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SROI in the Art Gallery; Valuing Social Impact

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Turner Contemporary was established in 2001, with the current high-profile building opening in 2011.¹ It receives most of its revenue funding from Arts Council England and Kent County Council, supplemented by income from its independent fund-raising activities. Entrance to the gallery is free of charge, and in its first five years Turner Contemporary achieved more than 2 million visits.² As well as hosting exhibitions by internationally significant artists, the gallery also delivers a programme of workshops and activities.

The establishment of Turner Contemporary is a prime example of what has become known as arts-led regeneration (Cameron & Coaffee, 2005), with one of its stated aims being ‘to be a catalyst for the regeneration of Thanet’ (Eslea, 2018; Turner Contemporary, 2012). Until the 1970s Margate had benefitted from a thriving seaside tourist industry. However, with the advent of cheap package holidays to warmer climes, the town’s tourist industry began to decline. The combined effects of deprivation, unemployment and a lack of resources and opportunities, has led to negative effects across the population of the town (Ewbank et al., 2014; Kennell, 2011). Responding to this economic and social decline, the gallery’s key strategic aims included, ‘to change people and communities’ and to ‘to build a larger, more diverse and more engaged audience for visual art’ (Turner Contemporary, 2012).

In 2015-16, the period under review, there were 415,000 visits to the gallery, attracting net additional visitor-related expenditure estimated at £7.8 million.³ However, discussing why the gallery decided in 2014 to commission a social impact evaluation,

¹ The building was design by internationally known David Chipperfield Architects and received wide press coverage when it opened.

² Visit numbers are recorded by the gallery using an electronic door register.

³ Economic impact reporting carried out by xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.

Karen Eslea, one of the founding directors of the gallery and now the visitor experience manager, stated:

Our economic impact is amazing, but it's about so much more than that. There is lots of important stuff going on, but how do you capture that, how do you go beyond that? [How do we prove to] our investors that they are getting some return on investment and we are making a difference to a disadvantaged community through art? (Eslea, 2018)

The need for the gallery to justify its funding and demonstrate to its backers that they were getting value for money, that they were 'making a difference', was clear.

The arts evaluation landscape

Within the field of publicly subsidised arts and culture in the UK there is an increasing emphasis on accountability – measuring and valuing the impact and value of institutions and projects. Since the formation of the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1946, efforts to democratise culture have resulted in a significant sector of the arts becoming dependent on subsidy. In its plans for 2018-2022, Arts Council England announced that it would be investing £409 million per year in 830 arts organisations, museums and libraries in its National Portfolio of Organisations (Arts Council England, 2018). Organisations that receive most of their funding from the government or non-departmental public bodies are frequently required to guarantee future subsidy by producing evaluations of past performance, adhering to funding agreements and meeting targets. This trend has led not only to the emergence of an arts evaluation industry, a specialised sector within the larger market research industry (examples in the UK include the marketing consultants Morris Hargreaves Macintyre and BOP Consulting), but also the development and popularisation of 'evaluation toolkits' that are made available to recipients of arts funding. Additionally (like the project described in this article) a significant amount of

evaluation is also carried out in partnership with universities (Oman & Taylor, 2018).

There is an emerging view that organisations in the cultural sector need to establish their legitimacy by using the tools and concepts of economics to fully state the benefits they offer wider society, and that failure to embrace these methods will lead to arts organisations losing the subsidy they currently enjoy (O'Brien, 2010: 4). Whilst economic valuation techniques are widely used across government to calculate the costs and benefits of competing demands on public funding, the cultural sector is lagging behind in its methods, largely because of the complexity of placing a monetary value on the benefits of culture to individuals or groups of people (Donovan, 2013: 4). However, this pressure to evaluate using quantitative methods creates anxiety, both amongst academics and researchers, and within arts organisations themselves (MacDowall, et al, 2015; Mirza, 2006; Phiddian, et al, 2017).

