Measure
for Measure

Measure for Measure:
A People-Centred Approach to Tailoring Justice.

Bridget McAloon, Dr Georgina Rychner, Yolanda Mansfield, and Dr Bethia Burgess

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Victoria Law Foundation

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The office of Victoria Law Foundation is on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge their history, culture and Elders both past and present.

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Foreword

Measure for Measure presents a mosaic of 66 justice projects across Victoria: services that respond to the needs of their communities. These types of projects are nothing new, even if some of the approaches are: see an issue and find a way to address it. It's a driving force in social justice and spawned the development of the community legal sector 50 years ago.

What we have seen over that half-century is organic growth and evolution, reflecting political, legal, and cultural conditions. The resulting constellation of legal assistance and institutional reforms carries strengths and weaknesses. The diffusion of services across geography and demography provides some resilience, but the fragmentation means there is no overview—no means by which to see the whole. In the words of this report, there are pockets of practice, some of which are evaluated at the project level, but with little to no opportunity to aggregate and analyse success. Enter Measure for Measure.

This work explores questions of efficacy, and in the process, performs two important functions: it offers a model, and it connects theory with practice.

The model lists the ingredients which experienced practitioners recognise as key to delivering good results—which is valuable in both design and evaluation. Granular assessment of diverse projects resulted in a broad but valuable model capturing elements of success. Turns out the elements identified by practitioners remain broadly consistent across that spectrum of services, underscoring the commonality of many of the elements. The model draws together a sample of current practice, setting up critical next phases to understand which combinations of these elements work in service provision: for whom, when, and for which problems.

The initiatives surveyed in Measure for Measure cross the spectrum of dosage, from holistic integrated service to lighter touch information and guidance, leaning into the capability people present with when asking for help.

Our previous work on the Public Understanding of Law Survey lifted the lid on literally millions of problems across the state, and made plain that capability is important to the outcomes many people achieve, including just resolution. If we are going to make a dent in that mountain of need, then gauging people's capabilities, how much support they need, and how best to meet that need, is central.

We know that wrap-around services can deliver outstanding results, but we also know that the supply of those services is highly constrained. On the data, we're leaving the vast majority of people with unmet legal need. This study explores success, sustainability, and scalability, but in truth, we are not in a position to make informed decisions about what to sustain or scale without further research to better understand what works, for whom, about what, and just how much help is required to make a difference.

This work acknowledges that many projects and organisations have been people-centred for years, even if they didn't call it that. To that end, the growing field of people-centred justice research is catching up with practice—where one can validate the other and influence how policy and decision makers recognise, value, and most importantly, fund, effective work.

It also expands on the characterisation of justice as an ecosystem, emphasising the interconnectedness of systems, gesturing to the impact of the bright light of policy focus in some areas, and the shadows in others. Ecosystem is a better descriptor than system. Unlike other public policy sectors, the justice ecosystem is intentionally fragmented—a structure which goes to the heart of concepts of justice. What this results in, however, is a block to visibility of the whole, and consequently, the opportunity to more fully understand its functionality. This work starts a process of aggregation: lifting the gaze from projects to systems and networks. Without that perspective, our capacity to identify the similarities and differences, what works systemically in meeting need and what doesn't, will continue to be thwarted, stalling development of desperately needed insight and evidence-based responses.

Measure for Measure is an important snapshot and analysis of activity which, both in what it did and what it couldn't do, reiterates the path forward: figure out what, and how much, works to move the needle in accessing and providing justice.

Lynne Haultain
Executive Director
April 2026

Executive summary

Measure for Measure: A People-Centred Approach to Tailoring Justice is foundational and timely research that makes an important contribution to the question that continues to sit at the centre of justice policy and practice: what works to meet people's legal needs? And just as important: how can we know?

Taking the Victoria Law Foundation's Data Mapping Project and the Public Understanding of Law Survey as a point of departure, this research moves beyond identifying legal need to examining how justice initiatives are designed, delivered, and experienced in practice, and what they achieve.

Drawing on 66 initiatives from across Victoria, the study offers a state-of-the-field assessment of efforts to address everyday legal problems, and provides a grounded account of what practitioners see as working in practice. These initiatives span a wide range of legal issues, populations, and service models, yet collectively reveal a shared commitment to tailoring responses to the needs and capabilities of individuals and communities. The research identifies both the promise and the limitations of current approaches, and provides a launching pad for more systematic, evidence-informed investigations and reform.

People-centred justice in practice

The research is grounded in the growing field of people-centred justice, which shifts the focus of justice systems from institutions to individuals—their needs, capabilities, and lived experiences. This paradigm recognises that access to justice is not simply about the availability of legal services, but about whether people are able to understand, navigate, and effectively use those services to achieve just resolution.

As Pilliar (2022) notes, a person-centred approach moves the promise of the legal system toward a 'thicker conception of what law can and should offer to those seeking justice.'[1] This is reflected in the initiatives explored in this study, many of which focus on 'people's actual needs and their actual capabilities for engaging with the law to meet those needs.'[2]

Across the initiatives studied, such a shift is clearly reflected in services that are increasingly tailored, accessible, and responsive to different cohorts. The approaches recognise that one-size-fits-all models are often ineffective and inequitable, particularly for individuals experiencing complex, intersecting forms of disadvantage and need.

Initiatives are not only focused on resolving legal matters but also on supporting people to better understand, navigate, and engage with the law over time. Many of the participating initiatives placed explicit emphasis on developing individuals' legal capability, both as a dedicated focus and through enhanced service interactions, which helped change people's relationship with the law.

An exploratory model of what works

A central contribution of the research is the development of an exploratory People-Centred Justice Model, which draws together common elements identified across participating initiatives. The model provides a structured way of understanding what practitioners see as contributing to effective practice. Rather than a prescriptive solution, the model offers a flexible scaffold for understanding and operationalising what works in practice.

The model organises these elements across three interconnected levels:

Foundations

The underlying conditions that enable initiatives to emerge and operate, including:

- alignment with purpose, values, and strategy
- leadership, trust, and organisational culture
- the right people and capabilities
- technology and digital infrastructure
- funding

Initiative level

These elements reflect how initiatives are designed and operate in practice—how they are tailored to specific needs and refined over time. The elements at this level include:

- purposive design
- collaboration and coordination
- accessible and timely pathways
- embedding capability
- learning and adapting

Individual level

At this level, the focus is on how services engage with individuals and support them through their legal journeys. The elements at this level include:

- responsive, person-led support
- provision of choice
- continuity and supported transitions

Across all levels, trust emerged as a consistent and unifying theme—shaping relationships, engagement, effectiveness and sustainability. Trust is visually represented as a connecting thread, overlapping and interlinking across all levels and elements of the People-Centred Justice Model.

At the centre of the model are the people the justice system is intended to serve.

A flexible and adaptive approach

The model reflects the diversity of practice observed across the initiatives. Rather than a single approach, what emerged is an adaptive scaffold, where elements are combined and calibrated in different ways depending on context, need, and available resources. Importantly, the model elements can best be understood as spectrums rather than fixed categories, with analysis identifying examples that reflected a continuum of characteristics. Elements ranged from low-resource, lighter-touch examples, often enabling greater reach and response to broader need; to high-resource, more intensive and comprehensive examples servicing a smaller pool of more complex clients and users with intersecting needs.

This variation highlights the breadth of responses within the justice sector and the capacity to tailor support to different levels of need and capability. It also reflects an ongoing effort to balance reach and depth: providing accessible support to many, while ensuring that more intensive assistance is available where required.

Across the initiatives, there is clear evidence of iterative and adaptive practice. Services are shaped by their operating environments, evolving in response to changing needs, policy settings, and resource constraints. Collaboration, learning, and adjustment are embedded features of many initiatives, rather than one-off activities.

Importantly, the model highlights that effectiveness is not determined by any single element, but by how they are combined and adapted to context. It supports a more nuanced approach to service design and evaluation, encouraging practitioners and policymakers to consider what level of support is appropriate for different individuals and problems, and how resources can be allocated across a continuum of need and intervention.

By framing justice interventions in this way, the model provides a practical tool for bridging the gap between theory and implementation in people-centred justice.

Persistent challenges and system constraints

The findings highlight the strength and depth of practice at the level of individual initiatives, and a shared set of elements that are seen to underpin effective and tailored responses to legal need. At the same time, they point to the broader context in which these initiatives operate, and significant structural challenges that limit the impact of current efforts.

The justice landscape can be helpfully viewed as operating as an ecosystem: a complex, interconnected environment in which individuals can move between services, across multiple touchpoints and over time. The justice ecosystem comprises a wide range of services and supports, delivered at different intensities and through different pathways.

Fragmentation remains a defining feature of this justice ecosystem. Many effective initiatives operate in isolation, with limited mechanisms for sharing learning, coordinating efforts, or scaling successful approaches. This fragmentation is reinforced by competitive and often short-term, project-based funding, which can discourage collaboration and frustrate long-term planning.

There is also a lack of robust, consistent outcomes data. Although there is growing interest in evaluation and evidence-based practice, and a growing body of evaluated practice, many organisations face constraints in the resources, capability, and infrastructure to embed this practice. As a result, it remains difficult to assess what works, compare interventions, or build compelling cases for investment and reform.

Finally, there is still a persistent gap in understanding how much 'legal' is enough. The ecosystem currently offers a wide range of dosages of legal support—from information and education through to representation and integrated casework support, but there is limited evidence about how much and what type and combinations of legal support work best for different people and problems. Addressing this question, not just at the initiative or organisational level but at the broader ecosystem level, is critical to designing an efficient, equitable, and truly people-centred justice system.

Implications for policy and practice

Taken together, the findings point to the importance of complementing initiative-level insight with a stronger understanding of the wider justice ecosystem.

The broader justice ecosystem picture remains only partially understood. While individual initiatives may be effective in their own contexts, there is limited visibility of how they interact, where they align, and where gaps persist. There is also limited capacity to aggregate learning, compare approaches, and build a system-wide picture of effectiveness. As a result, there is currently no comprehensive view of how people enter and move through the justice ecosystem; how different services connect—or fail to connect—along that person's journey; or what combinations of support lead to meaningful outcomes.

The findings make the case for an ongoing, coordinated, evidence-driven, and system-wide approach to access to justice. To support this, the report outlines key priorities for an emerging research and evaluation agenda.

These include:

- Testing and refining the People-Centred Justice Model, including incorporating the perspectives of service users at its centre.
- Prioritising the development and use of peoplecentred justice data that captures people's needs, pathways, and meaningful outcomes across different cohorts, legal issues, and locations. Systemlevel, mixedmethods, and intersectional data are needed to assess what works for whom and to guide the design, scaling, and evaluation of people-centred justice approaches.
- Investing in more consistent outcomes measurement approaches, with a focus on people-centred measures and the capabilities, tools, and systems to use them. This includes establishing comparable data and counterfactuals, which is critical to support the assessment of which justice initiatives work and to what end.
- Developing more robust evidence on effective service dosages, to better match interventions to need and capability. In particular, the question of what lower dose interventions, such as information, education, and advice strategies, work to effectively meet legal need remains a significant challenge for policy and practice and understanding what works.
- Building ecosystem-level data of people's help-seeking journeys to complement initiative-level insight. This includes gaining a better understanding of how people enter and move through the ecosystem; what service levels and supports they receive; where barriers and gaps arise; and what outcomes are achieved. Such information is vital to identify system level opportunities that may exist to provide better access to just resolution through practices such as need and capability-based triage and referral.

Critically, such efforts across an ecosystem require sustained leadership, resourcing, and commitment. Without coordinated action, piecemeal initiatives and evaluation risk continuing to generate fragmented insights that cannot be effectively scaled or translated into systemic reform.

Realising the promise—towards a more responsive justice ecosystem

Across Victoria, it is clear there is significant effort to respond to legal need—through programs, services, and partnerships designed to support individuals and communities experiencing legal need. There is energy, innovation, and a clear commitment to doing better. At the same time, the research reinforces the limits of our current understanding of what works—particularly at the level of the justice ecosystem.

Measure for Measure highlights both the promise and the ongoing work of people-centred justice. The initiatives examined in this study demonstrate that more responsive, tailored, and effective approaches are not only possible but already embedded in a variety of ways. The exploratory People-Centred Justice Model developed through this research provides a way of bringing these into a shared frame—highlighting common elements and offering a practical foundation for reflection, design, and further investigation.

However, realising the promise of people-centred justice at scale requires a step change in how the sector understands, measures, and invests in what works. This includes moving beyond isolated initiatives to a more integrated and collaborative ecosystem, supported by robust evidence and shared learning.

The prize is significant: a justice ecosystem that is better able to connect people to the right help, at the right time, in the right way—one that not only responds to and meets legal needs, but supports people to navigate them with confidence and capability.

Ultimately, the research underscores a central insight: improving access to justice is not only about expanding services, but about designing systems and ways of working that genuinely respond to people, their needs, capabilities, and lived realities. By advancing an operational model and a future research agenda, equipped with people-centred justice data, this report provides a foundation for policymakers and practitioners to take the next steps toward a more effective, equitable, and truly people-centred justice system that delivers just outcomes for people in need.

As the evidence base matures, we can start to unlock the answers as to what is effective, sustainable, and scalable in tailoring justice to meet people's legal needs.

1 | Introduction

Measure for Measure: Tailoring Everyday Justice (Measure for Measure) is an important and logical next step in exploring questions of what works to effectively meet legal need and capability across the community. Using a mix of research methods, it explores understanding of what is seen to be working, and how we can know what's effective, scalable, and sustainable.

Measure for Measure takes the Victoria Law Foundation's (VLF) Data Mapping Project and the Public Understanding of Law Survey (PULS) as a point of departure. It also leans into the extensive work done globally to identify what works in effective services and incorporates key concepts from people-centred justice research approaches.

Using effectiveness, sustainability, and scalability as a scaffold,[1] Measure for Measure set out to explore, understand, and share what the participating service providers saw as working to meet legal and capability needs, and what showed promise for broader application.

The overarching research questions were:

- What: Across the Victorian justice sector, what initiatives are seen to be working best to meet the legal needs and capabilities of individuals and communities?
- Why: Why was the initiative started? What was the issue that needed addressing?
- How: How does the initiative work? How is it known to be working?
- What next: What is happening next for the initiative?

The initiatives submitted to this study were highly varied in population, location, users, and needs, but had many commonalities. Thematic analysis brought these together in an operational model which reflects the overlapping and interconnected nature of participants' experiences in tailoring everyday justice, and identifies what is seen to be driving practice to meet need.

The model is not a rigid formula but rather a way to think about what works based on real-world practice. It will continue to evolve with further research and the growing evidence base of different responses to access to justice.

Project background

Measure for Measure has Victorian and global research and theoretical bases. The project was informed by findings from VLF's Data Mapping Project and the PULS.[2] It was undertaken in the context of extensive formulation of what works to deliver true access to justice and the fast-developing field of person-centred justice, which recently appeared in the Justice Data Observatory's (JDO) research agenda.[3]

The Data Mapping Project found that available civil justice administrative and service data in Victoria did not consistently record client and user characteristics and outcomes. The PULS found that legal needs and outcomes were significantly related to people's legal capability, and that there were high levels of unmet legal need even where people had help from legal services.[4]

The PULS also provided new insight into the legal capability of Victorians, raising questions about what works to meet their needs, and consequently, what makes for effective access to justice. Legal capability refers to an array of knowledge, skills and attributes which give people an 'effective opportunity to make a decision about whether and how to make use of the justice system'.[5]

1 Effectiveness, sustainability, and scalability as the three pillars of the what works stream in the Justice Data Observatory research agenda. See Sandefur and Burnett (2023a).

2 Balmer, Pleasence, McDonald and Sandefur (2023, 2024a, 2024b), McDonald et al. (2020), McDonald, Kennedy, Hagland and Haultain (2021), McDonald, Kutin and Hagland (2022) and McDonald and Haultain (2023).

3 Sandefur and Burnett (2023a).

4 Balmer, Pleasence, McDonald and Sandefur (2024b).

5 Pleasence, Coumarelos, Forell and McDonald (2014), pp.123–124. The PULS investigated legal capability within the Victorian adult population, operationalising a measure of legal knowledge, confidence, practical legal literacy, attitudes to law and lawyer accessibility, trust in lawyers and digital legal capability measures. See further, Balmer, Pleasence, McDonald and Sandefur (2024a, 2024b).

Legal capability is integral to understanding the needs of help seekers. These capabilities are central to whether and how people obtain help and whether they can achieve a fair outcome through the justice system.[6] Findings from the PULS also reveal the experiences and consequences of legal problems that point to a mismatch between what people need and what assistance and help they get.[7]

The substantial unmet legal need identified in the PULS calls for a multifaceted response, one that caters to the demonstrated legal need and capability of diverse sub-populations. New understanding of legal capability points to implications for access to justice, dispute resolution processes, practice, and policy.[8] It goes hand in hand with the growing global literature on people-centred justice and the enduring question of what works to deliver effective access to justice for everyday legal problems. However, as Young (2024) argued, 'it is still far from clear what those models should look like, who should provide them, and how to entice people to use them'.[9]

While the PULS provides empirical evidence of the legal need and capability of Victorians, it also highlights critical gaps in the understanding of what works to effectively meet those needs.[10] Work on legal need must be supplemented with information on people, their journeys to and through services, and the outcomes they achieve.[11] As VLF's Data Mapping Project showed, there continues to be a system-wide need for smarter data that goes beyond administrative and service data. The data should record not just outputs and activities, but outcomes: who has their needs meet, and who does not.[12]

Empirical legal studies that examine the experience and handling of legal issues demonstrate over and again how matter characteristics, people's attributes, geographic, and situational context matter.[13] Questions of what works are intrinsically resource and expenditure questions, such as the availability, operation, and location of services and justice institutions relative to community need. At the organisational level, evaluation in service delivery repeatedly points to the inherent tension involved in allocating finite resources to keep access to justice within reach, and the organisational sustainability of doing just that. For example, in circumscribed funding environments, tough decisions must be made about eligibility and the level of assistance provided to individuals and communities in need.[14]

When it comes to legal services, questions of eligibility for what level of public assistance (e.g. information rather than advice or casework) and the affordability of private services are at play. As the form of service becomes increasingly unbundled, the greater the contribution people need to make themselves, which demands higher levels of legal capability.[15]

In the context of access to justice in Victoria and beyond, what works remains a crucial and open question. The consequence is inadequate evidence on which to base policy and practice, and to build compelling business cases for investment and reform.[16]

There has been progress towards more client and user-focused forms of assistance, underpinned by an increased use of data to target and design services. However, further research is needed to bring the pockets of effective and sustainable practice to light and demonstrate whether and how efforts to deliver tailored services result in better outcomes for those in need.

Measure for Measure moves thinking forward in identifying the dimensions of effective service provision across a range of environments. It is an effort to collect a broader dataset in a context where localised, project-based evaluation is more common, and empirical work at scale is required.

6 Balmer, Pleasence, McDonald and Sandefur (2024b).

7 Balmer, Pleasence, McDonald and Sandefur (2024a, 2024b).

8 Balmer, Pleasence, McDonald and Sandefur (2024b).

9 Young (2024), p.1157.

10 See, for example, Balmer, Pleasence, McDonald and Sandefur (2024), Coumarelos et al. (2012) and Pleasence et al. (2014).

11 McDonald and Haultain (2023).

12 See McDonald et al. (2020), McDonald, Kennedy, Hagland and Haultain (2021), McDonald, Kutin and Hagland (2022), McDonald and Haultain (2023) and Balmer, Pleasence, McDonald and Sandefur (2024b).

13 See, for example, Balmer, Pleasence, McDonald and Sandefur (2024b), OECD (2025) and Pleasence, Balmer and Nokes (2025).

14 See, McDonald (2021), p.716.

15 Pleasence, Coumarelos, Forell and McDonald (2014), p.144.

16 McDonald (2021).

People-centred justice: Research framing

Over the past two decades, approaches to access to justice have shifted from a focus on justice institutions to questions about how people navigate to and through those institutions, and what kind of justice people get. International organisations such as the World Justice Project, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Hague Institute for Innovation of Law, and the World Justice Project have adopted this lens through which to assess access to justice, informed by the growing global empirical evidence of justice and needs.[17] Global developments have occurred against the backdrop of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015), specifically Goal 16.3 that commits member nations to 'promote the rule of law at national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all'.[18]

The PULS, for example, brought a new perspective on how legal capability affects the experience, handling, and outcomes of justiciable problems. It added impetus and nuance to the broader shift in research and practice from a top-down court and lawyer-centred policy to a more bottom-up person-centred approach to service delivery and reform.[19]

People-centred justice is a paradigm that arose through increased recognition of the justice gap: the gap between the legal help that people need and the help they are getting, and the evidence that justice systems in diverse jurisdictions 'are failing to respond proactively and effectively to common impactful justice problems'.[20] Studies around the world often demonstrate that the majority of justiciable problems are not resolved by or are even reaching formal justice systems, either due to a lack of legal awareness on the part of the person experiencing the problem or barriers in accessing such systems.[21]

A key feature of such studies is that they measure legal problem prevalence from the perspective of the population, rather than top-down. It is within this bottom-up tradition that the field of person-centred justice has emerged.[22]

People-centred justice approaches seek to provide better justice by putting 'people and their legal and justice needs at the centre of the justice system'.[23] This means designing justice mechanisms or services with the user in mind, and:

> developing and implementing policies and services that meet… needs, and removing barriers to access as part of a holistic vision for a people-centred justice ecosystem.[24]

A people-centred justice approach rests on a more nuanced understanding of what barriers different people face in accessing justice, and how people can best be supported to overcome those barriers and have their needs met. This approach can create services and supports that stretch beyond the more traditional, narrower top-down approach to access to justice as the domain of lawyers and courts.[25]

Building evidence of what works

The American Bar Foundation, International Development Research Centre (Canada), OECD, and World Bank recently formed the Justice Data Observatory (JDO). The JDO published a global research agenda tying together questions of what works, people-centred justice, inclusive economic growth, and research evidence.[26] This agenda identified three knowledge gaps or pillars for building the evidence base on people-centred justice:

1. knowledge to inspire a change in approach
2. knowledge for understanding how people-centred justice matters, and
3. knowledge for implementation.[27]

The agenda called for a shared framework of research to build theoretical insight and actionable intelligence, pointing to the need to 'uncover the ingredients of just solutions, or what works. Measure for Measure is a foundational effort to do some of this work.

17 See OECD/Open Society Foundations (2019), OECD (2021, 2025) and World Justice Project (2019a, 2019b).

18 See further, https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda.

19 Balmer, Pleasence, McDonald and Sandefur (2023, 2024a, 2024b).

20 Chapman et al. (2021), p.5.

21 See, for example, OECD/Open Society Foundations (2019), OECD (2021, 2025) and World Justice Project (2019b).

22 See McDonald (2021), pp.709–711.

23 OECD (2021), p.4.

24 OECD (2021), p.93.

25 See further, Coumarelos et al. (2012), pp.3–5 and Pilliar (2022), p.201.

26 Sandefur and Burnet (2023a). See also Sandefur, Burnett and Drummond (2023) for a review of global people-centred access to justice and development outcomes.

27 Sandefur and Burnett (2023a). These questions not only inform and guide policy, practice and justice reform, but also place people-centred justice as a global movement, where shared research questions enable fruitful cross-jurisdictional comparison.

Compared to evidence about community legal need, evidence establishing what works to meet legal need (and to close the justice gap) remains stunted. As McDonald (2021) observed:

> Whereas the empirical legal needs evidence base is thick (although there is always more to learn) the 'what works' evidence base by comparison is thin. Across all aspects of legal assistance and other justice institutions, there are substantial gaps in understanding 'what works'.[28]

The what works moniker is widely used as a shorthand for a complex line of inquiry. As Pleasance, Coumarelos, Forell, and McDonald (2014) found:

> the direction of travel for researchers in the field should now be towards questions of what works, for whom, when, why and at what cost?[29]

Beyond justice system costs, inquiries must also include the cost of everyday legal problems for individuals, the community, and society, vital for building business cases to invest in justice solutions.[30]

Building rigorous evidence of what works necessitates a systematic approach, one that allows the intended outcomes of a program, model of working, or intervention to be determined through comparison of counterfactuals (e.g. treatment and control groups) to measure what would have happened without the intervention.

Elsewhere, Burnett and Sandefur (2024) observe how legal service design and evaluation have historically focused on program effectiveness, yet the size of civil legal need requires that programs and services be able to scale and be sustained at scale. Such questions are 'ultimately tests of time'.[31]

Building knowledge for implementation, the third pillar from the JDO research agenda takes up the question of what works in people-centred justice, encouraging researchers and policymakers to understand 'what interventions work for whom, where and when' and 'what solutions are effective, and how to sustain and scale them'.[32] Measure for Measure was designed to uncover ingredients of what works in Victoria and ties directly to this third type of knowledge.

Sandefur and Burnett (2023) further identified that answering what works questions in the JDO research agenda:

> will require a systematic approach and systematically collected data to understand why and how types of interventions, policies, programs work in certain contexts and for certain populations or problems.[33]

There is considerable literature on what, in theory, makes a person-centred service or program effective, including accessibility (physical, linguistic, cultural), uptake, trustworthiness, services or programs targeted to the legal problems or cohort of people it is trying to assist, timely services, collaboration with other services (legal and non-legal), and the appropriateness of the service or program to the needs and capabilities of users.[34]

Evidence on what works to meet legal need and to close the justice gap, though growing, remains unevenly distributed.[35] In 2019, the Task Force on Justice highlighted the cost of injustice and identified data evidence as an important lever for reformers working towards justice for all. Data and evidence not only create awareness of the problem scale but can help to demonstrate how solutions can be cost-effective.[36]

In Victoria, VLF's Data Mapping Project found a strong appetite for evidence of what works in civil justice and to learn more about outcomes. It also identified data and measurement challenges to building an evidence base to do so. This included gaps in the justice system responsibility that impede evidence of what works to make civil justice better, cheaper, quicker and fairer, and effective civil justice policy and practice.[37] McDonald and Haultain (2023) found that while service and administrative data

28 McDonald (2021), p.744.

29 Pleasence, Coumarelos, Forell and McDonald (2014), p.175.

30 See, for example. Farrow et al. (2016). Similar questions continue to be at the heart of OECD 2025 interest in access to justice and inclusive economic development and identification of the need for a knowledge hub for data and analysis, best practices in public policy, and recommendations about the design and provision of services to meet legal need and to ensure fair processes and outcomes.

31 Burnett and Sandefur (2024), p.1529.

32 Sandefur and Burnett (2023a), p.5.

33 Sandefur and Burnett (2023a), p.5.

34 See Pleasence, Coumarelos, Forell and McDonald (2014) and Burnett and Sandefur (2024).

35 Sandefur, Burnett and Drummond (2023).

36 Task Force on Justice (2019).

37 See McDonald et al. (2020) and McDonald and Haultain (2023).

were still primarily driven by functional and operational need, a wide range of institutions and organisations within the legal and justice ecosystem aspired to glean greater insight regarding the experiences, impacts, and outcomes for the people they were established to serve.[38]

As with all research agendas, approaches to people-centred justice are not without limitations or conjecture. The elasticity of the term allows old practices to be repackaged as people-centred justice with no or limited change to practice.[39] This presents another challenge in the promotion of systemic change. As Toy-Cronin (2024) argues, the adversarial justice system involves disputes between two or multiple people, raising the question of whose needs should be prioritised in those cases.[40] Going further, others raise the inherent tension between individual needs and the needs of the community, and point to the wider set of institutional interests and responsibilities caught up in and which together form the justice ecosystem, such as people within justice institutions.[41] Such observations guide critical engagement with people-centred justice initiatives, reforms and claims, and wider conceptual development.

Ecosystem and operating environment

When it comes to people-centred justice approaches and questions of what works to meet legal need, context matters. The justice system is increasingly being conceptualised as an ecosystem, where systems thinking, design, and technology hold the promise of a more joined-up justice system.[42]

An ecosystem is understood as having organic characteristics, where parts wither and grow, and where a change in one part of the ecosystem can affect other parts. It is also likely to be more attuned to the reality of the operation and production of elements, such as the provision of community legal education and information.[43]

For example, evaluation of Victoria Legal Aid's Summary Crime Program found a tightly coupled system where change in policy and operating environment emanating from the Victorian Department of Justice and Regulation (as it then was), Victoria Legal Aid, Magistrates' Court of Victoria, Victoria Police, and Corrections Victoria could all effect time pressures, workload, and performance of each other.[44]

Recognition of and response to this interconnectedness is key. VLF's Data Mapping Project found the utility of Victoria's civil justice data could be enhanced by coordination and collaboration across civil justice institutions, where data aggregation and linking could unlock mutually beneficial insights.[45] Collaboration and coordination across the justice system were seen as a path to improve justice data, build justice system insight, fill knowledge gaps, and build evidence.

The fragmented nature of roles, remit, resourcing, and governance of the Victorian justice ecosystem, with a mix of Victorian and Commonwealth courts, tribunals, dispute and complaint-resolution bodies, and legal assistance services, affected the use and utility of available data. Better use of quality data would deliver valuable evidence to inform at the macro systems level and for micro-operational understanding and strategic planning.[46] Benefits of data aggregation identified in the Data Mapping Project included insight and better understanding of user journeys to and through the justice system, and how upstream activity affects downstream operations, processes, and outcomes.

Funding for justice data systems and practices tends to be scarce, with government and others typically funding projects and reforms, rather than system-wide infrastructure and practice. For example, courts and tribunals tended to leapfrog each other when adopting new

38 McDonald and Haultain (2023).

39 See Di Giovanni and De Langen (2024) and Toy-Cronin (2024). It is also important to note that access to justice and legal need terminology and definition remains in flux. For example, before 'people-centred justice' rose in prominence, 'citizen-centred' practice was widely used, and before 'client-centred' practice. See further, Mulherin (2023).

40 Toy-Cronin (2024), pp.610–611.

41 As Genn (2012), p.397 reminds 'the civil justice system is a public good that serves more than private interests,' while Boulanger-Bonnelly (2024), p.406 noted how the public function of the courts and dispute resolution mechanisms should be considered alongside people-centred justice reforms.

42 See, for example, Justice Connect (n.d). Available at: https://justiceconnect.org.au/about/innovation/access-to-justice/.

43 For instance, Dauvergne, Johnson and Srivastava (2025) recently examined how public legal education and information in British Columbia could be improved. They described a constellation of resources and organisations involved, and recommended the creation of a Public Legal Education and Information Hub to support the ecosystem of producers, lead evaluation, and identify and share best practice.

44 McDonald et al. (2017).

45 McDonald and Haultain (2023), pp.34–38.

46 McDonald and Haultain (2023), p.38.

case management and administrative systems, jumping to the latest technology and practices.[47]

Technology has been one of the fastest-moving enablers affecting the design and delivery of justice. The long-forecast technology-based transformation of justice institutions and practices is gaining pace.[48] Digital platforms, online connectivity, and artificial intelligence innovations are being adopted and promoted to improve the accessibility and availability of information and other supports for people with legal need.[49]

An Independent Review of Australia's National Legal Assistance Partnership recommended the establishment of a Justice Technology Innovation Fund as a key mechanism to support access to justice and legal assistance for Australians.[50] Should such a funding scheme eventuate, it could significantly reshape the justice ecosystem and operating environment, potentially accelerating and transforming understanding of what works to effectively meet legal need.

Measure for Measure: A state-of-the-field assessment

Against this background, Measure for Measure aimed to assemble pieces of what works in meeting the legal needs of Victorians. To put together the pieces and explore the research questions, the project started with a modest ask: what are the initiatives that those working in the Victorian justice system see as working well? What things, programs, practices, and ways of working do service providers proudly hold up and say: 'This is working!'?

Put simply, the study explores what measures work to meet the legal need and capability of Victorians, and how we can know what's effective, scalable, and sustainable. Measure for Measure investigates how Victorian justice actors perceive success in meeting legal need, providing a foundation for learning and further empirical research into what works.

In response to the ask, we received 66 responses: 66 examples of justice initiatives from across Victoria working to fill specific and tightly defined access to justice gaps across the justice ecosystem.

With data from 66 initiatives collected and analysed, this research provides a valuable state-of-the-field assessment and an opportunity to showcase the diversity of approaches seeking to prevent and resolve legal problems.

The project draws together the disparate knowledge from across the initiatives to create a composite picture of what is seen to make justice solutions work for different people and communities.

