

SIMNA Event Round Up: Outcomes Measurement Initiative Panel

25 November 2022

Attendees:

- Christina Griffiths from Urbis and SIMNA (Facilitator)
- Heather Thompson and Liz Bloom from Global Sisters
- Mark Gates and Harry Sillett from Vanguard Laundry, and
- Judi Drown from the Department of Social Services

Transcript

[Christina]

...known as the ready growth grants and the Outcome Measurement Initiative or OMI. And has also driven the development and delivery of the payment by outcome trials and partnership with state governments on impact investing, with the aim of growing the sector, so thank you for joining us.

Then we have Mark and Harry from Vanguard. So Mark is Vanguard CEO and it says here that you've got a decade of experience in commercial laundry and you're still here, and over 15 years of leading operational improvement. Harry, after studying journalism, I interestingly found out on your LinkedIn profile, is the Social enterprise and Operations General Manager at Vanguard. He's held several roles in training and development and has been pivotal in the development and implementation of Vanguard's Social Impact Centre and manages the parallel delivery of the operations and social impact support for Vanguard's participants.

Then we have Liz and Heather from Global Sisters. So I'm doing it around the wrong way, Heather is Global Sisters Chief Operating Officer. Her career has been dedicated to the social and economic justice for women in the Asia Pacific, and she helped launch Global Sisters in 2016 and brings expertise in social impact, Community Development, organisational capacity building, microfinance and program design. And Liz is Global Sister's Head of Impact, she has a Master in evaluation, so lots of friends in the room I think, and has supported organisations across the Asia Pacific to maximize the impact by applying evidence to inform design and iteration of strategies and programs. So thank you all our panellists and we'll get into the discussion. To begin with and I'll start with Judi and sort of move down, can you tell us a little bit about your organisation, a little bit about your boss would be great [laughter] and your Approach To OIM.

[Judi]

Can do that. I just want to start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge all the lands we are on and everyone on the screen.

Yes, I could put dirt on my boss because she was supposed to be here [laughter]. No, she has a very good excuse and she's lovely. I won't go as high as the Department of Social Services, perhaps you all know a big government department but in my area, so in Social Impact Investing, as Christina said. I've been the Director for four years now and we have a program which includes a number of sets of trials. And the objective of those trials is to grow the social investing market and more importantly to determine what the role of the Commonwealth Government should be or could be in growing the sector, or growing the market. So two trials that we have in the social impact investing or investment space, as you mentioned we have three payment by outcome trials, so that is where the government acts as the funder and we're working directly with three organisations to achieve outcomes and impact and we, that as it implies, we pay on those outcomes. So traditionally government gives out grants, in the grant scenario we give an organisation some money and we take 100% of the risk that they may or may not achieve every impact. In a payment by outcome scenario we share that risk with the service providers. And in the case of our trials one of them has investors who will cover that risk, others have philanthropic support covering the risk and we're just testing and trialling that to see to build our capability and capacity in doing it and the organisations, so there's a lot we're learning in that space and outcome measurement obviously is pivotal to that you can't define and measure the outcome.

The other investments we're doing are in Partnerships with state governments. So, a number of state governments in Australia do have impact investing and they're doing quite a lot in that and we're partnering with them, and again we're learning a lot about how to do that and also understanding measuring outcomes at the different levels of government so it involves a whole lot of data linkage which is a bit of a minefield and everybody, you know, knows that's difficult but we're testing and trialling to see what can be done and pushing the limits of that.

And then we have two sets of trials which we're building their capability of the sector. So one was the Sector Readiness Fund and Bruce is somewhere behind us. So that's run by Impact Investing Australia and that was to provide grants to Social enterprises together with an intermediary to build their capability to be able to attract investment. And then, the second one which is what we're talking about today, we finally got there, is Outcome Measurement Initiative. So that was set up to help organisations to define and measure their outcomes to then attract investments. That was the aim of it so that they're able to do that. So under that program we funded Global Sisters and Vanguard to increase their business or scale their impact with a view to measuring that outcome and impact. In order to, through that, to attracting investment or external funding other than to government and you know noting it's a trial. Part of that was that we wanted to be able to share that with the sector so we engaged Urbis too. That's how they came involved, to analyse and look at what was happening in both those both the organisations to see what they were doing in that outcome space and create some case studies and videos which will be available for people to see shortly. There's quite a process in the government for getting things put up on the website to be made publicly available [laughter], but we are working through it so close, would have been really great to say and there they are. Maybe next week. So we have a, you know, and they're brilliant they're absolutely you know I'm going to whet your appetite now. You really do want to log on and have a look at them they are so great. So they will be available and that's what this project was about so really looking at how they both approached outcome and impact measurement and then being able to share that with the sector.

