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A Conceptual Framework for Measuring Criminal Justice Success in Responding to Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Crimes:

Final Results and Recommendations



VIOLENCE
AGAINST
WOMEN ACT

MEASURING
EFFECTIVENESS
INITIATIVE

JRSA
Justice Research and Statistics Association

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Introduction and Overview

The Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), first authorized by the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (VAWA) and amended (or continued) through subsequent, develops the nation's capacity to reduce domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking (hereafter called "VAWA crimes"). They do so by administering 19 grant programs designed to strengthen services to victims and hold offenders accountable. Four of these are formula programs which OVW distributes to states accordingly, and 15 are discretionary grant programs for which OVW is responsible for creating program parameters, qualifications, eligibility, and deliverables in accordance with authorizing legislation. Each program has specific legislatively mandated purpose areas, such as training, funding law enforcement staff positions, providing victim services, establishing specialized units, and many more.

To aid in measuring the effectiveness of these vast efforts, grantees report quantitative and qualitative data to OVW twice per year through a progress report. The data are cleaned and compiled after each reporting period, and summarized every two years into a Report to Congress. The progress reports currently capture a series of outputs (counted activities), such as types of community partners, frequency of meetings, task forces formed, people trained in various topics, victims served (or not), or the number of bed nights provided at transitional housing programs.¹

The data reported in current progress reports are limited when it comes to the ability to assess outcomes that result from these efforts and funding. For example, while OVW can track the number of law enforcement policies developed, there is no information related to the impact of those policies on the community unless grantees take it upon themselves to report those changes in the qualitative

The Conceptual Framework is supported by three accompanying reports and one supplemental matrix that we reference throughout this document:

1. Literature Review
2. Dataset Inventory
3. Research Agenda
4. Indicators Matrix

¹ Outputs represent products and services delivered to a program's clients, while outcomes represent changes in clients or communities resulting from program activities and outputs (Wholey, 2004).

narrative sections of the report. Similarly, a Coordinated Community Response, or a multidisciplinary, comprehensive approach to VAWA crimes, serves as the cornerstone upon which much of the grantee work is based--yet, that section of the progress report is limited to outputs about how often grantees convened their community partners. This provides grantees with little ability to show OVW and other stakeholders the impacts of that coordination. By developing more meaningful outcomes for grantees to report that are minimally burdensome to collect, OVW can better measure the success of their mission and their vast programming.

In 2020, OVW funded the Violence Against Women Act Measuring Effectiveness Initiative (VAWA MEI), which is a part of the Catherine E. Cutler Institute for Health and Social Policy at the University of Southern Maine's Muskie School of Public Service, and the Justice Research and Statistics Association, to research, pilot test, evaluate, and ultimately recommend new measures that OVW grantees can use to report on these outcomes and to help them and OVW to gauge the success of law enforcement's response to VAWA crimes. In particular, the focus has been on three of the discretionary programs; the Improving Criminal Justice Responses to Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking Grant Program (ICJR); the Rural Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking Program (Rural); and the Tribal Governments Program (TG). This report outlines the findings of this project.

Measuring Success

Any attempt to measure outcomes in the criminal justice response to VAWA crimes, particularly those for law enforcement, must be considered within longstanding and complex contexts. First and foremost, OVW grantees, particularly those in law enforcement agencies, can use VAWA funding for a wide range of potential activities. For example, the Improving Criminal Justice Response (ICJR) Program has 22 named purpose areas that range from implementing pro arrest programs to coordinating computer tracking systems to planning, developing, and establishing comprehensive victim service and support centers. This means that two ICJR grantees, both focused on law enforcement purpose areas, may undertake very different activities with their funding; one may use their funding to staff a specialized domestic violence unit within their local law enforcement agency, while another might focus on training to reduce gender bias in law enforcement officers. This complicates the identification of universal outcomes that can apply to a variety of grantees across purpose areas and activities.

Outcomes should also be conceptualized in terms of short- vs. long-term. Short-term outcomes are typically measured at the end of a program or soon afterward (e.g., the victim is more knowledgeable about her/his legal rights), allowing for more direct relationships to be inferred between activities and results. However, long-term outcomes occur both later in time and further from direct program activities (e.g., crime reduction in a city) and are more challenging to link directly to program activities due to factors that may intervene between the end of program activities and the observed long-term outcome.

Further, a single indicator can be interpreted differently depending on the larger context. For example, increased victimization reporting can signal that a response to VAWA crimes is building victims' trust in the criminal justice system, and thus their confidence it will serve them if they report, or it can mean that more crime is occurring.

Lastly, connecting particular law enforcement outcomes to specific VAWA grant purpose areas or activities must account for any number of other social, political, and environmental factors. These factors may include, but are not limited to: variations in local laws, policies and procedures; differing definitions of key outcome terms (such as recidivism) or the measures used to capture them; differences in which outcomes are desired by various agencies; and the difficult task of implementing new data collection.

Purpose of this Project

The purpose of this project was to develop a foundational, research-based conceptual framework that logically connects the interventions undertaken by OVV's funded grantees to longer-term outcomes experienced by victims.² At OVV's direction, the project focused specifically on law enforcement's response to VAWA crimes. In addition, the project identified key outcomes measures that can be collected and reported in a reliable manner to effectively demonstrate the effectiveness of VAWA-funded programs. These recommended measures were rooted in research, generated from existing data when possible, and field-tested by a volunteer pool of grantees.

This report represents the culmination of the project and presents the final conceptual model and recommended indicators. The project team undertook these efforts in collaboration with experts, stakeholders, and practitioners, and reviewed a wide range of literature and data sources to identify measures and indicators. The first half of this paper presents the conceptual framework and provides evidence of the linkages contained in the model. The second half describes the field-testing process, the recommended indicators that emerged, and the lessons learned from pilot sites about how to implement this type of data collection effort in the future. The conclusion of the report offers considerations to OVV for how to approach this process of outcomes measurement going forward.

² The project focused on outcomes for adult victims (e.g., over the age of 18). Child victims are a distinct population with unique needs and are treated differently by the legal system.

The Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework outlines how an outcome is achieved, showing the pathways from a program's activities to outcomes to the long-term desired impacts of that program (Sullivan, 2016; Van der Waltd, 2020). Creating a unified conceptual framework for grantees engaged in law enforcement work and coordinated community responses provides a common set of outcome measures from which OVW or its grantees may choose to best capture whether specific objectives are being met. Ideally, the framework will enable the field to move from reporting on activity counts, or "outputs," toward demonstrating the tangible outcomes and impacts that result from their VAWA-funded work.

Methods

The first phase of this project employed a mixed-methods approach to gathering and synthesizing information to inform the conceptual framework and list of measures to be tested in the field. This included consulting with an Advisory Board of experts and analyzing OVW grantee data (both qualitative and quantitative), each of which are described in more detail below. The conceptual framework also draws upon the findings from the comprehensive literature review and scan of datasets available at the national and other levels; each of these research efforts are documented as accompanying reports. While it is presented here in a linear fashion, the process for developing the conceptual framework was iterative; findings and lessons learned from the field-testing phase of the work have been incorporated into the final conceptual model presented here.