A start, but more is needed

Pilliar (2022) concludes that pursuing 'a person-centred concept of access to justice moves the promise of the legal system' towards a 'thicker conception of what law can and should offer to those seeking justice', and to a more responsive law that explicitly connects access to justice to individuals in society.[51]

This promise is manifest in initiatives explored in Measure for Measure, where the majority centre on 'people's actual needs and their actual capabilities for engaging with the law to meet those needs'.[52]

However, efforts to improve access to justice and meet legal need and capability often remain siloed at the initiative or organisational level. Efforts to sustain and scale up promising initiatives are hindered. Preventative strategies aimed at addressing root causes of prevalent justice problems remain difficult to propose and achieve within a complex justice ecosystem, and with funding and evidence constraints.

The findings from Measure for Measure point to the operationalisation of ways of working mooted in the PULS, reflecting a diversity of services and initiatives which are cognisant of need, capabilities, and resources. The promise embodied in these initiatives gestures to a reimagined legal system where individuals have greater control over their experience with the law through building their skills, knowledge, and capability.

47 McDonald, Kennedy, Hagland and Haultain (2021).

48 See, for example, Steffek and Sumida (2025) and Susskind (1996, 2008, 2021).

49 See, for example, Mundy (2024).

50 Mundy (2024).

51 Pilliar (2022), p.200.

52 Pilliar (2022), p.200.

This is a tantalising prospect. However, more is needed to build the type of understanding about the justice system necessary to pull the right policy and practice levers, and to inform the design and provision of services, processes, and tools that do justice.[53]

About this report

This report sets out the findings from *Measure for Measure: A People-Centred Approach to Tailoring Justice.*

The project methodology is detailed in Chapter 2, including how initiatives were sought, how information and data were collected and analysed, and the limitations of the approach taken.

Chapter 3 provides a summary of the participating initiatives and organisations.

Chapter 4 summarises aggregated analysis of the initiatives submitted in survey responses, detailing the types of organisations, partners, areas of law, target cohorts and legal matters, initiative reach in terms of people and geography, how long the initiative has been operating, and its current status, initial and current funding sources, and the main barrier to continuing and extending the initiative.

Chapter 5 explores what works in an exploratory model to operationalise people-centred justice, based on thematic analysis of the survey, interview, and document material collected.

Chapter 6 examines how success is defined, measured, sustained, and scaled.

Finally, Chapter 7 discusses the implications of the findings and further steps to grow an evidence base of what works and realise the potential of people-centred justice.

53 See further, Pilliar (2022), p.154, McDonald (2021) and Sandefur and Burnett (2024).

2 | Methodology

Overview

This chapter sets out the methodology for this exploratory research project.

The methodology was designed to explore what participants thought was working to successfully meet the clients' and users' legal need based on their experience and expertise.

A mix of quantitative and qualitative methods was used to collect information from participants, including a survey and semi-structured individual and small group interviews.

Participants were first invited to complete an online survey to capture specific initiatives that they saw as successfully working to meet legal needs. We received responses of 66 justice initiatives from across the state. From these, a mix of initiatives was selected for in-depth interviews to build the picture of success, scalability, and sustainability. The survey and interview instruments are set out in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

The research was undertaken in three broad stages:

1. Project scoping and establishment
2. Mixed methods data collection (survey and interviews)
3. Data analysis (quantitative and qualitative) and reporting.

These phases are detailed below, along with limitations of the methodology.

Scope

Organisations delivering services within the Victorian justice sector were eligible to take part in the study. The scope included:

- Public legal assistance providers
- Courts and tribunals
- Dispute resolution and complaint bodies
- Other organisations offering or involved in providing legal help (e.g. pro bono legal services)

Organisations were able to submit multiple initiatives that met the following eligibility criteria:

- Operating within Victoria for a minimum of six months
- Perceived by participants to be successfully working or showing promise in meeting legal need.

Initiatives that met these criteria but were no longer operating were also eligible. This provided an opportunity to explore why services seen to be successfully meeting legal need were discontinued.

An invitation to participate was promoted to the public legal assistance and broader justice sector through the Victoria Law Foundation (VLF) newsletters, website, events, and direct engagement; collaborative service planning meetings; and consultations with peak organisations, such as the Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria and Victoria Legal Aid.

Survey

While the project was informed by a review of literature on approaches to people-centred justice and what works to meet legal needs, as the survey instrument was developed, it became apparent that there was inconsistent familiarity with and use of terminology amongst practitioners. The data collection tools were consequently iterated to reflect the language used by practitioners.

Eligible organisations were invited to take part in the project and provided with information on participation requirements, informed consent, and a link to the online survey.

The survey canvassed separate initiatives, rather than organisations. Participating organisations could nominate more than one initiative by completing a separate survey for each.

The online survey was designed to collect core project information using LimeSurvey Professional. Participant names and contact details were required to identify and mitigate possible automated bot and anonymous responses.

The survey instrument included a series of questions to investigate the overarching research questions detailed in the Introduction.

Pilot and cognitive testing of the survey instrument were conducted with five project stakeholders. It resulted in successive revisions to questionnaire wording.

The survey was in two sections:

- Section One: Nuts and Bolts

Twelve close and open-ended questions, with follow-up questions depending on answers. These questions sought basic information about initiatives, including the purpose, target legal problem or clients, initiative use and reach, and funding.

- Section Two: Why, What, How, What More, and What Next

Seven open-ended questions informed by the literature review. These questions canvassed specific information about the initiative, including why and how participants felt the initiative was effective in meeting legal need, their plans, and the anticipated sustainability challenges.

A final question sought consent for an interview in the next phase.

The survey was open for eight weeks. Three reminders were disseminated by email to the VLF Research mailing list approximately every fortnight. Notice of the research was also disseminated in VLF newsletters and stakeholders promoting the research in their communication networks. In total, 66 separate initiatives were submitted by 31 legal service and justice sector organisations, often program managers. One initiative was submitted through two separate surveys by two partner organisations.

While most participants completed the survey online, several used the downloadable questionnaire. The mode of response does not appear to have affected participant responses.

Survey data were aggregated, cleaned, coded, and analysed using Excel, SPSS (to code quantitative responses), and MAXQDA (to code qualitative responses).

Preliminary analysis of survey responses informed the selection of initiatives for the subsequent interview phase against the criteria set out below.

Interviews

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to explore 23 of the 66 initiatives. Initiatives were purposively selected using a matrix of initiative type, mode of operation (e.g. in-person, technology-based), legal dosage (e.g. education, information, advice, casework), target issue or population, and geographic location. The interview schedule is in Appendix 2.

Other than one online interview, as preferred by the participant, all interviews were conducted in person in Melbourne and in three regional areas. Interviews were recorded and transcribed with participant consent. They were conducted with as many people as the participating organisation preferred, most commonly one or two, but sometimes up to four. In total, 44 people participated in the 23 interviews, comprising a mix of senior staff, including CEOs, program managers, frontline service providers, and service partners.

Analysis

As discussed in the Introduction, the thematic analysis used access to justice and policy terminology to organise information. For example, principles such as the *National Strategic Framework for Legal Assistance* include 'client-centred and appropriate services' and 'collaboration and integrated approaches'.[54] One of the intended outcomes of these principles is that services are delivered in a client-centric manner and consider people's legal needs and capabilities.[55] While these principles were relevant to many participants, particularly those who receive national partnership funding, it became apparent that participants also had varied understandings of what these terms meant and how they informed their practice.

A coding structure was developed by the research team based on the literature, research questions, survey questionnaire, and interview schedule.

Close-ended survey questions were tabulated and summarised, and interview transcripts were uploaded to MAXQDA along with open-ended survey responses. Information collected for each initiative was initially coded and reviewed by members of the research team using the initial coding structure. This structure was reviewed and

54 The other four principles are to 'Focus service delivery on people facing disadvantage', 'Appropriately timed responses and preventative action', 'Empowerment and resilience' and 'Continuous learning and improvement', Council of Attorneys-General (2019).

55 See further, Council of Attorneys-General (2019).

modified throughout the analysis, as dominant themes were identified. The analysis then informed the model outlined in Chapter 5.

All illustrative quotes from surveys and interviews that appear across Chapters 5 and 6 were anonymised for consistency and confidentiality purposes.

Terminology and links to integrated and multidisciplinary practice

Relationships between legal care and healthcare are well established, with studies showing how legal problems lead to health problems and vice versa. This has prompted scholarship and policy examining the co-location of legal and health services, as well as health justice partnerships, also known as medico-legal partnerships, in the United States.[56] More broadly, a tradition of multidisciplinary and integrated forms of service has brought new approaches and language to the legal and justice ecosystem, utilising legal and other professional disciplines such as health care, social workers, mental health services, education and housing. Sociolegal scholars have also drawn on fields such as epidemiology to reconceptualise and learn how legal problems and legal outcomes might be understood, analysed, and measured in a people-centred way.[57]

While not the primary focus of this study, there was a crossover between integrated and multidisciplinary practice and the language used by participants. This reflects both the people-centred approaches taken and the proportion of health justice partnerships, family and domestic violence initiatives, and other partnerships submitted to this study. Further details are available in Chapter 4.

In particular, the term *allied professionals* is used in this report to refer to professionals and practitioners working in allied roles in the initiatives submitted to this study, working in conjunction with lawyers, legal staff, and justice organisations. The term is used broadly and includes healthcare workers, social and community workers, teachers and educators, and others. Other work has referred to these professionals, or subsets of them, as trusted intermediaries and (legal) problem noticers. They are frontline workers who help clients, acting as intermediaries to assist people in getting legal help.[58] This minor shift in language reflects the positioning of the collaborative nature of the initiatives submitted and aims to capture the shared trust, professional respect, and mutual goals that are integral to such working relationships.

Limitations

The study was designed to examine service provider perspectives on the initiatives they saw as effective and to explore the factors that were seen to make them so.

It was beyond the scope of this study to analyse legal need, capability, and outcomes at a client or user level, where other methodologies do so.[59]

The study tapped into the experience and expertise of those who work in service delivery and was structured to examine what were seen as successful approaches within the justice sector in Victoria at the time. The participant recruitment method, however, meant that the project was more likely to receive participation concerning initiatives of legal services, courts and tribunals, and dispute and complaint resolution bodies rather than justice initiatives operated by other justice sector stakeholders.

Another relevant limitation was the capacity and willingness to participate. While the opportunity to participate was wide, the majority of organisations that opted to do so were public legal assistance services. The scope of the study limited the inclusion to organisations that chose to submit, rather than a comprehensive survey of activity. There are also numerous examples across the justice ecosystem of initiatives that were eligible but were unaware or chose not to participate. Time, resources, and permission to participate were matters for organisations and institutions and would have affected participation.

One important limitation of the study was the area of law and type of initiatives that were submitted to the online survey, and subsequently available for follow-up interview. There was a high proportion of initiatives directed to family law and family violence legal matters. Many initiatives featured more intensive, multidisciplinary, and integrated practices, and there were comparatively few technology-based initiatives. In these cases, this may reflect policy and funding directions in recent years.

56 See Genn (2019), Burris, Pacula and Wagenaar (2023) and Haultain and Wei (2023).

57 See Pilliar (2023).

58 See, for example, Genn (1999) and Curren (2026).

59 Legal needs surveys, such as surveys of individuals, households, and businesses, as well as surveys of legal practitioners and studies of specific forms and models of assistance and dispute resolution processes, are examples.

The study is not representative, and participation was skewed to certain areas of law and types of initiatives (see further Chapter 4). As such, the findings are exploratory and cannot reliably be used to make generalised findings about the Victorian justice system.

The findings prompt more questions and invite further investigation. It is an important step in surveying and identifying the elements of service that achieve valued outcomes for service users and staff.

One consequence of the methodology was the significant variation in the size and scope of initiatives. Some were relatively small and focused on a particular demographic group or legal issue. Others were broader, such as a service program or model, or information and assistance provided online and widely available. Such variation reflects the nature of initiatives across the legal assistance and justice sectors that are intended to help people manage and resolve their legal issues, and the complexity in doing so successfully.

Given the literature on people-centred justice, it is relevant that it was beyond the scope and resources of this study to investigate the experiences, perceptions, and satisfaction of clients, broader staff, project partners, or funders. Rather, the study was designed to explore the factors that were understood to be influential in projects seen to successfully meet legal need, and to provide a basis for further evaluative study incorporating such perspectives. This would complement other monitoring and evaluation, such as user experience and satisfaction, effective partnership, and particular practice models. Research is required to investigate how the people at the core of people-centred justice practice understand and experience these services and processes, and how effective they are in meeting people's needs. Other data collection and research methods are required to do so.

Further limitations flow from the exploratory nature of the research. For example, initiatives submitted were generally those of which participants were particularly proud. While useful in identifying factors seen as affecting what works, it nevertheless introduced bias in the material collected. While evidence of successful initiatives was canvassed, independent evaluation of performance and outcomes was beyond the scope of the study. The intent was to explore and identify what common factors were thought to contribute to perceived success. This provides an informed foundation for evaluative research using other methodologies, such as outcomes evaluation and systematic review employing randomisation, statistical meta-analysis, and qualitative meta-synthesis.

It is not yet possible to compare apples with apples across services and projects, given the variation in data collection and outcomes measurement in the sector. This extends to the challenge in developing a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between legal need, capability, and outcomes.[60]

This research sets the table for further investigation of what works and what amounts to success for those involved.

60 See further, McDonald and Haultain (2023) and Balmer, Pleasence, McDonald and Sandefur (2024b).

3 | Summary of the participating initiatives

The Measure for Measure survey received responses covering 66 initiatives from 31 organisations. These initiatives showcase the breadth and diversity of justice approaches currently seeking to prevent and resolve legal problems across Victoria.

The surveyed initiatives offer insights into organisations that are grappling with the various challenges of delivering effective and cost-efficient access to justice, and the amount of legal that is required to meet the diverse legal need and capability across the community.[61]

Table 3.1 presents a summary of surveyed initiatives. While many initiatives submitted included collaborations or partnerships, only the organisations that submitted the survey responses are listed against each initiative.

The initiative summary (column three) is simply a very brief outline of the purpose of the initiative, as a quick reference guide. It does not capture the full aims, nor the depth and breadth, of an initiative's activities and scope, nor the wider context in which it operates.

The next chapter provides a quantitative analysis of the initiatives, outlining who these initiatives had targeted, for what legal matters, in what locations, over what duration, and with what sources of funding.

The initiative submissions identified a variety of target problem types, locations, population groups, needs, and capabilities, but also shared several key and important commonalities. These commonalities are explored in detail in Chapters 5 and Chapter 6 of this report.

TABLE 3.1: Summary of participating initiatives and organisations

Organisation Name	Initiative Name	Initiative summary
Anika Legal (Anika)	Repairs Service	Repairs Service helps renters advocate for safe homes using technology and a volunteer workforce.
ARC Justice	Child Protection (CP) Program	The Child Protection Program provides legal representation in regional Victoria for those involved in the child protection system, particularly women and children impacted by family violence.
Barwon Community Legal Service (Barwon CLS)	Law for Life Skills	Law for Life Skills provides civil law education and preventative support to at-risk young people.
Children's Court of Victoria (CCV)	Court Support Coordinator (CSC) Program	The Court Support Coordinator Program provides targeted and specialist support to self-represented litigants (SRLs) in the family division of the Children's Court, helping them navigate court processes and access relevant supports.
Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC)	Women Engaging and Living Safely (WELS)	Women Engaging and Living Safely is a health justice partnership offering an integrated legal response through Eastern Health's maternity services for women at risk of or experiencing family violence.
	Mabels	Mabels is a health justice partnership offering specialist family violence legal support to women, through services integrated into local health clinics.

61 McDonald (2021).

Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC)	SAGE	SAGE provides integrated casework support through a multidisciplinary team for women experiencing family violence who face additional complex barriers.
	Strengthening Intake Quality and Data Insights (Data Insights)	Strengthening Intake Quality and Data Insights supports strengthened legal service access, intake, and referrals at ECLC through enhanced data collection and analysis.
	Consent, Cybercrimes and the Law education sessions	Consent, Cybercrimes and the Law is an education package for secondary schools on consent, cyber-safety, sexual harassment, sexting, image-based abuse and the law.
	Rights of Seniors in the East (ROSE) and Engaging and Living Safely and Autonomously (ELSA)	Rights of Seniors in the East and Engaging and Living Safely and Autonomously provide legal, psychosocial, and financial counselling support to people experiencing or at risk of elder abuse, as well as free education and secondary consultations.
	Deakin Legal Service	Deakin Legal Service supports the legal needs of international students who are enrolled at Deakin University (Burwood Campus).
	Climate Justice and Disaster Recovery (Climate Justice)	Climate Justice and Disaster Recovery supports climate justice through disaster preparedness activities and disaster recovery legal support.
Fitzroy Legal Service (FLS)	Voices for Change	Voices for Change is a self-advocacy group for members who have an acquired brain injury and previous contact with the criminal justice system, and who provide lived experience expertise to the legal and health sector, and education to the broader Victorian community.
	Prison Law Handbook	The Prison Law Handbook provides online practical resources on prison law for those incarcerated, their supporters, and families.
	ActivistRights.org.au	ActivistRights.org.au provides legal information about rights, protections, and other information for people involved in or planning protest activities or political demonstrations.
	Work Without Barriers	Work Without Barriers is an employment and professional skill development program for women who have faced systemic barriers to their employment.
	Mercy Hospital and Fitzroy Legal Service Legal Health Clinic	Mercy Hospital and Fitzroy Legal Service Legal Health Clinic provides legal support to patients of the Mercy Hospital who are experiencing family violence.
	Property Pilot	The Property Pilot provides legal assistance to victim survivors of family violence who have a small property pool.
	Divorce Clinic	The Divorce Clinic is a monthly service to assist people in filing their own online divorce applications.
	Yarra Fitzroy Legal Service Health Justice Partnership (Yarra HJP)	Yarra Fitzroy Legal Service Health Justice Partnership provides legal support services to primary carers who are victim survivors of family violence, embedded within a family services centre.
	North Richmond Community Health - Family Law/ Family Violence Advice Clinic	The Family Law/Family Violence Advice Clinic provides legal assistance to patients at the North Richmond Community Health Centre who have experienced family violence.
Gippsland Community Legal Service (GCLS)	Clean Slates Health Justice Partnership	The Clean Slates Health Justice Partnership between GCLS and Latrobe Regional Hospital integrates legal and health services for people with mental health conditions
	Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Project (Disaster Project)	The Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Project provides legal education and support to assist communities in Gippsland to prepare for future disasters and respond to disasters that have already occurred.

Hume Riverina Community Legal Service (Hume Riverina CLS)	Integrated Family Violence Health Justice Partnership with Centre Against Violence (FV HJP with CAV)	The Integrated Family Violence Health Justice Partnership with Centre Against Violence provides legal assistance, education, and advocacy to victim survivors and those at risk of family violence in Northeast Victoria.
	Overcoming the Invisible Hurdles for Justice for Young People (Invisible Hurdles)	Overcoming the Invisible Hurdles for Justice for Young People is a partnership that embeds legal support in youth and health services to improve outcomes for young people experiencing, or at risk of, family violence.
Inner Melbourne Community Legal (IMCL)	Housing Justice Partnership (Housing JP)	The Housing Justice Partnership provides on-site legal support for people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness, embedded in local homelessness services.
inTouch Women's Legal Centre (InTouch)	Legal Pathways to Recovery	Legal Pathways to Recovery provides advice, casework, and legal education to women of migrant and/or refugee background who have been affected by family violence.
Justice Connect	Safeguarding Now, Preventing Future Abuse (Safeguarding Now)	Safeguarding Now, Preventing Future Abuse supports seniors to connect with peers and discuss plans before execution through co-designed Conversation Guides.
	Not-for-profit Law's Online Legal Resources	Not-for-profit Law offers an online legal resource hub of self-help guides and tools to support strengthened governance and legal capacity in community organisations.
	Digital Consumer Outreach Program (DCOP)	The Digital Consumer Outreach Program uses digital marketing and online strategies to improve the awareness and online accessibility of Justice Connect's legal services.
	Pro Bono Portal	The Pro Bono Portal provides a service that matches people with unmet legal need to relevant pro bono lawyers across Australia and internationally.
	Justice Connect Answers	Justice Connect Answers is a service connecting people with lawyers for free, tailored, and specific legal advice across several common areas of law.
	Dear Landlord	Dear Landlord is an online tool designed to support renters to understand the legal eviction process and their rights, draft tailored documents, and provide referral pathways to access financial and legal supports.
Lander & Rogers	Small Claims Large Battles (Small Claims)	Small Claims Large Battles was a collaborative project to provide legal representation to women with small asset pools navigating divorce, especially those experiencing family violence.
Legal Tech Helper and Mental Health Legal Centre (LTH and MHLC)	Smart Self Help to Empower Families in Mental Health Law (Smart Self Help)	Smart Self Help to Empower Families in Mental Health Law online tool provides accessible, anonymous, and tailored legal information and resources to people facing mental health challenges, and their friends, families, and carers.
Magistrates' Court of Victoria (MCV)	Remote Hearing Support Service (Remote Hearing SS)	The Remote Hearing Support Service supports people affected by family violence to take part in a family violence intervention order hearing remotely, with specialised support from a family violence practitioner before, during and after their legal engagement with the court. attend court.

Moonee Valley Legal Service (MVLS)	Legal Concierge	The Legal Concierge program provided integrated legal services to six public housing estates and appointed Legal Concierges from the community to build community engagement and access.
Neighbourhood Justice Centre (NJC)	The Multilingual Family Violence Audio Guide (the Guide)	The Multilingual Family Violence Audio Guide provides audio and written information about family violence and available supports in five priority language groups to support non-English speaking and newly arrived communities in navigating the family violence service sector.
	Criminal Pre-Hearing Clinic	The Criminal Pre-Hearing Clinic runs monthly, allowing clients and lawyers to meet and prepare before their hearing dates, increasing the efficiency of the court process.
	Young Adult List (YA List)	The Young Adult List is a once-a-month court listing of matters where the respondent is a young adult between 18–25 years old, with additional services available on-site to provide tailored support.
Northern Community Legal Centre (Northern CLC)	The Safe Landing Project	The Safe Landing Project works collaboratively with police, courts, and family violence services to provide wrap-around legal support to women on temporary visas experiencing family violence.
	Take the First Step Project	The Take the First Step Project trains groups of local women from diverse backgrounds to be family violence peer educators and leaders within their community.
Office of the Public Advocate (OPA)	Independent Third Person	Independent Third Person attend police interviews with adults and young people with disabilities, supporting the person with a disability throughout the process.
Peninsula Community Legal Centre (Peninsula CLC)	This is Not Who I Want to Be	This is Not Who I Want to Be is an interactive theatre project providing legal education on family violence and forced marriage to secondary students from multicultural communities.
	Street Law Coffee Van	The Street Law Coffee Van, staffed by a lawyer, community engagement officer and barista, visits isolated and disengaged communities across the southeast of Melbourne, providing legal services and legal health checks.
Q+Law	Q+Law	Q+Law provides legal support, systemic advocacy, referrals, and education for LGBTIQA+SB62 Victorians, led entirely by and for LGBTIQA+SB communities.
Seniors Rights Victoria/ Council on The Ageing (Victoria) (SRV)	Planning for the Future	This specific iteration of the Planning for the Future program provides legal education to older adults in the Deaf Community to increase awareness of the legal and other options available that can reduce the risk of elder abuse, especially financial elder abuse.

62 LGBTIQA+SB stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Asexual, Sistergirl, Brotherboy and all other identities outside of the cisgender or heterosexual experience. Please note, that in our survey instrument we used the term LGBTIQA+, which aligned with the common naming of priority client groups within the Victorian justice system at the time of surveying. Other than Chapter 4 where the quantitative survey results are directly referenced, we have expanded the term used throughout this report to LGBTIQA+SB.

Tenants Victoria	Repairs Toolkit	The Repairs Toolkit is a set of online self-help tools to help Victorian renters learn about and exercise their rights regarding repairs and minimum standards in their homes.
Victoria Legal Aid (VLA)	Webchat Legal Advice	Webchat Legal Advice, a collaboration between VLA's Legal Help and the Family Violence Program, offers legal advice to people experiencing and using family violence through the Webchat medium.
	Youth Citizenship in the West	The Youth Citizenship in the West project provides early intervention support for young people from culturally diverse communities to apply for and understand the legal importance of citizenship.
	Appointments for deaf and hard of hearing clients	Regular appointments with a Legal Aid lawyer and an Auslan interpreter for deaf and hard of hearing clients, with other accessibility supports also available.
	Family Dispute Resolution Service's Kids Talk program	Kids Talk is a child-inclusive program, part of VLA's in-house Family Dispute Resolution Service, and designed to support early resolution of family law disputes by allowing young people to have input into decision-making.
	Help Before Court	Help Before Court provides opportunities for people charged with an offence in the Magistrates' Court to engage with VLA and progress their matter before their first court hearing, complementing the existing duty lawyer service provided at court, and providing legal advice, case preparation support, referrals and court representation.
	Preventative education with at-risk young people (Preventative Education with YP)	Preventative education with at-risk young people delivers preventative legal education to at-risk young people to help them make more informed choices, understand their rights, and know where to seek help.
Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC)	Charter of Human Rights eLearning Modules	The Charter of Human Rights eLearning Modules provide an accessible tool for people to learn about their rights and obligations under equal opportunity and human rights laws in Victoria.
West Heidelberg Community Legal (WHCL)	Making Space	Making Space is a co-designed project to improve physical space and practices to better support the needs of children who attend the service in the care of adult clients.
Western Community Legal Centre (Westjustice)	Restoring Financial Safety Program	The Restoring Financial Safety Program provides multidisciplinary support to women who are victim survivors of family violence and are trapped financially.
Women's Legal Service Victoria (WLSV)	Together from the Start	Together from the Start is a health justice partnership providing support for women experiencing family violence who attend Monash Health for antenatal care and are at risk of or have child protection involvement.
	Integrated Programs	The Integrated Programs provide integrated support to people affected by family violence through a team of specialist financial counsellors and social workers.
	Family Law Capacity Building Program (FL Capacity Building Program)	The Family Law Capacity Building Program is a multi-project initiative that provides support to the community legal assistance sector to build family law capacity and strengthen family law practices and assistance across the state.
	Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence Pilot	The Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence Pilot program provides integrated legal assistance and advice to migrant women with visa issues they experience due to family violence and relationship breakdown.

Youthlaw	Ballarat Youthlaw - A health justice partnership service (Ballarat Youthlaw HJP)	Ballarat Youthlaw is a health justice partnership working through and with community organisations and Ballarat Community Health Service to provide legal and related assistance to vulnerable and disadvantaged young people in the Ballarat region.
	Friday Fines Clinic	The Friday Fines Clinic is a specialist clinic assisting young people with special circumstances to deal with their fines, with the help of volunteer law students, paralegals, and social work students.
	Legal Pod Program	The Legal Pod Program provides long-term legal support to young people who have left the out-of-home care system, connecting small teams of pro-bono lawyers with an individual young person to respond to their multiple legal needs for up to 3 years, as they transition from care.
Youth Law Australia	Harm Practice	Harm Practice is a technology-enabled prevention and response legal service that supports children and young people (and their supporters) with experience of maltreatment and harm. including sexual abuse.

4 | Analysis of survey responses

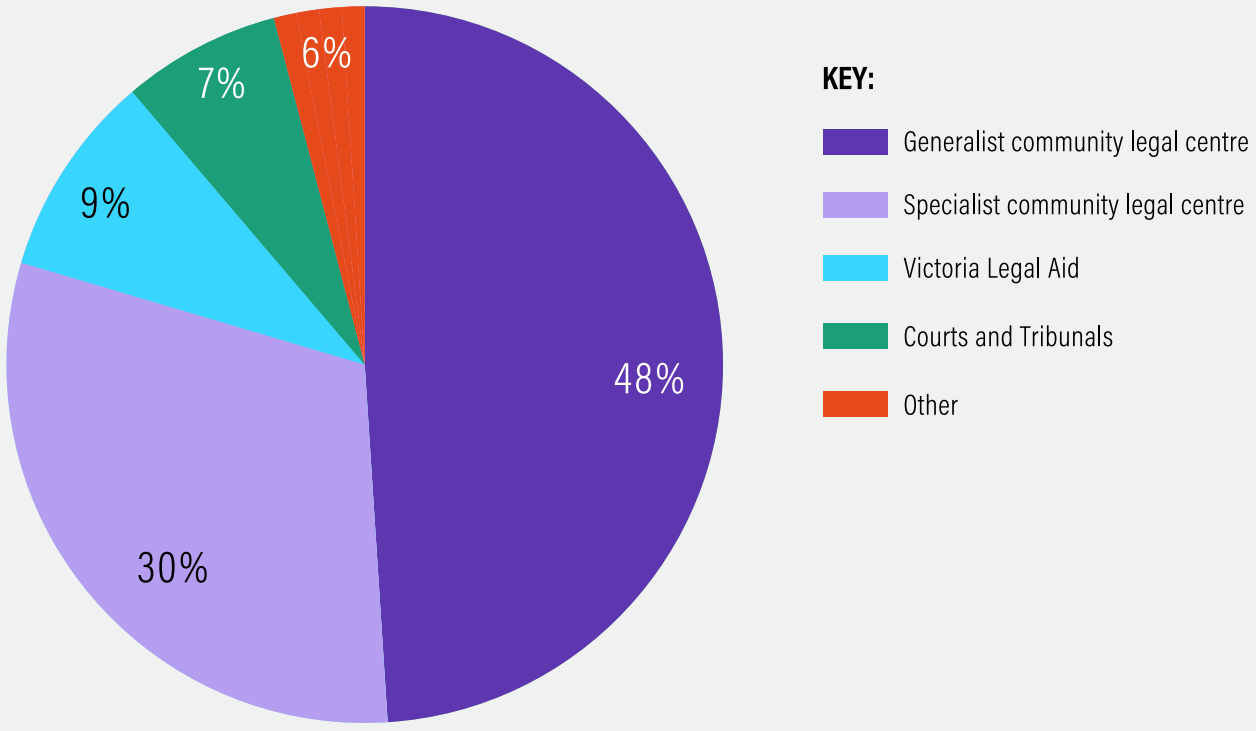
This chapter summarises responses from the online survey on the 66 initiatives submitted by 31 organisations.

Types of organisations

Most organisations that participated were public legal assistance service providers, submitting 58 of the 66 initiatives (87%, see Figure 1). There were 32 initiatives submitted by generalist community legal centres, 20 by specialist community legal centres, and six from Victoria Legal Aid. Courts and tribunals submitted five. The remaining initiatives were submitted by one community organisation, one independent statutory body, one private law firm, and one legal technology company.[63]

Eleven organisations submitted more than one initiative; these eleven made up 71 per cent (N = 47) of the total number of submitted initiatives.

FIGURE 1 | Types of organisations that submitted a survey response



63 Note that the N = 67 for the type of participant organisations, and 66 for initiatives. This is due to two partners for one initiative making a joint submission.

