Valuing VCSEs

Data infrastructure to measure sector value

Technical Walkthrough of a Proposed VCSE Value Mapper



A Project Funded through the British Academy Policy Innovation Fellowship Activities Fund - with additional insight from an LPIP Place Fellowship



Inclusive and value-ful digital infrastructures to support a thriving VCSE sector

Should ‘value’ be the lens through which policy interventions can be better understood and supported?

Exploratory question



Agenda

Please read these slides as background information before testing the VCSE Value Mapper.

Please reflect discussing the CEEDR team's experiences of completing the VCSE Value Mapper.

Was it intuitive to use?
What does the taxonomy miss?
Are the measurements/methods adequate (NB: this is a WIP)
Where are the interoperability gaps with frameworks participants currently use?
What risks or ethical concerns arise from the technical design?

Outputs will inform the policy lab sessions expected in May and June, organised with the British Academy.

Welcome and context

Purpose: To introduce key findings and outputs from a BA-funded Policy Innovation Fellowship to explore the technical design and interoperability of proposed VCSE Value Mapper with relevant data infrastructure needs and frameworks

Unlike tools designed for corporate business model redesign, the VCSE Value Mapper applies a multi-dimensional typology developed inductively from VCSE sector practice, centred on community-defined value rather than market value capture.



About this Project

British Academy Policy Innovation Fellowship Activities Fund

This nine-month project (October 2025 – July 2026) advances action-based research a Policy Innovation Fellowship, *Understanding the value of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector.* The Activities Fund is exploring how technology can support articulation and measurement of VCSE value. This includes a proposed VCSE Value Mapper and integration with key British Academy programme insights.

Research Team: Dr Amy Burnett (PI) and the British Academy Social and Cultural Infrastructure Digital Society programmes - from Catherine Wilder (Keystone Ecological – Platform Architect)



For further details and outputs from this fellowship and follow-on activities funding, please see the Valuing Community website Projects Page.

Research Questions

This research addresses critical gaps by examining how value is defined and operationalised. Underpinning questions include:

- How is 'value' currently measured? What metrics capture VCSE service quality?
- Who uses these measures and how? How are valuation approaches applied across stakeholder networks?
- Are current methods fit for purpose? Do measures reflect multifaceted VCSE value?
- How is value negotiated? How do actors justify, construct, resource, and assess outputs?
- Do VCSE services offer system efficiencies? Do delivery methods lead to more effective interventions?
- How can data practices be improved? What steps enhance data collection to empower the sector?



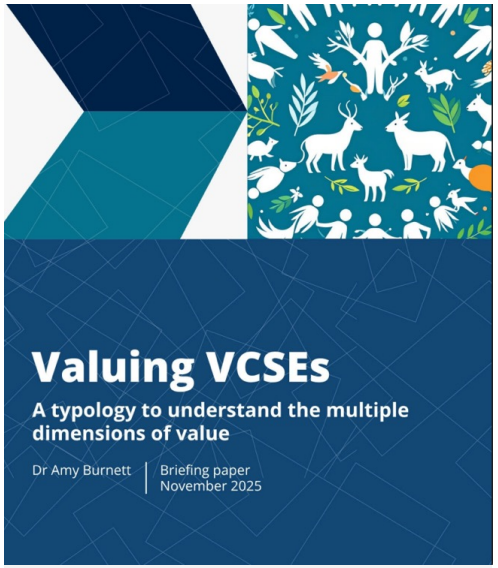
Find out more @
https://valuingcommunity.co.uk/projects/ba-fellowship/

VCSE Value Typology

This typology presents a comprehensive framework for understanding how Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations create value, moving beyond conventional economic measures to encompass a fuller spectrum of VCSE+ contributions.

