



EMBED
INTEGRATING
SOCIAL VALUE
IN YOUR
ORGANISATION
AND CULTURE



GOLD AWARD

Your Step-by-Step Guide

"The Gold accreditation recognises the extensive progress we've made to grow our impact. In the process, we've developed a richer understanding of how to measure, develop and maximise the Netcompany pound to support our people, planet and small businesses."

Richard Davies, Country Manager, Netcompany UK

1 | Welcome

At Gold level, you're ambitious about your organisation's ability to deliver significant impact for society. This coveted award recognises true best practice. You've collected evidence for a full 12 months and are now ready to evaluate your impact. You will have existing and robust social value practices in place and will likely have a mature strategy.

At this level we introduce two new assessment categories: 'Trust' and 'Performance Management'. A greater emphasis is placed on demonstrating the levels of trust that your employees and customers place in your organisation, and in showing how social value insights influence your strategic decisions.

Your organisation will:

- Consolidate evidence collected over a 1-year period to demonstrate your commitments in action – from case studies to management information.
- Build a detailed understanding of how internal and external stakeholders perceive your social impact.
- Receive an independent evaluation of the impact you are creating for society.
- Demonstrate a clear strategy for influencing others to create impact and value.
- Use insights to make decisions about how you performance manage, invest time and develop your supply chain.

Benefits to you:

- Provide impressive, credible evidence in response to social value tender questions.
- Build performance to increase Return on Investment.
- Strengthen your relationships, reputation and loyalty among customers, staff, stakeholders and investors.
- Differentiate your organisation with employees and future talent – as an ethical, sustainable business that is brilliant to work for.
- Showcase your award externally – a Gold Award celebrates demonstrable social impact.

↳ Purpose of the Audit

- To evidence the extent to which your organisation is achieving its pledges and creating social legacy.
- To independently review and verify that your social value processes, activities and claims meet the required standards of the Mark.
- To understand how social value within your organisation is perceived and experienced by key stakeholders.
- To build up and review the evidence required to 'score' your organisation and award an accreditation, if appropriate.



2 | What you can expect from us

The award is conferred by Social Value Quality Mark CIC – an independent Community Interest Company that exists to uphold the highest standards of values-led business. We challenge rigour, celebrate progress and drive local spend. SVQM operates an independent Oversight Panel who will review your evidence and either confirm successful accreditation, or give reasons why the award has been declined.

Many clients also opt to receive consultancy – enhancing their chances of success. We offer this through our strategic partnership with the Social Value Business. SVB is a founding member of Social Value Quality Mark CIC, meaning they have a deep understanding of the accreditation framework and are uniquely well placed to guide you. However, as a true independent, we recognise ‘whole of market’ solutions from other consultancies, too.



↳ Oversight Panel

The Oversight Panel plays a crucial role in helping us to maintain and uphold the highest levels of transparency and trust. Our Panel ‘dip tests’ 20% of all audits for consistency. This ensures a degree of separation, ensuring we can defend the outcome of our audits and show that they are fair, legitimate and transparent. Our panel members represent a diverse range of skills, backgrounds, sectors and interests – but all are united in having a passion for, and detailed experience of, social value and/or compliance.

3 | The Audit Process

You will be assessed based on the evidence you provide under each **Review Category**.

Our auditor will send you a list of **Review Questions** that correspond to the Categories at least 28 days in advance.

Each Category is weighted in order of priority. These **Percentage Weightings** will be applied to arrive at a final score.

Each Category also has a **Standard** – this is our view of best practice and informs what the Auditor looks for.

Gold Accreditation - Review Categories and Weightings

Plan

Category Standard: 'Social value planning is effective, robust and aligned to business goals and values. The right processes, skills, knowledge and infrastructure exist to create, measure, monitor and report social value.'

This category focuses on your approach to the planning of social value within your organisation.

The questions will typically cover:

- How your Board level sponsor and Social Value lead proactively drive social value performance
- Whether you have a robust strategy and end-to-end process for the management, reporting and maximisation of social value.
- Alignment of clear measures against your commitments
- How you engage, map and measure your stakeholders, partners and supply chain
- Your plans for reducing inequality within the organisation
- Whether your values and culture have been formally reviewed or benchmarked
- Evidence of training, knowledge sharing and effective communications

10%

Demonstrate

Category Standard: 'Social value plans and policies are being consistently implemented with clear positive, measurable impact, and are managed for continuous improvement.'

