TrustLaw

MEASURING PRO BONO IMPACT

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About TrustLaw

The Thomson Reuters Foundation works to advance media freedom, foster more inclusive economies, and promote human rights. Through news, media development, free legal assistance and convening initiatives, the Foundation combines its unique services to drive systemic change.

TrustLaw, an initiative of the Thomson Reuters Foundation, is the world's largest pro bono legal network. Working with leading law firms and corporate legal teams, we facilitate free legal support, ground-breaking legal research, and resources for non-profits and social enterprises in 199 countries. By spreading the practice of pro bono worldwide, TrustLaw wants to strengthen civil society and drive change.

Foreword

Welcome to the "Measuring Pro Bono Impact Guide," brought to you by TrustLaw, the global pro bono legal network of the Thomson Reuters Foundation. At TrustLaw, our mission is to connect lawyers in over 199 countries with NGOs and social enterprises in need of pro bono legal assistance. By engaging in pro bono work, lawyers can leverage the power of the law to address some of the most pressing issues facing society today.

We work closely with legal teams, including both law firms and in-house teams, around the world to achieve this mission. From large international firms with dedicated staff working full-time on pro bono matters to small, one-person law firms providing ad hoc legal advice to local community organisations, TrustLaw supports a wide range of pro bono initiatives. Our regional teams provide us with unique insights into the global pro bono landscape, and our TrustLaw Index of Pro Bono offers a comprehensive view of the scale and trends of the pro bono legal sector internationally.

In today's world, measuring impact is essential, particularly in driving social change. Organisations want to know that their time, investment, and efforts are making a real difference. While many still rely on reporting hours as the primary metric for assessing achievement, there is a growing recognition of the need to consider impact more holistically. However, measuring impact, especially in the context of pro bono services within the social economy, can be challenging and costly.

This guide aims to bridge this gap. By providing a clear 5-step framework, we aim to support legal teams in measuring the impact of their pro bono programs more effectively. We believe that by understanding and quantifying the impact of their work, lawyers can maximize their contributions to social change and make a tangible difference in the lives of those they serve.

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Getting started on your impact journey

As pro bono practice evolves and deepens there is growing interest in better tracking the impact of pro bono work. However, it can be difficult to demonstrate a clear link between the hours contributed and the social impact achieved. **This guide intends to support legal teams to start measuring the impact of their pro bono work by providing a basic enabling framework.**

Why measure pro bono impact?

Measuring the impact of pro bono work is key for legal teams.

