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**Section VIII**  
**Advances in Knowledge of Social and**  
**Sustainable Marketing: Understanding the**  
**Benefits of Sustainability Reporting Practices by**  
**Social Enterprises**

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## *Assessing Sustainable Outcomes of Reporting Practices by Social Enterprises*

*Judith M. Herbst*

Centre for a Waste-Free World, Queensland University of Technology, Gardens Point Campus, Australia

Ultimately, all businesses and not-for-profit organizations that aim to respond meaningfully and responsibly to their stakeholders (internally and externally) and, in the process, drive value creation for the short, medium, and long term will find integrated thinking to be the way forward. This thought process, which is captured in integrated reporting, will be invaluable for sustainability in the years to come ([Olson & Attolini, 2017](#)).

### **Chapter overview**

Social enterprises exist to pursue social, economic, and often environmental value. However, there is little empirical research on reporting in these organizations to substantiate their performance and to show how they meet the needs and expectations of their stakeholders. Generally, there is no obligation to publicly report on their organizational performance. Multiple case study research was conducted to examine reporting and outcomes across diverse Australian social enterprises. Evidence reveals social enterprises benchmark their results, disclosing limited financial information to detailed nonfinancial data. Significantly, those organizations that provide a more cohesive analysis of their triple bottom line were able to gain additional resources to satisfy their sustainable missions. Implications are that holistic models reflecting integrated reporting can be a mechanism to bind stakeholders with organizational objectives thus, to acquire more resources to sustain operations and society. Findings of the case studies in this book chapter can be used to guide marketers to reach socially responsible consumers through disclosure of performance reporting on sustainable practices. Although third sector organizations have restricted funding bases that may limit this activity, deeper reporting practices can bring added value, particularly for such small- and medium-sized organizations.

### **Keywords**

accountability, integrated reporting, social enterprise, stakeholders

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## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading the chapter, the reader should be able to:

- Analyze different styles of reporting practices by profit-for-purpose organizations, and understand the consequent need for sharing the ‘pulse’ of a company to show how it is faring across multiple areas, including financial, natural, human, social, and manufactured capital in meeting its purpose
- Study the concept of integrated reporting and scope of this socially responsible and sustainable approach, illustrated by case studies, to utilize as a framework for optimizing the capabilities of companies and to meet societal needs

## INTRODUCTION

Social enterprises are classified as hybrid organizations (Doherty, Haugh, & Lyon, 2014; Peattie & Morley, 2008). Positioned on a continuum between for-profits and nonprofits, they are characterized as businesses with “primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximize profit for shareholders and owners” (UK Government, 2011). To maintain commercial viability, a social enterprise may operate within a larger business, affiliate with a for-profit enterprise as a subsidiary, or establish divisions whereby one part functions “for-benefit” and the other part acts “for-profit” (Alter, 2004; Pitta & Kucher, 2009). In the latter instance, each side cooperates for joint survival.

While social enterprises continue to evolve with new legal forms and recent third-party certification schemes (Brewer, 2016), traditional financial metrics are not deemed sufficient to fulfil the array of needs of constituents, spanning donors, business partners, clients, customers, or volunteers in social enterprises (McLeish, 2011). An implication is that there is a relationship between parties, and the organization as the primary actor is supposed to inform the other about its strategies and actions, as well as to provide justification or explanation for its conduct or misconduct which happens through reporting. Additionally, there has been a greater call for measurement and evaluation of performance in social enterprises (Arvidson, Lyon, McKay, & Moro, 2010) to contribute to theory and accounting practice. To be accountable to stakeholders, an organization needs to have a system to capture and convey its performance.

Since the nature of social enterprises involves balancing both social and financial objectives, both of these areas need to be specifically assessed (Tyler III, 1983). By providing this information, it will help constituents to understand how these organizations reconcile their accounts, identify which reporting tools are being utilized, and explicate about returns on investment.

While social enterprises make money as commercial businesses, many of them obtain additional grant funding to conduct social programs, so it is important for them to be accountable to their grantors, donors, and other groups that contribute such resources to demonstrate that investments are producing expected results for those businesses and their intended beneficiaries. Nevertheless, there is no uniform standard in social enterprises for measuring financial and social impact.

As primarily small businesses that are not publicly listed, many are not compelled to disseminate financial reports. Apart from grants that require an acquittal on how funds were spent and associated returns, there are generally no other requirements imposed on social enterprises to track and release data on their results. Few countries subscribe to mandatory reporting despite the link between integrative management of sustainability performance, measurement, and reporting (Schaltegger & Wagner, 2006). Indeed, social enterprises should be able to show they meet the needs and expectations of the multiple entities that they serve (Brown & Forster, 2013; Hasnas, 2013). It is feasible to obtain added value from carrying out this exercise because reporting is a medium to promote how an organization is achieving its cause and can be a way to connect stakeholders with its mission (Jones & Mucha, 2014).

Although there is an increased trend to discuss the plethora of existing tools to capture social and economic performance in the field of social entrepreneurship (Öncer, 2019), or to suggest developing more useful frameworks (Crucke & Decramer, 2016; Luke, 2016), performance reporting in these third sector organizations is still under-researched (Connolly & Kelly, 2011; Ridley-Duff & Bull, 2016). Considering the lack of empirical data, especially evidence grounded in newer types such as integrated reporting (IR) (Berg & Jensen, 2012), the learning objectives of this chapter is to show the results of how multiple cases, social enterprises, disseminate information about their social and financial performance to their stakeholders, and to discover how their practices may affect their sustainable missions.

