



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Social Value in Procurement Policy

Policy Owner: Head of Procurement

Approved by SMT: January 2026

Review Schedule: Every four years

Last updated: January 2026

Next review due: January 2030

Purpose

This policy sets out the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's (the Assembly Commission) approach to embedding social value in procurement, ensuring that contracts deliver wider benefits to society, the economy, and the environment.

Introduction and Context

The Assembly Commission is committed to ensuring that public expenditure delivers meaningful and measurable benefits to society, the economy, and the environment, in addition to fulfilling the core requirements of contracts. This policy reflects the principles set out in the Northern Ireland Executive's Procurement Policy Note (PPN) 01/21 – Social Value in Procurement, and recognises best practice across the Northern Ireland public sector¹.

Social value in procurement refers to the wider benefits that public sector procurement can deliver for society, beyond the core function of acquiring goods and services. It includes outcomes that promote economic growth, support community wellbeing, encourage fair work, and contribute to environmental sustainability².

While the Assembly Commission is not required to comply with PPNs issued by the Department of Finance, the principles set out in PPN 01/21 remain strategically relevant to our procurement function. Further, the objectives defined in the [Procurement Act 2023](#) require the Assembly Commission to have regard to 'maximise public benefit'. Accordingly the Assembly Commission's [Procurement Policy](#) sets out our commitment to doing so.

The Assembly Commission will align with key elements of PPN 01/21 and guidance on social value as it supports consistency across the wider public sector, reflects supplier expectations, and reinforces the Assembly Commission's commitment to delivering broader societal outcomes through procurement.

¹ The Strategic Investment Board's [Social Value Unit](#) provides practical guidance and support for 'buying social' which has been used to develop and implement this policy.

² This definition was developed with support from Microsoft Copilot, an AI-powered tool, and has been reviewed for alignment with current public procurement policy.

Assembly Commission's Commitment to Social Value in Procurement

All procurement projects conducted by the Procurement Office will consider social value as part of the specification, procurement strategy and contract management.

The Procurement Office will work with the business area to identify opportunities for suppliers to contribute positively to the local economy, society, and the environment, to ensure that these contributions are measurable, deliverable, and proportionate to the nature of the contract.

Where it is considered relevant to the subject matter of the goods, services or works being procured and can bring specific, meaningful and measurable social value outcomes, it will be incorporated into the project. Specifically:

- **For contracts involving the procurement of goods and services:**
 - i. **If the estimated contract value (exclusive of VAT) is above £1M, a weighting of 10% of the total award criteria will be applied for the assessment of social value.**
 - ii. **If the estimated contract value is less than £1M, the inclusion of social value will not require a mandatory assessment criterion. However, if it is relevant, it can be included and weighted proportionately.**
- **For contracts involving the procurement of works:**
 - iii. **If the estimated contract value (exclusive of VAT) is above the UK threshold, a weighting of 10% of the total award criteria will be applied for the assessment of social value.**
 - iv. **If the estimated contract value is less than the UK threshold, the inclusion of social value will not require a mandatory assessment criterion. However, if it is relevant, it can be included and weighted proportionately.**

These criteria will apply to contracts procured directly by the Assembly Commission as well as those appointed by way of a further competition called off a framework.

Where the procurement services are provided by a third-party, for example; Construction and Procurement Delivery (CPD) or Crown Commercial Services, the lead business area or Project Manager will be responsible for ensuring that these commitments are applied.

Social value will be embedded into all parts of the procurement lifecycle, from preliminary market engagement to contract delivery and management. For example, through:

- Identification of appropriate themes and indicators.
- Accessibility for SMEs.
- Structured payment plans that assist suppliers with cash flow.
- Considering ways to reduce consumption, reduce carbon emissions, and end of contract/life options.
- Application of environmental and ethical standards.
- Building in minimum sustainable requirements.

Suppliers will be expected to demonstrate how they will deliver agreed social value commitments, and to report on progress at agreed intervals.

Social Value Themes and Indicators

The Assembly Commission has identified four social value themes, aligned with those set out by the [NI Social Value Unit](#), under which specific, proportionate and measurable commitments can be made:

I. Increasing Secure and Ethical Employment

This theme focuses on creating new job opportunities within Northern Ireland, particularly for underrepresented or disadvantaged groups. It includes the provision of apprenticeships, traineeships, and internships, as well as initiatives to upskill existing employees. Ethical recruitment and employment practices must be upheld, ensuring compliance with labour standards and the elimination of modern slavery within supply chains.

II. Supporting the Local Economy and SMEs

Suppliers are encouraged to engage SMEs, social enterprises, and voluntary/community organisations within their supply chains. This may include offering fair payment terms, providing transparent subcontracting opportunities, and actively promoting supply chain opportunities to local businesses.

III. Promoting Environmental Sustainability

Suppliers are encouraged to implement measures to reduce waste, carbon emissions, and energy consumption in the performance of the contract. This theme includes the use of recycled, recyclable, or sustainably sourced materials and the adoption of carbon reduction targets and/or offsetting measures to mitigate environmental impacts.

IV. Enhancing Community Wellbeing

This theme covers activities that support local community initiatives and charitable causes, encourage employee volunteering to assist with community projects, and promote equality, diversity, and inclusion in both employment and service delivery.

Guidance for Suppliers

When preparing a tender submission, suppliers are required to set out clear, specific, and measurable commitments under the relevant social value theme(s). Proposals should describe the activity to be undertaken, quantify the commitment (for example, 'two apprenticeships over 12 months' or '20 hours of employee volunteering per quarter'), specify the delivery timeframe, and explain how the activity will benefit communities or the environment in Northern Ireland.

Social value proposals will be evaluated on the basis of relevance, specificity, deliverability, and impact. Relevance refers to how well the proposed activities align with the Assembly Commission's social value theme(s). Specificity relates to the clarity and measurability of commitments. Deliverability assesses whether the supplier has the capability and resources to achieve the commitments, and impact considers the likely scale, significance, and sustainability of the benefits delivered.

Contract Management

Social value commitments agreed during the procurement process will form part of the final contract (likely through the establishment of key performance indicators (KPIs)). The supplier will be required to report regularly on progress and outcomes using a format agreed with the Assembly Commission's Contract Manager. The Assembly Commission reserves the right to take appropriate contractual action³ in the event of non-delivery or underperformance in respect of social value commitments.

Social value commitments should be proportionate to the scope and value of the contract and realistic to ensure successful delivery. Overstating social value proposals may adversely affect contract performance and compliance.

Review and Continuous Improvement

Unless legislative requirements mean an earlier timeframe, this policy will be reviewed at least every four years to ensure it remains aligned with public procurement policy in Northern Ireland, and evolving best practice in social value delivery.

³ Appropriate contractual action will be individual to each contract and will be set out in the corresponding contract.