

Social Impact for Events

A guide to measuring and communicating the social impact of events.



Kiā ora

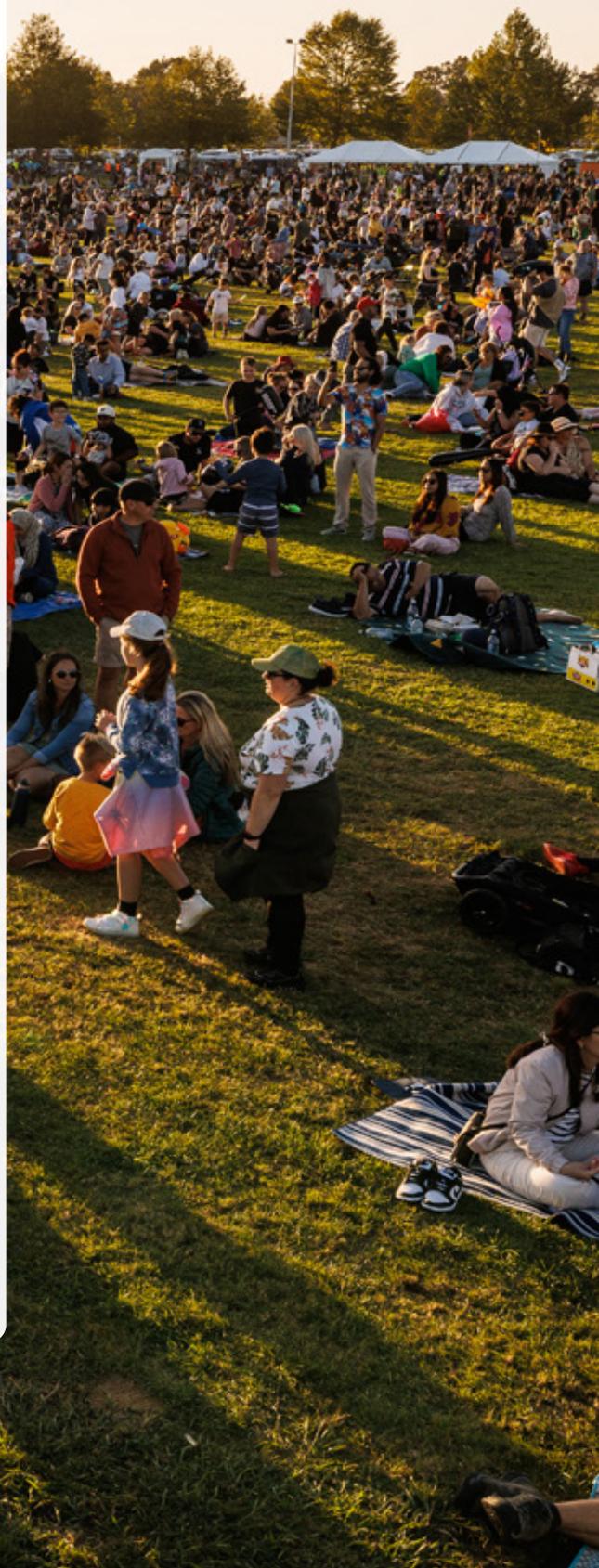
Events play a powerful role in shaping the social fabric of the Waikato, from grassroots community gatherings to internationally recognised festivals and sporting showcases, they connect people, celebrate culture and enhance our quality of life.

Hamilton & Waikato Tourism has partnered with Storied to develop this resource to help event organisers, partners, and community stakeholders to understand, measure and communicate the social impact of events across the Waikato.

This guide provides practical tools, insights and local examples to support better decision-making, stronger storytelling, and more meaningful outcomes.

**The Mighty
Waikato**
New Zealand

| storied.



Measuring event impact.

Event evaluation is a key part of planning and delivery, offering insights into what worked, what can improve, and whether goals were met. It's a full-cycle process covering before, during, and after the event. Using a range of measures, holistic evaluation assesses impact across attendance, social outcomes, economic value, environmental footprint, and media reach. It helps track success, drive improvement, and support long-term sustainability.

Event impact is measured across five areas:

1. Attendance and engagement

Tracks who attended and how they engaged, including demographics and repeat participation.

2. Social

Measures contributions to inclusion, community connection, wellbeing, and cultural expression.

3. Economic

Estimates financial impact, including ROI, local spend, jobs, tourism, and business support.

