



Impact Evaluation Standard 2026

What's New

Version: IES 2026.0

Release Date: April 2026

Published by: Thrive Platform

OVERVIEW

The 2026 Release

The Impact Evaluation Standard 2026 is now live!

Representing a significant investment in detail and precision, this year's update strengthens the standard at its foundation, refining how each metric is defined, applied, and evidenced in practice.

This release goes beyond a typical annual update. Rather than focusing on new metrics, the primary effort has been on improving precision, consistency, and robustness across the entire framework.

Every metric has been thoroughly reviewed: evidence requirements examined, additional data fields defined, and improved wording implemented throughout. As a result, each metric now includes a defined set of additional data entry fields, enabling more structured and consistent capture of activity across all projects.

Capturing this additional context, alongside required evidence, significantly strengthens how impact is demonstrated, improving both the clarity and credibility of reported outcomes.

We are also continuing to enhance our proxy methodology, evolving our approach to ensure it remains best-in-class for social value measurement. Further updates will be shared in due course.

The result is a framework and platform that are meaningfully more capable and better equipped to support high quality, evidence-based reporting — providing a single, reliable view of your social value and its beneficiaries, and greater confidence in the impact you are delivering.

What is live from today

The following is available to all customers in the Thrive platform from today.

In the Impact Evaluation Standard

Every metric has been reviewed from the ground up. You will notice:

- Updates to metric names, tightened for clarity
- Clarified and more detailed recording guidance, with examples and definitions
- Sharpened, itemised evidence requirements applied consistently across the framework
- A defined set of additional data fields for every metric — see Full Data Entry below

In the Thrive platform — Full Data Entry

Full Data Entry is live from today. When adding a record, you will see a new tab alongside the familiar entry flow. This is where the line-item detail behind each claim is captured — the specific fields aligned to each metric's evidence requirements.

Each metric now includes a defined set of additional data entry fields, enabling more structured and consistent capture of activities. Capturing this context — alongside required evidence — improves the visibility and traceability of your data, supports best practice reporting, and enables social value to be captured, managed, and evidenced in one place.

What is now available

In addition to everything above, Thrive Validation is now available for customers who wish to take their social value data quality further.

Thrive Validation

Thrive Validation applies over 1,000 Impact Evaluation Standard-aligned rules to data at the point of entry — in real time, as each record is submitted. It checks that records are complete and consistent with the methodology, providing immediate feedback before a claim is finalised. It represents the first stage of the Thrive Assurance Framework, establishing a strong foundation for verification and audit.

Thrive Assurance Framework

Validation Does the data meet Impact Evaluation Standard rules and requirements at the point of entry? LIVE IN-PLATFORM, APRIL 2026	Verification Has the data been independently reviewed to confirm outcomes are appropriately evidenced, correctly applied, and accurately attributed? LIVE, DELIVERED BY THRIVE'S ASSURANCE TEAM	Audit Do reported outcomes, supporting evidence, and underlying processes stand up to limited assurance scrutiny supporting external reporting and disclosure? COMING LATER
---	---	---

Validation Modes

Configured at project level

STRICT Submission blocked until all checks pass Users must resolve all identified issues before a record can be submitted. Produces: Issues — failed checks that must be resolved prior to submission.	ADVISORY Same rules, submission not blocked Users are shown recommendations at the point of submission. Produces: Advisories — the same underlying checks, presented without blocking submission.
---	--

To find out more or get started, speak to your dedicated Customer Success Manager.

From record to rigour — with IM18

IM18 — Non-Local FTE Employment Opportunities Created

The following shows how IM18 looks across each aspect of this year's release — from framework updates, through richer in-platform data capture, to real-time Validation.

1

Impact Evaluation Standard 2026 — Framework — All customers

Evidence requirements and recording guidance for IM18 have been reviewed and sharpened. The Impact Evaluation Standard now explicitly confirms that roles must represent net-new positions within the organisation, and that hires need **not** have been previously unemployed. This removes a common point of ambiguity and makes the metric easier to apply correctly and consistently.

2

Full Data Entry — Platform — All customers

When adding a record against IM18, a new Full Data Entry tab is available. This is where the line-item detail behind the claim is captured: employer organisation name, employee ID, employment start date, job title, and postcode prefix — all aligned to the metric's evidence requirements. The existing basic entry flow remains available alongside it.

3

Validation — Platform Add-on — Validation customers

With Validation active, the rules built around IM18 are applied at the point of entry. Take the FTE check: Validation does the calculation — if a role started mid-period, it works out exactly how much FTE is claimable, surfaces any overrun in real time, and stops double-counting before it happens. Every field is checked; every record marked as valid or flagged for review before submission.

Metric Updates

The following details each specific change to the Impact Evaluation Standard for 2026, together with the rationale behind each update and what it means in practice.

IM181 Physical Wellbeing Initiatives

Wider scope, streamlined evidencing

IM181 introduces a broader, more flexible approach to capturing physical wellbeing activity. Claims are based on new unique enrolments of individuals into initiatives designed to improve physical wellbeing, delivered as a direct result of the organisation's or project's interventions. Initiatives must be free to the individual and delivered or funded through the organisation's interventions. This may include, but is not limited to, gym memberships, sports clubs, yoga, walking groups, and other structured physical activity programmes. Supply chain participation is within scope.

How claims work

Each individual may only be counted once within any 4.5-month period, regardless of the number of initiatives they are enrolled in. Where an individual enrolls in a new initiative more than 4.5 months after their last recorded enrolment, they may be counted again. Each submission must relate to a single initiative only — multiple initiatives should not be combined into a single submission. Only new enrolments within the claim period should be included.