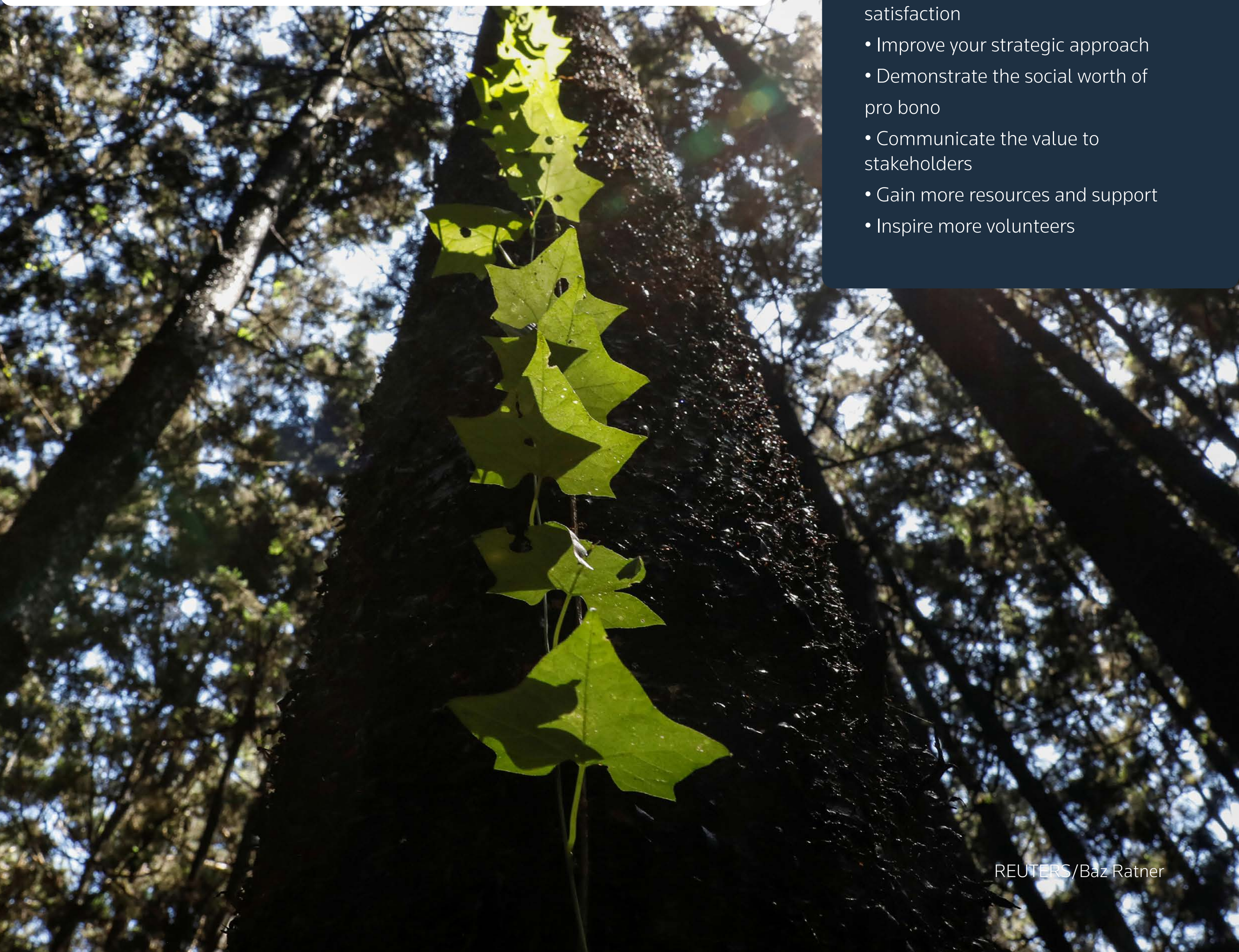
It can help you better understand how your work contributes to society, including learning what your pro bono clients aim to achieve in terms of real-life change, and then, making sure pro bono is meeting clients needs.

It can help you improve the reach and efficiency of your pro bono programme. Impact data can equip you to show your stakeholders—clients, other firms and companies, and the community—how your efforts are making social impact.

Finally, demonstrating real-world impact can help to build buy-in from internal leadership and decision-makers and motivate lawyers.

Examples of reasons to measure

- Ensure you understand what your pro bono clients aim to achieve in terms of real-life change, and then, make sure pro bono is meeting these needs
- Make the best use of limited resources
- Effective allocation of work to reduce burden on lawyers
- Expand or alter the programme, as necessary, based on lessons
- Tailor resources to client needs
- Ensure client and volunteer satisfaction
- Improve your strategic approach
- Demonstrate the social worth of pro bono
- Communicate the value to stakeholders
- Gain more resources and support
- Inspire more volunteers



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Steps to track and measure impact

Reflect on this map and questions to start designing your framework for tracking pro bono impact:

Steps	Key questions
1. Define Impact	Why does your legal team do pro bono? What do you expect to achieve? Do you understand the need?
2. Create a definition of success	What are the specific objectives you want to achieve through pro bono? Do the objectives respond to different needs of a variety of stakeholders?
3. Develop a roadmap	How do you plan to achieve your objectives? What steps are necessary to achieve your goals?
4. Create a process to evaluate success	How is progress measured? When is success accomplished? What information do you need for your assessment? How will data be identified and collected? How will the data be analysed and shared?
5. Use your learnings	How can your conclusions be used to evaluate success? How can you use findings to reflect on your strategic approach? What is the best way to communicate your impact?

