



Measuring Social Value: The Value Game and the Youth Employment Service in Glasgow

Glasgow's Regeneration Agency (GRA) tested and applied an innovative approach to valuing the outcomes achieved by its Youth Employment Service (YES) to assess the social value created and account for public spending. This is the first time that The Value Game, an interactive visual tool, has been used in Scotland to express the value of outcomes created by a service. GRA is now better equipped to make social value assessments in the future.



Background

Glasgow's Regeneration Agency (GRA), an arms-length external organisation of Glasgow City Council, is the lead agency delivering employment and training programmes, business and social enterprise support services. GRA works in partnership, under the direction of Glasgow's Youth Employability Framework, to tackle youth unemployment in the City.

The Youth Employment Service (YES) aims to increase and sustain the number of young people into a positive destination: training, education or employment. It particularly targets young people at risk of failing to progress into a positive destination and who have a range of behavioural issues that restrict progress into education or employment.

YES offers targeted and tailored person-centred training and support to find employment, extending from engagement to preparation and progression into employment. This includes one-to-one support and group sessions on a range of employment, personal and social skills, work-experience placements and after care support.

GRA collects outcome monitoring information on the YES programme, but has no way of putting a monetary value

on these outcomes. GRA wanted to pilot an innovative method of valuing outcomes to justify and account for the spending of public funding on the YES programme and to improve its social impact monitoring.

Scope and focus

There are a range of methods used to determine the value of outcomes. There are price based methods, such as cost-savings, increased income, public resource reallocation and revealed preference, and value-based methods such as stated preference and contingent valuation.

The Value Game is a visual survey-based tool using Value Game Product Cards depicting goods and services that have a market value to explore the value of intangible outcomes.

The Value Game offers a way of finding out how important the outcomes achieved through services are compared to other goods and services that the service users would purchase. The Value Game enables service users to compare the identified outcome to the products and services that they value and thus discover their relative importance.

One of the main issues when asking people about their willingness to pay for a specific service or outcome (traditional

contingent valuation) is that it may lead to answers that are strategic rather than realistic. This is either because people do not have the money to pay for the services anyway leading to an overstatement of the willingness to pay, or they are afraid that they will have to pay at a later stage and therefore strategically give low values.

Because the products in the Value Game are represented by images, without reference to the price, stakeholders are forced to apply a more intuitive assessment of value, which avoids strategic answers and ultimately leads to a more realistic value of the outcome.

Implementation

The main stakeholder group was the disadvantaged unemployed young people that are the clients of the YES service.

The Developing Markets for Third Sector Providers programme facilitated a Value Game workshop attended by ten YES clients.

The first step in the workshop was to identify the three main outcomes for the young people. There were identified as:

- Improved employability
- Increased confidence
- Increased optimism about the future

Workshop participants were then given more than 40 Value Cards depicting products of assumed value to them, ranging from low value items (can of juice) to high value one (annual rent of a flat). The group selected 13 cards that were relevant to them and introduced one more product that was not in the original selection, but should be included.

The group subsequently ranked the 14 selected Value Cards in order of importance. The three identified outcomes, presented as Outcomes Cards, were introduced to rank within the Value Cards.

Finally, a monetary value was then attached to the Value Cards next to the Outcomes Cards and the value of the outcome was calculated as the average of its two adjacent Value Cards.

Key challenges

Using the Value Game proved to be a relatively straightforward way for GRA to identify and assess the value of the outcomes for the young people from the YES service. However there were a number of challenges:

- **Managing the group process.** The group, as in many cases, was dominated by a small number of very vocal young people. The facilitators had to intervene a number of times to ensure that everybody could contribute and the decisions made by the group were indeed shared by the whole group.
- **Selecting relevant Value Cards.** The facilitators initially provided the group with a large number of different Value Cards. When discussed with the young people it turned out that a large number of the Value Cards were irrelevant for the young people and some highly relevant products were missing. This was overcome by providing stakeholders a number of blank cards and a felt tip pen to create their own cards. In this Value Game one additional card was produced (driving license).
- **Valuing the Value Cards.** In order to determine the value of the outcomes, the facilitator had to attach a monetary value to the Value Cards nearest to the Outcome Cards. This can only be done satisfactorily if the Value Cards are detailed enough. For example a TV can mean a small 22' screen with a value of around £150 to a 8" smart TV with a price of around £22,000.
- **Monetary Value of the ranking.** Sometimes the ranking of the Value Cards is not coherent with their monetary value. In this case that was caused by a relative high value attached

to products required for everyday use (e.g. clothes) over products seen as luxury goods (e.g. a holiday).

- **Using the evidence to inform decisions.** Having valued outcomes and established their relative value, the next step is to use this evidence to inform decisions about the service. More effort should be put into activities that result in outcomes with a high value and activities leading to no outcomes, and outcomes with a relative low value should be decreased or dropped.

Outcomes

Valuing outcomes by using the Value Game provided GRA with an important insight into the outcomes achieved by young people from the YES service and what value is created for them, including:

- **Evidence of the value.** Many social impact reports receive criticism because of the subjective way in which monetary values have been identified for intangible outcomes. GRA was able to show that the monetary values used were grounded in a recognised valuation technique and based on direct feedback from the young people themselves.
- **A positive social return.** Because GRA was able to value the outcomes of the YES service, it could calculate the social return, which revealed that it has created considerable additional social value for the young people.
- **A replicable and scalable method.** The Value Game is available as an online tool, whereby an unlimited number of service users can assess and rank the values of service outcomes.

These were important benefits for GRA to better understand what young people valued in the service.

Critical success factors

There are a number of critical factors that enabled GRA to make good use of the Value Game as a tool to value outcomes.

Critical success factors included:

- **An established tool.** GRA could make use of the Value Game, developed in the Netherlands and tested in social impact measurement analysis across Europe.
- **Commitment to understanding and valuing the service.** Those involved in the process within GRA held a strong commitment to understanding the outcomes resulting from the YES service and their value. The valuation exercise was undertaken as a genuine learning experience without any preconceived ideas on findings.
- **A responsive focus group.** GRA has developed an excellent relationship with its clients and was therefore able to get together a group of ten young people that gave up their free time to attend a workshop. Because of this personal relationship with GRA the young people were able to be realistic in their assessment, without the need to under or overstate the value of the outcomes.

Future ambitions

GRA has used the Value Game to better understand and value service outcomes for young people. Based on the initial pilot there are a number of ways that the Value Game can be used:

- Regularly (e.g. annually) repeat the Value Game process to check if the outcomes and their value are still valid.
- Use the Value Game online tool as a standard method of impact measurement to build up an even stronger evidence base of social impact.
- Conducting Value games for other GRA services.

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