

Questions for Minister of Social Investment Nicola Willis and the Social Investment Agency (collated and themed from the webinar on 26 November 2024):

Theme	#	Question	Response
Community engagement	1	How will the Social Investment Advisory Board engage with iwi, hapū and communities?	The Social Investment Board was established in November 2024 as a ministerial advisory committee that provides independent advice and assurance to the Minister for Social Investment. It also provides guidance to the Social Investment Agency on the development and implementation of social investment. The Board is developing its work programme and will engage with a range of stakeholders to build its advice, dependent on the issues at hand.
	2	What is the channel to engage with, and provide feedback to, the Social Investment Agency (SIA)?	Feedback and questions can be sent to our public-facing email address: info@sia.govt.nz , which is constantly monitored. We also have a newsletter newly launched, which you can sign up to on our website (www.sia.govt.nz) to stay informed. We have regular meetings with a range of peak bodies, and will be hosting a range of other engagements across the year where we will seek to understand the perspectives of stakeholders, and as well as seek feedback on specific proposals.
Enabling the grassroots	3	How will the government support small hapū, community and voluntary groups in building their capability to measure and report on their impact in ways that make sense to whānau?	SIA already works closely with a number of hapū, community and voluntary groups to grow capability in data collection, analysis and use. SIA's recently launched Regional Data Explorer is a good example of government making it easier for local and regional decision-makers to access more, better data to support the identification of solutions, and make evidence-based decisions.
	4	How will funding criteria adequately assess relationships as well as resources and size of an organisation to ensure the right group is resourced to deliver for whānau?	SIA is actively working with departments and Ministers to identify how to ensure that social services are delivered by those best placed to support whānau. SIA will engage closely with the sector to ensure this advice is robust, and adequately balances the benefits and costs of deeper community involvement and Ministers' accountabilities.
	5	How will the Government balance expectations with the resource constraints of hapū, community and voluntary organisations and groups that have already experienced funding cuts?	Social investment is about using data and evidence to understand people's needs and how best to meet them, and drive earlier and more effective investment in social outcomes. The current system is not working for everyone, and the Government wants to see things done differently. This means changing the way the public sector and funding system works, and to commission services in a way that makes an impact for providers, communities, and those needing help.
	6	How will the mandatory criteria for independent SROI reports be adjusted to make them feasible for smaller organisations and groups in future funding rounds, including timeframes?	We are aware that there are some funds that require independent SROI reports, but the Social Investment Agency has not set any mandatory criteria for independent SROI reports. A core pillar of social investment is to ensure that value is delivered from government investment in social services. We are developing a measurement framework for social investment initiatives which will be provided to public sector agencies to set standards for reporting. We would not expect all providers to be capable of conducting social return on investment (SROI) calculations themselves and will look at what tools might be developed to support providers. SIA has expertise in these sorts of analyses and would work closely with providers in the conduct of any future SROI calculations.
	7	How can we ensure that more investment reaches essential grassroots organisations and groups that often struggle to secure funding, and that these essential community supports are not lost?	Social investment recognises that those closest to communities are best placed to identify and respond to unmet needs using evidence-based approaches. SIA will engage closely with the sector to ensure this advice is robust, and adequately balances the benefits and costs of deeper community involvement and Ministers' accountabilities.

Giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi	8	How will Te Tiriti o Waitangi be given effect to in the social investment approach?	The Secretary for Social Investment attended the National Iwi Chairs Forum at Waitangi this year. This was an important engagement on the social investment approach with the wider iwi leaders group and we expect ongoing discussion and engagement with iwi in this and other structured fora. SIA also regularly hui with Pou Tangata and Pou Tahua representatives on the social investment approach and seek their advice on engagement with iwi.
	9	Where can people find information about the Iwi Chairs Social Investment roadmap?	The Social Investment Roadmap is a product of the Iwi Social Investment Design Group.
