

A photograph of a business meeting around a wooden table. Several people's hands and arms are visible, wearing business attire. They are looking at and pointing to various documents spread on the table. The documents contain financial data, including bar charts, line graphs, and pie charts. One person is using a white marker on a document, another is holding a black pen, and a third is using a calculator. A tablet is also visible in the foreground. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a professional and collaborative environment.

Signs your social investment strategy isn't working

Four questions to ask before you change your programmes, your partners, or your budget.

The budget is spent. The outcomes don't match the effort.

The programmes are running, but results are hard to demonstrate and the communities you serve don't seem to feel the difference. Initiatives are spread across departments and teams struggle to see the bigger picture.

These are the most common reasons organisations approach Tshikululu. More often than not it points to one underlying issue: **misalignment**.

- 01 Is your finance team starting to ask hard questions?
- 02 Can the communities you serve actually feel the impact?
- 03 Is your reporting telling one story, or several?
- 04 Do you have a shared theory of change, or just a strategy?

The same challenges we look for when we first engage with a client.

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a white pen, poised over a black calculator. In the background, there are financial documents with blue bar charts and a laptop keyboard. The scene is set on a light-colored desk.

Is your finance team starting to ask hard questions?

Money is going out across several initiatives, but there is no single, unified view of what it is achieving. When spend can't be tied to a clear impact narrative, finance starts to question whether it is justified, and programmes that can't prove their value are often the first to be cut.

01

Listen for

“What did we actually get for that spend last year?”

“Why are there four different funding requests for what sounds like the same thing?”

“We may need to cut some of these programmes.”

02

Can the communities you serve actually feel the impact?

Despite significant investment, the people your programmes are designed to serve remain dissatisfied, or simply don't see a difference. If the value isn't visible to the end user, something structural is wrong, regardless of what the numbers say internally.

When initiatives operate in isolation in the same community, duplication is inevitable.

Listen for

“The numbers look great, but the feedback on the ground doesn't match.”

“We've been working in that community for years. Why are they saying nothing has changed?”

“Our beneficiaries can't really tell you what we do for them.”



03

Is your reporting telling one story, or several?

Different departments measure impact differently, count beneficiaries differently, and report against different KPIs, even when working toward the same goal. There is a common vision, but too many separate pathways leading away from it.

Listen for

“Wait, which beneficiary number is the correct one?”

“That team counts it differently to how we do.”

“We’re all reporting, but no one can give me a single figure for the whole organisation.”

04

Do you have a shared theory of change, or just a strategy?

Most organisations have a strategy. Far fewer have a shared theory of change that connects every initiative to the same definition of success. You may have one strategy, but several competing interpretations of what it's working towards.

“We know what we're doing, we just can't explain how it all connects.”

“Everyone agrees on the mission, but not on what success looks like.”

“Why are two departments running versions of the same project?”



The next step

Make your investment count with the Social Impact Maximiser

An end-to-end approach that maps, designs, monitors and manages your social investments so that every rand works harder. Nearly three decades of experience designing social impact strategies that work.

Email JSwanepoel@tshikululu.org.za to find out how to integrate your social investment strategy for maximum impact.