

Advancing Continuous Improvements in the Family Justice System

Focus Group Project Report

August 2025



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Executive Summary

The Centre for Research, Evaluation, and Action Towards Equal Justice (CREATE Justice) received funding from the CBA Law For the Futures Fund for a project about advancing continuous improvements in the family justice system in Saskatchewan. This broader initiative is designed to explore ways to better support those in Saskatchewan with family justice matters. This report presents findings from an initial step in the larger project.

Guided by principles of **action research**, a collaborative, cyclical process aimed at both generating knowledge and informing practical change (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2013; Stringer & Aragón, 2020), the project actively engaged stakeholders in shaping the research design, data collection, and interpretation. This participatory orientation was intended to ensure that findings would be both relevant to and usable by those working within the family justice system.

CREATE Justice hired the Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research (CHASR) to conduct focus groups with lawyers, legal researchers/educators, and community agency representatives. The purpose of the focus groups was to generate practical insights into system transformation, particularly through gathering insights that may inform the development of a strategy map in Saskatchewan. Specifically, the team sought to better understand how to measure changes that are happening in family justice services, processes, programs, and organizations in the province, through gathering information that would help inform best practices, effective methods, and key considerations for pursuing systemic change. Drawing inspiration from British Columbia and Alberta's family justice system strategy map (see [Appendix F](#) for sample strategy map), participants considered key questions about strategy map components:

- **Outcomes:** Changes that we hope to see for people with family justice matters, including those who interact with the family justice system (e.g., increased knowledge about a certain topic, reduced time to resolution, decreased stress)
- **Strategies:** What can be done (e.g., activities, actions) to facilitate outcomes for people with family justice matters (e.g., education for different groups, adjusting existing programs/processes, implementing new initiatives, advocacy efforts)
- **Capacity development areas:** Resources that will build the capacity of different people and groups, thereby enabling strategies to proceed (e.g., people, partnerships, relationships, funds)
- **Principles:** Values to help guide the formation of a strategy map and overall system transformation

Further, participants reflected on the roles of legal professionals in system change, and challenges to, and helping factors for, tracking and measuring change.

Method and Analysis

The project was **guided by action research principles**, engaging stakeholders throughout the research design, data collection, and interpretation to ensure findings were relevant and actionable within the family justice system (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2013; Stringer & Aragón, 2020). A purposive sampling strategy was used to ensure participation from the individuals with direct, relevant experience; therefore, the recruitment pools for each of the three focus groups were small and targeted. In

collaboration with the project advisory committee, the core research team (Brea Lowenberger, CREATE Justice, Judy Jaunzems Fernuk, the Well-being Coordinator at the College of Law, and Leah Howie, Liaison to the Saskatchewan Access to Justice Network) developed a recruitment list that emphasized diversity in geography, demographics, role, organization type, and experience within the family justice system and systems change experience. The core research team provided CHASR with 18 contacts for the lawyer group (6 participated), 14 contacts for the legal researcher/educator group (4 participated), and 18 contacts for the community agency representative group (4 participated). Those who did not participate in the 90-minute Zoom focus groups either did not respond to the invitation, responded with interest but were not available during the focus group times, or were expected to attend a focus group but did not show up.

Although the number of participants was relatively small, this should not be viewed as a limitation on its own. Generalizability, in the traditional quantitative sense, was not the goal of this qualitative inquiry. Rather, the study aimed to gather insights from a purposively selected, diverse sample. Having responses from people with different backgrounds and demographics, even with a small sample size, can be useful for reasons other than traditional generalizability (e.g., the responses have some level of relevance to those that come across them, or the ability for report readers to think about the results in relation to their own settings and scenarios).

A general inductive analysis (Thomas, 2006) was conducted to organize responses into categories based on specific evaluation/research objectives. This approach is particularly suited for situations where researchers have predefined objectives—in this case, informing the development of a strategy map, while also remaining open to the emergence of unanticipated themes from the data (Thomas, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2012).

With the objective of this report being to foster collaboration and being an initial step in a larger, ongoing project, the data was reviewed and presented in light of this aim. Additional data including issues, strategies, and outcomes has been retained for internal use and will be considered alongside other relevant data and research to guide next phases of this ongoing project.

Results

1. Roles and Responsibilities for Systems Change

The focus group data emphasized a shared responsibility model for system transformation. Those in the 'legal community' were viewed as being responsible for improving accessibility of legal services to meet the needs of those with family justice matters, fostering interdisciplinary and multisector collaboration, knowing about the law, and sharing legal knowledge.

Participants also suggested roles of non-legal professionals in transforming the family justice system, such as:

- Government (e.g., to “kickstart” or advocate for programming to increase the number of mental health professionals)
- Mental health professionals (as a wraparound support service)
- Third-party programming (e.g., to help with strengthening core life skills)

- Lawyers and non-lawyers in community facing positions (e.g., work to assist the legal profession)

More broadly, some people indicated that everyone involved in the family justice system has a role in changing the system.

2. Development of a Strategy Map in Saskatchewan

Participants across all groups found the components of the sample strategy map to be relevant but called for contextual adaptation in Saskatchewan. Multiple participants emphasized that the sample map was too high-level and lacked specificity around actions, responsible parties, and indicators of success. Thus, participants called for specificity: who is responsible for actions, what outcomes are for whom, and how changes will be measured.

Participants envisioned the strategy map as a living tool to support:

- Goal setting
- Development of indicators
- Cross-sector accountability
- Informed decision-making
- Motivation for system transformation

Participants suggested adding or modifying components of the sample map to reflect:

- The high prevalence of intimate partner violence in Saskatchewan
- Rural, remote, and northern service contexts
- Cultural and Indigenous frameworks
- The significant proportion of self-represented litigants
- Expanded definitions of family and justice

Although the focus group guide did not include a question about perceived issues with the family justice system in Saskatchewan, participants articulated a broad range of systemic and service-related issues. Participants frequently linked these issues with strategies that they thought could be included in a Saskatchewan strategy map. Additionally, participants sometimes drew connections between issues and outcomes. The perceived issues were categorized into six thematic areas:

1. Accessibility barriers: Participants reported accessibility barriers that were logistical (e.g., transportation, appointment scheduling), technological (e.g., digital illiteracy, limited access to devices), and systemic (e.g., complexity of court processes, self-navigation burden).

2. The interrelation between process complexity, time to resolution, and financial burden: Participants described a system where time, cost, and complexity are interwoven and mutually reinforcing. Examples of issues stated by some participants included lengthy and inefficient processes; the high financial cost of resolution; and negative impacts of the interrelated issues, such as poverty and ‘giving up’ on family justice matters.

3. Issues with current approaches and policies related to the family law courts/system: Participants voiced concerns about the structure of the court system, noting that it is too “one-size-fits-all,” and thereby, inadequately responsive to the diverse needs of people with family justice matters. For example, participants felt there should be increased focus on/consideration of children’s views and rights. Some participants highlighted the benefit of having judges with previous family law experience hearing family law cases.

4. Various issues related to cases with domestic violence/intimate partner violence: Every group highlighted system shortcomings in addressing intimate partner violence. Participants noted gaps in police response to domestic violence, violence screening availability, and system design that may enable continued manipulation and coercive control. Additionally, participants noted child-related challenges associated with cases that involve domestic violence (e.g., children’s self-blame, and hesitance to speak to children about family violence).

5. Third-party related limitations: Participants, especially community agency representatives, noted shortcomings of third-party programs that aim to assist the public with matters related to family justice. For example, some programs are underfunded, narrow in scope, or inaccessible due to restrictive eligibility. More broadly, some indicated that there were not enough services or non-existent services, and some noted shortages in mental health professionals.

6. Keeping up to date with changing information and practices: Some issues were conceptual or systemic in nature. Participants observed a lag in updating terminology about evolving definitions of family and using technology, as well as challenges updating legal information and forms when legislation changes.

7. Miscellaneous issues: Other issues that participants mentioned included disconnection between systems, the high proportion of self-represented litigants, the lack of Indigenous representation in decisions about the Divorce Act, and people being ‘far removed’ from issues with the family justice system.

Lastly, participants spoke about principles for guiding development of a strategy map in Saskatchewan. Principles focused on:

- Equity, accessibility, and inclusivity
- Cultural and community grounding
- Early intervention and prevention
- Interdisciplinary collaboration
- Safety and trauma-informed practices

While focus group participants were adept at suggesting strategies to address perceived issues in the family justice system, there was less discussion about capacity development areas needed to successfully implement these strategies. Identifying capacity needs is inherently tied to those responsible for delivering or overseeing programs and initiatives. For example, if a recommended strategy is to expand a specific program, the staff managing that program may be best positioned to

determine the additional resources, training, or infrastructure required. Additional data collection could help develop a comprehensive list of capacity development areas.

3. Tracking and Measuring Change

Participants acknowledged the complexity of tracking and measuring changes in the family justice system. Challenges included:

- Data collection and measurement challenges (e.g., resource intensive data collection, accountability uncertainties, missing/incomplete data)
- Participation challenges to accurately convey data (e.g., tracking people who give up or choose not to enter the family justice system)
- Systemic barriers (e.g., disconnected systems and restricted access to system data)

In contrast, participants proposed a variety of strategies that could help overcome these barriers and support inclusive evaluation:

- Data collection and measurement strategies (e.g., use of existing data, development of meaningful indicators, learning from comparable initiatives)
- Participation strategies (e.g., trust building with communities, low barrier feedback options, provision of participant incentives)
- Systemic strategies (e.g., multi-sector collaboration)

Recommendations for Future Work

The focus groups produced a rich dataset pointing to perceived and unanticipated issues related to the family justice system and actionable strategies to improve peoples' experiences with Saskatchewan's family justice system. The findings underscore the value of co-creating solutions with diverse groups of interested people, especially those with lived experience, and moving beyond the legal sector. The strategy map, if developed with sufficient detail and community guidance, could serve as a critical tool in advancing responsive, equitable, and meaningful family justice transformation. Researchers and change-makers may wish to:

- Determine evaluative approaches to guide all future work
- Reflect on how a strategy map could be useful for continuous improvements and/or helping transform the family justice system in Saskatchewan
- Combine the results of the focus groups with other relevant data, to develop inventories of perceived issues with the family justice system, outcomes for people with family justice matters, strategies to address issues, and capacity development areas
- Generate proposed pathways for addressing family justice system issues (e.g., using a dashboard)
- Create a comprehensive list of groups involved in or affected by the family justice system to clarify multisectoral roles and responsibilities and inform future advisory committees
- Take steps to generate widespread awareness of the work that is being done to advance continuous improvements to Saskatchewan's family justice system
- Collect data from those with lived experience (i.e., those with family justice matters or those who have navigated family justice matters in the past)
- Consult with service providers to identify capacity needs of those who would be responsible for delivering or overseeing programs and initiatives

1. Project Overview

The Centre for Research, Evaluation, and Action Towards Equal Justice (CREATE Justice) received funding from the CBA Law For the Futures Fund for a project about advancing continuous improvements in the family justice system in Saskatchewan. This broader initiative is designed to explore ways to better support those in Saskatchewan with family justice matters. The overarching research questions guiding the larger project are:

1. In what ways can a more user-friendly public interface for supporting families in transition and in resolving family disputes be developed using innovative ideas from models and stakeholders in other jurisdictions?
2. How can a Saskatchewan model in response to family justice needs be enhanced to recognize adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) experienced by parents in their childhood, reduce further harm to their (current) families, and increase well-being of families as they work through the transition of separation?

By addressing these questions, the project aims to inform Saskatchewan stakeholders through the following:

1. Ongoing development of competencies in family law education.
2. Continuous system changes in individual programming and collectively across the Saskatchewan family justice sector.
3. A more user-friendly public interface for supporting families in transition and in resolving family disputes.

CREATE Justice hired the Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research (CHASR) to conduct a small set of focus groups on the topic of developing a strategy map to help inform changes to Saskatchewan's family justice system. The focus groups were an initial step in the larger project, aimed at gathering expert input from diverse sectors connected to the family justice system. This smaller project was a joint effort between CREATE Justice, the Well-being Coordinator at the College of Law, a Project Advisory Committee, and CHASR.

Any questions about this report can be directed to Shaneice Fletcher-Hildebrand (shaneice.fletcher@usask.ca), CHASR's evaluation manager and specialist.

1.1 Purpose of Focus Groups

The purpose of the focus groups was to gather information from key groups involved in the field of family justice to help inform best practices, effective methods, and key considerations for measuring the collective impact of family justice initiatives in Saskatchewan. The goal was to better understand how to measure changes that are happening in family justice services, processes, programs, and organizations in the province.

The focus group portion of the project builds on the work that other locations have completed to date. For example, British Columbia and Alberta have developed a strategy map for the purpose of aligning and coordinating complementary efforts to design, track, and measure continuous improvements and for transforming the family justice system.