[Christina]

Great, thank you Judi. [Gesturing to Mark and Harry] so how, tell us a little bit about Vanguard and how you approached outcome and impact measurement.

[Mark]

Okay so a little bit about Vanguard. Vanguard's a commercial laundry based in Toowoomba. So [it] initially started back in 2016 and it operates under the method of using transitional employment to help people [who] suffer from a social disadvantage. So back in 2016, we would have had probably about eight to ten staff would have been a gut full. By the end of 2022 we'll probably have about 60 people and so the aim is to employ but who can't get into employment they will process through a training program the Vanguard curriculum and ultimately we'll help them gain employment elsewhere. And then we'll go right back to begin and we'll start it over again with a new cohort of people, and hopefully help them into further employment.

So as a commercial laundry we support the local Healthcare sites like private and public hospitals and plus a lot of hotels are based in the Toowoomba region. So we've got that commercial side of the business but also we've then got the social part so out of our current cohort we bring up staff 65 staff and a payroll. I think about 30 to 35 would come from what we've been with our target staff so people that have been able to achieve employment elsewhere. Roughly speaking, they'll stay with Vanguard from three up to about 18 months before we would then transition them to another employer elsewhere. And we'll work with that employer to make sure their employment then sticks and again more then we recruit and then and we'll go again. So for us OIM initially started as a proof of concept that's essentially what it was it was a we think this is going to work we think if Vanguard does this, this is what the outcome is going to be but we don't actually know that for sure so hence that's how OIM came into the Vanguard World.

[Christina]

Great thank you. Heather and Liz what about Global Sisters?

[Heather]

Thank you, so Global Sisters, we exist to make business possible for women. And so by that, we mean, you know, all of you would know in Australia if you're unemployed, underemployed, low-income, struggling to find employment, there's not many options. It's pretty limiting and limited. and we want self-employment or business or entrepreneurship to be a genuine third alternative to welfare and, and unemployment. And so we started in 2016, and by the time we met DSS and we were just about to start to scale. So, in 2019 we, you know, worked a lot in place in the Eastern parts of Australia and have really tested the model. But felt that we were really ready to scale and started digital transformation. [We] said that we could make our programs, which is really a long-term, we call it like a life cycle of business support for women, so it's not just like a few weeks you know training program or something. It's you know three plus years of support to get a business off the ground and to get a business profitable and sustainable. And that's everything from sales and

marketing support to business coaching from some of our amazing corporate Partners to micro Finance to business education. Basically everything that's needed over the long-term. And we had to move that online, and not just you know a 12-week program, we had to move this whole life cycle support online, and really did that throughout, throughout COVID.

You can see on the right hand side of the diagram [gesturing to PowerPoint slide] that is our social impact framework. And, so we developed this with our sisters at the very, very beginning. So it was designed and with and for our Sisters and the women that we support. And so those women are low-income, unemployed, underemployed, often on welfare. But, we always say they're incredibly diverse. We're very, very inclusive and they could be like any of us in this room, if you're a woman. And you know every woman in this room is only a few steps away from homelessness. A few circumstances change and we're all pretty vulnerable. So this is certainly something for, for all women. Our impact framework, as you can see in the middle part of it [gestures to PowerPoint slide]. We have six domains, six impact direct impact domains, where we want to see change and our sisters want to see change in their lives. On the outer part of the circle you can see our macro more systems change component of what we want to see happen. So we're looking at both of those both of those levels. So in 2019 we started to scale. I'm currently, we're at around 5 500 women nationally that we've supported. Over a thousand new businesses launched and over six million dollars in pro bono support from our corporate Partners directly to our Sisters. We've got some big targets we want to reach. And 43 000 women across Australia and create 17 000 new micro businesses. And those businesses will be really, really diverse genuine employment for women all across the country. Would you move onto the next slide?

So on to our impact measurement, and I think what was really important for us over the last few years, as part of this this project with DSS has been connecting those two pieces. So connecting the direct impact with our sisters and our systems change macro impact aspirations. And you can see in this impact roadmap here that we're that's what we're really trying to do and that's been a big step forward for us through this IMPACT program with DSS. Great, thank you very much.

[Christina]

Now both of your organisations - sorry not, not you Judi - but both of Global Sisters and Vanguard have used outcome and impact measurement or OIM to support continuous improvement. You sort of touched on that. Can you talk us through this and how you make sure that you're getting timely data to inform continuous Improvement. And I'll start with Heather and Liz.

[Liz]

Yeah and, so as well, as having our overarching impact measurement system, that Heather's just talked through, which is collecting ongoing data against each of those domains. So we have an annual lengthy survey and then ongoing surveys and registration forms throughout the year that that keeps up-to-date resistors. We also conduct a lot of rapid evaluations, so, because we're a pretty entrepreneurial organisation. We are often piloting co-designing with our Sisters new ways to go about business and to support them.