Source: Burnett, A (2025)

Valuation type	Summary	Measures of success from this valuation lens and question from this value perspective
Monetary and cost-benefit analysis	Often the default measure of success and efficiency by policy-makers and suppliers	Money saved and efficiencies: Is this solution or intervention going to save money or lead to evidenced efficiencies?
Recognition, reputation and appreciative value	Working with the VCSE builds a positive reputation to support social good (which may be enhanced through accreditation schemes)	Improved reputation: Will I be recognised for my work in partnering with this organisation?
From a capitals perspective	Measuring outcomes in terms of how they support different capitals (social, human, infrastructure/built, natural etc)	Interdependent benefits: Will this intervention lead to multiple benefits other than the one I normally deal with?
Improved governance and culture	Contributing to positive business models and decision-making (i.e. more inclusive)	Better decisions: Will this model lead to better and more inclusive decision-making?
Community assets and ownership	Understanding how assets and services delivered by VCSEs contribute to better or more ownership by and for communities (see the British Academy's work on social and cultural infrastructure)	Community influence over assets: Does an asset managed by the community produce better results?
Value chain perspectives	Measures that quantify social value in the supply chain (i.e. beyond the VCSE sector and in the public/private sector product and services)	Cascading (scope 3) results: Will this have positive benefits for my supply chain
Personal value and meeting intrinsic objectives	Whether the social economy and 'doing good' meets people's personal goals to contribute to society	Personal satisfaction: Does this meet my personal goals and values?
Regenerative value	Measures that encourage positively reinforcing outcomes, through carefully considered incentives from a systems approach	Amplified positive value: Is this intervention designed so that it can benefit from positive levers and incentives, encouraging other cascading benefits?
Policy influence and outcome	The value VCSE activities have as coproducers of policy or in influencing its design	Policy influence: Are VCSE interventions meeting or shaping policies at different scales (i.e. national, local)?



Dr Amy Burnett, a Fellow hosted by the British Academy Policy Innovation Fellowship in the Civil Society and Youth team at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) developed a nine-dimensional VCSE value typology to understand how different value measures are (or not) being understood and measured.

About this Project

This Policy Innovation Fellowship Activities Fund seeks to:

- Explore how technology—including AI, platform governance, and spatial analysis—can enhance measurement whilst maintaining community ownership and democratic values.
- Culminate in co-designed requirements for animating the Value Typology in an AI-enabled "VCSE Value Mapper" tool, identified as a potential output during the Policy Innovation Fellowship that required further investigation as to demand and potential design.
- Enhance value-ful sector assessments: The Value Mapper tool, if developed, could be invaluable for empowering civil society to articulate its Value/impact effectively to government and other stakeholders, strengthening its position to support relationships and understanding of sector contributions, i.e. a methodological tool to enhance government's civil society Covenant with the sector.



However, it is essential that such a tool in itself would add value amid the plethora of tools, frameworks and measures to define value measures in different ways.

Research Roots

Draws on:

- British Academy Policy Innovation Fellowship on measuring value in the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector with DCMS/Civil Society and Youth Directorate
- British Academy research on measuring social and cultural infrastructure (with the Bennett Institute) and digital society principles
- LPIP research on devolution and parish and town councils and ideas for 'regenerative devolution' and international experience of decentralisation
- LPIP research on asset-based community development and ecological citizenship
- Regenerative value and governance and SLCC article on neighbourhood planning
- Experience working with community and parish councils
- SG member of the DCMS/ODI Volunteering Open Data Standards



Current State

Data Challenges & Value Measurement Gaps

The VCSE sector makes a significant contribution to the UK economy yet lacks comparable data infrastructure to evidence its activities and impacts.

This systematic invisibility undermines the sector's ability to demonstrate value, secure resources, and inform policy-making. VCSEs contribute significant value but accessing and using data is challenging, particularly for under-resourced organisations.

Value Measurement Gaps

While monetary and efficiency measures dominate current frameworks, dimensions such as regenerative value, community ownership, and personal/intrinsic value creation receive limited systematic attention.

