

Issue 2 : February 2022

Welcome back! In this newsletter we're sharing information and updates on the steps our pilot sites are taking to lay the groundwork for the development of their prosecutorial dashboards. We describe three foundational steps that offices across the state can use to begin their dashboard journey: conducting a capacity assessment, communicating within the office, and identifying priority indicators.

The Colorado Prosecutorial Dashboards Project

The **Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab** (Colorado Lab) and the national **Prosecutorial Performance Indicators** are working with **eight judicial districts in Colorado** to develop data dashboards to assist district attorneys' offices with tracking progress toward greater efficiency, effectiveness, and fairness. Following this initial phase, we will develop tools and infrastructure to scale use of the dashboards statewide.



We welcome feedback and input. Our hope is that your questions and ideas will strengthen the work of pilot sites, and that staff in jurisdictions across the state will learn along the way as the work of the pilot sites progresses. Reach out any time to Jo Beletic at the Colorado Lab (joanna@coloradolab.org)

Foundational Step 1: Conducting a Capacity Assessment

Understanding the current perceptions, strengths, and opportunities within each district attorney's (DA) office is a critical first step to kicking off the dashboard work. Pilot sites administered a short survey to all staff, focused on understanding office priorities, prosecution strategies, perceptions of community engagement, disparities in the criminal justice system, and office practices. Colorado Lab staff gathered additional insight on staff perceptions by conducting in-depth interviews with prosecutors and other staff.

Offices used results from their capacity assessment to identify actionable strategies including opportunities to improve communication, address training needs, and boost morale. In addition, offices used results to craft messages that would resonate with staff, for example, if staff felt positively about the need for transparency with the community, emphasizing the ways the dashboards work could support that goal.

We summarized results from across the pilot sites to help inform statewide dashboards work and provide a benchmark from which to examine shifts in perspectives over time. [Check out the summary report here.](#) We identified three key findings. Staff in DA offices:

- See the importance of transparency and community engagement efforts.
- Might benefit from increased access to relevant and actionable information on office-wide practices and outcomes; however, not all staff see the value of cross-office data.
- Would benefit from reviewing data on racial and ethnic differences to understand the presence and extent of disparities.

You can review and use our [all staff survey](#) in your office to help inform your dashboard work.



“ The capacity assessment was a great tool to see what areas our staff thought we excelled in and where we could improve. I was glad to see an overwhelming share of respondents indicating a willingness to examine data and trends in our work and a desire to communicate and engage more actively with the community. Those key findings will help guide us forward as we determine the best uses of the data internally and how to most effectively leverage our findings to better serve Larimer and Jackson counties.

– Gordon P. McLaughlin, District Attorney 8th Judicial District ”

Foundational Step 2: Communicating within the Office

Fostering two-way communication with staff in the DA's office about the dashboard work is critical in order to: (a) get their input and buy-in, so that we can develop a tool they value and use; and (b) make sure they are aware/are not surprised when data are released to the public.

Over the past few months each of the pilot sites has developed strategies to foster two-way communication, sharing information with staff across their offices to strengthen understanding about the project, dashboards and their value, and the development and implementation process.

Examples of strategies offices have used include:

- Emails from the elected DA.
- Presentations and discussions during regular meetings, including all staff meetings, chief's meetings, and unit specific meetings.
- Listening/discussion-based sessions, such as lunch-and-learns.
- Intranet page or internal communications channel, such as Teams or Slack.
- Interactive visuals/posters on the wall for staff to review and provide feedback.
- Informal conversations with members of the workgroup.

In case you missed it, check out these at-a-glance messages about the [value dashboards provide to staff in different roles](#), including management, deputy DA's, legal assistants, victim witness staff, investigators, and diversion staff.

Foundational Step 3: Identifying Priority Indicators

Dashboards are designed to examine the work of the prosecutor's office as a whole. They take data from the Case Management System (in Colorado, the Action system) and display it visually so it is easier to see and understand. The national Prosecutorial Performance Indicators project has developed a [menu of 55 data elements](#) that Colorado offices can draw inspiration from.

Over the past few months, each pilot site has reviewed the menu to identify which data elements are of highest priority for them to: (a) review internally and (b) share with the public. For areas of high priority, offices have started proactively identifying data quality challenges – and opportunities to address them. [Here's a link to a tool](#) you can use to review the indicators within your office. It may be helpful to pull together a [workgroup](#) to help you brainstorm.

Gathering High-Quality Data on Defendant Race and Ethnicity

Many of the indicators require the office to have valid and reliable data on the race and ethnicity of defendants. Often, law enforcement partners are responsible for collecting this information. We are working on identifying best practices you can use when having conversations with law enforcement partners. If you have ideas, let us know!



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