



AASM  
AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION  
OF SOCIAL MARKETING



SMANA  
SOCIAL MARKETING  
ASSOCIATION OF  
NORTH AMERICA  
Advancing Behavior Change for Social Good



September 2017

# GLOBAL CONSENSUS ON SOCIAL MARKETING PRINCIPLES, CONCEPTS AND TECHNIQUES

## BACKGROUND AND TASK

This paper has been developed by a working group composed of members of iSMA, ESMA and AASM. The paper was also in its final stages reviewed and enhanced by SMANA.

The task of this working group was to consider the global consensus definition of Social Marketing and to develop a set of principles, concepts and techniques that explain more fully the added value of Social Marketing.

The consensus definition of Social Marketing:

*Social Marketing seeks to develop and integrate marketing concepts with other approaches to influence behaviour that benefit individuals and communities for the greater social good.*

*Social Marketing practice is guided by ethical principles. It seeks to integrate research, best practice, theory, audience and partnership insight, to inform the delivery of competition sensitive and segmented social change programmes that are effective, efficient, equitable and sustainable*

*Approved by the Boards of iSMA, AASM and ESMA in 2014.*

The group were tasked with ensuring that the principles, concepts and techniques identified as defining Social Marketing were consistent with the global consensus definition and that they should be set out succinctly, but also be comprehensive in scope.

## THE PROCESS

A working group consisting of members from the supporting associations has developed the following set of Principles, Concepts and Techniques to provide an expanded description of **how** Social Marketing is delivered. This set of principles is intended to elaborate the explanation about **what** Social Marketing is as set out in the previously endorsed consensus definition of Social Marketing.

The starting point for the development of this guidance was a literature review of published and grey material focused on the nature and practice of Social Marketing. This analysis was supplemented by reference to the membership survey conducted as part of the consensus definition exercise in 2013. This survey captured member's views about the key components of Social Marketing practice.

This guidance paper has been subject to four rounds of refinement by the working group up to the end of December 2017 and two rounds of refinement with the endorsing association boards between December 2016 and June 2017.

It has been fully recognized since the start of this process that Social Marketing is a dynamic and evolving field of theory and practice and that this will continue to be the case. In recognition of this the principles, concepts and techniques set out in this paper should be subject to regular review and amendment at intervals deemed appropriate by the endorsing associations and any new associations.

It is recommended that the growing number of global Social Marketing interest groups and associations collaborate to draw on the concepts and principles set out in this paper to **develop a professional code of ethics for Social Marketing**. This code should be designed to provide guidance to members about the appropriate and ethical application of the concepts and principles set out in this paper.

### The membership of this working group:

Hamilton Carvalho	Rebekah Russell-Bennett
Patrick Cook	Duane Sinead
Stephen Dann	Suzanne Suggs
Wilma Falconer	Matthew Wood
Jeff French (Chair)	Win Morgan
Ross Gordon	Nadina Luca
Philip Holden	

**This paper was formally ratified by the ESMA, AASM and SMANA Boards between July and August 2017.**

## **RATIONALE**

Up to this point in the development of Social Marketing's theoretical base, authors have been content to set out descriptors of activities and actions together with some concepts and principles of practice that have been observed to be associated with Social Marketing. Writers have described the features that they have observed as "criteria" or "benchmarks". These words are indicative of an undifferentiated approach to describing and categorizing what constitutes the essential elements of Social Marketing.

This reflective and observational approach to analysis has helped focus debate about what Social Marketing is and how it has been practiced, but it has not assisted the field in explicitly delineating the uniqueness of Social Marketing and its distinct contribution as a field of theoretical study and practical application of social programme design and intervention.

Previous attempts to set out Social Marketing 'criteria' or 'benchmarks' have also failed to prioritize these descriptive elements associated with Social Marketing. The resulting lists of 'criteria' or 'benchmarks' do not explain the nature of each criteria. Existing descriptions also fail to address the relative importance of each criteria in terms of defining Social Marketing. This limited analysis represents a major weakness in current Social Marketing theory and it has serious consequences for teaching, research and the practical application of Social Marketing.