As Belfiore and Bennett point out:

...a 'toolkit approach' to arts impact assessment [...] demands excessive simplifications, and its popularity is linked to its perceived advocacy potential rather than to any demonstrable contribution it may make to a genuine understanding of the nature and potential effects of artistic engagement. (Belfiore & Bennett, 2010: 121).

This brings to the fore a tension between two kinds of research – so-called 'legitimate' research carried out for academic ends, and 'advocacy driven' research that is characterised as being subservient to the needs and priorities of organisations who need to justify their impact and funding (Belfiore, 2016: 205). Bennett has described this as the 'torn halves of cultural policy research' – in other words 'critical' versus 'instrumental' approaches (2004). Concerns have been expressed that governments are only interested in instrumental value and its social and economic impact, leading to research that overlooks capturing intrinsic value and has difficulty grasping the essence

of subjective experiences (Holden, 2006: 3).

Social Return on Investment

Given the policy environment outlined above, it is hard to argue against the pragmatism of arts organisations who are required to evidence their impact in ways that are both convincing and communicable. Arts managers seek to maximise the value of their activity reporting, not only to account to stakeholders, but also to arrive at understandings of their effectiveness that can lead to better strategy and, in turn, a more efficient use of resources.

The problem for Turner Contemporary was how to find robust evidence of their social impact. At one level this was an exercise in advocacy, but at another there was clearly a genuine curiosity amongst the management team to find ways to describe and understand the difference they were making and, at a more prosaic level, ‘to find out what people are thinking about us’. The gallery had not been without its critics, not only amongst the local population and in the press (David Batty, 2016), but also in academic work that had been openly hostile to the idea of arts-led regeneration in Margate (Hubbard, 2017; Lees & McKiernan, 2014; Ward, 2018). When the report was commissioned there was some sense that the gallery needed to find a way to defend itself against these attacks.

Against this backdrop, in 2014 the gallery commissioned a report on its social impact from the xxx. The team at xxxx proposed the use of the relatively newly developed Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology (Nicholls, et al, 2012). The current guardians and advocates of the process

are an organisation called Social Value UK,⁴ and they aim to ensure the method is used consistently and adheres to a set of published principles. Social Value UK describe SROI to potential users as:

...a framework for measuring, managing, reporting and accounting for social value that engages with stakeholders and analyses your activities through their eyes. It helps you to understand where social value is being created and destroyed by involving stakeholders and valuing what matters to them (Social Value International, 2015)

One of the characteristics of SROI is its relative complexity as a method (Yates & Marra, 2017). Applied to the operations of a reasonably large and multifaceted arts institution, the resulting evaluation was significantly more extensive and complicated than first envisaged. The gallery team took a chance with commissioning the report because, as Eslea subsequently admitted, nobody on the team really knew what the process would entail or what the result would look like.

It surprised us all how large the amount of work was, and how it took longer than expected. I don't think I had really factored in enough of my own time, and we had a change of personnel, and getting financial information at some points was incredibly frustrating (Eslea, 2018).

The investment and expertise required to undertake an SROI analysis is considerable, and this has been one of the key criticisms of the method. In their review of SROI, Yates and Marra conclude not only that more training might be needed to produce 'better, more uniform and more informative SROIs', but SROI should itself be subject to a metaevaluation to ascertain in each case whether the cost of the method justified the

⁴ Social Value UK describe themselves as the national network for social impact and social value and are a member of the global network Social Value International.

benefits accrued (2017:137).

Because of the scale of the Turner Contemporary SROI evaluation, the constraints of a journal article do not allow us to describe every part of the process, nor discuss all the data in detail.⁵ Instead, I aim to articulate the key parts of the methodology, offering some of the findings as illustrations of how the research was carried out, and how the data was analysed.

