



Guide for VCSEs



Introduction

This guide looks at how social value may be included in public sector contracts and how Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations can benefit from the social value requirement placed on suppliers of those contracts.

If your organisation is bidding on tenders for public sector contracts, you may find that social value has been included in the tender, either as part of the award criteria or as contract conditions.

Guidance for suppliers, on how to address social value in your bid response and how it may be scored, is available on our website at [Suppliers - Social Value NI](#)

Background: How Social Value is included in Public Sector Contracts

Public procurement is an important source of expenditure in Northern Ireland, with central and local government spending upwards of £3 billion annually on supplies, services and construction works. This expenditure offers tremendous potential to contribute to the economic, environmental and social outcomes contained in the Executive's Programme for Government.

Social value refers to the wider financial and non-financial impacts on the wellbeing of individuals, communities and the environment. The social value derived from a public contract is the positive legacy created through its performance such as a more diverse workforce, fewer single use plastics in the environment and more cohesive communities.

By including social value in procurement, the public, private and VCSE sectors can work together to:

- invest in skills development and employability, to support a more resource efficient, greener and low carbon economy;
- support social and micro enterprises;
- support voluntary and community organisations;
- promote equality, diversity and inclusion;
- build ethical, diverse and resilient supply chains;
- reduce our carbon footprint and promote biodiversity; and
- improve mental health and wellbeing.

Procurement Policy Note (PPN) 01/21 Social Value in Procurement addresses the requirement for Government Departments to include social value in its contracts. The PPN mandates that from June 2022, public sector tenders must allocate a minimum of 10% of the award criteria to social value in works contracts above the UK Procurement Threshold and in services contracts above £500,000 (inclusive of VAT).

PPN 01/21 provides a framework of social value themes and indicators. A common framework enables us all to develop a shared understanding of the social value requirements of public contracts and how they will be scored.

There are 4 themes:

- **Increasing secure employment and skills** - aims to create employment and training opportunities and support in-work progression and skills development, both for those who face barriers to work and to support a more resource efficient, greener, low carbon economy.
- **Building ethical and resilient supply chains** - aims to tackle employment inequality, reduce the risk of modern slavery and human rights abuses within the supply chain, promote diverse and secure supply chains, and support entrepreneurship and social enterprises.
- **Delivering climate action** - aims to support climate adaptation and mitigation measures, promote biodiversity and resilient ecosystems, stimulate the circular economy and work towards net zero by minimising carbon emissions.
- **Promoting wellbeing** - aims to support wellbeing, improve equality, diversity and inclusion, and promote community cohesion.

When bidding on contracts, suppliers will set out how they will deliver social value under the theme(s) selected by the Contracting Authority. More information on how social value is scored can be found on www.socialvalueni.org.

How VSCE Organisations can benefit

Supply chain opportunities

One of the 4 Social Value Themes is building ethical and resilient supply chains which aims to promote diverse supply chains, and support entrepreneurship and social enterprises. Where a VCSE organisation offers goods or services that align with what is being delivered under a contract, Suppliers can deliver social value by including those organisations in their supply chain. Examples of purchases that have been made from social enterprises include uniforms, catering and venue hire.

There are also opportunities for VSCE organisations to provide expert advice to the supplier to enable the supplier to deliver certain social value initiatives, for example:

- Supporting the supplier to create and implement action plans related to, for example: equality and diversity, health and wellbeing, human rights due diligence and biodiversity.
- Delivering environmental or health and wellbeing training and/or initiatives to staff working on contracts or communities where contracts are being delivered.

CASE STUDY

As part of the Social Value commitments on DAERA's Graphic Design, Print and Website contract, The Foundation built on its long-standing relationship with Orchardville Works. This is a Social Enterprise within Orchardville, a charity which supports adults with learning disability or autism to live, learn and work across Northern Ireland.

Orchardville Works has been fulfilling orders for The Foundation, such as collating and inserting items into folders, packing items for transit, or providing hand assembly services. For the DAERA's Graphic Design, Print and Website contract, Orchardville Works fulfilled an order to insert multiple items into envelopes and sealed the envelopes ready for posting.

Opportunities for participants

Many suppliers will be looking to fulfil their social value commitments by delivering paid employment and/or skills opportunities to people who are disadvantaged in the labour market. VCSE organisations often support people who meet this criterion through their own programmes of work.