1.2 Method and Analysis Overview

This project followed an action research approach, engaging a Project Advisory Committee and key stakeholders in a collaborative process to guide focus group design, data collection, and interpretation. The Project Advisory Committee is comprised of seven members from a wide range of organizations who have a family justice-related background. The goal was to generate actionable insights that could inform the development of strategies to improve family justice services. This section includes a brief overview of the Project Advisory Committee meeting that helped inform the data collection strategies, information about the focus groups, and a summary of analytic steps. The focus group project received ethical approval from the University of Saskatchewan Ethics Board on May 13, 2025.

1.2.1. Initial Project Advisory Committee Meeting

The Project Advisory Committee met in November 2024 to guide planning for upcoming focus groups aimed at understanding how changes in family justice services can be effectively measured. During this meeting, members provided input on recruitment strategies, emphasizing the need for diverse representation across geography, demographics, and professional perspectives. The committee discussed practical considerations for inviting participants (e.g., possible challenges with government email firewalls) and potential motivators for participation (e.g., offering continuing professional development credit). Members also explored logistical issues related to scheduling focus groups, noting that late afternoon sessions might best accommodate lawyers' work commitments. In January 2025, committee members had the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the drafted focus group guide to ensure the questions were relevant and comprehensive. These collaborative efforts were designed to strengthen the project's qualitative data collection by improving participant diversity, ensuring feasible scheduling, and refining data-gathering tools.

1.2.2 Focus Group Recruitment

A purposive sampling strategy was used to ensure participation from individuals with direct, relevant experience; therefore, the recruitment pools for each of the three focus groups were small and targeted. Purposive sampling is a method used to intentionally recruit individuals who have specific knowledge, experiences, or perspectives that are relevant to the research topic. This approach helps ensure that the qualitative data provides rich and meaningful insights that will address the research/evaluation questions.

The core research team collaborated with the Project Advisory Committee to develop a recruitment list that emphasized diversity in geography, demographics, role, organization type, and experience within the family justice system and systems change experience. The evaluator managed the recruitment process, which included sending email invitations and follow-up reminders (see [Appendix A](#) for the recruitment emails). To boost participation numbers, the core research team identified additional individuals to invite as needed. In total, the core research team provided CHASR with 18 contacts for the lawyer group, 14 contacts for the legal researcher/educator group, and 18 contacts for the community agency representative group. The evaluator sent a scheduling poll to everyone who expressed interest. Focus group times were chosen based on the time that worked for the highest number of individuals.

Prior to the focus groups, invited individuals were sent a project overview (see [Appendix B](#)), and those who expressed interest in participation were sent a consent form (see [Appendix C](#)). Once the focus groups were scheduled, participants were sent a 2-page informational document on strategy maps (See [Appendix D](#)), and a 10-minute video explaining the overarching project in more detail (See [Appendix E](#)).

Demographic details were not formally collected to uphold participant confidentiality. Each group included participants from various sectors and organizations. Not all participants were located in the same geographic area.

1.2.3 Focus Group Session Details

Three 90-minute focus groups were conducted via Zoom – one with each of the following groups:

1. Lawyers (6 participants)
2. Researchers and other legal educators (4 participants)
3. Community agency representatives (4 participants)

People from the participation pools who did not participate in the focus groups either did not respond to the invitation, responded with interest but were not available during the focus group times, or were expected to attend a focus group but did not show up. The participation rates are as follows: 33% (lawyers), 29% (researchers/educators), and 22% (community agency representatives).¹

Focus group questions prompted participants to think about a strategy for coordinating and measuring change in Saskatchewan by viewing an example strategy map and discussing related ideas. [Appendix F](#) includes the sample strategy map that was shown during the focus groups. Participants were also asked to share their perspectives about how strategies could be tracked, and how changes could be measured, in Saskatchewan. [Appendix G](#) includes the focus group guide.

The moderator followed the semi-structured guide, allowing flexibility in the discussions. This flexibility is consistent with action research principles, enabling participant input to shape the conversation while still addressing the study's core objectives (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2013; Stringer & Aragón, 2020). A law student was hired to take notes about group dynamics during the focus groups (e.g., speaking order; agreements and disagreements; use of Zoom reactions; Zoom comments) and personal involvement (e.g., level of speaking, body language). [Appendix H](#) includes the note-taking template. Post-session, the evaluator emailed participants to thank them for their participation and to offer a summary of the focus group results upon project completion. Sessions were audio-recorded on an external device. Transcriptions were completed via Rev.com – a third-party transcription software approved by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board.

1.2.4 Analysis

The analysis followed a general inductive approach (Thomas, 2006), a method well-suited for evaluations driven by specific research objectives, yet one open to new insights. General inductive analysis involves "...a set of procedures for creating meaning in complex data through the development of summary themes or categories from the raw data" (Thomas, 2006, p.239).

¹ Based on CHASR staff experiences with focus group projects, including some focus groups with the target populations for this project, these participation rates were expected.

The result of general inductive analysis tends to be between 3 and 8 sub-categories that summarize the results of each top-level category. In this project, 10 top-level categories were identified based on the focus group guide:

1. Key Outcomes
2. Key Strategies
3. Current Saskatchewan Strategies
4. Key Capacity Development Areas
5. Legal Community Role
6. Guiding Principles
7. Strategy Map Information Sources
8. Strategy Map Uses
9. Challenges to Tracking and Measuring Outcomes
10. Helping Factors for Tracking and Measuring Outcomes

Five additional top-level categories were identified after completing a close reading of the focus group transcripts:

1. Sample Strategy Map Relevance
2. Issues Related to the Family Justice System
3. Role of Those Outside of the Legal Community
4. Map Adaptation to a Saskatchewan Context
5. System Design Considerations

A 5-step analytic process was followed:

Step 1 (Preparation of raw data files): The evaluator reviewed transcripts for accuracy, de-identified them, and formatted them for analysis.

Step 2 (Close reading of text): The evaluator read the transcripts and took notes on: a) Passages that needed clarification; b) 'adjacent topics' (i.e., responses that were related to focus group topics, but did not directly answer a focus group question); and c) topics that participants spoke about for each question.

Step 3 (Creation of categories): The evaluator attempted coding using NVivo 14 software, but two challenges were encountered:

1. Different parts of single participant responses were coded to different sub-categories, meaning that the participant indicator (e.g., Lawyer1) was not visible when some of the passages were coded. This would have made it difficult to identify who said certain passages at the reporting stage.
2. The strategy map components that participants identified in the focus groups were often linked to perceived issues related to the family justice system. NVivo does not have a function for clearly viewing these linked passages.

The evaluator used Microsoft Word 365 (Version 2506) to categorize focus group responses, which allowed participant indicators to be visible for each coded passage. The evaluator was also able to categorize passages in a way that showed linkages between perceived issues and strategy map components.

Step 4 (Handling overlapping coding and uncoded text): Overlapping coding was completed throughout the categorization process by simultaneously coding passages into multiple sub-categories when needed. New sub-categories were created on an ongoing basis for parts of responses that did not neatly fit into the categories and sub-categories and reviewed and discussed by the core research team in accordance with action research – ongoing iterative reflective-action.

Step 5 (Continuing revision and refinement of category system): The evaluator refined, renamed, combined, or subdivided sub-categories for clarity and specificity.

Step 6 (Analysis and reporting process): The core research team took part in the analysis and reporting process. With the objective of this report being to foster collaboration and being an initial step in a larger, ongoing project, the data was reviewed and presented in light of this aim.

Additional data including issues, strategies, and outcomes has been retained for internal use and will be considered alongside other relevant data and research to guide next phases of this ongoing project.

1.2.5 General Notes on Group Dynamics

Overall, participants across all groups demonstrated strong engagement and a collaborative approach to discussions. In all groups, there was an abundance of agreement, primarily indicated through head nodding, verbal agreement, sharing experiences, and building on each other's responses. In the lawyer group, some participants also used emojis to indicate agreement (e.g., thumbs up or heart). There were a small number of instances which signaled differences in perspectives, though they were not necessarily disagreements. Rather, these instances involved one person stating a thought, followed by another person adding context.

A. The lawyer focus group

- **Engagement:** Two lawyers spoke more frequently than others but did not dominate the conversation. Participants occasionally used the chat. Visually, participants appeared to be engaged with the sample strategy map that was shared on the screen. While some participants had not reviewed preparatory materials beforehand, they were still able to meaningfully engage. One participant left mid-way through the focus group. The participant did not indicate why they left before, during, or after the focus group. The impact is uncertain. While it is uncertain what this participant would have contributed to the remaining questions, it could be generally noted that this person's perspective, potentially informed by their specific demographic and background characteristics, is only represented in some parts of the focus group.

- **Focus group flow:** There was no particular speaking order in this group. The focus group guide was followed less closely in the lawyer group compared to the other groups, as responses from participants (including conversations amongst participants) tended to address topics that spanned multiple questions. Thus, the moderator did not ask some questions that were included in the guide.
- **A note on conceptualizing ‘outcomes’:** There was an extended period of silence after participants in the lawyer group were asked about outcomes that could be included in a Saskatchewan strategy map. The moderator reframed the question, asking the participants to think about issues related to the family justice system, and goals that might stem from those issues.

B. The researcher-educator focus group

- **Engagement:** One participant spoke less frequently than the others, and mentioned they were not a ‘content expert’ in law. The moderator helped ensure balanced contributions by directing specific questions related to that participant’s connection to family law and systems change when relevant. The Zoom chat was primarily used for agreement and adding to participants’ spoken responses. Participants referred to the sample map that was shown on the screen in their responses, suggesting their engagement with the content.
- **Focus group flow:** Two participants tended to respond to each question first, followed by the others. The chat was used for agreement and adding to a person’s spoken response. The focus group guide was followed more closely in this group than the lawyer group, though some questions were asked out of order to promote flow.

C. Community agency representative group

- **Engagement:** All participants spoke about the same amount. Chat comments were not used in this group. Approximately halfway through the call, the group became more engaged with one another. Participants were highly engaged with the sample strategy map that was shared on the screen, as many items in the map were read out loud and expanded on by participants.
- **Focus group flow:** There was no particular speaking order. The focus group guide was followed most closely in this group.
- **Clarification requested by participants:** More than the other two groups, community agency representatives requested clarification on terms that were used in focus group questions or the sample strategy map. For example, one participant wanted to know what “Support agency” was referring to in the sample map. There were also requests to define “legal community,” explain what was meant by the “family justice system” (is it just the courts?), and provide examples of frameworks, data, research, or resources that could be consulted to inform a strategy map.

The remainder of this report includes the results of the focus groups and concluding recommendations and future directions. There are two points to keep in mind before reading the results in **Sections 2 – 5:**

1. Quotes presented in the results are followed by an indicator of which focus group the response came from:
 - L = lawyer
 - RE = researcher/educator
 - CAR = community agency representative

- M = moderator
- 2. Three acronyms were commonly used in participant responses:
 - DV = domestic violence
 - IPV = intimate partner violence

2. Results: Reflections on Strategy Map Components – Outcomes, Strategies, Capacity Development Areas, and Guiding Principles

The results presented in this section stem from discussions about the sample strategy map.

The sample strategy map ([Appendix F](#)) includes outcomes, strategies, capacity development areas, and principles.

For consistency when coding responses, the evaluator defined each strategy map component as follows:

- **Outcomes:** Changes that we hope to see for people with family justice matters, including those who interact with the family justice system (e.g., increased knowledge about a certain topic, reduced time to resolution, decreased stress)
- **Strategies:** What can be done (e.g., activities, actions) to facilitate outcomes for people with family justice matters (e.g., education for different groups, adjusting existing programs/processes, implementing new initiatives, advocacy efforts)
- **Capacity development areas:** Resources that will build the capacity of different people and groups, thereby enabling strategies to proceed (e.g., people, partnerships, relationships, funds)
- **Principles:** Values to help guide the formation of a strategy map and overall system transformation

All but one participant had direct experience or background knowledge of the family justice system², which allowed them to easily articulate issues and propose strategies to address them. Participants identified fewer person-centered outcomes, as was requested in the focus group question. This may reflect confusion about the definition of ‘outcomes,’ as the question about person-centered outcomes followed reflections about outcomes in the sample map. The outcomes in the sample strategy map include some person-centered outcomes for the people with family justice matters (e.g., “reduced toxic stress”), as well as high-level system goals (e.g., “maximize a holistic approach” and “reduced costs to the system”). Thus, there were minimal linkages made between strategies and outcomes, or issues and outcomes. Participants relayed even fewer capacity development areas, likely because capacity development areas (what is needed to implement strategies) heavily depend on who is responsible for the strategies. Those who are determined responsible for strategies will be in the best position to relay what capacity is needed to implement strategies. It is recognized that some participants may have limited familiarity with the full range of capacities required to execute certain strategies, which can contribute to delays or challenges in advancing systemic reform.

The strategy map results are organized into four sub-sections:

- 2.1 Relevance of Sample Map Components
- 2.2 Current Strategies in Saskatchewan
- 2.3 Guiding Principles

² One participant brought knowledge about system change generally and applied their knowledge to systemic change in the family justice system.