Example: An employee enrolls in a workplace yoga programme in January and a walking group in March. As both enrolments fall within 4.5 months of each other, only one entry may be recorded. If the same employee then enrolls in a gym membership in July (more than 4.5 months after January), a new entry may be counted.

Proxy value: £42.00 per new enrolment

Note on IM100: IM100 has been archived and will be retired from the main documentation in favour of IM181. It remains accessible in the platform for historical data purposes, and all previously recorded data is unaffected.

Framework-Wide FTE Standardisation

Baseline updated from 40 to 35 hours

The standard FTE baseline has been updated from 40 to 35 hours per week, applied consistently across all relevant employment metrics within the framework.

Why

A 35-hour working week more accurately reflects working patterns across a wider range of organisations, particularly in the public sector, and supports future international applicability without requiring country-specific adjustment.

Impact

Organisations whose standard working week exceeds 35 hours will reach 1 FTE more quickly than under the previous baseline. The maximum claim remains capped at 1 FTE per individual, ensuring there is no risk of overclaiming as a result of this change.

IM144 T-Level Placement Weeks

45-week cap removed

The previous maximum claim limit of 45 placement weeks has been removed. Customers can now claim for the full duration of T-Level placements delivered, provided appropriate evidence is supplied.

Why

While 45 weeks represents the minimum T-Level placement duration, many placements extend beyond this. The previous cap prevented accurate capture of the full value of extended placements where evidence exists to support the claim.

Scope expanded beyond VCSEs

The scope of the donations metrics has been expanded beyond donations made solely to VCSE organisations. Donations to educational institutions and local government providers are now within scope, where the primary purpose and characteristics of the recipient organisation align with social value creation.

Why

Customers frequently support organisations outside the VCSE sector that deliver clear social value outcomes — schools, community-focused SMEs, and locally delivered public services. The previous restriction meant genuine contributions could not always be captured.

Evidence requirement

Customers must ensure the purpose of the donation clearly aligns with social value creation and provide evidence of this accordingly.

Scope expanded and reporting structure updated

The scope has expanded from construction waste to total waste. The metric now follows the standard reduction-based structure: a single annual submission measured against a defined baseline, with one validated entry permitted per reporting year.

Why

Waste volumes fluctuate naturally with operational activity levels. The Impact Evaluation Standard now makes explicit that an annual baseline approach is required, ensuring reductions are assessed on a like-for-like basis. Expanding scope to total waste increases applicability across sectors.

Impact

Customers must now provide baseline and current reporting period data and confirm scope consistency via declaration. Organisations input the final calculated reduction figure into Thrive, retaining supporting methodology and calculations to evidence the claim during verification.

Clarifying intended usage

The Impact Evaluation Standard now explicitly confirms two key requirements: roles must represent net-new positions within the organisation, and individuals hired do not need to have been previously unemployed. These metrics capture the creation of additional employment opportunities; the prior employment status of the individual is not a criterion.

Why

The Impact Evaluation Standard now makes this completely clear, ensuring customers can apply these metrics with confidence and consistency.

Clarifying eligibility and interaction with new job metrics

The Impact Evaluation Standard now explicitly confirms that individuals counted under these metrics must have been unemployed prior to starting the role. These are uplift metrics: they can be claimed in addition to new job creation metrics where a net-new role has been filled by a previously unemployed individual from a qualifying group, or independently where an existing vacancy has been filled on the same basis.

Why

The Impact Evaluation Standard now makes the interaction between these metrics and new job creation metrics completely explicit, giving customers full clarity on how both sets can be applied — including in combination where relevant.

Clarifying baseline and period requirements

Customers submitting reduction-based claims must now provide the previous and current reporting periods, the output values for each, and confirm via declaration that the scope of measurement is consistent across both periods. One validated entry is permitted per rolling year.

Why

Reduction metrics measure improvement over time, which requires a reliable baseline and comparable reporting periods. The Impact Evaluation Standard now makes explicit what baseline and period information is required, ensuring reductions can be consistently assessed on a like-for-like basis.

Impact

These metrics will generally become fully usable from end of Year 2 onwards, once baseline data has been established for the first reporting year.

Now enforced in-platform

The following metrics reflect a point in time: each new submission replaces the previous entry rather than adding to it. The platform now controls this automatically, ensuring data is captured correctly and consistently.

**Why**

These metrics are designed to capture organisational position at a specific moment rather than cumulative activity over time. For example, the number of employees with a formal flexible working arrangement is a snapshot of the current position — not a running total. The platform now enforces non-aggregation for these metrics, so submissions always reflect an accurate, current picture. Previous entries remain visible so customers can track how their position has changed over time.

Clarifying the definition

The metric now applies only to formal flexible working arrangements, rather than informal or ad-hoc practices. Arrangements can be recorded at an individual level, where formal agreements are in place for specific employees, or at an organisational level, where a documented non-statutory policy demonstrates that flexible working is a standard option available to all employees.

Why

The Impact Evaluation Standard now makes this explicitly clear: only formal arrangements or documented organisational policy count. This gives customers a precise, consistently applicable definition that makes claims straightforward to evidence.

Full metric documentation — including updated evidence guidance and recording guidance for every metric — is available in-platform under **Help > IES documentation**.

For questions about this release, please contact your dedicated Customer Success Manager.



www.thrive-platform.com/impact-evaluation-standard