

Vehicle modifications for people with disability: a social return on investment (SROI) analysis

Claire Hutchinson, Angela Berndt, Jenny Cleland, Susan Gilbert-Hunt, Stacey George & Julie Ratcliffe

A return to driving is often an important goal for people with acquired disabilities. Furthermore, given the increase in high technology vehicle modifications solutions, some people with lifelong disabilities are now able to drive for the first time. Returning to driving is a process supported by many professional groups, agencies and organisations including vehicle modification funders, driver-trained occupational therapists, rehabilitation physicians, driving instructors, vehicle modifiers, and rehabilitation engineers. Through consultation with consumers and other stakeholders, this research generated a theory of change for the social value created by vehicle modifications for people with disabilities.

Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology was applied to identify inputs (investment), outputs (activities) and outcomes (benefits). Outcomes are valued using financial proxies. The social value of outcomes were discounted on the basis of what would have happened without the intervention (deadweight), what outcomes were displaced by the intervention (displacement), who else has contributed to the outcomes aside from the funder (attribution), and whether experience of outcomes declines over time (drop-off). The research showed that vehicle modifications did not displace any positive outcomes and that outcomes did not drop-off over time due to the continued presence of the modified vehicle in the lives of consumers. SROI is expressed as a ratio, such that 4:1 indicates that \$4 of social value is generated for every \$1 invested.

Social value was projected into the future over the benefit period, while accounting for inflation. A benefit period of 10 years and inflation was estimated at 2.5% per year. Five modification scenarios, from low to high technology solutions were costed for funder, consumer and co-investment outcomes.

Based on funder investment, the SROI ratio for a low cost vehicle modification was estimated to be \$135.01 for every \$1 invested. The highest cost scenario was estimated to generate \$3.40 in social value for every \$1 invested. Consumers' investment was also estimated with the SROI ratio between \$19.86 (scenario 1) and \$15.27 (scenario 5) for every \$1 consumers invested.

Even when funder and consumer inputs were taken together, SROI ratios were positive from \$17.32 to \$2.78 for every \$1 co-invested. Payback period for funders was between 3.5 weeks and 2 years 8.4 months and for consumers was between 5.4 and 7.1 months.

Investment in vehicle modifications is repaid in generated social value over and above the expected driving life of people with disability as well as the expected life of a vehicle. As such, funders who place restrictions on the age of vehicles they consider investing in may wish to reconsider these policies as payback periods on investment are relatively short, while contributing strongly to the quality of life for people.