Originating in San Francisco in the late 1990s, forms of the SROI methodology have been in use in the UK since the early 2000s and the method was endorsed by the UK government in 2009 (Nicholls, 2017).⁶ The method relies on its users strictly following a set of principles that are published online in a comprehensive guidance document, and which can also be understood by attending a two-day training course run by Social Value UK. The stated intention is that international standardisation will increase and improve practice and also allow findings from SROI studies to be compared and understood side-by-side. However, as Nicholls acknowledges, SROI continues to be interpreted in different ways (2017: 128). For instance, although in their discussion of cultural advocacy and evidence based policy making Oman and Taylor explicitly refer to organisations in the cultural sector enthusiastically ‘evidencing their value through social return on investment (SROI)’ (2018: 226), they subsequently

⁵ The full 79 page report is available for download here:

XX

⁶ The UK government's Office of the Third Sector and the Scottish Government commissioned a project beginning in 2007 that continues to develop guidelines that allow social businesses seeking government grants to account for their impact using a consistent, verifiable method. This resulted in another formal revision to the method, produced by a consortium led by the SROI Network, published in the Guide to SROI (Nicholls et al., 2012).

critique a published analysis by Fujiwara (2013) that bears no resemblance to the method endorsed by Social Value UK. Where Fujiwara's work uses large government generated datasets to carry out purely quantitative analysis, the widely adopted SROI method endorsed by Social Value UK uses a very different approach. Although based on accounting methods and frequently associated with the production of a number or ratio that represents a return on investment (RoI), the method actually uses qualitative, rich description, *in combination* with quantitative analysis. This, as I discuss below, leads to a range of insights that extend much further than a set of numbers. As SROI practitioners point out:

‘...SROI is much more than just a number. It is a story about change, on which to base decisions, that includes case studies and qualitative, quantitative and financial information’ (Nicholls et al., 2012: 8).

The association with numerical outputs has, however, resulted in some suspicion about the process, particularly in the arts sector. After the report was complete, Eslea told us: ‘At the time, when it was relatively new, there were a few external comments saying that using a financial figure is not the best way to go...’ (Eslea, 2018).

When Woodley et. al. carried out a survey on behalf of Arts Council England that investigated the meaning of resilience to arts practitioners, they found that management theory and practice informed by business seldom appealed or seemed relevant to arts and cultural sector workers. They noted that ‘...this can in part be a language barrier – with ‘profit’, ‘return’ and other concepts from the business and start-up world being seen as alien to the sector’ (2018: 58). However, the SROI method is relevant for the cultural sector – and to some extent unique – because it not only involves a detailed consideration of the investment that must take place in order to achieve an outcome (in other words a ‘cost/benefit analysis’), but it requires the

evaluator to directly engage with the audiences and users of the provision. This process offers rich insights about what matters to them, requiring them to describe in their own language the impacts (both positive and negative) that they feel as result of taking part in the activity.

SROI Principles

There are six principles that SROI practitioners are required to follow, and each of these is outlined in detail in the various guides that are published both by Social Value UK and others (APM, 2016; Nicholls et al., 2012; Nicholls, 2017). The principles or, more accurately, steps, are:

- (1) Establish the scope and outline those affected by the intervention
- (2) Determine a story of change
- (3) Collect evidence
- (4) Establish impact and causality
- (5) Calculate a value for SROI
- (6) Use and implement what has been learnt

In this project data was collected using a range of methods including interviews, focus groups, workshops, observation, surveys and desk research. In the following sections I illustrate our approach by outlining a specific sub-section of the research.

Scope

The scope is established by delineating the research, both in its breadth and by the time period that is being reported. As the outcome will be a return on investment, the period of an SROI report normally coincides with an accounting period, or a financial year. In this case we measured the social return on investment in the gallery's 2015–16

accounting year and we were able to use the budgets and expenditure from that period to accurately record the quantity of resources expended to deliver the gallery's activities.

Establishing the breadth of the research was more challenging. Turner Contemporary is a complex organisation, depending as it does on a range of income streams and activities in order to function effectively. As outsiders to the organisation, and with intermittent access, at first it was hard for us to make sense of all the activities that were being delivered. Initially the ambition had been to carry out an SROI report on the activities and impact of the entire organisation. It transpired, however, that our lack of experience in the methodology led us to underestimate the time and resources necessary to produce a report of this scale. Up until now most SROI reports have been designed to account for just one strand of an organisation's activity – perhaps associated with a distinct project or initiative, particularly if this receives a dedicated stream of funding. Our solution was to identify and categorise three distinct types of activity delivered by the gallery – the exhibition programme; the work with schools and colleges; and the evening classes, workshops and drop-in arts education events.

