

A Conceptual Framework for Measuring Criminal Justice Success in Responding to VAWA Crimes

Executive Summary



Project Summary

In 2020, the Office on Violence Against Women (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 (JRSA), to develop and pilot test a set of indicators for gauging success in the criminal justice system's response to the VAWA crimes. Specifically, the purpose of this project was to develop a foundational, research-based conceptual framework that logically connects the interventions undertaken by OVW's funded grantees to longer-term outcomes experienced by victims.¹

Phases and Activities

Phase I: Develop a conceptual model for law enforcement grantees based on research and field experience.

Activities: Conduct a literature review, explore existing datasets and grantee data, convene an advisory group, develop a conceptual model, and recommend outcome measures to pilot test.

Phase II: Develop and pilot test a set of indicators for gauging success in the criminal justice system's response to VAWA crimes.

Activities: Pilot a data collection tool and conduct follow-up interviews with 12 volunteer pilot site grantees.

Phase III: Recommend outcome measures that law enforcement grantees can use to track their progress.

Activities: Finalize conceptual model and accompanying Indicators Matrix and offer recommendations to OVW.

Results

Phase two of this project tested the feasibility of implementing new new data collection options for OVW-funded grantees to better measure the impact of law enforcement interventions. This pilot phase both inspired sites to think differently about data and helped identify needs for data capacity building, clear processes to support program evaluation, and dedicated funding for evaluation or system improvements to support data reporting. The final set of recommended indicators can be found in the Conceptual Framework report and the companion Indicators Matrix (MS Excel Workbook). Recommended indicators includes items specific to law enforcement agency, officer, and victim outcomes.

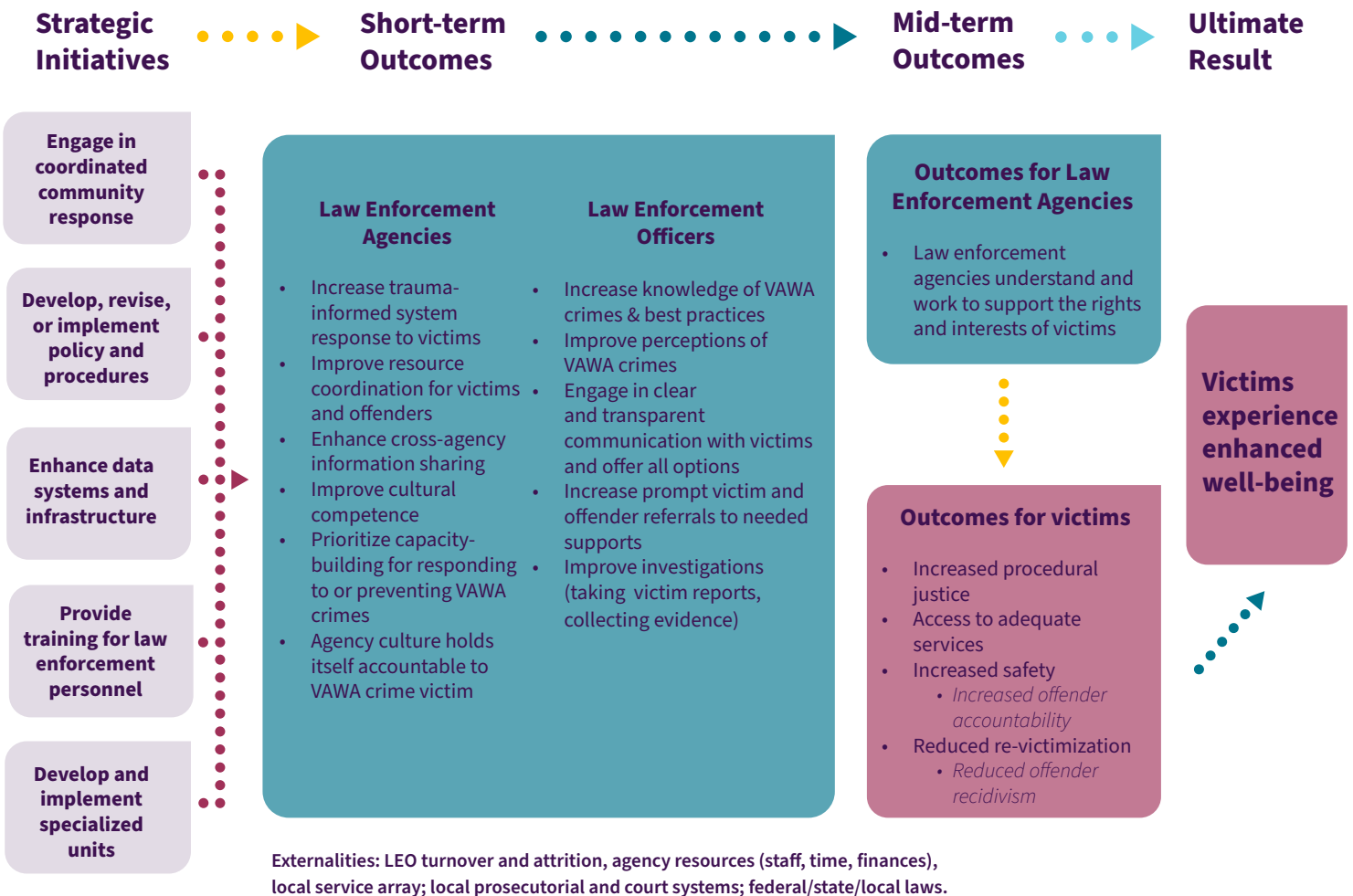
¹ The project focused on outcomes for adult victims (e.g., over the age of 18). Child victims are a distinct population with unique needs and are treated differently by the legal system.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered to OVW:

1. Incorporate outcome measures already being collected, but underutilized, into routine analysis and reporting.
2. Consider funding data capacity and infrastructure development for LEAs separately from direct victim services.
3. Revise the application process to support and incorporate robust outcome measurement.
4. Require post-award support and technical assistance to refine and finalize proposed measures and collection/reporting processes.
5. Invest in funding a research agenda that builds grantee data and evaluation capacity.

Final Conceptual Model



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.