This chapter first reviews the body of literature on measurement and performance reporting within social enterprises. Next, it focuses on the tools for accountability that are utilized by seven heterogeneous organizations dedicated to the triple bottom line (Elkington, 1997). Then themes are uncovered from analyzing the data, noting similarities, and differences across these organizations. Lastly, theoretical and practical implications are drawn, demonstrating that by engaging in a more comprehensive style of performance report instead of issuing a standalone financial, social, or sustainability account, it can bring greater benefits for the social enterprises and their constituents over other available reporting methods.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Conventional methods for conducting performance in social enterprises are inadequate. First, they do not capture the value of commitments to achieve both social and commercial objectives. Second, it is difficult to capture this information using traditional means because performance can include: “any metric that organizations, or those who evaluate them, use to ascertain progress toward stated goals and objectives, be it behavioral, skill based, or assessment of outcomes” (Lane & Casile, 2011, p. 241). Third, auditing with older, restricted approaches is rife with challenges because there is no concrete method to identify and quantify intangible benefits of company operations (Tyler III, 1983), or to quantitatively measure data that reveal macro-level performance about products and programs. Of the various frameworks that measure financial and nonfinancial returns, some of the most popular types that show complementary microlevel performance at the market and customer level include the practice-based social return on investment (SROI), social accounting and audit (SAA), and the balanced scorecard, a type that integrates social and economic aspects for blended value (Öncer, 2019).

Notwithstanding that multiple methods exist to evaluate overall performance, the most common global frameworks utilized in third sector organizations (Nicholls, 2009), particularly in social enterprises, are SROI and SAA (Ridley-Duff & Bull, 2016). SROI is a top-down and system-based approach to evaluate outputs, outcomes, and impacts. Adapted from the concept of cost-benefit analysis, it attempts to translate significant social impacts such as assessing the value of human resources using proxies to derive quantifiable value to inform interested social investors and public representatives. The SAA framework, alternatively, is a bottom-up and mainly qualitative method to assess an organization's triple bottom line. It entails gathering data from within and outside of an organization's operations by working in consultation with stakeholders to prepare a report and a governance statement that are subject to verification by independent auditors. The SAA is seen as a helpful tool for managerial planning and guiding improvements besides being useful for stakeholder engagement. Yet, SROI and SAA have limitations.

SROI cannot calculate the nonfinancial achievements of an organization because they cannot be quantified (Arvidson et al. 2010), and it omits giving an internal perspective of a company's activities. Although SAA, on the other hand, can express a narrative of organizational performance, it offers insufficient financial data for social investors. These frameworks therefore fail to convey a comprehensive account of value to conform to public (European Commission, 2011) and institutional pressure to measure and account for social impact in social enterprises (Vik, 2017).

Newer reporting practices offer a wider scope of value created by organizations. These tools are being utilized to holistically account for pertinent nonmonetized contributions and financial returns. They factor in human, social, natural, manufactured, and financial sources of capital (Parkin, Johnson, Buckland, & White, 2004) described in Table 17.1, which are imperative to exist. They also recognize measures beyond gross domestic product (GDP), allowing companies to report on wider areas of their business operations in one complete document. It is relevant to social enterprises because these types of organizations have broader goals than solely turning a profit.

**TABLE 17.1** Overview of the Five Capitals Model

Capitals	Descriptions	Examples of Stocks of Capitals	Examples of Flows From Healthy Stocks
Human	Motivation, energy, and the ability to form relationships as well as the health and intellect of individuals	Health, spirituality, knowledge, and skills	Creativity, happiness, participation, and innovation in work
Social	Groups that bring added value to individuals	Families, communities, schools, workplaces, and government	Justice and inclusion, security and satisfaction in school and work
Natural	Resources and the services that flow from nature	Vegetation and ecological systems in land, sea, and air	Improved energy, climate, food, water, and waste
Manufactured	Materials and built infrastructure from industry	Tools, power supplies, roads, and buildings	Space to live and work as well as access and distribution of real products
Financial	Money that attaches value to products and services and enables buying and selling of the other sources of capital	Stocks, bonds, and cash	Means to value, own or exchange other stocks of capital

Source: Adapted from [Parkin et al. \(2004, pp. 12, 39\)](#).

IR ([International Integrated Reporting Council, 2011](#)) aligns with this inclusive approach to reporting. It is garnering support across small and large corporate entities from various sectors as a way to explain how a company creates value across multiple dimensions through a whole-of-system analysis ([CPA Australia, 2016](#)). This method offers the ability to explain how a company is commercially, socially, or environmentally resilient, and it can guide investors in learning about the benefits to society that derive from an organization's operations ([Adams & Simnett, 2011](#)) by providing insight into whether a business is meeting its short- and long-term targets. Thus, IR can relay how a company's business model and strategic direction create value for stakeholders over time ([KPMG, 2012](#)) by giving a succinct narrative that factors in an organization's resources and relationships while making future projections.

Although researchers contend IR is progressive ([Watson, 2011](#)), an evolution in corporate communication ([Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, 2015](#)) because it presents value and reduces risk for decision-making ([Stubbs & Higgins, 2014](#)), IR is criticized for lacking standards of quality assurance for the five capitals ([Cheng et al. 2014; Frias-Aceituno, Rodríguez-Ariza, & García-Sánchez, 2014](#)). The [International Integrated Reporting Council \(2011\)](#) rationalizes that assurance on IR will evolve as the practice continues to unfold. Others contest integrated reports for different reasons ([Flower, 2015](#)). They claim it may reveal partial or one-sided viewpoints ([Brown & Dillard, 2014; O'Dwyer & Boomsma, 2015](#)), so they believe it does not contribute to integrative management of sustainability ([Stacchezzini, Melloni, & Lai, 2016](#)). Yet, IR has received prominence since its introduction ([de Villiers, Rinaldi, & Unerman, 2014](#)). Adopters are required to be transparent about what information managers apply to decision-making to reflect their integrative thinking, sustainable actions, and to avoid siloed approaches to measurement and reporting practices ([Giovannoni & Fabietti, 2013](#)).