Stakeholders

We identified and aggregated the gallery's stakeholders – defined in SROI as people who experience 'material change' as a result of an organisation's outputs – into six overarching groups. We classified the most significant of these as primary stakeholders; these were visitors to exhibitions, participants in formal education and participants in lifelong learning. We classified the remaining three groups as secondary; they experience change even though they may not be directly involved in the activities of the gallery. These secondary stakeholder groups were local retailers, non-visiting local

residents and local artists. Our research found that these three groups benefit from increased footfall in the retail areas of the town, increases in tourism, a changed visitor demographic, the growth of a creative and cultural industry infra-structure and increased levels of social capital.

The ‘Story of Change’

Through engagement with the different stakeholder groups, we developed a story of the change that had occurred as a result of their involvement and participation with Turner Contemporary. We gathered evidence of both positive and negative change, and we estimated which were the most important outcomes. This was achieved through participant observation, interviews, focus groups and surveys. We dealt with the problem of complexity and scale by effectively producing a discrete SROI report for each of the activities considered, and then combining these to make a final overall report.⁷ For the purposes of this case study I will give an account of the way we established the SROI for just one of these activities, the lifelong learner provision. We used the term lifelong learning to describe educational activities that are not undertaken as part of a formal programme of education. Typically, these participants will attend weekly sessions at the gallery where they take part in arts activities, produce their own artwork and, in some cases, commission professional artists to collaborate in the production of installations and exhibitions. Others attend occasional drop-in sessions with their families on Sundays or during school holidays where they undertake arts and craft projects.

⁷ This means that instead of generating one aggregated SROI ratio for the whole of the gallery, we produced a separate return on investment ratio for each of the activities considered.

To give an idea of the scale of the programme, 8,072 participants took part in activities, projects and workshops identified as lifelong learning, either on a regular basis throughout the period under consideration, or at a one-off event in this period.

Identifying outcomes

As discussed above, the central tenet of SROI methodology is that the outcomes to be defined and understood are identified by the stakeholders themselves. Typically, these outcomes are identified using interviews, focus groups and workshops, with analysis being undertaken to identify dominant themes and patterns in the data – essentially a qualitative methodology that is repeated until saturation is achieved. At this stage the SROI method strongly resembles a grounded theory methodology where themes are drawn inductively from qualitative data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Time spent talking with stakeholders is not only the most time-consuming aspect of an SROI analysis, but also has the biggest impact on the quality of the reporting.

Through our observations and focus groups, we identified a series of individual outcomes that contributed to an overall increase in the well-being of participants. In SROI research these outcomes, both for the individual and for the wider community, are represented as a ‘theory of change’ (see table 1). Each outcome is illustrated below with a selection of the material gathered as part of our interviews and focus groups.

Outcome 1 – They became more open-minded and confident

Participants feel empowered, which increases their self-belief and creates a stronger sense of self-efficacy and leads them to become more pro-active members of the community.

“There is something that everyone’s good at.”

“That just gave me such confidence, I felt wonderful (...) I felt like I could do anything after that...”

“I think what it made me do is just open my eyes to everything I look at.”

The workshops increase participants’ confidence, allowing them to find their strengths, tackle their weaknesses and as a result believe in themselves. They find it easier to sustain their efforts even after failures or setbacks. They feel more in control over the situations they encounter.

Outcome 2 – They strengthened their social networks

They improve their ability to form better and stronger relationships and therefore feel less lonely and experience a sense of belonging to the community.

“It really changed a lot of things for me – my outlook on things (...) and just generally my ability for getting back out and about.”

“... you make friends with different people with different interests.”

Through interacting at Turner Contemporary, the participants improve their social skills finding it easier to socialise outside of the organisation, enabling them to enjoy a sense of belonging to the community.