And we always co-design with Sisters, but then also wrap rapid evaluation around all of those programs. So that's largely part of my role. And so I can also act as a bit of a developmental evaluator bringing back those insights as I'm hearing them on the ground to the team. You know, regularly updating them on you know what we're hearing and what's that into the for the programs and being a bit of a critical voice I suppose. And so as an example, when we had to go online because of COVID our sisters needed a place online to sell because a lot of them are selling at markets or face-to-face or in shops and that wasn't possible anymore. So we were hearing this need from our sisters through the data. But we were also needing, it was kind of necessity because of COVID. So we use that that live information to develop Marketplace. We evaluated it that led to us co-designing a project called the lab, which helps sisters who join Marketplace but weren't having many sales you know having any sales. And that's a reason, initiative we've been evaluating at the moment. And then that's led to another industry runways and with Partners like Mecca which we're currently evaluating as well. So yeah it's a we definitely have a big focus on using the data regularly.

[Christina]

Great, Mark and Harry?

[Harry]

Yeah, so for us we actually started from a big fat external OIM set up with CSI Swinburne coming in annually and conducting interviews and evaluations, sorry interviews, and surveys with our staff together. Like big data so stuff about you know smoking rates and hospitalization rates versus before but before someone was employed with us versus after. And also collecting qualitative data as well and, and those, those data collection points helped us to make operational changes. Definitely everything from the amount of shifts we gave staff to the types of coffee that we stocked in the staff room. Like literally, a lot of....

[Christina]

You're in Melbourne, you're speaking to the choir.

[Harry]

So definitely they that that helped us to make changes and to also look at the kinds of impacts we were making but it wasn't timely so we actually had to build from the ground up. Our staff, our staff tracker tools so that we could collect real-time data. And basically what we wanted to know is, we wanted to know... we wanted to know more about our staff at smaller intervals in time. And we also wanted to track their experience through our program and learn more about you know what might be holding them back or what was motivational for them to move so our system of support them where people move through three phases and then eventually graduate. And that's when as Mark alluded to they go on to transition so what's really important to us is that we make that experience of transitioning through our program and externally, and out of Vanguard as smooth and as enriching a process as possible. So whilst we collect whilst the CSI were enabled were able to collect great data for us and still do. And that makes a real impact to what we do and also it also goes a lot towards illustrating how we are working towards our goals in our theory of change. All that's very important. We also need to look really at a macro level, sorry, at a micro level about what it's like for

our people to be in our system. So the staff tracker, really we build that based on very regular meetings with our staff. So our staff are paid to work on the production floor and also paid to come and undertake development activities with [us], with our social impact team. And we track people through those development activities and try and learn as much as we can about their experience as it happens.

[Christina]

Thank you. So the case study stuff which we have heard about, watch the space, I believe in about in about a week's time they might be available. But we'll make sure that you're the first to know. These have been developed to sort of identify the learnings of the last sort of three four years particularly around measuring and reporting your outcomes and impact. So starting again with Heather and Liz, can you talk us through how you use your OIM to inform your plans for growth?

[Heather]

So I was I was thinking about this earlier today and this may not be in the case studies (laughter)

[Christina]

This is an exclusive!

[Heather]

So I think for us the, what was really really important... at the end of last year and the beginning of this year the work that Liz was doing around our direct Sister impact around those six domains. What started to come out in the third domain which is financial resilience and that's really for us in helping women set up businesses you know where they're not just generating an income, earning an income, but starting to earn a sustainable income where they can move off welfare. That is really like the guts of what we're trying to do and we started to get excellent data that confirming that. Like we knew that that was the case anecdotally, but we started to get great data that that was that that was genuinely happening. And that so having such a robust impact system really just gave us... and getting those results gave us the confidence to start thinking about how we're going to continue to scale. And what that's going to be looking like for us next year is that we're going to be doing three quite significant demonstration projects with three very targeted cohorts where we can prove to the government and to society that it is possible for women to move off welfare through business. And I think that yeah just the having... having that data come through really gave us the confidence to go ahead with these major demonstration projects which are very outcomes based. One of them is actually a social impact investment initiative from New South Wales Government and others are with big philanthropy and... yeah so it's really got us to that point which was just incredible so we will continue business as usual and continue to scale as like as targets. But these demonstration projects will help both with the direct impact but also the systems change aspirations. We have around sort of pieces of welfare reform and elevating women's micro business and then the second main point was just as Judi said the whole aim of this project was around impact investment readiness and we're at that point now. So you know we're a small organisation and very, very lean team but National. And you know it's only taken a few years and we're at that point now we've put in our first tender social impact investment tender. So yeah that's been... that's

really helped us to think about how we're going to, how we're going to fund and support the work going forward so yeah it's been great.