There are only limited systematic forms of evaluation of performance ([Arena, Azzone, & Bengo, 2015](#)). In social enterprises, it is important to implement a sound measurement framework to unify social and/or environmental data with economic accounts ([Schaltegger & Wagner, 2006](#)) to arrive at blended value to drive competitive advantage ([Lodhia, 2014](#)), and it is important to tell a complete story of a company's performance ([Mook, Richmond, & Quarter, 2003](#)). Irrespective of which framework is selected by a social enterprise, however, it is generally agreed what is crucial is for an organization to divulge how it is addressing its social impact.

Theoretical underpinnings on performance evaluation refer to the need to show the adequacy of an organization in measuring and comparing its performance against established benchmarks for satisfying its value-laden motives and agendas ([Connolly & Kelly, 2011](#)). For this study on performance of social enterprises, stakeholder theory was the most applicable lens to view how these organizations disclose their performance since these organizations carry out activities on behalf of many constituents. It is necessary for a business to not only elucidate how it is acting ethically in reporting on the interdependent parts of its social, political, and economic interests ([Deegan & Unerman, 2011](#)), but it should show how it is meeting the needs

of governmental agencies, funding bodies, and other key stakeholders. By prioritizing its salient stakeholders according to attributes of power, legitimacy, and urgency (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997), then an organization can determine how to portray content to account for the internal and external parts of company operations. Those groups perceived as holding higher degrees of influence in power, for instance, are more likely to receive the greatest attention.

Ideally, a performance report should bring enhanced transparency with key stakeholder groups and benefit company managers or directors for conducting more informed decision-making. By adopting a stakeholder orientation to assemble a performance report, it can become a marketing vehicle to forge deeper connections with investors, intermediaries, policymakers, beneficiaries, and members of the public, to uphold credibility or build a company's reputation to engender lasting relationships (Parrot & Tierney, 2012) to fulfill company objectives and open avenues for growth.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative research was employed to capture the scope of financial and social measurement and reporting practices in social enterprises. Since there is little scholarly research on these organizations devoted to the triple bottom line, the study adhered to a phenomenological paradigm to guide the process. Inductive research (Blaikie, 2009) was employed through a comparative approach of cases to explore theory and practice of how reporting to various stakeholders is conducted and may bring certain outcomes. Multiple case study was appropriate. This method was utilized in prior social enterprise research, and it presents opportunities to capture measurement of social impact using IR by related nonprofit organizations (Adams & Simnett, 2011). Further, it is a pathway to discover holistic forms of accounting by aggregating market value with nonmonetized inputs that are missing in conventional accounting (Mook et al. 2003). Yin (2009) recommends looking at multiple cases over a single case for accumulating a better understanding of real-life events. Additionally, it is more likely to yield generalizable conclusions from replication of data that facilitates corroboration (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

A purposeful sampling strategy (Yin, 2009) was used to identify and negotiate access to Australian social enterprises that actively work toward achieving sustainable development (United Nations, 2002). Business database research, ABI/INFORM, and credible publications were consulted to find applicable organizations (Kernot & McNeil, 2011). They all adopted strategies to enhance environmental quality and social well-being which was embedded in their core business activities or missions (Parrish, 2010). Descriptions of their business activities and sustainability practices follow.

First, AAC is the parent company of multiple social enterprises including Ashoil and Ashlinen, which both aim to broaden local employment opportunities across the remote Pilbara region of Western Australia (Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation, 2013). Under agreements with a mining company and its associated suppliers (Minerals Council of Australia, n.d.), Ashoil collects used cooking oil and converts it into biodiesel to resell this cleaner fuel for drill and blast operations (Lee, 2013) and to decrease its own greenhouse gas emissions. Ashlinen, alternatively, collects and recycles used mining uniforms for resale or for donation to charity shops to extend the life cycle of textiles (Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation, 2014).

Second, Abbotsford Convent is a historic compound located beside the Yarra River of Melbourne, Victoria. The organization has received international recognition as a thriving arts and cultural precinct (Abbotsford Convent, 2014b). Eleven historic buildings are gradually being restored within an enclave of 6.5 hectares of gardens. A variety of tenants occupy leases and run activities that cater to an array of professional and personal pursuits.

Third, Hepburn Wind is a community-invested wind farm that harvests renewable energy in rural Victoria. It offers carbon offsets and sells clean power through a partnership with an energy reseller, plus it uses its profits to disburse grants through a community fund, especially to start up more renewable energy projects in nearby townships (Hepburn Community Wind Park Co-operative Limited, 2014).

Fourth, Infoxchange is as an ICT service provider. Originally it was set up to connect databases of government agencies to place homeless people in temporary accommodation. Gradually, their services expanded to link wider public services and help nonprofit organizations become more digitally proficient (Infoxchange, 2014). In the aftermath of damage from earthquakes in Christchurch, New Zealand, the company extended overseas to shift business operations online. Then in 2018, Infoxchange merged with Connecting Up to enlarge its capacity to serve disadvantaged people through technology (Infoxchange, 2018).

Fifth, Perth City Farm was initiated to establish a green zone in an urban setting of Western Australia. Members received permission from the East Perth Redevelopment Authority to turn a toxic strip of land into an organic agricultural area and community hub ([Perth City Farm, 2014](#)). The social enterprise offers horticultural education, leases space, and hosts events to supplement their produce sales. It is well known for partnering with locals and neighboring institutions on social projects.

Sixth, Resource Recovery began by managing the rubbish disposal services for a regional council in New South Wales ([Great Lakes Community Resources, 2014](#)). In the process, it diverted and repurposed a range of material streams that were destined for landfill, and it became a best practice waste management leader ([Resource Recovery, 2015](#)). Eventually, a consulting branch was spun off, RRA, and the company geographically extended their business model in other states with tip collection and industrial ecology services.