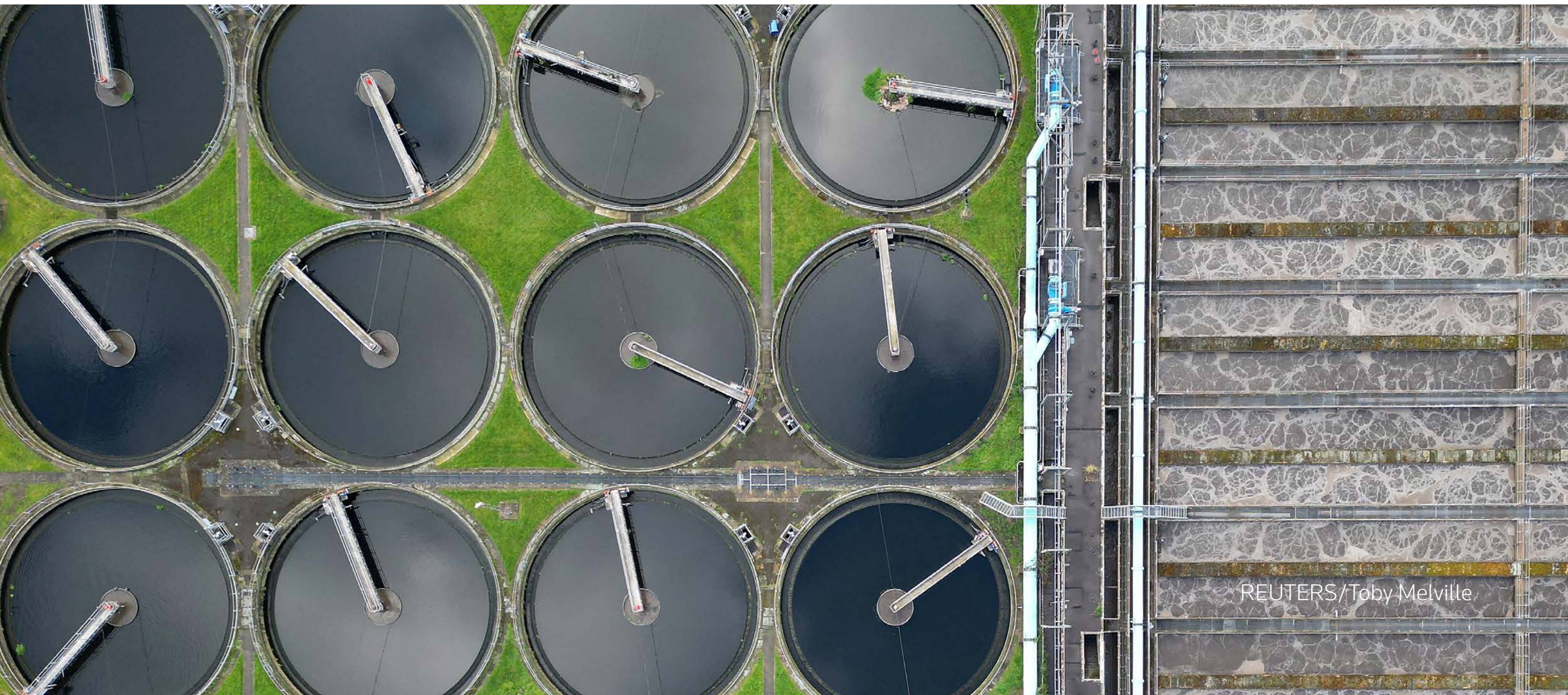
01 Define Impact

Why does your legal team do pro bono?

There is no single definition of impact as it depends on what is expected to achieve. To define what impact means for your organisation, it is important to go back to basics and think about the reasons you do pro bono. You can find the answer to this question by discussing it with your whole pro bono team, and even external stakeholder partners.

Examples of desired impact

- Stronger civil society empowered to change lives of people and communities
- Stronger legal and policy frameworks upholding human rights and protecting environment
- Lawyers empowered to create positive change.



REUTERS/Toby Melville

0.2 Create a Definition of Success

What are the specific objectives you want to achieve through pro bono?

Having defined the "why" behind your pro bono programme, it is important to set specific objectives and define what success means to your pro bono team. These may be long-term or short-term and may be different for different stakeholders.

Tip
Ideally, you will be able to evaluate and report on long-term changes that result from your programme. Building strong relationships with the recipient individuals and organisations from the outset enables open communication and feedback that will be vital for the evaluation process.

Do the objectives respond to different needs of your stakeholders?

There can be many different stakeholder groups involved in the delivery of a pro bono programme and it can be helpful to consider objectives for each. The most common stakeholders to consider are: (1) **the organisation;** (2) **the pro bono programme;** (3) **the pro bono lawyers; and** (4) **the pro bono clients**.

- **Objectives for the organisation** may relate to ensuring the value of your pro bono programme supports the goals of your organisation as a whole and these are aligned.

- **Objectives for the pro bono programme** may relate to delivering an efficient and effective pro bono programme. The things to track are different from "the why" of pro bono and relate more to "the how".

- **Objectives for pro bono lawyers** may relate to ensuring your teams have positive experiences doing pro bono, are sufficiently motivated to take on the work, and learn from the opportunity.

