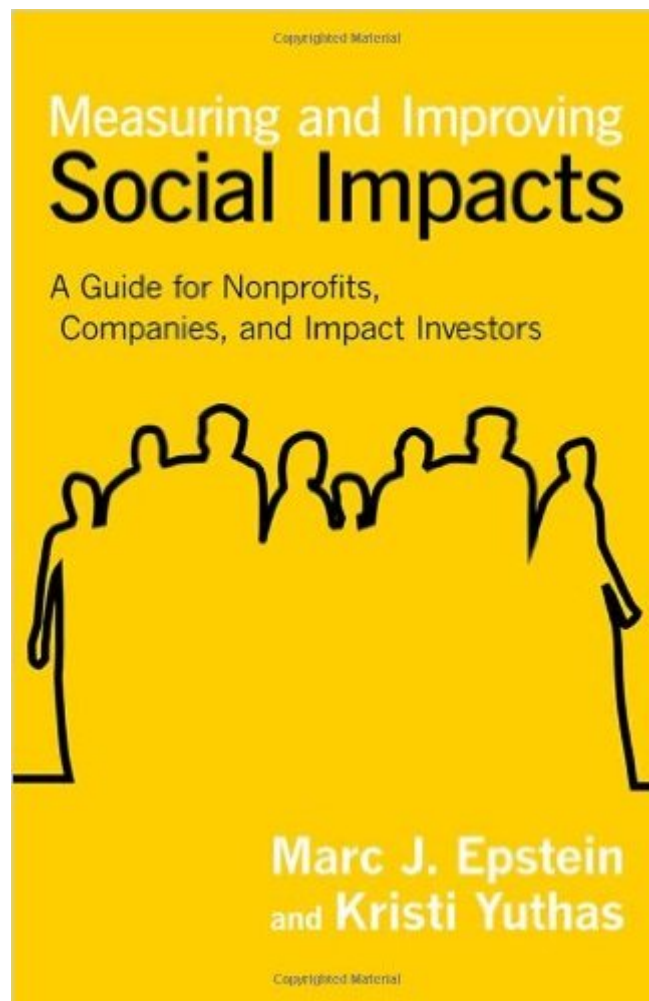


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# Measuring And Improving Social Impacts: A Guide For Nonprofits, Companies, And Impact Investors



## Synopsis

The world is beset with enormous problems. And as a nonprofit, NGO, foundation, impact investor, or socially responsible company, your organization is on a mission to solve them. But what exactly should you do? And how will you know whether it's working? Too many people assume that good intentions will result in meaningful actions and leave it at that. But thanks to Marc Epstein and Kristi Yuthas, social impact can now be evaluated with the same kind of precision achieved for any other organizational function. Based on years of research and analysis of field studies from around the globe, Epstein and Yuthas offer a five-step process that will help you gain clarity about the impacts that matter most to you and will provide you with methods to measure and improve them. They outline a systematic approach to deciding what resources you should invest, what problem you should address, and which activities and organizations you should support. Once you've made those decisions, you can use their tools, frameworks, and metrics to define exactly what success looks like, even for goals like reducing global warming or poverty that are extremely difficult to measure. Then they show you how to use that data to further develop and increase your social impact. Epstein and Yuthas personally interviewed leaders at over sixty different organizations for this book and include examples from nearly a hundred more. This is unquestionably the most complete, practical, and thoroughly researched guide to taking a rigorous, data-driven approach to expanding the good you do in the world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Super helpful book for impact professionals or newbies to the field alike. I'm an impact evaluator for a nonprofit and this book changed my outlook on impact entirely - bringing me from what they call the outcome (or "product" of your services) and beyond to your impact (what that product does for your beneficiaries). I think the authors are so right in that we often stop at the outcome - how many jobs were created, how many meals were served - rather than looking at what the ultimate impact is. The book expands on this in a meaningful way that helps you add depth to your impact reporting.

**PROs-** Covers everything I could think of- Compelling read, although it's heady stuff you'll want to read it and it's a fast read... I'm 2/3 of the way through in just two days.- It's 212 pages with a really long bibliography that can be helpful for additional reading.- It's good for all levels of familiarity with the subject- The book describes an ongoing impact cycle that you can refer to constantly to make sure you're maximizing your impact system - and your impact results

**CONS-** The writing is very heady so some concepts had me rereading sentences, but it was still a quick read

Altogether I highly recommend it. The best book on impact I've read thusfar and one I'll definitely keep on my desk to refer to again and again.

Started off and finished well enough, but in between there was so much heavy data writing I had to skim a lot of it. Not that it won't help you gather and report data on your project. It will. But it reminded me of all the RFP talk that gives me fits.

Many of the best business books were written to share the results of research conducted to answer an especially important question. That is certainly true of this one. Marc Epstein and Kristi Yuthas interviewed more than one hundred leaders, soliciting their responses to not one but several separate but interrelated questions. In essence, they asked: "How to measure and then improve social impacts?" They invoke the "journey" metaphor because some of those who read this book have already embarked on efforts to make a positive difference by supporting the causes they care most about; others are still in the planning process; and still others are struggling to decide whether or not to become significantly involved in social initiatives.

A set of five interview questions provides the framework of the book Epstein and Yuthas wrote in order to share what they learned:

1. What will you invest?
2. What problem will you address?
3. What steps will you take?
4. How will you measure success?
5. How can you increase impact?

These five questions are structural Parts within which the material is organized and presented. They also comprise what Epstein and Yuthas identify as "The Social Impact Creation Cycle." The aforementioned questions are answered in sequence. Keep in mind that the Cycle is an on-going process, literally a work in progress, and will

probably require continuous modification. Monitoring the cycle will indicate when and why to commit less of some resources, for example, and more of others. It is important to keep in mind that external as well as internal developments may require some of those modifications. Think of Epstein and Yuthas in terms of various roles they play: First, they are the co-authors of this book, best viewed as an operations manual. Also, they will be consultants as answers to the first three questions are determined or (if the journey is underway) for evaluating -- and perhaps revising -- the answers that have guided and informed efforts until now. Moreover, because no two organizational "journeys" are ever the same nor is an organization the same as when it first embarked, Epstein and Yuthas will be guides and advisors during five key processes: formulation of plan, implementation of it, measurement of progress to date, evaluation, and amplification. Measurement reveals (at best) partial success, progress, evaluation reveals what works, what doesn't, and why so that the given organization can intensify effort and increase investment in one area (or areas) and reduce or eliminate elsewhere. I congratulate Marc Epstein and Kristi Yuthas on producing a book that may well prove to be for some readers, especially for leaders in nonprofits, the most valuable they will read this year and perhaps in years to come.

Well meaning smart people and organizations are investing tremendous amounts of money and energy to create social good and impact around the world. At the end of the day, they need more than warm fuzzy feelings that their investment had the intended impacts. They deserve more and they are beginning to demand it. If you want to know that you're effectively and efficiently creating social impact with your time, effort and money, do yourself a favor -- read *Measuring and Improving Social Impacts* by Epstein and Yuthas. *Social Impacts* shows you how to pave the way for success by gaining clarity on what you're committing to invest, clearly articulating the problem you're focused on, knowing just the steps you'll take to achieve and measure your outcomes and impact. And finally, it shows you how to improve the impact that you're making over time. This book is filled with tons of examples, it's clear and approachable and it provides helpful action steps at the end of each chapter to guide you. If you believe you deserve more than a warm fuzzy feeling for all that you're investing to make social impact, read this book. It's well worth the investment!

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