[Christina]

I mean I think in our first conversation looking at those numbers of how many women you've supported now I think it was sort of 500 or something like that.

[Heather]

Yeah, that's right.

[Christina]

So, I'm looking at that thinking, yeah, that is growth. It's great, yeah (gestures to Harry).

[Harry]

I think that, for us there's probably two parts there as well. I think having DSS be able to support our OIM has enabled us to, as I mentioned before, learn more about ourselves. And that has, because we know more now about what the experience is of our candidates through our program, we learned a few things about our cohorts. So what we know is that we have a mixed cohort. So of the 30 people that Mark mentioned before they come from 62 cohorts some of those guys there's a real spectrum of experience. Within those 30 people so some of those guys have are still actively managing some really acute mental health challenges and they might even be living on site in a Mental Health Institution while they work for us. And then there's a whole spectrum where there's people at the other end of the spectrum that have overcome a lot of challenges in their past and are now have been locked out of employment, but they just need that opportunity to break back into. And they don't have that really heavy load of, of managing their mental health so much.

So because we could because we could identify that through our OIM, we could then decide what was the optimum split for our cohort in terms of making sure we were making as much impact as possible. So it enabled us to scale our internal impact by saying well. Yes we can still manage people who have acute mental health challenges, but if we play with the mix of that target cohort we can help more people. We can help people pick up, and we can go out. And so for example last year we had 65 individuals come through our program in the calendar year which is the most that we've ever had. So we've been able to move people who are locked out of employment, but just need to leg up, identify them at the beginning of the journey and give them that push into employment through Vanguard. So that's the internal component that OIM has helped us to, to achieve. And then for us as well we're looking into the future and we're looking for expansion. And we're looking at other sites that are away from Toowoomba and in other probably regional communities.

And because through OMI we now know so much about ourselves and know what we do and how we do it best, we can then go to communities that have their own unique challenges that are local to them and try and map our approach to their specific challenges. I think that's really important so we can go meet with Community leaders, which we've recently done, talk to people about what kind of social problems their communities are facing and then say well we know we can do X Y and Z really

well and we think that matches up to your challenges, in a really synchronistic way. And we think we can help in this community. So I think both internally and externally it's helped us to envision what scale and growth looks like.

[Christina]

Great, may as well continue guys (gestures to Harry and Mark) now you've got the floor. So, there are plethora of approaches that can be used to support outcome and impact measurement what are your learnings around investing in these?

[Harry]

Yeah, so yeah, I think for us we definitely have learned the value of both really robust and thorough external OIM. Because you know it is that fresh set of eyes and that, you know, those real research Bona fides that CSI Swinburne give to us and enable. And to have them in externally once a year to undertake that real robust research focused OIM is, is super important to us. And produces great data that we can use to both win funding and change how we operate all sorts of different things. And we, we have learned that that probably from our point of view needs to be complemented by, also, in a robust internal OIM processes that drive that more continual improvement piece that's done in little bits rather than big chunks, if that makes sense. So that's probably one of my bigger learnings from the process.

[Mark]

I think, you know we, as I mentioned, there on that our initial, Vanguard's initial approach, I am, was all about proof of concept. Does the Vanguard work? We think it's going to do this, but we don't actually know that for sure. You know one of the stages through DSS was how do we scale? And Harry mentioned how do we scale locally, for us that means expanding locally within our region. And we did that, and what that actually meant was we actually created more jobs and we transitioned more people. And we've now proven that, and that's fantastic as you know. It's back to you guys, not really exactly the same position that we're looking for growth to the next stage. The second Vanguard are we ready, yes we are ready, but it all comes from the back of this, right? This is the, this is the sort of the natural progression going, we've done the OIM, we've scaled. We've proven that fact. Now let's go do it again. And the conversations that I had personally three years ago versus the conversations at home these days about growth and expansion, as Harry said, with the bona fides behind us around 'can you prove what you say you're going to do does it work?', yes and here it is. And the conversations are shorter and that's the thing that for us particularly when we're looking for expansion, we're looking for investment, the conversations are a lot easier. So yeah we're really looking forward to that next stage basically.

[Christina]

Yeah

[Liz]

So one of our big learnings is the importance of mixed methods. So having really strong quantitative data supported by storytelling. This is something Global Sisters has done from the beginning. But recently we conducted an in-depth impact evaluation looking over the last year and we had a really strong Quant base. So we had 600 survey responding Baseline with 132 comparison survey with a quite a lengthy survey. So that gave us, as I heard, there was a lot of confidence that what we're doing is working and it's having the results that we want. But in order to create the social change and the systems change that we want we know, and I'm sure many of you know that you need to develop empathy. So you need to develop empathy and understanding and that's done best using stories humanizing the people.