Outcome 3 - They enhanced their knowledge and skills

Lifelong Learners report developing new skills and improving existing ones, which boosts their confidence and increases an appetite for more. A combination of confidence, inspiration, and new competencies influences the next steps in their lives, such as choosing to enter higher or further education, working in arts related environment, or holding an exhibition of their own work.

“I am now planning to get an art degree at university.”

“As a result of the experience I am now thinking about pursuing a career in journalism.”

“I have just had my own exhibition which I would never have imagined doing before.”

SROI practitioners are encouraged to consider the longer-term social impact of interventions and projects, describing this as a causality chain. Typically, a causality chain will move from the specific and direct outcomes experienced by stakeholders to the wider reaching and longer-term effects. The causality chain developed for this group of stakeholders is shown in table 2.

Although the SROI method explicitly advises researchers to consider negative as well as positive outcomes (in SROI terms, social value can be destroyed as well as created by an activity), the voluntary nature of the lifelong learning activities we considered means that participants tended to feel consistently positive about their experience. Those who did not find value in the experience or felt negative consequences as a result of attending (such as travel costs, having to find childcare or giving up another activity) probably left the programmes and were thus unable to report to us on their experience.⁸

Quantifying the change that has taken place

Having identified what outcomes the stakeholders experience, we conducted further consultation to understand how much had changed for each stakeholder group. We observed sessions and spoke to participants, and we carried out a series of surveys at a

⁸ Although it may have offered a valuable insight into where the provision might be improved, it was beyond the scope of the research to track down and consult with those who had left the programmes.

selection of the Lifelong Learning sessions. The analysis of survey responses from our stakeholder groups enabled us to quantify the outcomes experienced. This provided us with overall percentages of occurrence for each of the identified outcomes for each activity and across the whole of the Lifelong Learning programme. We used objective indicators such as asking them how many new people they had met whilst at the gallery, and we used subjective indicators, such as asking them if they felt open to new things. We also asked them how much of this change they attributed to taking part in activities at the gallery, allowing us to assess how much of this change was because of Turner Contemporary. Not every participant attributed all their positive change to Turner Contemporary – and some either did not feel these outcomes at all or did not attribute them entirely to their involvement with the gallery. The SROI deals with this when the final social return is calculated by considering and discounting for attribution factors. Additionally, later in the paper, the wider negative consequences for the gallery of some long-term participants becoming dependent on the gallery for their well-being are also discussed.

Valuing the outcomes - translating qualitative evidence into quantitative data.

Conventional approaches to evaluating an investment measure monetary transaction – in other words, the benefit (or financial return) of an investment is divided by the cost of the investment. However, the SROI methodology differs from this because it recognises that using monetary transactions alone does not capture the whole ‘value’ that is created. Where there is no market price for a series of outcomes, the SROI method sets about translating them into a monetary value by assigning a proxy, thus representing the value of the outcome using the same currency as the initial investment. As Nichols noted in the introduction to Fujiwara’s 2012 report:

To understand [this] research one needs to accept the common practice of using a value of adult learning expressed in monetary terms for comparative purposes for those items that do not have a market value. This is a fundamental principle of the Government's approach through its Green Book methodology in order to capture the social benefits of wider policy initiatives (Fujiwara, 2012: 8).

A proxy acts as an estimate of value that can determine the relative importance across a range of different outcomes. It is important to realise that outcomes do not necessarily have actual financial value; in SROI value is a measure of, or an approach to identifying the relative importance of a change experienced by stakeholder (Richards & Nicholls, 2015). Different people will have different views on this value, but by using a range of financial proxies we are able to arrive at an estimate of value.

We used two recognised SROI methodologies to calculate the value of the outcomes experienced by lifelong learning participants: a valuation workshop (meeting directly with a range of participants in a focus group situation) and a desk-based review. In the workshop we used a 'revealed preference' valuation game, asking participants to rate the value of related market traded goods, and then rank the importance of these in relation to the outcomes they accrued as a result of taking part in their art workshops (Fujiwara & Campbell, 2011). Working collectively and valuing the outcomes against items with known financial values, they generated a financial proxy for a full year (equating to around 60 hours) of participation in Lifelong Learning activity of £4,500.