2.1 Relevance of Sample Map Components

In all focus groups, there was wide agreement that all sample strategy map components were relevant to a Saskatchewan context. See **Figure 1** (next page) for the sample strategy map.

In the lawyer group, there seemed to be a shared understanding amongst participants that issues with the family justice system were similar across provinces. Thus, discussions about strategy map components in this group centered on specific items that could be included in a Saskatchewan map, rather than on the listed components in the sample map. Some researcher/educator participants relayed their thoughts about components in the sample map, though most of the discussions were focused on items that they would like to see in a Saskatchewan map. Conversations about strategy map components were more balanced in the community agency representative group, whereby participants first identified and spoke about the sample map components, then proceeded to talk about items to consider for a Saskatchewan map.

The relevance of the sample map components was indicated in response to direct questions about which components would be relevant to include in a Saskatchewan map, as well as during other discussions, in which participants emphasized the importance of certain components.

When directly asked about the relevance of the outcomes, strategies, and capacity development areas in the sample map, multiple participants indicated that they were all relevant:

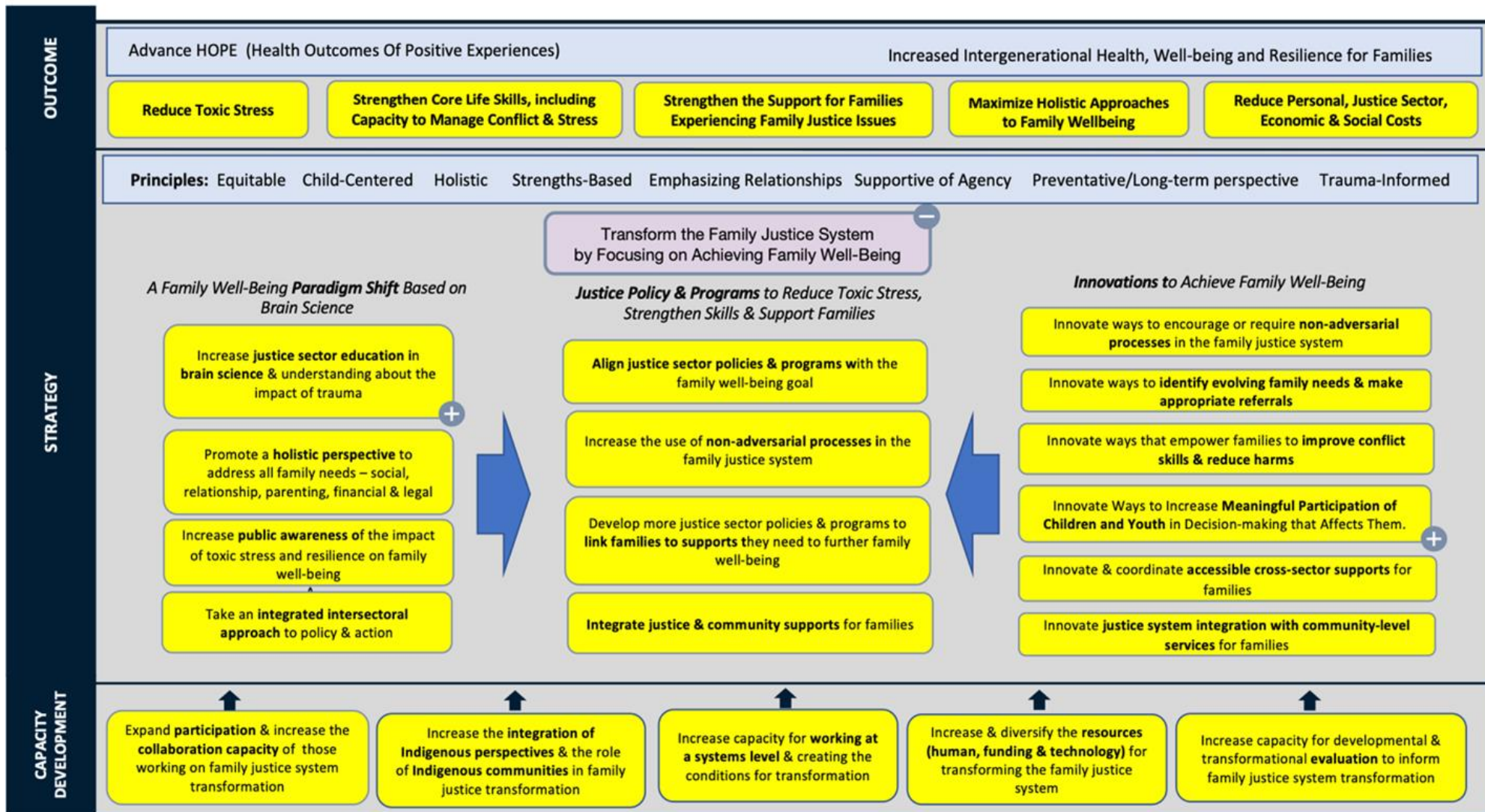
During a discussion about outcomes: “In my view, I feel like for the most part, a lot of these family law issues aren't unique in Saskatchewan. I know a lot of provinces have been trying to develop these individualized systems, and processes, and models. Quite frankly, I feel like the issues in BC are, in a lot of ways, the same thing...I didn't really see anything that I wouldn't also include in a Saskatchewan model.” (L3)

During a discussion about strategies: M: “What are some strategies in the sample map that might make sense to include in a Saskatchewan map, or in a Saskatchewan context?”
CAR4: “All of them...That's the easiest answer. I mean, you can't argue with any of them I don't think.”

During a discussion about capacity development areas: “I also think that the other [capacity development areas] [should definitely] be included in Saskatchewan's plan with that slight change to the Indigenous one.” (RE4)

→ **The suggested change to the Indigenous-related capacity development area:** “Just what I'm seeing on the Indigenous section is it says, ‘increase the integration of Indigenous perspectives and the role of Indigenous communities in family justice transformation.’ That sounds good on the surface, but I think what it's missing there is that you can't just increase the role of Indigenous communities. You have to increase the capacity of that Indigenous community to have a role.” (RE4)

BC's Transform the Family Justice System (TFJS) Strategy Map



April 2022

Figure 1

Results in **Section 2.2** further indicate how multiple components of the sample map are relevant to a Saskatchewan context, as participants identified similar and/or related components that could be added to a Saskatchewan map.

Throughout focus group discussions, participants emphasized specific components of the map that they liked, felt were obvious, and/or viewed as important. Sections **2.1.1**, **2.1.2**, and **2.1.3** below include participant quotes about the relevance of specific map components. **These sub-sections are not a comprehensive indication of the relevance of the sample strategy map components.**

2.1.1 Emphasis on Sample Map Outcomes

All the outcomes in the sample map were alluded to by at least one participant. See Figure 2 for the outcome portion of the sample map.

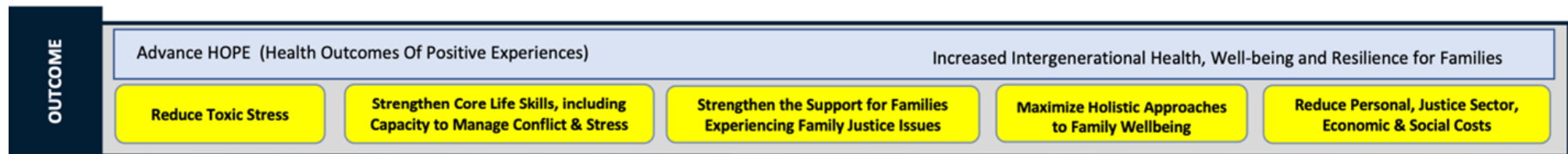


Figure 2

“The middle one, ‘strengthen the support for families experiencing family justice issues,’ seems most obvious to me.” (RE2)³

“I’m glad to see things pointed out, like ‘strengthening of core life skills’, and ‘holistic approach’.” (CAR4)⁴

“I think the fifth one with the costs kind of stands apart from the others. That’s the one that kind of...just sticks in my head...I would definitely keep that one. For the first four, those seem to be in a different direction, where [they’re] less tangible outcomes, but equally important.” (CAR2)

“One [outcome] that stuck out to me is the reduced toxic stress.” (CAR1)

³ According to the definition of outcomes and strategies used for this report, this ‘outcome’ would be considered a strategy (see the introduction to **Section 2** for definitions of strategy map components)

⁴ According to the definition of outcomes and strategies used for this report, these ‘outcomes’ would be considered strategies

2.1.2 Emphasis on Sample Map Strategies

The sample strategy map includes a variety of strategies organized into three columns. See Figure 3 for the strategy portion of the map.

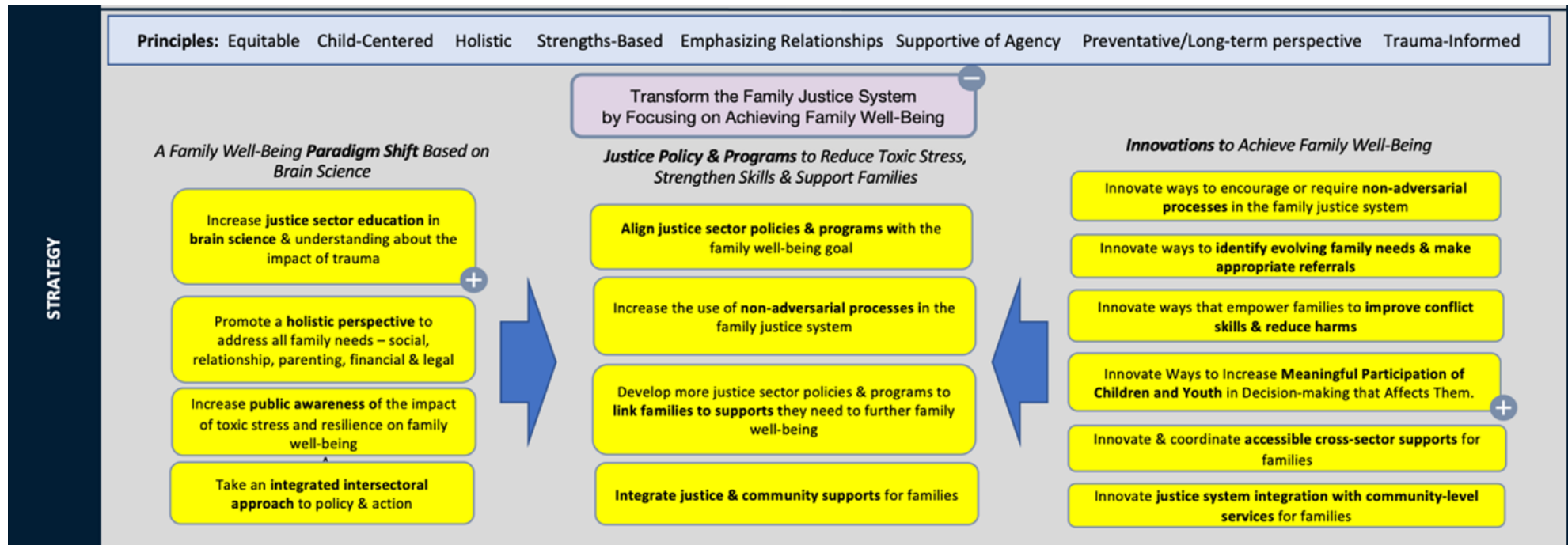


Figure 3

A participant in the community agency representative group focused on the relevance of strategies outlined in the first column: “a family well-being paradigm shift based on brain science”. All strategies in this column were specifically mentioned by this participant – “increase justice sector education in brain science & understanding about the impact of trauma”, “a holistic perspective to address all family needs”, “increase public awareness of the impact of toxic stress and resilience on family well-being”, and “an integrated, intersectoral approach to policy and action”:

“The trauma-informed training and brain science and understanding there, is great to see.” (CAR4)

“The holistic perspective, not just looking at what people would first think of as family needs, but other things like financial concerns.” (CAR4)

“The increase in public awareness of the impact, I think that’s real important and should have it.” (CAR4)

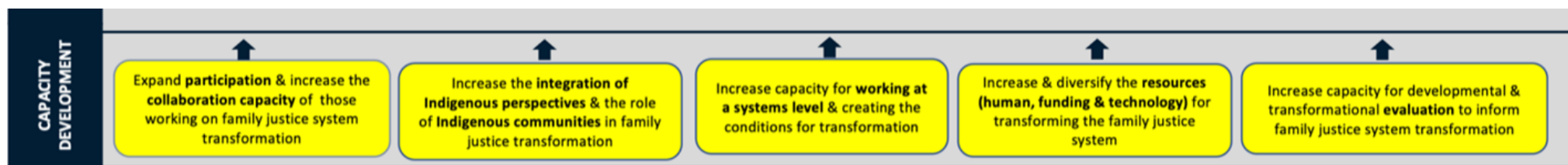
“The integrated intersectoral approach of course is great...you think of social services and childhood family services there, and what other agencies.” (CAR4)

Another participant from the community agency representative group spoke more generally about the third column of strategies in the sample map: “Innovations to achieve family well-being”. Specifically, this participant thought that the topics of each strategy in this section were ‘good,’ but suggested that the term ‘innovate’ is a step removed from taking solution-based actions:

“I was looking at the right-hand column and they all start with innovate and I’m thinking, ‘well, are you just saying that our plan is to come up with better plans to do things?’ It’d be nice if we had the solutions as opposed to hav[ing] a plan to make better plans, but the bolded items that are in that right-hand column, in those areas, yes, I think actually doing that is going to be good.” (CAR2)

2.1.3 Emphasis on the Sample Map Capacity Development Areas

Conversations about capacity development areas tended to stick closely to the areas that are listed in the sample map. See Figure 4 for the capacity development portion of the sample map.