	10	How will SIA ensure they uphold (and not undermine) the Iwi Chairs Social Investment Roadmap, and learn from the vision and approach of iwi?	The Social Investment Roadmap is an innovative tool that is owned by the Iwi Social Investment Design Group. The Roadmap is a tool that supports iwi to self-determine and understand the social needs for their people. It is an approach that is supported by the National Iwi Chairs Forum and SIA is engaging closely with Iwi Chairs as we develop our social investment approach.
	11	What resource will be dedicated to by-Māori-for-Māori approaches and initiatives?	Social investment recognises that those closest to communities are best placed to identify and respond to unmet needs using evidence-based approaches. This includes by-Māori-for-Māori approaches. The size of the resource to be dedicated to these approaches is not pre-determined.
Equity and inclusivity	12	How will social investment address structural inequities?	Social investment aims to change the way services for those with multiple and complex unmet needs are provided. It will enable better targeted and more effective delivery of cross-cutting services and supports for those the system does not currently serve well.
	13	What proportion of social investment will target specific groups that are currently under-served, including tangata whenua, Pasifika, disabled people, migrant youth etc?	Social investment aims to change the way services for those with multiple and complex unmet needs are provided. It will enable better targeted and more effective delivery of cross-cutting services and supports for those the system does not currently serve well. We know that those with highest need are often overrepresented by tangata whenua, Pasifika and other specific groups.
	14	How does social investment address systemic and societal factors, such as education systems not designed for neurodivergence?	Social investment aims to change the way services for those with multiple and complex unmet needs are provided. It will enable better targeted and more effective delivery of cross-cutting services and supports for those the system does not currently serve well.
	15	How will a social investment approach ensure that whānau have their basic food, housing and health needs met?	Social investment aims to change the way services for those with multiple and complex unmet needs are provided. It will enable better targeted and more effective delivery of cross-cutting services and supports for those the system does not currently serve well.
	16	How does the social investment approach align with the UNCRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), the Children's Convention and the UNDRIP (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)?	Social investment is about using data and evidence to understand people's needs and how best to meet them, and drive earlier and more effective investment in social outcomes. As a signatory to the UNCRPD, UNDRIP and UNCROC, New Zealand is committed to upholding the human rights of these groups. In developing and implementing the social investment approach, officials will identify and assess the impacts of policy decisions to ensure alignment with our commitments under these conventions.
Measuring impact	17	How will the Minister and the SIA work with iwi, hapū and communities to determine what will be measured and how?	The approach to outcome measurement is still evolving as we develop the operating model for the Social Investment Fund and how initiatives will be funded through that mechanism. Our experience shows that it is possible to agree on outcomes of mutual interest through close engagement with communities and social service providers, including iwi, hapū and whānau.

18	Where can we find information about the developing standards and frameworks that SIA is developing for social investment?	SIA has been working on standards for measuring impact and value for money, but these are still a work in progress. The focus for the first tranche of standards has been internal to government to make sure government agencies have a consistent approach to the way they measure impact and value for money calculations.
19	How will Māori data sovereignty principles be upheld in this process?	SIA has been working on standards for measuring impact and value for money, but these are still a work in progress. The focus for the first tranche of standards has been internal to government to make sure government agencies have a consistent approach to the way they measure impact and value for money from their own programmes. SIA is working closely with Māori researchers within government agencies to ensure mātauranga Māori and te ao Māori ways of knowing are incorporated into the standards.
20	How will data privacy issues be addressed in the social investment approach?	Data sharing will be essential to the social investment approach. Government agencies have built very strong capability for using and sharing data safely as government activity has become increasingly digitalised. SIA will be working with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, Crown Law and the independent Data Ethics Advisory Group as the social investment approach evolves to make sure data is treated safely and ethically.
21	How will SIA ensure kaupapa Māori and Pasifika indicators are valued?	We anticipate that we will be working with Māori and Pacific providers who are closest to their communities. Social investment initiatives will be monitored using measures that are agreed with providers to incorporate a shared view of success. We continue to work with iwi on indicator dashboards to provide them with iwi specific data to inform their strategic planning and investments.
22	How will SIA support positive indicators of change rather than focusing on mitigating negative indicators?	Social investment initiatives will be monitored using measures that are agreed with providers to incorporate a shared view of success.