Following the recommendations in the SROI guidance, we triangulated our primary research by carrying out a desk review of the literature in the area. This review considered studies that investigated the impact and value to participants of part-time learning courses and programmes (Fujiwara, 2012; Matrix Knowledge Group, 2009). We used this additional information to moderate the values collected from our valuation

workshop, finally valuing intensive participation in Lifelong Learning at Turner Contemporary at £3,000 per participant if they attended for a full year.

Using similar techniques, we were likewise able to assign proxy values to the other, less intensive types of lifelong learning offered by the gallery.⁹ By multiplying the proxy values by the number of participants (taking into account the type of activity they were involved in and the amount of time they spent taking part) we were able to arrive at a total value for the outcomes of all lifelong learners who participated in the 2015/16 financial year of £1,185,570 (see table 3). This step is important from a return on investment perspective because it precisely accounts for the numbers of participants over the course a year and it details the level of engagement of each participant. This was made easier by Turner Contemporary's rigorous approach to recording participant numbers at each of their events and activities, allowing us to accurately estimate the level of return experienced by the totality of stakeholders in relation to the investment made by the gallery.

Calculating the SROI

Finally, we used the data collected to calculate the social value created. To calculate impact, we followed SROI guidelines by considering:

- deadweight (a measure of the amount of outcome that would have happened even if the activity had not taken place)
- displacement (how much of the outcome displaced other outcomes)

⁹ This included family drop-in art classes and one-off workshops related to current exhibitions.

- attribution (how much of the outcome was caused by the contribution of other organisations or people).

We accounted for these factors through our earlier surveys with stakeholders and, taking this into account, we estimated that the total value created for stakeholders was £569,074 (accounting for the fact that the value of the total outcomes experienced by stakeholders – £1,185,570 – was not all due to their experience at the gallery, and was not felt equally by all participants).

The amount invested

We determined the direct costs of the lifelong learning programme based on the management accounts for 2015/16. In consultation with the gallery's senior management and finance team, we apportioned 2% of the overheads of running the gallery (indirect costs) to the programme and considered any income generated by the activity. We found that the total investment in the lifelong learning programme was £111,825. The analysis then shows that the net SROI ratio for Turner Contemporary's lifelong learning programme was 4.09 to 1 (see table 4). This means that in one year, for every £1 invested by Turner Contemporary, £4.09 of net social value is created for participants in Lifelong Learning activities.

Sensitivity testing

Social Value UK make an Excel spreadsheet available for download that can be used by SROI practitioners, which they call a 'value map'.¹⁰ This has pre-set formulas that help calculate impact. Once the project data has been entered into the spreadsheet, sensitivity

¹⁰ <http://www.socialvalueuk.org/resource/blank-value-map/> (accessed 18/12/18)

testing involves changing the values in the various fields and seeing how this affects the final ratio. If the research team are uncertain about an estimate, they can enter possible maximum and minimum estimated values – for instance in the value of the proxies used – and ascertain the effect this has on the amount of social value being reported. When we carried out sensitivity testing, we were surprised to find that the final ratio was only minimally influenced by changes in our estimated variables. This gave us confidence in the final ratio; albeit that, as the next section discusses, the ratio is only a small part of the value offered by an SROI report.

Conclusion - how the report was used

The gallery commissioned this report as an adjunct to its existing research which focussed on economic impact, visitor numbers, visit motivation and visitor satisfaction. The management team felt sure they were having an influence that went beyond simply high visitor numbers and visitor spend but were unsure about this could be measured. Their marketing director had stated early in the commissioning process that the SROI method appealed to them because it ‘produced a number rather than a narrative’, and it was felt that this would advocate more powerfully for the gallery. However, and unsurprisingly, given the complexity of the method, the results were almost immediately misinterpreted by a well-meaning local journalist, who wrote:

Using a method called social return on investment, researchers led by xxxxxxxxxxxx found that for every pound spent by visitors to the gallery £2.88 was generated, for every pound spent by the gallery on life-long learning £4.09 was created, and for every pound spent on formal education programmes there was a £5.15 return [*sic*] (Whitlock, 2016).