4. Environmental

Assesses footprint and sustainability efforts like waste, energy, transport, and emissions.

5. Media

Measures reach, sentiment, and value of media, including digital, social, and brand exposure.

Based on Nielsen's Event Impact Assessment (EIA) framework

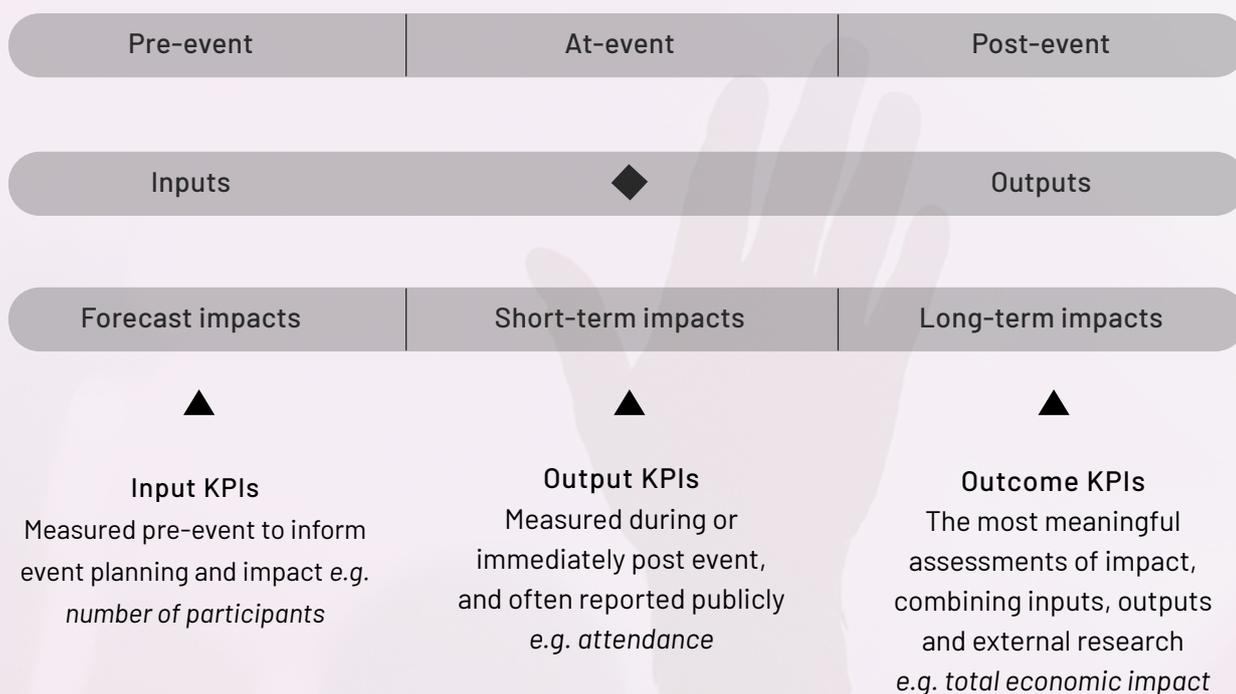


Measurement framework.

A staged measurement framework helps event organisers evaluate social impact in a clear, structured way across the event lifecycle. Dividing measurement into three phases - pre-event (forecast impacts), at-event (short-term outcomes), and post-event (long-term impacts) - ensures your approach stays focused and manageable.

Pre-event data sets the baseline and identifies targets. At-event measurement captures immediate participation and feedback. Post-event evaluation tracks sustained changes in community pride, wellbeing, or inclusion. This framework keeps your efforts aligned with your goals, supports better planning, and builds a stronger case for future support.

► Measurement framework



Framework adapted from *Common Indicators For Measuring The Impact Of Events | ASOIF | 2021*

Social impact and events.

Social impact includes the positive and negative effects an event has on people, communities, and society. It extends beyond the event itself to influence wellbeing, cohesion, culture, and quality of life. Social impact can be grouped into the following four focus areas aligned with the Living Standards Framework, New Zealand's wellbeing model, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Social impact is measured across four key pillars:

1. Community Impact

Events can boost self-image and quality of life by building civic pride, social capital, community capacity, and a sense of belonging – especially when these outcomes are widely shared.

2. Health and Wellbeing

Events offer immediate health benefits and support lasting behaviour change by encouraging participation, social connection, and positive health attitudes.

3. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Events that promote equitable access and inclusion increase minority participation and help shift attitudes toward greater social equity.

4. Volunteering and Skills

Events enable people to give back, gain experience, and build skills and networks. Volunteers enhance delivery and deepen community engagement.

Based on eventIMPACTS Social Impact Framework



The importance of social impact in events.

Measuring social impact enables events to demonstrate their effectiveness, improve future planning, and build trust with stakeholders.

Key benefits of measuring social impact include:

- **Builds trust and connection with communities**
Demonstrating social impact helps build public, funder, and council confidence in your event.
- **Enhances funding and investment opportunities**
Clear, measurable impact strengthens funding and sponsorship proposals in a competitive landscape.
- **Helps refine delivery to meet evolving needs**
Impact data reveals what works and what needs improvement, guiding stronger future events.
- **Demonstrates community-focused leadership**
Measuring and reporting social impact shows leadership and responds to growing community interest.
- **Outlines alignment with local and national goals**
Aligning event outcomes with local, regional and national objectives shows how your event contributes to wider development aims.



How to use this resource.

This resource is a step-by-step guide to help event organisers measure, evaluate, and communicate social impact. It is practical, flexible, and scalable for events of any size. Each step outlines a key part of the process - from defining your purpose to continuous improvement - and includes clear actions to support your approach. The content is intended as general guidance and should be adapted to suit your specific context.

Step-by-Step Summary

Step 1: Starting with purpose

Define what your event aims to achieve socially and focus your efforts on a few meaningful goals.

Step 2: Setting a baseline

Understand your starting point by gathering data and engaging stakeholders to identify strengths and gaps.

Step 3: Deciding what to measure

Select realistic indicators for each impact pillar that align with your event's purpose and capacity.

Step 4: Measuring across the event lifecycle

Plan data collection before, during, and after the event to capture a full picture of impact.

Step 5: Data analysing and evaluation

Review your data, compare it to targets, and identify what worked, what didn't, and why.

Step 6: Reporting and sharing stories

Tailor your communication to each audience using clear metrics and real-life stories to show impact.

Step 7: Improving and evolving

Refine your approach after each event, deepen collaboration with stakeholders, and build your capability over time.



step 1

Starting with purpose.

This resource promotes a practical approach to measuring and communicating social impact that any event organiser can adopt, regardless of event size or type. The first step is to define your event's purpose and the social outcomes you want to achieve. Start small, focus on what matters most, and build your approach over time. A clear purpose will guide planning, shape measurement tools, and make reporting meaningful.

A pragmatic approach means being realistic about your capacity while staying committed to improvement. Not every event needs complex systems to track outcomes. Focus on areas that align with your purpose and take measurable steps. Use a simple feedback loop to learn, refine, and demonstrate progress.

Social impact is most effective when delivered in partnership with your community and stakeholders. Listening to feedback, engaging diverse voices, and co-creating outcomes will make your event inclusive, relevant, and trusted. This collaboration strengthens quality and builds long-term support.

Key actions for step 1

- Define the social outcomes you want to achieve, such as community pride or inclusion.
- Identify which of the four pillars are most relevant.
- Focus on a small set of achievable outcomes that match your capacity.
- Engage community groups, iwi, and stakeholders to shape your goals.
- Create a clear purpose statement linking to the positive change you aim to deliver.



step 2

Setting a baseline.

Before measuring progress, it is important to understand your starting point. Establishing a social impact baseline helps identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities. This involves gathering data, engaging stakeholders, and reflecting on current contributions to community outcomes.

Start by identifying key stakeholder groups such as your regional tourism organisation, local council, participants, volunteers, mana whenua, and marginalised communities. Map existing practices, partnerships, and any available data or feedback. Use simple tools like stakeholder mapping templates, baseline surveys, and checklists to clarify where your event stands against the four social impact pillars.

Baseline indicators can include volunteer numbers and diversity, attendee wellbeing or life satisfaction, perceptions of inclusion and cultural relevance, and barriers to participation. Early data collection through surveys or interviews provide a clear picture of current perceptions and areas for improvement.

Key actions for step 2

- Identify key stakeholders including councils, iwi, volunteers, and community groups.
- Map existing practices using data, partnerships, and community feedback.
- Select baseline indicators aligned to the four social impact pillars.
- Use tools like surveys, interviews, and checklists to gather early insights.
- Capture pre-event perceptions to define your starting point and focus measurement.



step 2

Setting a baseline.