Key Findings

- **Measurement Gaps & Systemic Invisibility —** Current frameworks dominated by monetary and efficiency measures fail to capture dimensions such as regenerative value, community ownership, and personal/intrinsic value creation.
- **Stakeholder Perspectives on Value Creation —** Different stakeholder groups prioritise different aspects: policy-makers focus on efficiency and policy influence; community organisations prioritise personal value and community assets.
- **Business Model Impacts —** Measurement approaches must accommodate multiple perspectives whilst maintaining coherence across the sector — and must reflect hybrid organisational models that span public and private logics.

RQs and summary findings

Research Question	Key Challenge
How is 'value' currently measured?	Dominance of monetary approaches that crowd out other value forms
What metrics capture VCSE service quality?	Existing frameworks are supply-chain-focused and insufficiently VCSE-specific
Who uses these measures and how?	Structural power imbalances shape who defines and applies valuation
How are valuation approaches applied across stakeholder networks?	Competing value logics across actors with unequal power
Are current methods fit for purpose?	Systematic invisibility of distinctive VCSE value dimensions
Do measures reflect multifaceted VCSE value?	Reductionism in measurement perpetuates the measurement gap problem
How is value negotiated?	Political nature of value construction in procurement and commissioning arenas
How do actors justify, construct, resource, and assess outputs?	Hybrid organisational models are innovative but poorly rewarded within mainstream frameworks (i.e. structurally unincentivised)
Do VCSE services offer system efficiencies?	System efficiencies are real but poorly evidenced within some current metrics
Do delivery methods lead to more effective interventions?	Funding pressures threaten the distinctive delivery approaches that generate effectiveness
How can data practices be improved?	Fragmented, under-resourced, and sector-blind data infrastructure
What steps enhance data collection to empower the sector?	Need for non-extractive, open, and community-aligned data tools

Co-Design

Policy Innovation Fellowship Engagement and interviews with VSCEs and their supporters

Activities Fund Engagement

Focus Group 1 - Technology/tech4good, analysts and academics (18/2/26)

Focus Group 2 - Parish and Town Councils/Local Authorities (25/2/26)

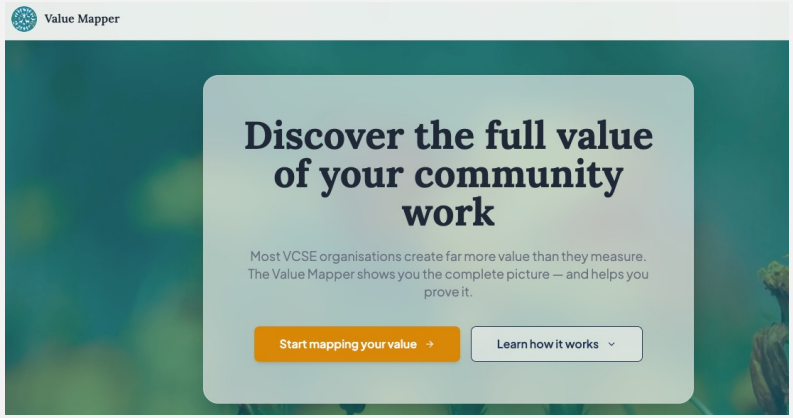
Policy Lab - policy-makers, data specialists, stakeholder representatives from VCSEs and focus groups

Objectives

The research aims to:

- Validate whether a multi-dimensional value typology developed during a British Academy Policy Innovation Fellowship is useful for different stakeholders who are from, work with, procure from or support VCSEs
- Identify which value dimensions matter most and which feel missing and how these can link to key frameworks and systems
- Understand existing measurement practices and pain points (and how the British Academy's measuring social and cultural infrastructure framework might address these)
- Test accessibility of language and concepts (i.e. value 'vs.' impact)
- Gather user requirements for the VCSE Value Mapper tool
- Explore how small organisations could realistically use the framework/mapper tool including an offline VCSE Value Cards (v1.1. for comment)
- Understand how to embed design preferences into policy and data systems