This paper seeks to address this weakness by setting out for the first time a set of consensus Principles, Concepts and Techniques for Social Marketing.

## **THE PRINCIPLE AND CONCEPTS THAT UNDERPIN THE ENDORSED GLOBAL DEFINITION OF SOCIAL MARKETING**

In this paper, we have set out a hierarchical model of Social Marketing Principles, Concepts and Techniques.

Between principle, concepts and techniques there is an obvious hierarchy, however, within these clusters there is no obvious or logical way of delineating an order of importance.

It is the view of the working group that it is more important to distinguish and recognize the key hierarchical relationship between criteria of different kinds rather than the importance of hierarchies within clusters of similar criteria.

## Diagrammatic Representation of the Social Marketing Principle and Six Core Concepts



### The Core Social Marketing Principle

(A Necessary marker for all Social Marketing Programmes)

- **The facilitation of personal and social good**

### The six Core Social Marketing Concepts

(Necessary elements in all Social Marketing Programmes)

- **Setting of explicit social goals**
- **Citizen orientation and focus**
- **Value proposition delivery via the Social Marketing intervention mix**
- **Theory, insight, data & evidence informed audience segmentation**
- **Competition/ Barrier and asset analysis**
- **Critical thinking, reflexivity, and being ethical**

## THE CORE SOCIAL MARKETING PRINCIPLE

The facilitation of personal and social good is a necessary marker of all Social Marketing Programmes. Social Marketing is focused on creating social good through the creation of social value for individuals and communities and whole societies. Social value is ideally collectively agreed through community dialog, understanding and civic institutions. For example, it might be that a community would like to have every baby vaccinated to create social value, and aim to have everyone drive their car safely. Both these collective acts add social value for communities as well as individuals.

Social Marketing is focused on helping to both define social good and then to develop programmes to bring it about. Around the world governments of different kinds and their people use a variety of approaches to agree what behaviours and beliefs are socially valuable and how they should be brought about or sustained. Social Marketing is a systematic process for assisting with this aim and a way of developing culturally appropriate and ethically acceptable mixes of interventions that are supported by societies.

## THE SIX CORE SOCIAL MARKETING CONCEPTS

### Setting of explicit social goals

Social Marketing programmes always seek to influence behaviours. Social Marketing can also be focused on influencing social policy, belief's, attitudes, understanding and opinions as these can contribute to the ultimate aim of positive social behaviour. An essential feature of setting explicit social goals is that they are accompanied by equally explicit metrics that facilitate the ongoing measurement and evaluation of interventions. The evaluation of process, efficiency, quality, ethical practice, short term impact and longer-term outcomes are all part of standard Social Marketing practice. Social Marketing goals are often expressed as strategic goals and more specific behavioural objectives. It is, however, necessary to adopt a reflexive approach to the setting and revision of Social Marketing goals and objectives.

### Citizen orientation and focus

Social Marketing research, planning and project implementation is built around a commitment to understand and engage communities and beneficiaries of social programmes. This means that rather than experts alone deciding what needs to be done and how it should be done, citizens should be engaged in identifying problems, developing solutions and implementing them. Social Marketing programmes undertake detailed scoping research before they develop intervention options. The notion of Citizen orientation within Social Marketing is not one linked to or limited by membership of a democratic political system or to concepts such as self-determination or personal responsibility. Within Social Marketing citizen orientation is concerned with ensuring that the people who are

the focus of the Social Marketing interventions are engaged in the selection, development, delivery and evaluation of programmes designed to assist or enable them.

### **Value propositions delivery via the Social Marketing Intervention Mix**

Social Marketing value propositions are developed based on the target audience insight, evidence and data gathered, they are the means through which social good is delivered. Value propositions are developed through a process of critical reflexive thinking. Social Marketing nearly always uses a mix of interventions to create social good. Social marketers set out for each audience segment they are seeking to help how the benefits of compliance with the desired social goal would maximise what they value individually and as citizens. This 'value proposition' guides which types of intervention are developed and delivered. Value propositions create value for citizens by helping them achieve what they want to, solve problems and make life easier and better. Value propositions come in many forms including; service provision, social products, policy, systems, environments, economic incentives and socially approved sanctions, recommended behaviours and actions.