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Figure 4

Participants specifically mentioned four out of five capacity development areas – “expand participation & increase collaboration capacity of those working on family justice system transformation”, “increase the integration of Indigenous perspectives & the role of Indigenous communities”, “increase capacity for developmental and transformational evaluation”, and “increase & diversify the resources (human, funding, & technology)”:

"I keep going to the first box there around 'expanding participation and collaboration capacity'. I recognize it's about the family justice system transformation, but I also wondered if there's opportunities to expand participation with those who are focused on family wellbeing." (RE3)

"['Integration of Indigenous perspectives and the role of Indigenous communities'] kind of goes towards the first [capacity development area] as well, 'expanding participation and increase collaboration capacity'." (CAR4)

"Well, one that stuck out to me is the 'integration of Indigenous perspectives', and 'the role of Indigenous communities and family justice transformation'...I think those kind of go hand in hand, making sure that Indigenous perspectives are being part of that evaluation and if it is working, how it is working." (CAR1)

"It's nice to see evaluation being mentioned here, so making sure that we're finding ways to ensure that this is working and finding ways to improve." (RE1)

"I see that here, 'human resourcing, funding technology', seeing that integration, seeing the collaboration of the sectors, I think this is a well-done section." (RE1)

2.2 Current Strategies in Saskatchewan

Participants were asked: ***“To your knowledge, what is currently being done in Saskatchewan to improve the family justice system in relation to the strategies and outcomes on the map?”*** In response to this question, and throughout the focus groups, community agency representatives and researchers/educators tended to identify specific organizations and programs (for the public and for legal professionals). The moderator did not specifically ask lawyers this question, as multiple participants from this group alluded to current strategies in other responses. Lawyers identified different supports that some legal professionals provide to their clients, as well as family law court processes in Saskatchewan.

2.2.1 Programming offered to the public by legal organizations

As recognized in the focus groups, legal and non-legal organizations in Saskatchewan offer public-facing programs aimed at improving access to legal information and support. Participants mentioned free legal advice programs, legal assistance programs, and informational resources. The following programs and resources were mentioned:

- **Shift** (RE1; CAR4)
- **Listen** (RE1; CAR4)
- **CLASSIC** (CAR1)
- **Pro Bono Law Saskatchewan** (CAR3)
- **Legal Aid** (CAR3)
- **Family Law Information Center** (L1)
- **Educational information for youth** (CAR4)
- **Existing information and resources (broad)** (RE4)
- **Elizabeth Fry Society** (CAR1)

2.2.2 Supports offered by some legal professionals or law firms

Participants spoke about legal professionals and law firms in Saskatchewan that offer tailored support to better meet client needs. One lawyer spoke about providing clients with instructions or training on how to use technology:

“One of the things we've started doing is basically training our clients at the outset. This is how we operate, and sort of setting that standard and very easy to walk through instructions on how to use things like that. For some clients, it can be as easy as 'we need you to set up an email address'; phone calls, letters are a really inefficient way for us to deliver our services and email is our primary method of communicating. So, sometimes it's just training, things like that.” (L3)

“Trying to tell people [clients], ‘okay, change your passwords, try to find a way to somehow communicate with us in a way that isn't intercepted by the other party’.” (L3)

This lawyer also spoke about using AI to assist with client communications, and fee reduction options for those with no income or low income:

“One of the tools that exists is I can plug that into a ChatGPT, as long as there's no sensitive data and say, ‘write this to a grade six level’. And then I can read that and say, ‘yeah, that says exactly what I said, except in a way that's probably going to be understood more’. So, you're still not

circumventing a lawyer providing that legal advice. We're just connecting those dots. I think we need to be a lot more creative inside the profession with how we use the tools.” (L3)

Lastly, another lawyer mentioned clients receiving support from a “financial neutral” (often a private professional working with legal teams):

“We would utilize what we call a financial neutral. So, something that's at the front end when people are first moving into separate and apart homes where they were getting advice and assistance from somebody who could help them think about budgeting, et cetera.” (L2)

2.2.3 Aspects of the Family Law Court Process

Participants described several court-connected processes that shape how family justice matters are handled. The processes mentioned include:

- **Family violence screening officers** (CAR2)
- **Mediation** (L1, RE4, CAR3)
- **Judicial Case Conferencing** (L1, L2, CAR3)
- **Pre-conference trials** (L1, L2)

2.2.4 Non-Legal Wraparound Supports

Another strategy mentioned in the focus groups was non-legal wraparound supports, such as healthcare providers who support family wellbeing and Sanctum Care Group – an organization that assists people living with HIV/AIDS:

“Of course, lots of health providers are working to support family wellbeing in a number of perspectives...[Physicians] could be aware of some of the resources and supports or continue to be aware.” (RE3)

“Sanctum Care Group.” (CAR1)

2.2.5 Organizations that Offer Education to Legal Professionals

Lastly, two professional development opportunities for legal professionals were brought up:

- **PATHS** (RE2)
- **Trauma informed training for lawyers** (CAR4)

2.3 Guiding Principles

Participants relayed a variety of principles that could be used to guide the development of a strategy map in Saskatchewan, as well as overall system transformation. Most responses fit into two sub-categories: Equity and Accessibility and Cultural and Community Grounding.

2.3.1 Equity and Accessibility

As shown in **Table 1**, some principles were centered on ensuring the system is inclusive, navigable, and responsive to all.

Principles Related to Equity and Accessibility	Quotes
Accessibility	“I know people who don't have resources...don't even have access to a smartphone or a computer. So, some sort of principle going towards that need as well.” (CAR4)
Simplification (of the family justice system)	“This goes to what [CAR3]'s been really stressing, thank goodness. And it's so true, the simplifying. That may fit in one of these other principles, but maybe couldn't hurt to have the word simplification in there as well, or streamlining or something.” (CAR4)
User-Focused	“We need to [have] a system that works for the user, not for the people that are designing the system. So, it needs to work for families...just wanting to make sure that whatever system is designed actually works for the user. And maybe that's captured in some of the wording in there, but I hope our system actually works.” (L4) “Meeting folks where they're at.” (CAR1)

Table 1

2.3.2 Cultural and Community Grounding

Other responses focused on embedding cultural perspectives into system transformation efforts. **Table 2** outlines principles grounded in culture and community.

Principles Related to Culture and Community	Quotes
Indigenous Specific Principles	“I think I'd like to see something that reflects Indigenous knowledge here somewhere and again, I wouldn't know the exact best phrasing just off the top of my head, but there's nothing in the principles in [sample map] here, and there needs to be something reflected on not just collaboration.” (RE1) “My word for that is wahkohtowin and I think that actually encompasses all of these principles because in Indigenous languages, one word can mean so much more than just one word. Wahkohtowin means that we are all connected. It means kinship. It's also an Indigenous worldview of holism, and it's also a code of

	conduct for how you conduct yourself in relationships. I think at the end of the day, it's about accountability also and your responsibility to be a good relative. To me, honestly, it encompasses all of [the principles]... However, I would not suggest that a colonial legal system should appropriate Indigenous terms. It would have to come from Indigenous people. It would have to come from that collaboration and that co-creation.” (RE4)
Culturally Informed	“I would say culturally informed.” (CAR1)
Co-creation	“I think that's a key word too, is co-creation.” (RE4)

Table 2

2.3.3 Miscellaneous Principles

Some participants conveyed the importance of early support, safety, and working across disciplines and sectors to provide holistic support (see **Table 3**).

Miscellaneous Principles	Quote(s)
Early Intervention and Prevention	“I think if you can get any assistance, any support, early. People shouldn't have to wait.” (CAR2)
Safety	“Maybe safety should be one.” (RE2)
Multidisciplinary	“I think that holistic approach and multidisciplinary approach is something that should be emphasized.” (L3)

Table 3

3. Results: Responsibility for System Change

During conversations about capacity development areas, the evaluator asked participants: “In your opinion, what is the role of the legal community in building capacity and/or promoting change in the family justice system?” While answering this question, participants from each group alluded to the roles and responsibilities of non-legal professionals, suggesting that family justice system transformation will stem from the actions of multiple sectors, disciplines, and groups.

Passages are organized into two sub-sections:

- 3.1 Role of the Legal Community in Transforming Saskatchewan’s Family Justice System
- 3.2 Role of Non-Legal Professionals in Transforming Saskatchewan’s Family Justice System

3.1 Role of the Legal Community in Improving and/or Transforming Saskatchewan's Family Justice System

Participants from each group contributed multiple ideas about how the legal community could be involved in capacity building and, more generally, promoting change within the system. Ideas were categorized into actions to better serve those with family justice matters, collaboration efforts, and knowledge and knowledge sharing responsibilities. As expected, there were more (and more detailed) lawyer responses about the role of legal professionals.

3.1.1 Actions to Better Serve Those with Family Justice Matters

The following quotes highlight actions to improve the legal system's responsiveness to the needs of families and the broader public, especially through improved accessibility.

One lawyer indicated that it is the role of the legal community to **improve service delivery, generally**, otherwise there could be some non-lawyer ownership of law offices:

"You've got jurisdictions like Arizona and Utah, Washington State, looking at expanding into non-lawyer ownership of law offices and providing legal services. So, I think we've got a short window, or a short runway, before we lose it...so if [the legal community is] not able to better address these accessibility and efficiency issues... it's going to be passed on to the business community. And I think we have a short window to improve how we deliver those services." (L3)

A community agency representative described the role of legal professionals in **simplifying family justice processes, generally**, to make them more accessible:

"I think it's going to be hard to convince the legal profession that what needs to happen is things need to be simplified so it's accessible to everyone. ... And maybe just the world is going to be a better place if things are better for everyone." (CAR2)

A lawyer communicated that the legal community has a responsibility to **collate various supports** for people with family justice matters, to make accessibility easier:

"Although there could be many people that would be helpful to support families, I think the system has a responsibility then to collate those to make it easy for people to access, so that they don't have to go through six or seven different doors to get counseling and legal service." (L4)

Lastly, a community agency representative mentioned the Law Society of Saskatchewan's responsibility to **regulate the legal profession** to the public's best interest:

"The Law Society of Saskatchewan is supposed to regulate the profession of law to the public's best interest...I think if [lawyers] want to be self-regulated, I think if we want to hold a monopoly on providing legal advice, we have to be able to serve the public." (CAR3)

3.1.2 Collaboration Efforts

Some responses focused on working across disciplines and sectors to support holistic transformation. Some responses suggested that it is the responsibility of legal professionals to **foster interdisciplinary and multisector collaboration**. These collaborations may occur through building relationships with non-legal professionals and learning from them:

“There are other professionals that are part of helping families go through these experiences that...[are] important, and building relationships with the people that are giving the mental health supports or could.” (L2)

“I think it's really good to be learning from other groups like PATHS, Sask Sexual Assault Services, other experts, which is where that collaboration comes in...I think it's both really important that we lead and collaborate effectively as members of the [Law] Society. I'd like to see that collaboration from the very get go to understand how best to draw upon the strengths of the members of the legal profession, but also when to step back. That should be integrated right at the beginning of anything we take into Sask.” (RE1)

Other passages imply the importance of collaborative efforts in circumstances where it could be helpful for legal professionals to be less involved. Put differently, some suggested that lawyers are responsible for **having role awareness, humility, and skills to engage in interdisciplinary collaboration** – understanding the limitations of their roles and when to be less involved:

“I keep harping back to the financial piece...If [lawyers] are like, ‘okay, now I've got this family law file and I'm doing all of the things’. Well, that's really not what we're trained in...” (L2)

“I think as being part of the legal system, there's both a need to be more involved and maybe less involved.” (RE1)

3.1.3 Knowledge and Knowledge Sharing Responsibilities

Participants also suggested that it is the role of the legal community to **know about the law and share that knowledge with others** for educational purposes:

“I think part of it is lawyers being open to realizing that, especially for family law, we have a little teeny tiny bit of expertise, which is what are the parameters of the law?” (L2)

