

69%

of volunteering time goes unused

What does good look like?

Most volunteering time never gets claimed, and most businesses aren't measuring the impact. This report shows what good measurement looks like, how to check where you stand, and the three moves that close the gap fastest.



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The data gap hiding in your volunteering programme

69% of employer-supported volunteering time goes unused¹. 62% of UK businesses offer paid volunteering days, but most of that time is never claimed, and 40% aren't measuring the impact at all.

This report shows what good measurement actually looks like, how to check where you stand, and the three moves that close the gap fastest.

This report examines the state of corporate volunteering measurement in the UK, what organisations are capturing, what they're missing, and why the gap between volunteering activity and evidenced social value has become a risk for social value teams and ESG leaders.

What the research found

- ✓ 62% of UK businesses offer paid volunteering days — but only 31% of that time is actually used¹
- ✓ 40% of businesses with programmes do little or no evaluation of their impact¹
- ✓ 60% of UK organisations say social data quality is their biggest sustainability reporting obstacle²
- ✓ Only 19% of firms with programmes offer volunteering to all staff — limiting both participation and the scale of social value that can be claimed¹
- ✓ Organisations with high uptake — Volunteer Leaders — are significantly more likely to have verifiable impact data for ESG disclosure and procurement submissions¹

Strategic implications

The measurement gap is not a reporting inconvenience. It is an exposure. For organisations competing for public sector contracts, facing ESG disclosure requirements, or answering board questions on social impact, the inability to produce verified volunteering data is becoming a structural disadvantage — one that is solvable, but only if addressed deliberately and early.

This report sets out what good measurement looks like, how organisations can self-assess their current maturity, and the three actions that close the gap fastest.

THE PROBLEM

Your volunteering programme is generating data.

You're just not capturing it.

The gap between volunteering activity and evidenced social value is not primarily a cultural problem or a resource problem. It is a measurement infrastructure problem — and it is almost universal.

When a social value leader is asked to **provide evidence of social value delivery — in a tender evaluation, an ESG disclosure, or a board review** — the answer is often the same: while many organisations can draw on data held by their community partners, they frequently cannot tell you exactly how many hours were contributed, which causes were supported, or what that activity was worth in social value terms.

This is not a failure of intent. Most organisations running volunteering programmes genuinely want to measure their impact. The failure is structural: programmes have been built to enable participation but not always to capture it. The result is a form of social value that is real in activity but invisible in evidence.



of allocated volunteering time is actually used.
Over 140 million hours went unused last year. ^[1]



of UK organisations
say social data quality
is their biggest
sustainability reporting
obstacle. ^[2]



of businesses with
programmes do little or no
evaluation — meaning zero
evidence to show for the
activity that does occur. ^[1]

Three structural failures

Three structural failures explain why most organisations cannot evidence their volunteering impact, even when significant activity is occurring:



01

Participation is permitted but not tracked

Most volunteering policies grant employees time to volunteer, and many organisations already have a basic mechanism for recording that the time was taken — typically through HR systems and line-manager approval. What's usually missing is a mechanism for capturing what the employee did with that time, which organisation benefited, or what activities were undertaken. Without a system of record for that detail, the data simply does not exist to retrieve later.



02

Social value is calculated retrospectively, if at all

Of the 40% of organisations that do evaluate their programmes, most do so annually and manually — compiling spreadsheets, chasing managers for estimates, and applying inconsistent methodologies. The result is figures that cannot be independently verified and would not survive scrutiny in a procurement or audit context.



03

Programmes do not reach the whole workforce

Just 19% of firms with programmes offer volunteering to all staff. The majority restrict access — by seniority, location, or working pattern — in ways that are rarely stated explicitly. A programme that reaches only 30% of the workforce cannot produce figures that represent the organisation's community contribution. It produces figures for a subset, which limits both the scale of claimed social value and its credibility.

Why the measurement gap has become a risk

Three years ago, a story about community impact was sufficient for most ESG purposes. That's no longer true. The bar for what counts as evidence has risen sharply — and it will keep rising.

The bar has moved from intent to evidence

Across every channel where volunteering activity gets scrutinised — procurement, ESG disclosure, investor reporting, board oversight — the same shift is underway. A narrative about community impact used to be enough. It no longer is. What's expected now is quantified, sourced, independently verifiable evidence, and organisations that can only offer intent are starting to lose ground to those that can prove outcomes.