So you know there's many examples in social change where there's been great quantitative data sets or in existence with advocacy going on but it hasn't led to the change until there's been a significant story or a number of stories that have kind of catalysed that. So one way we did this is so we spoke with 26 of our sisters and we developed a series of Journey Maps, as well as having them speaking on the on that impact website having videos of them speaking to each of our themes and our evidence points. But basically we did three interactive Journey Maps so these are video Journey Maps.

This is Fabiola Campbell's. She's one of our sisters and she runs Professional Migrant Women which supports migrant women to progress into leadership roles in their career. And, if you're on our website you'd be able to hover over each of these tiles and videos will pop out of her talking about that part of her journey. So it starts with, you know the barriers that she faced, goes through to you know, what she the different supports she got from Global Sisters. Specifically, the impact that each part of that support I had on her. And you just have to listen to it and watch it to know that it just instantly humanizes her. It's so compelling. And so, that's, yeah, a massive learning for Global Sisters and, yeah.

Another one is that we try and do things in a really interactive accessible way. And we have a impact platform where we share all of our impact anything impact related our framework and all of our findings. And again the reason we do that in an accessible way isn't just to make it pretty, even though it is pretty, it's because we want to be able, to anyone in society, to be able to look at it to engage with it to hold us to account, particularly our Sisters. So we want Fabiola or anyone who did that and say 'no that's wrong' or 'you know you totally skewed that' or 'you know you've forgotten this'. And so we share that with our sisters and they give us really amazing feedback on it, on it. And it's yeah, I get also pushing against the idea of what rigor is. So you know, we know evaluation came from the education sector in America was developed by sort of a certain demographic of people. And certain language and jargon is considered rigor. But you know, things can be engaging and attractive and, and easy to understand, and still be really rigorous. Or if not more rigorous because people can understand them and hold you to account on them.

[Heather]

Yeah and just to add to that, this has been, yeah, just having that having that lens has been really really important for us. But Liz put up the our latest impact report onto our Sister Community which

is like a 5 000 strong like Community Facebook community. And the Sisters were just saying 'I see myself in this, so this is this is my experience'. And it was, it was really emotional to see that have that direct that direct response. And yeah really being held accountable for what we say the impact is.

[Christina]

Yeah absolutely, and if you haven't already make sure you go into every day. Very, very impressive. And yeah as you've touched on that's obviously publicly available anyone can see it. You know the punters can see it, your Sisters can see it, etcetera. You've also made the decision to make your OIM in publicly available can you talk me through that decision?

[Mark]

For us... it was in a DSS contract (laughter). For us, for Harry and I, we've been in the sector for four or five years now. So the amount of times that we get contacted from other social enterprises saying hey, hey what's your thoughts on this and how do you do that. And for us if we can put this information out there in the world and there are other organisations like Vanguard and Global Systems that can take a learning, some learnings, whatever learnings it might be. At the end of the day we're all trying to create that social impact. So they can create that social impact quicker because they've learned from our mistakes or they've learned from something we've done. It's an absolute no-brainer for us and you know the aim is to, how do we get more organisations like this off the ground? So for us that's the absolute way we should share the information. Hopefully in a few years time there'll be a lot more organisations like us doing this.

[Christina]

Right I think it's a challenge for all of us.

[Heather]

Can I just add one more thing on learnings, that we didn't cover? Just I think the, the one big mistake we made was investing into a social impact tool, into Tech way too early. And it yeah it was just a real headache, waste of money, waste of time and resources. So I just would really recommend that anyone embarking on this that they, you know, you know, you may... CRM may be all you need at the beginning and then do everything else just on Excel or Survey Monkey. Like it's absolutely fine to do it like low Tech. You don't need anything very fancy at the beginning. And then you can move to that when you're when it's really well tested and established.

[Christina]

Yeah, Excel is your friend great. Judi do you have any sort of reflections on either what our, what our panellists discussed or anything from a funder's perspective?

[Judi]

Absolutely it's really exciting to hear what you have both achieved through the program. So you know, I've, government might think of a program and put some money into it. But it's really great to, to see that the results that come out of it. And I just wanted to thank you both for sharing you know

sharing your learnings. Being very generous with this, Mark said it was it was in the contract but you could have held back, we would have been none the wiser (laughter). But I think you have both been incredibly generous with the experience that you've had with everything that's happened. As you say it is about building it. You know yes we put this put this money in and we did the program with two organisations. Vanessa said we'd love to see, it's about that growth and it's about seeing more Vanguard's more Global Sisters having more impact over all. You both touched on the fact that you're, you've got knowledge evidence and you've got confidence and I think that's really valuable. But it's also, from the funder perspective, we have confidence. If you have that evidence and you have your information and you can come to government as a funder or an investor or

a philanthropy whoever it might be that's holding the money. If you are, you have that information then then the funder has the confidence to say 'hey we can back, we can back these people we're not going to be blowing our money on this' or 'we're not going to be...' you know. To put the cold hard government hat on, you know, there's limited money there's limited funds out there. And government, like everybody else, wants to spend money on stuff that's going to make an impact and going to have an outcome. If you have a product or you have been able to have that confidence you've got the evidence you are more likely to be successful as you experience in for the impact investing and having philanthropy you know wanting to back your service. Because funders want to back stuff that works, surprising...