“I also think there is that ability to recognize that as legal practitioners, that there is an ability to be able to maybe have a greater reach in some aspects, to bring a lot of that knowledge and that practitionership to some of these trainings, et cetera.” (RE1)

3.2 Role of Non-Legal Professionals in Transforming Saskatchewan's Family Justice System

Responses from each group suggested multisector responsibility for capacity building and system transformation. Participants recognized that transformation requires contributions from all parts of the system, not just legal actors. For example, a researcher/educator thought that **everyone involved in the system has a role in system change**:

“I think everyone has a role to play, but...I think that looks different, right? I think there's different capacity to be involved in the capacity building work if you work for the Ministry of Justice or you work for a legal organization or you're a private practice lawyer, but I think this affects everybody through their work and their connections with the family legal system. There's some way to be part of it, whether it's participating in education or delivering education or doing advocacy through the College of Law or through other groups, things like that.” (RE2)

A lawyer mentioned the role of legal professionals in collaborating with other supports that those with family justice matters may need. Specifically, the participant alluded to the role of **mental health professionals**:

“And then there are other professionals that are part of helping families go through these experiences that...is important, and building relationships with the people that are giving the mental health supports or could.” (L2)

A community agency representative brought up the role of **third-party programming** in addressing specific outcomes in the sample strategy map:

“When I think of the family justice system, that means...you are in some sort of court process, whether it's provincial court or at the Court of King's Bench related to this. So, strengthening core life skills, I'm very curious how a court could do that for us or for any client. And I don't know if that's the role of the court either, so maybe it's programming outside of that...So, that piece, a great idea, but I don't know if that's the role of the court.” (CAR3)

Lastly, a participant in the community agency representative group noted that the people in the focus groups (**lawyers and non-lawyers in community facing positions**) have done valuable work that helps legal professionals, as well as those with family justice matters:

“I always think back to my very early days at [workplace]...I heard it from a senior practitioner, that [community agencies] don't do anything for lawyers and don't help at all...but times have changed and the stuff we do now, all of us [community agencies] on the call here...is hugely valuable in their practices. Well, we say often here that an informed client is a better client. I don't know too many that argue with that.” (CAR4)

4. Results: Developing a Strategy Map in Saskatchewan

Participants were asked a series of questions to identify key factors that researchers might consider when developing a strategy map for family justice transformation in Saskatchewan. Participants were prompted to think about what a strategy map could be used for, and what information sources would be helpful to consult. Some participants also made note of specific Saskatchewan contexts to keep in mind, provided broad feedback about the sample map, and reflected on the ‘design’ of family justice systems.

Passages in this section are organized into four sub-sections:

- 1.1 Strategy Map Uses
- 1.2 Strategy Map Information Sources
- 1.3 Map Adaptation to a Saskatchewan Context
- 1.4 Broad System Design Considerations

4.1 Strategy Map Uses

The evaluator asked the groups: “How could the strategy map be used to help transform the system?” Participants focused their responses on different aspects of strategic planning and direction. Specifically, they thought that a strategy map could be used to guide vision, goals, and future action.

Table 4 lists ideas about strategy map uses, with quotes to exemplify each.

Strategy Map Uses	Quotes
A tool for outlining goals and indicators	<u>Goals</u>: “My first thought is it's not actually about the map, it's about what results you're driving towards as a collective and what impact that's having.” (RE3) <u>Indicators</u>: “Measuring the number of things that go to court is not measuring success necessarily... I question whether there are just a lot of people who...would've just given up.” (L1)
A tool for outlining who should be involved	“I think there, in recent years, has been a drive to recognize socio-legal partnerships and the combination between legal issues and health issues...Just keeping in mind that health and legal partnership and who we want at the table to make sure that we're keeping health involved in this as well.” (RE1)
A tool for accountability	“How do you take something like the map and say, ‘This is how we're outlining our goals and what we're wanting to achieve and how we're maybe parsing it out by who's going to accomplish what and when.’ Presumably, that type of detail would accompany this high-level map.” (RE3)

A tool for informed decision-making	"[It's] something to look back on to inform decisions." (CAR1)
A tool for motivating continuous improvements and/or transformation	"How can we attach the stories and voices of the impact that this work is having to continue to generate some momentum to advance the work? There's presumably years and years of work that's happened to support improvements in this space to date. How can we tie some of those stories and the impact that that's having to continue to build momentum for this work into the future? Often, that happens through conversations and over coffee sometimes or meetings, et cetera." (RE3)

Table 4

As one participant mentioned, a strategy map may be "a good starting point" (CAR1) to guide system transformation. Participant responses in **Table 4** suggest that more details accompanying a strategy map would be helpful to pursue actionable change.

4.2 Map Adaptation to a Saskatchewan Context

Responses in this sub-section represent ideas that flowed from participants' reflections about Saskatchewan-specific contexts and the overall sample strategy map. While passages in **Section 4.1** suggest the usefulness of a strategy map, the results in this sub-section show how a Saskatchewan map could be different. The results indicate that there are important contextual factors to consider when improving/transforming the family justice system in Saskatchewan, and that, as has occurred in British Columbia and Alberta with accompanying layers to their strategy maps, researchers may wish to consider a higher level of detail in a Saskatchewan map.

4.2.1 Saskatchewan Contexts to Consider

Throughout focus groups, participants pinpointed Saskatchewan-specific contexts that they thought were important to keep in mind as work continues on advancing improvements to the family justice system. Incorporating these contexts may improve the usefulness of a strategy map in Saskatchewan.

Table 5 includes Saskatchewan contexts that participants identified.

Saskatchewan Contexts	Quotes
High proportion of intimate partner violence in Saskatchewan	"In Saskatchewan...we have the highest rate of intimate partner violence in the country for provinces." (RE4)
Rural, remote, and northern contexts	"We need to always remember the rural and remote and northern context, and how receiving services and getting access to information is very different in rural areas." (RE2)

The Indigenous population	“[The map] needs to be built upon Indigenous knowledge and maybe reflective of some of the conversation [RE4] has had with the child protective service issues. That needs to be front and center for Sask for sure.” (RE1)
The high percentage of self-represented litigants who navigate the family justice system	“We all know [the] percentage [of self-represented folks] is so high in the family justice system.” (CAR4)

Table 5

4.2.2 Perceived Issues Related to the Saskatchewan Context to Consider

The focus group guide did not include a question about perceived issues with the family justice system in Saskatchewan, though it was a central topic in each of the focus groups. Most commonly, participants tended to link strategies with issues. Within single responses, participants would often relay an issue and propose activities or actions that could address the issues. Less often, participants drew connections between issues and outcomes, and between issues and capacity development areas.

Perceived issues related to the family justice system in Saskatchewan were thematically categorized. For each issue theme, quotes from the focus groups have been provided to illuminate the issue in the participants’ own words. The identified issues are not necessarily linked to strategy map components; however, they were nonetheless raised during the focus groups and their inclusion in the report is deemed important for future discussion and consideration (see [Table 6](#)).

Perceived Issues	Description	Quotes
Accessibility Barriers in Different Areas of the Family Justice System	Participants in each focus group identified some accessibility barriers that may affect how individuals engage with different aspects of the family justice system. These barriers span logistical, technological, cognitive, and systemic dimensions, and underscore the need for a more inclusive, user-friendly, and	“It was mentioned at the beginning that we need to always remember the rural and remote and northern context and how receiving services and getting access to information is very different in rural areas. There’s also a lot of other things in terms of access, like having to drive to the city just for legal information, having to go to court in another town, having to go drive 45 minutes just to do the supervised exchange program if there even is one available to you...Something about how [that access can] really [be] made more equal no matter where you live.” (RE2). “One thing that I don’t hear talked about very often that I think is really at the core for our families is about finances. And I don’t mean what does it cost for them to get a lawyer... but it’s that the families that are reconfiguring from being under one household, and in most cases commingling their income and their

	responsive family justice system.	property and trying to figure out how to do that well - many of them don't have financial acumen." (L2)
Interrelation Between Complexity of the Process, Time to Resolution, and Financial Cost of Resolution	Participants from each focus group described how the complexity of family justice processes, lengthy timelines, and high financial costs are interconnected. These issues often reinforce one another. For example, delays can increase expenses, complex procedures may require more professional support and require more time, and more time generally equates to higher financial costs.	"It takes a really long time to work things through the system. And I think part of that is a function of who we're dealing with. I think sometimes it takes people a lot of time to get through the emotions of their marital breakdown or their relationship breakdown. That timeline also impacts cost, which is it's just getting really, really difficult for people to have assistance from legal counsel. And it just becomes sort of insurmountable, I feel...The costs can be really high, we continue to add processes and layers to this where it makes it quite a bit more difficult for people to get a cost[-effective] resolution." (L1) "The court's trying to manage the incredible workload of the family law division right now... There should be some triaging through the system for like, if you've got million-dollar estates that you need to get actuaries to give expert evidence to...go to a trial. Sure, that should be the full scope of it. But I think for most people's matters, they're just trying to work out child support and a parenting schedule, and so does this need to go through the same process as more complex things?" (CAR3) "I think that I have really come around to the mediation process...But I wonder about the people who can't afford it...The costs associated with people getting mediation services [can be] astronomical. You have private lawyers doing it at private lawyer fees, and I don't begrudge them that. But you also have people through the Dispute Resolution Office who have to pay a significant amount of money." (L1)
Issues with Current Approaches and Policies Related to the Family Law Courts/System	Participants in each of the focus groups raised concerns about structural- and policy-level shortcomings within the family law system. For example, some participants	"When people are going through this process, it's not like they can show up one day, and do one thing, and then it's like, 'perfect, we're good to go.' I think the strategy needs to look at it with a little bit more distance to say, 'what will the supports be that the family needs for an extended period of time?' Especially where there's trauma, where there's violence, where there's special needs for the children, where there are cultural differences, language

	relayed that the court system is too “onesize-fits-all”, or a desire for specialized family law legal professionals (lawyers, judges, etc.).	barriers, all invisible illnesses, you name it. Because every family is unique and each individual within the family is unique. Trying to come up with one thing that’s going to work for everybody and address all these things is impossible. So, what could we put in place that walks alongside a family that gets some consistency and accountability...?” (L2) “I think ultimately there is a role for the court to play in making orders when people can't come to negotiations and agreements. But the court process right now is a little bit too one-size-fits-all. Small claims court is a great example of an uncomplicated system that supports self-represented litigants, and is very manageable to go through, and has quite quick timelines... I can't say good enough things about the small claims court. The other thing too is that even in wills and estates in the Court of King's Bench, there is some triaging.” (CAR3) “It’s really important in my opinion, to have family law judges hearing family law matters.” (L1)
Issues Related to Cases with Domestic Violence/Intimate Partner Violence	At least one participant from each group identified challenges related to how the family justice system responds to intimate partner violence, and more generally, challenges that people who have experienced intimate partner violence may encounter. Some examples included gaps in understandings of domestic violence, limited availability of screening officers, and interpersonal violence that may be	“The thing that I was going to [mention was the] family violence screening officers in Saskatoon and Regina. Well, that’s great, but wouldn't it be great if that could be in every judicial center in the province?...It is just taking what we already have there and making sure that it's available to everyone.” (CAR2) “So, if you're going to promote [non-adversarial processes], you have to have a very robust screening system at all stages of the process. A screening system for family violence, and for coercive control in particular because it is those partners who utilize coercive control that are most skilled at legal systems abuse.” (L5)

	perpetuated by current processes.	
Third Party, and Broad, System-Related Limitations	Participants (especially those in the community agency representative group) highlighted some limitations to existing programs and services. Additionally, some participants mentioned complications due to shortages of mental health professionals in the province. The importance of developing wrap-around services was discussed.	“Just reflecting back on what [RE4] just said, we do need wraparound supports and again, this all comes down to funding, but [there are] clinics that do have more of a wraparound model, and I would be so interested to see that here. The one that I [know] is the Barbra Schlifer Clinic in Toronto, and it is, I think, addressing some of those issues where you just get your two hours, you have a chat with somebody, it’s helpful to get you started, and then you never talk to anyone again. It has onsite interpreters, it has onsite counselors, mental health counselors, support for family immigration, sometimes criminal law representation. It’s just so much more holistic. There’s summary legal advice for issues with sexual harassment, violence, et cetera...I do think that as [RE4] said, funding the summary legal advice is a good thing to start with, but it’s not enough.” (RE1) “We’ve got people who are in an absolute state of crisis sometimes, and we’re telling them, ‘well, just check this place’ or ‘go to the Family Law Information Center’, or ‘you can try this, or you can try that.’ And they call these places and then that doesn’t work, and they’re just sort of sent from one place to another [because they don’t have any money]. And I think it’s really, really disheartening and you just feel like, ‘I don’t have any money, I’ve got three little kids, I can’t find a place to live, we’re living on someone’s couch, I don’t have anything, and I can’t get them into a new school because their dad won’t let me enroll them. I can’t do anything.’ We couple this need to send them all over, looking for their own resources, of which there are often none, or not enough. And then we say, ‘okay, now you’re going to do it with all of this trauma behind you too.’ I think that’s a real problem.” (L1)

Table 6

4.2.3 Miscellaneous Feedback About the Sample Strategy Map

Some participants had feedback about the sample strategy map, sometimes related to Saskatchewan contexts mentioned in **Section 4.2.1**. The following quotes suggest that, while the components of the sample map are relevant, there are additional details that could be added if a map is created in Saskatchewan. There are additional layers to other strategy maps. Strategy maps are high level, but in British Columbia/Alberta are accompanied by additional documents that include more detail. Strategy map use could be enhanced by addressing the following feedback.