Key stakeholder groups to consider when establishing a social impact baseline.

Stakeholder Groups**Interest****Community Members and Attendees**

Events can boost self-image and quality of life by building civic pride, social capital, community capacity, and a sense of belonging - especially when these outcomes are widely shared.

Volunteers

Volunteers seek meaningful experiences where they feel valued and supported. They are often motivated by the chance to give back, develop skills, and build social connections.

Mana Whenua and Māori Communities

Mana whenua are interested in events that recognise and respect te ao Māori. They value genuine partnerships, opportunities for cultural expression, and alignment with tikanga and kaupapa Māori.

Priority Community Groups

These groups are focused on equitable access, representation, and having their voices heard. They want events that remove barriers and promote a more inclusive and fair community.

Funders

Funders are looking for evidence of social impact and alignment with their strategic goals. They want to see how the event contributes to community wellbeing, inclusion, and long-term outcomes.

Sponsors and Commercial Partners

Sponsors are interested in associating with events that have a strong social reputation. They seek brand alignment, meaningful community engagement, and positive visibility.

Event Staff and Organisers

Organisers want to deliver impactful events that strengthen partnerships and community trust. They value data that helps refine delivery and demonstrate accountability.

Regional and National Agencies

Government and sector agencies look for events that support regional priorities such as health, culture, inclusion, and tourism. They are interested in how events contribute to broader development goals.

step 3

Choosing what to measure.

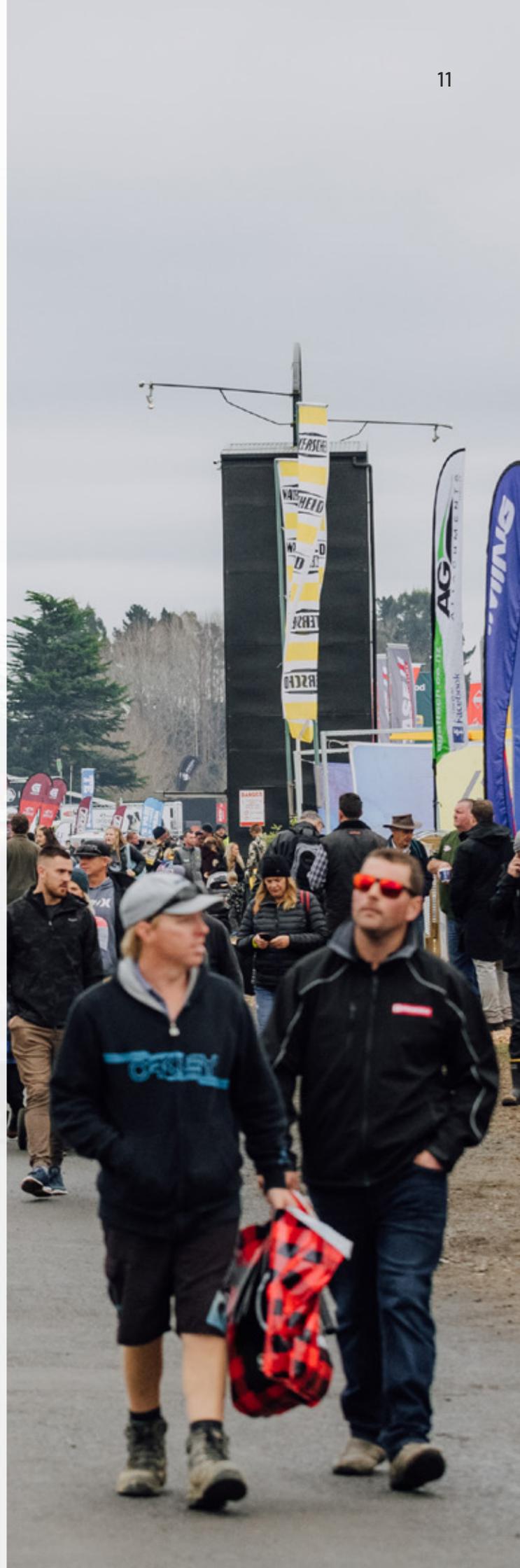
Choosing the right indicators is crucial for capturing social impact. Focus on 3-5 indicators per pillar that are realistic, meaningful, and aligned with your event's purpose and outcomes. Avoid measuring everything and instead select indicators that provide clear evidence of change and can be tracked with the resources available.