Advisory Board

The project team convened a board of eight (8) experts to provide critical insights to the development of the conceptual model. The advisory board members included both academic experts and OVW grantees who are active in the field. Members each participated in an in-depth interview prior to convening as a full group. The interviews were tailored to each person's area of expertise and covered topics such as victim reporting, victim safety, victim empowerment, offender accountability, coordinated community response, procedural justice, and prevention. In each instance, follow-up questions asked participants about possible outcomes and measurement. Advisory board members were also engaged in two on-line virtual meetings in June and July of 2020. During these meetings, the project team presented the results of the data collection efforts and solicited members' feedback. The team also presented a draft of the conceptual model and held small group "breakout" conversations to allow members to react to it in smaller, facilitated conversations. The second session also focused on indicators and measurement considerations.

Grantee Data (Quantitative and Qualitative)

Grantees report quantitative and qualitative data to OVW twice per year. Although grantee-reported data is limited in what it can tell us on its own, it lends insight to the project when viewed in the context of other data sources. The project team analyzed the information from one reporting period (January to June 2018) for the ICJR, Rural, and TG Programs to identify which grantees engaged in law enforcement activities, which activities they were most likely to engage in and report on, and how these data reporting patterns related to their grant purpose areas (as described in VAWA authorizing legislation).

The quantitative analysis identified grantees engaged in any activities related to law enforcement (LE-related activities) by whether or not the grantee: selected at least one law enforcement-related purpose area; identified themselves as a law enforcement agency; or reported data on at least one indicator related to law enforcement. The project team then analyzed the data reported by that pool of grantees to identify the indicators on which they were most likely to report information.

The team also examined all narrative data from grantees who indicated that they (or their MOU partners) carried out LE-related activities or indicated that they undertook training activities during the same reporting period. The analysis of qualitative narrative text examined what grantees indicated were important outcomes that were not being measured elsewhere, and how they referred to existing or potential measures for these outcomes. Using Nvivo qualitative analysis software, project staff coded the narrative responses to identify information provided on the short-term and intermediate outcome categories generated from the literature review as well as our knowledge of what grantees are funded to implement. Outcomes that were not easily categorized using the lists created from the literature were also noted.

Defining the Problem

Law enforcement's response to crimes reported or identified generally consists of investigating and either making an arrest or closing the case. Historically, police departments' success has been measured in terms of crime rates, arrest, and/or clearance rates; yet few VAWA crimes are reported, fewer arrests are made, and even fewer are referred from law enforcement to prosecution. This can happen for myriad reasons. These might include factors such as victim blaming, doubting victim credibility, inconsistent departmental leadership, lack of criminal justice actors' awareness about the dynamics of VAWA crimes, gender and/or racial bias, and various geographical and socioeconomic factors (O'Neal et al., 2019; O'Neal & Spohn, 2017; Pattavina et al., 2016; Shaw et al., 2016; Spohn & Tellis, 2012, 2019; U.S. Department of Justice, 2015).

Reporting rates of VAWA crimes to law enforcement agencies, particularly sexual assault, are low (Sacco, 2019)³ and vary across jurisdictions (Lonsway & Archambault, 2012). Many victims may never report their victimizations to law enforcement, or may not wish to participate in a law enforcement investigation. Victims' reasons for not reporting are many, including self-blame, guilt, fear of consequences for the offender, fear of reprisal, and lack of belief that reporting will result in beneficial outcomes (Carretta et al., 2015; Logan & Valente, 2015; Paul et al., 2013; Spencer et al., 2017; Spohn et al., 2017). Domestic violence survivors may also be reluctant to report abuse to the police due to mandatory arrest laws and policies, which can result in higher rates of dual arrest or arrest of the victim solely (Hirschel & Deveau, 2017; Schwartz, 2012).

In addition, for many victims of VAWA crimes, individual perceptions of success vary widely and may go beyond reporting, crime, arrest and/or clearance rates, relating instead to improvements in well-being such as improved safety or housing as described in the Literature Review (see "Victim/survivor safety and well-being"). Victims may not want the crime they have experienced to receive a criminal justice response, instead preferring a response centered in healing and avoidance of re-traumatization (Deer, 2018). Other researchers who have studied this issue have mapped out a social and emotional well-being framework for domestic violence programs which focuses on the factors that contribute to quality of life, including increased access to resources, increased connections and support, enhanced justice, adequate social and economic opportunities, and safety (Sullivan, 2016). Thus, in addition to including outcomes related to the criminal justice response and successful collaborations (such as coordinated community responses, or contacts with non-criminal justice agencies), a comprehensive view of success must also consider procedural justice (perceptions of justice processes), access to services that support well-being, victim safety and re-victimization, and offender accountability (each of which is described in more detail in the subsequent section). This framework attempts to address each of these domains.

This conceptual framework describes the general activity-to-outcome pathways for a wide range of unique, locally-focused efforts and is not intended to establish an expectation that grantees must or should engage in all activities. Moreover, most OVW grantees operate within a broad system of complimentary services and supports. Thus, the conceptual framework should be viewed as a mechanism by which to demonstrate the ways in which multiple agencies, programs and partners contribute to the larger, cumulative result of victim well-being.

³For example, Sacco found the rate of sexual assaults reported in the 2017 National Crime Victimization Survey was triple the number reported by police in the same year according to the Uniform Crime Report.

Strategic Areas of Intervention

In response to the challenges described above, OIW grantees engage in a wide range of activities within the funded purpose areas to ensure that law enforcement agencies and officers understand and work to support the rights and interests of victims. These law enforcement-related activities fall under five broad categories, all of which are incorporated into the conceptual model:

1. Engage in **coordinated community response**, defined as multidisciplinary teams that shape local approaches for preventing and responding to violence and abuse, provide cross-disciplinary training, facilitate referrals, and assess gaps and weaknesses in the community's response to domestic and sexual violence.
2. Develop, revise, or implement **policy and procedures**, defined as internal agency and/or organizational guidelines for responding to domestic and sexual violence.
3. Enhance **data systems and infrastructure**, defined as computer systems and software whose purpose is to collect and track data related to domestic and sexual violence cases, and communicate with other data systems.
4. Provide **training for law enforcement personnel**, defined as information on sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking that enables professionals to improve their response to victims/survivors as it relates to their role in the system.
5. Develop and implement **specialized units**, defined as centralized or coordinated groups, units, or dedicated staff of police officers, prosecutors, probation officers, judges, or other court staff responsible for sexual assault and/or domestic violence cases.

The Conceptual Model

The following conceptual model (Figure 1) visually depicts how the OVW-funded law enforcement activities are hypothesized to flow logically to the desired long-term outcome of enhanced victim well-being.⁴ Starting on the left with the **strategic initiatives**, or activities of OVW funded grantees, the model proceeds to the right to demonstrate the progression of outcomes or results of these activities. The large blue box describes the **specific efforts and outcomes of actions taken by law enforcement agencies and law enforcement officers**. The blue box to the right depicts the mid-term outcome that is expected when the short-term outcomes are achieved: law enforcement agencies understand and work to support the rights and interests of victims. As the model illustrates, both the short- and mid-term outcomes of law enforcement efforts subsequently impact and influence the outcomes for victims.

