Building on Alan Andreasen’s 2002 six-point criteria, they are designed to:

- Support better understanding of core social marketing concepts and principles
- Promote a consistent approach to review and evaluation
- Assist in the commissioning of social marketing services

The benchmarks were selected by reviewing successful social marketing projects and identifying the common elements that contributed to their success. The benchmarks are not a social marketing process, but the elements that can improve the impact of a social marketing intervention. Other factors, such as strategic planning, partnerships, stakeholder engagement and monitoring and evaluation, are also important. The benchmark criteria are set out, along with planning advice and tools, on the The NSMC’s online Planning guide and toolbox, available at www.thensmc.com.

The benchmark criteria are not designed to be a simple tick-box checklist. Instead, they are a set of integrated concepts. For example, insight should evolve from the customer orientation work and exchange should be illustrated in the ‘price’ element of the methods mix. The links between the benchmarks are highlighted in the table.

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Aims to change people's actual behaviour
- The intervention is focused on influencing specific behaviours, not just knowledge, attitudes and beliefs
- Clear, specific, measurable and time-bound behavioural goals have been set, with baselines and key indicators established

Customer orientation identifies ‘actionable insights’ – pieces of understanding that will lead intervention development
- A deep understanding of what moves and motivates the target audience, including who and what influence the targeted behaviour
- Insight is generated from customer orientation work (Benchmark 2)
- Identifies emotional barriers (such as fear of testing positive for a disease) as well as physical barriers (such as service opening hours)
- Uses insight to develop an attractive exchange and suitable methods mix (Benchmarks 5 and 8)

Seeks to understand what competes for the audience’s time, attention, and inclination to behave in a particular way
- Addresses direct and external factors that compete for the audience’s time and attention
- Develops strategies to minimise the impact of competition, clearly linked to the exchange offered (Benchmark 5)
- Forms alliances with or learns from the competing factors to develop the methods mix (Benchmark 8)

Uses a mix of methods to bring about behaviour change. Does not rely solely on raising awareness
- Uses all elements of the marketing mix (product, price, place and promotion) and/or primary intervention methods (inform, educate, support, design and control)
- Promotion is used to ‘sell’ the product, price, place and benefits to the target audience, not just to communicate a message
- Takes full account of existing interventions in order to avoid duplication
- Creates a new brand, or leverages existing brands appropriate to the target audience
- Methods and approaches are financially and practically sustainable