



Evaluation: Making it realistic and worthwhile

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**BUT I still
don't know if
it works**





What do we mean by evaluation?

A process to ask and answer questions about whether something is worthwhile:

- how your service is working (*process evaluation*)
- whether it made the difference you hoped it would (*outcome evaluation*)



Why bother with evaluation?

- To learn from and improve the delivery of your services
- To demonstrate value
- To satisfy funding body requirements for continued funding



The challenges of evaluation

- Legal services are delivered in a complex social setting in which many factors affect its impacts
- Limited funding in the sector for rigorous evaluations
- Rigorous evaluations require careful design and an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of different research methods
- A review we conducted found very few studies used the methods required to demonstrate effectiveness



Our hero concepts





Modest

- Proportionate to size of project
- Realistic about what a service can achieve on its own
- Realistic about which impacts can be demonstrated – short and long term
- Realistic about the strengths and weaknesses of different methods of evaluation



Meaningful

Before you can evaluate be clear about:

- 1. **WHO** you are providing the service for (eg general community, workers who support clients)
- 2. **WHEN** it is being provided (ie Just in time eg divorce classes or just in case an issue arises in the future)
- 3. To achieve **WHAT** purpose?
 - For clients to *self help*? To *get help*? Or for community workers to *give help*?



Different roles for CLE (Forell and McDonald, 2015)

Who		Broader community clients	Core clients	Workers
		Higher capability	Lower capability	Problem noticers
To Do		Self help	Get help	Give help
When	Just in time	Procedural – To outline steps to take with existing problem and provide tools to do so. <i>More technology</i>	To identify problem as legal & introduce legal service provider for immediate help. <i>Less technology</i>	To help recognise their clients' existing legal issues & know where to refer/ link clients to legal help. <i>Technology + F2F</i>
	Just in case	To encourage steps to prevent problems arising and encourage action when they occur. <i>More technology</i>	To identify problems as legal - to prevent problems and to encourage help seeking when problem arises. <i>Less technology</i>	To build capacity to recognise issues and refer, across a range of issues, to assist current/future clients. <i>More technology</i>
Intent		Provide alternative to legal assistance services.	To connect isolated clients to legal assistance services.	Provide a pathway to legal assistance services for their clients.
Types of outcomes		Users able to resolve issues. Use law to prevent issues.	Users seek assistance for legal problems.	Problem noticers provide appropriate referrals.



Why ask these questions?

By systematically answering each of these questions you can:

- Be clear about the role of your service
- Ask meaningful evaluation questions
- Determine the processes and outcomes you need to measure to evaluate the success of your service



Measurable

- Rigour is required to remove bias and measure outcomes accurately
- Without rigour confidence in your findings isn't possible





To bolster rigour

- Rule out or account for external influences – eg seasonal effects, previous knowledge
- Collect data in a way that doesn't bias the sample – random assignment or stratification can help here
- Collect enough data to allow you to pick up if differences were made. This allows for the use of statistical tests that can give you confidence that the differences you found were not due to chance



- Rule out demand characteristics or other alternative explanations with a comparison group
- Collect objective measures – that go beyond subjective impressions eg increased referrals
- Collect multiple data sources – both subjective and objective – so you can compare and see that all sources indicate the same
- Often the ideal design is a pre and post with follow up and a valid comparison/control group



Take home message

- Asking more precise questions and doing this with rigour is the best way forward
- Evaluations will be most successful when they focus on:





References

Tools to assist with evaluation produced by the Law and Justice Foundation of NSW

Justice issues paper 16: effectiveness of public legal assistance services, Digiusto, E 2012, Law and Justice Foundation of NSW, Sydney

See this paper for: A detailed explanation of outcome and process evaluations and the research methodologies required for each type. This paper contains information on how to design more rigorous evaluations.

[http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/articleIDs/550206C336A8DDFDCA257DCB001B37CC/\\$file/JI_16_Effectiveness_web.pdf](http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/articleIDs/550206C336A8DDFDCA257DCB001B37CC/$file/JI_16_Effectiveness_web.pdf)

Community legal education and information at Legal Aid NSW: activities, costs and future planning, Forell, S & McDonald, H M, 2015, Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, Sydney

See this report for: The table on p. 61 explaining the different roles of CLE – a vital tool for planning CLE and determining precise evaluation questions.

[http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/articleIDs/06CA067847F3CF7DCA257E9E000E3BB1/\\$file/CLEI_Legal_Aid_NSW.pdf](http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/articleIDs/06CA067847F3CF7DCA257E9E000E3BB1/$file/CLEI_Legal_Aid_NSW.pdf)

Justice issues paper 18: the outcomes of community legal education: a systematic review Wilczynski A, Karras M & Forell S 2014, Law and Justice Foundation of NSW, Sydney

See this report for: A systematic review of research into the effectiveness of CLE. This paper contains a discussion around realistic ways to improve evaluation in the sector.

[http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/articleIDs/18C587ECBD959D50CA257A91001F76F0/\\$file/JI18_Outcomes_of_CLE_FINAL_web.pdf](http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/articleIDs/18C587ECBD959D50CA257A91001F76F0/$file/JI18_Outcomes_of_CLE_FINAL_web.pdf)

Justice issues paper 19 , What works? Learning from the literature, Maria Karras & Suzie Forell, 2015 , Law and Justice Foundation of NSW, Sydney

This paper provides a guide to identifying relevant research and, in a transparent way, reporting the best available evidence drawn from these studies.

[http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/articleIDs/4DB933C5EFC070C6CA257DE900194CE4/\\$file/JI19_What_Works_FINAL_web.pdf](http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/articleIDs/4DB933C5EFC070C6CA257DE900194CE4/$file/JI19_What_Works_FINAL_web.pdf)

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