don't fit - you can't do them in a number of different ways. I've been on training courses for some but they don't work for us and some focus on story of change. Theory of change we use but it doesn't fit as well with financial metrics. We've used WEMWBS but they're hard with children as younger ones can't really articulate that in line with those questions."*

Arts Organisation

Responses show a clear correlation between an organisation's confidence to measure social impact and previously receiving support or training. Figure 4.4 overleaf illustrates this relationship. All respondents that indicated they had received both training and support felt they were either very confident or somewhat confident in measuring social impact. This compares to 41 percent amongst those that had accessed neither training or support. This suggests the value of training and support being available to the sector to help develop confidence around the measurement of social impact.

Figure 4.4: Confidence compared to training/support received
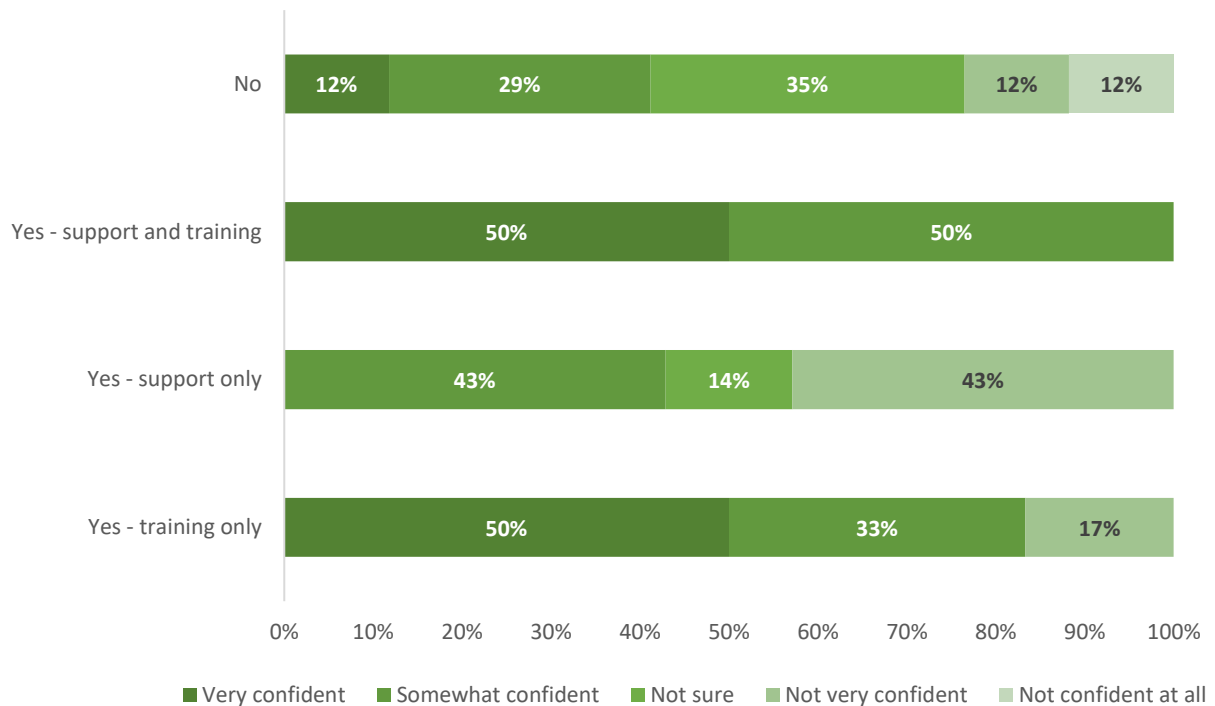
Source: Wavehill Arts and Culture Org, survey n=41

5 Mapping Frameworks

This section explores the characteristics, strengths, and limitations of existing social impact frameworks. This includes those that are explicitly used within arts and culture, as well as frameworks originating from beyond the sector.

The review set out to identify and map existing frameworks that support or could inform social impact measurement in the arts. In identifying relevant frameworks, the review team conducted extensive and systematic search of a range of sources of information. This was complemented by a range of engagements with the arts and cultural organisations, including in depth interviews and an online survey. Together, the review sought to map and appraise different frameworks to identify and explore potential areas of promise. For more detail on how the search strategy was implemented, please see the Appendix 2 Methodology section.

5.1 Results of the Search

Together, the search found 30 frameworks that were deemed to be relevant to the review. These were relatively straight forward to identify, however discerning what was a potentially relevant framework, and what was not was a little more difficult to establish. To help understand and analyse the diversity of frameworks currently available, a range of relevant characteristics were extracted from the information gathered. This included:

- The **focus** of the framework, including the range of activities it seeks to explore impact.

- **Outcomes** of interest included in the framework.

- The **methods** and approaches and processes for identifying and agreeing outcomes, and for collecting and analysing information.

- How the results are **validated**, whether they require internal or external validation.

Further practical information was collected, including the costs of accessing and using specific framework, and the estimated time required to complete an impact estimation.

5.2 Mapping Frameworks

There are several existing typologies of social impact frameworks and approaches. These tend to differentiate frameworks by the types of data that they suggest an organisation should collect, and the ways in which that subsequent information should be analysed. Crossicks and Kaszynska's (2014) comprehensive analysis, for example, delineates different approaches by the types of data used to support impact measurement, and the research designs used to collect and analyse data. This includes the main focus of enquiry in understanding the value of arts and culture, such as the reflective individual, civic engagement, communities' regeneration and space, economic outcomes, and health and wellbeing. They also map the different methodological approaches to understanding impact, including ethnography and network analysis, through to techniques derived from economics and the health sciences.