Overview of the current MVP – for feedback. Demonstration of shadow value methodology, recognition gap calculation, and interoperability design



www.vcse-value-mapper.lovable.app

Catherine's walkthrough here (unlisted link)

Sample output of the VCSE Value Mapper

VCSE Value Mapper

Tool being explored by Dr Amy Burnett and built by Catherine Wilder (Keystone Ecological)

Purpose: Digital platform to measure full spectrum of value created by voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations - directly applicable to parish councils managing community assets

Multi-dimensional value framework assesses	Output for each asset/organisation:
• Traditional metrics (financial, employment, service delivery) • Shadow value (emotional labour, democratic infrastructure, knowledge commons, community regeneration, prevention systems) • Strategic positioning and transformation pathways	• Hidden value quantification with monetary estimates • Recognition gap analysis (what's being missed by current measures) • Strategic development opportunities • Reflection framework for board/council discussions

Multi-Capital Measurement in Practice

Moving beyond whole-life costs to regenerative value assessment

Capital type	Tools	Regenerative Measure
Environmental Capital	BREEAM, Energy Audits, Flood Protection, Circular Economy Statements	Positive feedback loops with nature, net environmental gain
Social Capital	Changing Places facilities, Inclusive Design standards, Access Audits	Community wellbeing, participation, social cohesion, democratic engagement
Economic Capital	Circular Economy approaches, Whole-life Cost Assessment, Social Value in procurement	Local wealth retention, resilient local economies, community wealth building
Cultural Capital	Adaptive Reuse, Conservation Accreditation, Heritage assessments	Heritage and place-based identity, cultural renewal, social infrastructure
Human Capital	Skills development, volunteering capacity, community organising	Community capacity, knowledge commons, prevention systems

Shadow Value and its importance to Asset Transfers

Shadow value: The unmeasured contributions that asset-based community infrastructure generates

Relevance: Without measuring shadow value, asset transfers appear as cost burdens rather than infrastructure investments

Theme	Shadow Value
Emotional Labour and Care Work	Relationship maintenance, pastoral support, community cohesion
Democratic Infrastructure Value	Civic participation, governance capacity building, community voice
Knowledge Commons Stewardship	Information sharing, collective learning, skills transfer
Community Regeneration	Place-based transformation, asset development, local identity
Prevention Systems Value	Early intervention, crisis avoidance, reducing downstream public costs

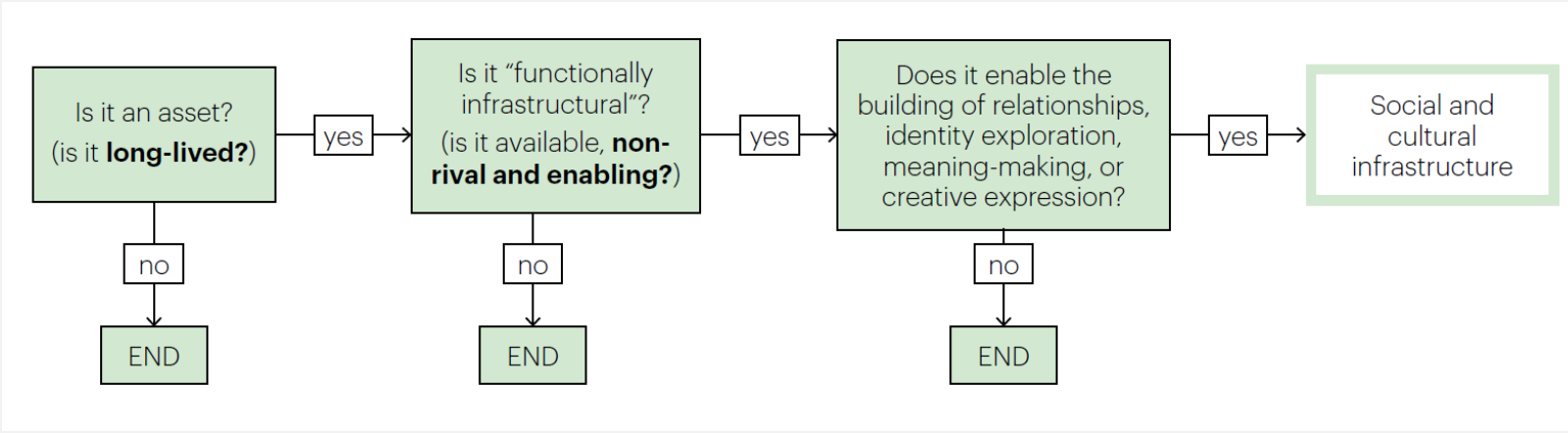
The Social and Cultural Infrastructure Framework