This category focuses on how you've gathered data and information to evidence your progress against your social value pledges and Key Value Indicators.

The questions will typically cover:

- Stakeholder engagement and consultation
- The influence of partners and networks
- Continuous improvement against your social value policies
- Commitment to specific recognised standards, such as the National Living Wage
- Representation of SMEs, charities and social enterprise within your supply chain
- Stakeholder trust in the organisation
- Your positive and negative outcomes
- Your approach to paying employees and suppliers

25%



Calculate

Category Standard: 'Financial and non-financial value is measured and calculated ethically, transparently and legitimately. Both negative and positive value created through the delivery of goods and services can be audited and reported.'

This category focuses on the process of using your data and information to calculate the direct, indirect and hidden value.

The questions will typically cover:

- Mandatory and non-mandatory training definitions, hours and costs
- The value of positive and negative outcomes against your pledges
- Income and inward investment by location as a result of delivering social value
- Supply chain value by size, location and business type
- Employee and customer footprint
- Benefit to the public sector in terms of time, capacity and resource

20%

Report

Category Standard: 'Both negative and positive value is accurately and fairly reported, together with insights that enable continuous development. Trust levels are captured and reported by stakeholder group.'

This category focuses on the transparency and legitimacy of your reporting against your social value pledges and key value indicators.

The questions will typically cover:

- Fairness, accuracy and transparency of reporting
- Approach to reporting both positive and negative outcomes, aligned to social value themes
- Clear reporting definitions – e.g. of stakeholders, Social Value pledges, Key Value Indicators
- Ability to report outcomes by geographical location
- Reporting of trust levels by stakeholder group
- Clear referencing of sources and data to recognised standards
- Conclusions around continuous improvement / development

10%

Performance Management

Category standard: 'Strategic decision-making is underpinned by social value insights and results in improvements to products and services. All departments are actively supportive and engaged.'

This category focuses on the extent to which social value insights inform strategic decision-making, leading to positive outcomes.

The questions will typically cover:

- How the leadership team take decisions with social value in mind

Eco System

Category Standard: 'Stakeholders, suppliers, partners and communities are consulted and engaged with ethically and transparently. Social impact can be clearly demonstrated by audience.'

This category focuses on the extent to which your social value approach has influenced and benefitted your supply chain and partners.

The questions will typically cover:

- Changes experienced by mapped stakeholders
- Influence of the organisation and its networks
- Evidence of mapping and improving relationship trust
- Ethical decision-making when engaging with suppliers/partners
- Existence of a supplier Social Value Charter or equivalent
- Evidence of continuous improvement since last audit

7%

Trust

Category Standard: 'The organisation demonstrates fairness, integrity and quality through every interaction, to the extent a strong 'social contract' is created, based on trust.'

This category focuses on how your organisation demonstrates fairness, integrity and quality, to create a strong social contract.

The questions will typically cover:

- Evidence that the company is living by its values
- Integrity in supporting and developing staff and volunteers
- Levels of trust by stakeholder group – staff, volunteers, partners, clients
- Approach to reward and recognition
- Commitment to, and evidence of, continuous improvement
- How trust is created and built legitimately and transparently

8%

- Changes and improvements to operations, services, processes and policies
- Evidence of innovation to increase social value outcomes
- Integration of social value within the organisation's strategy and growth plans
- Strong, active and continuous stakeholder engagement
- Whether research has been undertaken to enable social impact to be maximised

20%

The types of evidence we request

It is the responsibility of the organisation to upload all supporting documentation to your Teams folders (access to be provided by Social Value Quality Mark CIC) by the agreed date. Failure to do so may lead to the audit needing to be rescheduled and additional cost incurred.

The documents required vary between clients. However, to support you with your preparation, the following list gives an indication of the types of evidence we look for.