Outcomes for victims: This model contends that as law enforcement agencies and officers work toward short and mid-term outcomes, these achievements influence a victim’s experience of procedural justice, access to adequate services, personal safety, and reduced re-victimization. We also include two outcomes for offenders that should result from these programs: increased offender accountability and reduced offender recidivism. The conceptual framework contends that when these outcomes for offenders are met, victims experience increased safety and reduced re-victimization. Although not depicted overtly, the model recognizes an inherent tension that exists between law enforcement agencies and officers and victims: agencies and officers, who are tasked with enforcing the law, sometimes take actions that conflict with the wishes and needs expressed by victims.

Ultimate result: As demonstrated in the literature and by this conceptual model, an improved system response yields greater procedural justice, adequate services and supports, and increased safety for victims, which ultimately leads to improved health and well-being in the long-term.

Externalities: Included on the bottom of the model is a list of externalities – underlying factors that may impact activities and outcomes that are outside of program control. These include turnover and attrition among law enforcement personnel; the resources available to an agency (e.g., staff, time, funding, etc.); the array of local services available; local prosecutorial and court systems; and local, state, and federal laws.

⁴ The conceptual model focuses on adult victims (e.g., over the age of 18). Child victims are a distinct population with unique needs and are treated differently by the legal system.

Figure 1. A conceptual model for Law Enforcement activities to improve the response to VAWA crimes.



This conceptual model illustrates the logical progression of how OVW-funded work should lead to the ultimate result that victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking experience enhanced well-being. Reading from left to right, the model depicts how grantee-funded activities improve outcomes for law enforcement agencies and officers; the subsequent results chain illustrates how these short-term outcomes connect to victim well-being in the longer term.

Evidence of Linkages: From Interventions to Outcomes

As described above, this model contends that the actions of law enforcement agencies and officers influence victims' experiences of well-being in the long-term. The following section provides a summary of evidence from the literature, existing data sources, and the knowledge and expertise of the project Advisory Board members and the project team to demonstrate the connections that exist between the interventions and outcomes specified in the conceptual model, and further supports the recommendation that OVW should gather information from grantees in relation to these areas.

Outcomes for Law Enforcement

Of particular interest while developing this conceptual model was how law enforcement agency culture (often referred to as “police culture”) can be reformed to more positively respond to VAWA crimes. Many factors can influence organizational culture, including systems and processes, behavior and attitudes of employees, areas of expertise, values and traditions, and management and leadership styles. A handful of studies into police culture suggest reform efforts must simultaneously address individual officer mindsets and whole-agency culture in order to implement change (McLean et al., 2020; Ingram, 2013; Stoughton, 2015). The advisory board members also distinguished between the outcomes for individual officers as compared to agency-level outcomes (AB Discussion, Session #1). Although the studies cited above do not examine the impact of police culture on VAWA crimes, they do recognize the significant effect of police culture on community outcomes and the potential impact that training reform may have on changing the culture of law enforcement. Thus, the conceptual model separates changes within law enforcement agency culture from changes in the individual knowledge, perceptions and actions of officers, noting that both are inextricably linked.

Numerous studies have shown that attitudes, perceptions, myth acceptance, and belief in traditional gender roles have negative implications for how law enforcement responds to VAWA crimes (Garza and Franklin, 2020; Franklin et al. 2020; Garza et al., 2020; Sleath & Bull, 2017; Stewart and Madden 1997; Venema, 2019). When officers write in case records that victims are the reason for investigations stalling, officers are less likely to complete other investigative steps or refer the case to prosecution (Shaw et al., 2016). Moreover, officer attitudes and beliefs have been tied to victim reluctance to remain engaged. When victims and survivors feel invalidated, judged, or blamed for their victimizations, they become subject to secondary victimization which can exacerbate their trauma symptoms (Ahrens et al., 2010; Lorenz et al., 2019; Ullman & Peter-Hagene, 2014). In turn, they may be more likely to avoid or discontinue their participation in the criminal justice process (Feeney et al., 2018; Lorenz et al., 2019; Patterson, 2011). Relatedly, improved knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs can have a beneficial effect. One study showed police who had more years in the force, who viewed victim advocates favorably, and who reported more knowledge of available services provided more frequent service referrals (Goodson et al., 2020).

OVW grantees also provided anecdotal evidence of the importance of building law enforcement's knowledge and capacity of VAWA crimes, and cited short-term outcomes such as increased referrals to supportive services, increased use of protocols, improved data collection and tracking, better communication, use of victim-centered investigative techniques, and higher-quality evidence gathering (Grantee Data).

Training programs to address law enforcement officers' misperceptions about victims (e.g., how survivors should look, think, and behave) have been shown to improve attitudes, decision-making, and interviewing practices of police officers and reduce case attrition rates (Hamby, S., Finkelhor, D., & Turner, H, 2015). Specifically, researchers have explored the effectiveness of a wide range of training topics related to VAWA crimes including trauma-informed training (Franklin et al., 2020; Lathan et al., 2019), specialist training on sexual assault investigations (Darwinkel et al., 2013, Lorenz & Maskaly, 2018), sexual and family violence response training (Fleming, 2020; Sleath & Bull, 2012; Smith et al., 2016), training on gender-based violence (Baldry & Pagliaro, 2014), and cultural competency training (Engelman & Deardorff, 2016; Russell, 2018; Russell & Sturgeon, 2019). Although there is some evidence that training has a positive impact on case dispositions (see for example Darwinkel et al., 2013 and Lonsway et al., 2001), little empirical research has examined precisely how and to what extent changes in officers' knowledge and perceptions of sexual violence and victimization actually influence their behavior, especially in the longer term.

Research also shows that coordination among stakeholders at both individual and agency levels is critical to an effective criminal justice response to VAWA crimes, with effects ranging from improved case efficiency (i.e., time to sentencing) to victim empowerment to improved communication due to cross-disciplinary training (Hovda, 2012; Praxis International, 2013; Smith Stover, 2012; White & Sienkiewicz, 2018). While not generalizable to a larger population, the analysis of OVW grantee reported performance measures data supports these findings. Some benefits of collaboration named explicitly by grantees included: improved victim treatment; increased referrals to advocacy services; increased reporting by victims; larger resource and referral networks for victims; stronger awareness of dynamics of these crimes in criminal justice and judicial systems; and increased capacity to conduct thorough investigations and catch repeat offenders (Grantee Data). For example, one grantee described the result of improved coordination thusly, "The response from law enforcement and hospital staff in [county] has substantially gotten better. They are contacting us more often to respond to a victim and referring them to us, where we have had issues in the past." The importance of law enforcement working with other providers was also emphasized by all members of the project advisory board as necessary to increase the services available to victims and to provide external accountability (Advisory Board Interviews).