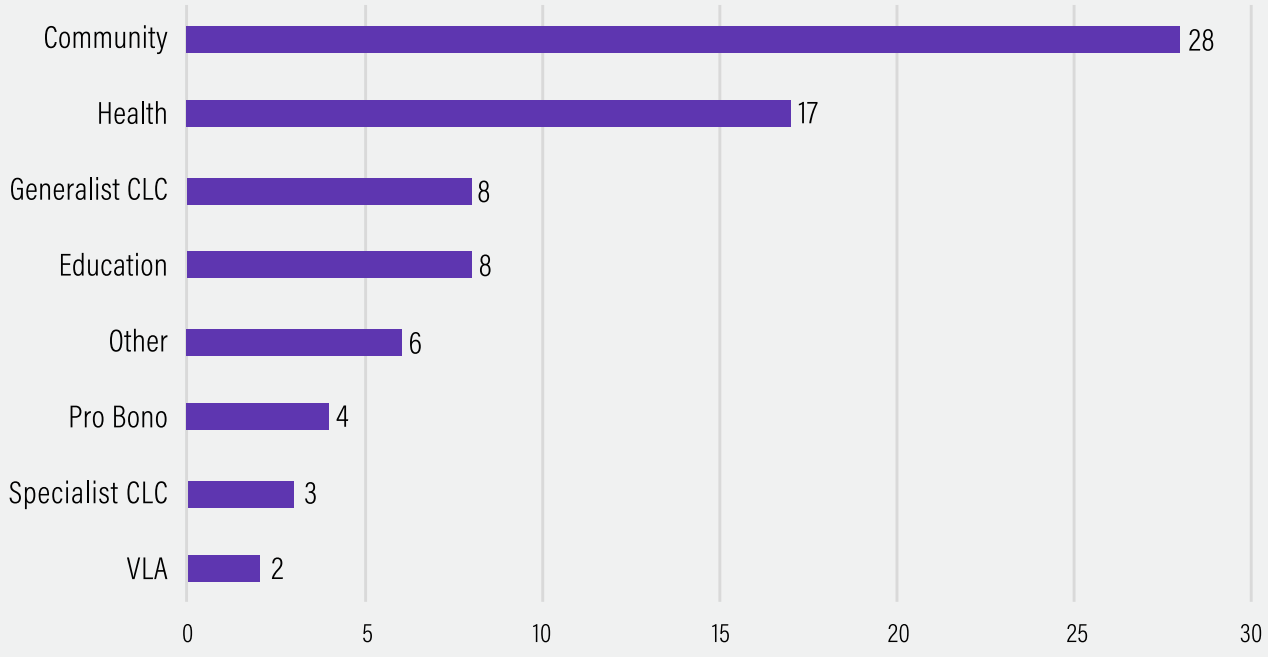
Partners

Nearly two-thirds of the initiatives submitted (N = 43, 65%) were collaborations with one or more external partners. Of initiatives with a collaborating partner, 25 (58%) listed more than one partner, and ten (23%) listed more than two partners.[64]

The most frequently reported types of partner organisations were:

- Community organisations were reported as partners in 28 initiatives, predominantly (79%) by community legal centres.
- Health organisations were partners in 17 initiatives, with more than half being reported by generalist community legal centres (N = 11).
- Generalist community legal centres were partners in eight initiatives, most commonly with other generalist community legal centres (N = 4).
- Education organisations were partners in eight initiatives, again, most commonly with generalist community legal centres (N = 4).
- Other partners reported for the remaining 15 initiatives included law firms (e.g. pro bono partners), specialist community legal centres, Victoria Legal Aid, as well as government and named individuals.

FIGURE 2 | Overview of partnerships by the number of initiatives



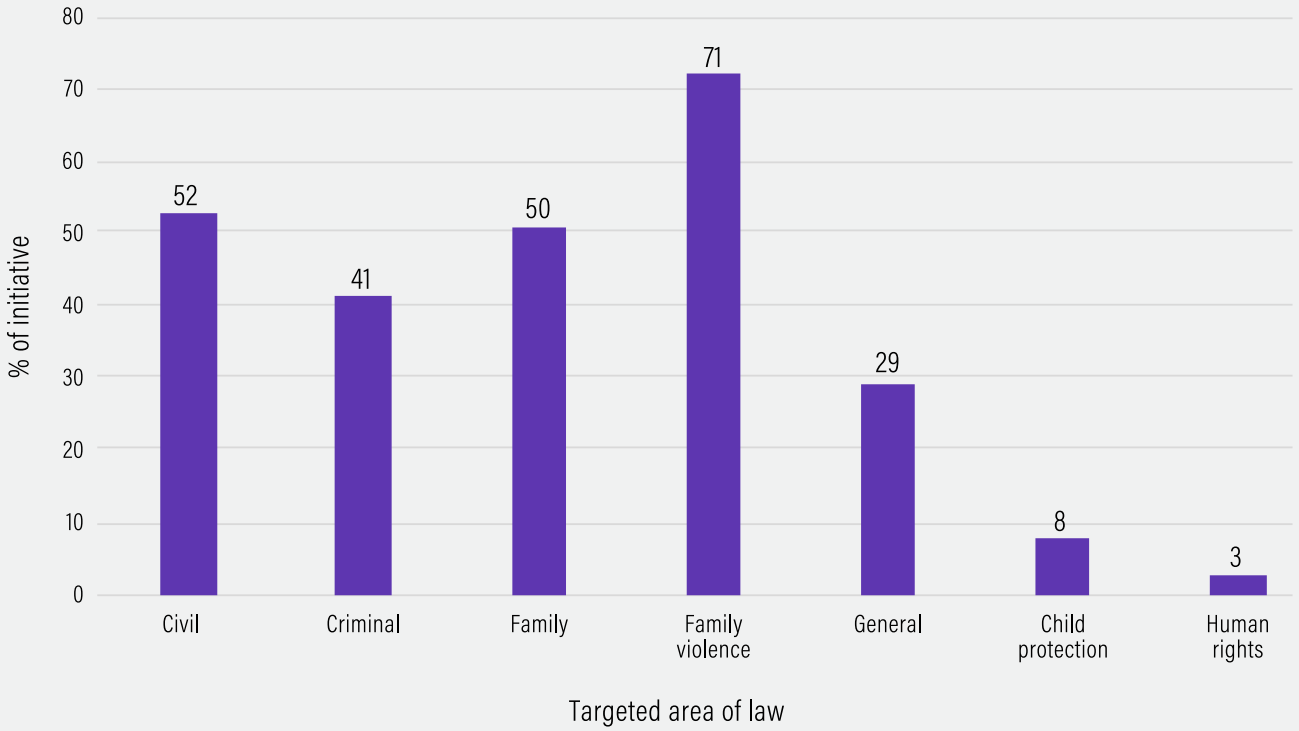
64 Total number of reported partners (N = 76) exceeds the number of submitted initiated (N = 66) as initiatives commonly reported more than one partner. 'Other' included local government/councils, government departments, and independent named individuals.

Area of law

The survey asked participants to specify the broad area or areas of law each initiative targeted. Multiple areas of law could be specified for each initiative. Most of the initiatives (71%) involved family violence, followed by civil law (52%), family law (50%), criminal law (41%), and general legal (29%).[65] In response to the open-ended other category for this question, child protection (8%) and human rights law (3%) were the most common.

Figure 3 reports the percentage of initiatives involving different areas of law reported for the 66 submitted initiatives.[66]

FIGURE 3 | Area of law by percentage of initiatives



Target cohorts and legal matters

Most of the submitted initiatives were designed to respond to either a specific cohort of people or area of law. Initiatives that responded to both were common.

Twenty-one (32%) initiatives targeted a specific cohort, often cohorts identified as facing elevated rates of legal need. Twelve initiatives targeted young people, four targeted migrant and refugee women, and two supported people living in rented housing.

Several initiatives were targeted for fine-grained cohorts and legal matters. Participants explained that this stemmed from observed gaps between legal assistance services and legal needs, for example, for sex workers or public housing residents. Some initiatives were targeted to fill service gaps or otherwise complement existing services and practices.

65 General legal typically involves multiple areas of law and/or legal processes.

66 Note that reported percentages are based on the total number of submitted initiatives (N=66) and that each initiative could involve more than one area of law.

Nineteen (29%) initiatives were designed for a specific legal matter or circumstance. Nine of these initiatives focused on family violence, with child protection, climate-related disaster, and employment problems the subjects of others.

Twenty (30%) initiatives were designed with both cohort and legal matters in mind. Most of these initiatives were focused on family violence matters amongst specific target cohorts, such as migrant and refugee women, expecting or new mothers, or court users. Other initiatives were designed for specific cohorts, such as for renters to address rental matters, older people concerning elder abuse, or young people with fines.

The survey asked participants to identify the cohorts that initiatives were intended to assist. Table 1 reports the cohorts for the submitted initiatives. Note once again, multiple cohorts could be reported for each initiative.

TABLE 1: Target cohort(s) as identified by organisations

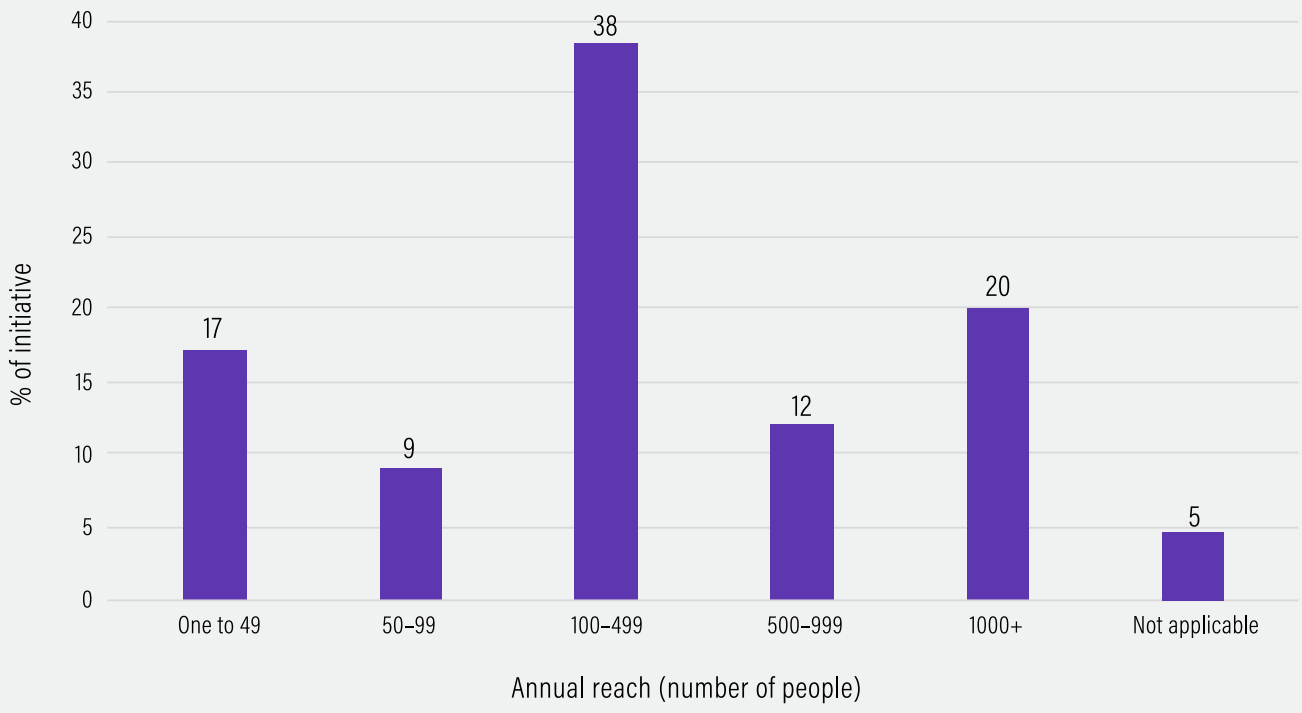
Target client group	N	% of all initiatives
People experiencing, or at risk of, family violence	41	62
People experiencing, or at risk of, financial disadvantage	30	46
Culturally and linguistically diverse people	28	42
People experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness	26	39
Children and young people	26	39
People experiencing, or at risk of, other forms of disadvantage	24	36
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people	23	35
People with a disability	22	33
Recent arrivals or asylum seekers	20	30
Single parents or carers	19	29
People living with mental illness	19	29
People residing in regional, rural, or remote areas	18	27
Victoria (statewide)	17	26
People with low education levels	17	26
LGBTIQA+ people	16	24
Older people	10	15
People affected by climate change	5	8

Reach

Estimated people per year

Survey participants were asked about the reach of their initiatives. Submitted initiatives most frequently (38%) assisted an estimated 100–499 people annually. However, nearly one-third (32%) of initiatives were larger in reach. One-fifth of the initiatives submitted were estimated to assist more than 1,000 people each year. A similar percentage (17%) had a much smaller reach, estimated to reach up to 49 people a year (see Figure 4).[67]

FIGURE 4 | Estimated number of people assisted annually, per initiative



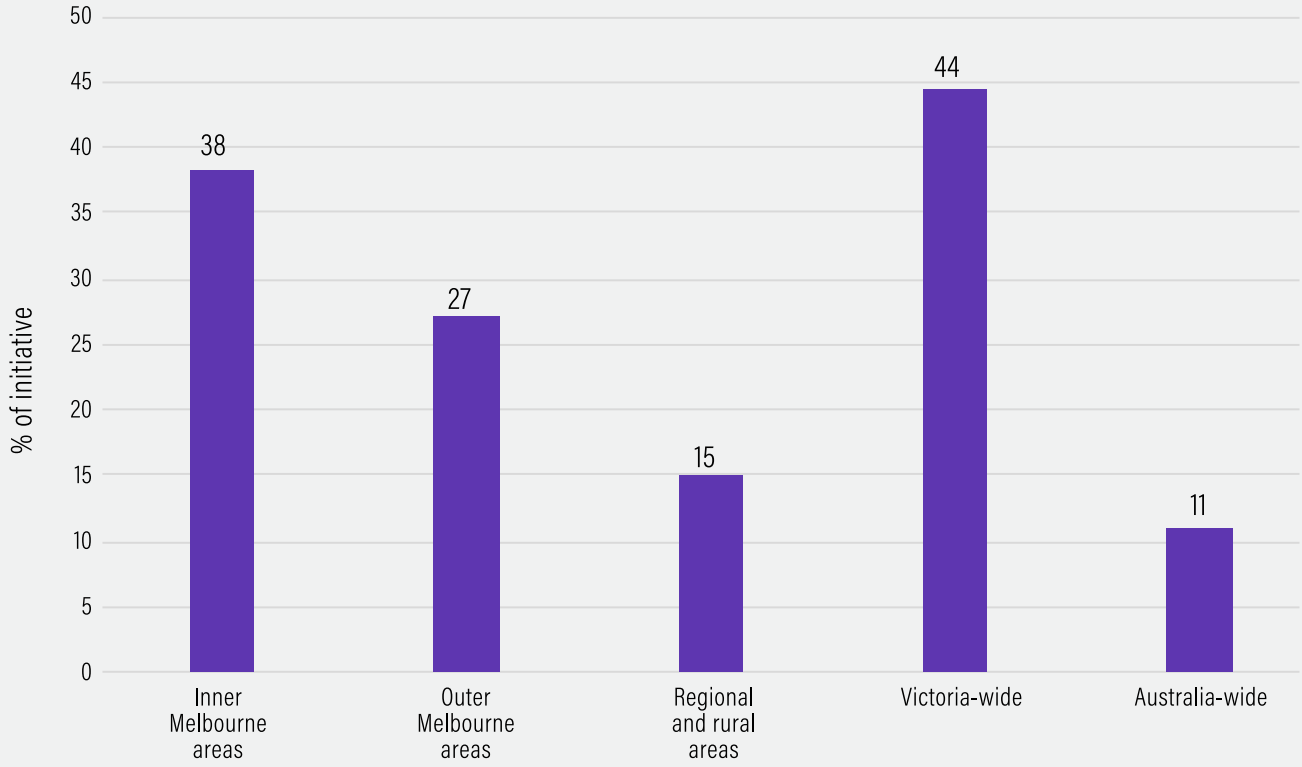
Geography

Participants were also asked about the geographic coverage or reach of each initiative. Several initiatives covered more than one geographic area, and some participants selected overlapping areas (such as national and statewide) to emphasise the multiple focus points of their coverage. Most frequently (44%), initiatives operated across Victoria, followed by 38 per cent targeted to inner Melbourne areas, 27 per cent in outer Melbourne areas, 15 per cent to regional and rural Victorian areas, and 11 per cent reached Australia-wide (see Figure 5).[68]

67 Percentages do not tally to 100 due to rounding. Note further that some initiatives served individuals, communities and organisations, such as where secondary consultations were a feature of initiative. This could consequently bring up estimated reach further.

68 Percentages are derived from the 66 submitted initiatives. As participants could select more than one category, percentages do not tally to 100 per cent.

FIGURE 5 | Geographic reach of initiatives



Status and duration

Sixty-four of the 66 submitted initiatives (97%) were still operating at the time of the survey, with one initiative noting that it was currently paused due to a lack of funding. One initiative was completed, and another was not operating because funding had come to an end. It was not uncommon for participants to explain how initiatives had changed over time, including reductions in operations and scope due to reduced funding.

One of the eligibility criteria was that initiatives had to have been operational for at least six months. Just under half of the initiatives were operating between six months and five years, with a similar proportion in operation for between five and ten years. The remainder, less than five per cent, were operating for more than ten years.

Funding

The survey also asked open-ended questions about the initiative's funding, including the number of funders, initial and current funders, and whether core funding was involved. Participants described funding sources in a range of ways, and responses demonstrated inconsistencies in what was understood as core funding. For example, core funding variously comprised a range of sources of government funding, including but not limited to the National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP) (now the National Access to Justice Partnership), the National Partnership on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence, and other funding from Commonwealth and Victorian government programs. Secondary analysis was used to regroup the categories of funders, however, the analysis of funding sources remains an approximation.

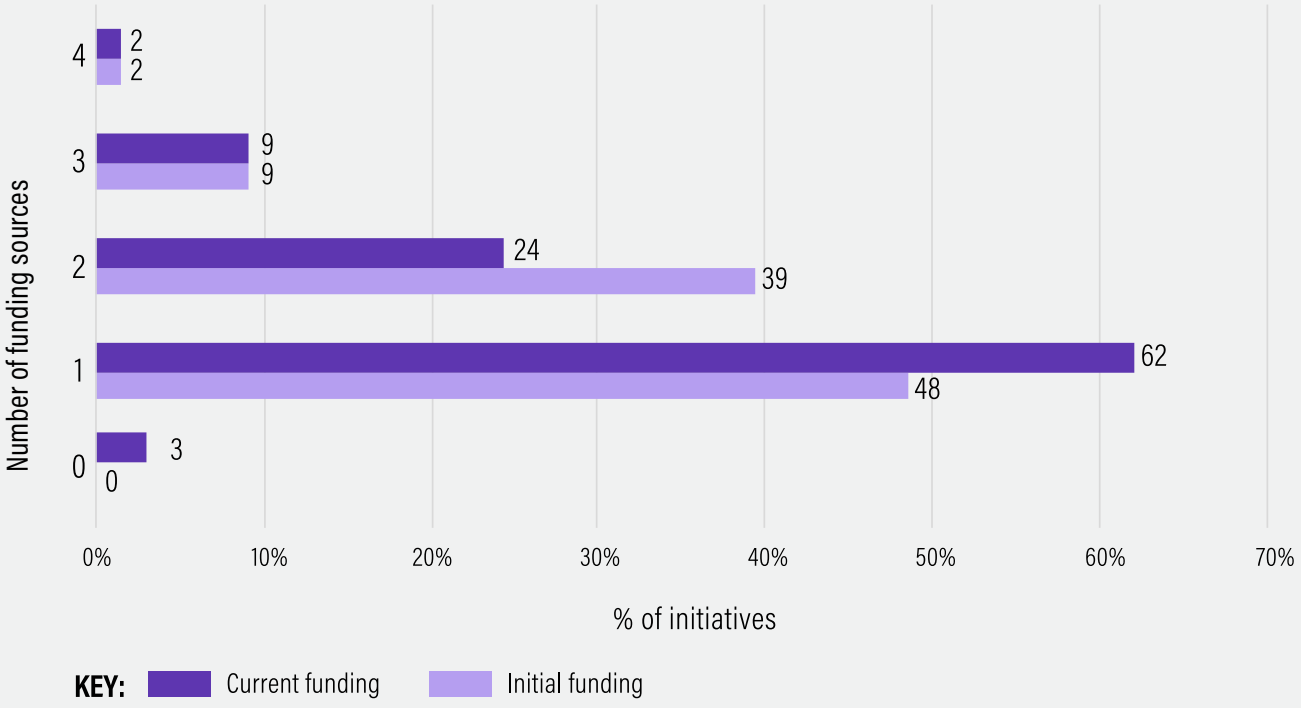
Participants reported a variety of government funding beyond the NLAP, including funding programs administered by federal and state government departments. This included funding through programs and projects administered by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services, and the Victorian Departments of Families, Fairness and Housing; Premier and Cabinet; and Justice and Community Safety; as well as Emergency

Recovery Victoria. Other sources of funding reported included universities, charities, fundraising, and donations.

Initiatives tended to have more funding sources when they started. Most initiatives (52%) initially relied on more than one funding source (see Figure 6). A sizable proportion (11%) had three or four sources of funding. The most common funding combinations were various sources of Commonwealth and Victorian Government funding, grants made by trusts and foundations, most commonly the Victorian Legal Service Board + Commissioner and the Victoria Law Foundation (VLF), and a few other direct funding, such as donations when they started.

Funding circumstances had generally changed over time. While initiatives with a combination of three or four sources of funding continued to operate in that way, the proportion of initiatives relying on one source of funding increased (up from 48% to 62%), with a corresponding decrease in the number that had two sources (down from 39% to 24%). As detailed above, there were two initiatives (3%) that were not funded either because the project was completed or was no longer funded at the time of the survey.

FIGURE 6 | Number of funding sources, initial and current



Looking further at how sources of funding had changed, there was some indication of a drift from non-government grant funding to core funding. Around half of the initiatives initially involved funding from non-government grants, including Victorian Legal Service Board + Commissioner, the VLF, and philanthropic bodies, whereas only about a quarter of the initiatives currently received non-government grants.

The use of core funding also changed over time, with approximately 30 per cent of initiatives initially involving core funding and some 40 per cent currently applying it.

When funding runs out

All funding sources other than core funding, including program and project funding, tended to be time-limited. In their survey responses, many organisations explained that initiatives often had to navigate funding changes, including managing extension of funding, moving to core funding, or obtaining new sources. Sometimes initiatives had to be modified or scaled down, or else suspended or discontinued.

For ten initiatives (15%) this had already occurred, with steps taken to reduce the scope of the initiative, or redirect other funding to keep initiatives alive when time-limited

program funding expired. In some instances, initiatives were paused or discontinued pending subsequent grant applications and obtaining other funding.

It was common that initiatives had initially been funded as a result of government policy commitments such as the Victorian Government's Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTQIA+ Strategy (2022–2032), or the Commonwealth Attorney-General's National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians (Elder Abuse) 2019–2023. Participants explained that it was usually unclear what the long-term future of such programs was, and that it was common for some policy programs to be continued, and others to stop.

Barriers

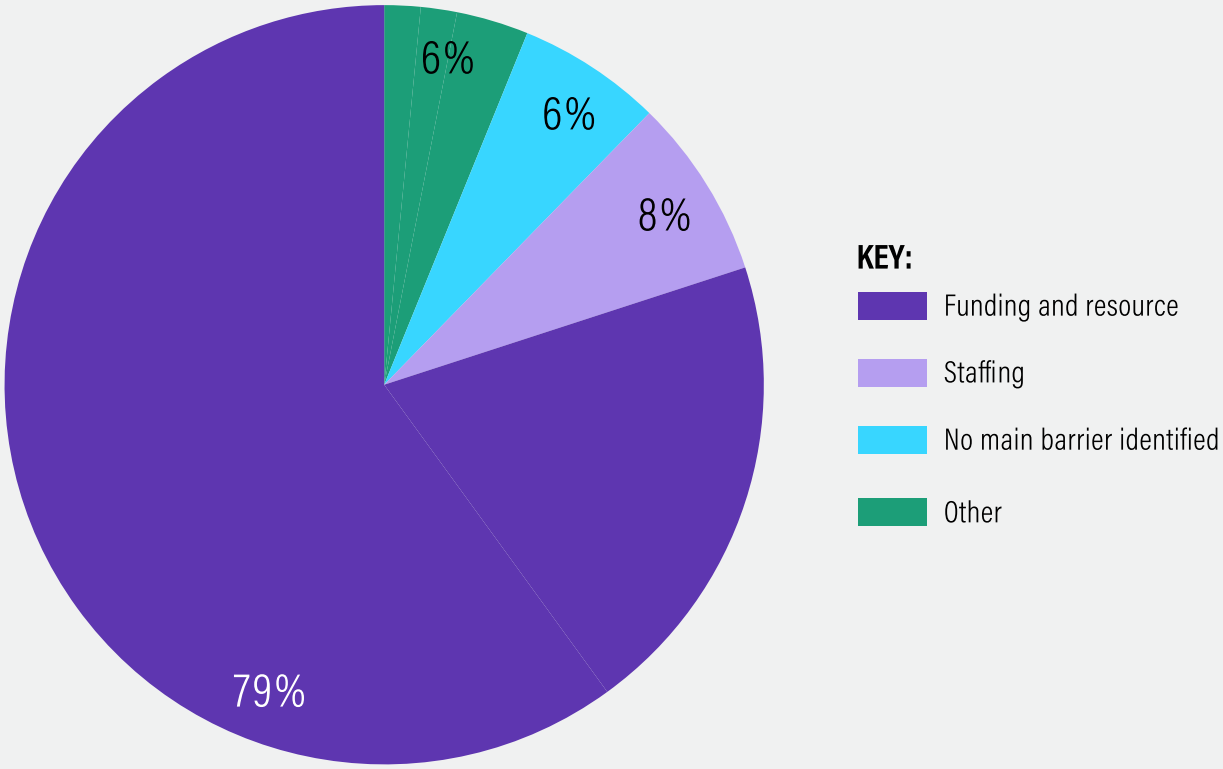
Participants were asked an open-ended question about what, if any, barriers stopped them from doing what they would like with the initiative, such as reaching target clients, scaling up, or expanding to new service areas, legal problems, or cohorts. They were also asked to identify the most significant barrier to the initiative's current or future success.

Participants commonly cited a wide range of barriers to their initiatives. However, when it came to the most significant barrier to current or future success, funding and resourcing issues were overwhelmingly cited. For 79 per cent of initiatives, funding and resources were identified as the most significant barriers (see Figure 7). Funding and resources included external and internal barriers, such as obtaining external funding and resource allocation to the initiative, given other competing organisational priorities.

The next most frequently identified barrier was staffing issues (8%). While often related to funding and resources, staffing barriers also include recruitment and retention. For example, some participants noted that being short-staffed affected what and who the initiative was able to help, such as where there were insufficient staff to accept referrals or reach out to certain target cohorts.

Other barriers identified by participants included technology, awareness and promotion of the initiative, and having to navigate internal and partner operational approval processes. For the remaining six per cent of initiatives, participants reported that there wasn't a main barrier, but rather a confluence of significant barriers.

FIGURE 7 | Most significant barriers to initiative success



5 | Exploring what works: Operationalising people-centred justice

Introduction

This chapter reports findings from the project's thematic analysis. Through 66 survey responses and 23 follow-up interviews, research participants communicated what they saw as making a difference in their efforts to develop justice practices and services attuned to the diverse needs of individuals and communities.

An inductive thematic analysis was undertaken on the qualitative data. The analysis identified common elements across the data that participants recognised as enablers and drivers of success (in all its forms), and, to some extent, the sustainability of initiatives.

This chapter explores each element that was identified through the analysis, with practical examples illustrating their real-world operation. Brought together, these key elements are represented in our People-Centred Justice Model.

Starting from the outer ring of the model, the chapter outlines the common themes as defined at the Foundations, moves onto the elements at the Initiative Level, and finishes with the elements at the Individual Level. Each section outlines the dominant themes from the analysis of the material, along with any operational challenges reported by study participants.

A People-Centred Justice Model

Together, the common elements are represented in what we have termed a People-Centred Justice Model. While the project survey and interviews did not explicitly frame questions in the language of people-centred justice, both the survey and interview instrument were designed using a framework from people-centred justice literature (see more on this in Chapter 1).

In addition, the terminology we have chosen for these elements (e.g. embedding capability) is not necessarily representative of the language participants used. Rather, the elements reflect the authors' approach of bringing together common examples from participants and capturing their shared traits under an umbrella term. For example, embedding capability incorporates many examples from participants who spoke to a variety of implementation approaches centred on improving legal knowledge, skills, boosting confidence, and upskilling help-seekers or legal and allied staff.

As an exploratory model, this framework brings together common elements that participants identified as making a difference in meeting legal need. It is hoped that this framework may inform or guide legal services, allied organisations, funding bodies, and researchers who aim to design, reflect on, or evaluate how person-centred justice might practically be achieved.

It is important that it was beyond the scope of this project to interview the help-seekers who used or engaged with these initiatives. Further research, including empirical research with legal help-seekers, is needed to evaluate initiatives and their mechanisms of success in meeting legal need.

The People-Centred Justice Model outlines common elements at three levels:

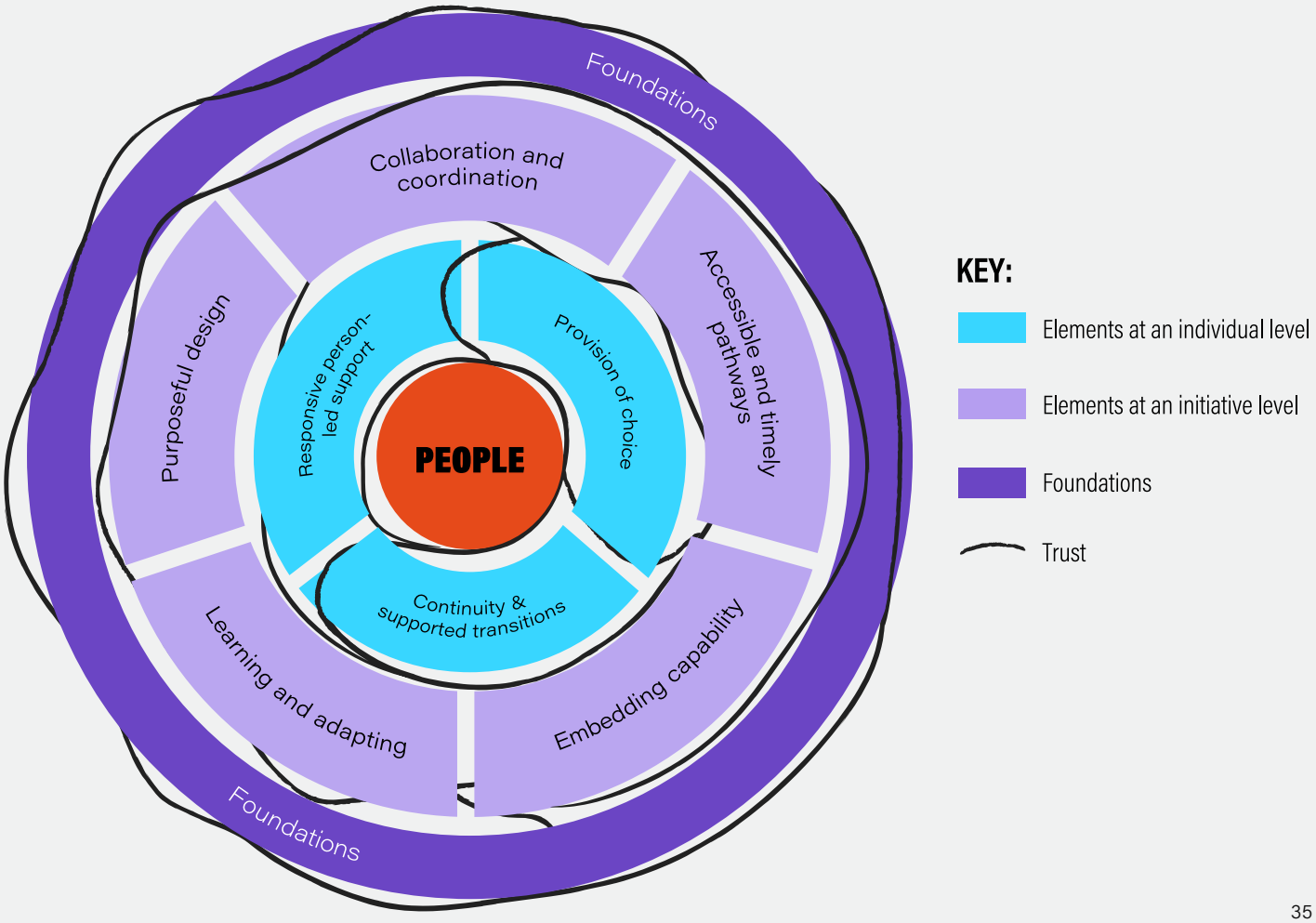
- The foundations level, which outlines the common foundational supports identified for initiating and maintaining the initiatives. The five dominant themes at this level were:
  - Alignment with purpose, values, and strategy
  - Leadership, trust, and culture
  - Right people
  - Technology and digital infrastructure
  - Funding.

- The initiative level, which outlines the common enablers identified for designing and implementing justice initiatives for specific communities and/or legal needs. The five elements at this level were:
  - Purposive design
  - Collaboration and coordination
  - Accessible and timely pathways
  - Embedding capability
  - Learning and adapting.
- The individual level, which outlines common ways in which participants tailored initiatives to improve the overall experience for individual help-seekers. The three dominant elements at this level were:
  - Responsive, person-led support
  - Provision of choice
  - Continuity and supported transitions.

