

Pro Bono Sector Impact Toolkit

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR MEASURING THE IMPACT
OF YOUR ORGANISATION'S LEGAL PRO BONO WORK

THE **NATIONAL**
PROBONO CENTRE

NCVO



Introduction

The purpose of this toolkit is to assist pro bono charities and organisations in measuring and demonstrating the impact of their work. Co-designed by the National Pro Bono Centre (NPBC) with a wide range of organisations and individuals in the legal pro bono sector through a series of workshops, and further developed by specialists at NCVO, this toolkit is expressly intended for use by all kinds of organisations with differing needs.

Having been piloted successfully by LawWorks to measure cross-organisational impact, and by University House to measure project-specific impact, both organisations share useful reflections throughout this toolkit.

The central foundation of this toolkit is a focus on theories of change, which we will explain should underpin all aspects of your work. Put into practice, a theory of change will support you to:

- understand and explain how your work achieves wider change;
- improve the effectiveness and efficiency of your work;
- demonstrate the value for money your work achieves; and
- make compelling arguments for funding to continue and expand your work.



**The toolkit is an impressive body of work.
We used it to demonstrate how a high-value project
proposal could achieve substantive change.”**

– Eddie Coppinger, Director, University House



We wanted to better understand the difference our work is making across the organisation, both for the people we support and for those delivering pro bono services. Developing a clearer approach to impact measurement has helped us articulate our value, strengthen our learning, and ensure we are focusing our efforts where they have the greatest effect.”

– Hayley Nock, Head of Strategic Development, LawWorks

Contributors

Steering Group

- LawWorks
- Advocate
- Norfolk Community Law Service
- South West London Law Centres
- Free Representation Unit
- Slaughter & May

Workshop Participants

- University House
- Access Social Care
- Central England Law Centre
- YESS Law
- Spire Barristers
- Simmons & Simmons
- TrustLaw
- A4ID
- Action Against Medical Accidents
- Centrepont

Impact measuring journey

Across the vibrant legal pro bono sector, our many organisations take a wide variety of approaches to achieving their aims.

The resources in this toolkit will enable your organisation to develop a theory of change that is best suited to your own approach.

Your theory of change can be limited to a single project, or it can be organisation-wide. Measuring impact is ultimately a journey that can take organisations in different directions depending on what you are trying to discover or articulate.

To help you, this toolkit includes **five models** which illustrate what a theory of change could look like for different types of organisations, depending on what you are measuring or how you approach your work. Alongside each model, we have included examples and insights into measuring outcomes corresponding to the relevant type of activity.

It is likely that no single model is a perfect fit for your organisation, though some trial-and-error is to be expected. These models will support you to develop your own theory of change for

your project/organisation, and you can ‘pick and mix’ across our models to get started.

With each model, we have included an explanation of the theory of change, a selection of indicators that can be used to track outcomes, and suggested methods of collecting data corresponding to these indicators. There are a number of examples and templates which highlight best practice for creating surveys and reports.

For ease of use, this toolkit comprises separate documents for each model, as well as related resources covering survey design, case studies and impact reporting. We have made the visual component of each model, as well as a blank template, available on [Canva](#) to provide an easy-to-adapt basis for your own theory of change.

Rest assured that you do not need to use every tool or measure outlined in the models. Most organisations will start small and build over time. Once you start using these tools, you can revisit them over time to refine and tailor your approach.

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The flexible, ‘pick and mix’ approach allowed us to tailor the framework to our programmes.”

– Hayley Nock, Head of Strategic Development, LawWorks

5 models for a theory of change

01 Client work for individuals

For organisations or projects which primarily **deliver pro bono directly to individuals** in the form of advice, casework or representation.



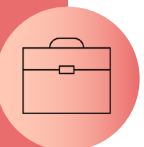
02 Client work for organisations

For organisations or projects which primarily support **charities, social enterprises or community groups** with matters including legal advice, casework and governance.



03 Collaboration with pro bono lawyers

For measuring the impact of **working with pro bono lawyers**, including on capacity and sustainability.



04 Legal sector pro bono work

For measuring outcomes for **volunteers and/or legal sector organisations** participating in pro bono, such as on skills and motivation.



05 Policy influencing

For organisations or projects which **contribute to policy, practice, or systems change**, such as through evidence, stakeholder engagement or strategic litigation.



Implementation in practice

To implement the toolkit effectively:

- **Secure leadership buy-in early:** Ensure senior leadership (including trustees and board members, where appropriate) understand this toolkit's purpose, the time commitment, and how learnings from it will be used – this helps to protect time and sustain follow-through. This is particularly important if you are measuring impact across your organisation, as it may raise fundamental questions about how your organisation works.
- **Co-design internally:** Involve staff and volunteers in selecting the minimum set of measures so it feels realistic and useful.
- **Co-design with beneficiaries:** Where possible, even light-touch feedback from beneficiaries can improve relevance and inclusion.
- **Use findings:** Plan a short reflection session to turn data into decisions. Even if you don't have the capacity to produce an impact report, it is still important to reflect on and learn from the findings. Don't be deterred if your data suggests something isn't working as well as you hoped – use it to improve! This is one of the strengths of this approach.
- **Keep it simple:** Take small steps at first!

“

We're still in the early stages of rolling out our approach, but the process has already helped to inform internal discussions and shape our strategic thinking. Over time, we expect it will enable us to articulate our impact more clearly to funders, partners and stakeholders, and to demonstrate the value of our work more consistently and on a cross-organisational basis.”