Similarly, Reeves (2002) used methodological characteristics as a broad way of mapping different frameworks and approaches to impact measurement.[67] She identified five broad approaches that draw on a diverse range of methods for gathering relevant information, including project visits, interviews, questionnaires, case studies, focus groups, and participant observation. Most of these approaches adopt composite methodologies which combine both quantitative and qualitative information.

To map the frameworks highlighted in this research, the review team highlighted the broad methodological approach advocated by each framework. It also sought to consider in more detail the practical as well as methodological implications of different frameworks and approaches. This was in order to examine the practical relevance of different frameworks for organisations across arts and culture, and to make suggestions and recommendations on characteristics that could enable organisations and individuals engage with impact measurement more effectively.

Drawing on techniques from critical research appraisal, each framework was then assessed against a range of relevant criteria. These include theoretically important factors that could promote or hinder engagement with impact measurement from different organisations across the sector, as well as conceptual considerations.

- **Flexibility:** The extent to which a framework can be effectively applied to different scenarios and activities. This reflects the extent to which outcomes within a framework can be adapted to different objectives, activities or settings.

- **Applicability to the Arts:** Linked to flexibility, this explores the potential relevance of the framework to arts and cultural activity. This is principally to explore the potential relevance of impact frameworks developed for other sectors

- **Information Requirements:** This explores the amount of information organisations are required to bring together in order to complete an impact assessment, relative to other frameworks. This is important as it may have resource implications for organisations and individuals.

- **Capability Requirements:** This reflects the extent of capabilities individuals or organisations are required to hold in order to successfully engage with impact measurement. Where a framework requires relatively complex data analysis techniques, or is framed in such a way as to require specific skills and expertise in impact measurement, these approaches may place higher capability requirements on an individual or organisation.

- **Robustness:** this relates to the ability of the framework to deliver analyses that offer accurate reflection of the impact of impact of an activity.

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[67] Reeves (2002) *Measuring the economic and social impact of the arts: a review*, Arts Council England

Against each criterion, an assessment of either low, medium, or high was given to each framework as the summary table can be found in Section 7 of this report. Section 8 provides two examples comprising a brief commentary on how these assessments were made. This is a subjective determination made from publicly available information. There are significant limitations to this approach: some judgements were made with partial information. Some may not hold in all cases, especially around confidence in the framework.

Some organisations may be more receptive to certain frameworks, for example, whilst others may view them as not relevant. Overall, this should be considered as indicative of the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches, rather than a definitive statement of each framework's qualities. Whilst these limitations are important to note, the aim is to be able to identify potential candidates or characteristics that could be shared or built on. The idea is that judgments against each framework are largely determined relative to other approaches. In supporting this analysis, a global assessment was made which has sought to tease out particularly effective frameworks in addressing the issues outlined above.

A further assessment was made exploring the reach of particular frameworks amongst arts and cultural organisations drawing on survey and in-depth interviews.

5.3 Framework Characteristics

The 30 frameworks identified through this review represent a diverse range of approaches to social impact measurement. There was considerable variation in the level and depth of information accompanying each framework. Together, the guidance surrounding many frameworks was conscious of the challenges of engaging in impact measurement and sought to offer practical support and guidance. Some offered this within detailed guidance that was framed in technical language. Others were more accessible, providing key points that organisations should consider when undertaking impact measurement. What was apparent in reviewing frameworks was the variable quality in the presentation of guidance. Those that were easier to understand and interpret provided information in accessible language within a clear structure. They also provided enough depth of information to understand the full range of considerations when undertaking impact measurement.

Whilst there was considerable diversity in how frameworks were presented, most advocated drawing together a range of information, including qualitative and quantitative data, in understanding impact. Of the six frameworks that advocated only one form of information, five sought to gathering quantitative information through a survey. Within frameworks that suggested collecting a range of information, there were varying degrees of prescription around the specific outcomes that organisations should explore. There was a myriad of formulations and typologies, Venn diagrams and rationales that set out the potential outcomes of interest. Some frameworks offered broad suggestions of the types of outcomes that may be of interest, others offered more specific suggestions, including specific tools or discussion guides for collecting information.

For a table summarising the frameworks identified through this research, their broad characteristics, and the judgments made against each criteria outlined above, please see the Summary Table.

Flexibility:

Overall, frameworks tended to advocate a flexible approach, one that helped organisations to explore the meaning and value of their work or activity to inform and shape social impact measurement (n= 19). To varying degrees, these frameworks sought to provide the outline of the process that individuals or organisations should follow in reaching for their objectives surrounding social impact measurement.

Through techniques such as Theory of Change and Logic Modelling, these frameworks assumed a process orientated approach to impact measurement. This included facilitating discussion, both within an organisation and with beneficiaries, to explore the objectives and values of the organisation, the activities it is engaged in, and highlighting relevant outcomes that would support social impact measurement. Importantly, these approaches offer flexibility, enabling organisations to develop more coherent approaches to impact measurement that are more aligned to the values and objectives of the organisation, and to the precise activities they support.