### **Theory, insight, data and evidence informed audience segmentation**

The gathering of understanding about the people who are to be helped is a key concept of Social Marketing as it develops a more differentiated approach to supporting communities and individuals. Audience segmentation is the process of clustering people together who share similar beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and social pressures. Segmentation enables a more customised development of support programmes for individuals and groups. Segmentation is also a representation of respect for citizens and a practical manifestation of a commitment to work with citizens to deliver Social Marketing programmes that meet their needs.

### **Competition, barrier and asset analysis**

Within Social Marketing it is not enough to seek to influence, policy, individuals and group behaviour, it is often also necessary to influence the 'competition' who are trying to influence target groups in a negative way. Influences on social behaviour include personal significant others, the media, environmental factors, cultural factors, economic factors and social norms. All of these factors can act as barriers to adopting or sustaining positive social behaviour. For example, if you want to encourage people to re-cycle their waste, use a bed net or use less energy it is also necessary to understand who or what might be encouraging people to not do these things. Once identified, strategies to reduce the influence of competing factors, actors and barriers can be developed as part of the Social Marketing strategy. Social Marketing can also be focused on identifying threats,

challenges and opportunities that arise from human interaction with the broader ecological environmental factors.

As part of the action response to competitive factors, actors and circumstances Social Marketing involves developing implementation coalitions with other organizations, sectors, professionals and communities to address identified social challenges and competition. Scoping what assets exist in the wider community of interest and encouraging them to make a contribution to solving social challenges is a marker of good Social Marketing practice.

### **Critical thinking, reflexivity and ethical practice**

The Social Marketing process is both systematic and systemic. It involves comprehensive research, analysis, planning, management and evaluation of programmes. In addition to logical planning and evaluation Social Marketing also involves the use of theory, critical, reflective and an adaptive approach to analysis and development. This reflexive approach includes a commitment to ensuring that Social Marketing programmes are both culturally acceptable and relevant. Social Marketers continuously assesses multiple environmental, social and economic factors that are having or may have an impact on the social goals they are promoting. Social Marketers seek to continually adjust and improve programme delivery in the light of new opportunities, threats and feedback about programme delivery. Social Marketing practice is also

informed by ethical considerations including acceptability, transparency, and the balancing of potential benefits and costs associated with programme intervention.

These six concepts have not been set out in a sequential fashion, implying a step by step process. There are many Social Marketing planning models that present such guidance. The concepts set out above are rather intended to describe those elements that alongside the Social Marketing principle of the facilitation of personal and social good identify Social Marketing practice.

### **SOCIAL MARKETING TECHNIQUES**

Within Social Marketing many planning, analysis and implementation tools are used. Many of these techniques are not unique to Social Marketing. Just like commercial marketing, Social Marketing draws on a wide range of theories, research methods and promotional practice to develop, deliver and evaluate intervention programmes. Social Marketing is a multi-professional, cross disciplinary field of study and practice. It displays a reflexive and adaptive approach based on continuous tracking, evaluation and environmental scanning. Well planned Social Marketing programmes display the characteristic of agile adaptation to changing circumstances, unexpected events and opportunities and the application of a broad array of techniques and approaches.

### **THE ESSENTIALS OF SOCIAL MARKETING PRACTICE**

It is the conclusion of the working committee that the core principle of Social Marketing must be identifiable for an intervention to be classified as Social Marketing. However, the presence of this principle alone is not enough to classify an intervention as Social Marketing. An intervention should also be able to demonstrate most of not all of the six concepts are also being addressed and applied.

The presence of the core principle and six core concepts indicate that planners, academics, researchers and practitioners are applying current best practice in Social Marketing.

The presence or absence of techniques that are frequently associated with, but not unique to Social Marketing are not critical to identifying Social Marketing because they can be and are applied in many other forms of social intervention.

ESMA, AAS, SMANA, ISMA, LAMSO

All correspondence re this draft paper should be sent to: [Jeff.French@strategic-social-marketing.org](mailto:Jeff.French@strategic-social-marketing.org)