Some contracts will also have provision for delivering benefits for 'Priority Groups' who have been identified by the client. These can include, for example: people with disabilities, people with an offending background or young people who are care experienced. Again, many VCSE organisations will already be working to support these specific groups and are a fantastic resource for those suppliers who are trying to connect with those people. VCSE organisations can be best placed to create the link between Suppliers and people who can avail of initiatives such as:

- Employment opportunities
- Work placements
- Skills development (e.g. mentorship, curriculum support)
- Digital inclusion initiatives, including the promotion of skills and donation of IT device
- Financial support towards training organisations

CASE STUDY

The delivery of social value on a Libraries NI agency worker contract has helped a young man with autism secure a permanent job for the first time.

Luke took his first step into paid employment as a temporary cleaner in his local library, which enabled him to build confidence and learn new skills. This helped him secure the role permanently when it was advertised.

Luke's Employment Officer with the NOW Group, an organisation that supports people with learning difficulties and autism into jobs with a future, says:

"I have seen a big change in Luke from when I first met him. His confidence and self-esteem have grown. He now has a purpose and structure to his week and, of course, has his own spending
..

Support for your organisation

Another aspect of delivering social value is when suppliers are asked to use their skills and experience to benefit local communities. These skills will often be aligned with the works or services being procured, such as:

- Pro bono professional advice in matters related to the contract, e.g. Financial Services, Advertising, Design and Architecture.
- Donation of time, labour, tools and materials.
- License and software donation, and digital skills training for employees and volunteers.
- Mentoring, training and practical skills for staff.

CASE STUDY

Elite Training and Consultancy Limited delivered business development support to the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO) as part of the Social Value requirements on a large public sector IT contract. NIACRO is a voluntary organisation committed to reducing crime and its impact on people and communities through working with children and young people, families affected by imprisonment and adults in prison and the community.

This collaboration involved designing and building an online calculator which would enable NIACRO's participants to determine when their criminal record becomes 'spent'. The supplier worked closely with NIACRO to understand the legislative framework, design and build the tool, and undertake extensive user testing to ensure the calculator met the needs of their participants.

Steps to take

Register as a broker on our website

Brokers are organisations in Northern Ireland who:

- can benefit from the social value initiatives public sector suppliers deliver;
- work with people who can benefit from the social value initiatives; or,
- have knowledge and skills to support suppliers to deliver social value initiatives.

The '[Find a Broker](#)' section on the Social Value website helps suppliers who win public contracts find brokers who can assist them in delivering their social value requirements.

Use your profile on our website to clearly set out your social value pitch for suppliers, detailing how working in partnership with you can help them deliver social value.

If you are a social enterprise, you should also register on the [Social Enterprise Northern Ireland directory](#).

Use the Contract Search

Be pro-active. The Broker section of www.socialvalueni.org also allows you to search for live contracts that include social value. You can search by location, the types of initiatives included on the contract, or by specific groups you may be supporting, such as people with disabilities. The search will return a list of

relevant contracts and include details such as the public sector organisation it belongs to, the name of the contract and Supplier's details which you can use to make contact if you feel your organisation can benefit.

It is also a good idea to be aware of upcoming procurements. There are published pipelines of procurement opportunities which you can use to identify contracts that are likely to go out to tender soon with social value requirements. You can find these pipelines here: [Procurement pipelines | Department of Finance](#)

Build your social value proposition

Approaching a supplier or being ready to build a relationship with them if they approach you will be more successful if you understand social value and how your organisation can benefit. Having a social value proposition developed means that:

- you can actively seek out opportunities on contracts that have been awarded and
- you can build relationships with suppliers who are frequently awarded Government contracts to help them prepare for social value award questions in upcoming tenders.

Some tips for putting together a compelling social value proposition are:

Develop your knowledge of Social Value:

Resources are available on www.socialvalueni.org. In addition to the contract search, you can find case studies where social value has been successfully delivered and look at the guidance for suppliers and procurement officials.

Being aware of the types of initiatives Suppliers are being asked to deliver will help you to understand where your organisation can align. Having someone in your organisation who is up to speed with social value and is available as a contact point for Suppliers will make it easier for them to contact you and start to build a relationship with your organisation.

Tell your story:

Suppliers will be actively looking to make relationships with VCSE organisations in order to deliver their social value requirements. Show them your unique selling points to set you apart from other organisations. Telling the story of the communities you are working with or participants you are supporting can bring the good work that you are delivering to life for a supplier and help them to visualise the difference they can make by working with your organisation. If you have worked with a supplier previously to deliver social value, showcase your success by writing and sharing case studies to showcase how you were involved.

