

## **Responsible Business Forum: May Summary**

The latest Responsible Business Forum welcomed participants from across sectors to explore how collaboration and partnership can strengthen social value delivery. The Forum is the result of a recent merger between the Social Value Forum and the Charity Forum, aimed at uniting efforts to support more cohesive and impactful responsible business practices.

### **Spotlight Presentation: Social Value in Procurement**

#### **Tim Edwards – Social value overview**

Tim outlined how social value focuses on improving wellbeing and adapting services to maximise impact. He explained recent policy developments, including the Procurement Act 2023, which mandates a minimum 10% weighting for social value in public contracts and requires it to be embedded into the final contract. He stressed the importance of realistic, aligned contributions and avoiding inflated or irrelevant claims.

#### **Ayad Al-Ani – Barriers and opportunities**

Ayad highlighted the difficulties faced by voluntary and community organisations in measuring impact—such as lack of time, technical expertise, and standardised frameworks. He introduced the Collaborative Value Initiative, a project co-led by multiple UK universities, to support the development of shared, user-friendly tools for measuring social value. One approach includes using SROI proxies to assign financial value to outcomes like reduced stress or increased employment.

### **Key discussion themes**

#### **1. Capacity and clarity for SMEs and charities**

Many small organisations are delivering significant social impact but struggle to capture or communicate this effectively, particularly when responding to public procurement requirements. A lack of shared language and tools across sectors continues to be a barrier.

#### **2. Disconnect between purpose and procurement**

There was concern that social value in tenders often becomes a box-ticking exercise. Participants called for a return to measuring real impact, such as improving quality of life, rather than just fulfilling predefined metrics like apprenticeships or local spend.

#### **3. Role of support organisations**

Organisations like the Chamber and VAST were recognised as key players in translating frameworks and advocating for procurement models that reflect true social impact.

#### **4. Strengthening cross-sector collaboration**

Charities and VCSEs, with extensive experience in qualitative impact, could support SMEs navigating social value. Participants also agreed on the importance of data sharing, better storytelling, and shared platforms to amplify collective impact.

#### **5. From donations to partnerships**

There's growing interest from the private sector in developing meaningful, long-term partnerships. Charities hold valuable data and are keen to demonstrate impact in ways that align with funders' and businesses' needs.

#### **Emerging priorities and challenges**

##### **Challenges**

- Inconsistent frameworks and language.
- Gaps in capacity and confidence, especially in SMEs and small charities.
- Disconnection between actual social value and what is scored in tenders.
- Lack of robust tools and shared measurement systems.

##### **Priorities**

- Educate commissioners and standardise language across sectors.
- Build shared tools and templates (e.g. SROI proxies, theory of change models).
- Create stronger cross-sector partnerships.
- Develop a central data bank of anonymised local data to support funding bids and planning.

#### **Data sharing and collective impact**

An open discussion focused on how public and anonymised data can be shared more effectively. Ideas included:

- A central data repository hosted by the Chamber.
- A shared local survey tool for use across charities and businesses.
- Learning from other sectors, such as football's social impact data collection or NHS anonymisation protocols.

Concerns were raised about reluctance to share data, particularly in joint projects with local authorities or NHS partners, but participants agreed that clear boundaries, trust, and a collective mindset are key to overcoming this.