Seventh, WorkVentures was a pioneer of profit-for-purpose businesses. It was founded on the principle that social enterprise can translate into an innovative business model ([Hetherington, 2008](#)). Today, the company performs IT repairs for major corporate clients, it refurbishes and resells computers to low-income earners, and it provides vocational training programs to integrate youth, migrants, and refugees into jobs ([WorkVentures Ltd, 2014](#)).

Although these social enterprises all operate within different industries, they are commonly small- and mid-size enterprises (SMEs), and they constitute respected business entities with at least a five-year track record. Two suitable respondents were identified from each company based on their experience and ability to capture different perspectives and insights into organizational performance reporting practices. In total, 14 founders, senior executives, or managers who occupied paid or voluntary positions participated. The researcher also scrutinized more than 300 pieces of secondary data on the organizations to triangulate the findings, drawing from peer-reviewed literature, government documents, company websites, project and annual reports, and articles from industry associations. Hence, the evidence was gathered from primary and secondary sources, and the interviews were held at the business settings.

A brief survey was administered to learn the profile of the organizations listed in [Table 17.2](#). Then respondents answered semi-structured questions that were designed to obtain consistent and pertinent information for making comparisons among the cases. This method also let the researcher observe firsthand details such as how the organizations engage in water or land conservation, and waste management practices.



**TABLE 17.2** Profile of Social Enterprises

<b>Companies and Respondents</b>	<b>Legal Status</b>	<b>Industries</b>	<b>Locations</b>	<b>Paid Staff</b>	<b>Annual Turnover</b>
AAC/AAC1—Ashoil	Subsidiaries of proprietary limited corporation	Biodiesel	Tom Price and Wangara, Western Australia	<5	\$700–800 K
AAC2—Ashlinen		Apparel			
Abbotsford Convent 1	Not-for-profit limited by guarantee	Public arts	Abbotsford, Victoria	20	\$2.6 M
Abbotsford Convent 2					
Hepburn Wind 1	Co-operative	Renewable energy	Leonards Hill, Victoria	<5	\$941 K
Hepburn Wind 2					
Infoxchange 1	Not-for-profit limited by guarantee	ICT	Richmond, Victoria, Brisbane, Queensland, and Christchurch, New Zealand	100	\$8 M
Infoxchange 2					
Perth City Farm 1	Branch of incorporated not-for-profit	Agricultural and community hub	East Perth, Western Australia	<10	\$400 K
Perth City Farm2					
Resource Recovery 1	Subsidiaries of incorporated not-for-profit	Waste management and recycling	Tuncurry, New South Wales, Queensland	<35	\$2 M
Resource Recovery 2/RRA					
WorkVentures 1	Not-for-profit limited by guarantee	IT	Mascot, New South Wales	100	\$15 M
WorkVentures 2					

Source: [Herbst \(2017, 2019\)](#).

The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed through a two-step process, using manual and NVivo coding to arrive at higher-level themes from the evidence. It involved an iterative approach to extract patterns and build explanations ([Welsh, 2002](#)). When interpretations were reached, reports were written and confirmed with participants in 2016 to ensure robust results.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The organizations pursue sustainability in distinctive ways to reach their missions given in [Table 17.3](#). In the course of doing business, they enact marketing activities to obtain revenue for their operations. Moreover, the social enterprises implement social marketing interventions to drive social or environmental change. [Table 17.4](#) highlights social programs or advocacy initiated by each company.

**TABLE 17.3** Cases with their Mission Statements

<b>Cases</b>	<b>Missions</b>
Ashoil and Ashlinen	To benefit members and other Aboriginal people across the Pilbara through culturally appropriate employment, education, training services, and programs ( <a href="#">Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation, 2014</a> ).
Abbotsford Convent	To restore the infrastructure of a national heritage site for Victorians; to build a safe, accessible public hub for connectivity and well-being; to create a cultural platform of appealing and inspiring content; and to catalyze a creative cluster to harness skills, and share ideas and resources among the community ( <a href="#">Abbotsford Convent, 2014b</a> ).
Hepburn Wind	To create a cooperatively owned renewable energy project that operates as an exemplary wind farm for the community ( <a href="#">Hepburn Community Wind Park Co-operative Limited, 2014</a> ).
Infoxchange	To create social equality and opportunity by empowering people through access to information and communications technology ( <a href="#">Infoxchange, 2014</a> ).
Perth City Farm	CROP – To showcase innovative urban farming and foster partnerships and community participation in food production workshops, interactive tours, and social enterprises that promote sustainable food systems; COOK – To use the farm-based cooking school and community kitchen to bring people together to share and prepare healthy meals using seasonal produce harvested on site; CONNECT – To encourage community engagement through hands-on learning and social education designed to inspire dialogue, debate and awareness around local, national, and global food issues ( <a href="#">Perth City Farm, 2014</a> ).
Resource Recovery and RRA	To use local knowledge and networks in partnership with government, industry, and community for maximizing community resources and to assist people experiencing disadvantage to develop social and economic livelihoods ( <a href="#">Resource Recovery, 2015</a> ).
WorkVentures	To connect people with choices so they can improve their own lives, using the benefits of technology ( <a href="#">WorkVentures Ltd, 2014</a> ).