The Balanced Value Impact Model, **Kings College London**

The Balanced Value Impact Model (BVI Model) draws evidence from a wide range of sources to provide a compelling account of the means of measuring the impact of digital resources and using evidence to advocate how change benefits people. The aim is to provide key information and a strong model for the arts and cultural organisations, specifically memory institutions and cultural heritage organisations. The Balanced Value Impact Model is applied in five core functional stages:

1. Context
2. Analysis and Design
3. Implementation
4. Outcomes and Results
5. Review and Respond

It draws on a theory of change approach, guiding organisations in thinking about and mapping the potential impact of their work, highlight potential stakeholders and formulate research designs that explore a diverse range of outcomes for a diverse range of stakeholders and audiences.

For more information, click here.

These approaches tend to more complex in nature, however. They often advocate a systems approach, in which social impact measurement is embedded into other aspects of an organisation's work within an iterative process. By design, these approaches also seek to achieve impact measurement through a negotiated process bringing together a range of individuals and stakeholder groups to co-design a Theory of Change and impact measurement tools. Facilitating this process is itself a difficult task, over and above the equally complex task of impact measurement. One framework, for example, proposed an eight-stage process starting with an organisations mission statement and ended with programme refinement.

These approaches also tended to have higher information and capability requirements. They generally require more comprehensive data collection activities, including the use of mixed method approaches to gather both qualitative and quantitative information. Many frameworks were vague as how this information should be handled and analysed. This suggests that individuals and organisations accessing such an approach would need a good grounding in designing and implementing social impact measurement to effectively engage. At least in their current formulations, this suggests that these frameworks may be more relevant for organisations that are confident in social impact measurement and/or have time to embed processes across an organisation.

Other frameworks seek to provide organisations with simpler, more accessible, and structured processes for engaging with social impact measurement. These tended to focus on the act of data collection itself, providing them with the research tools and guidance to gather relevant information effectively and efficiently:

The LIFE Survey, The Happy Museum

The framework gives museum access to an online survey that captures a range of information relating to individual learning, interaction, feelings, and environment. The survey also captures a range of demographic. Data is analysed centrally to support those organisations with limited or no experience with data analysis.

The platform also enables organisations to run pre-post testing that measures changes over time – participants can complete the survey prior to engaging in the activity, and then again after their experience. This enables the framework to be sensitive to any changes that could hypothetically be attributed to the activity. The framework also advocates the use of control group, that is to ask a group that have not participated in the activity to complete the survey. This feature would enable a more precise understanding of the impact of the activity.

For more information, [click here](#).

Whilst these approaches are easier to engage with, in terms of the outcomes of interest these approaches tend to be more prescriptive in nature. This limits their flexibility and ability to respond to specific objectives or activities. This could serve to underestimate the impact of such initiatives, especially if there is a significant mismatch in the methods of engagement and the outcomes collected through such an approach.

5.3.1   Applicability to the Arts:

In terms of applicability, a number of frameworks from beyond the arts and culture sector may be relevant to arts and cultural organisations. These tend to be more flexible in nature, including those that set out a broad process rather than specific outcomes. They similarly draw on exploratory tools such as logic models or theories of change to examine and direct subsequent impact measurement.

Prove-It, NEF Consulting

Aimed broadly at supporting small community projects, the Prove-It toolkit is a freely available framework. The toolkit looks beyond quantitative outputs such as numbers of participants involved to the impact it is having on people and communities. It provides a range of exercises and materials to enable organisations to create their own storyboards, surveys, workshops and reports. It describes a paired down process for exploring social impact than more expansive theory of change approaches. The Prove it! Toolkit incorporates three main tools:

- A Storyboard exercise for understanding how a project's intended activities will lead to change.
- A Survey Questionnaire to be used at the start and end of the project.
- A Poster Evaluation exercise in order to reflect at the end of a project on its impacts and the lessons that have been learnt.

The storyboard aims to show identified need, then the following survey aims to understand the perceptions of the participants and wider community followed by reflection on the findings as well as the impact the initiative or project is having or could have. The toolkit is flexible as it can be used for many different organisations.

For more information, click here.

Conversely, there are frameworks that originate from arts and cultural organisations that may not be relevant or valuable to other organisations in the sector. These tend to be less flexible and place greater focus on specific outcomes or activities. This can make them ill-suited to explore the impact of other activities with different objectives.

Arts for Health and Wellbeing, Public Health England

Drawing on broader public health frameworks and principles on impact measurement, this comprehensive framework guide to projects with public health objectives or specific therapeutic elements. The framework broadly advocates a theory of change approach, and working with other organisations, stakeholders, and participants in framing subsequent impact measurement. The framework also encourages organisations to draw on validated tools for exploring wellbeing, such as the arts observational scale (ArtsObs), and the patient health questionnaire.

For more information, click here.

5.3.2 Information Requirements:

The information requirements of each framework varied enormously. On one end of the scale frameworks suggest collecting small amounts of data from a sample of participants, and on the other approaches that advocated significant and in-depth engagement across a broad range of domains. Some frameworks advocate approaches that are information intensive, both in terms of the volume of information required, but also in how that information is used in broader processes:

Culture[3], Kent County Council

This framework seeks to provide a comprehensive resource for arts and cultural organisations aiming to manage and measure social impact. It revolves around a Plan Do Review cycle that embeds social impact measurement in broader processes that seek to improve the effectiveness of provision over time:

The approach advocates a comprehensive, mixed methods approach that captures a diverse range of qualitative and quantitative information on instrumental and intrinsic outcomes. It includes links to tools and frameworks that can fit within the overall approach.