Government procurement: from PPN 002 to PPN 026

Social value is already a scored element of most public sector procurement. Under the current PPN 002 (which superseded PPN 06/20), social value carries a mandatory minimum weighting of 10% for relevant central government contracts. The Social Value Act applies across all four UK nations, with additional obligations under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act in Wales.

From January 2027, PPN 026 introduces a revised Social Value Model for central government procurement, built around two outcomes — good jobs and skills — with organisations expected to demonstrate how their activity has built skills or employability, particularly for excluded groups, NEETs (young people not in education, employment, or training), or other marginalised stakeholders. For central government contracts worth £5m or more, the minimum weighting rises to 20%; contracts from £1m to under £5m retain the 10% minimum.

Scope note

PPN 026 is policy, not law, and it applies specifically to central government contracts. Whether — or how far — local government and other public bodies will follow suit is not yet clear. Further guidance on sub-criteria, evaluation methodology, and implementation detail is due in Autumn 2026.

Why the measurement gap has become a risk

Different stakeholder groups will apply this in different ways — but the direction of travel is consistent: quantitative evidence, not qualitative narrative. Procurement panels can evaluate quantified, sourced social value evidence. They cannot evaluate good intentions or unverified estimates. Organisations competing for public sector contracts without robust volunteering measurement data are, in practice, leaving social value scoring points on the table in every submission.

10%→20%

Minimum social value weighting under PPN 002 today, rising to 20% for contracts of £5m+ from January 2027 under PPN 026. ^[4]

£24.7 billion

Economic and social value generated by formal volunteering in England in 2021/22 — the value pool employee programmes draw from. ^[5]

ESG disclosure: the same shift, wider reach

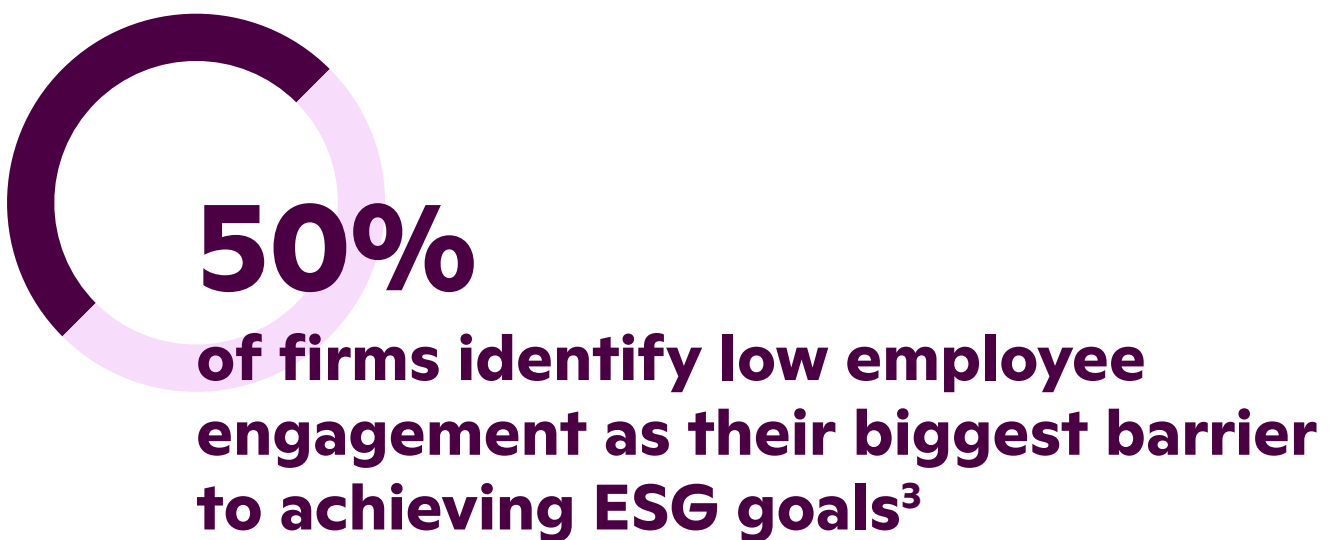
As we've seen with environmental reporting, social value reporting has followed the same trajectory over the last decade — a steady movement away from narrative and towards quantification.