**TABLE 17.4** Social Marketing Interventions

<b>Cases</b>	<b>Social Marketing Programs or Advocacy</b>
Ashoil and Ashlinen	Offering apprenticeships to Aboriginal students to counter low rates of school attendance, and to prepare youth for employment
Abbotsford Convent	Holding health and well-being events to encourage healthier lifestyles
Hepburn Wind	Coordinating grassroots campaigns to overcome political opposition to community renewable energy
Infoxchange	Teaching ICT skills to marginalized people residing in public housing projects to bridge the digital divide
Perth City Farm	Giving permaculture workshops and hosting weekend markets to sell local produce
Resource Recovery and RRA	Setting up a bike repair and resale shop to teach skills to at-risk high schoolers and developing a community garden with bush regeneration to the community
WorkVentures	Running an IT academy to teach skills to youth, and overseeing an afterschool program to assist incarcerated or troubled youth to become integrated into society

Source: [Herbst \(2017, 2019\)](#).

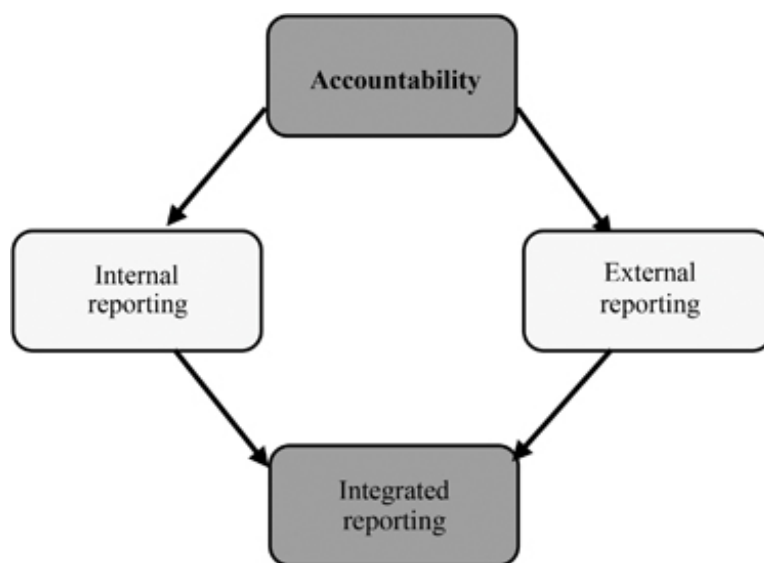
Several themes emerged about the social marketing. It was clear the organizations offer either external programs for social impact or it is an intrinsic part of their daily operations. Abbotsford Convent did both—they cooperated with the state Office of Environment and Heritage and architects to incorporate environmentally sustainable design principles in built structures, and they allied with the Yarra Energy Foundation, corporates and academics to strategize how to install solar panels. The Convent separately negotiated with tenants to maintain ventilation and find ways to shade building interiors for energy efficiency. Hepburn Wind led a political action campaign for renewable energy. They suggested for shareholders to write to their government leaders to allow communities the right to harness small-scale commercially renewable power. By galvanizing an effective movement for change, it made members and outsiders want to be connected with a more responsible organization.

Being viewed in a positive light resulted in generating more volunteers for the organizations' community work. Infoxchange and WorkVentures were able to obtain hardware and software donations to teach digital skills to migrants and refugees. Perth City Farm sourced people who contributed to replanting trees in deforested areas.

By engaging with their communities, the organizations could achieve milestones: to bring different clans together to work in harmony; they could broker deals with businesses for a social license to operate; and they could break cycles of unemployment. Ashoil and Ashlinen subsidized cultural events and offered a training ground to high-schoolers as a springboard for long-term employment. Resource Recovery acted similarly to give training to people from all walks of life and they sponsored workshops or social get-togethers in their outdoor hub.

The cumulative effect of these social marketing efforts translated into higher sales for the organizations. Employees, customers, and the public wanted to be affiliated with good corporate citizens, but it was still important for the social enterprises to produce a good product at a good price and deliver it through the right distribution channels or place.

This research examined the fourth marketing mix element of promotion, to see how the organizations communicated about their sales, social, or environmental endeavors with their target audiences. Evidence showed management would monitor company performance and, in turn, disseminates data to executives or board members for internal purposes; information would be released across multiple formats for external audiences; and at times, it was amalgamated into an integrated report. These accountability categories are exhibited in [Figure 17.1](#). When the social enterprises compiled their reports into an inclusive, singular document rather than fragmented analyses, it seemed to produce greater social, environmental, and economic value to maximize impacts for those organizations.



**FIGURE 17.1** Types of reporting for accountability.

## Internal Reporting

The social enterprises exchanged valuable information about performance among their organizational leadership. Staff members periodically informed their parent company or board members on the status of meeting company objectives with key performance indicators (KPIs) to benchmark their effectiveness in delivering goods and services, such as measuring the amount of income received, the number of staff members trained, and the number of visitors received. Then the organizations were able to perform cost-benefit analyses to see what areas they could make modifications to improve their potential gains.

Last year we restored three new spaces ... So, I guess it's a big thing in the organization about developing that understanding of the need for the commercial side of the business in supporting a lot of the community and arts programming.

(Abbotsford Convent, Respondent 1)

Perth City Farm used the evaluations of its financial accounts to identify which areas of its business brought in higher cash flow, facilitating the decision to focus more efforts to increase venue hire of its premises, and to hire new management for its operations. Some of the other organizations used the data about their internal performance for the purpose of tendering or renegotiating business contracts.

Several social enterprises also used the assessments to determine how to fund their social endeavors. Managers would look at their revenue per project to figure out where they could divert surplus toward funding social programs which reflects literature stating that nonprofits resort to cross-subsidization for such purposes (James, 2017).

We've got some areas doing better than others. We measure each of them independently and then make those decisions as to when and where we want to cross-subsidize.

(Infoxchange, Respondent 2)

Coupled with the quantitative data on market performance, the social enterprises employed Internet tracking to collect qualitative data of consumer opinions to indicate to leaders how target audiences responded to their products and services. This information helped to justify expenditures in marketing and advertising campaigns via online media platforms, and it was useful to capture data for strategic planning.