Show where your organisation can be involved

Think about each of the social value initiatives that a supplier may be asked to deliver and how they align with what you deliver, or ways in which your organisation can benefit. Set out how your organisation can be involved, showing where your business model or needs align with what the Supplier will be delivering under the contract. A full list of the initiatives can be found on our website [here](#). Some examples of initiatives and things to consider are:

Initiative	Things to consider
Paid Employment	Do you work with participants who can benefit from paid employment opportunities such as people who are long term unemployed, people with disabilities or people in priority groups?
Work Experience	Do you work with people who can benefit from shorter, unpaid work experience opportunities to help them learn about the workplace?
Skills development and educational attainment	Do you have participants who would benefit from skills development e.g. CV writing, mock interviews or other skills?
Digital Skills and Cyber Security	Do you have participants who could benefit from short digital skills or cyber security initiatives?
Financial donations to support people within Northern Ireland who face barriers to employment to gain recognised industry related qualifications	Do you have participants who could benefit from support in gaining recognised qualifications? Are there specific industries like construction or IT they are interested in?
Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) action plan	Does your organisation have the skills to write or advise another organisation on how to write and implement an EDI action plan?
Inclusion of VCSE Organisations in the contract's supply chain	Does your organisation produce goods or services which could be part of the supply chain for the contract?

Business development and knowledge sharing with a VCSE organisation or Micro Enterprise in Northern Ireland	Are there areas related to the contract that your organisation can benefit from? Look at the type of contract the supplier has been awarded. For example, a financial services contract could involve staff that could train your staff on accounting software or perform an audit of your accounts. Is your organisation thinking of moving or doing an extension which an architecture firm could offer advice on etc.?
Environmental Action Plans and Training	Does your organisation have the skills to write or advise another organisation on how to write and implement an Environmental action plan or deliver training to a Supplier on topics related to the environment?
Environmental Initiatives delivered to local communities/VCSE/education establishments	Do you have participants who would be interested in receiving training or getting involved in activities related to the environment?
Circular economy	Does your organisation have the skills to advise or offer training to another organisation on how to implement circular solutions in their business? Or would you be able to reuse materials from other organisation that may otherwise go to landfill?
Health and Wellbeing	<p>Does your organisation have the skills to write or advise another organisation on how to write and implement a Health and Wellbeing action plan for their staff?</p> <p>Does your organisation deliver training or activities that Suppliers can contract you to deliver to their staff around physical and mental health?</p>

	Do you have participants who would be interested in receiving training or getting involved in activities around physical or mental health?
Art & Culture	<p>Do you have participants who would be interested in getting involved in activities around art or culture?</p> <p>Does your organisation produce art or deliver cultural activities that could be a supply chain opportunity for the contract?</p>
Initiatives to improve good relations between people from different religious, political, racial and ethnic backgrounds.	<p>Do you have participants who would be interested in getting involved in activities around developing good relations?</p> <p>Does your organisation deliver activities that could be a supply chain opportunity for the contract in the area of good relations?</p>
Donation of time to support educational establishments or organisations working with people who are at risk of social exclusion or who are disadvantaged in the labour market	<p>Are there opportunities for Suppliers to volunteer at your organisation?</p> <p>Is there an area of work you plan to deliver which requires skills that the Supplier can deliver?</p>
Donation of supplies or tools to educational establishments or organisations working with people who are at risk of social exclusion or who are disadvantaged in the labour market.	Is there a project or maintenance issue that suppliers are able to assist with or deliver for you? Will these require the expensive hiring of tools or equipment that a supplier may already have and can lend to your organisation? This may go hand in hand with the provision of skilled labour.

Tailor for specific contracts/asks

Once you have developed your Social Value proposition, you can tailor your messaging to different suppliers. The approach you would take with an IT supplier may differ from the conversation you would have with a construction supplier. Using the contract search on our website will let you know which social value initiatives have been included in a contract. However, a lot of suppliers also have their own corporate social responsibility policies and may be open to working with VCSE organisations in other ways outside of what is set out in their public sector contracts.

Sign up for our newsletter

The Social Value Unit send quarterly newsletters which you can sign up to receive. These include details of any upcoming training and events as well as case studies of social value in action. You can sign up on our website <https://socialvalueni.org/newsletter-sign-up/>