For more information, click here.

On the other hand, some frameworks seek to reduce complexity down to simply the process of collecting and analysing data. In the case of the LIFE Survey, for example, the platform will even analyse an organisation's data, leaving them with the challenge of encouraging participants to complete the questionnaire. These frameworks also seek to make the findings more generalisable, and to explore trends across different of people:

ONS4 Wellbeing Questions, ONS

The ONS4 explores a person's wellbeing across four questions. They provide a reliable and valid snapshot of a person's wellbeing. The questions form part of the wider Measuring National Well-being (MNW) Programme at the ONS, which aims to provide accepted and trusted measures of the nation's well-being. This enables a range of comparisons, including between the wellbeing of participants with those of the broader population. This can provide useful intelligence, including for organisations working with particularly vulnerable or marginalised groups.

One of the main benefits of collecting information on personal well-being is that it is based on people's views of their own individual well-being. In the past, assumptions were made about how objective conditions, such as people's health and income, might influence their individual well-being. Personal well-being measures, on the other hand, take account of what matters to people by allowing them to decide what is important when they respond to questions.

For more information, [click here.](#)

5.3.3 Capability Requirements:

There is significant variation in the underlying capability requirements of different frameworks. With the proliferation of approaches that advocate more flexible, exploratory approaches, including those that draw on theories of change or logic models, the limitation is that they tend to require greater levels of knowledge and confidence to effectively embed them. Frameworks such as Culture3, the Balanced Value Impact Model, and Arts for Health and Wellbeing all require significant prior knowledge of impact measurement, including the methods and tools for collecting information. These approaches also require significant adaptive capacity, that is, the ability and flexibility of an organisation to learn and adopt new ways of working.

Some frameworks recognise the importance of capabilities in engaging in social impact measurement. These include paired down approaches that are particularly suited to smaller organisations and community groups. There is also an approach that actively seeks to develop an organisation's capacity to engage with social impact measurement:

Music and Social Impact Toolkit, World Pencil

The toolkit seeks to help organisations develop and enhance their ability to engage in social impact measurement. It sets out step by step guide to building understanding of social impact across an organisation, and in identifying and developing the relevant skills and expertise required to deliver it.

For more information, [click here](#).

5.3.4 Robustness:

This relates to the ability of the framework to deliver analyses that offer accurate reflection of the impact of impact of an activity. Again, there are different criteria for determining robustness depending on the approach and information that is brought together through impact measurement. Many frameworks describe and outline how rigour could be achieved, at least in the collection of data:

Cultural Value Model

The Cultural Value Model (CVM) aims to achieve culturally and experientially sensitive understandings of cultural value, in ways that are sensitive to context. The CVM is presented as an innovative device for conceptualising, analysing and assessing value in a multidimensional and visual way. 'The CVM is designed for planning, monitoring and evaluating projects and organisations over time, alongside existing performance indicators and impact measures.' (Gillespie *CVP Report*, Executive Summary). At the heart of the model is something called 'constellation mapping', where the members of the organisations involved devise a set of components of cultural value, deploying the 'Imagine' approach, which uses aspects of free association. The model is multidimensional, bringing together different components of value, emerging from consultations with stakeholders inside and outside the organisations. The collective assessment and scoring of these components of cultural value produce a range of indicators which are then presented in visual form as a diagram. The CVM approach is generic enough to be used by different organisations, but flexible enough to be adjusted to specific needs. The concepts of balance and configurations that we have explored here offer important ways of making evaluation relevant to organisations.

For more information, [click here](#).

Whilst frameworks may themselves advocate approaches that are rigorous, they are by no means a guarantor of success. Robustness is also derived from the practical application of an approach or framework. Rigorous approaches to impact measurement may be poorly applied, which can undermine the process. Conversely, weaker frameworks may by applied more effectively. This raises the importance of broader context shaping impact measurement, including the specific barriers and challenges facing an organisation.

This review may form the basis from which a taxonomy could be developed that could provide guidance to arts organisations as to which frameworks or tools to consider depending on the nature of their evaluation. Whilst the development of a taxonomy was beyond the scope of this review, this may be a future consideration for Arts funders to consider to further support social impact measurement across the sector.

We now turn to outlining the conclusions of the review.

6 Conclusions

Much contemporary debate and research surrounding social impact measurement in the arts has focused on developing workable and appropriate frameworks. This review suggests that this has resulted in a proliferation of flexible, exploratory approaches that view social impact measurement as a broader process. These frameworks, which draw on techniques such as theory of change and logic mapping, seek to embed impact measurement more closely in the design, enactment, and analysis of artistic and cultural experiences.

These perspectives and approaches have emerged from the recognition that '*off the shelf*' frameworks that tend to be prescriptive in the outcomes they seek to measure are limited in their ability to understand and demonstrate social impact. Whilst these approaches do have strengths, there has been a distinct move away from developing a unified approach or single framework informing social impact measurement across the arts. The focus of activities, the values organisations hold, and the objectives and outcomes that they seek to promote are simply too diverse.