This short piece typifies the problems with interpreting SROI research (and indeed using it as an advocacy tool) – the misrecognition of the proxy values attached to

non-market outcomes as financial returns. Yates and Marra highlight this as one of the dangers of SROI – that because the use monetary units implies more reliability and validity than might be due, important (and perhaps damaging) funding decisions might be made based on numbers that tell only a small part of the story (2017: 139). However, our experience has been that funding decisions for organisations such as Turner Contemporary are based not upon single advocacy documents, but upon a myriad of complex and interacting factors. As Belfiore & Bennett (2010) have observed, funding decisions in the arts rarely adhere to a rational process of evidence-based policy making. Although at the beginning of this article I discussed the perceived need for cultural institutions to use the tools and concepts of economics to fully state the benefits they offer wider society, for Turner Contemporary the value of this exercise eventually came not from a set of numbers, but from the method itself. Reflecting on the process, this had an impact on the way the gallery team thought about their role, and it prompted them to ask questions that had never been asked before. Above all it was a learning experience for the management team who are required by the process to look carefully at how they invest their resources, the kinds of returns this gives them, and where they can usefully focus their activities. It also gave them deeper insight into the personal experiences and outcomes of individual users. This is frequently cited by SROI practitioners as one of the key benefits of the methodology – it obliges the client organisation to reflect much more carefully not only on how they create value, but also on the resources expended in order to achieve that value.

An epiphany for Eslea had been the realisation that the impact felt by participants in lifelong learning programmes was very large in the first year of their attendance; they quickly met new people, learnt new skills and become more open minded. However, whilst these benefits accrue quite rapidly in the first year, they were

likely to drop off as their attendance continued over longer periods of two or more years, the initial gains having been attained and consolidated by the participants. The high return generated for the gallery by its lifelong learning programme can only be sustained if they are able to continuously introduce new people to their programmes of activity thus refreshing the cohorts. Some participants even exhibited signs of becoming dependent on the gallery and commented that they would feel ‘a sense of bereavement’ if they were no longer able to attend their evening workshops. This poses a problem for the gallery when projects are often reliant on short-term funding and they have no choice but to end the project once the funding comes to an end:

At the end of the project, if you’ve done it well, there is a sense of loss and people feel bereft. The funding [comes] to an end, the coordinator that’s funded goes away... What I’ve learned is that you have to really communicate at the beginning that this will end to everyone involved, because people can feel quite angry. The organisation can’t just keep working with that small group of people, it has to move on. That’s the opposite of the way in my early career everyone believed that you should work. That all came from social return on investment (Eslea, 2018).

In terms of the advocacy, the role that the gallery had expected the numbers in the research to play proved to be less useful than first imagined - the descriptive outcomes were more powerful in telling the story of the gallery. Shortly after the report was published, a local pizza restaurant started supporting the gallery by including a donation for every ‘We ♥ Turner Contemporary’ pizza that was purchased. The copy on the in-store promotion contained a quote from the gallery that said:

We are really proud that through our innovative work, art is inspiring change. Visitors and participants tell us that the gallery provides a stronger sense of connectedness to family and friends; enables them to be more receptive to new experiences; empowers them; increase self-belief; inspires and excites them and encourages them to be more active members of society (GB Pizza Company, 2017)

This text was drawn from the SROI report, and perhaps shows that the rich descriptions and vivid stories uncovered by the SROI method are, in many ways, more powerful than the numbers that are often cited as the primary outcome of the SROI method – not only in terms of advocacy, but also in the self-awareness it offers an arts organisation.