In addition, Advisory Board members emphasized the importance of officers engaging in clear and transparent communication with victims throughout their cases to ensure they were made aware of all options regarding case progression as a critical way to engage them in the criminal justice process (AB Discussion, Session #1). Multiple Advisory Board members also cited the prompt referral of victims to local resources as critical to building trust with the victim, engaging them in the process, and ensuring their safety in the short term (AB Discussion, Session #1). These themes emerge from the trauma-informed literature as well, which highlights the need for building a sense of safety and trust when working with trauma survivors. In DePrince et al.'s longitudinal study on social reactions to disclosure (2017), victims emphasized the importance of trauma-informed training and clear communication about their options and available services. Another study found that after being notified about sexual assault kit results through a trauma-informed, victim-centered protocol, most survivors chose to discuss their options further and reengage with the criminal justice system (Campbell et al., 2018). However, several Advisory Board members also described the tension that exists between enforcing the law and promoting victim empowerment: "Outcomes from the law enforcement [perspective] and victim perspective may not intersect" (AB Interviews).

Outcomes for Victims

Procedural justice is an increasingly recognized goal of the criminal justice response to VAWA crimes. Procedural justice is defined as perception of fairness and equity in the criminal justice and judicial processes regardless of case outcome; experiences of procedural justice may apply to both victim and defendant (Jonathan-Zamir et al., 2015; National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice, n.d.; Tyler, 1988, 1989, 2003). Some research has shown that experiencing procedural justice can reduce victims' emotional distress following contact with the criminal justice system (Barkworth & Murphy, 2016) and that police and advocate practices, like explaining court processes and referring families to services, often led to victims leaving abusers and abusers being arrested (Hamby et al., 2015). Another study showed that procedural justice may be even more important to victims than case outcomes (Anderson, 2015). Interestingly, Cerulli et al. (2015) found that even when their desired legal outcomes were not achieved, victims continued to seek help from the legal system and other sources for subsequent incidents. While the literature on procedural justice indicates that faith in the fairness of the criminal justice system may be an important outcome of well-delivered services, none of the grantees reported on it directly. However, victim trust, often mentioned in tandem with victim reporting, showed up frequently as an outcome of activities like training and CCRs, as well as law enforcement's use of best practices like trauma-informed interviewing and the facilitation of advocacy (Grantee Data).

The ability of victims to access appropriate and adequate services is another potential outcome of an improved law enforcement response, stemming from increased officer knowledge and connections to local service providers as well as their capacity to engage with victims and recognize their needs. An analysis of a model⁵ rooted in the dual goals of victim safety and offender accountability elicited recommendations from the field about measuring success beyond criminal justice metrics (i.e. arrests, convictions), including measuring access to needed supports in the short and long-term (White & Sienkiewicz, 2018). Of note, this study analyzed 13 VAWA authorized grant programs. Officers' proactive actions to provide victims with information on their risks, and with direct connections to services, have also been found to lead to victims taking additional protective measures. Specifically, Koppa (2018) found that implementing the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) reduced female homicide victimization; when victims accessed information and increased their risk awareness through the LAP, they took additional protective measures, ultimately resulting in reduced homicides. Another study found that when female victims with children received supportive responses from the justice system, such as restraining orders being granted and police responses to calls for IPV, women felt safer and protected by the system. However, when they received a non-supportive response from family court (e.g., denied restraining orders, visitation rights granted for abuser) it increased the danger they faced (Zeoli et al., 2013).

Offender Outcomes as a Proxy for Victim Well-being

The Advisory Board engaged in deep conversation about the need to include offenders in the equation to break the cycle of VAWA crimes and enhance victim well-being in the long term (AB Discussion, Session #1); this was discussed in terms of accountability and access to interventions and other supports and services. Practitioners in particular shared their experiences of seeing children who were once victims become perpetrators and the lack of supports available “once you become the offender.” Others described how victims and perpetrators are often linked through children, financials, and property, and cannot separate fully in small, close-knit communities. Similarly, a recent article critiquing the criminal response to domestic violence urged a more preventive and non-carceral approach (Goodmark, 2021), to promote the well-being of all victims (both adults and children).

While there is scant evidence for the success of offender intervention programs, particularly for domestic violence, in terms of re-arrest (Brame et al., 2015; Broidy et al., 2016), some deterrence initiatives have shown promise. For example, the Offender Focused Domestic Violence Initiative (OFDVI) has shown that prioritizing offender accountability may enhance victim-directed coordinated community responses and improve

⁵ The model was the Victim Empowerment, Safety, and Perpetrator Accountability through Collaboration (VESPAC).

victim safety, such as reductions in intimate partner DV-related calls for service, arrests, and victim injury percentage documented in IPV arrests (Community Oriented Policing Services, 2017; Sechrist & Weil, 2018). Another study of a dedicated domestic violence unit -- which included victim assistance with restraining orders and safety plans -- resulted in reduced incident reports over two years (Exum et al., 2014).

Similarly, research looking at the impact of police intervention on victim safety and reduced recidivism is mixed, although a number of studies suggest a positive link. Cho et al. 2010, found that when perpetrators were arrested it effectively reduced revictimization, as compared to those victims whose partners were not arrested. A study by Cordier et al. 2019, demonstrates evidence that protective orders can be effective in reducing re-offense, particularly for some groups, and when used in combination with other law enforcement interventions, like arrest. The confiscation of firearms is another offender-focused intervention that has been proven effective at reducing the most extreme instances of violence, namely intimate partner homicide, and which has the potential to be even more effective with improved enforcement (Zeoli, et al., 2016). However, Small et al. (2019) found that removing a firearm led to increased IPV incident reports, suggesting a shift away from firearm threats toward physical violence.

The pilot phase of the project found that access to offender interventions and supports often fell outside the direct influence of the VAWA grantees who use grant funds to support law enforcement activities and instead fell under the purview of prosecutors and courts. Moreover, pilot sites had minimal capacity to collect data on these programs and corresponding outcomes. Ultimately, while offender intervention programs and supports may be an important tool in preventing future VAWA crimes, the conceptual model focuses instead on general offender accountability and reduced recidivism as they tie directly to victim outcomes of increased safety and reduced re-victimization.

Identifying Measures of Success

When developing measures by which to gauge success, it is imperative to consider the feasibility of collecting data on the outcome measures across organizations with varying data collection and reporting capacities. An outcome measure that is impossible to collect due to resources or capacity will not assist a program in measuring their success. While reporting output measures is often inherently woven into performance measurement data tracking systems in agencies (e.g., the number of people served), outcomes take time to materialize, measures may be more complex, and they are therefore more challenging to measure accurately (e.g., increased trust in the system or enhanced victim safety). Furthermore, programs that are primarily accustomed to tracking outputs for the purposes of grant reporting may not have systems in place to track outcome data. A critical aspect of this project, once the conceptual framework was established, was to test the feasibility of collecting and reporting on new outcome measures with a sample of OVW grantees.