## External Reporting

The social enterprises engaged with their external stakeholders over multiple channels to share company information. Representatives of Ashoil and Ashlinen regularly attended Aboriginal conferences to explain their business model as social enterprises in the mining sector. Similarly, Resource Recovery and RRA attended waste management conferences to discuss how they function, communicating best practices to their associates within the Community Recycling Enterprise Network. The other organizations similarly networked with colleagues about their performance at industry events.

Part of that's by going to conferences—talking to other players in the waste industry and just looking at what we do.

(Resource Recovery, Respondent 1)

While the social enterprises acted openly and transparently to divulge information about their performance to colleagues or the public, they did not have a uniform system in place for gathering data. Table 17.5 reviews different systems and types of disclosure by each social enterprise. When an acquittal was needed to be prepared for a funding body to justify that money was spent as stipulated in a contract, then an organization would often circulate this report for wider reach. WorkVentures and Infoxchange published information to show the financial and social benefits of computer-based training programs that were subsidized via corporate sponsorships and in-kind support (Piccone, 2011; Wheadon, 2010; WorkVentures Ltd, 2011). Positive effects included attaining higher education, employment, and satisfaction from beneficiaries and service providers.

**TABLE 17.5** Summary of Systematic Forms of Disclosure

<b>Organizations</b>	<b>Print or Online</b>	<b>Internal on Social or Financial Data</b>	<b>External on Social or Financial Data</b>	<b>Integrated Data</b>	<b>Extent and Types of Publicly Available Performance Reports</b>
Ashoil and Ashlinen	O	S, F	S	X	Concise annual report of social impacts, Indigenous presentations
Abbotsford Convent	P, O	S, F	S, F	√	Annual review and comprehensive financial and social performance report prepared by staff and independent consultants, regular posts, and presentations, e-newsletters, stakeholder meetings and site tours
Hepburn Wind	O	S, F	S, F	X	Annual financial and social report, regular posts and presentations, member e-newsletters, site tours, intellectual property shared on a wiki
Infoxchange	P, O	S, F	S, F	√	Annual financial and social report, comprehensive special financial and social project reports prepared by independent consultants, white papers on social endeavors, regular posts, and presentations
Perth City Farm	O	S, F	S	X	External evaluation report on a collaborative project, regular posts
Resource Recovery, RRA	P, O	S, F	S, F	√	Annual financial and social report, special project evaluation and funding acquittal report prepared by an independent consultant, regular posts and presentations, site tours
WorkVentures	P, O	S, F	S, F	X	Concise annual financial and social report, special project evaluation and funding acquittal reports, regular posts

Source: [Herbst \(2017\)](#).

Additionally, the organizations distinguished between short-term outcomes and long-term impacts. WorkVentures and Perth City Farm measured the number of participants that completed certified training programs. Then the social enterprises continued to monitor their trainees in a longitudinal evaluation process to assess how many participants remained in the workforce. This information was tabled and written up for public dissemination and feedback for the government.

Well I could give you more long-term data in terms of our group-training organization...we get them trained up and they get their qualifications while they're inside a host employer. So, they start working full-time...and we track these kids for two, three, four, five years because they're on social media. We link with them on LinkedIn, Facebook. They're our alumni...

(WorkVentures, Respondent 1)

Benchmarking results for at least three-to-five years also enabled the organizations to keep in touch and develop long-term relationships with their stakeholders. Hepburn Wind maintained a regular e-newsletter and other online formats to communicate about their progress or challenges. It helped them to foster so much public goodwill that its executives decided to express their gratitude by hosting special on-site events such as sustainability education days. These events heightened awareness and support for their mission to advance an exemplary wind farm.

Spinoffs of delivering products and programs were mainly reported online to stakeholders via e-newsletters or annual reports. Only for a special occasion would the social enterprises distribute a special printed report such as when Infoxchange wanted to commemorate its 10-year anniversary, writing about their

achievements. The social enterprises frequently posted videos or operated their own YouTube channels. They preferred video as a platform because they found it is an effective medium to articulate narratives of their journeys, show images, and obtain comments from program recipients.

The social enterprises would determine whether to release a concise financial cost-benefit analysis or social account depending on whom they wanted to address. At a minimum, most of the organizations seemed to primarily respond to the need to divulge financial information to capital investors. For public audiences, on the other hand, they generally released broader information. Of greater interest though, several social enterprises presented a comprehensive picture of their organizational performance using IR.

### Integrated Reporting

Abbotsford Convent continuously collected data to assess their performance. They hired quantity surveyors to map the costs and benefits at different stages of their redevelopment—buildings that were restored and they received estimates of those structures that needed to be completed across their site (Essential Economics Pty Ltd, 2011; Essential Economics Pty Ltd, 2014). Additionally, they gathered qualitative and quantitative data from an independent economic impact study undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers to assess their returns on investment to transform the Convent into a thriving multipurpose complex. The Convent then merged all of this data with content on the outcomes from receiving a raft of public, private and nonprofit support over their first decade of operation (Abbotsford Convent, 2014a). This major report doubled as a prospectus to seek future funding for ongoing rehabilitation.

Infoxchange similarly provided annual reports that went beyond conventional accounting measures. However, their integrated style of reports focused on ICT and social justice through promoting policies for digital inclusion (Dickins, 2014; Walton, Kop, Spriggs, & Fitzgerald, 2013).

Resource Recovery paralleled this pattern of disseminating integrated reports, but they published less regularly, giving information on specific projects. A commissioned report on “The Green” assessed the value of developing a community center and regenerating the bushland around their industrial park (Hastings, 2013). The remaining social enterprises were investigating what they could do to improve their future reporting practices. Hepburn Wind was even analyzing how to upgrade their future annual reports toward something closer to IR.