Use simple tools to collect data such as attendee surveys, volunteer feedback forms, and stakeholder interviews. Combine quantitative data with stories, quotes, and examples that bring the impact to life. This creates a balanced and credible picture of both successes and areas for improvement.

For example, under **Community Impact**, you might measure the percentage of attendees who feel more connected or proud of their community. **Health and Wellbeing** can be measured by the percentage of attendees reporting improved mood, reduced stress, or motivation to be more active. For **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**, track the diversity of volunteers or the availability of accessibility tools. **Volunteering and Skills** can be assessed by volunteer hours, skills gained, and satisfaction.

Key actions for step 3

- Select 3-5 indicators per pillar aligned with event goals.
- Use simple tools such as surveys, feedback forms, and interviews.
- Combine quantitative data with stories and testimonials.
- Ensure indicators are specific, measurable, and easy to track.
- Prioritise quality insights over quantity of data.



step 3

Choosing what to measure.

Key indicators and practical measures of social impact.

To assess social impact effectively, combine quantitative data with qualitative insights. Surveys, event data, and stakeholder feedback capture both measurable trends and rich stories. The table below outlines each pillar with key indicators and practical data collection examples.

Social Impact Pillar	Indicators	Example Measures
Community Impact	Measure local pride, connection, and regional perception.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of attendees who feel more connected to community • % of locals who feel proud the event is held in their area • Change in perception of Waikato as a place to live or visit • Number of partnerships with local groups or businesses
Health and Wellbeing	Track how the event supports physical, mental, and social wellbeing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of attendees reporting improved mood / reduced stress • % encouraged to be more active or connected • Participation in wellbeing-focused activities • Anecdotal evidence of positive impact
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	Measure representation, access, and inclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of attendees, volunteers, or performers from under-represented groups • Feedback on feeling welcome and included • Number of targeted outreach initiatives • Presence of DEI policies or training
Volunteering and Skills	Track participation, development, and future engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total volunteers and hours • % aged under 25 or from priority communities • Volunteer satisfaction • % reporting skill development or confidence gains • Number interested in future roles or pathways • Presence of DEI policies or training

step 4

Measuring across the event lifecycle.

Measuring social impact requires a clear plan that spans the entire event lifecycle. Evaluating impacts before, during, and after the event provides a complete view of how it influences people and communities. This approach offers evidence for stakeholders, supports improvements, and highlights long-term value.

Pre-event (forecast impacts):

Forecast outcomes using past data, stakeholder input, and surveys. Set targets for volunteers, diversity, and community pride. Establish baseline measures like current perceptions of Waikato and community connection.

At-event (short-term impacts):

Track volunteer hours, participation diversity, and wellbeing activity attendance. Collect live feedback and stories to capture immediate impact.

Post-event (long-term impacts):

Follow up with participants and stakeholders to assess lasting changes in pride, wellbeing, skills, and community perception.

Key actions for step 4

- Map pre, during, and post-event stages and assign measures to each.
- Align all measures with event goals and impact pillars.
- Set pre-event baselines for key indicators.
- Track short-term metrics such as attendance and feedback.
- Assess long-term outcomes like wellbeing and community perception.



step 4

Measuring across the event lifecycle.

The table below outlines specific examples of how the four key pillars of social impact (Community Impact, Health and Wellbeing, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and Volunteering and Skills) can be measured at each event stage.

Social Impact Pillar	Pre-Event (Forecast Impact)	At-Event (Short-Term Impacts)	Post-Event (Long-Term Impacts)
Community Impact	Survey community on current pride and perceptions of Waikato. Forecast % increase in local attendance.	Track % of attendees who feel proud or connected during the event. Collect feedback on the event's cultural relevance.	Post-event survey on changes in pride and perception of Waikato as a place to live or visit. Measure new partnerships with local groups.
Health and Wellbeing	Estimate participation in wellbeing-focused activities. Survey baseline wellbeing or physical activity levels.	Track % of attendees reporting improved mood, reduced stress, or increased motivation.	Post-event follow-up on lasting wellbeing impacts or behaviour changes, such as continued participation in physical or cultural activities.
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	Set targets for representation of under-represented groups among attendees, volunteers, and performers.	Track actual participation and use of accessibility tools or services. Collect feedback on feeling welcome and included.	Evaluate whether targeted outreach led to ongoing participation or improved accessibility. Review DEI policies and outcomes.
Volunteering and Skills	Forecast volunteer numbers and hours. Identify training needs.	Record actual volunteer hours and demographics. Gather feedback on satisfaction and skill development.	Assess longer-term benefits, such as confidence, new employment pathways, or willingness to volunteer again.

step 5

Data analysis and evaluation.