23	How will the impacts of funding cuts to evidence-based approaches and initiatives be measured, such as cultural identity and belonging in schools, disability supports and prevention services?	Social investment intends to prioritise investment in initiatives, services and supports that are demonstrably effective. This means there will be greater investment in evidence-based approaches that are proven to be effective in improving outcomes for those with multiple and complex unmet needs.
24	How will SIA ensure the accuracy of any administrative data being used to make decisions, especially where demographic data is missing from the IDI?	SIA employs some of the most senior and experienced IDI analysts in government, who have in-depth understanding of the strengths and limitations of data contained in the database. Any quality issues that impact on assumptions underpinning our analyses are always well-documented and communicated with stakeholders.
25	Will other forms of evaluation and impact measurement be recognised by SIA and other government agencies besides one-off expensive SROI reports?	<p>A core pillar of social investment is to ensure that value is delivered from government investment in social services. We are developing a measurement framework for social investment initiatives which will be provided to public sector agencies to set standards for reporting. We would not expect all providers to be capable of conducting social return on investment (SROI) calculations themselves and will look at what tools might be developed to support providers.</p> <p>SIA has expertise in these sorts of analyses and would work closely with providers in the conduct of any future SROI calculations. We would support any analysis that provides credible and robust estimates of impact.</p>
26	How will SIA ensure holistic supports and multiple initiatives that work collectively for whānau are valued and measured?	Social investment initiatives will have a strong emphasis on measuring whether desirable outcomes are being achieved, and free providers to innovate in how those outcomes are achieved. We believe this contracting approach is entirely consistent with holistic or multiple initiatives.
27	How will SIA ensure a right-sized approach to measurement to suit the scale of the initiative or organisation?	An important aspect of social investment outcomes contracts will be arriving at a shared view between government and community providers as to what success looks like and how it will be measured, in a way that maximises relevance, accuracy, timeliness and minimises reporting burden on the service provider.

	28	How will systemic and societal factors be measured through social investment?	Social investment is about targeting investment. Our use of data and analytics enables us to target cohorts that are experiencing multiple and persistent disadvantage, and we will be able to measure tangible success of our investments in these cohorts.
Role and priorities of government	29	What is the role of local government in social investment, especially in regions and small towns?	Social investment recognises that those closest to communities are best placed to identify and respond to unmet needs using evidence-based approaches. We will be looking to engage with a wide range of stakeholders and partners who act as funders, providers, and community liaison at a local level, including local government as appropriate.
	30	How does the removal of the four 'wellbeing objectives' from local government align with the Government's focus on social investment?	This decision relates to the Government's desire to see local bodies focuses on core infrastructure and service delivery.
	31	What level of resource will the Government commit to social investment over this term and future terms?	This will be determined on a budget-by-budget basis.
	32	What are the Minister's priority focus areas for social investment?	<p>The Minister for Social Investment has previously outlined some areas for priority focus (refer speech to IPANZ, 24 October 2024). This includes a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change across the public sector to shift focus from outputs to outcomes, including changing the way that social services are commissioned. • Work to establish a Social Investment Fund that will directly commission outcomes for vulnerable New Zealanders and work with community, non-government organisations and iwi providers. <p>In doing this, drawing on data and evidence will give us the best chance of changing lives and ensure we get value for the money we spend.</p>
	33	What kinds of initiatives will be funded through the Social Investment Fund? Approximately how many each year?	The Social Investment Fund is still being developed and details will be announced in due course. We expect that the Fund will have a strong focus on directly commissioning outcomes for vulnerable New Zealanders and work with community, non-government organisations and iwi providers.
	34	How will you ensure transparency of the metrics and methodology behind frameworks developed by SIA, and impact reports commissioned or accepted as evidence to support funding being approved, in the social investment approach?	SIA is committed to transparency and being accountable for the methods we use to measure impact and value for money. As with all government agencies, SIA is also committed to the requirements for openness and availability of information through the Official Information Act 1982.