Organisations such as Thrive and Social Value Portal are helping to define the value of social impact, but they require organisations to understand and track their own contributions: employee volunteering hours, the activities undertaken, and the outcomes generated. The infrastructure for quantified social value now exists — the burden has shifted to organisations to capture the underlying data well enough to use it.

Why the measurement gap has become a risk

Board accountability: the question is coming

ESG governance requirements are tightening. Boards are increasingly being asked — by investors, by regulators, and by governance frameworks — to demonstrate that they have oversight of the organisation's social impact, not just its social policy. Investors are increasingly looking for evidence of impact relative to investment: for example, if an organisation has 500 employees participating in volunteering, what impact is that actually generating. A social value leader who cannot produce verified volunteering data when the board asks is underprepared for that conversation.



(World Economic Forum, 2024)

The PWC finding in context

When 60% of organisations identify social data quality as their biggest sustainability reporting obstacle, the specific gap they are describing is almost always the same: they know community activity is occurring, but they cannot translate it into the verified, methodology-backed figures that ESG disclosure frameworks and procurement scorecards can use.

Volunteering data is the most commonly cited missing input.

Employee participation in community activity is one of the key mechanisms through which social value is generated for ESG-led organisations — though not the only one. For many organisations, the engagement gap is also an ESG delivery gap.

Where does your organisation sit?

Use this framework to self-assess your current position across six dimensions. Most organisations with existing programmes will find themselves in the Basic or Developing columns. The Advanced column reflects the practice of Volunteer Leader organisations — those with consistently high uptake and evidenced impact. These organisations go a step further still: they give employees volunteering opportunities aligned to the organisation's social value goals and to the geographies of both the business and its employees.

Basic (Most organisations)	Developing	Advanced (with GoVo)
Participation tracking		
Manual spreadsheet, incomplete, annual	Platform-based, monthly reports, partial coverage	Real-time dashboard, full workforce, auto-generated
Social value calculation		
Not calculated	Ad hoc, inconsistent methodology	Auto-calculated at point of activity via Thrive's Impact Evaluation Standard (IES)
Workforce coverage		
Office-based, full-time staff only	Most staff, limited flexible formats	All staff — remote, part-time, frontline — flexible and skills-based
ESG reporting integration		
Not connected to ESG disclosure	Manually compiled for annual report	Structured evidence, ready for ESG and procurement reporting
Management visibility		
No reporting to line managers	Annual summary to senior leadership	Real-time uptake data at team level; managers act on it
Audit readiness		
Could not produce evidence on request	Partial evidence, requires significant compilation	Audit-ready impact reports, generated on demand

See what Advanced looks like for your organisation.

[Book a demo](#)

The most common self-assessment mistake

Having a social value team or a platform doesn't mean you're Developing or Advanced. The real test: could you produce a verified, audit-ready social value figure for the last 12 months, today? Most organisations in the Developing column can't. The volunteering happens; the data capture doesn't.

What the measurement gap is actually costing you

The business case for closing the measurement gap is not primarily about upside — it is about exposure. Organisations sitting on unmeasured volunteering programmes are carrying an unpriced risk into every procurement bid, ESG disclosure, and board conversation where social value is scored.

Public procurement makes this cost easiest to quantify, because the weighting is written into policy. But the same exposure exists wherever social value is scored without evidence to back it — in ESG disclosure, investor reporting, and boardrooms — even where no single line of policy puts a number on it.

What that weighting actually means in money

TODAY

£500k

on a £5m contract

10%
minimum weighting

Current position — PPN 002

For relevant central government procurement, social value carries a minimum 10% weighting.

FROM JANUARY 2027

£1m

on a £5m contract

20%
minimum weighting

From 1 January 2027 — PPN 026

For central government contracts worth £5m or more, the minimum weighting rises to 20%. Contracts from £1m to under £5m retain a 10% minimum.



On a £5m contract, social value represents a minimum 10% of the evaluation under PPN 002 — rising to 20% under PPN 026 from January 2027.

That's the commercial value of the scoring at stake, and it's about to double.

What the measurement gap is actually costing you

The unclaimed capacity



140million hours went unused across the UK last year ^[1]

That's paid leave, already committed and budgeted, generating a fraction of its possible value. Every unused hour is capacity you've already paid for and can't currently claim toward a bid, a disclosure, or a board conversation.