The review also suggests that there is an abundance of approaches, frameworks, guidance and support surrounding social impact measurement and feedback from the arts and culture sector indicates that this can be confusing and bewildering. Whilst it was evident that organisations responding to the survey saw social impact measurement as an important aspect of their work, there were a range of challenges identified that affects engagement. These included both conceptual and practical constraints that present barriers to engagement which were discussed in Section 4.3 and 4.4 and are summarised in the table below.

Table 6.1 Overview of the conceptual and practical challenges to social impact measurement.

Conceptual	Practical
Robustness	Resources
Causation	Funder requirements
Sensitivity	Capabilities
Coherence between activities and outcomes	Confidence in frameworks
	Training needs

Where organisations have been able to overcome these challenges, there are examples of innovative social impact measurement that is embedded within organisations vision and strategies. There was a direct link between organisations that had received training around social impact measurement and their confidence in carrying it out. As such, a priority should be to explore ways of in which internal capacity to measure social impact can be built across the sector with the aim of helping organisations to address the barriers they experience.

Social impact measurement was seen to be important for communicating the value of an organisation's work, to understand the impact of their work and to secure funding. However, there was recognition of the wider role it can play in informing an organisation's core strategy when impact measurement was successfully embedded.

In this regard, an important next step for the sector is to consider not only measuring social impact as a tool for advocacy and fulfilling funding requirements, but also as a tool that supports internal assessment of performance, refinement of approaches and provides insight and learning around an organisation's performance. Linking impact measurement to an organisation's core aims or KPIs would help organisations to ensure their measurement is focused on what is important to their organisation. Theory-based approaches, such as theory of change are helpful to enable organisations to align data collection tools or frameworks (including bespoke tools) with the specific outcomes they seek to measure.

Findings from the review suggest frameworks that include more participatory, person-centred approaches, including co-design offer organisations opportunities to be more reflective about the values they hold, the objectives they are working towards, and the outcomes that they wish to see. This could ultimately lead to more effective practice, increasing the role and potential of art and culture in people's lives.

Whilst frameworks offer arts and cultural organisations routes into social impact measurement they are, however, imperfect devices. Organisations face a range of barriers and challenges to impact measurement. Davies and Heath's assessment of how museums use impact research of the visitor experience, for example, concludes that they do not feed back into organisational learning in ways that are effective beyond advocacy. 'The organisational and institutional context in which [impact] evaluation is commissioned, undertaken and received', they conclude, 'can impose contradictory demands and undermine the opportunity of learning from and applying the findings of evaluation.'[68]

6.1 Recommendations

Effectively addressing the barriers and limitations surrounding impact frameworks is important in supporting sector involvement. Several recommendations that emanate from this research:

1. There appears to be emerging consensus surrounding the role and potential of theory-based approaches to evaluation, such as frameworks that draw on theories of change. This is from both those that wish to see more empirical impact measurement in policy making, and those that have been critical of impact measurement in the arts. This suggests that there may be common ground that could be explored in helping to develop a common language and purpose surrounding impact measurement.

2. Related to this is supporting organisations broader engagement with social impact measurement, including building capability and confidence. This could include a number of initiatives, such as developing a community of practice; peer learning; providing guidance to organisations in how to negotiate the measurement process with funders; encouraging funders or investors to ring-fence budgets to enable fund recipients to access professional support; and showcasing the importance of the whole organisation buying into the impact measurement journey.

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[68] Davies & Heath (2013) 'Good' Organisational Reasons for 'Ineffectual' Research: evaluating summative evaluation of museums and galleries. *Cultural Trends*, 23, 57-69, p.57

3. With some of the more flexible and ambitious frameworks, there does not appear to be easier routes in for less experienced organisations. This could suggest that stepped approaches, which ultimately aim for more embedded and holistic approaches to impact measurement, but through a more gradual process, could be valuable in building an organisation's capacity and confidence.

4. There is an apparent need for greater clarity of information presented in the guidance that accompanies social measurement tools. Information should be accessible, and comprehensive. This is especially important for what happens after information is collected, where most guidance stops at data collection.

7 Summary Table

Table 7.1: Measurement Framework Summary Table

This table outlines the judgements made against each framework identified through the review. Key: H = High, M = Medium, and L = Low

Name	Developer	Sector	Approach	Qual	Quants	Cost	Flexibility	Applicability	Information	Capability	Robustness
Arts Evaluation Toolbox	British Council	Arts and Culture	Theory of change, mixed methods	Y	Y	Free	H	H	H	H	M
Arts for Health and Wellbeing	Public Health England	Arts and Culture	Theory of change, logic model development, mixed method	Y	Y	Free	L	M	M	M	M
Balanced Scorecard	Social Enterprise London	Social Enterprise	Process mapping and change management	Y	Y	Free	H	M	H	M	M
Behaviour Attitude Matrix	The Happy Museum	Museums	Objective prioritisation	Y		Free	H	M	L	L	L
Capturing the Audience Experience	New Economics Foundation	Theatre	Data collection tools	Y	Y	Free	L	H	M	M	M