	35	How does a "Social Investment" approach align with the funding cuts to service providers, particularly in prevention services and supports?	SIA will allow the Government to get a wider view of social service impact and delivery for broader outcomes, rather than those decisions being taken on a more narrow agency-by-agency basis.
Implementation	36	How will SIA ensure transparency of the approach being implemented across agencies?	SIA is responsible for setting the standards for social investment to ensure there is consistency across government agencies and contracted providers. The standards will be made publicly available once finalised.
	37	What strategies are in place to support the culture change required in government agencies to enable better collaboration and procurement processes?	SIA is working with other government agencies to support a greater focus on outcomes in contracting and the bringing together of multiple contracts for providers. SIA is developing a range of materials and guidance to support both government commissioners and providers when entering into outcomes contracts. SIA is also part of the Social Services Commissioning and Procurement Committee, hosted by MBIE, which provides a forum for collaboration in commissioning and procurement across the social sector.
	38	How will social investment align with existing Government strategies and action plans?	Social investment will be a mechanism for implementing Government strategies and action plans, where appropriate.

	39	How will the Government initiatives (such as bootcamps) also prove their evidence-base and impact?	Government agencies routinely evaluate funded initiatives but our observation is that there is variability in the quality of that evaluation. SIA has been working on standards for measuring impact and value for money, but these are still a work in progress. The focus for the first tranche of standards has been internal to government to make sure government agencies have a consistent approach to the way they measure impact and value for money calculations. We expect the quality of government evaluation to improve as these standards are adopted.
	40	What assurance can you provide that hapū, community and voluntary organisations and groups can have confidence in partnering with the government, given recent issues with Oranga Tamariki contracting?	SIA is aware that implementing social investment will require government to do things differently. We support the Social Sector Commissioning principles and are working with government agencies to develop materials that will support their implementation through social investment outcomes contracting in the first instance.
	41	Where Social Investment Fund initiatives are successful, will there be a pipeline to (i) continue funding through mainstream agencies, and (ii) reduce funding of current BAU activities within these agencies?	The Social Investment Fund is still being developed and details will be announced in due course. We expect that the Fund will have a strong focus on directly commissioning outcomes for vulnerable New Zealanders and work with community, non-government organisations and iwi providers.
	42	What do you see as the role for social enterprises in social investment?	Social enterprises are one of the many avenues for social investment, whether as a potential partner for the Social Investment Fund or by demonstrating social investment.
	43	What policy supports exist for Responsible Investment pathways, such as ESG (environmental, social and governance), into place-based projects?	The Minister for Social Investment has indicated her desire to better harness the enormous goodwill and resources that exist outside government. There may be opportunities in the future to consider that potential role of impact investment into place-based projects.
Long-term vision and sustainability	44	How will social investment balance early intervention initiatives with support for older people and individuals and whānau with complex disabilities?	Social investment focuses on prioritising investment in more effective and better targeted supports and services for those with multiple and complex unmet needs. This can include services and supports across the spectrum – from prevention and early intervention to crisis response and healing.
	45	How will you balance investment in 'bottom of cliff' interventions with investment into communities to keep people away from the cliff?	Social investment focuses on prioritising investment in more effective and better targeted supports and services for those with multiple and complex unmet needs. This can include services and supports across the spectrum – from prevention and early intervention to crisis response and healing.
	46	What is the approach to social investment where the "cost-benefit" assessment of social benefits is not equivalent between different populations, such as for older people and those with complex disabilities, where all people can be supported in ways that meet their needs and aspirations?	Social investment focuses on prioritising investment in more effective and better targeted supports and services for those with multiple and complex unmet needs. This can include services and supports across the spectrum – from prevention and early intervention to crisis response and healing. We acknowledge that this approach won't necessarily apply to every area of social sector spend or replace rights-based social protection.
	47	How will you ensure the long-term sustainability of services, such as home and community care, through a social investment approach?	The social investment approach will enable government, providers and the public to understand the true value of social services being delivered, to both individuals and society. This should strengthen the ability of service providers who are able to prove their impact making a case for long-term funding.