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Tables

Story of Change – Lifelong Learning			
Sample Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Community Outcomes
Blank Canvas Intergenerational sharing of ideas.	60 hours per year, approximately 29 participants in each session.	More open-minded and adventurous <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to take new opportunities • Increased curiosity • Feeling inspired • Increased self-confidence • Having a sense of purpose 	1: Participants feel empowered, which increases their self-belief and creates a stronger sense of self-efficacy and leads to more pro-active members of the community.
Youth Navigators Young people training to lead tours in the gallery.	47 participants trained as gallery tour leaders.		
Studio Group For local artists and makers to work together and help each other make work.	48 hours per year 15 at each session making artwork collaboratively.	Stronger Social Networks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved social skills • Intergenerational understanding • Opportunity to meet new people • New friendship groups • Social bonding and social inclusion 	2: Participants feel more connected and improve their ability to form better and stronger relationships, they experience a stronger sense of belonging to the community.
Craft Club Intergenerational sharing and learning craft skills.	30 hours per year. 60 participants per session		
Big Sing Choral group meeting and rehearsing at the gallery.	80 participants in each session. 96 hours per year. Perform for wider community at TC public events.		
Easy Sunday Families working together in experiences they would not usually do at home.	2-hour session 50% of participants from CT9 area.	Increased knowledge and skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More people connected to culture • Development of a stronger relationship with the arts • Acquisition and enjoyment of new creative knowledge and skills 	3: Participants become more competent and accomplished which makes more education and professional opportunities available to them.
Easy Holiday Families working together in experiences they would not usually do at home	3-hour sessions Generates some income.		
Youth Navigator Training Navigators train to deliver much of Turner Contemporary Learning Programme.	47 participants trained to deliver much of Turner Contemporary Learning Programme.		

Table 1. Story of Change for Lifelong Learners.

Causality Chain of Outcomes for Lifelong Learners

<p>Participants take part in sessions with visiting artists and tutors.</p>	<p>They are encouraged to take risks, try new things, and to explore their capabilities in unusual ways.</p>	<p>They become more open-minded and confident. Their willingness to take new opportunities is enhanced.</p>	<p>Participants feel empowered, which increases their self-belief and leads them to be more pro-active members of the community.</p>
<p>Participants take part in sessions with people they have never met before in a supportive environment.</p>	<p>Group activities and opportunities to share their work and experiences allows them to form new friendships</p>	<p>Participants strengthen their social networks and improve their ability to form better and stronger relationships.</p>	<p>They experience a stronger sense of belonging to the community.</p>
<p>Participants work in a sophisticated gallery setting and can directly experience art.</p>	<p>Activities built around the exhibitions in the gallery and philosophical enquiry structured by the tutor builds their knowledge base.</p>	<p>Participants have enhanced knowledge and skills and feel more connected to culture.</p>	<p>Participants become more competent and accomplished which makes more education and professional opportunities available to them.</p>

Table 2. Causality Chain of Outcomes for Lifelong Learners.

Type of stakeholder engagement	Output – Typical total hours per annum	No. of participants	No. of participants who felt outcome (85% of total)	Total participant hours for each type of activity	Total
Intensive (Proxy £60/hr)	Craft Club: 30 hours.	90	77	2310	£885,300
	Studio Group: 48 hours.	15	13	2064	
	Youth Navigators 20 hours.	47	40	80	
	Art Inspiring Change: 28 hours.	100	85	2380	
	Generation Art: 15 hours	15	13	195	
	On Margate Sands: 26 hours	225	191	4966	
	Journey with the Waste Land: 60 hours	40	34	2040	
	Ageless Thanet: 20 hours	42	36	720	
Drop In (Proxy £25/hr)	Easy Sunday: 2 hours.	2691	2287	4574	£283,950
	Easy Holiday: 2 hours.	3752	3189	6378	
	Tours by GAs: 0.5 hour	955	812	406	
Facilities (Proxy £2/hr)	Big Sing: 96 hours.	100	85	8160	£16,320
Total value:					£1,185,570

Table 3. Value of outcomes calculated using proxies.

Total impact value (accounting for deadweight, displacement and attribution)	£569,074
Total investment minus income (including a 2% allocation of the gallery overheads)	£111,825
Gross SROI = (total impact value / investments)	5.09
Net SROI – Lifelong Learning = (total impact value - investment)/investments	4.09

Table 4: Calculation of Net SROI