- **Objectives for pro bono clients** relate to the actual impact on pro bono clients, their beneficiaries and communities they work with, and broader social change. These objectives can sometimes be more challenging to track, especially when evaluating long-term impact, but it is worth trying, so that you can understand whether you are making positive social change through your pro bono work.

Examples of objectives

For the organisation:
- Advances its CSR/ESG strategy
- Creates public recognition as a pro bono leader and other reputational benefits
- Helps recruit, engage and retain pro bono and commercial clients
- Helps the legal team engage and retain committed lawyers

For the pro bono programme:
- Programme is delivered efficiently
- Demonstrates the importance of pro bono
- Creates buy-in from the organisation/firm and individual lawyers

For pro bono lawyers:
- Offers a positive experience
- Facilitates a seamless engagement with the pro bono client
- Helps to provide exposure to new legal issues
- Creates opportunities to gain experience

For pro bono clients:
- Improves their quality of life (for individuals)
- Enhances organisational resiliency
- Helps with delivery of mission and ability to drive impact

03 Develop a roadmap

How do you plan to achieve your objectives?

Creating a roadmap helps to articulate what you want to do and how you plan to achieve it. A roadmap can look like a formal, detailed theory of change or it can be a more informal process map. The key is to map your big picture vision and objectives and then to draw the link with the practical steps and resources you will need to make that vision a reality.

Inputs

Inputs are the resources contributed to a programme or project. This can include dedicated human and financial resources, space, materials, etc. Identifying inputs can help determine what you have available to administer your programme as well as any gaps.

Key questions:

- What resources do/can you dedicate to your programme?
- Do you need additional resources to create a successful programme and meet your objectives?

Activities

Activities are how you put your resources to use, and the actions required to implement your programme.

Key questions:

- What activities do you currently undertake?
- What activities are necessary to achieve your objectives?

Outputs

Outputs are the direct results of or deliverables from the activity, in the case of pro bono, this is often the deliverable or what the beneficiaries receive as a result of your programming. The outputs are what lead to the outcomes.

Key question:

- What practical outputs do my activities generate?

Outcomes

Outcomes are the changes that occur as a direct result of the programme. Outcomes can be divided not only temporally (e.g., short-term, intermediate, and long-term), but also by stakeholders.

Chain of Outcomes:

- **Short-term** – the direct and immediate result of the activities and outputs. This is the easiest to measure.
- **Intermediate** – links the short- and long-term outcomes.
- **Long-term** – the results that occur overtime. This is the most challenging to measure.

Key question:

- What changes are resulting from our pro bono work?

Tip

Keep your defined impact, vision and objectives in mind when developing your roadmap. See how these may be linked in our sample chart at the end of this chapter*.

Examples of Inputs

- Volunteer lawyers
- Pro bono programme administrator
- Law firm infrastructure, including case management systems, legal support staff, etc.
- Budget

Examples of Activities

- Legal clinic
- Pro bono projects
- Programme coordination
- Webinars and trainings

Examples of Outputs

- Drafted contracts
- Self-help legal guides
- Legal training delivered
- Completed legal proceeding

Examples of Outcomes

- Outcome for your volunteer lawyer might be gained experience
- Outcome for your client might be a successfully resolved legal issue or, in the longer-term, a changed law or policy as a result of advocacy using pro bono legal research

Tip

When evaluating outcomes, ask different stakeholders to define what they expect to achieve. This can be especially useful when evaluating long-term external impact. Pro bono work ultimately supports the client's objectives - finding out what those are will help you get a better sense of the real-world results.

*Sample Chart – Linking Inputs, Activities, Outputs, Outcomes and Impact

This chart links all factors used to build your roadmap. Main impact is to widespread awareness on women's rights. See how we have developed two distinct paths with varying outcomes for two different stakeholders (women and NGOs), yet both intended to achieve the overarching impact.

INPUTS	• Coordinator to design and run the activities efficiently • Venue and materials for event • System for webinar • Lawyers to deliver trainings • Lawyers to respond to legal requests • Lawyers to draft and prepare guides • Designer to design guide and system to publish it	• Coordinator to design and run the activities efficiently (e.g. Identify the number of pro bono lawyers and pro bono hours needed) • System for webinar • Lawyers to deliver trainings • Lawyers to respond to legal requests
ACTIVITIES	• In person training and webinars for women • Connection service and provision of legal advice to women • Design and publish know your rights guides for women	• Legal webinars for NGOs • Connection service and provision of legal advice to NGOs
OUTPUTS	• Legal learning services for women delivered • Legal advisory services for women provided by pro bono lawyers delivered • Digital resources for women published	• Legal learning services for NGOs delivered • Legal advisory services for NGOs provided by pro bono lawyers delivered
OUTCOMES	**Women** are aware of their rights	**NGOs focusing on women's rights** are legally savvy and efficient when promoting women's rights
IMPACT	**Widespread awareness on women's rights**	

REUTERS/Saumya Khandelwal

0.4 Create a process to evaluate success

What steps are necessary to evaluate success?