- › Details of your service outcomes – for example, trust, satisfaction and advocacy scores and client testimonials.
- › Details of your engagement outcomes – for example, employee engagement scores, attrition rates and exit interview data.
- › Details of mandatory and non-mandatory training and development – for example, HR training records.
- › Details of your operational and strategic relationships with partners and suppliers – for example, partnership, charity and supply chain agreements.
- › Stakeholder maps showing relationship, level of influence, degree of consultation, and the outcomes / changes experienced
- › Evidence of supply chain spend – for example, a supply chain map showing the amount spent locally, regionally, nationally.
- › Activities delivered within the community, the people engaged and how they have benefitted. This could be evidenced through photos, case studies and testimonials.
- › Details of how social value is influencing your culture, development and decision making – for example, through Board minutes, strategy papers and evidence of ‘decision gates’ (a documented process for ethical decision making).
- › Evidence of positive communication, consultation and engagement – for example, through a stakeholder map, social value communications plan and strategic communications.
- › Details of any codes, charters and initiatives – for example, The Prompt Payment Code, Mental Health at Work, Good Business Charter.
- › Copies of raw data, draft and final reports.
- › A visual ‘journey of change’ showing outcomes and impact.



Award Threshold

Each of the audit questions are assigned to categories and hold a 'weighting'. This weighting will be applied to the score given to each audit response. To be awarded the Social Value Quality Mark Gold, you are required to reach a minimum weighted threshold score of 80%.

Scoring

The auditor will review your evidence and carry out independent research by engaging with your stakeholders to validate your claims.

The Auditor will assess your response and score accordingly.

1 – Full Compliance

The client has completely satisfied the auditor that they have met the requirements and have successfully answered the research question.

½ – Partial Compliance

The client has satisfied the auditor that they have meet the requirements in area, but not in full. There are either gaps in evidence or a lack of clarity in a response.

0 – Non Compliance

The client has failed to provide adequate/ suitable evidence to support claims.

The score for each question will be added together and recorded on the audit spreadsheet. This will create a weighted score for the theme areas.



Mandatory Questions

Each theme areas have several mandatory questions, that **MUST** be answered satisfactorily. If the organisation is scored anything less than full compliance. The organisation will fail the audit.

On receiving your application, Social Value Quality Mark CIC then has a 2-week window to review. We will let you know if further information is required, giving you the opportunity to submit further evidence. We'll then either confirm successful accreditation, or the reasons why we've declined your award.



4 | Pre-Audit Option

If you're unsure whether your organisation is likely to achieve Gold, you can apply for a pre-audit. This identifies gaps in your evidence, management, understanding and processes ahead of an official audit. You'll also receive an action plan based on the findings, to give you a greater chance of success.

For the pre-audit, we ask for a reduced list of documents and evidence in support of the Audit Categories described.

↳ Stakeholder Engagement

The following internal stakeholders are also engaged during the pre-audit, through a series of 1-hour online sessions.

Session 1 - SV Sponsor

Session 2 - SV Leader

Session 3 - HR and Training and Development

Session 4 - Contract Manager

Session 5 - Specific to the organisation



Outcome

You will be presented with a 'findings review' and action plan to support your organisation's progress towards the qualification threshold of 80% compliance against the standards.

Example:

Area of Review	Findings and Observations	Recommended Action	Rating
Calculating Value	<p><i>There is limited evidence to suggest that the organisation has a clear approach to translating outcomes into meaningful impact, and therefore, the calculation of value is not possible.</i></p> <p><i>No evidence of a connection between the delivery of activities against Key Value Indicators and what is being measured.</i></p> <p><i>This is considered an area of noncompliance.</i></p>	<p>a) <i>An urgent review of the approach to calculating value using a recognised social accounting methodology. Adopt the principles of a financial measure that stakeholders will consider legitimate.</i></p> <p>b) <i>Define the legitimate (government recognised/ industry-leading) source of financial metric that is used to calculate value.</i></p>	Red

5 | Supported accreditation (optional)

The team at Social Value Business are invested in your journey – through our collaboration, they want you to be successful and will work with you on the evidence you need to demonstrate the Gold standard. You'll be matched with a specialist who understands your sector and can tailor elements of the approach to meet your needs.



To get started, they will:

- Ask you to agree a brief costed proposal.
- Issue a Terms of Engagement.
- Allocate a specialist from the team.
- Create a project plan and give you access to a shared Teams folder.

At Gold level, clients typically benefit from:



TAILORED CONSULTANCY

At this level, you will benefit from individual, tailored advice. Let's talk about your strategic goals, your journey so far and how to harness social value to propel your growth. Use us as a critical friend and 'sounding board' to ensure your approach is dynamic and impactful.



PLANNING

Put greater robustness around your social value strategy to ensure it meets the Gold standard – including clear parameters for managing performance, building trust and continuously improving, in line with recognised best practice and legislation.