As can be seen in Figure 8 below, trust surfaced as a dominant theme at all levels throughout the analysis. For this reason, it is visually represented as a connecting thread, overlapping and interlinking across all levels and elements of the People-Centred Justice Model. The building of trust was regularly cited as critical to perceptions of initiative success and sustainability; between professionals, organisations and services; between professionals and services working with individuals and communities; and with broader perceptions of trustworthiness of the justice system and the role of lawyers. In this model, trust can be understood as a virtuous cycle to be curated, cultivated, and resourced.

At the centre of this model are the people justice is meant to serve.

FIGURE 8 | People-Centred Justice Model



Elements that interconnect and overlap

While presented separately in the model, the analysis found that the elements of what works were often interconnected. Different elements did not operate in isolation but were shaped and in turn shaped by one another.

Taken together, the elements represent the valued attributes that participants variously saw as effective, efficient, or otherwise beneficial in meeting people's legal needs, fostering accessible pathways and relationships, or building agency and capability. This analysis is discussed in further detail in Chapter 6.

Participants were often discussing initiatives that operated in iterative and adaptive ways, as shaped by the environmental circumstances and wider policy, funding, and operational context. As might be expected, beyond their commonalities, there was variation in the precise make-up of elements among individual initiatives. Analysis also indicated variation in the intensity and resourcing of each element, rather than a specific formula.

Model elements can best be understood as spectrums rather than fixed categories, with participants describing various ways initiatives operated in practice. What emerged from the analysis were examples that reflected a continuum of characteristics. Elements ranged from low-resource, lighter-touch examples, often enabling greater reach and response to broader need, to high-resource, more intensive and comprehensive examples servicing a smaller pool of more complex clients and users with intersecting needs.

For example, from the initiative level of the model, the collaboration and coordination element spans from informal, cross-organisational relationships to formal accountability mechanisms between partners. The accessible and timely pathways element ranges from passive availability to proactive and ongoing outreach efforts. The learning and adapting element could range from identifying problem trends through administrative data to conducting full project evaluations to embed learnings and improve future delivery.

It was beyond the scope of analysis to quantify or measure each element. The elements identified in the analysis were not equally prominent in every interview or survey response. As such, the study does not address questions of necessity or sufficiency, or attempt to apportion contribution to success in meeting legal need. Rather, this study identifies common elements from the information collected, explores participants' perspectives of what contributed to effective practice across various initiatives and why they were valued as ingredients of what works. As will be discussed in Chapter 7, further research will be required to explore these questions.

The foundations level

Achieving successful design and delivery of new initiatives that go beyond business as usual, as most participants described their initiatives, comes with risk. Channelling often limited resourcing into a new idea or service can carry uncertainty surrounding potential success or failure. Participants suggested several themes that could reduce these risks, giving initiatives the best chance of success. This section outlines the common themes that participants described as foundations of their initiative's success.

Five themes were identified and discussed at an organisational or initiative level: alignment with purpose, value and strategy leadership, trust and culture; right people; technology and digital infrastructure; and funding.

A high number of participants pointed to these themes as being critical to getting new justice initiatives off the ground, maintaining the momentum of the work, and, where possible, sustaining results or even supporting the work to flourish and expand. Challenges for maintaining several of these foundational themes were also commonly identified by participants and are explored below.

Alignment with purpose, values, and strategy

> … as a Community Legal Centre, you're always looking for ways of how you can open up access and help people access legal advice and legal services, and break down any barriers to those legal services.[69]

For many initiatives, alignment with broader organisational purpose, values, and strategy was vital in creating opportunities to better respond to the legal and related needs of those they sought to serve. Southside Justice's **Sex Worker Legal Program** was one such initiative that highlighted the importance of this alignment in their work. Participants described how their actions were aligned across the initiative and the broader organisation, ensuring consistency in the organisation as responsive to and advocating for their community.

69 As discussed in Chapter 2, all quotes across Chapters 5 and 6, unless directly attributed to the literature, are participants' anonymous responses to the research survey and interviews.

Given the high proportion of initiatives engaged in collaboration, alignment of values and strategy could also span across organisations. Many initiatives pointed to shared values as important for working. Hume Riverina Community Legal Service's (Hume Riverina CLS) **Overcoming the Invisible Hurdles for Justice for Young People (Invisible Hurdles)** identified a strong focus on shared values between partner organisations across the education, Aboriginal health, and family violence sectors as critical to the initiative being able to improve outcomes for young people experiencing disadvantage.

Organisations involved in Gippsland Community Legal Service's (GCLS) **Clean Slates Health Justice Partnership** also demonstrated shared values, strategic alignment, service commitment and stability, which helped to resolve legal problems impacting people's mental health and wellbeing.

Leadership, trust and culture

> There's a real culture here of, what's the practical solution … not, what's best for us, not what's easy, not what's going to fit within budget … What's going to be the most practical way of helping people? …We talk about breaking down barriers. What does that mean? What's the actual act of doing that? … Being accessible to people … what does that practically look like? And there's just a really big culture of that, and whatever you have to do to achieve that, you're encouraged to do quite actively by management.

Many participants described the importance of being open to exploring new ways of working as underpinning their initiatives' success. Organisational leadership and trust were widely described as essential to this approach. In many cases, the decision to try something new came with uncertainty. Several participants touched on the support leadership provided to enable new initiatives to overcome this uncertainty.

Staff involved in the Fitzroy Legal Service (FLS) **Yarra Health Justice Partnership (Yarra HJP)** identified that the initiative benefited from active engagement and encouragement from leadership, who championed targeted ways to respond and improve service access for local communities. For Eastern Community Legal Centre's (ECLC) **Mabels** project, the early involvement of internal and partner leadership signalled strong joint support for multidisciplinary approaches to meet needs arising from family violence.

Opportunities to table ideas for new initiatives at the organisational level were frequently identified by respondents as a key enabler. For example, a culture of flexibility and willingness to try new approaches was central in the Neighbourhood Justice Centre's (NJC) initiative to implement a **Young Adult List (YA List)**, which was informed by similar approaches in overseas jurisdictions. Drawing upon the existing strengths of the NJC's therapeutic justice approach, the initiative also fostered a ground-up environment that enabled the sharing and discussion of trialling new responses to trends at court.

Support and trust from management and partners were common factors among many of the initiatives. For Lander & Rogers' **Small Claims Large Battles (Small Claims)**, leadership from each partner was actively engaged in brainstorming the initiative, increasing awareness and understanding of the initiative's purpose, and strengthening organisational commitment.

The active engagement of leadership was also seen to support the viability of initiatives, and what is required to get an initiative beyond startup and piloting. This was exemplified by the **Family Law Capacity Building Program (FL Capacity Building Program)** run by Women's Legal Service Victoria (WLSV), which was seen as helping the organisation's longer-term vision.

Organisational changes were frequently identified by participants as shaping the ongoing operation of initiatives in critical ways. For example, changes in leadership and strategic priority could substantially affect operations, in addition to perceptions of value and success. This was also relevant to partnership arrangements, where changes could result in a shift away from long-standing or previously agreed expectations between organisations or the withdrawal of services entirely. As one participant commented on the withdrawal of a partnering organisation:

> … some changes in their leadership meant their connection to the program changed and from their perspective, their ability to respond in that space was limited.

Right people

> You've just got to find the right type of person … that has that … passion and ability.

Passion

The people implementing and operating initiatives, and their passion to make a difference, were cited as an important driving force for many of the initiatives studied. Both the leadership and staff involved in on-the-ground service delivery embodied this passion and commitment. In fact, as noted in the Methodology, passion and commitment are likely to have had a role in survey submissions.

Victorian legal assistance services have been found to attract values-driven staff.[70] Initiatives such as Legal Tech Helper's (LTH) and Mental Health Legal Centre's (MHLC) **Smart Self Help to Empower Families in Mental Health Law (Smart Self Help)** and Northern Community Legal Centre's (Northern CLC) **The Safe Landing Project** specifically identified staff passion as a driver in establishing initiatives, and also in commitment to building evidence for monitoring and learning. Further, participants from Victoria Legal Aid's (VLA) **Help Before Court** initiative explained that positive feedback from people accessing legal help indicated the utility and effectiveness, which in turn supported staff commitment, drive, and satisfaction.

This was also a feature where initiatives relied on volunteers. Some participants noted that volunteers were important in providing support to end users. This commitment was exemplified by the volunteers of **Independent Third Person**, run by the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA). These volunteers often travelled long distances to support people with intellectual or mental disabilities during police interviews, which could occur at all hours.

Recruitment and retention

Recruitment of staff with specific skill sets was another enabling factor in initiatives that were seen as successful, especially for those more multidisciplinary or integrated projects. Here, participants pointed to the right set of personality, expertise, knowledge and skills to support effective integrated practice, such as where the roles of lawyers and other professional staff intersect.

This was the case for independent child consultants employed in VLA's **Family Dispute Resolution Service's Kids Talk Program**, who needed to engage with and build understanding for both young children and parents/caregivers involved in family dispute resolution. Staff noted that the child consultants' expertise was essential in connecting with the young children and facilitating their participation. Other initiatives, including Youthlaw's **Ballarat Health Justice Partnership service (Ballarat Youthlaw HJP)** and Hume Riverina CLS's **Invisible Hurdles**, highlighted the importance of employing lawyers able to engage and connect with the target users, who were young people in both initiatives here.

Some participants suggested that the more responsive and flexible an initiative was, the more difficult it was to train new staff its approach. For instance, one participant explained that establishing rapport with key stakeholders required knowledge, experience, and building trust, all of which took time to develop.

Retention also affected operation and sustainability. Participants pointed to retention strategies as important, such as recognition and investment in staff mental health and wellbeing, training, and other supports. For example, supporting staff to manage challenging behaviours, complex issues, and reducing occupational violence was a key concern raised within the **Q+Law** initiative. The adoption of trauma-informed practices, including the management of vicarious trauma, was widely noted by staff and volunteers working in the FLS's **Yarra HJP**, OPA's **Independent Third Person**, and ECLC's **Strengthening Intake Quality and Data Insights (Data Insights)** initiatives.

Finally, many participants commented on the level of resourcing required to build the knowledge, skills, and confidence to deliver successful initiatives. Time, funding, people, expertise, and commitment all contributed to the capacity and capability within justice and other social services involved in these initiatives. However, changes or fluctuations in any of these areas impacted both the capacity of the workforce involved in delivering the initiative and the people and communities in need of these services. As one respondent commented, the lack of training or service capacity to respond could compromise the community's ability to access help, which undermines confidence and trust in the system.

70 See Kutin et al. (2022).

Technology and digital infrastructure

Availability and access to up-to-date digital infrastructure and other technology were also important for initiatives using remote or online service delivery. This could be achieved through investment to build internally, as was the case for Justice Connect, in providing the **Digital Consumer Outreach Program (DCOP)** and **Dear Landlord** initiatives. Other initiatives, such as the LTH and MHLC's **Smart Self Help Tool**, accessed the requisite infrastructure through collaborative or partner arrangements, as further discussed at the initiative level: collaboration and coordination.

Funding

> With the funding circumstances, there's multiple projects going that all contribute to that integrated practice … so it really is a tapestry of funding, of projects …

Above all else, participants often explained that the funding context and arrangements were the most salient factor in determining what, when and how, and ultimately, whether an initiative could be delivered.

Participants explained that securing, reporting, and sustaining funding was a perennial challenge. As reported in Chapter 4, nearly all (79%) initiatives identified funding as a critical factor and the main barrier to continuing and extending initiative operation. Initiatives often had multiple sources of initial funding (52%), but this was reduced over time, with 62 per cent having one source of funding when surveyed. Several were no longer operating due to a lack of funding, with another 15 per cent having to redirect funding or shrink the scope of operation to continue the initiative.

Participants explained how competitive funding processes could affect relationships with partners and stakeholders, and how project-based and other funding sources had to be juggled to continue successful initiatives. One participant likened the funding of their one initiative to a tapestry of multiple, individually funded projects, each with their own data and reporting requirements. Often, as funding arrangements came to an end, efforts to secure alternate funding increased.

Funding was especially challenging in the context of operationalising integrated or cross-sector initiatives, where there were differences in perceptions of value and subsequently funding eligibility for legal and non-legal components of projects. For example, the contributions of social work support were seen as vital for one initiative, but wrap-around support was not factored into funding. Provision of in-kind or internal resourcing was one avenue adopted by some initiatives to overcome these issues.

> … legal teams often get funding and grow, increasing demand on non-legal services, but the non-legal funding does not get increased simultaneously, with some funding explicitly precluding allocation to non-legal staff.

Funding inequity was also identified for initiatives reliant on collaboration or partnership arrangements. Services with larger resource pools or secure long-term funding had greater potential to contribute to the collaboration, whereas smaller services or those facing funding uncertainty had less scope and capacity. This resulted in the adoption of more cautious and considered approaches by some smaller services in determining what was feasible. This also had the potential to create a power differential between collaborating services, presenting risks to the development of confidence and trust if not managed appropriately.

Participants also noted a lack of funding opportunities to support data collection, monitoring, and evaluation activities, as well as improvements in data quality. Without dedicated funding, internal resourcing constraints can be a barrier to implementing better data collection or outcomes measurement practices. This resulted in growing wish lists for more robust evidence than the anecdotal feedback many organisations can collect with existing capacity. As one participant commented:

> It's very hard to go out to government or philanthropics and say, 'hey, can you give us money for doing data analysis?' because they're going to go, 'oh no we want to,' but they would rather prioritise direct services.

Elements at the initiative level

Having described the organisational foundations required to create an environment for effective access to justice interventions, this section discusses the common elements that participants referenced as strong features of their initiatives.

This section is grouped under five elements: purposive design, collaboration and coordination, accessible and timely pathways, embedding capability, and learning and adapting. Together, these elements represent the dominant themes in participants' descriptions of what made their initiative work to meet legal need. Where relevant, challenges reported by participants in the design, delivery, or data-related aspects of their initiatives are also captured within this section.

Each level of the People-Centred Justice Model is interconnected, and each element has an impact on the experiences of and outcomes for the people they serve. However, this section explores participants' perceptions of effective design, implementation, and adaptation of overall initiatives, rather than the decisions made at the individual level. Elements at the individual level are discussed in the following section.

Additionally, the interrelation between initiative elements is a deliberate feature of the model, and in particular, purposive design considerations overlap and interact with the other key initiative level elements. Some participating examples are therefore considered through multiple angles throughout the initiative-level discussions below.

Purposive design

Purposive design relates to the specific problem-solving agendas with which tailored justice initiatives were conceived. This element brings together two broad features of initiative design that participants described as important in countering the many aspects of the legal system that could be intimidating, inaccessible, or seem irrelevant to people experiencing legal problems or otherwise seeking justice.

Firstly, initiatives were designed to serve a community or group of people defined through a shared experience or challenge in accessing legal services. Secondly, the needs and experiences of these people were used to shape the initiative's design, whether through direct consultation or by learning from existing evidence. These features are explored in detail below, followed by a discussion of the common challenges participants raised regarding data and initiative reach.

Designed with community, for inclusion

> Nobody excluded, nobody left behind.

Several initiatives used community engagement and co-design practices as part of their design process to support initiatives that met the needs of their community. For example, West Heidelberg Community Legal (WHCL) **Making Space** staff found that clients would bring young children to their offices for legal appointments, who were often restless, or would cancel appointments if they had no alternative care options. They described using human-centred design workshops in the inception phase as an alternative to conventional design practices. They credited this process with helping them centre the distinct needs of clients and their children when considering the day-to-day aspects of the service.

Responding to the needs of another age cohort, Seniors Rights Victoria/Council on The Ageing (Victoria) (SRV) engaged in a consultative process to design their program to increase elder abuse awareness among older adults in the Deaf Community **Planning for the Future**. SRV explained that this enabled them to hone their messaging and deliver more accessible presentations when the program began. In ECLC's **Climate Justice and Disaster Recovery (Climate Justice)** work, planning and design were supported through staff engagement with local community networks, attendance at planning meetings, and engagement with local community houses. This provided opportunities for affected residents to receive information about ECLC's services, and for ECLC to identify and plan for future needs.

Other initiatives were co-designed with specific groups, such as the Southside Justice's **Sex Worker Legal Program**. Established in 2022 following the decriminalisation of sex work in Victoria, early discussions for the project centred on the need to engage directly with the sex worker community to ensure the initiative would meet their legal needs. Delivery of the initiative also recognised the importance of sex worker strengths, their expertise in self-advocacy, as well as their longstanding experiences of criminalisation, marginalisation, and stigmatisation. Overall, program staff were guided throughout the design by the principle that establishing a safe, inclusive, and non-judgmental service was the critical first step to addressing legal need. Co-design with Vixen (Victoria's peer sex worker organisation) helped Southside Justice to develop casework guidelines informed by sex workers' lived experience.

Designed to address barriers and inequalities

> … if we can improve or lift the floor for some of our most vulnerable community members, it benefits all communities.

Of the 66 initiatives submitted, a considerable number were designed to prevent legal problems or otherwise provide timely access to community legal education (CLE), information, and other self-help mechanisms such as online tools and resources.

There were also several examples of initiatives designed as early intervention projects for target cohorts experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage, such as Peninsula Community Legal Centre's (Peninsula CLC) **Street Law Coffee Van**, or those with precarious visa status, as with Northern CLC's **The Safe Landing Project**.

Initiatives such as inTouch Women's Legal Centre's **Legal Pathways to Recovery** legal education sessions, VLA's **Preventative education with at-risk young people (Preventative Education with YP)** and Justice Connect's **Safeguarding Now, Preventing Future Abuse (Safeguarding Now)** are examples of early intervention strategies. These initiatives typically worked with targeted cohorts identified at heightened risk of particular legal issues, to support their future capability and help-seeking skills. Other CLE initiatives, such as ECLC's **Consent, Cybercrimes and the Law education sessions** and Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's (VEOHRC) **Charter of Human Rights eLearning Modules**, sat more closely in the primary prevention space, designed to meet legal information needs at a whole-of-population level.

Some initiatives had also been designed to address the unequal power dynamics between different groups of people. A power imbalance between landlords and tenants was identified by participants from Anika Legal's **Repairs Service**, Tenants Victoria's **Repair Toolkit**, and Justice Connect's **Dear Landlord**. Unequal relationships between groups within the legal system were noted, such as newly arrived migrant women supported by WLSV and Northern CLC, or people serving prison sentences who received access to online legal information through FLS's **Prison Law Handbook**.

This approach was also observed in initiatives such as Hume Riverina CLS's **Invisible Hurdles**, which focused on the underlying problems that precede or exacerbate the impact of legal problems. Other initiatives sought to uncover underlying issues and inequalities in the way the law and legal services operated, such as Moonee Valley Legal Service's (MVLS) **Legal Concierge** initiative, which aimed to strengthen engagement pathways for marginalised communities. For example, staff from Barwon Community Legal Service's **Law for Life Skills** explained its design aimed to address the underlying drivers of crime and antisocial behaviour among young people, drawing on research and experience that emphasised community legal services in addressing the barriers to young people seeking legal assistance.

Participants also described initiatives being designed to respond to demand pressures, such as LTH and MHLC. Participants explained that the spike in requests for support from family and friends of people experiencing a mental health crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic led MHLC to work with LTH to design the **Smart Self-Help** tool. This online self-help tool provided clear, practical, and relevant information to friends, family, and carers, enabling MHLC to reserve its helpline for more urgent needs, such as assisting people in psychiatric wards.

Challenges

Identifying and connecting with underserved communities

> The two key barriers… are reaching suitable clients and having the staff capacity to engage them successfully.

Participants noted several challenges in establishing and maintaining initiatives that were tailored to cohorts and problems through purposive design. One challenge was identifying unmet legal need amongst cohorts that may not recognise the legal aspects of their circumstances.

This was a common challenge in several initiatives designed to meet young people's legal needs. Some initiatives sought to increase legal awareness and agency amongst young people, a cohort more likely to be over-represented and over-criminalised in the justice system. The same issues that increased their likelihood of experiencing a legal problem could also act as barriers to their receiving legal help.[71] Initiatives to provide legal help to young people were highlighted as an important way to overcome access barriers, including conducting outreach in concert with health or social workers.

71 Specific examples from participants included: young people from out-of-home care backgrounds; young people with experience of using violence in the home; and young Aboriginal people in the local community.

Being able to effectively reach people and communities most in need and then respond with the right legal expertise could be labour-intensive. As one participant noted, finding the right match within a service, even when staff resourcing was sufficient, could create bottlenecks and prolong waiting times.

Information and data on specific legal needs

While many initiatives were designed to target a specific legal need, several participants explained that they did not always have access to the right information to know they were effectively targeting those most in need. There was also interest in statewide and local area needs assessments, which identified intersectional experiences and issues rather than single-axis analyses. For example, participants explained that there were challenges associated with better understanding how contemporary issues such as family violence reforms, cost-of-living pressures, the housing crisis, and climate-related disasters had impacted their communities separately and in combination. Others explained how strengthened information and data, such as regular legal needs surveys and other specific population studies, would help overcome challenges and improve planning and decision-making.

More tailoring or more people?

> And the data is reflecting that… the more people are presenting with higher intersectional factors, the more complex the service ends up being.

Many initiatives described the trade-off between intensity of support and reach. Challenges at the design stage included allocating limited resources along a continuum, from providing more tailored support to a smaller cohort to reaching more people with lower-level support.

Initiatives that sought to address complex problems or low capability were likely to have higher resourcing needs, such as funding, people, and time, when compared with initiatives that targeted people with higher capability or more generalist legal problems. The trade-off to increase service flexibility was that initiatives provided fewer people with a higher level of assistance compared to initiatives that prioritised higher reach. One service reasoned that, due to resource constraints, lower reach was necessary to ensure their service model was not compromised. To account for this, they would prioritise cases where they identified a high level of risk and complexity. Staff acknowledged that this informal prioritisation would only become more difficult as demand for their service increased, particularly if funding remained scarce.

Collaboration and coordination

> You realise that [a] partnership approach allows you to build shared skills with our partners. Then…we're building skills as a professional team, and so we're getting better at what we do, which then supports women better, which then means we're working with women in a deeper, more effective way, and then learning more from them.

A feature of the initiatives was that many involved aspects of collaboration, and multidisciplinary and integrated practice. Participants explained the value and benefits of working collaboratively, either in partnerships or less formal arrangements, to build multifaceted solutions that better meet the multifaceted need of the people they aim to serve. As reported in Chapter 4, nearly two-thirds of initiatives (65%, N = 43) were delivered with one or more external partners, ranging from generalist or specialist Community Legal Centres (CLCs) to healthcare practices, community organisations, government departments, and even theatre performers.

Participants explained that decisions to collaborate with allied professionals,[72] services, and organisations were made for a range of reasons, including to reach and embed initiatives within communities; to understand and learn from key stakeholders; to centre the experience, expertise, and voices of those they were trying to help; and to provide a more holistic, person-centred experience for the individual.

Overwhelmingly, participants mentioned collaboration and coordination within and between organisations as key to strengthening the initiative. Participants also frequently pinpointed the collaborative element as a main indicator of success.

Collaborations were cited as beneficial for skill building; widening the accessibility, reach, or expertise of the service; understanding community needs and sensitivities; and reducing referral fatigue. Ultimately, where services came together to focus on a common interest, collaborative endeavours were often characterised as being people-centred and holistic.

Participants pointed to many aspects of collaboration and coordination that made for effective practice, with trust frequently identified as critical between partners, in

72 See Chapter 2 for explanation of allied professionals terminology.

creating effective ways of working together for initiatives to successfully reach and serve those people they are intended to help.

Different ways of collaborating

The initiatives that involved partnership and collaborative work did so in a range of ways. As other work has found, as levels of service vary in the intensity and form of assistance they provide, collaborative and partnership practice also varies.[73] For example, initiatives varied in the type of sectors that participated, the formality of arrangements, and governance.

Justice sector collaboration

> There's a strength that comes from place based CLCs providing good … law services to communities that they work in. And so I think there's [also] that thing about the role of a specialist that understands an area of law, to collaborate with CLCs to build capacity and capability to deliver more services in that area, and collectively, we address unmet legal need.

Within the justice sector, collaboration and partnerships occurred between publicly funded generalist and specialist legal assistance providers, as well as private pro bono law firms.

For public legal services, a range of initiatives facilitated opportunities to share ideas and troubleshoot solutions. A partnership between specialist and generalist CLCs, such as WLSV's **FL Capacity Building Program**. This collaboration sought to increase understanding of and practice around family law and violence issues in generalist legal assistance services.

Whilst not prominent amongst the initiatives, some participants noted examples of private pro bono law firms collaborating with each other and the sector more broadly. For **Small Claims**, private law firms and a specialist CLC worked on a project specifically designed to enhance access to legal services for women experiencing family law disputes that involved smaller amounts of money but could have significant impacts. The two law firms (Lander & Rogers and Herbert Smith Freehills) worked with WLSV to better understand and improve assistance for women unable to afford private legal representation for divorce and other family law proceedings.

Other examples of collaboration between public and private legal assistance services include Justice Connect's **Pro Bono Portal**. This service connected pro bono lawyers to help-seekers to provide tailored legal advice online. Youthlaw's **Legal Pod Program**, which provided free long-term legal assistance from pro bono lawyers to young people aged 18–25 and over who had left the out-of-home care system.

Cross-sector collaboration

> It's such a valuable part of the work that we do to have that really kind of deep collaboration.

Other initiatives collaborated beyond the justice sector, typically through partnerships with other allied professionals. Participants explained that people experiencing complex legal and related problems often benefited from integrated assistance, such as multidisciplinary practices like health justice partnerships. Beyond health, examples included initiatives on housing, family violence, financial and mental health issues. Participants also pointed to the referral and accessibility benefits that came with co-location between legal and other assistance.

Integrated Programs, an initiative of WLSV, is an in-house specialist team of financial counsellors and social workers with family violence expertise. Participants noted the value in having access to this team across several WLSV initiatives, such as the **Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence Pilot**, to provide legal staff a trusted referral pathway for women who needed more holistic support. Other participants, such as those from the **FL Capacity Building Program**, noted that the ability to collaborate with other internal organisation functions and allied professionals in areas of education and engagement was valuable in delivering these initiatives.

The provision of advice from expert family violence advocates and community lawyers was a feature common in health justice partnership initiatives. The Mercy Hospital and FLS **Legal Health Clinic** and ECLC's **Women Engaging and Living Safely** were two initiatives integrating on-site legal information and advice in hospital settings for women experiencing or at risk of family violence.

Other initiatives featured collaboration with the community and social services. The **Housing Justice Partnership (Housing JP)**, run by Inner Melbourne Community Legal (IMCL), provided legal and other social assistance supports to people accessing homelessness services. Hume Riverina CLS's **Invisible Hurdles** used integrated and co-located legal services to assist young people at

73 See Pleasence et al. (2014) and Eastern Community Legal Centre and Federation of Community Legal Centres (2025).

risk of family violence. Lawyers were co-located with local services such as a youth homelessness service, a school for disengaged youth, and an Aboriginal health service.

For initiatives using technology and other online infrastructure, collaboration was said to be important in bringing together the required legal and digital expertise. This was demonstrated in LTH & MHLC's **Smart Self Help**, an online tool developed in a partnership with experts from Central Queensland University (CQ University).

Making collaborations work

> Strong partnership-building … involves building long-term, strong relationships across all levels of the partnership from the practitioners right through to senior management.

Building trust between organisations was seen as integral to successful collaboration. Some initiatives had already achieved this through the formalisation of existing relationships developed over previous collaborations. For other initiatives, however, this was new ground. Finding ways to bring together services with very disparate structures, engagement approaches and staff cohorts was crucial. Preliminary work to reach shared understanding and expectations, whilst respecting the strength of differences between services, was noted by one participant as key. Initiatives such as Lander & Rogers **Small Claims**, Hume Riverina CLS's **Invisible Hurdles** and Northern CLC's **The Safe Landing Project** also referenced the importance of formal partnership and governance arrangements through written agreements or advisory groups in establishing organisational role clarity, contribution, and responsibilities.

Other initiatives relied on less formal ways of working. In SRV's **Planning for the Future**, participants noted the value of informal monthly conversational sessions between collaborating services to identify knowledge gaps and topics relevant to older members of the deaf community.

It was also clear that good working relationships between different staff at different organisational levels were essential to success. Participants from ECLC's **Mabels** spoke to this, identifying that one of the key elements of program success was building long-term, strong relationships across all levels of the partnership, from practitioners to senior management. WHCL's **Making Space** participants spoke about the 'organic' nature of their integration and relationships, as a legal service embedded within a wider health organisation. This contributed to the health and longevity of relationships across the organisations even as staff turned over, funding fluctuated, and priorities changed.

Participants made clear that building and maintaining relationships took time, effort, and resourcing. As **Ballarat Youthlaw** participants pointed out, it takes time to build trusted relationships with local services, and trust has been critical for other services to feel comfortable and safe referring young people. Other participants pointed out that collaborations were easier to maintain and thrive when partners are resourced. As one participant pointed out:

> … the teams are able to be generous, and people are able to be generous when they're resourced, well resourced.

Participants also frequently spoke about relationships working when they were focused on the goal of the client or service user. This was summed up by one participant:

> We have good local relationships with services to ensure our clients are well supported to achieve their goals.

Challenges

Managing risk

> … in what circumstances should privilege be extended more broadly within these types of multidisciplinary practices to enable women to be able to access services without having to worry about or make choices about 'Do I want to risk waiving privilege?'

Some participants described how collaborative initiatives could present challenges for sharing information. This was especially pertinent for initiatives that sought to address complex, multilayered problems that intersected legal and other social service systems. Balancing professional, ethical, and legal requirements, such as legal professional privilege, confidentiality, privacy, and informed consent, with the need to work collaboratively to address issues of risk and safety was common. This had the potential to create frustrations and hamper prioritisation, timing, and coordination of support services.

Accessible and timely pathways

> Those who have legal problems can talk to a lawyer on the spot, as well as be referred to support services for the other social issues that are so often associated with legal problems.

Whether through collaboration or novel service design, another common element among participating initiatives was a concern for accessibility to assistance and reaching people at the right time. Several participants explained the thoughtful ways in which paths and gateways had been developed to ensure people could access and navigate the initiative. A range of factors, such as physical location, trauma and emotional needs, urgency, cultural safety, as well as user awareness, understanding, and preference, were among the considerations that aimed to put people at the centre.

Bringing the service to the target cohort

> They wouldn't know that they had legal problems, and they certainly wouldn't walk through our doors. So even from that benchmark, you're reaching people who wouldn't otherwise access legal assistance.

In finding that people only recognised one in three of their legal problems as legal in nature, the Public Understanding of Law Survey (PULS) data has shed light on the extent of latent or unexpressed legal need in Victoria.[74] Many participants were aware of this issue and the subsequent risk of problems escalating before people actively sought out legal assistance. This understanding prompted several initiatives to take their services to locations where higher legal need and/or lower legal capability were identified.

By bringing legal services to the local community through a pop-up clinic, Peninsula CLC's **Street Law Coffee Van** was an example of an intervention aiming to uncover latent legal problems. Peninsula CLC also recognised that people experiencing disadvantage could distrust lawyers, and so sought to provide an informal, approachable service available near local gathering places and social service hubs, specifically to encourage engagement with those who wouldn't otherwise seek legal assistance. Similarly, participants described MVLS's **Legal Concierge** program as providing important connections between the legal service and the community, both through increased referrals from legal concierges and targeted drop-in clinics at public housing estates.

GCLS emphasised the importance of physical proximity in boosting trust with their target communities when carrying out their **Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Project**. On the other hand, trust could also be affected by word of mouth in regional communities. There was potential for one dissatisfied community member to affect future referrals. Initiatives needed to be attuned to community perceptions and establish strong visibility and referral pathways to maintain community trust.

Providing services at the right time

> ...we saw an opportunity to continue building our knowledge of what works in connecting people with information and resources at the right time, and the right place, and share this knowledge with others in the sector.

Participants noted that co-location with other sector services could also enable people to access more timely legal help, reducing the likelihood of problem escalation. One example was ECLC, which established **Mabels** in response to the documented increased risk of family violence for women during pregnancy and early motherhood. **Mabels** provided women with access to legal advice at an early stage, often before a patient may have identified that they were experiencing family violence. Appointments could be made quickly, sometimes on the same day or directly following the mother's maternal health appointment.