– Hayley Nock, Head of Strategic Development, LawWorks

EVALUATING YOUR USE OF THE TOOLKIT

01. Plan

- Secure buy-in and design your approach
- Start with a model theory of change (based on the type of pro bono you deliver)
- Confirm your outcomes and evaluation framework

02. Do

- Collect lightweight measuring and evaluation data as you go

03. Learn

- Review what the data says about outcomes and quality
- Sense-check findings with staff/volunteers and – where possible – clients

04. Review

- Summarise results using something like the impact report template
- Decide what to change, what to keep, and what to measure next cycle

“

The toolkit has helped us to collect and structure data more pro-actively, instead of waiting to see what funders will ask for.”

– Shah Begum, Projects Director & Solicitor, University House

Impact Measuring Lifecycle

Planning

Assumptions

Data collection

Reporting

Planning

A **theory of change** is a specific and measurable description of social change that forms the basis for planning, ongoing decision-making and evaluation, based on evidence and experience. Typically, your organisation's theory of change will set out:

- **the intended impact:** the long-term change you are working towards;
- **the outcomes:** the shorter-term changes you expect and how they contribute to achieving that impact;
- **the activities:** what you do, and how these activities are expected to support change;
- **the assumptions:** the conditions, enablers and risks that influence whether change happens as expected.

Not everything can be realistically measured, so typically some **outcomes** and **activities** are prioritised. These are usually the ones which are pivotal to your work, which represent the result of a chain of smaller changes, which unlock other outcomes, or which are most relevant to your funders or potential funders.

Each model theory of change in this toolkit comes with an **evaluation framework**, which explains how to measure progress

towards outcomes through **indicators** and an appropriate method of **data collection**.

Assumptions

Every theory of change relies on certain assumptions which must hold true for change to happen. Identifying assumptions can be useful to identify risks, test learning and strengthen decision-making. Some of the assumptions an organisation in the pro bono sector might make include:

- **Demand and engagement:** Individuals, organisations or partners are willing and able to engage with pro bono support when it is offered.
- **Appropriateness of the intervention:** The type and scope of pro bono support provided are suitable for the needs being addressed and are delivered at the right time.
- **Quality and consistency:** Pro bono support is of sufficient quality, consistency and continuity to contribute meaningfully to change.
- **Capacity to act on support:** Clients or organisations have the capacity, resources and stability needed to act on the legal support or advice they receive.
- **External environment:** Wider factors such as policy, funding, court backlogs, or organisational contexts do not prevent

intended outcomes from being achieved.

- **Volunteer capability and motivation:** Volunteers have the skills, confidence and support needed to deliver effective pro bono work and remain motivated to participate.
- **Effective coordination and relationships:** Relationships between charities and legal firms are well-managed and based on shared expectations.
- **Learning and adaptation:** Organisations can reflect on learning and adapt their approach in response to what evidence shows.

Does the success of your work rely on any of these assumptions? Are there other assumptions underpinning your work? Reviewing these can be a useful reflection on your work and your context.

Another point to consider: contribution, not attribution

Pro bono support is usually one of several factors that contribute to change. Exploring this can support learning and reflection. Where appropriate, you might ask clients or organisations questions such as: "What else helped to bring about this change?"

Data collection

You will need to collect data to measure your impact against the indicators in your theory of change. This toolkit includes resources you can use to carry out surveys in line with best practice, as well as tips on storing and evaluating that data, all of which can be adapted as needed:

- a. Survey design advice:** A GDPR-compliant introduction and optional profile questions which you can use in any survey.
- b. Core client/org survey:** A short set of questions focusing on satisfaction, outcomes and what next, designed to work across client work with individuals and organisations.
- c. Core pro bono lawyer survey:** A short set of questions for volunteers (and, where relevant, firms/chambers) to understand experience and outcomes from delivering pro bono.
- d. Model examples:** Example question sets corresponding to each model theory of change.
- e. Guidance:** Information on how to distribute surveys and build your own questions and tools.

Reporting

Once you have collected your data, you will want to review it, learn from it and report it, for example to stakeholders or funders. There are many ways to report impact, including videos, presentations, webpages or dashboards. These are often brought together through an impact report.

This toolkit includes an impact report template to help you think about structure, alongside guidance on how to describe what you delivered, what changed as a result, how you know this and what you will do differently in the next cycle.

Further reading

[NCVO evaluation guidance \(evaluation frameworks, building tools, analysis and report writing\)](#) NCVO evaluation webpages

[NCVO theory of change guidance](#)

[Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit](#) (particularly useful if you want to learn more about other possible tools to use)

Glossary

Type	Term	Definition
General	Legal pro bono	As defined in the Joint Pro Bono Protocol available on the LawWorks website, "legal advice or representation provided by lawyers in the public interest including to individuals, charities and community groups who cannot afford to pay for that advice or representation and where public and alternative means of funding are not available".
	Pro bono charity	Charities that enable or broker legal pro bono, either as their primary purpose or as a key aspect of their work
	Activity	What your organisation delivers to create change in the world, such as services (e.g. providing advice or legal support, training, campaigning and influencing work), or research and the resulting reports
Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL)	Outcome	The real-world changes you create through your activities – changes for people, groups, organisations or wider society, or for things like the environment or justice system.
	Impact	The big picture, long-term change you work towards, rather than what you see on a day-to-day basis. Impact is complex, as many actors work to achieve it, making it more difficult to attribute to the work of an individual organisation.
	Monitoring	The routine, systematic collection of information to assess your progress against your plans.
	Evaluation	The use of monitoring and other information to make judgments on how you are doing.
	Indicators	The individual pieces of information you collect to tell you, for example whether an outcome has been achieved, how an activity has been delivered and to whom. They are expressed in neutral language.
	Assumptions	The underlying beliefs, based on evidence and experience, about why one step in the theory of change is expected to lead to the next and what must hold true for change to happen.

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