[Christina]

So a secret of government is out! [laughter]

[Judi]

... confidence on both sides is my reflection on that. So yeah, and thank you, right.

[Christina]

Thank you. Well thank you panellists. And we'll now throw open to the floor for questions. So I'll maybe start in the room and then we will... the owl of knowledge (referencing slide image)... and then we will throw to our online participants. Any questions?

[audience member]

I have a question for yes the Global Sisters. You mentioned that you were able to get really robust kind of data around those financial outcomes for women. Yeah so can I ask what that actually looked like?

[Liz]

Yeah, so we ask quite specific questions to the sisters so we they're very generous in sharing all this information with us. So when they start with us it's a 30 question, a 30 question survey. And we asked them, you know, are you on does anyone in your family or your household receive government Income Support? What percentage of your household income is government Income Support? What, what's your main source of income in the household? What percent... Like literally,

like breaking it down. We ask them exactly how much their business is making, what stage business is up to, how easily they could raise two thousand dollars in an emergency. And how easily they meet household daily household living expenses. So that's just the finance questions and there's a whole range on you know business acumen and there's a lot there. And basically with the, the comparison survey we ask the same questions. And, so and we added a few on that were helpful for understanding change over time. But the first question on the comparison survey was how long have you been with us because, as Heather said, they don't come with, the women don't come in and do a program and finish. It's really, they jump in and out and they come at different times. So the way that we sort of break them up into cohorts is you know who's been with us six months a year, a year and a half, so we can see how long it takes for them to progress you know to start earning a livable income or to get off welfare. But yeah that's basically how we do it

[Heather]

The only thing I was going to say is what's next for us. So we're creating an app for our sisters because we do have a quite a complex customer journey, like user experience. And we want our sisters to be able to really own their own data and see that journey themselves like visually see it. So we're what we're hoping is that the app is going to be able to, yes collect data for Global Sisters so we can keep improving. But also visually show sisters how their you know their business is progressing, how their income is progressing and then how that you know, financial resilience and economic security is improving over time. So we're yeah we're super excited about that.

[Liz]

And that's in line, sorry just hijacking, that's in line with one of our principles for the data collection and sharing which is that it needs to benefit the sister. So Fabiola's Journey map we actually had sisters putting their hands up wanting to do Journey Maps because they can then use them to promote their business to apply for you know awards that sort of thing. Which is not the case usually for an evaluator when you just want to interview them. So, the sisters do and so we want to do the same with the app. So when the Sisters are inputting all this information we're not just taking it away. It's actually, they're doing it like you would in Fitness tracker or you know a health tracker and inputting it for their own benefit and then we can also see it.

[Christina]

That's great, when are you looking at introducing them?

[Heather]

Next year

[Christina]

Yes, that's very exciting.

[Audience member]

I'd be interested in both businesses responses. But you've obviously received grant funding to strengthen your outcome and impact sort of measurement sort of systems. What extent going forward are you still relying on grant funding to support those processes or are you actually being able to pay for it from your commercial revenue?

[Mark]

Yeah I'm happy to answer that. So Vanguard's probably... there's a complexness, a simple way to answer that question... but the complex one, I'm hoping I'll keep this short, is that we obviously run a commercial part of our business which is the laundry side of things and we've got the cost of the social program essentially. The aim of Vanguard has always been that at least the laundry business makes money and that can subsidize the cost of the social program. So that's always the, my [inaudible] we've been trying to work through the last couple of years.

We're at that stage now where we're probably still seeking about five to eight percent of funding every year from our revenue streams. That's probably what we're looking for external funding. Going back, probably I think two or three years pre-COVID it's probably closer to 40 or 50 percent. And that's that comes from two reasons. One, that's growing the commercial business to support the business. But it's also grown both sides of the business as well so that's why you know we talk about scaling and particularly local scaling for us because we're a type of manufacturing business that drives efficiencies. Efficiency is not a lack of jobs, efficiencies within how people work. So therefore and then it drives greater results so we're just about some 10 percent for us most of the time.

[Heather]

Yeah, for us we're, we're a not-for-profit and we have a Social enterprise through our Marketplace. And so for us we've always had a social impact team. From day one and we yeah we always will. We'll always find, just build that into all of our philanthropic corporate and government funding because it's just so critical to what we do.