Similarly, IMCL's **Housing JP** participants explained that their regular on-site drop-in legal clinics at homelessness services could break down barriers to accessing legal support related to negative perceptions of lawyers. Co-location enabled clients to drop in without an appointment or be referred in by a support worker, while reducing barriers to engagement by meeting them at a trusted service location. Similar reflections on the benefits of more timely legal support were described by other co-located initiatives, including Hume Riverina CLS's **Integrated Family Violence Health Justice Partnership with the Centre Against Violence** and the NJC's **YA List**.

74 See Balmer, Pleasence, McDonald and Sandefur (2023).

Accessibility also required thought regarding the physical barriers to accessing an in-person appointment. VLA's **Help Before Court** sought to improve access to their services by taking a 'no wrong door approach', offering a range of ways for people to first engage with the program, including online, in-person, and through warm referrals. By receiving help prior to their court appearance, people's matters could be dealt with in a more streamlined and timely manner. Both the client and lawyer were more prepared for the hearing, preventing unnecessary hearings, delays, and uncertainty.

Providing the right support

Another example participants shared of improving accessibility was by tailoring support to individuals and providing cultural safety. ECLC **Mabels** identified a cultural safety issue for Aboriginal women in discussing with health providers the challenges that they may be facing, including experiences of family violence. ECLC staff described how they and their health service partner took this into account in developing their service model to ensure Aboriginal women were supported to access culturally safe family violence support. Other initiatives, such as VLA's **Help Before Court**, noted the need to embed self-determination within their procedures to support First Nations clients, drawing on internal services, such as their Aboriginal Community Engagement officers, as well as linking with Djirra and Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) for guidance.

Tailoring for both cultural safety and low English literacy was incorporated in LTH and MHLC's **Smart Self Help** tool. The team was interested in better reaching low English cohorts, and found that emoji-based communication between nurses and clients was useful. They also incorporated user testing in their website design process to understand how accessible the tool was for people with mental health challenges and limited IT literacy. Similarly, staff at SRV's **Planning for the Future** initiative emphasised the need for Auslan interpreter services at legal clinics to assist older members of the deaf community in drawing up their legal documents.

Another example of tailoring the right support was discussed by staff at **Justice Connect Answers**, an online platform that allowed eligible help-seekers to post legal questions concerning financial issues, housing, employment, fines, and more, to which pro bono lawyers could respond. **Justice Connect Answers** used unrestricted means testing to target the 'missing middle', a cohort who didn't necessarily rely on welfare but couldn't afford to pay for legal services. **Justice Connect Answers** also referred users who needed additional support to other internal or third-party services.

Pathways to and from entry

Creating accessible pathways to entry could be achieved by embedding lawyers within an allied professional organisation, such as a health clinic or social service, like **Ballarat Youthlaw's HJP**. Operating through Ballarat Community Health, this initiative offered free legal advice to people aged 25 and under through a regular on-site lawyer. Similarly, FLS's **Yarra HJP** allowed primary carers who were victim survivors of family violence to discreetly access legal services from within a family services centre. Both initiatives trained other social services staff to identify legal problems and refer young people to the service, further increasing pathways to legal help.

Constructing timely and accessible pathways also required initiatives to anticipate where a person might go once they reach, and possibly enter through, a service entry point. For example, ECLC's **Data Insights** described how their conversational assessment process enabled them to tailor appropriate referral pathways to suit people's individual circumstances. Depending on the data captured at intake, individuals were directed to the most suitable referral pathway, either internal or external. People with less complex needs and higher capability were directed to self-help resources, and those with more complex needs and lower legal capability were offered more intensive support pathways.

Other initiatives, such as Westjustice's **Restoring Financial Safety Program**, explicitly responded to or engaged with various non-legal problems that commonly coincide with experiences of family violence, reducing the burden on individuals to navigate multiple referral pathways and service systems. Participants referenced the social and economic barriers that many victim survivors face in seeking legal help or being financially resourced to leave violent relationships in explaining the benefit of supported pathways.

Clear and customised information and advice

> We do more of the proactive, reaching out, and then what flows on from that … is that they might come back to us and say, 'Hey, you came out to us, and can we have you again?'

Legal capability can impact people's ability to identify that they have a legal problem, and to then take action to seek information or legal advice to address their problem. In recognition of this, information and advice services needed to consider how to best present legal information and advice, for example, by avoiding legal jargon or abstract information to minimise overwhelm among help-seekers.[75] One initiative, Tenants Victoria's **Repairs Toolkit**, described their approach of using logic-based prompting bots to provide plain language, tailored, one-off legal self-help tools for renters who were experiencing difficulties with repairs to their homes.

Multiple initiatives submitted to Measure for Measure noted that online tools did not need to be cutting-edge to be of help. In fact, technology that was too complex could overwhelm, dissuade or impose a barrier on target users. Creating a simple user interface, LTH and MHLC developed their **Smart Self Help** tool to assist people with mental health challenges, their families, carers, and friends with free legal information. While the tool used logic-based pathways to provide tailored information to the help-seeker, it generated short, plain language responses without high-level graphics, ensuring that users did not experience barriers to access based on their data, network coverage, or device functionality.

Embedding capability

> …it does take the professional skills of family violence advocates working alongside lawyers to be able to talk to women who may not have identified their experience or had the right language around identifying it as a legal problem.

Legal capability, defined as the knowledge, skills, attributes, and resources required to effectively identify and navigate legal problems, plays an important role in how people interact with law and legal systems.[76] Because of this, building the capability of those seeking access to justice is critical. Many initiatives identified capability building of help-seekers as a feature of their work, from directly providing community-based legal information and education sessions through to more intensive legal support, advocacy, and assistance services with a more explicit focus on upskilling people.

Another strong theme that came through from participants was the importance of building capability in the legal and allied professional workforce sectors. Equipping legal practitioners and allied professionals with the requisite knowledge and skills to assist help-seekers was seen as integral to the reach, effectiveness, and sustainability of these initiatives. Capability building was discussed in multi-directional and multidimensional ways, including building legal skills, building non-legal skills, providing legal-to-legal support, and bi-directional support between allied and legal professionals.

Individuals and communities

Community legal education and information

> … these are really disengaged kids. These are not mainstream kids … But over these last couple of years, you have kids who are actively, not only engaged but asking and helping design the education programs … These kids are actively engaged in learning about the law and how it applies to them and how they can use it in their everyday life. So I think that's quite remarkable.

To embed and build capability through an early intervention approach, many initiatives implemented various CLE approaches and tools. One example, VLA's **Youth Citizenship in the West**, sought to improve understanding of citizenship among young people and their families from culturally diverse communities. Legal education sessions focused on the benefits of applying for citizenship and how this could mitigate visa cancellation and other risks.

In addition to providing on-site legal information to young people, Hume Riveria CLS's **Invisible Hurdles** used visits to legal services and courts to increase young people's capability and understanding of how these services work. Through taking part in mock phone and interview appointments, court visits, and opportunities to speak

75 See Szczepanska and Blomkamp (2020), *Seeking Legal Help Online: Understanding the 'missing majority',* which found that even where help-seekers have interacted with the legal system before, or where they have a high level of English literacy and digital capability, they are often overwhelmed by legal jargon and a lack of specific advice regarding their problem.

76 See Balmer, Pleasence, McDonald and Sandefur (2024a).

with a presiding judge, young people could experience and understand different legal problem scenarios in a safe environment.

Community advocates and champions

Several initiatives described efforts to directly embed capability within specific community groups by training or upskilling community members to act as community-based advocates or champions. MVLS's **Legal Concierge** achieved this through a targeted internship program with young local public housing residents. Young people were provided with legal education and community engagement opportunities to develop their understanding, such as shadowing legal services staff. Once trained, young people acted as legal concierges, disseminating legal and other relevant information back into their communities. As an example of an early intervention strategy, participants saw dual value in this approach, both in increasing community knowledge around legal and other issues, as well as opening trusted referral pathways and connections into legal and other services.

Northern CLC's **Take the First Step Project** also saw value in using peer- or community-based advocates to increase capability and facilitate trust between community members and legal services. For this initiative, local women on temporary visas who spoke multiple languages and were active in their communities received training to become peer educators and leaders on family violence. Advocates supported newly arrived women to identify and disclose family violence issues and were sources of information on how and where to seek assistance, acting as the first line of support and providing a warm opening to the service if legal assistance was required.

Legal and allied professional workforce

Legal education for other sectors

> And that's like a huge benefit, because it guides them in their practice and assists them to sort of know how to approach things. I think that provides a really good kind of resource for the partner organisations.

Several initiatives described how online educational tools and resources were useful in increasing the legal understanding and knowledge of allied professional staff. One example was the VEOHRC **Charter of Human Rights eLearning Modules**, part of the Charter Education Program and available to all Victorian Public Service (VPS) staff. These modules build a human rights culture and develop sector capability among VPS staff to embed Charter principles in their everyday work. Justice Connect's **Not-for-profit Law's Online Legal Resources** initiative used a similar approach to support community organisations' knowledge, understanding, and confidence to prevent legal issues arising by implementing good governance arrangements.

Other initiatives sought to embed sector workforce and staff capabilities in their delivery model through promoting awareness and providing specialist legal education across existing stakeholder networks and organisational relationships. ECLC, through their **Climate Justice** initiative, discussed working with local emergency, relief, and recovery networks to build the sector's capability to identify legal need within natural disaster-impacted communities. Work centred on embedding an understanding of the importance of addressing legal need as part of other response and recovery efforts within these networks.

With a focus on LGBTIQA+SB advocacy, **Q+Law** described providing specialised legal education to their respective partner organisations, Queerspace and Your Community Health, to upskill their staff. In addition, **Q+Law** noted their support for other government, community advocacy, and private law firms to adapt their CLE offering to be more LGBTIQA+SB specific and inclusive. The upskilling of community organisation workers on legal issues faced by young people was also raised by **Ballarat Youthlaw HJP** participants as enabling allied professionals to better identify potential legal problems and support referrals to legal services.

Education for the justice sector

Some initiatives also targeted the upskilling of the legal workforce, demonstrating multidirectional capability building. The Southside Justice **Sex Worker Legal Program** drew upon the lived experience expertise of a trusted sex worker peer organisation to build the capability of the broader justice sector to better engage and respond to the legal needs of this group in a trauma-informed and respectful way. This was built upon the lived experience that supported the design of the initiative, as discussed previously in the purposive design element.

The WLSV's **FL Capacity Building Program** was an example of a specialist legal service collaborating with several community legal services to increase their capability in family law practice. Comprising a 16-week program of workshops and other resources, the program offered a tailored approach to each CLC. WLSV staff

remarked upon the important role of specialist lawyers in collaborating with generalist and place-based CLCs. By building their capacity and capability to deliver more services, they believed they could collectively meet more legal need within the community.

Learning from other sectors

Both initiatives discussed above also highlight the importance of complementary and transferable skills development for the legal workforce. This is especially relevant in areas of law where experiences of trauma, violence, or discrimination are common among people seeking legal assistance and support. A strong theme across initiatives was that, beyond legal skills, suitable staff could be trained to quickly assess legal capability, work in trauma-informed ways, and understand the individual to provide the right intensity of support or appropriately refer a client on. Many participants acknowledged the importance of improving the capability of the legal workforce to meet people's wide-ranging needs by understanding people's personal experiences and their broader welfare needs.

Initiatives that adopted integrated service delivery presented opportunities for staff from different sectors to learn. Staff involved in ECLC's **Mabels** found that the initiative enabled them to gain a better understanding of the intricacies and workings of the legal, family violence, and maternal and child health sectors. Participants described the benefits of building shared skills with their partners and as a professional team in improving the capability of all staff.

This multidirectional feature was also noted at the ECLC **Elder Abuse Response Programs ROSE** and **ELSA**, with legal staff, financial counsellors, and social support staff taking part in multidisciplinary team appointments with people at risk of or experiencing elder abuse.

Secondary consults

Several initiatives incorporated secondary consults as a key element of their response and a way of building cross-disciplinary or sector workforce capability. Secondary consults typically involved the sharing of expert knowledge (legal, health, or other) with other trusted allied professionals seeking information or guidance in formulating potential options on behalf of people with intersecting issues.

Q+Law reported high frequency and demand for secondary consults across a diverse range of justiciable problems from services responding to the needs of the LGBTIQA+SB community. Other initiatives to feature prominent use of secondary consults had a family violence or child protection focus, such as Hume Riverina CLS's **FV HJP with CAV** and WLSV's **Together From the Start**. Initiatives targeting the intersection of legal and other social issues, such as the IMCL **Housing JP** (homelessness), **Ballarat Youthlaw HJP** and Hume Riverina CLS's **Invisible Hurdles** (young people at risk), also found secondary consultations useful in upskilling partner capability to identify and respond to problems experienced by these cohorts.

Communities of practice

Communities of practice or working groups were also used by some initiatives to build capability within and across sectors. This facilitated opportunities for the broader sector workforce to share and discuss experiences, knowledge, and important developments within policy, practice, or law.

ARC Justice's **Child Protection Program** was involved in a specialist Children's Court working group, which provided a regional perspective on child protection issues relating to courts and judicial resolution conferences. Migration workers from across the CLC sector came together under the Northern CLC's **The Safe Landing Project** to support practices around migration law, family violence provisions, and protection applications. The VLA **Preventative Education with YP** program also made use of cross-sector learning opportunities through participation in the Community Development and CLE Working Group.

Learning from communities

> We're responding to women who would probably have fallen through the gaps … I think they are the women that teach us the most about what needs to look different from our mainstream approach.

The embedding of capability was not just one-directional, but with many initiatives taking opportunities to learn from and build relationships with the people and communities they were seeking to assist. The role offered to young people living in public housing through the MVLS's **Legal Concierge** initiative provided opportunities for MVLS staff to build trust through increased organisational learning and capability. This enabled MVLS to better engage and respond to community needs and risks and work in a more culturally safe manner.

Improving cultural safety was also a key aim for staff from SRV's **Planning for the Future**, in their efforts to provide legal assistance, information, and support to older members of the deaf community. To increase confidence

and trust of deaf community members seeking support through the initiative, staff undertook Deaf Community Awareness training. Delivered in Auslan and then translated into English, the staff gained awareness of what was involved in working with the deaf community, including working in a trauma-informed way.

Learning and adapting

A common interest among participants was that their initiatives adapted and responded to changes within communities, organisations or their broader operating context. This iterative approach often drew upon primary 'data'—whether through informal feedback or more standardised methods of monitoring and evaluation—as part of a continuous improvement practice that spoke to getting it right rather than simply getting it done. This element showed up through initiatives that demonstrated a willingness to modify their initiative to meet and respond to emerging needs and changes, all the while retaining a clear purpose (as discussed under the purposive design element).

Whether feedback was generated through methods that leaned towards collaboration (for example, by embedding practices that incorporate lived experience into ongoing implementation) or learning from administrative data, one similarity was their desire to integrate evidence-gathering opportunities within everyday activities to improve their understanding of, and ability to meet, current and emerging legal needs.

Another feature of this element was the ability to implement changes as new information presented itself, which required initiatives to foster a culture of openness to change and adaptation. This could be as simple as ensuring that their decision-making processes allowed for adaptation, including a focus on practical solutions rather than standardised practices. Initiative staff also referenced incorporating regular reflective practices, being open to taking risks, exploring new ideas, and making space for complexity and long-term change. This was often supported by the wider organisational culture, as discussed under the foundations level.

Examples of learning and adaptation from the research are discussed below, through examples of co-creation and consultative practice, formalised feedback loops and evaluations, and efforts to monitor for long-term success. This section also explores the common challenge of being able to collect the right data to support the responsive implementation of initiatives.

Co-creation and consultative practice

> We did consultations with frontline staff … to understand … what would you like to see in it? What are the frustrations and what can we address?

An example of embedded practices for learning and improvement was ECLC's **Consent, Cybercrimes and the Law**, which had been shaped over time by feedback, student disclosures, research, and changes in the legal and policy context. The most recent iteration was informed by the introduction of the mandatory Victorian Respectful Relationships Education (RRE) curriculum, with the team aligning their consent messaging to ensure their material reinforced the state's primary prevention approach.

Northern CLC also used consultative practice with community engagement workshops to support lawyers in the **Take the First Step Project** to talk about family violence and sexual assault in a culturally informed way. This consultative process informed the language and imagery used during community education sessions and the most relevant platforms to engage newly arrived migrants in their community.

The GCLS's **Disaster Project** held community consultations to identify and minimise the impact of post-disaster legal problems and create resources for future preparedness. Staff described this as a continuous learning model, incorporating real-time experiences into the development of future service design. Without a blueprint to rely on, the initiative required a community-engaged approach to identify the legal matters that the community was experiencing.

This flexible service model enabled GCLS to align their services with the needs of the community, an important feature when responding to the dynamic and unexpected nature of disasters and their long shadow. The ability to adapt and try new ways of working through the service was supported by the culture of regionally led decision-making in GCLS's broader service provision, which then filtered down to the project team, as discussed earlier in the foundation level.

Formalised feedback loops and evaluations

> Having this … informative report that wraps up the project is really good, because often with these projects, they launch, and then you don't know, how have they been used? What are the insights that could be shared more widely?

Other initiatives used more structured feedback mechanisms to provide evidence of success against expected outcomes. For example, participants from the Hume Riverina CLS's **Invisible Hurdles** program described features of reflective practice and embedded evaluation that was established from inception. Meanwhile, the FLS team referenced their regular surveys of City of Yarra staff and clients as important sources of data for measuring the success of their **Yarra HJP.** Alongside quarterly reporting to identify trends in legal issues, challenges, or client demographics, they saw this data as useful for building their networks and learning to meet the needs of their community.

Another example of an initiative using evaluation data for learning came from Justice Connect's **DCOP**. Participants shared the perceived benefits of each campaign, undergoing a full evaluation to identify what messaging, elements, or visuals worked best to generate the desired outcomes. These were both for the continued learning of the organisation as well as to inform their understanding of emerging legal need, service gaps, and online help-seeking habits.

VLA's **Help Before Court** also centred clients' feedback through workshops, interviews, and phone surveys of people who had accessed the service or requested a duty lawyer at court. The initiative also drew on complaints and feedback from clients to understand any pain points and embed them in metrics for evaluating success. VLA's **Preventative Education with YP** program used evaluation and survey findings to adapt their classroom education programs into a professional learning program for teachers.

Improving the responsiveness of the Magistrates' Court of Victoria's (MCV) **Remote Hearing Support Service (Remote Hearing SS)** was a key concern during the expansion from the pilot in Geelong to the evaluated model that was implemented across eleven Victorian courts. With increasing demand for the service, **Remote Hearing SS** staff explained the importance of implementing changes identified from the evaluation. For example, where there was staffing capacity, remote hearings were offered outside of the dedicated remote hearing sitting day, particularly where risk or need was high. Practices identified as particularly effective, such as pre-court support services, child safe and trauma-informed practices, and logistical support with technology, were also prioritised.

Monitoring for long-term success

> … really being able to see what works and what doesn't work, and not collecting data for the sake of collecting data, really just being effective and efficient with what we're doing when it comes to analysis.

Regular monitoring practices, including measuring and monitoring long-term outcomes, were also emphasised by some participants. The regular surveying of lawyers within the WLSV **FL Capacity Building Program** was identified as an important avenue for generating evidence of capacity building, and testing the validity of their theory of change. Greater emphasis on long-term change and sustainability in their measures of success was also attributed to regular reflection and communication protocols embedded in the program. Similarly, long-term outcomes measurement was also prioritised in Justice Connect's **BFP Not-for-Profit Law** initiative.

Alongside evaluation, the MCV's **Remote Hearing SS** also used regular monitoring to identify long-term trends in who they were reaching, or to pinpoint gaps that emerged over time due to changes in social or legal contexts. At WLSV, regular monitoring of the **Together from the Start** initiative assisted them in identifying opportunities to expand access to their initiative. One example of a change informed by this process was the decision to embed a financial counsellor within the initiative to respond to cost-of-living issues and improve support available to clients.

Challenges for implementation

Initiative staff faced various challenges in taking a learning-focused and adaptive approach to their work. These challenges are largely centred on the quality of data across the sector, the funding available for monitoring, evaluation, and learning, and the complexity in collecting data from service users, especially on outcomes. Appropriately balancing the timing, effort and impact on a service user of both the legal support provided and any follow-up feedback measurement was also identified as a common challenge.

Poor data across the legal assistance sector

> … undoubtedly, the importance of mapping administrative data to better understand evolving help-seeking needs and showcasing the impact of legal assistance cannot be overstated, yet it remains underfunded.

Several research participants reported a desire for better data to establish success in assisting clients who most needed it, and to have a more nuanced understanding of what was working, for whom, and under what circumstances.

Others raised challenges relating to the complexity of measuring effectiveness or quantifying the value of initiatives beyond anecdotal evidence. Without the use of control groups or comparative studies, which most were not resourced to implement, staff could not accurately make claims that initiatives were leading to better outcomes for clients than standard legal assistance models. Attempts to calculate cost avoidance associated with a specific initiative could also be clumsy and produce arbitrary numbers, according to some participants.

In addition, initiative staff could be unsure as to whether the specific demographic data they collected offered a true comparison to the data captured through general services. For example, if higher numbers of people with disabilities were recorded as accessing a targeted service compared with a generalist service, staff were unsure the extent to which this could be attributed to the initiative itself or to lower rates of disclosure in the generalist stream.

Barriers to collecting data

> When we're connecting people to self-help resources, we struggle to see the rest of their journey; what they do after they've used the information, and what impact this has on their legal issue.

While many services provided opportunities for service users to leave feedback or engage in monitoring and evaluation activities, several research participants noted a decline in the number of individuals able to do so. For example, some participants raised challenges in recruiting sufficient clients to complete feedback surveys, particularly if they were already time-poor or experiencing stress related to their legal issue. Particularly with light touch, unbundled help, it could be difficult to gather data on whether the resources or advice made a difference and whether their legal problem was resolved. When building data collection into services such as telephone support lines or online tools, several participants noted that there was always a need to balance the benefits of collecting data with the impact on the service or client, such as facing increasing call times or navigating hesitancy among service users to divulge personal information.

Because legal problems can take months or even years to resolve, various participants commented on the difficulty of following up with people after so much time had passed. If a person was contacted for feedback many months after support was provided, they may not have had the capacity or desire to revisit the issue. Challenges in ensuring feedback from a representative range of service users were also identified, along with the ability to embed ethical, intersectional, and accessible data collection, with upskilling and reorientation in existing data practices often required.

Barriers to measuring and evaluating qualitative features of initiatives, such as the effect of providing responsive, person-led support, are discussed in the following section.

A further exploration of data and outcomes-based practices and aspirations amongst participants is provided in Chapter 6.

Elements at the individual level

This section discusses the common elements identified at the individual level within initiatives that participants perceived to be working: the central ring of our exploratory People-Centred Justice Model. This level covers how research participants tailored initiatives to improve the overall experience for the help-seeker. While it was beyond the scope of this study to interview help-seekers themselves, this section identifies common themes that participants identified as putting the help-seeker at the centre of their work.

The three interdependent elements identified at this level are: responsive, person-led support; provision of choice; and continuity and supported transitions. These are explored below, using examples from the analysis.

Critically, the focus of this level of the model was best summed up by one participant:

> Nobody lost sight of the person.

Responsive, person-led support

> Every single case is different. Every single individual is different. Their history is different. So you have to be adaptable in what you're doing and how you're working with them.

In centring the person, initiatives faced a constant tension between service breadth (in targeting a pressing area of legal need affecting a cohort of society) and specificity (catering to different levels of legal capability). Significant time and resources were required to assess and apply the correct dosage of legal help relative to legal capability. This was often achieved by assessing each person's complex, intersecting capabilities, needs, expectations, and responses. While time and resource-intensive, such assessments could help redirect an initiative's time and resources from highly capable individuals to those needing more specialist or intensive support.[77]

The discussion of the initiative elements above has demonstrated how individualised assessments can be formally embedded into a service, such as through different service entries, triage processes at intake, or support from designated non-legal staff to conduct regular check-ins with help-seekers.

However, participants also explained how these tailored approaches needed to be guided by the person in front of them. This spoke to the importance of pathways being dynamic rather than prescriptive. Many participants described the process of assessing each individual, listening to what they needed, and making discretionary decisions regarding their needs and capabilities in a way that was swift and responsive. They noted that this way of working could only really be learned through on-the-job, client-facing experience. While such an approach could be explained to new staff in broad terms, formalisation or standardisation would risk becoming a check-box activity, potentially excluding people with complex needs by limiting staff discretion.

Examples of responsive, person-led support at the individual level are discussed below.

Supporting and representing people at court

Responsive, person-led support often surfaced in initiatives that were designed to assist court users. The Children's Court of Victoria's **Court Support Coordinator Program** was implemented to help court users in the family division navigate court processes and alleviate any distress they might experience. While the program was available to anyone, court support coordinators (CSC) usually identified self-represented litigants (SRLs) as some of the most complex, high-need court users. As a non-legal therapeutic role, CSCs provided court users with procedural information and linked them to external community and support services for help beyond the court. The vast majority of CSC work was responsive and discretionary, tailored to the person who presented at court on any given day.

In their interview, participants took us through a day in court as a CSC. CSCs used their knowledge of who was appearing in court and the matters being heard to address any questions or concerns with people arriving at court. If the person demonstrated higher legal capability, their contact with a CSC might only last fifteen minutes, even as an SRL. However, if a court user presented as having higher needs, particularly if they were showing heightened emotions, the CSC would do what they could to establish rapport and de-escalate the situation. This approach was equally accessible for court users with legal representation as SRLs.

Another example of responsive, person-led support was VLA's **Help Before Court**. In Victoria, the government funds duty lawyers who assist court users with advice, case

77 See Forell, McDonald, Ramsey and Williams (2013), p.56.

preparation, and representation on the day of their hearing, should they need it. **Help Before Court** was conceived to relieve the burden on duty lawyers by allowing people to request assistance before their scheduled court date. The initiative provided opportunities for people charged with an offence in the Magistrates' Court of Victoria to engage with VLA and progress their matter before their first court hearing.

Participants explained that a large amount of triage for **Help Before Court** occurred at intake. The program included guidelines that ensured clients with serious matters or complex personal stories were guaranteed a consistent response. However, flexibility built into the guidelines meant lawyers could retain discretion in their client meetings, particularly taking into account legal capability. Intake team members used VLA's client capability framework to support them in balancing procedure with on-the-spot discretionary assessment. Support could be provided through information, referral, advice, or in-court representation.[78] In addition, if or when the person was assigned a lawyer, that lawyer would also have discretion as to the services provided, based on priority factors and level of perceived legal capability.

Responsive and person-led support for higher reach models

> One reason why it works is that it provides an open door, and we can move people into more high intensity services if they need them.

As illustrated by the two court user examples above, responsive and person-led support provides an intensity of service through discretionary, in-person engagement. However, several initiatives demonstrated how such support could also be scaled for a higher reach service. One example was **Justice Connect Answers**. Justice Connect recognised that a certain level of legal capability and digital literacy was required for people to seek legal assistance online. They not only needed to know that their problem was legal in nature, but also had to formulate and communicate their problem using the portal. Participants noted that the portal's online form was refined through co-design workshops to support users in developing their questions. By monitoring the portal, staff were able to provide discretionary, responsive support by calling users who appeared to require additional support. The staff member could then warmly refer them to a different Justice Connect service more appropriate for their needs and capabilities.

A similar assessment was undertaken by Tenants Victoria's **Repairs Toolkit**, with callers to their phone service. When people called the Renter Support phone service, staff asked whether they had heard of the online toolkit and helped them gauge whether this tool would be helpful for that person and/or their problem. The conversation between the staff member and help-seeker assessed what the help-seeker felt more comfortable using. While some were keen to use the online tool, others felt more comfortable receiving higher intensity support over the phone.

Provision of choice

Integral to the concept of 'tailoring' justice is accepting that each help-seeker will have differing levels of legal capability and needs. Participants frequently pointed out the importance of listening to the help-seeker and respecting an individual's agency and preferences in their help-seeking journey.

Providing choice to help-seekers was reported by participants to be incredibly empowering, and itself a way to build legal capability. By moving from prescriptive legal advice or stringent procedures, towards allowing the help-seeker to determine the method that is best for their needs, help-seekers can be given the tools rather than just the answers, increasing their future capacity to navigate legal problem-solving.

Examples of this element include customising the experience of help-seekers to provide better support and providing them with options rather than a prescriptive solution.

Customising the experience to better support help-seekers

> What really gets to me as an individual is being able to provide help and assistance to someone … I wish I had that when I was growing up …

People-centred justice is about meeting people where they are and allowing them the opportunity to choose the level of service that is right for them. This was illustrated through our interview with the MCV's **Remote Hearing SS**, which gave people affected by family violence the option to attend a family violence intervention order hearing without having to physically attend court. Survivors or affected family members could be referred to the service through a range of pathways, including police, applicant practitioners

78 See Victoria Legal Aid, 'Client Priority and Capability Policy', accessed 10 March 2026: https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/client-priority-and-capability-policy.

in the court, or specialist family violence services such as the Orange Door (a partner organisation).

The service contacted the individual to discuss various logistics, the person's concerns about attending court, and their capacity to attend the hearing online. A family violence practitioner was then assigned to support the person before, during and after their hearing. The role of this practitioner was to demystify and reduce anxiety by explaining the exact technology that would be used, checking that the individual had the digital literacy to navigate it, and explaining every step that the individual could expect on the day of the hearing. The practitioner could also refer the individual to specialist family violence services.

Participants noted the trauma-informed approach used in providing choice to individuals accessing the service. They would ask whether individuals preferred to participate online from home, or in person at one of the MCV's designated, discreet locations. Individuals were asked their preferences for on-screen visibility during the hearing, including whether they would like their assigned specialist to have their screen on for moral support. In some cases, the individual was comfortable navigating the process themselves.

Another example was the NJC's **YA List**. The service recognised that the requirement for all adults over 18 to come before a Magistrate in court could put people under 25 at a disadvantage, and in need of support services, due to differences in psychological development. The **Young Adult List** provided young people with agency over the level of service they required and their level of engagement. One participant reflected on their hope for having made it easier for young people to build relationships with services and understand that their doors were always open if they wanted to engage.

Providing options rather than a prescriptive solution

At the lighter touch, higher reach end of the scale, provision of choice might be as simple as equipping people with the knowledge to empower them to make their own decisions. This is what Justice Connect aimed to do with two separate initiatives.

Firstly, with **Safeguarding Now**, participants stated that they understood that not everyone with a common legal question needed to see a lawyer. In response, they created conversation guides and facilitated workshops on topics such as an enduring power of attorney that provided users with information to clarify their options, seek direction, and then act for themselves. Justice Connect saw their conversation guides as a free resource that helped older people with decision-making around their future life events.

Similarly, **Dear Landlord** was a free, plain language tool that helped renters to understand their legal rights. The tool stepped renters through questions to identify their situation, provide a summary (which could be used in future correspondence with agencies such as Consumer Affairs Victoria), and present them with options specific to their case. **Dear Landlord** could direct users to apply to VCAT, draft a letter to their rental provider, or share links to CLCs, which could provide free legal advice. Where a letter was appropriate, the tool allowed users to enter their details and generate two versions, an editable document and a ready-to-send email version, providing options for their next steps. This lighter-touch model provided sufficient guidance to effectively assist a cohort of renters, while also allowing the user to customise and determine when or how they acted, boosting their legal capability in the process.

Continuity and supported transitions

Once help-seekers are through the door of a service, the question arises as to how they are guided to the outcome they need. Continuity of care has long been recognised in healthcare literature as a 'seamless service' between a patient and one or a small group of specialists, one that is a longitudinal, 'continuous caring.'[79] In community legal services, continuity of care can be facilitated at various points in the help-seeker's journey. This might be through a warm referral, or by ensuring the same lawyer follows the help-seeker through every stage within that legal service. Continuity of care can help to build trust, confidence and legal capability with the help-seeker and encourage them to re-engage with the legal service as new problems surface in future.

Examples that demonstrated the continuity of care as described by participating initiatives are discussed below, beginning with the importance of warm referrals, followed by both legal and other professional assistance to and beyond difficult transitions.

79 See Burch, Walter, Stewart and Bower, (2024).

The importance of warm referrals

> If you hand people a phone number, they're just going to go home and be like, this is all too hard.