Identifying Metrics

To select indicators to be pilot tested in the field with grantees during the second phase of the project, the project team created a comprehensive list of indicators to capture the core components of the conceptual model. This list was compiled by reviewing all the data sources described herein, including: the Literature Review (see accompanying report), knowledge and expertise of advisory board members documented through discussions and interviews, the Dataset Inventory (see accompanying report), and the analysis of grantee data. Six project team members subsequently reviewed the list of indicators using objective criteria (see Box 1), paying special attention to indicators that were mentioned by multiple sources (e.g., literature review, advisory board, and grantee narrative). The research team compared our ratings to generate a list of 56 indicators, which ultimately expanded to 84 unique data points that were tested in the field. This list expanded as the team developed the data collection tool and indicators. For example, referrals by type became multiple counts (one for each service type). Another example were instances where the original list contained rates but the research team ultimately determined it would be better to ask the field for counts which could be used to calculate rates.

The complete list of metrics, including the final recommendation rationale, can be found in the accompanying Indicators Matrix (MS Excel spreadsheet). We should note two important points about the list of metrics that was generated: first, some metrics were identified but not tested because they are already included on the semi-annual progress reports; second, at first glance some of the metrics may look like counts or outputs but can be considered outcomes when they are collected over time and compared to pre-program baselines, or converted into rates and compared to a standard benchmark or known best practice.

Criteria Used to Determine Indicators for Pilot Testing

Relevance: The indicator is directly related to criminal justice responses to VAWA crimes funded by OVW.

Accuracy: The degree to which the data reported for an indicator is correct and precise.

Validity: How accurately an indicator measures something. If an indicator measures what it claims to measure, and the results closely correspond to real-world values, it can be considered valid. There are four main types of validity:

Construct validity: Does the indicator measure the concept that it is intended to measure?

Content validity: Is the indicator fully representative of what it aims to measure?

Face validity: Does the content of the indicator appear to be suitable to its aims?

Criterion validity: Do the results correspond to a different indicator that captures the same thing?

Reliability: How consistently an indicator measures something. When applied to the same sample under the same conditions, or different people report on the same indicator, the results reported should be the same. If not, the indicator may be unreliable.

Usefulness: The indicator is suited to serve OVW and grantee purposes (measures a concept related to success in a meaningful way).

Ease of understanding: The indicator, and what data is required for reporting on it, is easily comprehended or understood; intelligible.

Feasibility: Level of ease or convenience with which a proposed metric can be collected and reported (e.g., low-burden, low-cost). The data is also routinely available from a reliable source.

Pilot Testing

Site Recruitment

The project team used existing grantee data to determine which grantees should be included in recruitment activities for the pilot testing phase. After culling the full list of grantees for those that had an active grant and reported using grant funds for law enforcement activities, forty-five grantees were identified as potential pilot sites. This included 20 ICJR grantees, 15 Rural, and 10 TG. Of the 45 grantees that were invited to attend an informational webinar about the project and pilot site participation, 15 attended. The one-hour informational webinar described the objectives of the project, the critical role of the pilot phase, and the specific responsibilities of pilot sites. In agreeing to participate as a pilot site, grantees were committing to attend a training on how to complete the data collection tool, complete the tool to the best of their ability, and participate in a follow up telephone interview. For their efforts, pilot sites were offered a \$500 stipend. Ultimately, 12 grantees participated as pilot sites, seven Rural grantees and five ICJR.

Data Collection Tool

Using the list of select indicators to be field tested with the pilot sites, the research team developed and launched an online data collection tool with the select 12 grantees to assess the availability and feasibility of collecting data on the metrics. It is important to note that this tool purposefully did not include metrics that were preliminarily recommended but are already collected by OVW on existing grantee forms. The tool contained 84 specific data points related to the following. The full tool is included as Appendix A:

- Law Enforcement Agency's (LEA) trainings, policies, and procedures
- LEA's MOUs with and referrals to service provider partners
- LEA's VAWA-specific staffing and caseloads
- Knowledge, skills, and perceptions of officers related to their response to VAWA crimes
- Communication with victims
- Investigative case records data (from LEA's records/data management system)
- Prosecutorial case records data (from prosecution records/data management system)
- Follow-up data on offenders (from prosecution or court records)
- Victims' perceptions of law enforcement

With the intention of capturing both actual data and feedback on feasibility, the tool contained three different types of questions: requests for quantitative data or "counts"; exploratory questions to gauge the extent to which the grantee was able to or would be able to in the future obtain the requested data; and, feedback questions to learn more about the process of gathering and reporting on the data. Prior to launching the tool, the research team hosted an instructional training webinar on how to use the data collection tool. Pilot sites were given about a month to submit the tool.

Post Interviews

To supplement the feedback captured in the tool, the research team conducted semi-structured telephone interviews with each of the twelve pilot sites. The interviews were intended to help determine the usability and quality of the reported data, as well as the perceived relevance of the measures. Interview questions were tailored to sites based on their responses to the data collection and included questions related their confidence in the accuracy of the data, the reasons they could not provide it, changes they needed to make to systems, and tools or resources that could help with collecting or reporting the measures.

Data Analysis

The pilot phase resulted in two primary sources of data for analysis: results of the data collection tool and information from follow up interviews. This qualitative and quantitative data was cleaned and analyzed to reveal the most frequently reported metrics, the metrics sites consistently could not provide data on and why, and the confidence in the accuracy of the data reported. Using this summary, the research team reviewed each metric and categorized each into one of two categories: metrics to recommend and metrics that are not recommended at this time. We then mapped the recommendations back to the indicators in the conceptual model to inform the following final results and recommendations.

Results of the Pilot Test

Recommended Indicators

Table 1 below contains indicators which are recommended to OVW as they have corresponding metrics that can be reliably collected and reported to demonstrate the effectiveness of law enforcement's response to VAWA crimes. The metrics related to each of these indicators were either tested in the field during the pilot phase or are already included on the semi-annual progress reports. All of the metrics can be found in the accompanying Indicators Matrix (MS Excel spreadsheet). Please note that some indicators are tied to multiple outcome concepts.

Although the following indicators and corresponding metrics are recommended based on both the research and practice presented in the conceptual framework and feasibility in the field, it is important to note that individual grantees are not conducting activities that align with each indicator, nor do they all have the capacity to collect data for every metric. Given the unique and locally-focused efforts and activities of OVW-funded grantees, we recommend this list of indicators be used by grantees to determine the most accurate and feasible metrics they should collect and use to demonstrate the success of their work; this will be discussed more in our final recommendations.

Law Enforcement Agencies

Some of the most frequently reported data points throughout the data collection tool were indicators with metrics related to law enforcement agency policy and practice. The majority of pilot sites stated that they could report on policies/procedures, trainings, MOUs, and staffing. Sites also reported that they could report on resource coordination for victims and information sharing collaborative processes with other agencies, such as case coordination and review.