Once you reflect and decide on your goals and your plan of action, you need to create a system to track and measure your progress and results.

1. Identify key indicators
2. Create specific targets
3. Identify the data you need to gather
4. Create a data-gathering process
5. Create a data-analysis process and decide how to use the learnings

How is progress measured?

Indicators help in the assessment of a programme's success. They provide evidence of change. They are usually divided into quantitative indicators (reported as numbers, e.g., a rate) and qualitative indicators (reported as words, e.g., a case study).

You can use your indicators to assess:

Effectiveness: Did the programme successfully meet the needs of clients and other stakeholders?

Efficiency: How well were resources utilised to facilitate the programme? How productive and well-administered is the programme?

Quality: How satisfied were the pro bono clients? How long does it take a pro bono lawyer to address a legal request? How satisfied are your pro bono lawyers with the administration of the pro bono programme?

Examples of indicators

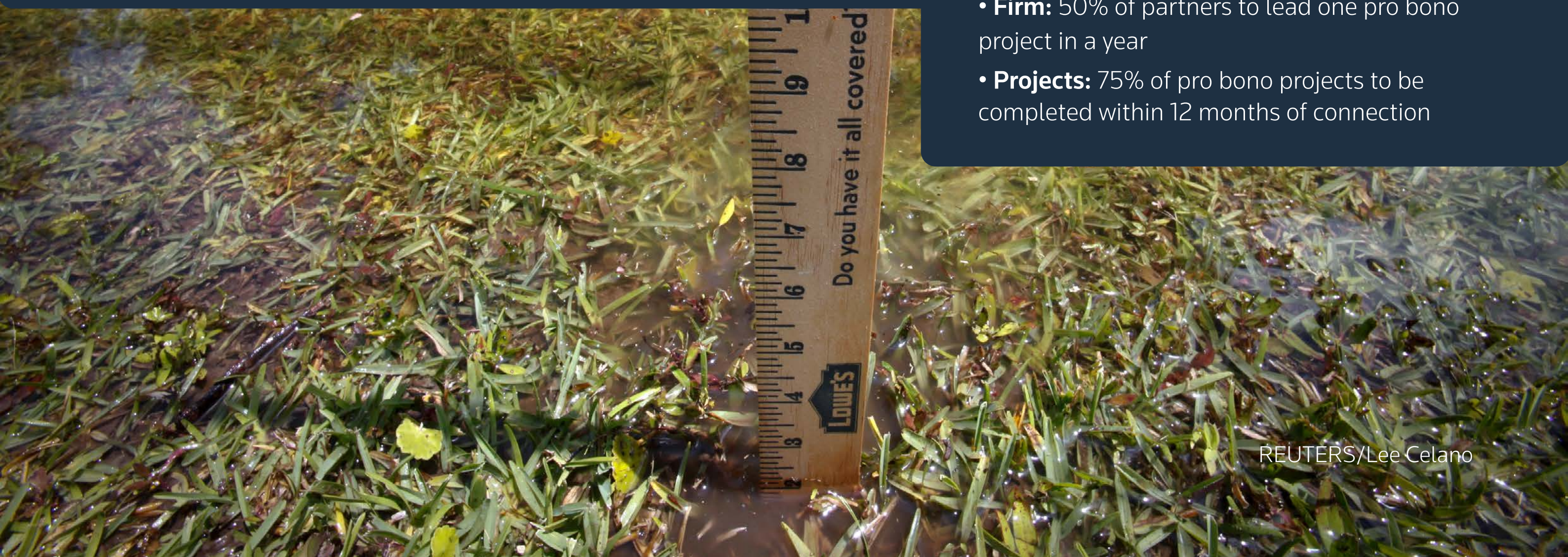
- **Inputs:** The number of hours dedicated by lawyers and how they translate into a monetary donation (free legal fees).
- **Activity**: How many pro bono requests your pro bono lawyers have committed to.
- **Outputs:** The number of pro bono projects your lawyers have completed.
- **Outcomes:** The number of pro bono clients that have successfully accessed legal support.
- **Impact:** Changes in a law; or improved organisational resilience to better serve the needs of people; or a favourable outcome for an individual in an administrative or legal proceeding thanks to legal pro bono support provided.

