



Measuring impact and the Centre's new Buddy Program

Measuring impact is becoming an increasingly important area for not-for-profit organisations to evaluate and highlight, to their funders and networks, the impact of their work. It is also a valuable tool for pro bono providers to evaluate the effectiveness of their programs and whether their work is achieving their intended aims. This article will discuss the ways in which the Centre is measuring its own impact and link to new resources that the Centre has developed to help others evaluate their own programs.

Measuring impact encourages organisations to engage with the question: How can we design and deliver our activities so that they have the greatest positive impact on our stakeholders? Engaging with this question can help an organisation pinpoint the areas where they have been successful in achieving their aims, as well as uncover where improvement is needed.

Centre's Measuring Impact Procedures

In conjunction with creating the Centre's new [2020-2025 Strategic Plan](#), the Centre has begun developing a Theory of Change, entitled 'Our Purpose', along with a number

of evaluation tools in order to measure the impact of its work. The Centre has developed a project planning tool that the Centre uses to proactively plan evaluation and measurement activities for each project. This ensures that procedures are put in place to measure a project's impact before it is launched. The Centre has also created an Activities and Impact Log, designed to help the Centre track and evaluate all its activities.

While on secondment at the Centre, I have been privileged to work on a number of projects for which I assisted in the creation of measuring impact procedures. The process of measuring and planning impact evaluation procedures prior to launching various projects has enabled me to critically evaluate the purpose and intended impact of the project. It has also encouraged me to think broadly about how to best promote resources, how to measure whether projects are actually achieving their intended aims and ensure that the resources are received by the intended target audience.

Measuring impact procedures have also enabled the Centre to co-design projects with stakeholders. Recently, I conducted a number of surveys with pro bono providers



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and community organisations listed in our Justice Project: Pro Bono Tool ('Tool'). By surveying stakeholders who are listed in and will use the resource, the Centre was able to refine the Tool to ensure it was user friendly and practical. The feedback from stakeholders has also helped the Centre to refine how the Tool is implemented, promoted and measured.

I am grateful that this secondment from Australian Government Solicitor has enabled me to improve my understanding of the importance of measuring impact and given me the opportunity to think critically about how to better design, develop, promote and measure various projects.

Measuring Impact Resources

To help organisations to create their own impact evaluation tools and theory of change, the Centre has created a Measuring Impact Hub ('Hub'). The Hub was created to equip all members of the pro bono community with tools and resources to measure the impact of pro bono work that is undertaken. To find out more about measuring impact or to view different types of measuring impact tools, visit the Hub [here](#).

Measuring Impact: Buddy Program

One example of a project that has been evaluated to determine whether it is achieving its aims is the Centre's new Buddy Program.

In early 2020, the Centre piloted a Buddy Program designed to assist law firm signatories with emerging and developing pro bono practices to grow their participation in pro bono legal assistance. The Buddy Program was designed to partner National Pro Bono Target (Target) signatories which have emerging and developing pro bono practices, with more experienced pro bono co-ordinators with more mature pro bono practices. This would enable signatories

to share their experiences, discuss best practice pro bono delivery and connect with members of the pro bono community in an informal and collaborative way.

Before launching the project, the team decided on the intended aims of the project, which were to:

- Grow participation in pro bono legal assistance
- Reduce barriers to doing pro bono
- Embed best practice pro bono delivery for new signatories from the beginning
- Engage and support new signatories the Target
- Encourage cross-collaboration within the pro bono community
- Help the Centre understand how to sustainably and systemically support emerging and developing signatories

With these aims in mind, the pilot Buddy Program was launched in May 2020, with a range of participants, including pro bono partners, co-ordinators and lawyers from six law firms. After three months, participants were asked to reflect on their experiences of the program so far. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

- “The program allows new and developing pro bono practices to access an established practice and sparks conversations around how to develop, expand and then maintain a best practice program...We enjoyed the informal approach to the Buddy Program. It was conversation between peers, learning from each other’s practices and sharing success and failures to hopefully strengthen our pro bono community overall.”

– Jessica Morath, Clayton Utz

- “Discussions with mentors (with significant experience) have provided very useful ideas and strategies on how to develop and expand my personal and BP’s pro bono practice.”

– Danielle Verde, Bartier Perry

- “It was a great opportunity to share our knowledge with others and hopefully our experience will help a less experienced firm join the pro bono sector.”

– Emma Maple-Brown, Herbert Smith Freehills

- “It’s a great opportunity to share the collaborative nature of the Australian pro bono sector with new signatories to the Target.”

– Morgan Long, Sparke Helmore

Using the feedback of the participants, the Centre will continue to refine the Buddy Program to ensure the best possible outcomes for current and future participants. This includes refining the ways in which we determine how to pair participants and what information to give participants prior to first meeting. The Centre is also using the feedback to determine whether the program is having the desired social impact and whether new procedures can be put in place to further the aims of the project. The Buddy Program will be formally launched early 2021.

If you would like to participate in the Centre’s Buddy program as a mentor or mentee, or would like more information about the program, please contact the Centre at info@probonocentre.org.au. ■

By Anna Jacobs, Centre Policy & Project Officer (on secondment from Australian Government Solicitor)

The Centre is grateful for the participation of all six firms that are taking part in the pilot of the Buddy Program. In particular, the Centre wishes to thank Sparke Helmore, Clayton Utz and Herbert Smith Freehills for volunteering the time of their pro bono partners, co-ordinators and lawyers to and agreeing to mentor Bartier Perry, HBA Legal and TurksLegal.

Participants were also asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements regarding whether the aims of the program were being achieved. The results are listed below.