We participate as a kind of benchmarking/monitoring/evaluation system that is being set up at the moment through the Coalition of Community Energy...we're defining what we should be capturing as projects come onto the Australian landscape...

(Hepburn Wind, Respondent 2)

Thus, findings indicated the social enterprises used a range of reporting formats to collect and communicate with their external stakeholders. The continuum pictured in Figure 17.2 reflects this evidence, demonstrating the organizations released a range of incremental amounts of information that comprised brief financial statements to more integrated types of social and financial accounts.

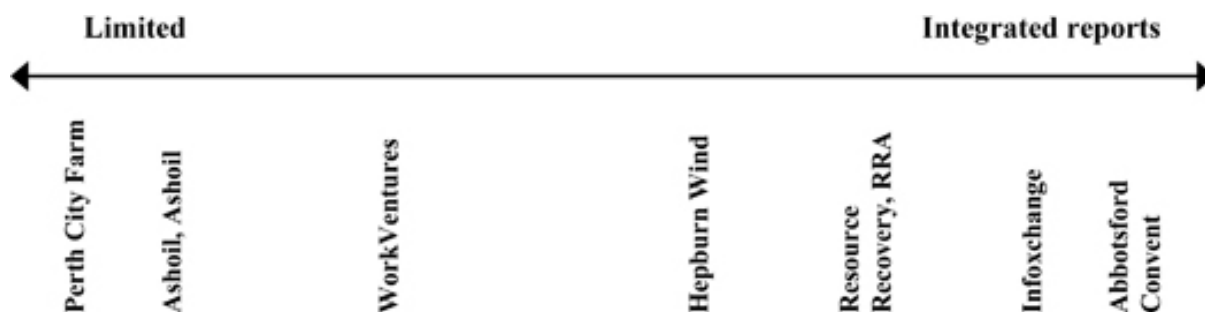


FIGURE 17.2 Levels of reporting by the cases.

Although the reporting was inconsistent and often incomplete on the social enterprises' impacts, [Table 17.6](#) reveals a scope of triple bottom line data that was disseminated by three of the social enterprises that reported in line with IR.

**TABLE 17.6** Cases Disseminating Integrated Data

<b>Case</b>	<b>Social Indicators</b>	<b>Environmental Indicators</b>	<b>Economic Indicators</b>
<a href="#">Abbotsford Convent (2014b)</a>	Annual growth of events hosted, records of visitor numbers and satisfaction from programs delivered on site	Efficiencies in energy and water consumption post-restoration of buildings, e.g., water tanks and solar energy	Return on investment from venue hire and costs of capital investments
<a href="#">Infoxchange (2014)</a>	Number of participants trained in digital literacy for improved health and well-being	Number of families and businesses linked to cloud computing to save transport emissions	Profit and loss including total sales of refurbished computers
<a href="#">Resource Recovery (2015)</a>	Number of trainees certified, percentage of Indigenous employees and reduction in recidivism of locals who were employed by the company	Percentage of waste recovered from landfill and amount of m <sup>2</sup> of land regenerated	Income and assets from awarded contracts and payments from job service agency referrals

Source: [Herbst \(2017\)](#).

## **DISCUSSION**

This chapter focused on research that explored the use of various accounting tools by seven Australian social enterprises to discharge their accountability to stakeholders. These organizations face special challenges in reporting due to needing to recount information about their dual social and commercial pursuits. Nevertheless, accountability can be a means to reconcile both of these remits, and greater transparency can bring increased recognition of organizational impacts, resulting in increased interest from investors and the public ([Wilkinson et al. 2014](#)).

Although performance reporting fluctuated with multidimensional systems of reporting being employed ([Hynes, 2009](#)), this finding is in line with a large global study to assess what types of reporting are carried out by social enterprises ([Huysentruyt et al. 2016](#)). In general, the cases reported about the number of target markets they served as a benchmark of their performance through the products or services they provided, and their rates of success in helping their clients or beneficiaries to attain social objectives. The results show all of the social enterprises were at least meeting their designated missions.

Those cases that leaned toward IR demonstrated more benefits were realized. Abbotsford Convent reached every goal it set in its initial five-year plan. Infoxchange partnered with new government agencies to provide ICT services across technological platforms in Australia and abroad. And Resource Recovery became nationally renowned and sought after for its waste management practices due to promoting their achievements which prompted company expansion. This evidence confirms showcasing more comprehensive company results can yield enhanced impacts—a win-win for beneficiaries and the social enterprises ([Pritchard, Ní Ógáin & Lumley, 2012](#)).

It is important to acknowledge that IR is a worthwhile tool because it overcomes limitations associated with established reporting methods ([Kay & McMullan, 2017](#)). It considers what is important to stakeholders rather than the companies electing to simply report on finances or aspects that are limited. Moreover, it was apparent from the comprehensive reports by Abbotsford Convent and Infoxchange that monitoring organizational performance has become a core business practice, and independent auditing has been implemented for quality assurance to bolster trust and credibility of the metrics.

## Theoretical and Practical Contributions

In accordance with stakeholder theory ([Deegan & Unerman, 2011](#)), giving a broader quantitative and qualitative overview of performance through IR can be a vehicle for companies to connect with multiple audiences. Literature ([Soyka, 2013](#)) emphasizes the advantages, including the ability for a company to present more than typical balance sheet figures. An organization can use this mechanism to relate to its buyers, suppliers, customers, and regulators among other constituents. These target publics are more likely to respond to the communication. For this study, audiences seemed to be responsive to those organizations engaged in deeper reporting on the five capitals as company growth was achieved and forecast. Abbotsford Convent managed to acquire donations that they pooled with revenue to pay for ongoing redevelopment. Infoxchange expanded and acquired resources through its merger that was publicized in its annual reports, and they anticipated servicing more clients ahead. The empirical evidence thereby extends stakeholder theory in the third sector.