Referrals are often referred to in health and legal services literature as 'cold' or 'warm.' 'Cold' referrals are where the contact details of a professional or organisation are provided to the help-seeker, and the onus is placed on them to make contact. 'Warm' referrals are where the help-seeker is directly assisted by the legal service, whether by making contact with the help-seeker or on their behalf. [80] Warm referrals are often held up in healthcare literature as an example of trauma-informed, person-centred care practice, and in this research were recognised by participants as an important factor of a successful initiative.

This was exemplified by FLS in the **Yarra HJP**, a partnership with a family services centre in the City of Yarra. The partnership provided accessible legal support to primary carers who had experienced family violence, with emphasis on warm referrals to assist survivors into their service. FLS staff would sit with the survivor, and an interpreter if needed, and call referral services with the help-seeker. In another health partnership between FLS and the Mercy Hospital (**Mercy Hospital and Fitzroy Legal Service Legal Health Clinic**), the referring health care professionals provided the lawyer with the client's details (with their consent). The lawyer would then reach out to them, alleviating the stress of clients needing to navigate the space themselves.

Once help-seekers are referred in, continuity of care assists in preventing re-traumatisation. WLSV highlighted this when interviewed about their **FL Capacity Building Program**. This program built the capability of generalist CLCs to deliver family law, litigation and casework services. Integral to this was imparting the integrated, trauma-informed practice that WLSV applied in their own services to help-seekers. Another WLSV initiative, run by their **Integrated Programs** team, was also designed to reduce the risk of retraumatising survivors of family violence. This team was made up of six specialist family violence financial counsellors and social workers, who provided holistic support to survivors across a wide range of issues. Designed as a 'one-stop shop,' this model helped lessen the need for survivors to retell their story, providing a trauma-informed response.

Assisting through and beyond difficult transitions

Through lawyers

Youthlaw's **Legal Pod Program** provided free long-term legal assistance to people aged 18–25 who had left the out-of-home care system (including residential care, kinship care and foster care). At the crucial point of transition out of care into adult life, the **Legal Pod Program** connected small teams of private pro-bono lawyers with a young person to respond to their multiple legal needs for a period of up to three years. This help extended to common legal issues, such as fines or debts, as well as aiding with tasks such as obtaining a driver's license. The person's assigned 'Pod' also provided warm referrals to other legal or non-legal professional assistance where needed.

In a similar vein, Youthlaw operated a **Health Justice Partnership** with Ballarat Community Health. Allied professionals in partnered health organisations, community organisations and schools referred young people (25 and under) into the local Youthlaw service. Once a young person was in the service, lawyers dedicated time and resources to following up with individuals and to keeping them engaged. Staff recognised that it could be difficult for young people to stay engaged during a time when they were likely to have a lot going on. Participants stated that they tried to be flexible, acknowledging that sometimes young people couldn't, or didn't want to, attend a physical appointment, and would communicate in a way that felt comfortable or safe to them, such as texting rather than calling.

Through a dedicated, in-house, non-legal support role

Northern CLC's **The Safe Landing Project** was established to support women who had recently migrated, often on temporary visas. The program supported women who had high risk of vulnerability through isolation, language barriers, low legal capability, and were subjected to threats of deportation by their partners. Specifically targeting migration and family violence matters, **The Safe Landing Project** provided an integrated response, recognising the complex legal needs of this cohort, including family violence intervention orders, child contact arrangements, property division, and more.

Women eligible for the project found out about the program through Northern CLC's **Take the First Step Project**, which trained women with diverse backgrounds to be family violence peer educators within their communities, and directed women needing advice to Northern CLC. As part of the intake process, Northern CLC conducted a legal health

80 Community Legal Centres Australia, 'Referral services,' accessed 14 August 2025: https://clcs.org.au/services/data/discrete-services/referral-services/.

check to ensure it captured all potential legal problems. These problems were then brought to the Northern CLC lawyer. Often, multiple specialist lawyers would need to be engaged, such as where one issue was being overseen by the migration lawyer, and an intersecting issue was being overseen by a different family violence lawyer. Participants recognised that dealing with multiple lawyers could be challenging for the individual and addressed this by establishing a project coordinator. This way, the help-seeker had a range of different lawyers working to assist them at any given time while maintaining a consistent point of contact to address issues and provide support through the coordinator.

Summary of exploring features of what works

This chapter has explored what participants saw as working to deliver effective legal support to target cohorts and communities. These major themes, brought together and presented in our People-Centred Justice Model, are indicative of how a successful, people-centred practice might be achieved.

Outlined at the foundations level of the model, the values, strategy, leadership, culture and staff of an organisation could be enablers or inhibitors of whether initiatives could be implemented, each element of the model and to what extent. In addition, the extent to which some initiatives could succeed and be sustained was highly dependent on funding. As outlined in Chapter 4, over half of the initiatives surveyed (52%) relied on more than one source of funding at the time of establishment. The number and nature of funding sources changed over the lifetime of initiatives, with many needing to divert core funding to sustain the initiative. However, participants reiterated that success could be achieved despite limited funding and resources. Often, there was no alternative.

At the initiative level, it was crucial for initiatives to be purposively designed and to connect with underserved communities, often through identifying and addressing barriers to access and underlying inequalities. Initiatives needed to be designed with the inclusion of the community. In many cases, this involved co-design and partnership with allied professionals to build trust with help-seekers and ensure more integrated support. Research participants recognised the need to bring legal service, intervention, or support to where people were at the right time. Recognition of legal capability meant providing multiple paths of service entry and tailoring access to the legal capabilities of the target cohort. Initiatives were strengthened where they were adaptive, with formalised feedback loops, and, ideally, time and resources for meaningful outcomes measurement and evaluation.

At the individual level, participants spoke of the need for built-in flexibility to adapt and respond to the person in front of them. Effective use of resources meant assessing legal capability, accessibility, and emotional capacity, and adjusting the level of assistance on a case-by-case basis. Where possible and needed, that support lasted beyond the person's day in court or the immediate resolution of the presenting problem, with initiatives ensuring a greater continuity of care. In addition, centring the person meant listening to their preferences and affording them greater choice.

Capability building was a predominant theme throughout survey responses and interviews, whether within the justice sector, across sectors, through communities, or as an outcome for individuals. Initiatives from specialist CLCs built the capabilities of legal staff in generalist and place-based CLCs. Legal staff expanded their capabilities by working alongside allied professionals through co-location, integrated models of care, or deeper collaboration. Legal staff trained members of target communities, who then became touch points and aided in building the legal capability of other community members. Other initiatives aimed not only to assist people with a legal problem, but to ensure that the person walked away more confident in their ability to seek help when the next legal problem arose.

Using the model

The People-Centred Justice Model developed from this project is not prescriptive as to what works. Based on real-world experience, it offers an exploratory approach that can evolve alongside practice. The model provides a potential scaffold for dialogue, strategy, and designing and evaluating responsive interventions that meet individuals' and communities' diverse and complex needs and capabilities. It is hoped that it can also assist in building the evidence base of what works to meet legal need.

Each element of the model functions as a potential lever for change, with the scope and impact shaped by the specific context and resourcing in which an initiative operates. The idea of the elements as spectrums supports scalable and responsive practice through encouraging reflection on where lighter-touch approaches may be sufficient, or where more intensive implementation of model elements is required.

Whilst the People-Centred Justice Model outlines the common elements seen to be underpinning the success of justice initiatives, the next chapter turns to a deeper analysis of what 'success' looked like for participants, and how this was, in turn, measured, scaled, and sustained.

6 | How success is defined, measured, sustained, and scaled

Introduction

The People Centred Justice Model from Chapter 5 presents an exploratory view of the common elements that participants considered effective in responding to the complex legal needs and capabilities of individuals and communities. As well as identifying the initiatives that they considered to be effective, participants were also asked to reflect on how they knew their initiative was working. Participant insights were captured through survey and interview questions on how success was defined and measured, and how they knew the initiative was making a difference (or showing promise) for their communities.

Participants were also asked what they would need to more fully assess whether, how, and for whom their initiative was working. This included identifying gaps in current measurement approaches, such as understanding the most useful data or insights to capture, to strengthen current practices and demonstrate effectiveness. Challenges and barriers to doing this were also shared.

The research highlighted clear commonalities in how participating initiatives understood, articulated, and valued success. It identified persistent challenges in measuring success and demonstrating effectiveness in practice. Despite these challenges, the data revealed a strong appetite for more robust measurement approaches and a shared commitment to strengthening the evidence base. Many participants shared aspirations to better capture outcomes of their work and more convincingly demonstrate their successes.

Finally, the research also explored how organisations planned to sustain, replicate, or scale their work. Participants were asked about plans for their initiative, as well as the barriers they anticipated in implementing these plans. The interviews provided an opportunity to explore the opportunities and constraints surrounding the future development and expansion of their initiatives.

This chapter outlines the dominant themes of success that emerged from the data, illustrated with key examples. It then identifies participants' shared aspirations to strengthen the evidence base and support a deeper understanding of what works. Finally, the chapter explores participants' ambitions to sustain and scale their successful initiatives, along with the factors that can constrain these plans.

The findings that follow explore how success was valued and understood across the initiatives studied, including aspirations for success: what projects were aiming to achieve but did not yet have evidence for. Responses largely focused on success at the initiative and individual level, rather than the foundational level, with success at the individual level being based on initiative staff perceptions and evaluative data when available. As discussed in Chapter 2, this research was limited to practitioners rather than direct engagement with clients or service users, and this engagement should form part of future research endeavours. Examples of success ranged from anecdotal data and case studies, through to clearly defined outcomes achieved and evidenced through independent evaluations.

Importantly, this study did not aim to interrogate the validity of participants' definitions of success, but rather to examine how success was understood among different initiatives. This discussion forms a basis from which to build a future research and evaluation agenda, as outlined in Chapter 7.

How success was defined

Several commonalities were found in how success was viewed and valued by research participants.

For many, the fact that these initiatives had existed, or still exist, sometimes years after initial funding was exhausted, was seen as a success in and of itself. The Neighbourhood Justice Centre's (NJC) **Young Adult List (YA List)** and the Southside Justice **Sex Worker Legal Program** were two initiatives that spoke explicitly to this.

Beyond this, definitions of success are reflected in the elements discussed in the People-Centred Justice Model from Chapter 5. Participants saw these elements as important components of why their initiative worked and found them useful in gauging progress towards better access to justice.

As discussed above, trust is a defining characteristic of success in the model, with participants discussing it at all levels of operation: between services; between service personnel; and between individuals, communities, and services. Trustworthiness was also viewed by many participants as increasing people's engagement with a service in the first instance.

At the initiative level, increasing legal capabilities was a dominant theme of success from the data. As discussed in Chapter 5, many participants explicitly discussed the intention to build legal capability at different levels and with different stakeholders through their initiative. More than just resolving legal issues, success was defined as building the legal capability of those seeking help: individuals and service users, and those seeking to provide the help: the justice workers and their professional allies. The professionals' enhanced knowledge, skills, and attitudes were linked by participants to improved access, experience, and outcomes for individuals and their communities.

Many of the definitions of success participants shared were described at the individual level of the model, and reinforced the very 'people-centredness' of the initiatives, in which they remain 'ultimately and fundamentally accountable to ordinary people',[81] with success ultimately assessed by the outcomes for the people that they serve.[82]

Common themes of success identified by participants included:

- Trusted relationships established, extended, and used
- Professionals' legal and other capabilities strengthened
- Timely, consistent, safe, and satisfying service engagement
- Individual and communities' legal capability strengthened
- More positive legal, wellbeing, and personal agency

These are discussed in detail below.

Trusted relationships established, extended, and used

> … I've always said this in my work, when … lawyers asked me, 'how can we do this better? How can we do this easier?' And I always say there's no shortcuts in community development. … It's actually just relationships. And if they don't trust you, they don't trust you, and if you don't show up, they won't trust you … That means just doing the work. You just got to rock up and show up, and there's no shortcuts.

Mirroring its place as an interconnecting thread of the exploratory model in Chapter 5, trust was a significant feature of how success was defined and measured, both in itself and through supporting achievements across all other commonly defined success domains. As a measure of success, many participants perceived trust as extending beyond the relationships between professionals involved in any initiative, to the fostering of broader organisational trust between stakeholders and service providers. This was seen to contribute to more sustainable and scalable help for people.

For example, West Heidelberg Community Legal (WHCL) **Making Space** participants explained that one important outcome for their initiative was improved connections and relationships with other professionals co-located with them at Banyule Community Health. Consequently, projects that built upon those core relationships were described as contributing to the service ethos and beneficial to the community the broader service sought to serve.

Another aspect of success discussed was having a trusted brand with people, the community, and other organisations. For example, participants from Justice Connect's **Digital Consumer Outreach Program (DCOP)** described how they sought to build brand awareness and trust over time, in the hope that people would then know where to go if they experienced a legal problem. Similarly, Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC) participants explained how having a local trusted service as a first point of contact was critical to their **Climate Justice and Disaster Recovery** work. Gippsland Community Legal Service (GCLS) participants from the **Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Project (Disaster Project)** also described how community trust reduced the time required to build relationships when disasters occurred, reiterating the importance of local visibility, trust, and experience in disaster preparedness and recovery.

In part, definitions of success linked to trust were also connected to legal capability. When trust in lawyers and legal services was built through initiatives, some participants noted that this could then increase help-seeking confidence. NJC's **YA List** participants discussed the importance of building trust with young people across legal and allied services. One example of success shared was young people's perceptions of fairness in the justice system, linked to the way they were treated in court.

The Fitzroy Legal Service (FLS) **Yarra Health Justice Partnership (Yarra HJP)** participants also described building trust with the community as a key success area that led to direct referrals into their program from other community members. Staff noted that clients seemed more willing to engage in the service when someone they already trusted in the community had an existing relationship with the service.

81 Burnett and Sandefur (2024), p.1550.

82 Sandefur and Burnett (2023b), pp.1335–1336.

As many of these examples indicate, participants often identified referral data, both inward and outward, as actual or potential success metrics for trust. Several highlighted the need for enhanced referral data and greater insights into individuals' journeys through the wider justice ecosystem.

Professionals' legal and other capabilities strengthened

The cooperation and coordination of legal and allied services were a strong feature among participating initiatives, linked to a focus on mutual capability building across professions. This capability building was often described by participants as increasing services' capacity to address complex legal and related needs. As a result, many participants also defined success in relation to legal and other professional capabilities being strengthened. This included the development of legal capabilities and other professional skills to address service gaps that had excluded people, reinforced inequities, posed challenges to service navigation, or made services unsafe for communities. Examples of capability building among lawyers and allied professionals are detailed below.

Allied professionals' legal capability

Participants from a range of initiatives pointed to allied professionals' legal capability building as a key area of success. Many participants described how increasing the legal capability of allied professionals strengthened their skills, knowledge, and confidence to identify legal problems and support people to access appropriate legal assistance. These participants explained that allied professionals were then more effective in their roles as brokers, problem-noticers, or intermediaries with individuals and communities. Under such circumstances, both allied and legal professionals could work more effectively together to benefit those they sought to help.

As Youthlaw's **Ballarat health justice partnership** service **(Ballarat Youthlaw HJP)** participants identified, part of the initiative's success stemmed from the work invested in training staff across local health and community organisations on legal issues. Through building their capability to identify potential legal problems, they were able to refer young people to appropriate legal services. Similarly, participants described a key result of Barwon Community Legal Service's **Law for Life Skills** as equipping youth workers with the knowledge and skills needed to support at-risk youth with their legal problems.

Finally, Seniors Rights Victoria/ Council on the Ageing (Victoria)'s (SRV) **Planning for the Future** participants described the benefits of two way training undertaken by professionals across their initiative. It not only increased community partner staff's understanding of legal issues but also enhanced legal staff knowledge of the deaf community. This mutual capability building was seen to create stronger referral pathways between the organisations.

Lawyers' legal capability

Several initiatives involved significant components of building lawyers' legal capability in specific areas of law, either their own lawyers, their partner organisations' lawyers, or both. Participants noted that this enabled lawyers to take on the role of legal problem noticers, creating pathways to effective assistance for a broader range of legal issues. In some cases, this also enabled services to expand the legal support options they provided. As a result, lawyers were able to assist with a wider variety of legal problems, and centres were better positioned to offer a more comprehensive suite of high quality legal support.

One example was the Women's Legal Service Victoria's (WLSV) **Family Law Capacity Building Program (FL Capacity Building Program)**. The initiative developed a collaborative approach with participating community legal centres (CLCs) to measure program success, including how the initiative improved lawyers' capabilities. As well as anecdotal reflections from the lawyers themselves, the program team observed lawyers improving their practices as they completed a series of skills-building workshops, which was seen as a positive sign that the initiative was working. Staff noted that lawyers provided more comprehensive advice. They also observed clear improvements in lawyers' ability to identify relevant issues early and apply a more trauma informed approach in their interactions with clients.

The Southside Justice **Sex Worker Legal Program** undertook a similar approach to sharing specialist knowledge and expertise with other legal services, having built these skills through delivering their project in partnership with Vixen. Participants pointed out that their legal service alone would not have made a significant difference to the large number of sex workers with unmet legal need across the state. The co-design training model Southside Justice and Vixen delivered built skills among the wider legal assistance sector to support sex workers experiencing legal problems, while also modelling peer-led practices.

Finally, Gippsland Community Legal Centre's (GCLS) **Disaster Project** participants discussed the impact of insecure and short-term funding cycles on responding to overlapping and ongoing disaster-related needs. Recognising this, success was understood by participants as how

knowledge and skills of disaster preparedness and recovery were transferred to the wider organisation from the initiatives' lawyers. Participants reflected on success as being evident when clients' disaster-related legal issues were picked up, regardless of which entry point they came from or what legal need they presented with.

Lawyers' transferable skills

Success was also described by some participants as lawyers increasing their professional service skills and capabilities through their work with allied professionals and service users. As has been noted elsewhere, lawyers can be removed, both physically and culturally, from many of the communities that require their services, leading to challenges with cultural competency and community trust.[83] Capabilities shared by participants when discussing initiative success included strengthening of cultural competencies, trauma-informed practice, and increased capability to identify the impact of health and social issues on service users and their legal matters. Participants identified these as providing the skills and knowledge to do things differently, to see more than a legal problem, and to provide truly person-centred support.

As discussed by ECLC **Mabels** participants, lawyers developed skills through their relationships with the women accessing their service, the maternal and child health nurses, and the service's non-legal advocates. Participants described success as how lawyers were enabled to have more appropriate early intervention conversations about family violence and to better respond to women who had not yet disclosed, or even identified, that they were experiencing family violence. This led to changes in how lawyers delivered services, performed their roles, and how managers supported the multidisciplinary team.

Participants from Lander & Rogers' **Small Claims Large Battles** discussed the importance of the training on working with vulnerable clients that their pro-bono staff undertook with WLSV as part of the initiative. This strengthened their existing practice and built confidence across the partners that service users would receive appropriate care.

Several participants also highlighted important benefits of working in collaboration with partners and allied professionals. Examples of successes from participants included increased job satisfaction, reduced stress, and less staff turnover. One participant explained this in terms of how 'a problem shared is a problem halved', knowing they were working with other trusted and valued professionals, and that they were better equipped to help support people with intersecting issues.

Overall, many participants observed that when professionals strengthened their knowledge, skills, and attitudes, the quality of services improved. This was seen to result in greater access and reach, as well as more positive experiences and outcomes for individuals and their communities. The following sections explore the common themes of success for services and for individuals, which enhance capabilities among lawyers and allied professionals to contribute to success, alongside the development of trust at all levels.

Timely, consistent, safe, and satisfying service engagement

> [One of the allied workers], talks about not long after being here … she had engaged with a young woman, a South Sudanese Australian, and developed a relationship with her, and she referred 14 other people. So that just screams to the … necessity of having a culturally appropriate service, or one in which people feel comfortable with or they identify themselves with, they're okay to make other referrals to.

Many of the initiatives discussed success as the delivery, timely uptake of, and consistent engagement with more effective services through their model. Effectiveness, as commonly described by research participants, included ensuring individuals felt safe, understood, and respected through the delivery of inclusive, trauma-informed, and culturally safe services, where individuals' needs were understood, validated, and supported.

Service reliability and accessibility were also seen as important, especially for individuals and communities who may have otherwise faced barriers in engaging with support services. Accessibility was frequently measured through the uptake of services, demonstrating people's willingness to use them. As Southside Justice **Sex Worker Legal Program** participants discussed, delivering a trauma-informed, safe, and non-judgmental service was a critical gateway to start addressing unmet legal need for sex workers. This theme was present across many initiatives, with participants cognisant that services can only be effective at resolving justice issues if people are willing and confident to engage with them.

83 Burnett and Sandefur (2024), p.1512.

Service engagement and experience

Client experience surveys were a common tool to monitor initiative success, capturing data on service users. Victoria Legal Aid's (VLA) **Help Before Court** participants discussed key results from their client satisfaction surveys, which included measures concerning how respectfully clients were treated, how rushed they felt, how well they understood what their lawyer was telling them, and whether the service took their individual needs and circumstances into account. This initiative had also compared service data with that of service users engaging in the regular duty lawyer service. Participants further explained how measuring results of more timely engagement before court was essential to questioning the benefits of the regular service approach, including providing evidence of individuals' increasing sense of confidence and control, and reduced stress.

ECLC commissioned an independent evaluation of their **Elder Abuse Response Programs**, which was conducted by RMIT and La Trobe Universities and the National Ageing Research Institute. The evaluation included examining the accessibility of the program for individuals seeking support in relation to elder abuse, including for people with physical and psychosocial disabilities and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Program aspects that clients found beneficial were also examined, which included the program's tailored approach and the ability to receive support from multiple professionals at once, rather than having to wait for a referral and navigate the service system themselves, as reported by this study's participants.

Many participants highlighted the importance of measuring increases in the sustainable uptake of allied services, such as financial counselling, health, mental health, and education as critical success metrics, again demonstrating the important role played by partners and allied professionals in these initiatives. For example, participants from the NJC **YA List** wanted to understand if their program would, as anticipated, result in more timely, appropriate, and sustainable referral processes, and therefore increase engagement with support services outside of the courtroom.

Return clients and service users

Several participants raised returning clients as an area of interest in defining success. Some organisations explained that they grappled with interpreting what returning users and clients meant for the service. There was uncertainty as to whether it meant that their needs were not adequately resolved, or whether it signalled trust and satisfaction if they needed further help.

The ARC Justice **Child Protection (CP) Program** participants described how a client's return for further support, although challenging, could provide useful feedback on the service. For example, if they returned for a new matter but sought support at an earlier stage than they had previously. The service collected additional data on referrals from service partners, stakeholders, and former clients, which were viewed as measures of service trust and quality. Similarly, Magistrate's Court of Victoria's (MCV) **Remote Hearing Support Service (Remote Hearing SS)** participants explained that returning clients could provide an important indication of success if it demonstrated that individuals felt confident and safe enough to reach out, often earlier, to request support.

Q+ law participants also spoke to the importance of measuring returning clients when considering the initiative's success. Participants perceived data on returning clients as demonstrating the legal and support needs of clients, as well as confidence that the service offered a safe space to obtain help.

Individual and communities' legal capability strengthened

> I would define success as people, as the community, feeling they know if there is an issue … that they can turn to somebody, that there is a service available to them. That's what I would say the success is. That's the point.

The strong theme of improving the legal capability of individuals and communities, as featured in the model, carried directly into participants' visions of initiative success. Many of the participating initiatives placed explicit emphasis on developing individuals' legal capability, both as a dedicated focus and through enhanced service interactions to help change people's relationship with the law. As a result, strengthened legal capability in individuals, and at times their wider communities, emerged as a common indicator of success and a focal point for measuring progress.

The key dimensions of legal capability for individuals and communities commonly identified and discussed by participants included:

- Confidence to engage with the justice system and act on legal issues
- More positive attitudes to law and lawyers
- Trust in lawyers, legal services, and legal processes
- Ability to identify and understand legal problems
- Confidence and knowledge to deal with their legal problem

These key dimensions of success that participants frequently spoke to largely mirrored the measures of capability explored in the Public Understanding of Law Survey, even if the term capability wasn't always used.[84] In turn, participants linked these capability dimensions to people's earlier identification of their issues as being 'legal' in nature, enabling more timely help seeking, support, and action.

For example, participants from the Northern Community Legal Centre's (Northern CLC) **The Safe Landing Project** explained the importance of including a range of indicators in their evaluation framework that concerned people's understandings of their legal rights. Similarly, discussions of success for the GCLS **Disaster Project** included whether the Gippsland community had an increased understanding of the need to prepare for disasters, including preparation for potential legal issues that could help reduce disaster recovery burdens.

Participants from FLS's **Yarra HJP** initiative described how client survey data measured key aspects of legal capability, along with how the service supported a person with their presented legal problem. This included understanding if a person would be able to access a legal service again in the future, would engage with a lawyer, and how confident they now felt in understanding and navigating the legal system on their own.

Increased confidence in accessing legal services, understanding and engaging with their own individual rights, and increased capacity to self-help and navigate the justice system were touched upon by many other initiatives as key success metrics, including participants from **Justice Connect Answers**, **Justice Connect Dear Landlord**, and InTouch Women's Legal Centre's **Legal Pathways to Recovery**.

Participants from VLA's **Preventative Education with at-risk young people (Preventative Education with YP)** initiative had undertaken a range of evaluations in the context of VLA's broader community legal education (CLE) work. They explained that feedback had shown success across several aspects of legal capability, including better understanding of the law, more confidence to deal with legal problems, and knowing where and how to get help. Anika Legal's **Repairs Service** participants, amongst others, explained that they collected similar data from service users, with this feedback demonstrating increased understanding of rights and confidence to handle similar issues in the future.

Positive legal, wellbeing, and personal agency outcomes

> We see problem resolution. We see greater confidence in accessing legal services in the legal profession. We see building of capabilities.

Increased engagement with more effective services, connected with stronger individual legal capabilities, was viewed by many participants as leading to the initiative's endgame: whether people's legal issues were addressed, and whether they were able to move forward with their lives.

For most of the research participants, success was also evident in broader wellbeing outcomes for people with legal need, which both supported the resolution of their legal problems and flowed from their effective conclusion.

Further, individual agency was also frequently identified as a longer-term measure of success, both in of itself, and underpinning the achievement of other results. Initiatives were keen to strengthen individuals', and to some extent communities', existing resilience, rights, and voice.

More positive legal outcomes

> Well, success really is ultimately the clients, the impact on the client is the benefit. So, if we can do things, that there's measures in place, which is what we are funded for in fact, measures in place [to] actually show that there's a benefit for clients, as well as the system.

As follows from the focus of this study, participants often identified more positive legal outcomes as a key marker of success. How this success was described often varied by the type of legal issues being addressed, the populations being supported, and the nature and operation of the initiative, for example, health justice partnerships, court support initiatives,

84 See Balmer, Pleasence, McDonald and Sandefur (2024a) for an exploration of legal capability.

or online tools. These outcomes were rarely identified in isolation from other aspects of success, with wide recognition that achieving better legal outcomes often depended on the other common successes discussed above, such as legal capability building, satisfying service, and trust.

For example, participants from the VLA's **Family Dispute Resolution Service's Kids Talk program** collected data on changes within mediation processes following children's involvement in the program. This included positive shifts in parents' understanding of their children's perspectives, and mediators observing improved communication. The program also captured settlement rates for **Kids Talk** mediations, including the successful resolution of disputed issues and the number of signed parenting plans or consent orders.

Participants from Northern CLC's **The Safe Landing Project** described one success measure as the often long awaited casework outcomes for women who secure permanent residency after receiving services through the initiative.

For WLSV's **Integrated Programs**, which supported women leaving violent relationships who sometimes had a large fine debt, one of the metrics of success employed was the amount of fine revocation or waivers the initiative secured on behalf of clients. Other success measures for the initiative included monitoring court outcomes, including terms of intervention orders, parenting agreements, and property settlements.

Improved social and wellbeing outcomes

> So when I say outcomes, it's not just their legal problem, it's about the full scope of what the service did for their wellbeing.

Many participants also pointed to beneficial social and wellbeing outcomes as markers of successful initiatives. These included reduced stress and anxiety, safer and more secure housing, improved physical and mental health, strengthened financial situations, and increased safety.

Participants spoke to findings reported from the Hume Riverina Community Legal Service's (Hume Riverina CLS) **Overcoming the Invisible Hurdles for Justice for Young People (Invisible Hurdles)** program, which assessed positive flow-on effects from the resolution of young people's legal issues. These effects included maintenance of school connections, family reunification, debt reduction or avoidance, personal safety, and homelessness prevention. The evaluation also considered wider emotional indicators, including feelings of hope, along with informed decision-making and social connections.

Participants from WLSV's **Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence Pilot** described how the initiative's financial counsellors were seen to have successfully helped clients reduce or waive debts, easing their financial hardship and therefore improving related wellbeing outcomes. Similarly, data from Westjustice's **Restoring Financial Safety Program** measured the number of women and children the program had supported to leave violent relationships and remain safe, restoring their financial and physical security. The program assessed increased financial security partly through the amount of money the program had recovered or secured in debts, fines, and compensation on clients' behalf.

Finally, as Northern CLC's **The Safe Landing Project** participants noted, the significance of their program was evident when they reflected on the role their initiative played in supporting people to leave dangerous relationships and potentially saving lives.

Strengthened agency

> ... it's the first time that someone has actually listened to me, that someone has validated my experience, and has allowed me to make an informed decision about what to do.

Increasing individual agency is a key component of building legal capability, but it was also highlighted by many participants as a critical longer-term success.

Participants highlighted multiple dimensions of individual agency, identifying increased empowerment, stronger and more confident self-advocacy, enhanced self determination, and an increased sense of control over their own legal identity. Some participants further linked increased agency to greater stability and normalcy, enabling individuals to navigate everyday life with increased confidence and dignity.

Overall, discussions on successes commonly led to participants identifying outcomes related to an individual's increased sense of ownership or empowerment over their legal journey, including what, when, and how legal and related support was provided. Empowerment was commonly seen to beget more empowerment.

Southside Justice **Sex Worker Legal Program** participants, for example, noted that for some of their service users with complex needs, meaningful outcomes were not always related to legal action being taken. In cases where service users could not, or chose not to, pursue a lawyer's advice, practitioners observed that being listened to, having their experiences validated, and making an informed choice still represented significant gains in agency and autonomy.

These client led decisions, while not necessarily producing a more positive legal result, were described as important indicators of success.

The ARC Justice **CP Program** participants also discussed the importance of people leaving the service feeling that their voice was heard. In addition to more measurable outcomes, staff highlighted the importance of capturing qualitative data that could speak to experiences that were harder to capture through standard metrics. They noted that even when clients did not achieve their desired legal outcomes, such as regaining care of their children or obtaining a particular care order, many still left the process feeling satisfied, heard, and supported. Clients often reported a sense of having achieved something meaningful simply by being able to participate and have their perspectives acknowledged.

ECLC **Mabels** participants discussed how a woman's first family violence disclosure could lead to her better understanding the family violence system, retaining control over her information, and making decisions at her own pace. They described this as a success due to the increased ability she would have to consider her options without pressure, and begin putting safety strategies in place in a way that felt informed and empowering.

Finally, Children's Court of Victoria (CCV) **Court Support Coordinator (CSC) Program** participants also noted that having clients' voices heard was a significant outcome for many clients. Even when the legal outcome did not change, participants reflected on clients feeling listened to as an important aspect of access to justice.

Measuring Success: How do participants know what is working and what more do they want to know?

Not all participating initiatives aimed to achieve success in all the areas discussed above. Evidence of success varied and was not always clearly defined in practice, nor were formal mechanisms for defining and measuring success always implemented.

While many participants discussed monitoring and evaluation within their initiative, this was also an area of aspiration for more resources to support their ability to understand and demonstrate successful practice. To the extent that the submitted initiatives sat outside mainstream operations, as many did, participants often indicated that they wanted to know whether the initiatives worked better than mainstream practices. However, this was typically a challenge without consistent outcome measures across different types of services.

As the learning and adapting element of the exploratory People-Centred Justice Model identified, initiatives were generally not resourced to measure against control groups or other comparators, meaning demonstrations that initiatives worked better than standard approaches were based more on professional experience than measurement and data. As discussed in Chapter 5, several participants saw a need to strengthen client and service-user feedback to assess and improve results. Data quality; complexity; challenges in appropriately engaging and seeking feedback from service users; and limited resourcing directed towards monitoring, evaluation, and learning all presented challenges to robustly demonstrating success. The need for improved evidence was recognised as important for advocacy towards more sustainable funding and to scale initiatives, as explored in more detail below.