Once your data is collected, the next step is to analyse it and assess whether your event achieved its intended outcomes. Use the four social impact pillars to organise your findings. This keeps your evaluation focused and aligned with the indicators you selected earlier.

Compare the results to your baseline data and pre-event targets. Look for changes in areas such as community pride, inclusion, wellbeing, and volunteer engagement. Use a mix of numbers and personal stories to understand what worked well and what could be improved. This approach gives a fuller and more credible view of your event's impact.

Evaluation is also a learning opportunity. Use what you discover to refine future planning and strengthen relationships with funders, partners, and communities. Being clear about both successes and challenges builds trust and helps improve future outcomes.

Key actions for step 5

- Organise findings using the four impact pillars.
- Compare results to goals and baseline measures.
- Identify trends, successes, and areas to improve.
- Use data and stories to explain impact clearly.
- Apply insights to strengthen future events and reporting.



step 6

Reporting and sharing stories.

Measuring impact is only the first step. To maximise value, you need to communicate your findings in a way that is clear, engaging, and relevant to each audience. Reporting on social impact should focus on the metrics that align closely with your event's goals and the priorities of your stakeholders. Numbers are important, but they become more powerful when supported by authentic stories that illustrate the human side of your impact. Quotes from attendees, volunteer stories, and examples of community benefits all help bring the data to life.

A practical approach to reporting involves tailoring your content, timing, and format to each stakeholder group. Funders may expect detailed evidence of outcomes, while sponsors might be more interested in community engagement and positive brand alignment. It is also important to acknowledge lessons learned and areas for improvement, as this demonstrates accountability and a commitment to continuous improvement.

Key actions for step 6

- Focus on relevant metrics that reflect your event goals and stakeholder priorities.
- Bring data to life with stories, quotes, and real examples of impact.
- Tailor your message to each audience using clear and engaging formats.
- Use visuals like infographics and photos to enhance understanding.
- Report across the timeline with pre-event forecasts, live highlights, and post-event outcomes.



step 6

Reporting and sharing stories.

The table below outlines what, when, and how to communicate social impact to key stakeholder groups. These groups are illustrative, not exhaustive. Event organisers should identify the most relevant stakeholders for their event and tailor communication to suit their needs and priorities.

Stakeholder Group	What to Communicate	When to Communicate	How to Communicate
> Illustrative examples			
Funders	Evidence of community pride, inclusion initiatives, volunteer engagement, and wellbeing outcomes that align with funding objectives.	Pre-event (forecast impacts) and post-event (final outcomes).	Detailed written reports, impact dashboards, and follow-up presentations.
Sponsors and Commercial Partners	Community and brand alignment stories, volunteer and audience engagement, positive PR opportunities, and visible outcomes from health, inclusion, and cultural initiatives.	Pre-event (expected reach and impact) and at-event (live updates). Post-event summary of outcomes.	Impact summaries with visuals, short videos, thank-you reports, and presentations.
Regional and National Agencies	Contribution to regional priorities, inclusion and diversity data, skills development, and long-term benefits for health, tourism, and community connection.	Pre-event (alignment with strategic goals) and post-event (final outcomes).	Executive summaries, official reports, and data dashboards with clear impact narratives

step 7

Improving and evolving.

Measuring social impact is an ongoing process. Each event is a chance to improve how you collect data, analyse results, and share outcomes. The more data you gather, the richer and more compelling your story becomes. Over time, this builds trust, shows progress, and highlights your event's value to the community.

After each event, review what you measured, how you did it, and what you learned. Look for gaps or limited feedback and make small improvements to your tools and timing. Use these insights to improve future event planning and strengthen stakeholder engagement

As your approach evolves, aim to collaborate more with partners, funders, councils, iwi, and community groups. Shared goals and data collection improve consistency and impact. Over time, consider building internal capability or bringing in expert support to deepen your analysis and reporting. This could include exploring Social Return on Investment (SROI) to help quantify the social and financial benefits and value of your event.