Procurement gives the clearest number because the weighting is public and the maths is simple. But the underlying problem is the same wherever volunteering shows up unmeasured: a disclosure a stakeholder can't verify, a board pack with a claim nobody can stand behind, an investor conversation where 'we ran some great initiatives' doesn't survive scrutiny. The bid you can't win is just the most visible version of a cost every organisation with an unmeasured programme is already carrying. This value draws from the same £24.7bn pool of social value already generated by formal volunteering in England — value you either capture and evidence, or contribute to without ever being able to claim it.⁵

Why this compounds

The 40% of organisations doing little or no evaluation, are not necessarily running weaker programmes than the rest. They are running programmes with no infrastructure to prove what is happening — and that distinction matters more than programme quality, because procurement panels, auditors, and investors can only evaluate what is evidenced. This is the same gap behind the 60% of organisations who told researchers that social data quality is their biggest sustainability reporting obstacle. Two different questions, the same underlying answer: the activity exists, the evidence does not.

Procurement panels, auditors, and investors can only evaluate what is evidenced.



Three actions that close the measurement gap

The following actions are sequenced by impact and speed. They reflect the pattern of organisations that have moved successfully from low-maturity to high-maturity measurement programmes.



01

Diagnose your current measurement maturity honestly

Use the six-dimension benchmark in this report to assess where your programme actually sits — not where your policy suggests it should. The most useful diagnostic is direct: if asked today for a verified social value figure for the last 12 months, could you produce one that would survive audit scrutiny? Most organisations cannot. Identifying that gap specifically is the starting point for fixing it.



02

Build capture at the point of participation, not after it

Retrospective measurement is unreliable, resource-intensive, and produces figures that cannot be independently verified. The organisations that generate audit-ready data do so by capturing it at the moment of activity: hours logged by the employee at completion, cause and charity recorded automatically, social value calculated via Thrive and the Social Value Portal without manual intervention. This requires a platform with built-in tracking — not a spreadsheet review at year end.



03

Connect your volunteering data to your reporting infrastructure before the next cycle

Volunteering-generated social value should feed directly into GRI 413 disclosures, PPN 002 and PPN 026 procurement submissions, and board ESG reports. Currently, most organisations compile this manually, under deadline pressure, for each report separately. The fix is a single connection between your volunteering platform and your reporting calendar, set up once. After that, the data is there when each report, submission, or disclosure needs it.

CONCLUSION

The gap is closeable, and the cost of leaving it open is rising

Most organisations are generating more volunteering activity than they can evidence. The data exists in the hours their employees spend with charities and community organisations; it is simply not being captured in a form that counts.

Closing that gap starts with three moves: diagnose your measurement maturity honestly, build capture at the point of participation rather than after it, and connect that data to your reporting infrastructure before the next cycle.

The organisations leading on social value measurement are not doing so because they have larger budgets or dedicated measurement teams. They are doing so because they built the right infrastructure at the point of participation, and that infrastructure now produces evidence automatically, for every submission, every disclosure, and every board question that follows.

Every quarter that infrastructure isn't in place, more of the 140 million unused volunteering hours goes unclaimed, and the minimum social value weighting on public contracts continues its climb from 10% toward 20%.

The question is not whether to close the gap. It's whether you do it before your next procurement bid, ESG disclosure, or board question, or after.

About GoVo for Business

GoVo is Royal Voluntary Service's volunteering platform, connecting businesses and their employees with meaningful opportunities across a network of 2,000+ charities, making corporate volunteering simple, accessible and impactful. Backed by nearly 90 years of volunteering experience, Royal Voluntary Service has the infrastructure to deliver at national scale, as demonstrated by mobilising more than 400,000 volunteers nationwide for the NHS and Care Volunteer Responders programme on behalf of NHS England, proof of the scale and reliability GoVo brings to corporate volunteering programmes.

Methodology and sources

Primary research by Censuwide among 1,000 HR Decision Makers in UK businesses (aged 21+, minimum 50 from FTSE 350 companies), 27 February–4 March 2025; and 1,949 nationally representative UK adults (aged 16+), 28 February–3 March 2025. Economic analysis by the Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr), drawing on Pro Bono Economics productivity modelling.

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One dashboard



Zero guesswork



Evidence you can prove

Ready to make your volunteering programme work harder?
See GoVo in a 10-minute demo

Book a demo

Email: sales@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk
Visit: royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/business