Requirements and Concerns

The Social and Cultural Infrastructure Framework

Assets classed as social and cultural infrastructure demonstrate the same core characteristics as other types of infrastructure (roads, utilities, digital), while also making particular contributions to the social and cultural lives of communities.

Defining social and cultural infrastructure



Source: British Academy, Measuring Social and Cultural Infrastructure (Bennett Institute for Public Policy, April 2025)

The British Academy

Bennett Institute for Public Policy Cambridge

SCI - Measurement as a Process, Not a Product

Measurement should be seen as a process that at each stage considers how choices and decisions about what is measured and how reflects the needs of all involved.

Implication for asset transfers: You need to establish who will measure value, how community voice will be included, and what representation methods will inform decisions about adequate resourcing.

Source: British Academy, Measuring Social and Cultural Infrastructure (Bennett Institute for Public Policy, April 2025)

The three-phase framework:

Phase 1: Who is measuring and why?
Purpose-driven definition
Stakeholder identification

Phase 2: Measuring provision and access/use
Identifying social and cultural infrastructure
Assessing community access and use
Iterative refinement as insights emerge

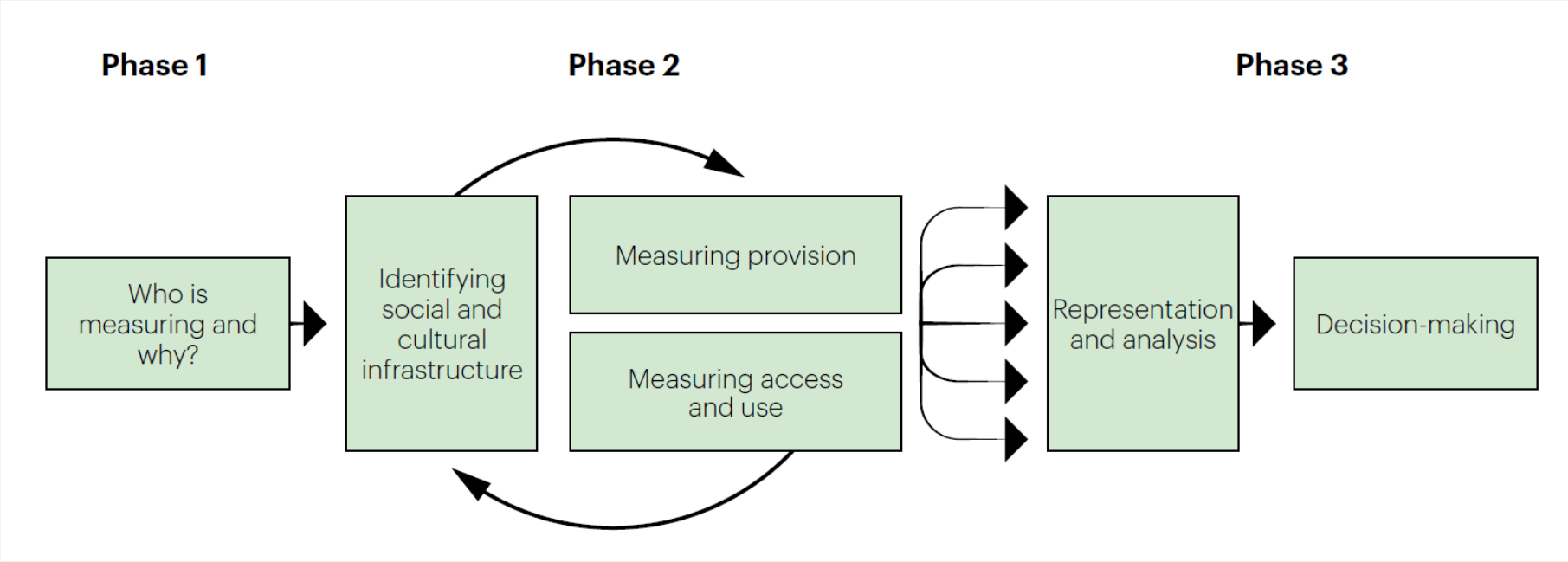
Phase 3: Representation and analysis → Decision-making
Multiple data sources (quantitative and qualitative)
Maps, visualisations, films, testimonies
Community voice in interpretation