First, one lawyer thought that there could be **more details in relation to the use of technology**:

“I noticed that it's sort of listed [in the map], but it's almost as if it's an oversight, the use of technology.” (L3)

Another lawyer, as well as some participants from the researcher/educator group, called for **direct acknowledgement of domestic violence**:

“I think there should be an acknowledgement in this strategy map of domestic violence and its impacts and the kind of approach that should be taken in those cases.” (L5)

“It's similar to what [RE4] was just saying, is I think we should specifically for Saskatchewan have something about intimate partner violence in here, not just be assuming that that's under family wellbeing.” (RE2)

A participant from the researcher/educator group suggested creating an **outcome specific to those in rural, remote, and northern Indigenous areas**:

“We could have an outcome focused specifically on rural, remote, northern Indigenous areas... Typically, when adapting things from other provinces, I find that sometimes that's not as easily reflected in other provinces that maybe have larger urban centers as opposed to a rural and remote population.” (RE1)

Multiple participants called for **definitions of key terms used in the sample strategy map**. Their responses indicate the importance of working toward a shared understanding of ‘child-centered,’ ‘well-being,’ ‘safety,’ and ‘support’:

“You have up there a principal of child-centered...and I notice in terms of innovations, you have ways to increase the meaningful participation of children and youth in decision making that affects them. And that of course is a right that they have in international law...Now under the Divorce Act, the fear that any family member has of domestic violence, including a child, is a mandatory consideration. So, in my view, children under the age of 12 should also have some input into the decisions that are going to be affecting their lives. And I've seen in some cases from other jurisdictions in Ontario, that you have children as young as between four and eight and they're quoted in the judgment and they're very articulate and perceptive. So, I think we have this kind of strong sort of line around 11 and 12, in terms of that's when a child is mature,

that's when a child can input. But that I think is being questioned in other jurisdictions and certainly internationally it's been questioned.” (L5)

“What is well-being for each family is gonna look very different. So, to ensure we're taking those perspectives into account.” (CAR3)

“I think just having a better understanding of support and what that means. Is that financial support so that more lower income families are able to access it? Is it access to legal information that's more readily available? Is there some semblance of counseling or extra mediation, et cetera? Just understanding what the support means and maybe breaking that out a little more clearly is something that I'd like to see maybe reflected a little bit better.” (RE1)

Some participants from the community agency representative group wondered if **some of the outcomes in the sample map could be combined**, though did not specify which ones or why:

“I don't know whether we keep them all and put them into ours, or it does seem like we might be able to combine a few of them?” (CAR2)

“[The outcomes] could be combined.” (CAR1)

4.2.4 Lack of Detail in the Sample Map

Building on participants’ feedback about the sample strategy map components in **Section 4.2.3**, quotes in this sub-section point to the lack of detail in the map, which participants sometimes associated with challenges. These results imply that having additional details or “layers” to accompany a high-level strategy map (e.g., who the outcomes are for, who is responsible for the strategies, what specific actions should be taken) could help actionable change efforts. Again, there are additional layers to other maps. Strategy maps are high level, but in British Columbia/Alberta are accompanied by additional documents that include more detail.

A researcher/educator participant identified a lack of detail with respect to the **outcomes** in the sample map, suggesting that researchers could specify who the outcomes are for:

“I was thinking about ‘who’ specifically. Is there an opportunity in this top part of the section where it describes the outcomes – the outcomes for who – and maybe a line or two articulating why that's important? I suspect everyone around this focus group would be able to articulate the why, but for somebody outside of the sector, it may not be self-evident and so a little bit about who...this work [is] for and what challenge are you trying to address and if that's quantifiable, that would be even better. Also, in a succinct way. This is a high-level document for sure.” (RE3)

Some participants spoke to the lack of detail regarding **strategies** listed in the sample map, indicating that there should be information about who is responsible for the strategies and what actionable steps accompany the strategies:

“My question is who [are] these strategies targeted to? Who's going to take an action on it? I think sometimes clarifying that is helpful in being able to really realize or clarify what the action might be. I just haven't heard it yet. I'm sure it is clear who does it in this context, but that's one of the things that I've found helpful in my context where we can be really, really clear about who might we be asking to do what and even better if who are we inviting to have opportunity to shape this in a way that works for them in their context.” (RE3)

“It's really nice to make plans like this, but if it can't be backed up with concrete action, that's really where things have to go.” (CAR2)

Finally, a researcher/educator participant communicated a lack of detail with respect to **outcomes and strategies** in the map. The participant called for the identification of more specific strategies that are being implemented to work towards outcomes, how the outcomes will be measured, timelines, and responsibility for action:

“I would also want to learn how these are all being implemented or what's being done to achieve the outcomes in BC [and AB] because these are big and the holistic sort of outcomes, that goes beyond just the time that families are engaged in the family justice system...They're good goals, they're things we would want to see, but how [realistic is it] to implement that and to measure those outcomes?” (RE2)

“I think it needs to be accompanied by some more specific steps for each of those pieces because I think as high-level goals and strategies, they're great. None of us would argue with any or most of what BC has on theirs, but I do read them and think, ‘It's so broad. How is that going to happen?’ ...I know this is intended to be high level, but I think for it to be effective, there needs to be that really clear roadmap of what happens next, what are the timelines, who's responsible, how is it evaluated, all of that.” (RE2)

4.3 Broad System Design Considerations

In their reflections about system transformation, some participants relayed thoughts and opinions about overall system design. These miscellaneous passages can be viewed as broad, vision-level strategies that may help guide system transformation. Some of the passages in this section are also included as strategies throughout **Section 2.2**.

4.3.1 Design a System to Handle Challenging Cases

A lawyer participant suggested that the family justice system be designed to handle the most challenging cases, especially in light of complexities associated with domestic violence cases:

“I do think that sometimes it helps to design a system to deal with hard cases. And those hard cases are typically the cases involving domestic violence because that's where you have the greatest risk, I mean, to all, to children, to survivors, et cetera. So, I think that keeping domestic violence in mind as we sort of go through some of these, the various elements of this strategy map is a pretty useful thing.” (L5)

This participant went on to suggest a separate process for more difficult cases, which may result in quicker processes and less costs:

“I sort of think it would be interesting to design a process where you could streamline some of these cases that are more difficult, and provide sort of an expedited process for them...I do believe that there are cases where somebody has to make a hard call, they have to make a hard decision, and judges are paid to do that. So, I do think that there should be a way in which that sort of process can be expedited for families that qualify and add less cost too, at reduced cost.” (L5)

4.3.2 Qualifications to Non-Adversarial Processes

In the sample strategy map, one of the strategies is to “increase the use of non-adversarial processes in the family justice system.” While some participants acknowledged the benefit of non-adversarial processes, there were calls for caution to the use of such processes in cases involving domestic violence. Some participants recommended the use of non-adversarial processes, though, with the addition of an adjudicated component or wraparound supports and services.

Participants from each group questioned the appropriateness of non-adversarial processes in cases with domestic violence:

“The encouraging non adversarial processes that [appears] in a few of those [strategy map] boxes, I think that should be qualified in some ways to account for instances where that's just not appropriate.” (L5)

“I also think it's important to think really carefully about the non-adversarial processes part because of course, that's the goal, but it's very difficult to have a non-adversarial process when working with someone who's a perpetrator of intimate partner violence. Somehow, that needs to have a balance with protection and support for victims and survivors.” (RE2)

“I don't know if this is already in place or not with the mandatory mediation for family law, but if you have been charged with domestic violence in criminal court, regardless of whether it was charging both parties or just charging one, those matters should be automatically excluded from...mandatory mediation, and there should be a way to search that up for people.” (RE4)

“I am in support of alternative dispute resolutions where it's appropriate, but [in] domestic violence settings, or [when] you can't negotiate, there's lots of factors where an order is required and because of the complexity of the system, they can't get that.” (CAR3)

Lawyer participants explained that non-adversarial processes can allow manipulation to persist. They recommended that these processes include strong screening measures for family violence and coercive control, along with an adjudicated element and/or comprehensive wraparound services:

“We're also seeing instances of some very highly skilled, intelligent manipulators, both of their partners, their children, and the legal system itself. So, that kind of unqualified emphasis on non-adversarial processes, I mean, the concern I have is that for highly elusive partners, it will

just afford them more opportunities for manipulation, extend and prolong delays, increased costs...I received an email from a woman...and her basic complaint was that she had to keep going back to court...She was basically saying this was becoming financially and emotionally just exhausting in between visits. She was the one who was trying to sort of deal with the children's anxieties that they were experiencing as a result of parenting time. I think there are real costs in some circumstances to doing this. So, if you're going to promote this, you have to have a very robust screening system at all stages of the process. A screening system for family violence, and for coercive control in particular because it is those partners who utilize coercive control that are most skilled at legal systems abuse." (L5)

"The concerns around out-of-court non-adversarial types of processes are often focused on the idea around processes that then allow for continued manipulation...But it doesn't have to be one or the other, because other types of non-adversarial processes [could] maybe have an adjudicated component, or a wraparound services component, something that has it not be a one and done." (L2)

4.3.3 Consider How Family Justice is Conceptualized

Some participants shared their thoughts about the conceptualization of family justice, relaying their opinions about how 'family' and 'justice' could be understood according to the current language used in legal settings. The passages in this sub-section were considered within the 'Broad System Design Considerations' category, for they represent ideas that may require a high-level shift in perspective by all involved in the family justice system:

First, a lawyer mentioned **limitations to the word 'family'** as it is used in the family justice sphere. Specifically, not everyone who interacts with the family justice system, and has a family justice matter, is considered a 'family':

"One of the things that we've been, not surprised about, but just finding more and more is it's not always the case that the unit has been a family. That might be kind of a weird thing to throw in there, but we are finding some more cases where perhaps the partners met – I don't even know if they were partners! – on Tinder, or something like that. So, it may not even be a family dynamic. They may have just had a child together, and I guess maybe we are defining it as a family." (L4)

This lawyer also commented that there are other parties, who may not be categorized as part of the immediate 'family' unit, who are involved in family justice matters:

"It has been more the case that there's multiple people interested in supporting the family dynamic with the family unit, whether that's persons of sufficient interest, grandparents, new partners, that unit is more than just a binary two people or two partners." (L4)

Second, two participants pointed out **battle-type language that may be used in the context of family justice matters**. First, a lawyer suggested that it was problematic to use the term 'versus' when referring to two parties involved in a matter because it is a conflict-infused term:

"It's one of my pet peeves. Why does it have to be parent A versus parent B? And for what it's worth, I refuse to direct any correspondence that has a little V in it, even to the court. I will say full name and full name because I don't know why [we are] saying that they should try to avoid conflict, and then all we do is give them language that is war language. Those two things do not work together well." (L2)

A researcher/educator participant spoke about people with family justice matters 'fighting' for their children, especially in cases where intimate partner violence is involved. The participant suggested that 'fighting' for children is 'antithetical' to family justice:

"When you're fighting for something, that is the most important thing and that's your children and potentially the safety of your children – I say fighting because when you're in the family court system, it is a fight...It's almost antithetical to what you would think family justice means. Just because you have these people, judges, who are deciding the fate of your child and especially in the context of intimate partner violence, they're making life and death decisions for your child because child homicide is a major risk factor for family violence and IPV situations." (RE4)

4.3.4 Use the Wisdom of Others to Design a New System

In the lawyer focus group, there was some discussion about how the family justice system was designed based on an old system, elsewhere in the world, and was not adapted to a Canadian context. This lawyer indicated that it could be helpful to draw wisdom from other cultural perspectives:

L2: "Our current system, the way it is, it's kind of like...Britain had a system, it came to Canada, then "oh, we're going to deal with families and just plug them into this adversarial court system that we have." What if we just totally just backed away from that for a moment and said, okay, well what about from the Indigenous perspective, how in other cultures even too, as far as how might they approach supporting families that are dealing with violence, that are ultimately ending their spousal relationship, or maybe they never even had one to [Lawyer4]'s earlier point." ... L4: "Well now I'm distracted by [L2], [their] last comments like, oh my God, that's good. We should talk about that. Just blow up the whole system. Start again. Why do we keep making adaptations to the current one?"

Section 4.4 adds to these lawyers' points, by pinpointing informational sources that could be consulted when forming a strategy map that is intended to guide system change.