In considering the recommended metrics related to trauma-informed policies and procedures, listed in Table 1 below, it will be important for OVW to clearly document a consistent definition of trauma-informed. For the pilot, the project team included a definition in the implementation guide (please see Appendix B). Additionally, if asking grantees to report on trauma-informed policies and procedures, it may be helpful to provide examples of effective policy documents, including language and content of the policies that guide the trauma-informed practices. Similarly, when considering indicators related to cultural competence, OVW should provide grantees with a clear definition of the term “culturally specific” so as not to duplicate referral counts.

Law Enforcement Officers

The majority of pilot sites said they could not now report data on change in knowledge and perception for law enforcement officers who participated in trainings, but could in the future. Some sites shared that officers complete post-training feedback surveys, but the surveys do not ask about changes in knowledge and/or the data are submitted directly to the organization presenting the training. However, sites were confident they could collect this data in the future with adequate planning.

Pilot sites were able to report data related to communication with victims and the systems they have in place to support streamlined communication (e.g., a dedicated phone line and clear contact guidelines) as well as referral counts.

The current semi-annual progress reports ask for numerous data points related to law enforcement activities (e.g., calls for assistance, number of arrests, case investigated, referrals to prosecution, etc.); sites were able to consistently report on these data. However, metrics on the data collection tool that asked about investigations beyond the data points currently collected on the semi-annual progress reports (e.g., sexual assault kit submission, case clearance, repeat calls for services, etc.) were data points sites could not report on now, but could in the future if they could prepare with adequate reporting processes. It is important to note that the pilot sites that were able to provide data related to case investigation expressed high confidence in the accuracy of the data provided, suggesting there are some practices and protocols in place that could be expanded.

⁶ Recommendations for research on effective trauma-informed policies are included in the accompanying Research Agenda.

Victims' Experience

As will be discussed further below, sites currently do not collect many of the data points related to victim outcomes, nor do they have a vision for how they could collect them in the future. Consequently, the majority of the recommended indicators connected to the victim experience relate directly back to administrative law enforcement data, rather than direct victim feedback; for example, sexual assault kit submissions, case clearance rates, protective orders, referrals to prosecution, and repeat calls for service. Although sites expressed interest in many of the other experiential victim-focused metrics, they did not think it was or would be feasible to collect related data without more established tools, protocols, and research. The Research Agenda includes recommendations on this point.

Offender-focused indicators that we recommend OVW use as a proxy to capture victim outcomes also come from law enforcement activity data, for example enforcement of protective orders. These offender-related data points will support understanding of the impact of grantee programming on victim safety and re-victimization. As discussed previously, while access to offender interventions and supports may ultimately increase victim wellbeing, these indicators fall outside the direct influence of the VAWA grantees who use grant funds to support law enforcement activities and are not included in this conceptual framework.

Table. 1

OUTCOME CONCEPT	RECOMMENDED INDICATORS
Law Enforcement Agencies	
Increase trauma-informed system response to victims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trauma-sensitive policies/procedures in place • Training devoted to trauma-informed practice • Documented connections with victim services agencies
Improve resource coordination for victims and offenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referrals made to supports and services • Formal agreements with resource providers in place, by sector • Formal cross-sector collaborations (e.g., task force, work group, etc.)
Enhance cross-agency information sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of collaborative processes (e.g., protocol, case coordination, case review, etc.) • Use and number of formal structures and resources in place (e.g., MOUs, data sharing agreements) • Multidisciplinary cross-trainings
Improve cultural competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training devoted to diversity, equity & inclusion, bias • Policies/procedures to ensure access to all victims (e.g., language access, physical access) • Formal structures (e.g., MOUs) with community agencies serving identified populations in place • Referrals made to culturally specific supports and services

Table. 1 (continued)

OUTCOME CONCEPT	RECOMMENDED INDICATORS
Increase capacity-building and staffing for VAWA crimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEAs perceive themselves as capable of responding to VAWA crimes • Number of staff units/FTEs specifically for VAWA crimes • Average caseload for VAWA investigators • Review of cases by supervisors for quality control and appropriate charges
Agency culture of accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of cases by supervisors for quality control and appropriate charges • Victims have easy way to communicate with various agency actors • LEOs inform victims of options at each point in case investigation • Number of staff units/FTEs specifically for VAWA crimes
Law Enforcement Officers	
Increase knowledge of VAWA crimes & best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEOs exhibit knowledge of policy/procedures • LEOs exhibit knowledge of best practice response(s) to VAWA crimes
Improve perception of VAWA crimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEOs are personally invested in improving response for victims
Increase respectful & transparent communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims have easy way to communicate with various agency actors • LEOs inform victims of options at each point in case investigation • LEOs avoid dual arrests
Increase prompt referrals to needed supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEOs make referrals to service provider partners
Improve investigations (taking victim reports, collecting evidence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual assault kit submission • Sexual assault kit tests completed • Referral rate to prosecution • Case clearance rate by reasons
Victims' Experience	
Increase procedural justice - trust in the justice system & compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case clearance rate by reasons
Increase procedural justice – case progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual assault kit submission • Sexual assault kit tests completed • Referral rate to prosecution • Case clearance rate by reason
Increased safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protective orders issued/enforced/violations
Increase offender accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforcement of protective orders, violations • Referral rate to prosecution
Reduced re-victimization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims report subsequent violence • Calls for service/repeat calls for service
Reduce offender recidivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subsequent police incidents for VAWA crimes • Subsequent arrests for VAWA or other crimes

Conceptual Considerations

In addition to providing concrete, tangible data points, piloting the data collection tool and potential metrics with pilot sites provided a unique and valuable lens into the interests, concerns, and capacity of OVW grantees. In both the data collection tool and follow up interviews, many sites took the time to honestly share insight and recommendations for how OVW may consider supporting grantee capacity building around performance measurement, data collection, and reporting. The following are three takeaways from qualitative feedback shared by grantees reflecting on their experience as a pilot site.

Inspiration for Data Collection

A few grantees shared that completing the data collection inspired them to think about data differently. While they are accustomed to routinely tracking and reporting on key metrics, grantees shared that some of the metrics requested in the tool made them realize there was more data they could be collecting. As one said, “A lot of these questions prompted me to think this wouldn’t actually be hard to track if we just started doing it!” Another said the questions were thought provoking and made them wonder why they had not been tracking specific metrics that would help to tell their program’s outcome story. Follow up phone interviews allowed such grantees to continue to explore the potential for expanded data collection activities.

Necessary Capacity Building

While some grantees shared they were inspired by the tool, many expressed a clear need for increased data capacity building and technical assistance before being asked to collect more or different data related to their grant-funded programming. In addition to dedicated funding, which is discussed below, grantees discussed the need for more comprehensive training and support around data collection practices and procedures. This included training and capacity building around working with stakeholders to engage in data collection. As one shared, they needed support for how to create “the habit and expectations around bringing data” with stakeholders and program partners. While they recognized they are accountable and responsible for their program data collection processes, they have little to no control over the processes of partner organizations. Grantees shared that early training and education around data collection expectations would help them establish systems and processes with partners to build trust and ease around ongoing data collection requests.