[Christina]

Yeah, yeah I remember having a discussion with you very early on. You're like 'it's just it's just what we do'. Like it's not even a consideration of you know, it's not an option. It just is built into how you deliver your program.

[Heather]

Yeah and particularly for us because we do have their both direct impact and systems change goals and their yeah the impact piece is critical for systems change.

[Christina]

Any other, yeah... (Nods to audience)

[Audience member]

My question was about the, you talked about internal impact measurement and their internal impact measurement. And annually you've got someone you've been using CSI to look at that do you see that external impact measurement being a necessary part of your business? And it's probably a different question for you guys because the systems change probably is more driven towards the external, but I'm interested similarly is it... will you be migrating at all to internal or were you always want to have external as well?

[Mark]

For Vanguard we look, I think it's, we're always going to want that external. And it's a part validation because of what we do and who we are. But also I think it's necessary. I think you know to come back to the early question around financing, the nature of our business is that we're always in some way shape or form going to rely on external funding that's just the reality of that type of business. But equally you know for us we like to use that information we're talking about peer benchmark against their peers in other social enterprises. So I think we're always going to have both for our perspective to be perfectly honest with you. And I think the, the growth Journey for Vanguard is going to be quite extensive. So we talk about growth as in the next stage, next site, right now. But you know our plans are probably five ten years in the future we're always looking at more and more and more and how do we do more so I think for us we're always going to have both sides of it

[Harry]

Yeah I think, just to build on that I think, even though you know we draw sort of 90 plus of our income from our from our commercial activities we are still a not-for-profit DGR not-for-profit with social impact at the core of what we do and, as you know, that was part of the reason that we were founded. So that can never go away. So as long as we do see social impact we have to measure it. Otherwise you know, what are we doing? So I think that that external piece I think the great thing about the whole DSS program that we've been able to be a part of is it hopefully is self-perpetuating because it's been able to give us that that data that will enable us to win more funding. And that funding to go back into outcomes and impact measurement and hopefully the site will can continue on into perpetuity. So I think yeah I agree with Mark that we'll external piece to that just for that external. As opposed to Liz, we're not very smart at robust and rigorous evaluation, we just run laundry. So yeah we don't have a Liz, we got a me [laughter]. And so we'll always need someone to come and look at what we do.

[Heather]

For us, that is my answer. We've always done internal because we have a Liz. But, but in seriousness we have considered doing external and hearing about you guys is put it back on the on the radar. Yeah we would like to do that and we just haven't arranged it yet. And, but I think for us that what with all of our the work we're doing now around the macro indicators the systems change indicators and connecting them with the direct impact we're trying wherever possible to be benchmarking against national standards and finding national data sets to compare again. So at least we're, it's not an external evaluation but at least we're comparable. So that's a big focus of ours at the moment.

[Christina]

Might be interested to hear about the data linkage program (laughter).

[Heather]

Okay, great! (more laughter)

[Christina]

Yes (nodding to the audience)

[Audience member]

I had a question about the data linkage program

[Christina]

Perfect!

[Mark]

Oh, was that set up (laughter)

[Audience member]

Is there any capacity down the track to link some of the data that you've each generated with monitoring and a value evaluation data collection with data from DSS or from state government services. I mean a lot of insights could be had. The mind boggles at the possibilities interactions with the justice system interactions with the health system interactions with homelessness services interactions with all manner of government services that I imagine would it would be desirable if people didn't have to access those public services. Particularly if their emergency or crisis oriented so is have either business or, Judi have you thought through what might be possible down the track to kind of connect these different data sets so we can see a bigger picture.

[Christina]

I might start with Judi because I know you guys have got an answer (gesturing to Mark and Harry) and you guys probably have an answer as well (gesturing to Heather and Liz). So Judi do you have a, do you have a....

[Judi]

Probably not a very adequate answer

[Christina]

Okay, okay, that's fine.

[Judi]

It is, it is possible at a very high level. You know so data is available in in various places. As you say, it's about identifying lots of state government level and what's at a national level. And this is part of the problem about government arrangements where we have some services and so some data is collected at the Commonwealth and then other data, for example hospitals schools, for input you'd have to be going to each and every state to get that data. And for a National Organisation that can be problematic. But at a very high level you know it is possible to get information so that you can say on a state level or at a local level this is the, you know the population looks like this in against some indicators. You can apply through data lab and so anybody can do that and put in a request and get information. But it's very very high level type stuff. And as I said for a National Organisation that's a challenge.