Culture Counts	Culture Counts	Arts and Culture	Survey	Y	Y	Subscription model	M	H	L	M	M
Culture Cubed	Kent County Council	Arts and Culture	Theory of change approach, mixed methods	Y	Y	Free	H	H	H	H	M
Cultural Value Model	AHRC	Arts and Culture	Participatory Action Research, mixed methods	Y	Y	Free	H	H	H	H	H
Generic Social, Learning, Wellbeing Outcomes	Arts Council England	Arts and Culture	Standardised set of Statements and Outcomes, Measurement Tools	Y	Y	Free	M	H	M	M	M
IETM Toolkit	IETM, Brussels	Arts and Culture	Theory of change approach, mixed methods	Y	Y	Free	H	H	H	H	M
Impact and Insight Toolkit	Arts Council England	Arts and Culture	Standardised set of Statements	Y	Y	Free	M	H	M	M	M
Inspiring Learning for All	Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA)	Arts and Culture	Change management, self-evaluation, mixed methods	Y	Y	Free	H	H	M	M	M
LIFE Survey	The Happy Museum	Museums	Survey	Y	Y	Free	L	M	L	L	H
Maximise Your Impact	Social Value UK	Social Enterprise	Theory of change, mixed methods	Y	Y	Free	H	M	H	M	M

Music and Social Impact Toolkit	World Pencil	Music	Theory of change, social impact measurement capacity building, mixed methods	Y	Y	Free	H	H	H	M	M
ONS Wellbeing Questions	Office for National Statistics	Health and wellbeing	Survey		Y	Free	L	M	L	M	M
Outcomes Star	Triangle	Public and third sector	Person-centred, strengths-based and co-production approaches, mixed methods		Y	Variable Pricing	M	M	M	M	M
Participatory Impact Assessment	Feinstein International Centre	International Development	Participatory Action Research, mixed methods	Y	Y	Free	H	M	H	H	M
Prove, Improve, Account	Social Audit Network	Social Enterprise	Theory of change, mixed methods	Y	Y	£40	M	M	H	M	H
Prove-It	NEF Consulting	Community Regeneration	Storyboard, survey, Poster Evaluation	Y	Y	Free	M	M	L	M	M
SIMPLE	Social Enterprise London	Social Enterprise	Theory of change, mixed methods		Y	Training Required	H	M	H	H	M
Social Impact Assessment	Red Ochre	Third sector	Theory of change, mixed methods	Y	Y	Free	H	H	H	H	M
Social Impact of the Arts	Somerset County Council	Arts and Culture	Theory of change, logic model, mixed methods	Y	Y	Free	H	H	H	H	M

Social Return on Investment	The SROI Network	Public and third sector	Logic model	Y	Y	Free	M	M	H	H	M
Social Value Policy Template	Kingston Smith Fundraising and Management	Social Enterprise	Mixed methods	Y	Y	Free	M	M	M	M	L
Story of Change	The Happy Museum	Museums	Planning tool, Theory of Change, Logic model.	Y	Y	Free	H	H	L	M	M
The Balanced Value Impact Model	King's College London	Digital Resources	Theory of change, mixed methods	Y	Y	Free	H	M	H	H	M
The LBG Model	Corporate Citizenship (USA)	Private Sector	Logic model		Y	Subscription model	M	L	M	H	M
UCL Museum Wellbeing Measures Toolkit	University College London	Museums	Survey	Y	Y	Free	L	H	M	L	M
Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scoring System	Warwick Medical School	Health and wellbeing	Survey		Y	Free	L	M	L	M	M

Appendix 1 Framework Summaries

The below presents a sample of framework summaries which outline key characteristics.

Story of Change - The Happy Museum Project

Flexibility	Information Requirements	Capability Requirements	Robustness of Model	Applicability to Arts
High	High	Low	Medium	Medium

The Happy Museum Project Story of Change is a tool to help organisations highlight the links between objectives, activities, and outcomes. The approach seeks to provide a simple and engaging way of exploring and mapping out the outcomes they wish to achieve. This can inform subsequent social impact measurement activities.

Drawing on a workshop approach, Story for Change uses a simple logic model to help participants to identify principles, activities and outcomes. It helps organisations to reverse plan from the impact and outcomes they want to see and the actions they need to take to realise these changes.

Strengths
Adopting this approach helps organisations to be outcome focussed and plan actions based on what they want to achieve. It advocates a workshop approach with a cross section of stakeholders to collaboratively think about the change they want to see, and the steps needed to achieve it. Whilst the approach is aimed at museums, it would suit other arts and cultural organisations.

Weaknesses
The framework may at times be too simplified and unable to adequately reflect the complex nature of collecting information against outcomes identified through the workshop.

Lessons and Applicability
The collaborative approach allows for input from various stakeholder meaning that valuable input is taken from a cross section of staff, audiences and patrons.

Cost and licence considerations
The cost is free and there are guidance and support materials available on the Happy Museum website.

Further Information: Click Here

SIMPLE - Social Enterprise London

Flexibility	Applicability to Arts	Information Requirements	Capability Requirements	Robustness of Model
High	Medium	High	High	Medium

The Simple framework, developed by Social Enterprise London, provides organisations with a broad process for mapping out their activities and outcomes. The framework is combined with a two-day training course where participants learn about the five stages of the framework, including:

- Scope it- A scoping exercise where organisations review their context taking into account their aims, priorities, and any external factors influencing them to identify activities most closely related to their intended outcomes;
- Map it- Activities are mapped against short, medium and long term goals;
- Track it- Identifying the measurements and tools which can be used to generate evidence for impact;
- Tell it- Analysis of impact data and identifying best sources to compare against in order to evidence social impacts; and
- Embed it- Ensuring that the framework is followed at all stages to ensure data collection and analysis is rigorous and that there is opportunity for regular review.