Key actions for step 7

- Review impact data and tools after each event.
- Identify gaps and refine collection methods.
- Use insights to improve future event design and engagement.
- Collaborate with stakeholders to capture richer, aligned data.
- Invest in internal or external expertise when needed.
- Track progress across multiple events to build a stronger story.



Final tips and resources.

Social impact measurement does not need to be overwhelming. The most important thing is to get started, no matter the size or type of your event. Begin with a simple plan, focus on what matters most, and build your approach over time as your confidence and capacity grow.

Rather than collecting large volumes of data, prioritise high-quality insights that help you understand what is working and where you can improve. A few well-chosen indicators, supported by meaningful stories or feedback, can be more powerful and useful than a complex data set. Focus on what is realistic and valuable for your team and your stakeholders.

To help you get started, this resource includes some practical tools:

- **Baseline Checklist**
- **Data Collection Checklist**
- **Reporting Checklist**

These tools are designed to be flexible and easy to use. You can adapt them to suit your event and scale up as you gain experience.

visit [waikatonz.com](https://www.waikatonz.com) to find out more



Baseline checklist

Use this checklist to assess your current position before measuring event outcomes. Establishing a baseline helps identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities across your four key social impact pillars. Record your progress using the status and date columns.

Action	Status	Date
Identify relevant social outcomes (e.g. inclusion, pride, wellbeing)		
Determine which pillars are most relevant to your event		
Engage key stakeholders (e.g. council, iwi, community groups)		
Map existing practices, partnerships, and community contributions		
Collect existing data (e.g. volunteer numbers, past feedback)		
Identify any gaps or barriers in participation or access		
Conduct pre-event surveys or interviews		
Document current perceptions and wellbeing indicators		

This checklist offers practical, low-cost ways to collect social impact data before, during, and after your event. It includes simple methods and sample questions for both ticketed and unticketed events. Use free tools, existing platforms, and support from volunteers to keep it manageable. Start small, focus on key measures, and build over time for meaningful insights.

Event Stage	Purpose	Collection Methods and Questions
<p>Pre-Event</p>	<p>Establish baseline perceptions and set realistic targets.</p>	<p>Ticketed Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add survey questions to online ticketing platforms. • Capture expectations, demographics, and accessibility needs. <p>Unticketed Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Google Forms or SurveyMonkey (basic plan). • Share links via social media, email newsletters, or noticeboards. <p>Sample Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How connected do you currently feel to your local community? • What are your main reasons for attending this event? • Are there any barriers that might prevent you from attending?
<p>At-Event</p>	<p>Capture real-time feedback and short-term impacts.</p>	<p>Ticketed Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send a one-question poll via email or SMS. • Include a QR code on tickets or programmes. <p>Unticketed Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use QR codes on signage or posters. • Roaming volunteers with tablets to collect responses. <p>Sample Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How welcome and included do you feel at this event? • What has been the highlight of your experience so far?
<p>Post-Event</p>	<p>Assess longer-term outcomes and impact.</p>	<p>Ticketed Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send follow-up surveys via email or ticketing platforms. <p>Unticketed Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use social media polls, community groups, or QR codes on event websites. <p>Sample Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did this event positively influence your connection to the community? • Have you participated in new activities or volunteering since attending? • What could be improved for future events?

Measuring impact is only the first step. To maximise value, communicate your findings clearly and effectively to each audience. Focus on key metrics that align with your event's goals and stakeholder priorities. Pair data with real stories - such as quotes from attendees or community outcomes - to make your reporting more engaging and meaningful.

Action	Status
Focus on relevant metrics	Prioritise the metrics that align with your event goals and stakeholder interests. Avoid overloading reports with too much data. Focus on what matters most.
Bring data to life	Use real stories, quotes, and images from attendees, volunteers, and community members. Authentic experiences help your data resonate.
Engage key stakeholders (e.g. council, iwi, community groups, etc.)	Adapt the tone, level of detail, and format to suit each audience. Funders may want outcome data. Sponsors may focus on community engagement or brand alignment.
Tailor for your audience	Adapt the tone, level of detail, and format to suit each audience. Funders may want outcome data. Sponsors may focus on community engagement or brand alignment.
Use clear visuals	Incorporate charts, dashboards, photos, or infographics to present your data clearly. Visual content increases engagement and helps audiences retain key messages.
Report across the timeline	Include pre-event goals, at-event highlights, and post-event outcomes. This structure helps demonstrate the full journey and impact of your event.