[Harry]

Yeah so we at the original iteration of our evaluation accessed data like public health, PBS, and Centrelink. So we did collect that data. It was fairly so for our evaluator Dr Elms from CSI Swinburne. It was quite a laborious process fairly complex process and for us a costly process, or for DSS by extension. But so certainly it wasn't the easiest process. But we were able to paint a picture about the savings we were able to make to those critical federal support systems. We then made the decision about four years into our evaluation. Part of that Journey was funded by DSS and we also had a previous iteration of our evaluation funded by private philanthropy. So we made a decision into the journey that we, we... so we had found a pattern of data that we could say well we can, we saved on average Centrelink x amount of dollars per year.

We're happy with that that pattern is predictable enough that we can extrapolate that through time. But the... elbow grease that it takes to get that data on an ongoing basis is probably not. no longer necessary. And that probably points a little bit to what Mark was describing before so initially probably our evaluation was a lot more about proving conceptually that Social enterprise could have an impact on Society at large. And, and things like, could social impact ease the burden on critical support services like Centrelink and public health. And then just because we wanted to be able to use that data in a more affected way in our own business. We made the decision to kind of work with CSI to change the way that we collected data, so that it focused less on those broader trends and more on things that were operational-isable, which is not really a word. But yeah so that so the short answer is yes we have collected it and but we don't anymore.

[Mark]

I think the other part as well, just jumping in, around sharing information from such enterprise back out into the world. As well I think there's a, that the trend is starting to change. I think the social impact sphere; sector is still a little bit behind at times. There's things like standardization that hasn't really occurred. So what I would call one thing you guys might call something completely different. So I think as an industry we need to get much better at that to start with before we start sharing data. The question is should we be sharing a data? A thousand percent yes. If it comes back to that point if we can help other people sell businesses like that we absolutely should. And personally for us as well I think you know for the impact investment space as well. Or for our philanthropic. You

need to I think it comes back to that point in, you made, you need to prove that it works. You know for them to invest they have to stand behind it and say easy information. So my personal view and our view is that we should be sharing I think most social enterprises should share as much as physically possible if you're finding the right for and finding the right way of sharing that data within my owning habit.

[Heather]

Yeah this is such an interesting conversation. So we're coming up against this right now with our first impact investment tender. Where it was at the state government level, and but we have our impact is at a federal level around women moving off welfare and those savings being at a federal level. And so yeah we really were keen to understand the data sets that the New South Wales government pulled to create their benefit costs that they and how they came to that. And they weren't able to share that publicly. So like that's not it I think it was very very complicated. But and they had to kind of come up with a nominal amount. But yeah so we're really keen to get more transparency more accessibility of that kind of data. And then equally like of course you know share it back. And we're talking to like organisations, like SEO, SEO data who can you know pull some of those incredible data sets and make them relevant and then add ours to it. So yeah we'll be interested to see what's happening with government. But if there's no government solution we'll be looking to someone like SEO.

[Christina]

I think there's a challenge in the set to the sector and that is as well of if I ask you have data that you can give to me. And so actually facilitating those discussions and actually putting up your hand and making contact with other organisations whether they be in your sphere or not in your sphere around what learnings can be shared and what data can be shared as well in the, in the relevance of that. And we probably have time for one more question.

[Judi]

I'd like to make one comment on that.

[Christina]

Yeah, yeah absolutely!

[Judi]

I mean keeping in mind there's a lot of laws around [laughter] so the Privacy Acts and all of that. You know, we've had Optus, we've had Medibank. So the big key to all of that is around consent. So particularly you know obviously that's different if we talk about unit record data, about an individual, or if we're talking about large cohorts or Trends things like that. but just keeping in mind that they're that there are there is legislation in place to protect people's data. there is the data accessibility and transparency act that's being placed. And where in the process of determining, like all good law legal dances, it's not written very clearly. So there's different interpretations of what it might actually mean for government sharing data and we're testing that at the moment. So as I said in my other

social impact investing trials and things that we're doing we're testing a lot of their ability to link State and Commonwealth data sets together. We're doing a lot of work in trying to determine as you were saying in a social impact investment, what are the savings and revenue at the state level and what are the savings and revenue at the Commonwealth level. So we're in the process of testing and trialling all of that at the moment. It's not very clear-cut. But you know hopefully once we've done a bit of that then we might be able to do some of it we are doing some State and Commonwealth data link, linkages that we hope to be able to share at a high level.

[Christina]

Very exciting for all of us evaluators in the room. No pressure! No pressure! Okay well I think that pretty much leads us to time. So thank you all for joining us please join me in thanking our panellists [applause]. And yes please come along to other SIMNA events you know hopefully this is wetted your appetite and there will be more to come. And yeah we now have some more charcuterie and beverage to network over so thank you so much

[Judi]

I just want to say that we are sponsoring the SIMNA awards.

[Christina]

Oh, it's great.

[Judi]

Yes so looking forward to that.

- End of Transcript -