Strengths
The SIMPLE framework enables organisations to map out their intended outcomes but, more importantly, to attribute the success criteria and measurement tool which enables the progress to be evidenced. The framework is adequately comprehensive to meet the needs of most organisations, allows flexibility for organisations adapt the approach to meet their context is practical in its application.

Weaknesses
It requires some level of understanding of social impact measurement and can be time consuming to roll out. This includes the two-day training course and the time taken to develop their approach to measurement and developing tools and processes to collect data.

Lessons and Applicability
Given to the fact that this is not an off the shelf tool and allows for flexibility in how organisations can adapt the framework, SIMPLE could easily be applied to any organisation looking to measure social impact. Although it follows a framework, it can also provide organisations with the skills and principles for effective social impact measurement.

Cost and licence considerations
There are costs associated with sending people onto the two-day training course.

Further Information: Click Here

Appendix 2 Methodology

Inclusion Criteria

This review was concerned with mapping existing social impact frameworks. To determine what was relevant to the review, a set of pre-defined search criteria were established. In order to be considered, the framework must:

- Be concerned with estimating social outputs or outcomes of activity.
- Clearly define outcomes of importance.
- Has publicly available information that enables people to understand and utilise the framework.

The review included international examples, as well as frameworks from other fields such as health and social care.

Search Strategy

The review team firstly completed a comprehensive and systematic search of existing literature, including more applied outputs as well as academic research on social impact in the arts. This included searching electronic databases, scanning relevant papers, and contacting relevant organisations. The objective was to ensure the full range of relevant frameworks was captured within the review.

Electronic databases were searched using a predefined search string. In ensuring the search was sensitive to the full breadth of eligible frameworks, no methodological or contextual filters were applied. The databases included:

- Web of Science, inc. Arts and Humanities Citation Index
- JSTOR
- ERIC, Educational Resources Information Centre
- ACE Databases and Library
- Americans for the Arts Social Impact Explorer

In order to complement electronic searches, the review team also manually searched relevant journals, libraries and conducted reverse citation mapping of key texts. The team also scanned publication lists of relevant organisations including other UK arts councils, NESTA, New Economics Foundation, Social Value Lab, NCVO and National Lottery Community Fund. The team also contacted relevant organisations working in this space to highlight any unpublished or ongoing development work that may be relevant to the review.

Once potentially relevant material was identified, either the citation or documentation were logged.

Screening

Once the search is complete, potentially relevant material was screened against the predefined inclusion criteria outlined above. The screening identified 30 relevant frameworks.

Data Extraction

Information from each framework was then extracted into an excel spreadsheet. This included background information, as well as the outcomes of interest. It breaks down the outcomes of interest and specific data requirements required to complete an impact estimate. It also catalogued any benchmarks or proxies that support impact estimates, including references of research from which they are drawn.

Critical Appraisal

Once the information was extracted, each framework was appraised in order to:

- Uncover problems in the design of a framework;
- Explore aspects that improve the usability of frameworks by organisations across the sector;
- Explore potential challenges of drawing on specific framework.

In order to explore these issues, each framework was appraised for:

- Flexibility:
- Applicability to the Arts:
- Information Requirements:
- Capability Requirements:
- Robustness of the Model:
- Confidence in the Model:

A relative judgement of either high, medium, low or unable to determine will be made against each category drawing on available information.

Trend Mapping

From this and other information gathered through sector consultation we then sought to draw out trends. This included areas of established or emerging good practice, as well as features or approaches that have successfully navigated the challenges of implementing social impact measurement.

Exploratory Interviews

Aims and Objectives

In complementing the review, the team also conducted exploratory interviews in order to:

- To generate in-depth insights regarding the views of three key stakeholder groups towards social impact measurement.
- To understand the trajectories and trends in social impact measurement, including amongst funders and commissioners.
- To consider the barriers facing organisations in undertaking impact measurement.

Sample Frame

We engaged a purposive sample of organisations across three stakeholder groups:

- **Consumers of social impact,** including funders and commissioners who drive demand in social impact measurement
- **Producers of social impact,** including organisations engaged in the production of social impact, of which measurement is or could play an important role in their work.
- **Developers of social impact**, including organisations engaged in supporting the development of social impact frameworks, tools or approaches.

Sector Survey

Aims and Objectives

In complementing in depth interviews, the team also reached out to organisations across the sector exploring their views towards social impact measurement. The survey was developed and distributed to arts organisations through Arts Council England and was live between August 2021 and October 2021. Respondents to the survey were asked whether they would be happy to contribute further to the research through a follow-up qualitative interview. The purpose of this was to explore in further detail the issues and themes emerging from the survey responses. It also aimed to explore established and emerging practice, including in the frameworks that are currently in use.

Sample Frame

The survey was distributed online through several channels, including emailed through to NPO leads. The risks of selection bias and unrepresentative sample is high and likely to be unknown, potentially undermining the insights that can be drawn – especially around attitudinal constructs. The survey was open for two months with multiple reminders sent during this time. respondents were given the opportunity to leave their contact details for further in depth follow up discussions and all of which did so were contacted to arrange a follow up telephone interview.