JOURNEY OF CHANGE

Map the journey of your customers or service users to demonstrate the transformative potential of your social value activities. SVB will work with you to align this to your pledges and Key Value Indicators.



DEVELOPMENT

Develop specific areas of your strategy, whether it's appointing a charity partner or setting up a new social enterprise. If SVB can't help, they will connect you with partners who can, from Carbon planning specialists to community insight teams.



COMMUNICATIONS / ENGAGEMENT

This isn't just about how you promote and celebrate your social value journey, it's fundamental to the success of your strategy. From winning over your board and putting social value at the heart of your brand story, to consulting and involving your various stakeholders – SVB has the expertise to support.



6 | Presentation and communication

Once you've achieved Gold, we will present you with a personalised award bearing your company's logo. Our Awards are sustainably sourced from The Workshop Aberfeldy – a social enterprise that supports young people into skills and employment. Each award is made from sustainable British oak.



Our Senior Communications Specialist will be in contact to help you promote your achievement. At Gold level, this support includes:

- Collaboration on press releases and communications.
- Links to the award logos.
- Image tiles for use on social media.
- Tailored advice for communicating your award.
- An invitation to take part in case studies and podcasts.

We will add you to a growing directory of companies choosing to stand out for the impact they create for society.



"Having our ambitions verified by the Social Value Quality Mark is the first step in assuring we have a robust and impactful programme – essential not just for winning new business, but for delivering for our communities."

Phillipa Green

Social Responsibility Director, CGI



Award Validity

Your award is valid for two years – after which you'll need to pay a small fee to re-audit and retain the licence, submit your application for the Platinum Award or relinquish your rights to the accreditation.

We will book a 12-month review meeting to confirm your preference.



Progressing to Platinum Award

Platinum awardees are celebrated for their influence, innovation and collaboration. At this elite level, it's no longer just about leading the organisation to higher standards of social value, but stretching outwards to spread best practice within your sector and cross-industry. Platinum requires a full 2 years of evidence and demonstrates the pinnacle of social value excellence.

At Platinum level, you'll be able to show the strongest possible evidence of your social value strategy in action – building significant reputation, loyalty and influence. Please ask us for more details.



7 | Audit Preparation

Frequently Asked Questions

It is essential that organisations make the necessary preparations for the audit. Good preparation enhances your chances of success and makes it less likely that you will need to re-audit, thereby incurring further charges.

Q) What's the difference between Gold and Platinum accreditation?

A) The Gold Award evaluates a full 12 months of evidence. It introduces the categories of Performance Management and Trust – asking you to show how social value is becoming embedded within your culture.

At Platinum, it's not enough to be driving social value within your organisation; we look for greater evidence of how you are spreading best practice externally. We introduce the additional assessment categories of 'Leadership and Influence' and 'Culture'.

Q) Will I receive a copy of the questions prior to the audit?

A) Yes, they will be supplied 28 days prior to the audit.

Q) Will I have a chance to discuss the questions prior to the audit?

A) Yes, your auditor will contact you at least 28 days prior to the audit, to discuss the audit in general, the audit process and to cover off any questions you might have.

Q) Are there any questions that are more important than others?

A) All questions are important, however there are several pass/fail questions for which you will need to show sufficient evidence, or will otherwise fail the audit. These will be clearly marked on receiving the questions.

Q) What do I need to prepare ahead of the audit?

A) You will need to provide evidence to support compliance against each of the audit questions. This could take the form of documents or a list of stakeholders with whom we can hold discussions.

Q) How should we provide our evidence?

A) Please upload your information and documentation to the Teams folder, provided.

Q) What if I cannot provide the information?

A) You will have 5 working days to provide missing or requested data, documents and information, from the date of the audit.

Q) What will the Auditor require?

A) All of our audits now take place virtually by videoconferencing unless otherwise requested. The only things we need are your uploaded evidence and your availability for the virtual audit meeting.

Q) Who will need to be in attendance?

A) The Social Value lead within your organisation will need to be present, and selected individuals will need to be available by phone or video call.

Q) When will we be informed of the outcome?

A) Your Auditor will inform you of the outcome within 21 days of the audit.

Q) Can we appeal the decision?

A) Yes. You can appeal the outcome of the audit within 10 working days. Your grounds for appeal must be sent to info@socialvaluequalitymark.com. Our independent Oversight panel will consider your appeal and provide a decision in writing within 21 days.



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