Dedicated Funding

The most consistent feedback from grantees was that they need dedicated funding toward evaluation efforts. This included funds to cover staff time and/or to purchase systems that support data collection and reporting. While many grantees shared

that they are open to collecting new metrics to

demonstrate the impact of their work, they do not have sustained, dedicated funding to allocate toward staff time or systems to support program evaluation efforts. Unless the funder directs grantees to allocate a certain amount of their budget to evaluation, grantees shared they are likely to put all money they can toward direct client work with victims. As one grantee said, “I can tell you that if the grant doesn’t support a position, it’s going to make it much more difficult to get the data.” Another grantee shared that staff at the agency were already “very underpaid and understaffed” and that it would be difficult to justify asking staff to take on additional data collection activities without taking other responsibilities from them.

“ *I can tell you that if the grant doesn’t support a position, it’s going to make it much more difficult to get the data.*”

In addition to dedicated evaluation staffing support, grantees shared that they need data tracking systems to streamline processes. Many grantees shared that the metrics requested in the pilot were tracked on paper and in different ways across different agencies and offices, resulting in discrepancies in case numbers between different systems in the same community. Some spoke to the need for statewide data collection systems. While some grantees had their own internal data tracking systems, they recognized the technological limitations; “We would definitely need funding support to make those database changes,” one shared when considering the ability to collect metrics requested in the pilot.

Metrics for Potential Future Consideration (not recommended at this time)

The indicators in Table 2 below are not recommended at this time. These are not inherently poor metrics, but rather are metrics that we are not recommending at this time due to a variety of factors, ranging from lack of access to the data, lack of tools/resources, and lack of infrastructure to collect and report. Law enforcement agencies across the country vary in their data capacity, data collection, and reporting processes, and in order to implement data collection processes for these indicators, grantees noted that they would need major system changes across their own and stakeholder agencies.

Law Enforcement Officers

Law enforcement agencies have limited access to data collected by the prosecution, courts, and probation side of the criminal justice system. Because of this separation, we do not recommend requesting data on prosecution rates, conviction rates, and case attrition at this time. While law enforcement actions affect court outcomes, pilot sites expressed that it would be very challenging for law enforcement to report these indicators to OVW. Some sites that were able to provide data related to these indicators shared that they were only able to provide the information because of their existing relationships with people in those offices.

In collecting information on case counts, grantees suggested OVW consider the extent to which agencies across the nation are consistently collecting and tracking VAWA information. Some pilot sites shared that their courts systems do not distinguish between intimate partner violence for VAWA related cases and regular domestic assault cases. One pilot site shared, “That would be part of a decision that would have to be made at the state level to incorporate that into their system.” If collected by all grantees, these disparities would cause data reliability and validity issues.

Although sites reported they would be able to report data on training-specific law enforcement knowledge and skills, presumably collected as part of a training, the vast majority of pilot sites said they could not report on the general perceptions, skills, and knowledge of law enforcement officers. Some sites that are project partners with law enforcement agencies said they would be uncomfortable asking officers about their perceptions, skills, and knowledge and worried this type of questioning could negatively affect their partnerships and relationships. They shared concerns about the agency or officer becoming defensive and worried officers would not be comfortable sharing the truth. As one site said, “I think it would be hard as an outsider – even though I work here in the [police department] – to get at that information. I think they would feel protective and resistant to providing that... [Officers] like to be trained and surveyed by other [officers] when possible.”

Victims' Experience

As discussed above, victims' perceptions of and experiences with law enforcement officers are particularly difficult to collect and although sites were interested in victim outcomes, very few were able to provide this information in the data collection tool. Pilot sites also shared concerns about victim confidentiality and safety when attempting to capture feedback from victims. Some sites shared they have conversations between advocates and officers to learn about victims' experiences and try to give timely feedback to officers to improve their response. One site discussed using "response cards" to take notes on the victim's experience, trying to anonymously capture their emotional response. However, these systems are informal, inconsistent, and do not allow for ongoing data collection, reporting, and systems-improvement efforts. As discussed in the accompanying Research Agenda, the field needs additional research and standardized and validated tools before agencies can collect reliable data related to victims' perceptions and experiences. Both the literature and this project's advisory board made it clear that it is critical to track these victim experience outcomes to demonstrate the impact of VAWA-funded activities, so while the victim outcome indicators below are not recommended at this time, this is an important area to continue to explore.

None of the pilot sites were able to provide data related to victim referral utilization. In fact, the majority of sites indicated that they could never provide this. Pilot sites are not currently tracking this information and expressed concerns about victim confidentiality around sharing utilization information. Sites thought victim utilization would be interesting information to have, but were unsure of who or how to track it safely.

Offenders' Experience

As discussed previously, offender outcomes are intimately tied to victim outcomes. While research indicates a potential linkage between offender interventions and supports and victim well-being, tracking many of these data points falls outside the direct influence of the VAWA grantees who use grant funds to support law enforcement activities. Pilot sites commented that their OVW grants funds do not support offender treatment programs so they do not have access to data on the availability and referrals to offender treatment programs. Similarly, using prosecution and conviction rates to measure offender accountability falls under the purview of prosecutors and courts, not VAWA-funded grantees.

While research indicates a connection between confiscation of firearms and increased victim safety (Zeoli, et al., 2016), pilot sites were not able to report data on firearms seizure. Sites reported huge variation in how, what, and when firearms are seized. Therefore, more information regarding state laws and practices around firearm seizures is needed before concrete indicators can be recommended. Specifically, as discussed in the Research Agenda, there is a need for more research and information around different policies and practices across the country and how they impact victim safety.

Table. 2

OUTCOME CONCEPT	RECOMMENDED INDICATORS
Law Enforcement Officers	
Increase knowledge of VAWA crimes & best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LEOs aware of service provider partners and how to contact
Improve perception of VAWA crimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LEOs perceive themselves as prepared to respond
Increase respectful & transparent communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victims feel respected and heard Victims are informed of case progression updates
Increase prompt referrals to needed supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LEOs make referrals to service provider partners within 24 hours
Improve investigations (taking victim reports, collecting evidence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prosecution rate Conviction rate Case attrition by reasons
Victims' Experiences	
Increase procedural justice - victims perceive process as "fair"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victims perceive that they were treated with respect Victims perceive police as helpful Victims perceive that they understood LE and court processes Victims perceive that they were included in case decisions
Increase procedural justice - trust in the justice system & compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victims are likely to call police again in the future Case attrition by reasons
Increase procedural justice – case progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prosecution rate Conviction rate Case attrition by reasons
Increase access to needed supports/adequate resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victims' uptake of service referrals (service utilization) Victims aware of culturally-appropriate community resources
Increased safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victims feel safe after calling LE Victims aware of ways to plan for safety Firearms seized
Increase offender access to interventions/supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of intervention/supports Referrals to sex offender treatment programs Referrals to BIP and other interventions/supports
Increase offender accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prosecution rate Conviction rate Firearms seized

Moving Forward

The first phase of this project established a conceptual model that serves as a framework by which to guide local program models and future data collection expectations for efforts that focus on the law enforcement response to VAWA crimes, and how those efforts connect to longer-term outcomes of justice, safety, and well-being for victims. This conceptual model is rooted in research, best practice, and knowledge from the field.