Participants widely explained the challenges faced in rigorously demonstrating success. Previous research has reported that, while there is a strong appetite for learning more about outcomes and what works in the Victorian civil justice system, this is an underdeveloped and nascent area.[85] In addition to funding and resources being overwhelmingly identified as the most significant barrier to the current or future success of the initiative, many participants also explained that there were resource, investment, coordination, measurement, and data challenges to measuring and demonstrating the success of initiatives.

Although there is now movement across the sector towards outcomes-based practices to measure the effectiveness of programs, including an outcomes-based framework as identified in the National Access to Justice Partnership for legal assistance services,[86] it was evident from the varied responses that there was not always a shared understanding of outcomes and outcomes measurement. Monitoring, evaluation, and learning practices varied significantly across the participant initiatives and organisations, including variability in resources and skills to undertake this work.

85 See further, McDonald et al. (2020), McDonald, Kennedy, Hagland and Haultain (2021), McDonald, Kutin and Hagland (2022) and McDonald and Haultain (2023).

86 Council of Attorneys-General (2024), p.24.

There were, however, commonalities among participants in their curiosity and appetite to understand more about whether, for whom, and how their initiatives were working. This included many common aspirations to build better data collection practices and generate evidence to inform wider learning. Most participants expressed a strong interest in developing a better understanding of how effective their programs were at achieving results across the markers of success they identified. Participants frequently discussed how stronger outcome measures and data would enable them to better quantify the impact of their work, assess and demonstrate whether each initiative was achieving its intended purpose, and strengthen efforts to scale and sustain effective practices.

With this in mind, the following section explores what participants commonly identified as challenges, opportunities, and aspirations for strengthening evidence to better build knowledge of what works to meet the legal needs of their communities. The discussion begins with the identified need to use and improve existing datasets, including the desire to strengthen feedback and consultative practices. This is followed by considerations of enhancing outcomes measurement, evaluation practice, and longitudinal data capture, and finally, the wider application of learning and evidence.

Utilising and improving existing datasets

> … the ideal world for data for us would be more of an outcomes measurement focus … but then also providing them with more of those outcomes measurement questions at the end, so that we're creating that full circle to be able to better our service provision based on their feedback.

Many participants expressed frustration with existing data and data systems, describing how the data collected was often inadequate to provide a clear story of people's experiences and outcomes. Some participants raised concerns regarding the quality, consistency, and usability of data collected, and how this contributed to knowledge gaps.

For example, those who received funding under the National Legal Assistance Partnership and reported using the National Legal Assistance Data Standards Manual guidelines expressed a desire for more useful data measures. Others were interested in approaches to data collection and analysis that could better capture the complexity of clients and their problems. These participants noted that more targeted resourcing and support may be needed at an organisational level to increase their ability to undertake more sophisticated analysis on existing data sets, such as intersectional analysis.

Participants from some initiatives, such as ECLC's **Strengthening Intake Quality and Data Insights (Data Insights)**, were already using their administrative and service data to examine whether and how needs were being met, and to evaluate the success of their services. Participants explained that they planned to explore the use of digital technologies to improve intake and referral processes using metrics such as turnaways, wait times, walk-ins, and help-seeker satisfaction.

In addition, several participants discussed their interest in strengthening client and service-user feedback and consultation mechanisms to better understand how and when initiatives were working or could work better. For example, participants from Peninsula Community Legal Centre's **This is Not Who I Want to Be** project identified an interest in more in-depth consultations with their target cohort (young people from multicultural communities) to assist in tailoring the material delivered for greater impact.

Incorporating better feedback loops was also of interest among participants from **Justice Connect Answers**. These participants saw the need for more information from service-users to better understand how discrete, one-off advice could support help-seekers to self-advocate and manage their legal problems. In other words, to understand if, and how, success happened. As discussed in the learning and adapting element in Chapter 5, several other participants pointed out challenges to measuring the success of self-help resources and online materials, with difficulties in measuring actual use and utility of resources, and in attributing any resulting differences made. The desire to understand more about an individual's help-seeking journey and use of self-help resources was raised by several participants wanting to understand paths to justice and the resulting outcomes.

Improved referral data for both inward and outward referrals, including their uptake and success, was mentioned by several participants as a key aspiration for better measuring success. Other aspirations included plans among participants from Justice Connect's **DCOP** to boost their customer relationship management measurement capacities to enable better monitoring and analysis of actions and results. Additionally, participants from Youth Law Australia's **Harm Practice** discussed their interest in improving trauma-informed approaches to measuring client outcomes, as well as using data collection for intersectional analysis to support a more nuanced understanding of who they were serving.

When considering improvements to existing data, the following participant captured a more widely shared view that greater consideration needed to be taken in developing data collection tools to ensure that services could clearly identify legal need and understand whether it was being met:

> … I think [it's about] coming at the data from that perspective, of how we're actually going to use it, so that we can tie it all into actually trying to meet legal need.

Appetite for outcomes, longitudinal data collection, and evaluation

> The outcome data is the big missing piece.

Beyond the potential for more regular collection of targeted outcomes metrics and incorporating better feedback loops, many participants raised the potential for strengthening wider, whole-of-organisation approaches to understanding and using outcomes-based practices.

There was also broad interest in more, and more useful, evaluation work. This included using project evaluations to better understand outcomes, what was driving outcomes, and what initiatives could be improved to make more of a difference with existing resources. For example, participants from the MCV's **Remote Hearing SS** saw value in a broader evaluation of programs and initiatives run within their unit to deepen understanding of what made their initiatives work. Participants involved in Moonee Valley Legal Service's (MVLS) **Legal Concierge** program were interested in running internal evaluations with program participants as well as engaging with other CLCs running similar programs to bring in learnings that may be relevant to their work.

Longitudinal and synthesis data were raised by participants from Hume Riverina CLS's **Invisible Hurdles** partnership. These participants pointed to the value of undertaking a synthesis evaluation, spanning the ten years that their program was running, to produce more in-depth evidence of the impact over this period. Several other participants also showed interest in longitudinal studies to investigate legal need and access to justice over time. Such interest made clear a recognition of the value of understanding and demonstrating the long-term benefits of access, and the potentially adverse effects of lack of access to justice and legal resolution.

Some participants noted that such studies would provide a rich source of evidence to drive coherent policy and funding decisions. Several noted the challenge of tracking outcomes due to the length of time legal problems could take to resolve: often months or years. Without detailed longitudinal data tracking, participants noted that it could be difficult to know what outcomes were achieved, if any. This created challenges for what could be reasonably measured as success within the often time-limited scope of projects. Other participants explained that following up with clients was difficult, and increasingly so as time passed from a person's last engagement. Some participants recognised this as an important gap in the evidence of what worked.

Several participants explained that knowing more about long-term outcomes and impact would help with the future direction and operation of their initiative. For instance, understanding the long-term outcomes for clients who receive comprehensive family law assistance was identified as a useful metric to demonstrate how the WLSV's **FL Capacity Building Program** may support victim survivors' longer-term wellbeing and circumstances, following family law and family violence matters. This went hand in hand with learning about longer-term outcomes of legal support to potentially change their understanding of the impact and even meaning of 'timely' legal help.

Similarly, with their interest in examining whether participation in their program affected legal needs several years on, VLA's **Preventative Education with YP** staff identified longitudinal data as a potential avenue to improve their understanding of what works to prevent legal issues. Participants from ECLC's **Data Insights** initiative also explained how long-term outcomes data would benefit service design beyond their clients' immediate legal outcomes, while those from FLS's **Yarra HJP** wanted to understand whether people's life outcomes were improved because of the way the initiative operated and the support offered.

Participants from WHCL's **Making Space** and CCV's **CSC Program** expressed enthusiasm about undertaking a project evaluation in the future. Several other participants also discussed the value of broader and more systemic evaluations, both within their organisations and across the legal and justice system, to build a more comprehensive story of success. Participants also wanted to learn about implementation, management, and operations while better understanding the replicability and scalability of the initiatives they considered were working.

Notwithstanding an appetite for evaluation and learning about the impact and long-term outcomes of their initiatives, many participants said that they did not currently have, or would have to obtain, funding and resources for strengthened monitoring, evaluation, and learning activities. While several participants had dedicated positions for this in their organisations, not all did. Among those that did have dedicated staff resources for monitoring, learning, and evaluation, many remarked that the level of resourcing was insufficient to fully embed a culture of evaluation in the organisation. As discussed in Chapter 5, a lack of dedicated funding to support these activities was a barrier for many, which was understood to undermine progress in this area.

Wider application of learning and evidence

> … there is a need for a sector-wide data system and support. At present each community legal centre is developing its own data standards and measurements, and it is difficult to know and understand the true extent of legal need and impact … we'd like a system, linked to the sector, that allows us to easily capture data, understand our impact and learn to improve. At present, we are doing all this [isolated] within our current resources.

Several participants pointed out existing opportunities to create stronger data linkages across the sector. This included opportunities to implement common measurement tools for key outcomes and better coordinate sector-wide support to strengthen the collection, analysis, and use of data across organisations. This support, it was identified, could also address the widening resource gap between some community legal centres. It could also strengthen the ability to collectively demonstrate value and impact, and influence funders of the very same.

While strengthened sector-wide practices remained a challenge, several participants commented that their initiatives had been running for enough time to generate information or learnings that they were interested in incorporating more widely into their services. This included evidence that was also seen to be relevant to questions of learning, sustaining, and scaling effective practice, examined further in the next section.

Difficulties in rigorously demonstrating what worked, and understanding why it worked, limit both the longevity and broader adoption of successful approaches. Several participants also emphasised the need for better data to maintain interest and investment in justice models. Participants once again widely pointed to evidence and associated resource challenges to doing so.

Common interests in, and opportunities for, strengthening the evidence base of successful initiatives clearly emerged across the markers of success discussed in the previous section. Overall, the desire for stronger evidence is centred on ensuring the justice models explored genuinely deliver better outcomes for the people they are designed to serve.

As one participant noted:

> Well success really is ultimately the clients, the impact on the clients … So if we can do things that there's measures in place, which is what we are funded for in fact, measures … that actually show that there's a benefit for clients …

These interests and opportunities serve as a foundation for a proposed agenda developed in Chapter 7. Before turning to this discussion, the following section explores how participants viewed the opportunities for sustaining and scaling success, as well as the barriers to doing so.

Sustaining and scaling success

> One thing that gets me excited is … two years on … feeling we've made the right investment. We listened to community … we jumped on the opportunity, and there's real potential for us to be able to sustain this and scale it so we can have a bigger and broader reach and impact for this community, that deserve this.

In addition to what was seen as success for their initiative, participants were also asked to reflect on how these successes could be sustained and scaled, considering also the need for localisation and appropriate tailoring to community needs. While many participants shared excitement at the prospect of finding ways to sustain and potentially expand initiatives, this was often tempered by funding, resource, and operational challenges as discussed in Chapter 5. In the face of such constraints, some participants discussed the difficulty of navigating their commitment to the work:

> Well, we've committed to always do this work, and so if it doesn't have its own funding, then we would have to make some choices about what might else might go. Or what else we could get funded for then.

Overall, sustaining and scaling effective solutions appeared to be a significant challenge for most participants. As discussed in Chapter 1, initiatives were operating within a fragmented

funding environment, which created uncertainty regarding long term support for core operations. Funding unpredictability and scarcity were also impacting organisations' ability to learn, share, and build on successful approaches.

Building on the discussion of making collaborations work in Chapter 5, trusting relationships between organisations were found to have significant value in the success, sustainability, and scalability of initiatives. The effects of trust included establishing effective referral pathways and supporting the development of legal and other professional capabilities. Developing and maintaining that trust, however, requires time, coordination, and supportive governance structures in addition to funding stability.

Sustainability of initiatives and their impact: opportunities and challenges

As outlined in Chapter 4, the median duration initiatives were operating was five years, with just under half having commenced operation within that time. Less than five per cent of initiatives were operating for more than ten years, with only one for over twenty years. Despite this longevity, participants from this initiative noted that state funding was not ongoing, requiring them to submit annual funding bids and retain employees on short-term contracts.

These figures point to the challenges with sustaining initiatives that participants were asked to reflect on. Challenges included securing further funding and resourcing, the time required to seek funding, and evolving operating environments, such as staffing changes and relationships with partners across the wider organisation. The issue of relationships is discussed in further detail below.

Durability and resilience are key components of sustaining success.[87] As several participants noted, however, the short-term and unpredictable nature of funding was a key barrier to sustainability, with resilient funding strategies being difficult to implement.

Across the initiatives, issues concerning how to sustain or expand their operations were an ongoing consideration. For many participants, the difficulty in sustaining initiatives they saw as effective could affect their ability to continue to implement and learn from what worked. Fragmented, project based funding created unstable long term support, limiting organisations' ability to learn, share, and build on successful approaches. At the same time, the absence of mechanisms for sharing and adopting insights further constrained opportunities to embed and expand what works.

As reported in Chapter 4, around half of the initiatives involved some funding from non-government grants, including the Victorian Legal Service Board + Commissioner, Victoria Law Foundation, and philanthropic bodies, often supplementing government funding. Where initiatives received fixed sum funding, such as through project grants, participants spoke of needing to find alternative ways of continuing to fund promising initiatives when the funding ended or ran out.

Several participants reported that, once external funding ceased, their initiative would likely have to be sustained using the organisation's core funding and, subsequently, would potentially be reduced in scale. For ten initiatives, this had already happened. The discussion in Chapter 4 also explored how the number of funding sources for initiatives tended to decrease over time, while the proportion of initiatives drawing on core funding tended to increase, which can be a sign of difficulty in retaining ongoing funding beyond initial funding terms. Several participants explained how they had needed to narrow the scope of initiative activities and how the organisation had needed to redirect core budget to maintain operations. Other participants reported that initiatives were paused or forced to operate at minimal levels due to funding and resourcing circumstances. Participants found this especially difficult where initiatives appeared to be successful and in some cases, had already demonstrated a level of effectiveness.

The ability to leverage scarce resources to promote sustainable legal service delivery was also seen by some participants as something that favoured larger organisations with sufficient resources to operate at scale. These observations are supported by existing research evidencing discrepancies among organisations' abilities to seek funding for projects, demonstrate projects' success, and obtain further funding, and how this reinforces the gap between the haves and have-nots in legal assistance.[88] The have-nots often have fewer means to monitor, evaluate, and learn, such as well-established data practices to mount compelling funding cases. Subsequently, they tend to fall further behind more well-resourced counterparts.

87 Burnett and Sandefur (2024), p.1536.

88 See McDonald et al. (2020).

Survey and interview responses suggested that establishing sustainable practices within a high-demand environment often required upfront resource investment and strategic planning. In tight funding environments, several participants saw digital technologies as offering an opportunity to streamline organisational operations and potentially reallocate resources, such as where digital information and self-help tools could meet legal need at scale.

For example, Tenants Victoria participants explained that the decision to host their **Repairs Toolkit** online resulted in a cost-effective initiative that could support self-help and free up resources for those who needed more intensive support. Participants from GCLS **Disaster Project** described how investing in the creation of digital community legal information and education resources had helped to manage demand for information from the community. Participants explained how having resources available on-demand provided something to promote and refer people to, while also offering a mode of help that could be accessed at any time.

As might be expected, many participants saw funding and resourcing as the most significant barriers to sustaining and scaling initiatives. For example, when considering the individual-level element of continuity and supported transitions, the higher intensity end of individual continuity of care is difficult to implement without continuity of funding. Scaling up or even sustaining this model of care can be beyond the scope of many organisations operating in a tight fiscal environment. Better evidence to understand which elements of a service model are critical to making it work is also required, so that the roles and elements most integral to effectiveness can be maintained.

More generally, participants identified short-term and unpredictable funding arrangements as creating issues for staff retention, as well as the way initiatives operated and were sustained. Participants identified variability in funding as a challenge for managing workforce and initiative sustainability. Several participants described how this could be counteracted by providing staff with opportunities such as learning and capacity building, supervision, and trauma and wellbeing support. However, these participants again reflected on the need for funding, resources, and workplace culture as necessary to sustain these activities.

For initiatives that worked within complex areas of law and/or communities with particular legal and related needs, participants explained that sustainability often depended on operational practices, support, and relationships within and across organisations. Regular staff turnover required more investment in recruitment, upskilling and both internal and external relationship building. Participants underscored how organisational change could both benefit and challenge initiative sustainability, and how the people filling key relationship roles at any time were a factor affecting sustainability.

Trust continued to be a common thread amongst participant responses. They reported that funding insecurity could lead to programs losing key staff, which could then impact levels of trust. As one participant shared:

> Without that [trust framework], we have nothing.

Several participants spoke of staff turnover affecting relationships with partners, allied professionals, and referral pathways. This was particularly so wherever trust was necessary for effective operation and to sustain successful work with colleagues, partners and stakeholders. As participants explained, this was because loss of key staff could mean a loss of trust among key stakeholders, including partners, referring agencies, individuals and the broader community. Once interrupted, some participants explained, trust took time and effort to attempt to re-establish. On the other hand, some participants noted how trust could support sustainability. This interdependent relationship between trust and sustainability was exemplified in specific operational circumstances. Once trust was established, some participants reflected that success could be sustained through the informal continuity of referrals and trusted relationships between organisations, even if a partnership lost formal funding.

One participant noted that the person-to-person relationships were what sustained successful collaborations across organisations, not simply relationships at the organisational level. As they explained, 'If we have a lawyer who's the key relationship builder there, and they burn out and they leave, then you're starting from scratch again.' For work where interpersonal trust was crucial, 'you can have a relationship with an organisation, but … at the end of the day, [it's] about the relationships that you have, person to person, within that organisation.'

Scaling successful initiatives: opportunities and challenges

> It is kind of on life support … we are unable to scale up given the funding uncertainty. This is a real shame …

As noted above, challenges in measuring success and learning from what worked created associated challenges to expanding and scaling initiatives and translating them to successfully operate in other contexts. Some participants noted that activities can be effectively transferred to new contexts, internally or externally, only when there is a clear understanding of how they operate, the ways they contribute to outcomes, and the populations they work for. To externally scale an initiative, this learning also needs to be effectively shared, and a willing audience found to take up the learning. Responses from several participants indicated that learning from, and building on, others' examples was challenging. Relatively few examples of initiative scaling-up were provided by participants, either about their initiatives being taken up by others or about them taking up the work of others.

Participants were asked in surveys and interviews what the plans for their initiatives were: whether they were continuing, scaling, or winding down. Participants reported opportunities to grow the scale of their initiatives, including expanding the reach of their service and the scope of their support into new areas of legal need. However, many participants also identified challenges and resource considerations that could inhibit their ability to pursue these ambitions.

Southside Justice suggested that their initiative could be scaled through online information and training materials that lawyers across the state could access alongside specialist support through a 'hub and spoke' model. This was one of the ways in which specialist legal knowledge about particular legal matters and cohorts could be shared more widely.

Similarly, VLA staff from the **Preventative Education with YP initiative** explained how local CLE programs run by CLCs could benefit from using resources developed through their initiative. For example, they described how their respectful relationships resources could be developed into a suite through which to train CLC staff to deliver content. These participants saw the benefit of CLC staff being able to save time on project planning and content delivery while being able to make adjustments for their local context.

One of the benefits of technology-based initiatives was the relative ease of scaling, where expertise concerning particular legal matters and people had broader relevance and application across the community. For example, Legal Tech Helper (LTH) and Mental Health Legal Centre (MHLC) explained that their **Smart Self Help** tool could be scaled to reach people across Victoria, and even with some modification, nationally, with the right partners and champions.

Several participants identified challenges in scaling initiatives in regional areas, particularly where the initiative either required legal practitioners with particular skillsets or the ability to recruit and train them. Sometimes participants could also identify challenges for scaling initiatives where a particular practice ethos was required, such as with multidisciplinary and integrated service models.

When considering expansion into new locations, participants also explained how the local infrastructure, allied professionals and partners needed to be present to support their initiatives and ways of working. For example, ARC Justice participants and participants from the NJC's **Multilingual Family Violence Audio Guide** explained that any expansion of their initiative would require them to build further local stakeholder relationships.

Participants also saw opportunities to scale their initiatives into new areas of legal need, not only into new communities. For example, participants from the WLSV **FL Capacity Building Program** explained that they had considered the scalability of their model for other areas of law, such as child protection, tenancy, and consumer law. In addition, they reported other ideas for expanding through other CLCs in Victoria and interstate.

Scaling did not necessarily require organisations to replicate existing initiatives in full. Participants from ECLC's **Data Insights** noted that scalability could be achieved through the implementation of a shared approach to data and evaluation practices.

Overall, the capacity for initiatives to learn from others was not straightforward. Although many participants demonstrated an appetite for sharing initiative learnings, there was no clear mechanism or incentive to do so, or for others to adapt or replicate initiatives. A general sentiment appeared to be that scalability would be enhanced by the accumulation of more compelling data and evidence of what was working, for whom, and how. Additionally, one participant suggested that the propensity to put a 'local' spin on an initiative when implementing it in a new setting, while understandable, could run the risk of losing some aspects important to success, along with inefficiencies and missed opportunities.

Scaling itself, however, was sometimes seen as insufficient to meet community legal need, even if reach could be doubled or tripled. As one participant reflected:

> … the evidence suggests that there will still be many more potential clients unserved. So, if financial and human resources are finite, and the unmet need greatly exceeds what those resources can safely provide, what is the solution that will ensure that those still with unmet need are getting the services they require?

This question articulates the dilemma that justice system stakeholders and policymakers face: how to balance high-intensity support and high-reach services, and interventions of varying dosages in between, to have the biggest impact on addressing unmet legal need.

7 | Implications and next steps

Measure for Measure was an exploratory project that sought to map and understand varied justice initiatives from across Victoria. The research brought together these pockets of practice to build a collective picture of what was seen to work for different individuals, communities, and legal problems, and what more might be needed.

The research bridges the growing international discourse regarding people-centred justice with practices on the ground in Victoria, Australia. In response to our ask of the justice sector for initiatives they saw as working, we heard about a remarkable depth and breadth of effort from across the state, building practices and services that sought to be responsive to people, their needs, and their capabilities. It was clear from the findings across the 66 initiatives that organisations were engaging with people-centred justice approaches and efforts, even if they didn't use that terminology or framing.

In democracies, justice systems are fundamentally and ultimately accountable to ordinary people.[89] People-centred justice approaches have been on the rise in Victoria and other parts of Australia, arguably in response to research insights and shifting national and state access to justice policy. Overall, the research findings from Measure for Measure suggest meaningful change is well on the way towards implementing people-centred justice approaches with targeting, tailoring and prioritisation of initiatives to meet the needs of population cohorts. This shift also reflects recognition of the critical accountability to ordinary people. A more differentiated and needs responsive service landscape is evolving, one that appears to be broadly more attentive to variations in people's needs and capabilities and how these are shaped by an uneven distribution of resources.

People-centred justice approaches are responses to empirical studies that show one-size-fits-all solutions are exclusionary, inequitable, and ill-matched to the diversity of legal need and capability.[90] This research captured exactly those tailored and fit-for-purpose responses from across the state that provide different solutions for different situations. The responses varied in the dosages of legal and other professional support provided, from engagement, education, information, and advice through to casework and more integrated services. They were context-specific and adaptive. There was no single model of success: what was seen as effective practice took multiple forms.

Despite the diversity of approaches, participants identified common elements as key drivers of success. Many of the elements are not new and have been pointed out in various evaluations and studies over more than twenty years in Australia and internationally.[91] It is clear from the analysis and findings here that the identified elements of what works are being put into practice in different combinations and a range of settings. Together, these common elements have been distilled into a People-Centred Justice Model that provides a practical foundation for operationalising people centred justice to meet legal need.

The initiatives explored feature more accessible services, at the right time and place for different individuals and communities who are often excluded or marginalised from justice services and systems. Participants highlighted that complex and compounding legal problems often require a more interdisciplinary response. On the ground, services are sharing the quest for solutions and working with problem-solvers in other disciplines to create timely and trusted pathways to and from legal support, as the research shows it has to.[92] Participants also told us that the ways of working captured in the People-Centred Justice Model made legal support less fragmented, prioritised the agency of help seekers, and underscored the central role of building legal capability for both those seeking help and those providing it.

89 Burnett and Sandefur (2024), p.1550.

90 See Balmer et al. (2023, 2024a, 2024b), McDonald et al. (2020, 2021, 2022), McDonald and Haultain (2023).

91 See, for example, Pleasence, Coumarelos, Forell and McDonald (2014), OECD (2021), McDonald, Forell and Wei (2019) and Burnett and Sandefur (2024).

92 Sandefur (2019), p.54.

The process of collaboration was often seen to build the mutual capabilities of justice and allied professionals, improving the reach, effectiveness, and sustainability of these initiatives. Many of the researched initiatives were also designed not only to address people's legal problems, but to positively change their relationship to the law. Many participants pointed to the broader potential of building legal capability and reimagining the legal system as a mechanism for empowerment; one that supports individuals to build not only knowledge, but the skills and confidence needed to exercise greater control over their lives, including their legal issues and journey.

This aligns with increasing recognition in the literature that designing effective people-centred justice, including building legal capability, has broad societal benefits. As Burnett and Sandefur (2024) point out:

> If individual and community empowerment are goals, as we argue they should be, the experience of interacting with services must also change people's relation to the law. When an activity builds legal capability, or people's ability to understand and use the law, the people and communities served are themselves are changed, approaching justice issues in new ways that reflect greater confidence, understanding, and possibility.[93]

Trust emerged as a central feature of the initiatives studied, underpinning all levels and elements of the model. The findings consistently pointed to the critical role of trust in shaping what is effective and sustainable, across professional relationships, organisational and service interfaces, and community engagement, along with broader perceptions of the justice system and the role of lawyers. Trust was seen to operate as an interconnected and reinforcing dynamic rather than a discrete component of practice, and it was clear from the analysis that trust requires deliberate investment and ongoing stewardship to sustain effectiveness.[94]

While the vision of people-centred justice being operationalised is compelling, the practice is patchy. Much of the innovation and effort continues to occur in isolated pockets, confined to individual projects and/or organisations. Systemic and effective preventative strategies that target the underlying drivers of prevalent legal issues, such as social and economic disadvantage and exclusion, remain difficult to identify, let alone progress, and structural and funding constraints continue to limit the capacity to test, evaluate, maintain, and scale promising approaches.

As foundational research to learn about what works, Measure for Measure could never provide all the answers. The findings from 66 initiatives provide a significant body of evidence, but this is only a start. Stronger evidence, deeper insight, and coordinated effort at the broader ecosystem level are needed. The research provides a starting point from which to build a more rigorous, collective, and systemic picture of what works, for whom, under what circumstances, and at what cost. Such a picture is needed if the most effective practices are to be identified, sustained, and scaled, and to prevent, reduce, and respond to the significant unmet legal need across Victoria. Only then can the potential of people-centred justice be more fully realised.

The insights and future directions outlined in this chapter offer ways to inform practice and policy, and to encourage new ways of working that stand a better chance of effectively meeting and matching the legal need and capability of more people.

Taken together, the steps set out below trace the outlines of an emerging research and evaluation agenda that will require support and participation from diverse players in the sector. Implementation will require leadership, resourcing, collaboration, coordination, and, importantly, trust, in fact, many of the same elements that underpin the People-Centred Justice Model developed through this project.

An exploratory People-Centred Justice Model

The findings from the Measure for Measure research were used to build an operational, exploratory model of people-centred justice, identifying common elements seen by participants to underpin success.

The elements are not fixed categories, and they shape and are shaped in turn by one another. Each element presents as a spectrum, reflecting a continuum of need, practice, or response. They range from low-resource, lighter-touch exemplars, often supporting a greater reach for the initiatives studied, to higher resource, more intensive and comprehensive examples for smaller client numbers. These spectrums are not linear or isolated; they interact, overlap,

93 Burnett and Sandefur (2024), p.1530.

94 For a recent study that also explored trust and its link to client engagement and outcomes, amongst other key related findings, see Curran (2026).

and evolve, forming a network of interdependent elements. The model supports scalable, responsive practice by prompting reflection on when lighter touch approaches may be sufficient and when more intensive, holistic support is needed. The report illustrates these spectrums with examples from participating projects across each element of the model.

Overall, the model offers a flexible scaffold for dialogue, strategy, and the design and evaluation of responsive interventions that align with the diverse needs and capabilities of individuals and communities. Each element functions as a potential lever for creating change, with the scope and impact shaped by the specific context and resourcing in which an initiative operates.

It is clear from the analysis and findings that the identified elements that works are typically operationalised in different combinations and intensities. Recognising the variable intensity of each element is important, as it demonstrates flexibility in the model and the mixing and matching of effort to need and circumstance. The calibration of the elements, the interplay between them, and the mechanisms through which they contribute to success now need to be tested to learn more about effectiveness, sustainability, and scalability.

Importantly, the model and its elements do not only apply to the more holistic and intensive initiatives, but can inform the design, implementation, measurement, and evaluation of justice initiatives across a broad range of contexts and target populations. This points to an important framing of people-centred justice approaches, acknowledging and valuing that they can happen at a range of intensities and across a range of legal environments, settings, processes and support offerings. This includes education, information, referrals, court processes, to advice, casework, and beyond. Indeed, a range of approaches are needed if people are to be met where they are with what they need and the capabilities they have with the resources available. Only then can a dent in the mountain of unmet legal need be made.

Next steps: Applying and testing the model

The model needs to be tested with the people at its centre. One clear limitation in this study is that it focused on legal service providers and other justice stakeholders rather than service users. People's views of what works are central to building on practitioners' perceptions and understandings.

There are key knowledge gaps in understanding how the model's elements contribute to outcomes. This includes opportunities to explore the relative intensities and potential combinations of elements most effective in meeting the full range of legal need as it presents across the whole of the community. The model offers a structured framework for posing these questions and generating further evidence about what works. The benefits of further evidence are myriad. From triaging people in need, through designing initiatives with varying legal dosages based on robust evidence of what works, to identifying justice gaps that require more targeted or even systemic responses.

Future research using the model can focus on how the elements contribute to outcomes across different legal assistance service types and forms of support in other justice settings. From standard and lower dose legal help, such as legal information, community education, and advice, to more intensive and bespoke services. By exploring the effectiveness of combinations and intensities in service settings and for populations, the model can deepen understanding of the core ingredients that make people-centred justice initiatives effective, sustainable, and scalable.

Any exploration of access to justice issues will also need to address the increasing interface with information technology and digital transformation. The incorporation of new information technology into legal assistance and dispute resolution raises important questions for what works research, including how to assess the impact of technological solutions on access to justice. Public trust and equitable access must remain central to any digital justice innovations.[95] The issue of people being digitally excluded, by design or default, remains an ever-present concern.[96]

A commitment to research that approaches the problem of unmet legal need with a 'spirit of independence from any given solution' is required.[97] The model gives us a set of common elements that can help us frame further investigations into what works independently, no matter the solution.

95 Byrom (2025).

96 See Byrom (2019), Denvir and Selvarajah (2021) and Donoghue (2017).

97 Sandefur (2019), p.53.

Such evaluative research would provide critical insight into which of the elements are critical for the effective and sustained implementation of what works. This is a key step to moving towards mainstreaming people-centred justice approaches, which potentially unlocks better access to justice for Victorians.

Quality data and measurement practices

Quality data is fundamental to identifying and addressing legal need, informing planning and service delivery priorities, and guiding effective funding decisions to deliver access to justice. Robust data infrastructures create the evidence base required to design, sustain, and scale services to meet diverse legal need and capability. Knowing what works in practice, for whom, and under what conditions, and having reliable evidence to substantiate these insights, is foundational to operationalising people centred justice and being able to do more of what works.

It is clear from the findings in this and other research that the Victorian civil justice sector is maturing in its capacity to use and capture data that is more people-centred.[98] The justice sector is also moving towards an evaluative mindset, consistent with the appetite demonstrated in the Victoria Law Foundation's (VLF's) Data Mapping Project.[99] More broadly, the *Hiil Policy Brief on Delivering People-Centred Justice*, notes how:

> … evidence-based practice is more likely to be accepted if the practitioners share a culture of wanting to be effective and successful in achieving results for clients.[100]

Such intent was clearly demonstrated by each organisation that participated in this study. The commitment of service providers to making a difference for individuals and communities, and the existence of a strong appetite for knowing more about what their services achieve, was clear.