When is success achieved?

Targets help you measure how much progress is expected against each indicator or objective and by when.

Examples of targets

- **Client:** 90% of pro bono clients are satisfied with the assistance provided
- **Lawyers**: complete minimum 20 hours of pro bono work in a calendar year
- **Firm:** 50% of partners to lead one pro bono project in a year
- **Projects:** 75% of pro bono projects to be completed within 12 months of connection



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What information do you need for your assessment?

Data is the information you collect to measure your indicators.

Data can be either quantitative or qualitative and it can be useful to gather a mix of the two. Quantitative data (relating to numbers) sheds light on how many, much, or often (e.g., number of pro bono clients served). Qualitative data (relating to words), offers information on the why and how (e.g., the testimony of a pro bono client).

Examples of data

- Information from lawyer and client on whether they completed the relevant pro bono cases
- Information from lawyer and client on how satisfied they are with the pro bono work: could use a point system (scale of 1 to 10) or words (very satisfied, neutral, not satisfied, etc.)

Tip

Prioritise your sources of data. Some systems can collect a lot of data but analysing it may be a complex and time-consuming task. Collect only what is useful and relevant.

How will the data be identified and collected?

To gather data effectively, it is important to create a **data-gathering process**.

This will help with accuracy and efficiency. Consider what tools are available and where the information will come from. It will also be necessary to train staff who will be involved in data collection to understand when and how they need to gather the information.

Examples of data-gathering process

- Survey your pro bono clients upon completion of the project to assess its success and their overall satisfaction.
- Have a call with your pro bono clients to understand the impact achieved by a project.
- Track the number of pro bono hours, projects, and clients.

Tip

1. A data collection instrument can be as simple as an Excel spreadsheet. The important thing is to start somewhere.

2. Try not to overburden staff or clients when gathering feedback. Simplicity and brevity are key when creating surveys and other data collection tools.

3. Leverage your existing partnerships. Do you partner with a pro bono clearinghouse or legal service organisation that is already collecting feedback from pro bono clients? Ask if that information can be shared.

4. For data-gathering, it is important to gather baseline data to enable comparison. For instance, conduct surveys with the client both before and after providing advice to track changes effectively.

How will the data be analysed and shared?

Data analysis is crucial to putting the information you have gathered to work. The analysis process will help you draw conclusions about your pro bono programme and its impact and effectiveness. These conclusions, in turn, can help make important decisions or demonstrate impact. You may also decide to use this analysis to evaluate your programme more broadly to assess its effectiveness, efficiency and quality.