4.4 Strategy Map Information Sources

This sub-section concentrates on sources of information that the stakeholders may wish to consult to inform the creation of a Saskatchewan-specific strategy map. Participants were asked about what information sources could be consulted, and who should be involved in creating a strategy map. A variety of sources were identified, including sources for cultural perspectives, those with family justice matters, existing data and literature, and, more broadly, everyone who has interest in family justice matters/the family justice system.

4.4.1 Indigenous and Other Cultural Perspectives and Frameworks

First, some responses from each group were about sources that center cultural worldviews, justice frameworks, and knowledge. Some passages were about drawing on the knowledge and wisdom of Indigenous and other cultural perspectives:

“Making sure that Indigenous perspectives are being part of that evaluation and if it is working, how it is working...Finding a way to create evaluations that also include Indigenous perspectives. And I think increasing the integration of Indigenous perspectives needs to happen throughout all justice systems, but especially family justice considering the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in care, and those types of things.” (CAR1)

“What if we...look[ed] at families a little bit differently, and how to support them, not thinking about this round hole in a square peg that we have right now [referring to the family justice system], that has just existed because it existed before, and just say, ‘alright, what could we learn from other cultures that maybe have some other processes, that then utilize the wisdom from other perspectives?’” (L2)

Another participant called for guidance from Indigenous-grounded justice frameworks; namely, the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and the Calls to Justice from the report on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people:

“Saskatchewan's map should align with the TRC Calls to Action around the 40s relating to justice and maybe the Calls to Action [Justice] for Missing Murdered Indigenous Women or recommendations from other reports that are relevant to our context here in Saskatchewan. That doesn't mean it's going to maybe align with all the recommendations, but it would be really good if the map could point [out] - I think, especially the TRC - how the map in Saskatchewan might connect to achieving some of those.” (RE2)

4.4.2 Perspectives from Those with Lived Experiences

Some responses from each group conveyed the importance of gathering information from individuals and communities who are directly impacted by the family justice system:

“I just find myself often in these kinds of conversations, and the people that are actually on the receiving end of things, don't seem to be present in the conversations...Getting information from people who are actually doing the things, and not just the service providers. Of course, we all have great ideas, but I do think we have an inherent conflict of interest too, because...it's our job, it's what we do.” (L2)

“I think victims,...people who have experienced how the systems have treated them firsthand should be front and center of informing those professionals and even policy makers and government leaders, how their decisions affect their real lives. Because for a policymaker or a government official or a judge or a lawyer, you are just a client or a case, but these are real people and real lives and real impacts. I would like to see anyone who would be willing to come forward as someone who has experienced the systems and has experienced intimate partner violence or other family violence. That could even be family members of missing and murdered

Indigenous women, family members of people who have never been found. There's a lot of people that you can say belong in that group if we are categorizing people. I would like to see them help to inform the strategy.” (RE4)

“Speaking to people who are impacted, people who've been through the family law system in different ways and maybe people who it worked well for, people who it didn't work well for, people who've done mediation and trial and all the different pieces, that's important input.” (RE2)

“I think youth, perhaps who their family was involved with the family legal system when they were younger might have an important perspective.” (RE2)

“I think the only thing that's missing from this is actual lived experience of a self-represented litigant going to the family justice system. It's never taken into consideration feedback, whenever amendments are made to court procedures, from lawyers.” (CAR3)

4.4.3 Academic and Gray Literature

Participants also spoke about consulting data and other information from academic and gray literature sources. A community agency representative mentioned two sources of local data:

“Pro Bono Law Saskatchewan has [data about] self-represented litigants, family wallet, legal advice.” (CAR3)

“The courts are going to have so much data about who is self-representing, what are the outcomes of the files, who completed mediation...Those court files are going to tell a lot about what's happening in our justice system.” (CAR3)

Those from the researcher/educator group shared academic literature sources to consult (specific areas, studies, and/or researchers):

“There's a lot of research that's been done in Australia...That is some really good research to take a look at for how the system is essentially reinforcing and creating that pathway to intimate partner violence for women and children.” (RE4)

“[There is] research on survivors' experiences with the legal system, and that also includes service providers who work with survivors of IPV as well. Really, that's more demonstrating what the issues are and what the concerns are and hopefully putting forward some relevant and actionable recommendations for change.” (RE2)

“I think there's some really good Canadian research on ‘here's what the situation is and here's what the issues and the problems are,’ which maybe helps to back up the need for some strategies or some focus on some areas.” (RE2)

“Wanda Wiegers from the [University of Saskatchewan] College of Law has a really great research article that came out in 2023 as well as Jennifer Koshan also has stuff that is really great and speaks to that lack of integration between systems.” (RE4)

Lastly, some participants suggested gray literature sources on relevant work completed in other locations, including some mentions of programs from other geographic locations:

“There are good examples out of other provinces that, of course, aren't always directly applicable, but I know that BC, the organization we're working off of for this map, has done some great stuff, transforming the family justice system which spans across Canada.” (RE1)

“The Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters has done some work in this area.” (RE1)

“I was the one who pointed out some of the family law training out of Ontario [Luke's Place].” (RE1)

“Nova Scotia did that big inquest into IPV after they had that mass casualty shooting that was part of an IPV situation, so that would be something to look at.” (RE4)

“Recommendations from other reports that are relevant to our context here in Saskatchewan.” (RE2)

“Some of the provinces where they do have the integrated family court system, looking at some of those differences and what exists would be really helpful.” (RE2)

“There is places in the States that are – I don't know if they're in operation since funding cuts and stuff like that, but I do know that they did exist and they basically were, I think, nonprofit organizations that you could go to if you were a victim of IPV, and they would represent you from start to finish in your family matter. That may be something to look into, one of those clinics or one of those organizations.” (RE4)

“There's the national self-represented litigant project... Julie McFarlane [led] the project.” (CAR4)

4.4.4 Information from Everyone with Interest in Family Justice Matters

Finally, some participants shed light on the value of gathering insight from everyone who plays a role in, influences, and/or has knowledge about family justice systems. Some researcher/educator participants conveyed the importance of consulting with various professionals, as well as those with lived experience:

“As you were creating the focus groups for this particular consultation, who are the key stakeholders that you identified? You split it into maybe academics versus practitioners versus those with lived experience, maybe educators, maybe people who work at schools and have to engage with families and children and those involved in child protection in some way, family

counselors, addiction counselors. I'd want to know people that are maybe touching different sides of this that aren't necessarily the first step that you think, but that may be part of this more broadly just because they might have some unique views as well." (RE1)

"I think the service providers are really key – mediators and others because they can speak to themes of what many families they work with are experiencing." (RE2)

"Family law professionals, but also judges and the adjacent service providers as well." (RE2)

Participants from each group also indicated, more generally, the value of prioritizing consultations with people who have varied backgrounds:

"I think if you can get as broad of a canvas, and getting [as much] information as possible...If you can get it from a broad spectrum of different communities, ages, just to be able to have the data that can identify where the gaps are, it's just going to be extremely helpful." (CAR2)

"I know there's some frustration because every province is pouring all these resources into something when I feel like if there was cooperation amongst all the provinces just to develop one common thing, it might produce more efficiencies." (L3)

"I'll say everyone who will be expected to do something in relation to those strategies." (RE2)

5. Results: Tracking and Measuring Outcomes in Saskatchewan

At the end of each focus group, participants were asked the following questions to gather practical considerations about tracking and measuring change in Saskatchewan:

1. What are some challenges that may arise when it comes to keeping track of the strategies in the province, or measuring the outcomes that we have identified in this focus group?
2. On the other hand, what might help different groups keep track of strategies that are being implemented, and measure changes that are happening?

These responses represent perceived challenges that researchers and evaluators may encounter, and strategies that could be employed to help mitigate challenges.

The results are organized into two sub-sections:

- 5.1 Challenges to Tracking and Measuring Outcomes
- 5.2 Factors to Help Track and Measure Outcomes

5.1 Challenges to Tracking and Measuring Outcomes

Participants relayed several challenges that researchers and evaluators may encounter when attempting to track and measure outcomes. Most responses could be categorized as data collection and measurement challenges, as participants acknowledged the large amount of data to be collected, complexities of measuring collective impact, and shortcomings of existing data. Some participants also communicated challenges to having those with family justice matters participate in data collection, and more systemic level barriers, such as the disconnection between systems.

5.1.1 Data Collection and Measurement Challenges

The first set of challenges, brought up in each focus group, centers on technical and logistical difficulties of gathering and interpreting data. The challenges range from specific (e.g., the time it will take to gather information) to broad (e.g., complexities of measuring change).

Table 7 includes sub-categories identified in participants' responses, specific to potential data collection and measurement challenges.

Data Collection and Measurement Challenges	Quotes
Resource Intensive Data Collection	<u>Amount of information:</u> "It's a huge amount of information to try to gather...I don't know that my small brain is capable of comprehending just how you sort of capture that." (L1) <u>Collecting data in an appropriate way:</u> "If you are reaching out to those affected maybe with a post satisfaction survey, et cetera, how are you doing that in a trauma and violence informed way?" (RE1) <u>Time to gather information:</u> "Some of these things will take time, right? If we're trying to gather stats on how

	many more people have been served or what the impact has been, trainings, et cetera. I think there's a challenge of making sure that you're realistic in the timeline that you give yourself." (RE1)
Accountability Challenges	"Where is the responsibility? It might be a great idea, but if no one is going to take responsibility of it, then I don't know what'll happen with it, if anything." (CAR3)
Missing or Incomplete Data	"I think as good lawyers, I'd like to consider myself a good lawyer, one of the things you try to do is avoid court when it's possible. I don't want my clients to have to go there. It's too uncertain, it's expensive, it's emotionally costly, it's financially costly, it's just too much. If I can, in this small community of Saskatchewan, sit down with somebody that I've worked with for decades, and we have a trusting relationship, and we can sit down and work out – within the parameters of the law – something that is really, really workable for this particular family, I'm going to do that. But you're never going to capture that on any of your numbers. Right?" (L1) "The difficult thing too, with [a] new process is [d]o you know what are happening to all these people [who may not be able to access help]?" (CAR3)
Complexity of Measuring Collective Impact	"Another challenge would arise with the collective impact measuring. There's always a challenge in measuring a collective impact and so I would be interested in seeing what the plan would be for that. How are you going to do that multi-pronged analysis because truly, I think that what needs to be done here. That's what is lacking." (RE1) "The challenge [is] when pieces of data will come from different systems and different service providers...especially the quantitative data. [It would be one thing] if it was like family court, who went through this process in this time period, but I think there would be relevant information from private practice individuals, from adjacent service provider systems. There might be things that are going toward the overall strategies and goals that are relevant that are being delivered by community-based organizations or

	Indigenous organizations. Then, trying to get a lot of different data sources from different sectors and collect it, which there's challenges and the timeliness, and then putting that all together." (RE2)
Method Considerations	<u>Quantitative vs. qualitative</u>: "Quant is probably easier. We train this many lawyers, this many judges, offered this many trainings, put this much money in. I think that is less of a challenge but also can be a challenge to make sure that it's targeted and mapped in a realistic way...I'm interested in hearing what the qualitative analysis would be." (RE4) <u>Uncertainty about how to collect data</u>: "Getting [as much] information as possible, I don't know how that happens. We have tried to get people to fill out surveys. We've taken our show on the road to try to set up focus groups, and I mean it's hard. It's hard to get feedback. The people that you absolutely want it from, I think you really just have to try hard to get it. I don't know how that happens." (CAR3)

Table 7

5.1.2 Participation Issues

Some participants, especially those in the community agency representative group, focused on potential barriers to capturing voices and experiences of those with family justice matters in data collection.

Table 8 lists participation-related issues that researchers and evaluators may encounter when tracking change.

Participation Challenges	Quotes
Difficulty tracking those who give up or do not enter the family justice system	"I know particularly in the domestic violence context, you have mothers who consent to things that...in retrospect, they shouldn't have consented to, but feel a lot of pressures, and even threats. So, I do think that this giving up as a result of emotional, financial exhaustion, or just the fear of retaliation, those are very real and very hard to measure." (L5) "I think another challenge to measuring outcomes is also that we only know what people report and so many people are not reporting because they don't feel supported or they don't feel safe in those spaces that

	we have to report. That would be a challenge, I think, and to just collecting data, whether quantitative or qualitative. That's a challenge for data collection.” (RE4) “I think there's something about people that just don't even enter the justice system at all either, that they could be eligible for child support, they could probably have some property division, but it's just too daunting, too much, and so they just won't even approach it. I guess, how do you get information from them?” (CAR3)
Challenges that Could Result in Lack of Lived Experience in Data	<u>Certain groups with lived experience may be unwilling to provide feedback:</u> “Not all Indigenous folks are willing to speak, and give feedback, because of the intergenerational trauma that has occurred within the family justice systems and within Saskatchewan.” (CAR1) <u>Uncertainty about how to motivate participation of those with family justice matters:</u> “Some people don't want to talk, well, who the heck wants to talk more about their family law situation? And you can tell all the self-represent litigants that, “yeah, you've been through it, your information will be so valuable. Please help us in this consultation” or whatever. How to get them to do it, I can't comment on it at all really.” (CAR4) <u>Lack of time to participate in data collection:</u> “What we really need to do is, like I was saying before, meet people where they're at. [For example, a] single parent [may not] have time to fill out a whole evaluation form.” (CAR1)
Lack of Trust Between Communities	“I think there's a lack of trust between many communities.” (CAR1)⁵

Table 8

5.1.3 Systemic Barriers

Some responses were on the topic of system-level issues that hinder effective information tracking.