Appendix 3 List of contributors

Stakeholder	Organisation
Andrew Barnett	Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
Ben Smith	Esmee Fairburn Foundation
Dan Gregory	Social Enterprise UK
Diane Kennedy	Evaluation Support Scotland
Gilly Orr and Amelia Sussman	Social and Sustainable Capital (SASC)
Hazel Rogers	Shelter
Jessica Plant	National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance
Kirsty Gillian-Thomas	Paul Hamlyn Foundation
Mandy Barnett	Social Value UK
Margaret Bolton & Grace Bremner	Local Trust
Melissa Wong	NESTA
Nicola Saunders	Arts Council England
Philipp Essl	Big Society Capital
Sally Cupitt	NCVO
Sean Gladwin- Social Impact Manager	School for Social Entrepreneurs
Seva Philips	NESTA
Victoria Hume	Culture Health and Wellbeing Alliance
Vinal Karania	Age UK

Appendix 4 Organisation Survey

Social Impact Framework Survey

This survey is intended to explore your views and experiences of engaging with social impact measurement. It supports a broader review of social impact frameworks commissioned by the The Arts Council England. The strategic ambition for the review is to better understand what social impact frameworks currently exist, and their role in supporting individuals and organisations across arts and culture, including museums, art galleries and libraries.

This survey takes no more than 10 minutes to complete. The research is being undertaken by Wavehill on behalf of Arts Council England. If you have any questions concerning the research, please contact Andy.Parkinson@wavehill.com. For further information about how this research supports the work of the Arts Council England please contact joe.shaw@artscouncil.org.uk.

Q24 Are you responding on behalf of yourself or an organisation?

○ Individual

○ Organisation

Q21 What is the name of the organisation you represent?

Q2 What activities within the Arts and Culture are you or your organisation engaged with?

- ☐ Literature
- ☐ Dance
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Visual Arts
- ☐ Combined Arts
- ☐ Museums
- ☐ Libraries
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Q4 Does your organisation fund other Arts and Cultural organisations or activities?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Not sure

Q3 At present, how many FTE employees do you have?

- ○ None
- ○ One
- ○ 2 to 5
- ○ 6 to 9
- ○ 10 to 20
- ○ 20+

Q5 Which region are you based in?

- ○ North East
- ○ North West
- ○ Yorkshire and Humber
- ○ East Midlands
- ○ West Midlands
- ○ South West
- ○ South East
- ○ London

Q6 Which are your main sources of funding?

- ☐ ACE NPO
- ☐ Other ACE grant
- ☐ Trusts and Foundations
- ☐ Local Authorities
- ☐ Public Sector
- ☐ Other, please specify

Q8 How important is social impact measurement to your work?

○ 0

○ 1

○ 2

○ 3

○ 4

○ 5

○ 6

○ 7

○ 8

○ 9

○ 10

Q22 How important is social impact measurement to awarding or securing funding?

○ 0

○ 1

○ 2

○ 3

○ 4

○ 5

○ 6

○ 7

○ 8

○ 9

○ 10

Q9 Have you or your organisation sought to measure the social impact of your work?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Not sure

Q23 In the last year, have you drawn on social impact measurement to:

	Yes	No	Not sure
Secure funding - grant	○	○	○
Secure funding - loan	○	○	○
Secure funding - other investment	○	○	○
Fulfil the requirements of a grant	○	○	○
Award a grant	○	○	○
Communicate the value of your work	○	○	○
Improve the impact of the work that you do	○	○	○
Other	○	○	○

Q11 Did you use a specific approach, framework or toolkit to guide social impact measurement?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Not sure

Q12 What framework / tools do you currently use to measure social impact? (Tick all that apply)

- [ ] Arts Evaluation Toolbox

- [ ] Arts for Health and Wellbeing

- [ ] Balanced Scorecard

- [ ] Culture Counts

- [ ] Maximise Your Impact

- [ ] ONS Wellbeing Questions

- [ ] Outcomes STAR

- [ ] Prove, Improve Account

- [ ] Prove-It

- [ ] Social Return on Investment

- [ ] Story of Change

- [ ] Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scoring System

- [ ] Other (please specify)

Q26 Other, please specify:

Q13 On a scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'extremely'), how helpful did you find the framework(s) you have used?

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Arts Evaluation Toolbox	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Arts for Health and Wellbeing	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Balanced Scorecard	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Culture Counts	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Maximise Your Impact	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
ONS Wellbeing Questions	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Outcomes STAR	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Prove, Improve Account	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Prove-It	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Social Return on Investment	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Story of Change	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scoring System	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q10 How confident do you feel with measuring social impact?

○ Very confident

○ Somewhat confident

○ Not sure

○ Not very confident

○ Not confident at all

Q14 Have you received any support or training around measuring social impact?

○ Yes - training only

○ Yes - support only

○ Yes - support and training

○ No

○ Not sure

Q15 Would you benefit from receiving support / training?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Not sure

Q16 What do you feel are the main challenges you face when measuring social impact?

Q25 Are you intending to start any social impact measurement in the next 12 months?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Not sure

Q17 Would you be willing to speak with a member of the research team to discuss your response in more detail?

○ Yes

○ No

Q18 If yes, please provide contact details below:
Name _____
Phone _____
Email _____

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