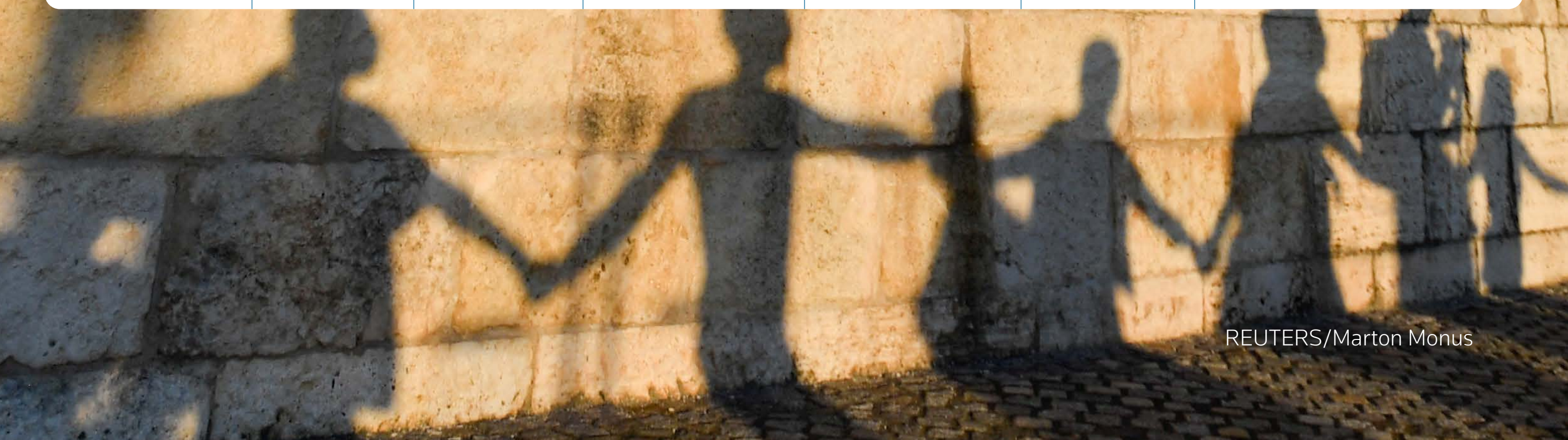
Tip

1. It can be easy to get carried away when collecting and working with data. The key is to choose a couple of essential and useful metrics for evaluation. Start small and build a good foundation for more. Remember, the qualitative impact of an action is often achieved gradually; it is important to allow enough time to evaluate the full impact.

2. Data analysis is an ongoing and intricate process. Reassessing your methodology upon completion is a necessary and beneficial step towards continual improvement.

*Sample Chart – Linking Indicators, Targets, Data, Data-Gathering and Data-Analysis

Objective	Stakeholder	Indicator	Target	Data	Data-gathering	Data-analysis
Impactful pro bono work	Pro bono client	Select a representative sample of pro bono cases and dive deep into their impact	10% of a carefully selected sample resulted in real-life changes in women's lives annually	Pre-selected sample of cases and quality data on the real-life change, the link between the pro bono work and the change, the evidence of that link and change	In depth conversations with relevant stakeholders and asking them for evidence of links and change	Look for trends and patterns. You can compare the notes and evidence you gathered for your sample to extract key learnings: are there common elements of success/failure? Is success circumstantial? Is success linked to a matter or type of partner? Is success directly linked to the way the pro bono advice/ assistance was delivered? Etc.
A positive pro bono experience	Volunteer lawyer	Satisfaction rate	90% of your team of pro bono lawyers express having a positive experience while providing pro bono support	Information from lawyers on how satisfied they are: could use a point system (scale of 1 to 10) or words (very satisfied, neutral, not satisfied, etc.)	Surveys	Group findings per scale/ words, extract % to assess if target was met. When needed, ask for more information to better understand what items contribute or do not contribute to a satisfactory project
Efficient programme administration	Pro bono programme and team	Number of pro bono cases	50 cases are completed annually by our pro bono team	Information on the number of cases finished as informed by lawyers/clients	Case and billing records	Calculate numbers to assess if target was met. If target was not reached, have conversations with the pro bono team and lawyers to assess what happened
Reputational benefits	Firm or company	Number of pro bono referrals	5 new pro bono clients are referred by previous pro bono clients annually	Information from new clients about how they heard about your programme	Intake records: include questions when onboarding new pro bono clients	Calculate numbers, assess if new clients are referred by the same person, assess if there is some commonality to the new clients onboarded through referrals



REUTERS/Marton Monus

0.5 Use Your Learnings

How can your conclusions be used to evaluate success?

Once you have gathered and analysed your data and compared your indicators against your targets, you should have a general sense of how your programme is performing against your goals. Ideally, you will also have gathered some qualitative feedback from pro bono clients on medium and long-term outcomes.

Examples of questions to evaluate success

- To what extent did the programme achieve the intended objectives?
- Were the outcomes worth the time and resources used?
- Did the programme generate a positive result for most stakeholders?
- Were the programme outcomes aligned with your objectives?

How can you use findings to reflect on your strategic approach?

Taking the time to reflect and share learnings as a team is a great way to put your learnings to use.

Tip

Remember to pivot as needed. For example, re-evaluate and set new targets. Use your findings to make informed decisions.

Examples of questions on strategy to discuss as a team

- What contributed to the success?
- What could have been better? How can those points be remedied?
- What should we not do again? What were the mistakes and how can they be avoided in the future?
- How are we progressing against our objectives?
- What do we need to change to achieve greater impact?

How will you communicate your impact?

A significant benefit of diligent tracking is the ability to share your impact and successes. Communicating the results of your impact assessment is a great way to showcase your legal team's hard work and dedication to supporting your community. It can even help to attract clients and other partnerships and be included in communications like ESG disclosures or annual reports.

One of the primary motivations for doing pro bono is the feel-good factor. As a result, it is good practice to celebrate and make achievements known. This, in turn, helps to improve morale, increase job satisfaction, and build even more motivation for pro bono.

Tip

Do not overshare. Ask your client before you share information about their organisation, their work, and their involvement in the specific project you worked on together.