According to the [International Integrated Reporting Council \(2013\)](#), once a company participates in IR, it is regularly expected to release data on its operations, strategies, and impacts, but there is a lack of enforcement by governments. Unless statutory reporting is imposed as a mandatory requirement, this situation is likely to continue to prevail which is unfortunate due to potential opportunities to be gained.

Taking a holistic approach to accountability is shown to be more meaningful than issuing separate social and financial reports to external audiences. In addition, the evidence confirms that deeper reporting can be constructive for internal purposes since it helps managers or board members to execute strategic planning and decision-making. None of the conventional frameworks are sufficient to achieve such purposes. This practical knowledge can be an incentive for diffusion of IR by other social enterprises. The case studies in this book chapter can be used as exemplars, to demonstrate to marketers and social marketers how to reach socially responsible consumers through effective performance reporting on sustainable practices.

## CONCLUSION

This study provides insight about performance reporting, especially the early stages of IR for seven Australian SMEs that promote sustainable development. Notwithstanding the demands of preparing financial, social, or combined accounts that primarily limit this application to large corporations ([Carnegie & Burritt, 2012](#)), momentum is building for instituting IR, particularly from reputable national accounting agencies (e.g., CPA Australia) and global accounting firms (e.g., KPMG International). Statutory reporting for it is growing as well in various countries. Legislation passed in South Africa requires all publicly listed companies to issue an integrated report. This country encourages all public, private, or nonprofit organizations to adopt IR ([SAICA, 2009](#)). There is also a push toward greater measurement and reporting practices by social enterprises with recent requirements being introduced in Italy and the United Kingdom. Discussions were even held in Finland and Norway to consider introduction of future legislation ([European Commission, 2016](#); [Jardine & Whyte, 2013](#); [Nordic Council of Ministers, 2015](#)), signaling further changes there.

Research in this area of the social enterprise field is overwhelmingly conceptual. It mostly proposes dimensions on what types of data would be useful to capture to meet the needs of clusters of stakeholders ([Arena et al. 2015](#)). Yet, some case studies reinforce the development of IR ([Frostenson, Helin, & Sandström, 2012](#); [Lodhia, 2014](#); [Soyka, 2013](#); [Stubbs & Higgins, 2014](#)). And the [International Integrated Reporting Council \(2011\)](#) recommends its value for factoring in the stocks presented in the five capitals model to move beyond measurements of GDP.

Integrity of the results of this study was maintained by interviewing and confirming findings among respondents, and by cross-checking numerous pieces of data over several years to detect patterns for interpretation. Also, the researcher adopted trustworthy provisions ([Shenton, 2004](#)) to prevent bias. The main limitation though is the results might not be representative of the international situation because the study was confined to a relatively small sample in Australia. However, it is reasonable to infer that social enterprises carry out similar reporting practices in other developed countries where the results could be tested in a cross-country study for validation.

Recommendations for future research therefore include undertaking a larger study, notably in those countries that are legislating for greater accountability through IR. Another investigation could attempt to determine how deeper reporting brings competitive advantages, specifically linked to the Sustainable Development Goals.



## LESSONS LEARNED

This chapter illustrates that the more a social enterprise is inclusive and responsive to its socially responsible stakeholders when communicating on its performance, the greater the likelihood that it will realize its objectives. While mechanisms to discharge accountability to stakeholders vary, by addressing the five capitals through IR, a company can precipitate a higher contribution to sustainability.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

It is important for a company to report about all sources of capital. Traditionally, a company only covers information on its manufactured and financial stocks.

1. How might a company address its human capital in its reporting practices?
2. How might a company address its social capital in its reporting practices?
3. How might a company address its natural capital in its reporting practices?

## EXERCISE

Select a social enterprise such as The Big Issue. Now design a framework of an integrated report for them by following these steps recommended by the International Federation of Accountants (Thompson, 2017).

1. **Prepare a statement of intent for stakeholders.** Briefly explain the aims, ambitions, and rationale of the business, reinforcing a commitment to good governance, transparency, and long-term strategies. Then outline how the organization will implement its performance reporting practices, including a timeframe and specific milestones to reach its mission.
2. **Map the key stakeholders.** Organizations need to understand their target audiences, and to be clear about their expectations of the business for the present and future. Identify the principal stakeholders such as customers, employees, and community members. Determine how your company uses its products and services to satisfy each group.
3. **Consider how the business creates value.** In what ways does the business generate value with its goods or services? Be concise but address all these material matters: the financial base for trading and growth; the infrastructure and assets for production; the intellectual property, processes, skills, expertise, and knowledge of management and employees; the access and proximity to water and energy; and the connections with customers and suppliers. Do not forget to state in what ways the business also invests in its community to cater to social or environmental needs.
4. **Look at the business model.** Does the business model and its associated strategies support value creation? Does it reflect stakeholders' expectations? Should the business make any adjustments to factor in risks and opportunities?
5. **Determine what resources are needed.** Will the company require additional resources to implement any changes to its business model or strategies? Think about whether the business may need to purchase new equipment, hire new staff, upgrade its product design, innovate, or source additional financial capital to accommodate business growth and to help society if demand for services heightens.
6. **Tailor your performance report to appropriate communication channels.** Ensure the messages that you formulate in a report will be effective. Do the company's existing platforms enable messages to be delivered to the organization's internal and external stakeholders? Should different types of social media be utilized to encourage cross-organizational communication and richer engagement with business strategy?

Remember every organization is structured and functions differently. An organization can leverage its available resources to adapt to IR over several business cycles as new systems for reporting are implemented and best practices evolve.

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