The Social and Cultural Infrastructure Framework

Requirements and Concerns

The Social and Cultural Infrastructure Framework

The Framework



Source: British Academy, Measuring Social and Cultural Infrastructure (Bennett Institute for Public Policy, April 2025)

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Technical Architecture & Platform Principles

How the platform is built — and what it is designed to do

Technical Architecture

Input Layer: Mixed input types: short text, long text, single-choice, multi-choice, and URL fields. Progress persistence across sessions.

AI Analysis Engine: Three-stage pipeline powered by Gemini 2.5 Pro. Forced JSON mode for reliable parsing. Methodology transparency sections in every report. Prompt adjustment protocols built in.

Database Layer: Relational database (PostgreSQL/Supabase). Row-level security. 162-action taxonomy with 37 columns per action stored and queryable. Progress and status tracking throughout pipeline.

Output Layer: Framework alignment mapping (National TOMs). Shadow value calculation with confidence scores. Value Intelligence Report. Dimension profile visualisation.

How the Platform Supports VCSE Value

Builds evidence without extracting it

Organisations control their own data through row-level security and optional password-protected sharing.

Makes lived experience legible to policy

Questionnaire narratives are translated into defensible, policy-relevant claims through dual-register output — practitioner language and academic transparency — without stripping organisational voice.

Trust infrastructure by design

Methodology is transparent: a five-page appendix explains scoring, loops, archetypes, and SCI application. Organisations review reports before choosing to share via password-protected links with expiry dates.

Place-based intelligence

Questionnaire captures geographic and demographic context. Place-based intelligence is a development priority.

Sample Output



Title
1 Your Story
2 The Value Nobody Counts
3 What Makes You Powerful
4 Your Complete Value Profile
5 Your Infrastructure Role
6 Your Strategic Position
7 Your Next Move
8 How We Worked It Out

VCSE VALUE INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Greenfields Community Interest Company

This report reveals the full spectrum of your value — from the soil you build to the community you nurture.

Community Interest Company · Easton, Bristol · 20 MARCH 2026

Open review: gaps, questions, and design challenges

- How intituive is it to use?
- What does the taxonomy miss?
- Where are the interoperability opportunities and gaps with frameworks participants currently use?
- What risks or ethical concerns arise from the technical design?
- What open-source components could form the foundation?
- How do we build for sustainability beyond initial funding?



Next steps

Recap of discussions

Technology Opportunities and Requirements to take to the Policy Lab

What would success look like for a "VCSE Value Mapper" from your perspective?

How could it support better partnership working?

How could the SCI framework and the Value Mapper help with asset transfer and valuation of assets?

What role would you want in developing or testing such technology?



https://valuingcommunity.co.uk/vcsecasestudies/



VCSE Case Studies

As part of the Valuing Community project, a series of short video case studies has been produced to provide a public-facing window into the research.

What is the value of the VCSE sector? Insights on civil society and the complexities of measuring value



Get in touch

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