The second phase of the project identified metrics that attempted to quantify the concepts into data points that could be collected and reported on by grantees in the field. The pilot not only revealed important insights about the feasibility of the proposed metrics, but also showed that the grantees included in the pilot were interested and curious about how they can use data to inform their work. However, grantees were clear they needed to go into a project knowing what data to collect and from whom they needed to collect it, and that they needed the time to establish the working relationships and processes needed to make data collection successful. Similarly, it became abundantly clear that any data collection effort must be responsive to the wide variety of programmatic work being undertaken by grantees, the varied data capacity of their community partners, and the unique program infrastructure within which different grantees work.

The lingering question, therefore, is how can OVW move grantees toward reporting outcomes that are consistent and meaningful, yet respect the autonomy of unique organizations to select measures that align with their specific project goals and local capacity?

Additionally, what investments and structures are needed to support this shift? The following recommendations are offered as a first step to answer these questions and provide ideas for moving this work forward in the years to come.

Recommendation 1: Incorporate metrics already being collected, but underutilized, into routine analysis and reporting.

On the current grantee reporting forms, grantees are already responsible for collecting 12 metrics that are recommended based on the results of this research. These specific metrics are noted in the accompanying Indicators Matrix (MS Excel spreadsheet). This is an area where VAWA MEI could continue to support OVW's desire to become more outcome driven; without changing existing progress reporting forms, or requesting new data from grantees, OVW and VAWA MEI could analyze these data points differently to better track and reflect programmatic outcomes. This could be implemented in the immediate future by comparing measures reported by grantees at the start of funding and again at the end (e.g., baseline to final report). For example, as highlighted earlier in this report and throughout the literature, referral rate to prosecution is an indicator that can be used to measure progress toward the outcomes of improved investigations, increased procedural justice (case progression), and increased accountability. By collecting and analyzing trends over time about the number of incidents investigated, arrests, and referrals of cases to prosecution – data already collected each progress reporting period from VAWA grantees – MEI could calculate referral rates to prosecution, and work with OVW to analyze how referral rates change from the start of funding to the end.

Recommendation 2: Consider funding data capacity and infrastructure development for LEAs separately from direct victim services.

Many grantees who participated in the pilot reported that if they can choose how to use their grant funding they and their partners will always prioritize victim services over data and system infrastructure. OVW should consider separating data and system infrastructure investments from other funding streams, if and to the extent possible under statutes and regulations. This could be further considered in tandem with other DOJ divisions, like OJP/OVC and COPS. One approach could be piloting a special initiative data capacity grant program for which a smaller or selected group of grantees could apply. Depending upon the outcomes of the pilot, this could then exist as an ongoing, separate data capacity building program, or alternatively, take the form of additional add-on dollars within existing funds which grantees could request to specifically build their data and evaluation infrastructure. This would remove the tension described above by allowing grantees to maximize their services while also enhancing their capacity to collect measures of their success. This should align with the approaches described in more detail in Recommendation 3.

Recommendation 3: Revise the application process to support and incorporate robust outcome measurement.

Grantees often reflected that they could collect the information included in the pilot if they had been able to plan for it, but it was not feasible to ask a partner for it as part of the pilot. OVW should consider how this project's conceptual model and tested metrics can serve as a framework to inform future Requests for Proposals requirements and award criteria. For example, applicants could be required to self-select measures from a recommended list based on what they are doing specifically – to build their own logic model -- and then demonstrate their capacity to collect and report on the outcome data that are relevant, useful, and feasible for their project and aligns with their project's budget justification. In this scenario, an RFP could state: *“List three performance metrics of impact from the list of approved outcome measures that are related to your proposed project. Describe how you will track and report on each, and include letters of support from relevant data partners or stakeholders stating their commitment to providing information as needed.”* An RFP could also provide guidelines for funding data collection, require that a portion of funds must be used to support those activities or, as described in Recommendation 2, make additional funds available upon request to support data collection efforts

Recommendation 4: Require post-award support and technical assistance to refine and finalize proposed measures and collection/reporting processes.

Grantees who participated in the data collection pilot identified that they needed training and support to build their capacity to collect and report on the recommended metrics; therefore, it would be unwise to build expectations into the RFP process that might put some grantees at a disadvantage. Instead, OVW should consider incorporating evaluation and data collection capacity building into the full grant cycle, starting with a planning period which could include reviewing data collection plans, providing consultation, resources and technical assistance related to data collection, and asking grantees to submit a final data collection and reporting plan. Indeed, some OVW grantees already have a post-award period for planning and developing a logic model, and many other federal programs and agencies provide similar evaluation and data support to their grantees regarding their required data collection activities. Subsequent training and technical assistance for grantees could support ongoing assessment, data interpretation, and program improvement through the life of the award. VAWA grantees have proven time and again they are nimble, flexible, and able to pivot, sometimes mid-stream, to best support victims and hold offenders accountable. Data, and periodic consults with outside technical assistance providers and evaluators, could help further this work and ensure tangible outcomes. The figure below depicts the cycle described in Recommendations 1 and 2.

Recommendation 5: Invest in funding a research agenda that builds grantee data and evaluation capacity.

The final set of recommendations to further support this body of work is to leverage OVW's investment in rigorous research to support knowledge gaps in theory related to the conceptual model, to further explore evidence of outcomes, and to field-test best practices for data collection. The Research Agenda which accompanies this report provides a detailed discussion of areas in which OVW could pursue research opportunities that would advance this conceptual framework. Items on the Research Agenda include opportunities from the following topic areas:

- Victim outcomes and wellbeing;
- Law enforcement agency culture and accountability;
- Law enforcement officer practices; and,
- Coordinated Community Response effectiveness.

Conclusion

In his recent remarks celebrating the 25th reauthorization of VAWA, President Biden noted that “...we set out...to change the culture...and the only way we could change the culture was by shining an ugly bright light on it and speaking its name.”⁷ Every day, OVW grantees support survivors in becoming and staying safe and rebuilding healthy lives and communities free from violence. This conceptual framework, then, is a testament to the ways in which data can support OVW, and the thousands of OVW grantees to deepen their efforts and broaden their impacts. The recommendations included herein seek to balance the burden of data collection for grantees with the tangible benefits of outcome-driven programming. It is our ultimate hope that these findings not only contribute to improved measures of success in the criminal justice system, but that they also contribute to profound, lasting changes in culture and positive results for the countless survivors who have been, and will be, supported by VAWA.

⁷ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/03/16/remarks-by-president-biden-celebrating-the-reauthorization-of-the-violence-against-women-act/>

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Appendix A: Pilot Data Collection Tool

Appendix B: Pilot Tool Implementation Guide