Building data systems and practices that provide the justice sector with an evidence base for meeting legal need and achieving successful outcomes is challenging. Although the passion and commitment of all study participants to the ideals of justice and learning what works to deliver access were resounding, there were also common challenges with respect to evidencing effectiveness. Resourcing, consistent and robust data practices, prioritisation, and capacity challenges continue to be constraints. As McDonald et al. (2020) found for Victoria's legal assistance services:[101]

> Quality data requires investment in people and time, in resources and capability. Without funding, building data capability and practices comes at the cost of frontline legal assistance service capacity, presenting an unacceptable dilemma.

Based on this research, challenges are clearly persistent.

Across the initiatives, participants' spoke to how organisations were wrestling with common measurement questions and areas for improvement in outcomes and measurement practice. Initiatives were then often employing different approaches in how they were tackling these questions, often in isolation. A need for development and resourcing to support more common measurement practices, such as ready-to-use tools and guides, would help to build capability and avoid reinventing the wheel.

As the VLF's Data Mapping Project demonstrated, there is also a system-wide need for smarter data that goes beyond the administrative, moving beyond outputs and activity data to what outcomes those outputs and activities achieve. As McDonald and Haultain (2023) explained:

> … effective outcome measures would help close the loop on the benefit of legal assistance and give valuable indications as to what service models work to meet the legal need and capability of diverse client groups and communities.[102]

A key gap in current efforts is the collection and assessment of outcomes, including a lack of consistency and comparability in the outcomes being measured and the methods used to measure them. This research, however, highlighted clear commonalities in how participating organisations understood, articulated, and valued success. These common success areas provide a starting point for further refining priority outcomes, including what happens to the people the initiatives are intended to benefit. Evidence from this research builds upon previous studies and points to the need for a step-change in evidence practices to match the access to justice policy and practice aspirations of the sector.

98 See, for example, Balmer, Pleasence, McDonald and Sandefur (2023), McDonald et al. (2020), McDonald, Kennedy, Hagland and Haultain (2021), McDonald et al. (2022) and McDonald and Haultain (2023).

99 See McDonald et al. (2020), McDonald et al. (2021), McDonald et al. (2022) and McDonald and Haultain (2023).

100 Muller et al. (2021), p.5.

101 McDonald et al. (2020), p.12.

102 McDonald and Haultain (2023), p.70.

Investment in quality people-centred justice data is central to unlocking a new level of understanding about access to justice and strengthening the justice sector's capacity to more effectively respond to legal need. The current pockets of practice to measure what works need to be accelerated, and the evidence of what works, and especially what works better, needs to be brought together to support decision-making at all levels.

Such work requires dedicated resourcing, leadership, and sustained commitment. It cannot occur by accident or without a clear strategic priority and funding. Stand-alone evaluations of specific initiatives, as several participants pointed out, only add to fragmentation and inhibits wider outcomes-based practice and capacity strengthening. One sign of a maturing approach to responding to legal need would be a systematic response to a systemic challenge. Movement in this direction has significant potential to address persistent policy challenges, and move closer to the long standing aspiration of realising justice equity, by doing more of what works to meet need.

Next steps: People-centred justice data, outcomes, and dosage

As outlined in Chapter 1, the information available to assess access to justice and determine questions of what works lags notably behind what we know about the drivers and consequences of legal need.[103] While there is ample evidence that unmet legal need in Victoria is high, the evidence of what should be scaled, how, where, and involving whom remains slim.[104] Exactly 'how much legal is enough to access justice' for 'different types of legal issues' and 'different people and circumstances' remain empirically sparse discussions.[105]

To support practice and policy, a new era of people-centred justice data[106] that includes measurement of outcomes and legal dosage is needed. This requires high-level support and resourcing. Participants in this study repeatedly emphasised how difficult it was to secure funding to enhance data collection and analysis capabilities. Without resources, the justice sector will continue to have limited capacity to generate the robust, evidence-based guidance needed for better policy and practice or to develop persuasive business cases for investment and reform.

The sections below outline areas for investment and commitment to growing the people-centred justice data and evidence base. This in turn can support the integration of the elements of success and successful models into wider programming and policymaking across the justice ecosystem.

Building and using people-centred justice data

Orienting data towards a people-centred analysis shifts the focus from collecting throughputs and single data points to seeing the people behind metrics: what they need, how they are getting to services and help (if at all), what they are getting when they get there, and what they achieve that is of importance and use to them. Using data in this way offers a foundation for a stronger evidence base on what works.

There is also a need to see different people, problems, and places in justice data in order to assess access to justice for different cohorts, types of legal matters, and locations.[107] Data is required to assess the effectiveness of people-centred approaches and to share what makes a difference for different types of users and legal matters.[108]

For example, intake data, supported with regularly updated legal need and capability data, may be used to design and test tools that provide more nuanced guidance to inform service providers' assessments of priority need. This goes to what paths to and through justice look like and work better for different people, and what different people get from their help-seeking journey.

To take another example, what works to meet the needs and capability of different self-represented litigants (SRLs)? There are ways to further build evidence to consider whether and how responses like timely advice and just-in-time assistance (such as duty lawyers) can help provide just resolutions, and for which SRLs, thereby reducing impact and costs on courts and tribunals. A more people-centred data and analysis focus can be applied to these complex contexts to better understand the efficacy of different service provision.[109]

103 McDonald (2021), McDonald and Haultain (2023) and Balmer, Pleasence, McDonald and Sandefur (2023, 2024a, 2024b).

104 McDonald (2021).

105 McDonald (2021), pp.693–752.

106 See, for example, Farrow and Jacobs (2020), Pleasence, Coumarelos, Forell and McDonald (2014), McDonald and Haultain (2023) and Byrom, Piccinin-Barbieri and Wells (2024). Researchers have noted that the potential insights available from existing administrative civil justice data have largely been exhausted. Advancing people centred, evidence based approaches to civil justice requires a new generation of justice data.

107 McDonald and Haultain (2023), p.22.

108 McDonald and Haultain (2023), p.40–41.

109 See further, McDonald, Kennedy, Hagland and Haultain (2021).

Mixed-methods data analysis (qualitative and quantitative) needs to employ intersectional analysis to build the evidence on who experiences the most severe legal need, not simply through single-axis categories of gender, disability, or race.[110] Analysing data in such a way will provide more specific empirical evidence to inform legal assistance and related social policy, and it begins to unpack the relationship between the multiple and intersecting forms of power and privilege that shape peoples' everyday experiences, and people's legal capability and need.

This data needs to be captured, analysed, and distributed not just at an initiative or organisational level, but ideally at a jurisdiction and ecosystem level to ensure that legal and justice institutions can design, implement, and measure the impact of initiatives.

Comparable outcomes and outcome measurement tools

Outcome measurement and outcomes-based practice are areas where further policy and practice guidance, capability development, and investment are needed to significantly advance the evidence base. There is clear movement towards outcomes measurement across the justice sector, including a long-term reform commitment under the new National Access to Justice Partnership 2025–30 on the development of an outcomes-based framework for legal assistance services.[111] It is critical that any outcomes measurement approach is developed consistently with the principles of people-centred justice data. Operationalising outcomes measurement in any meaningful way will also require an organisational data capability uplift.

Establishing a small, standard set of outcome measures and other data points needed to assess what works for people seeking justice, would be an important contribution toward developing more effective responses that can be compared.[112] The elements of the People-Centred Justice Model developed here point to key factors that influence effectiveness, and are likely to provide a useful lens for end-to-end evaluation, including how process and implementation contribute to the achievement of outcomes.

Establishing comparable data and counterfactuals in outcomes measurement is critical to assess which justice initiatives work and to what end. This can be achieved in various ways, such as through rigorous evaluation design, or follow-up outcomes data to allow the comparison of different initiatives.[113] Both approaches require collecting and analysing certain data, some of which is new, to unlock learning and new understanding of effective responses. As a start, efforts to build outcomes measurement must be more strategic, coordinated, and resourced. Only then can the effectiveness of any justice responses be assessed, and benefit-cost questions regarding sustainability and scalability be addressed.

Harnessing technology is potentially one way that more effective people-centred outcomes measurement approaches can be built. Ways to do this are at various stages of investigation across various justice organisations, and in other sectors. Technology can provide cheaper, scalable ways of collecting outcomes data, and this potential remains largely untapped to date, based on the initiatives submitted to this research. Further studies investigating various technological approaches to outcomes measurement hold promise of building the what works evidence base more quickly, easily, and cheaply.

Dosage and data: how much works?

Many initiatives in this study provided legal support of varying dosages along a continuum of legal intervention and provision. For example, in the case of legal assistance services, this included community engagement and legal education, through to information, referrals, advice, minor tasks, and other assistance, as well as casework and representation.

As Burnett and Sandefur (2024) point out, the legal services offered by lawyers are often disproportionate or unsuited to the wider nature of the problems people face. These problems may require: the application of only a little law; a combination of some law, other skills, and support from other allied professionals; or a more fulsome legal and allied

110 See, for example, Johansson (2025), Petrozziello (2025), Reisner et al. (2025) and Rodriguez Martinez (2022).

111 Council of Attorneys-General (2024), pp.24–25.

112 Muller et al. (2021), p.4.

113 See, for example, Australian Centre for Evaluation (2026).

support response.[114] Indeed, as the Public Understanding of Law Survey (PULS) findings demonstrated, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and attributes are significant factors affecting legal problem-solving behaviour, what people do and achieve, and ultimately, whether their legal and capability needs are effectively met.[115] The dosage question of just how much legal people need, in what form, and from whom, is one frontier of research and evaluation critical to improving design and the provision and scaling of what works.

In particular, the question of what lower dose interventions, such as information, education, and advice strategies, work to effectively meet some legal need remains an open and potentially significant breakthrough in understanding what works. Learning the minimum level of support required to effectively meet legal need could perhaps be considered the holy grail of access to justice research. As the PULS demonstrated so clearly, the justice system has thus far failed to provide what most people need.[116] Greater understanding of the outcomes of less intensive and lower cost forms of help that successfully meet need would potentially close justice gaps, particularly for the 'missing middle' or 'missing majority' of people. Greater understanding is also needed as to the value proposition of different forms of education, information, and advice, and how they can complement and augment other available forms of help.

For example, community legal education (CLE) has become a regular fixture in the suite of initiatives designed to improve people's awareness of their legal rights and legal assistance options if they encounter a legal problem. It was a feature of many of the initiatives submitted to this study. While both targeted and broad-reach CLE initiatives may serve different and important functions, greater investment needs to be made to understand the efficiency and effectiveness of these approaches in improving legal capability, supporting behaviour change, and reducing unmet legal need. Calls for more appropriate, tailored, and coordinated approaches for legal capability building,[117] therefore, need to be accompanied by commitments to fund and develop a shared evidence base that can promote effective, capability-enhancing CLE.[118]

Building the evidence base of what dosage works for who can have a significant impact on service provision. Provision of effective lower dose support for the many presents the opportunity to free up finite resources for others who need higher dose support. Where people with higher capability can make effective use of lower intensity services to achieve just outcomes, there is a strong business case to then scale up such initiatives, supported by enhanced assessment, triage, and referral processes based on need and capability. This can then make space for more integrated and intensive forms of help for those who need it. Better evidence, once again, is the key to unlocking the policy and practice decisions needed.

Researching dosage, therefore, goes some way to answering the question which justice system stakeholders and policymakers face: how do you most appropriately calibrate a system where there is a continuum of support services to better meet legal need across the whole community? Doing so requires zooming out from the initiative and organisation level to the wider justice ecosystem level to identify areas for investigation and evidence.

Wider civil justice ecosystem implications

The persistent level of unmet legal need in Victoria demonstrates the importance of increasing the sector's capacity to deliver effective and appropriate services where individual legal capability is insufficient to provide access to justice. This can be enhanced by promoting sustainable practices that minimise duplication, foster collaboration, and enable long-term planning. This is easier said than done.

Revisiting the ecosystem framing from Chapter 1, the findings from this research suggest the usefulness of understanding the justice system as a more dynamic and interdependent system, especially when considering the existing access to justice challenges and the practicalities of implementing people centered justice initiatives in response.

Balmer et al. (2023) observed how diverse causes and consequences of problems and unmet legal need call for multifaceted solutions, and how the quest for access to justice extends far beyond the leadership and oversight of any

114 Burnett and Sandefur (2024), p.1512.

115 Balmer, Pleasence, McDonald and Sandefur (2024a, 2024b).

116 See Balmer, Pleasence, McDonald and Sandefur (2023, 2024a, 2024b).

117 Council of Attorneys-General. (2019), p.10.

118 See Dauvergne, Johnson and Srivastava (2025) for their review of the public legal education and information in British Columbia, which provides a set of recommendations aimed at strengthening these resources, services, and supports. The top recommendation from the report centres on the creation of a Public Legal Education and Information Hub 'to support the entire ecosystem by: creating networks, fostering connectivity, pooling research and innovation resources, evaluating and sharing best practices, (and) developing frontline provider training...'

single organisation. The legal and justice sectors fall within this justice ecosystem governed by separate institutions, with separate responsibilities, powers, and policies that provide further challenges and opportunities to better match services and processes to what people need. As McDonald and Wei (2025) opined, '[a]ccess to justice is more akin to an ecosystem of multiple interacting institutions than a singular justice system charged with and able to deliver access to justice.'

As Dauvergne, Johnson and Srivastava (2025) note:

> The borders of an ecosystem are porous—discernable from a distance, but revealing close up that it is easy to move across the boundary, and that some organisms also belong to adjoining ecosystems on either side of the boundary.[119]

The porous nature of the boundaries is of particular note when considering the range of allied and justice professionals collaborating with justice sector organisations in the initiatives studied. What came through strongly in the research was an appetite for collaboration across the broad ecosystem. Participants frequently spoke to the value of working collaboratively with other legal and allied organisations, rather than in isolation.

The ecosystem framing is also useful when considering the barriers to sustaining and scaling justice initiatives, even those identified as effective, as this research explored.

It is only through understanding the ecosystem level that we can access the broader picture of what problems and clients are being prioritised, who is missing out, what service approaches are being trialled, what data is being gathered, what is being found to be effective, and what is not. But as the ecosystem is organic and multifaceted, and the potential of the reframing from system to ecosystem remains just that, no one holds responsibility for building this broader picture, for creating the shared evidence base, for growing promising approaches.

As this research found, there was an absence of mechanisms for sharing and adopting insights between organisations and more broadly, and naturally a limit to transparency within a system where organisations are competitors for limited funding. Participants spoke of the competitive and time-limited funding environment within which organisations operate, and how this also restricted the ability to scale up initiatives. Fragmented, project-based funding created unstable long-term support that was viewed by participants as limiting organisations' ability to learn, share, and build on successful approaches, both their own and others.

It is important to note that the broader competitive funding environment is a constant subtext for most of our research participants, who were working in legal assistance services. Political and policy priorities can also be seen in the profile of participating initiatives. Naturally, the availability of funding in particular areas has a bearing on the initiation and sustainability of service initiatives. For example, 41 of 66 (62%) of initiatives submitted were focused on supporting people experiencing, or at risk of, family violence, which has been a State and Commonwealth focus area for some years. There is an unquestioned need in these areas, and we note it here as an example of the powerful influence of government policy and funding as to what gets implemented and often sustained, and what does not.

Sustainability and scalability are interrelated, two sides of the same coin in many cases, and symptomatic of a life cycle common to many initiatives. Sustaining initiatives beyond initial pilot funding and resourcing, even when seen as effective and successful in meeting legal need, is often not assured. For the participants in this study, sustainability was fraught, often leading to a reduction or change that appeared to preclude scaling-up. Competing organisational demands may limit the scope and expansion of initiatives and/or the potential to scale them more broadly. In some instances, a failure to achieve sustainability, especially with time-limited and tied project funding, was a challenge for securing further external funding or other core organisation funding. Core funding for one initiative often comes at the expense of other organisational initiatives and activities. On the other hand, success leading to scaling up can also create precarity, where the demand for service continues to exceed capacity and expended resources are overwhelmed. Such is where initiatives become victims of their own success.

Key challenges in scaling and, to some extent, sustaining programs are linked to the challenges in learning and knowing. Activities can only be translated to new contexts when it is understood how they work, who they work for, and how they contribute to planned goals. Access to this critical knowledge depends on the extent to which policy, funding, and organisational settings enable experimentation,

119 Dauvergne, Johnson and Srivastava (2025), p85.

learning, and open dissemination of this learning.[120] Evidence can only be generated where interventions can be tested and evaluated, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Rigorous evaluation and learning are therefore essential to scaling and should be embedded in the design of evidence based programs.[121]

The 66 initiatives participating in Measure for Measure demonstrate considerable effort to address barriers to justice. This work remains largely fragmented, however. There is currently no capacity to aggregate learning across these efforts or to apply emerging insights in a coordinated, system-wide manner. This means that opportunities for broader learning, scaling, and reform are being missed.

At the initiative level, funding and policy support for the implementation of time-limited and discrete projects can also create piecemeal interventions. These are unable to address underlying inequality and vulnerability, and the structures and systems that cause many justice issues in the first place.[122] Funding arrangements can also support isolated interventions by individual organisations, resulting in those organisations implementing independent solutions to major social problems. As Sandefur and Burnett (2023b) point out:

> In such contexts, individual programs may be very effective at working on their piece of a complex problem, but cross-sector or system-wide collaboration are discouraged.[123]

Further, the wider system reform and upstream preventative work that can be undertaken on the back of individual initiatives with discrete, competitive, and/or limited funding streams is finite. As Plage et al. (2025) discuss, questions also remain about the capacity for systemic transformation given the embeddedness of the initiatives in the existing service landscape.

It is through the ecosystem perspective on disparate efforts to build access to justice that the broader question of what works must therefore be examined. This includes bringing together the initiatives, such as those examined in Measure for Measure, to understand, more systematically, what specific gaps in legal need are being filled, and where. One advantage of taking an ecosystem view, for example, is an examination of how different parts of the system come together, how services, projects, and system parts are coupled and interact, where blockages and pain points lie, and how systems thinking and evaluation can be brought together to benefit not only access to justice but also realising just resolution.[124]

Next steps: an ecosystem lens to build on what works

Extensive evidence demonstrating how legal need and capability are patterned across the community reveals the mismatch between what many people need from the justice system and what they are able to get.[125] In addition to the need for better data collection and outcomes measurement as set out above, there is an opportunity to invest in research and evaluation that builds a picture of the justice ecosystem. While the funding and resource challenges are undoubtedly significant, deeper understanding of people's legal capability and their paths to justice can open opportunities to progress wider practice, which better addresses community civil legal need.[126]

Study participants pointed to the importance of referral pathways, supported transitions, and ultimately not losing sight of the person. Other research on access to justice shows that poor or ineffective referrals between services can trap people in a referral loop, increasing frustration, reinforcing ineffective problem-solving, behaviours, and creating significant barriers to resolving legal issues.[127] Strengthening the quality and completeness of information on pathways, including both incoming and outgoing referrals between parts of the justice ecosystem, could substantially enhance the usefulness and reliability of justice system data.[128]

120 Burnett and Sandefur (2024), pp.1530–31.

121 Burnett and Sandefur (2024), p.1534.

122 Pilliar (2022), p.172.

123 Sandefur and Burnett (2023b), p.1345.

124 See further, Balmer, Pleasence, McDonald and Sandefur (2024b).

125 See further, Balmer, Pleasence, McDonald and Sandefur (2023, 2024a, 2024b).

126 See, for example, Farrow and Jacobs (2020).

127 McDonald and Haultain (2023), p.37.

128 McDonald and Haultain (2023), p.37.

There is an additional need for improved, collective data to understand how people journey to and through the justice system, to see what works along the way, who gets stuck and fails to negotiate justice barriers, and whose legal needs remain unmet. This includes gaining a better understanding of how people enter the system, at what service point, at what point in their legal matter, what service levels and supports they receive, how they then move between services, and the outcomes of their legal journey.

Such ecosystem-level data of an individual's help-seeking journey is needed to supplement studies on what works. It is also needed to identify more system-level opportunities to implement practices, such as need and capability-based triage and referral. Once the evidence has been built on what works, including for lower-dose intervention and support, the potential for improving access to justice through implementing a different combination of justice initiatives is enormous when viewed from the ecosystem level.

A high-level understanding is needed if people across the ecosystem are to be more effectively connected to the right service, at the right time, in the right place, and at the right dosage. This can also build a more nuanced and useful understanding of the people at risk of falling into justice system gaps, and what types of safety nets can be put in place to catch them.

Conclusion

Measure for Measure gathers a diverse range of approaches on how lawyers, legal staff and allied professionals are addressing parts of the iceberg of legal need.[129] These initiatives recognise that for the thousands of people who face civil justice problems daily, these problems can result in ongoing hardship and become, in many situations, an absence of justice.[130] By centring people in their justice approaches, the initiatives studied seek to address, in part, this absence.

These varied justice approaches researched have been used to develop an exploratory People-Centred Justice Model, which raises implications and opportunities for program design, evaluation, and further research. In particular, the model provides a set of common elements that can help further studies to build understanding and evidence of what works. As successive access to justice reviews and other research have identified, improved data and evidence regarding what works is the key to unlocking more effective policy and practice.

The challenge of appropriately investing in justice initiatives that meet community legal need requires improved insight into what works, and the capacity to assess effectiveness, sustainability, and to gauge the potential benefits of scaling up. It also requires balancing high-intensity initiatives that many of the people in most need appear to require, but are often cost-prohibitive, with less-intensive initiatives that may be more easily and effectively scaled.

This is only possible with an ecosystem view that rests on an evidence base capable of supporting broader strategic policy and investment. As others have observed, taking the legal need challenge seriously would benefit from the development of a justice epidemiology, where the health and performance of the civil justice ecosystem could be better monitored.[131] As we see it, the evidence base on what works to meet need remains largely underdeveloped to support decision-making beyond the organisational level. As is clear across the 66 initiatives, there is substantial effort to address the barriers to justice at a micro level, but there is currently no capacity to systemically aggregate, learn, and apply insights from those efforts.

The initiatives explored in this research are valued and valuable, and the curiosity, enthusiasm, and passion of the people driving this work cannot be underestimated. Nor should the opportunities to elevate, strengthen, and expand this work be ignored. Efforts are currently constrained on multiple fronts, but as these projects illustrate, there are opportunities. It is hoped that the findings of this report, the building of a collective view of existing approaches, will contribute to the people-centred justice movement. Additionally, the findings encourage a renewed effort towards a coordinated and collaborative quest to build the evidence of what works to meet legal need.

It is hoped this, in turn, will support joint efforts to build a mature, coordinated, and collaborative justice ecosystem that delivers better access to justice and, more importantly, just outcomes for people in need sooner rather than later.

129 See Sandefur (2019) and Silbey (2005).

130 Pilliar (2022), p.201.

131 See Burris, Pacula and Wagenaar (2023) and Pilliar (2023).

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Appendices A: Survey

The following questions formed the initial survey, designed to gather information about the initiatives and their key characteristics.

QUESTIONS

Part 1: The nuts and bolts

The questions in this section aim to provide an overview of the initiative, including its target audience, area of law, geographic scope, partnerships or collaborations, and funding arrangements.

1. What is the name of your organisation(s)?
2. What is the name of the initiative?
3. What is the initiative? Briefly describe the initiative's purpose and how it has been designed to meet the legal needs of particular clients or communities, or to address a particular legal need. Are there any specific features that make it unique?
4. Are you partnering with anyone on this initiative? e.g. other legal organisations, a school, a community organisation, a health service.

   ☐ YES ☐ NO

   4a. *[If answer YES to 4]* Please list any partners.

5. Who are the target clients and/or communities for the initiative? Select all that apply.

   ☐ Vic - general
   ☐ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
   ☐ Culturally and linguistically diverse people
   ☐ Children and young people
   ☐ LGBTQI+ people
   ☐ Older people
   ☐ People affected by climate change
   ☐ People experiencing, or at risk of, family violence
   ☐ People experiencing, or at risk of, financial disadvantage
   ☐ People experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness
   ☐ People living with mental illness
   ☐ People residing in regional, rural or remote areas
   ☐ People with a disability
   ☐ People with low education levels
   ☐ Recent arrivals/asylum seekers
   ☐ Single parents or carers
   ☐ People experiencing, or at risk of, other forms of disadvantage
   ☐ Other (please list):

6. If applicable, approximately how many clients does/did the initiative help annually? If it is an advocacy initiative, or has been running for less than a year, please provide an estimated annual reach. Choose one of the following answers.

   ☐ 1-49
   ☐ 50-99
   ☐ 100-499
   ☐ 500-999
   ☐ 1000+
   ☐ N/A

7. What area of law does the initiative target? Select all that apply.

- [ ] Civil law
- [ ] Criminal law
- [ ] Family law
- [ ] Family violence
- [ ] General legal
- [ ] Other (please list):

8. Are any specific legal problem type/s targeted by this initiative? For example, fines, employment problems, climate justice, housing and tenancy, elder abuse, or child protection.

- [ ] YES
- [ ] NO

9. *[If answer YES to 9]* Please list any specific legal problem(s) targeted.

10. What is the geographic reach of the initiative? Please select the relevant local government area. Select all that apply.

- [ ] National - Australia-wide
- [ ] State - Victoria-wide
- [ ] Alpine Shire
- [ ] Ararat Rural City
- [ ] Ballarat City
- [ ] Banyule City
- [ ] Bass Coast Shire
- [ ] Baw Baw Shire
- [ ] Bayside City
- [ ] Benalla Rural City
- [ ] Boroondara City
- [ ] Brimbank City
- [ ] Buloke Shire
- [ ] Campaspe Shire
- [ ] Cardinia Shire
- [ ] Casey City
- [ ] Central Goldfields Shire
- [ ] Colac Otway Shire
- [ ] Corangamite Shire
- [ ] Darebin City
- [ ] East Gippsland Shire
- [ ] Frankston City
- [ ] Gannawarra Shire
- [ ] Glen Eira City
- [ ] Glenelg Shire
- [ ] Golden Plains Shire
- [ ] Greater Bendigo City
- [ ] Greater Dandenong City
- [ ] Greater Geelong City
- [ ] Greater Shepparton City
- [ ] Hepburn Shire
- [ ] Hindmarsh Shire
- [ ] Hobsons Bay City
- [ ] Horsham Rural City
- [ ] Hume City
- [ ] Indigo Shire
- [ ] Kingston City
- [ ] Knox City
- [ ] Latrobe City
- [ ] Loddon Shire
- [ ] Macedon Ranges Shire
- [ ] Manningham City
- [ ] Mansfield Shire
- [ ] Maribyrnong City
- [ ] Maroondah City
- [ ] Melbourne City
- [ ] Melton City
- [ ] Mildura Rural City
- [ ] Mitchell Shire
- [ ] Moira Shire
- [ ] Monash City
- [ ] Moonee Valley City
- [ ] Moorabool Shire
- [ ] Moreland City
- [ ] Mornington Peninsula Shire
- [ ] Mount Alexander Shire
- [ ] Moyne Shire
- [ ] Murrindindi Shire
- [ ] Nillumbik Shire
- [ ] Northern Grampians Shire
- [ ] Port Phillip City
- [ ] Pyrenees Shire
- [ ] Queenscliffe Borough
- [ ] South Gippsland Shire
- [ ] Southern Grampians Shire
- [ ] Stonnington City
- [ ] Strathbogie Shire
- [ ] Surf Coast Shire
- [ ] Swan Hill Rural City
- [ ] Towong Shire
- [ ] Wangaratta Rural City
- [ ] Warrnambool City
- [ ] Wellington Shire
- [ ] West Wimmera Shire
- [ ] Whitehorse City
- [ ] Whittlesea City
- [ ] Wodonga City
- [ ] Wyndham City
- [ ] Yarra City
- [ ] Yarra Ranges Shire
- [ ] Yarriambiack Shire
- [ ] Other (please list)

11. What year did the initiative start?
12. How was the initiative first funded? Please list all initial funders, including any core funding.
13. Is the initiative currently running?

☐ YES ☐ NO

14. *[If answer YES to 14]* How is the initiative currently funded? Please list all current funders, including any core funding.
15. *[If answer NO to 14]* Why did the initiative stop?

Part 2: Why, what, how, what more, and what next?

In this section we would like to understand more about the initiative, including where the idea came from, how it works in practice, how you know it's meeting needs, future plans, and what challenges you may be facing in implementing, sustaining or scaling up the work.

13. **Why** was the initiative developed?

Where did the idea come from? What problem did it aim to address? How was the problem identified?

14. **What** makes the initiative work?

How does it meet the needs and capabilities of the target clients/communities?

15. **How** do you know the initiative is working or showing promise?

How do you know it's making a difference for the target clients/communities?

16. **What more** would you like to know about how this initiative is working, and who it is working for (and who it is not)?

17. **What next** for this initiative?

Is it ongoing, is it scaling up, is it winding down? Tell us the plans for the initiative.

18. **Barriers.** What, if anything, is stopping you from doing what you want to do with this initiative, internally and externally?

Please note: all answers to this question will be de-identified and anonymised.
Please describe any barriers , for e.g. in continuing, reaching target clients/ communities, scaling up and/or expanding to new service areas, new legal problems, and/or new client groups?

19. Of the barriers you listed for 22, what do you consider to be the most significant barrier to the current or future success of the initiative?

Please note: all answers to this question will be de-identified and anonymised.
Please describe the details of this barrier and how it has limited/or may limit the initiative's success

Where to from here? Next stage – Interviews

The question in this section records whether survey participants consent to a follow-up interview.

Survey responses will be supplemented with interviews with a number of selected participants to explore initiatives in more detail. In the event we wish to follow up, can we contact you to discuss an interview about this initiative?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Appendices B: Interview

The following questions were used as guiding questions in follow-up interviews with select participants who completed the initial survey. The interviews were designed to explore survey responses in greater depth and to gather more detailed insights into the initiatives described.

QUESTIONS

Part 1: Initiative story

The questions in this section focus on understanding the initiative, the legal need/s it seeks to address, the response adopted, the rationale for selecting this approach, and the role of collaboration in its delivery.

1. Tell us about the initiative
   a. How does it work, who does it target, and how has it evolved?
   b. How did you identify the need and the response?
   c. How did this idea get prioritised?
   [If a partnership] How were the project partners involved in the design?
   [If a co-design] Tell us more about the co-design process

Part 2: Effectiveness

The questions in this section aim to determine which aspects of the initiative are considered effective, the outcomes achieved and supporting evidence, and the monitoring, evaluation and learning practices in place.

2. What elements of the initiative do you think make it work?
   [If a partnership] What makes it work for the partners?
   [If a partnership] What makes the partnership work for you?

3. Does the initiative address the variety of needs and capabilities of your target clients?
   [If answer YES to 3] In what way?

4. How is success for this initiative defined?
   a. Do you think the initiative is succeeding?
   b. How are you measuring this?

5. Does this link to wider organisational data, monitoring, evaluation and learning practices?

6. Do you think the initiative is delivering better outcomes? How do you know?

7. Is there any other evidence you would like to be able to collect and use?
   [If answer YES to 7] What do you need to do this?

Part 3: Funding

The questions in this section address funding arrangements, approaches to funding prioritisation, and considerations of cost-effectiveness.

8. Tell us about the current funding arrangements for the initiative
   a. Who currently funds the initiative?
   b. Is the funding ongoing or time-limited?
   c. *[If the project was initially grant/pilot funded and is now core funded]* How did this move to core funding?
   d. Is there funding allocated for monitoring, evaluation and learning? Are there organisational resources to help do this?
   e. Is this an initiative you prioritise for funding over others? Why or why not?
   f. *[If it is grant-funded]* Would you divert core funding to continue it?

9. Do you think the initiative is cost-effective? Why or why not?

Part 4: Sustainability and scalability

The questions in this section consider the longevity of the initiative, as well as the opportunities and challenges associated with scaling up and sustaining effective approaches.

10. Beyond funding, is the initiative sustainable?
11. Do you think the initiative can or should be scaled up?
    a. *[If answer YES to 11]* Other than funding, what is needed to make this happen?
    b. Do you think the initiative can be taken up by others?
12. Because of the tailored nature of this initiative, do you think there are limits to how far it can be scaled up?

Part 5: Further information

The questions in this section capture any further information relevant to the initiative.

13. Did you take any risks with this initiative that paid off?
14. What one thing gets you most excited about this initiative?
15. Is there anything else you think we should know?

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