Examples of communicating impact

- Providing accolades and acknowledgment for pro bono lawyers. This can look like an award, an extra day off, a special mention in newsletters, a milestone for promotion.
- Regional and global pro bono award nominations for your key pro bono projects and/or pro bono teams.
- Mentions on the firm website.
- Producing impact stories on social media and/or your website celebrating the project and the impact it achieved.
- Publishing testimonies and quotes from both pro bono clients and lawyers.
- Including key information and case studies in your annual report.

Key Summary on Pro Bono Impact Measurement

This Checklist is meant to help you design your impact measurement strategy. Further detailed explanation can be found in the Measuring Pro Bono Impact Guide.

Steps	What to consider?	How to do it?	Tips - Reminders
Define Impact	Why does your legal team do pro bono? What do you expect to achieve? Do you understand the need?	Speak with your team about why they do pro bono	There is no single definition of impact
Create a Definition of Success	What are the specific objectives you want to achieve through pro bono? Do the objectives respond to different needs of stakeholders?	Define long-term or short-term results Consider the range of stakeholders involved (organisation, pro bono programme, lawyers, and clients)	Building strong relationships with pro bono clients will make the experience more meaningful and has the added benefit of making it easier to gather feedback and track long-term results
Develop a Roadmap	How do you plan to achieve your objectives? What steps are necessary to achieve your goals?	Consider and define: • **Inputs:** internal resources • **Activities:** use of resources and actions delivered to implement your programme • **Outputs:** direct, quantifiable results of the activity • **Outcomes:** changes that occur as a direct result from your programme	• Keep your objectives in mind when developing your roadmap • When evaluating outcomes, ask different stakeholders to define what they expect to achieve
Create a Process to Evaluate Success	How is progress measured? When is success accomplished? What information do you need for your assessment? How will data be identified and collected?	Select and define: • **Indicators:** provide evidence of change • **Targets:** help you measure how much progress is expected against each indicator or objective and by when Select the data you will gather: • **Data:** information that will inform the indicators and overall evaluation • **Types:** Quantitative (number of pro bono cases taken) vs. Qualitative (testimony of client) Design your data-gathering process (numbers, surveys, feedback calls, etc)	• Prioritise your sources of data • Social impact is usually not a linear process • A system can be as simple as an Excel spreadsheet • Try not to overburden staff or clients when gathering feedback • If you partner with an organisation already collecting feedback, ask if that information can be shared In data analysis, it is important to gather baseline data to enable comparison. For instance, conduct surveys with the client both before and after providing advice to track changes effectively Data analysis is an ongoing and intricate process. Reassessing your methodology upon completion is a necessary and beneficial step towards continual improvement.

Create a Process to Evaluate Success	How will the data be analysed and shared?	Design your data-analysis process to draw conclusions about your pro bono programme and its impact and effectiveness	
Use Your Learnings	How can your conclusions be used to evaluate success?	Consider answering: Did you achieve your objectives? Were the outcomes worth the time and resources used? Did you generate a positive result for all stakeholders? Were the outcomes aligned with your objectives?	Remember to pivot as needed. For example, reevaluate and set new targets. Use your findings to make informed decisions
	How can you use findings to reflect on your strategic approach?	Consider answering: what contributed to success? What could have been done better? Are you progressing towards objectives? What do you need to change to achieve greater impact?	
	What is the best way to communicate your impact?	Consider: • Accolades & acknowledgement (i.e. award, promotion milestone, day off, etc) • Mentions on the firm website • Impact stories • Publishing testimonies • Annual Report mention • Others	

If you want to learn more...

- Intrac for Civil Society, M&E Universe, July 2019
- Australian Pro Bono Centre, Measuring Impact Hub
- The Annie E. Casie Foundation, Developing a Theory of Change, June 2022
- Standford Social Innovation Review, A Playbook for Designing Social Impact Measurement, December 2028
- Sopact, Social Impact Metric Guide
- OECD, Measure, Manage and Maximise your impact, April 2024

Looking for ways in which your pro bono legal programme can further maximize your contributions to social change?

Please engage with TrustLaw to:

- Join our global legal pro bono network
- Provide pro bono legal assistance, if you are a legal member of TrustLaw already
- Explore impact stories on pro bono
- Explore award winning pro bono cases
- Explore pro bono global trends
- Use our learning resources for legal teams, including our Championing Pro Bono Guide
- Get in touch and tell us what else you need or how else you'd like to partner with us: trustlaw@tr.com

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