⁵ This quote is general and does not outline how this challenge is linked to data collection, tracking, or measurement. However, it was stated when the evaluator asked the group about challenges to tracking and measuring change. The only context surrounding the term “communities” is later in the response, where the participant mentions “folks who have lost trust in those systems.” (CAR1)

Table 9 showcases participants' ideas about possible system-level barriers to tracking strategies and outcomes.

Systemic Barriers	Quote(s)
Inefficiencies Due to Disconnected Systems	"I think one of the challenges that we talked about needs to be addressed is the disconnection between all the systems. That will be a definite challenge, trying to figure out how they can come together and how they can work together and maybe not overlap or leverage what one is doing, and then it supports the other and vice versa." (RE4)
Restricted Access to System Data	"You can't just go to the court and say, 'can you give me a spreadsheet of all the people we should be calling?' And it would give you the...information. How it happens? I don't know." (CAR2)

Table 9

5.2 Helping Factors for Tracking and Measuring Outcomes

Participants mentioned factors that may help researchers and evaluators track and measure outcomes. Helping factors were categorized in a similar fashion to the challenges, to allow for ease of linking challenges with helping factors. Participants relayed strategies for effective data collection and measurement (e.g., learning from similar projects and evaluations), evaluation participation strategies (e.g., use of participant incentives), and multisector collaboration.

5.2.1 Data Collection and Measurement Strategies

Participants in each group relayed some strategies and tools for addressing technical and logistical challenges in gathering and interpreting data. Recommendations in this category focused on pre-data collection considerations to prepare for data collection.

Table 10 lists the data collection and measurement strategies that participant identified.

Data Collection and Measurement Strategies	Quote(s)
Development of Meaningful Indicators	"Whatever indicators are chosen at this early stage, should be indicators that should be able to drive action." (RE3) "If you see X number of whatever you're tracking, what change is that going to make? What signal should that be to which group in order to do something differently or to continue to focus in a particular area to continue

	to achieve impact? How are the measures helping to drive impact and action?" (RE3) "I agree with [CAR3]. I was thinking about how [we would] be able to measure that everything we're doing today actually led to something positive. And it would be like 10 years from now, you did a survey, and eight out of 10 people were like, 'yeah, I was pretty happy with what happened in family court. Everything worked out great and wasn't too stressful.' And if that's what you got out of this, even if the outcomes were the exact same, the same number of people were getting the same amount of child support, were seeing their kids the same amount of time...wouldn't that be great? And it wouldn't have changed anything with what the actual laws were and what the actual decision from court was. But if it's just that they came out of that saying 'hey, that wasn't so bad.' I think that's the win." (CAR2)
Use of Existing Data (with caution)	"I think you're going to want to be very wary of those numbers... I don't think they capture a lot of those people who are falling off because they cannot afford to continue." (L1)
Learning from Comparable Initiatives	<u>Learn about developing a strategy map and implementing change:</u> "I think building on this [sample] model is great. It gives us a good place to start and obviously, recognizing there's adaptations that need to be made, but I think that there is good research on this and being able to draw upon those works and build those frameworks and have those indicators and see what's worked otherwise is a way to make this feel less daunting. Other organizations and other countries have done good work on this and just trying to build that in from the very beginning in a strong way, I think, will make this seem less of a Gordian knot problem and more realistic that it can be tackled and it can be tackled in a collective way." (RE1) <u>Learn about boosting participation in data collection:</u> "There's the national self-represented litigant project... They would probably be able to provide real good insights for us out here on just how to get information

	from the people who've actually been through it.” (CAR4) <u>Learn about collective impact</u>: “I think a helping factor is just not reinventing the wheel in some of these but taking into account other complex collective impact multi-sector evaluations and seeing what has worked and what has not worked for them.” (RE1)
Establishing Accountability Mechanisms	<u>Cross-sector</u>: “What I would like to see happen, I think for this to work, is regardless of where the [strategy map] is held, if you had all the stakeholders together coming in, and maybe each taking responsibility for a part of it and then holding one another accountable. So yeah, strategy number three and outcome number two, the government is going to be focused on that, and they're going to be taking the lead on that, but they're going to be expecting things from everyone else...The courts that are going to take on the lead on a different part of the map, and they're going to be held accountable by one another...I think the enforceability, and the accountability, has to be everyone committed to it and then continuing to work together, not just individually. If everyone says, ‘yeah, we're going to do this.’ Yeah, one or two organizations might be committed to doing some good work, but I think it has to all go together.” (CAR2) <u>Within organization</u>: “[There is] an ability within one organization to create regular opportunities to connect and share impact on specific accountabilities that have been assigned to various groups. That's one way that will help to keep track of, “how are we doing?” Then, of course, there's regular governance processes...but often much of the day-to-day work on staying on track to...[the] strategy happens internally to the organization.” (RE3)
Forward-Looking Planning for Data Collection	“It's just the things like [RE1] was saying to think really clearly about that plan at the beginning.” (RE2)

Table 10

5.2.2 Participation Strategies

Some participants spoke about efforts to ensure diverse voices and experiences are captured in data collection.

Table 11 includes participation-related strategies that could help track feedback and outcomes of people with family justice matters.

Participation Strategies	Quote(s)
Trust-Building with Communities	“Building that trust and building that rapport with folks who have lost trust in those systems...Again, I keep saying it and it's kind of a catchall, but meeting folks where they're at.” (CAR1)
Low-Barrier Feedback Options	“Maybe...having a drop box where you can give feedback at any place that would be a regular place... any of those places where people meet. So, having something that's lower barrier, kind of doing what we're doing now where you're talking to people from organizations who do work firsthand with those folks. So that could be that bridge, right? We've built that rapport, we've built that trust, so they're willing to share and give that feedback to people like us. So yeah, I think just lowering the barriers as much as you can. There's already so many loops that people have to jump through in the justice system. So yeah, getting that feedback from folks, like you're saying, would be so beneficial, but how do we get that? Well, meeting them where they're at.” (RE1)
Provide Participant Incentives	“I've seen success in getting focus groups, such as this, when people are paid for their time, and paid for their knowledge, and their expertise.” (CAR1) “If folks will have access to food, say if they are facing many barriers like homelessness and all that, that they will come [participate in data collection], they will also get food and be respected, but they're welcome to give feedback.” (CAR1)

Table 11

5.2.3 Systemic Strategies

Finally, some participants focused on collaboration as a system-level enabler for effective tracking and measurement. One participant focused on existing networks in the legal profession, while the other

participant focused on collaborations between community-based service providers and those in the legal profession:

“I do think one of the things that is special about Saskatchewan is I have interacted with every single person on this call before this call at some point, maybe with the exception of [Lawyer 6]...I mean these are familiar faces and that's a beautiful thing about Saskatchewan, is that I think a lot of the service providers know each other, and that lends itself to some real catalyzing of supporting clients when you get the right people in the right room. And I think that that is very special. The access to justice stuff that the college does, the courses that are taught, there's good connection. It's a very well-connected group of people...I think that there's huge potential to serve clients really well with that kind of network already in place.” (L4)

“I was thinking there's organizations like Elizabeth Fry Society, like Sanctum Care Group, all of these places who are connected already, to those folks, who are accessing, or not accessing and why aren't they accessing family justice. So, I think it really needs to be a wraparound support kind of thing, where we're working together, the courts and the NPOs, and the lawyers, everybody, to get that information.” (CAR1)

6. Result Reflections: Insights from the Project Advisory Committee

The second and final Project Advisory Committee meeting took place after the first draft of this report was written in August 2025. The main purpose of this meeting was to gather perspective from the Project Advisory Committee members (who are involved in or interact with the family justice system in different ways) about the results to help CHASR and the core research team think critically about the results. Specifically, CHASR and the core research team hoped to use committee member insights to help:

- Interpret the results;
- Effectively communicate the results; and
- Decide on the next steps for research and evaluation

During this meeting, CHASR presented a brief overview of the focus group results, and asked committee members the following questions to guide discussion about the results:

1. Which results are most interesting, surprising, and/or significant to you?
2. Do any of the strategies or ideas about tracking and measuring change seem particularly promising or challenging to implement?
3. Based on the results presented today, what would you like to know more about?
4. What do you think are the most important implications of these findings? (for the family justice system, or for the communities and populations you work with)
5. What advice do you have for moving forward with communicating these results and/or planning the next steps?

The following text summarizes the committee's discussion about the focus group results.

Some members highlighted the significance of participants' emphasis on third-party programming and the limits of the legal system in driving change. One member spoke about the potential value of a wraparound support model, suggesting that future work could explore how the model works in other sectors.

Some members raised questions about outcomes like “reduced time to resolution,” noting that quicker resolutions may not always lead to better results. There was also curiosity and caution around strategies such as the use of AI, with members emphasizing the need for critical evaluation of its application in justice contexts.

Some committee members expressed interest in learning more about mental health-related recommendations (e.g., solutions for increasing the number of mental health professionals in the province).

Some members discussed the challenges and opportunities of tracking and measuring change. For instance, some agreed with focus group participants that some data may be missed by only gathering traditional metrics (e.g., reasons for people who disengage from the system). One member commented that qualitative data could be particularly valuable, though there was acknowledgement that qualitative data collection is resource intensive. There was also discussion about data restrictions and privacy concerns to consider when thinking about sharing

data. Consistent data collection across groups and organizations was another topic that was brought up. Return on investment approaches were raised as possible framework.

There was also discussion about contextualizing the results within the small but diverse sample.

Lastly, one member noted that it would be helpful to have more time to reflect on the data before providing additional insight. The final report will be shared with the committee once completed to allow for continued engagement.

No results in this report were altered based on committee member responses.

7. Conclusions

The focus groups produced a rich dataset pointing to perceived and unanticipated issues related to the family justice system and actionable strategies to improve peoples' experiences with Saskatchewan's family justice system. The findings underscore the value of co-creating solutions with diverse groups of interested people, especially those with lived experience, and moving beyond the legal sector. The strategy map, if developed with sufficient detail and community guidance, could serve as a critical tool in advancing responsive, equitable, and meaningful family justice transformation. This section includes a list of study limitations and outlines results-driven recommendations and future directions.

7.1 Limitations

While this focus group project yielded valuable insights, there are a number of limitations that should be acknowledged:

1. For confidentiality reasons, participants' demographic and background details could not be disclosed. The core research team provided CHASR with a purposive recruitment list, which emphasized diversity in geography, role, organization type, and experience in family justice and systems change. To protect participant identities, transcripts were de-identified before analysis, and individual characteristics were not reported. As such, while diversity was prioritized and achieved in the sampling, the findings cannot be contextualized by specific participant backgrounds.
2. Not all focus group questions were asked in every group. In order to preserve the natural flow of discussion, the moderator occasionally omitted questions that had already been addressed through participant responses to earlier or overlapping questions. This was particularly evident in the lawyer group, where conversations often spanned multiple question topics. As a result, there may have been less detail about certain topics that were not directly asked about.
3. While participants were provided with an information sheet and video about strategy maps in advance (**Appendices D and E**) and given brief explanations of strategy map components during the sessions (see **Appendix G** for the focus group guide), there was limited training about strategy maps and strategy map components. While participants were not expected to have expertise in this area (the goal of the focus groups was not to develop a strategy map), there were some indicators that more detailed ideas about strategy map components could have resulted with additional materials and/or training. For example, some participants indicated that they had not reviewed the materials ahead of time, in one group there was extended silence when asked to think about outcomes to include in a Saskatchewan map, and some participants mixed up terminology (e.g., mentioned strategies when asked about outcomes or capacity development areas). Although responses were coded accurately at the analysis stage based on established definitions, additional preparation or training could have enhanced participant engagement with the mapping components.
4. A tight project timeline meant that the focus groups had to be completed within a limited window. While multiple time slots were offered to accommodate invitees, some individuals who expressed interest were unable to attend within the available timeframe. Due to the project scope, additional data collection opportunities could not be pursued.

A note on sample size: Although the number of participants was relatively small, this should not be viewed as a limitation on its own. Generalizability, in the traditional quantitative sense, was not the goal of this qualitative inquiry. Rather, the study aimed to gather insights from a purposively selected, diverse sample. Having responses from people with different backgrounds and demographics, even with a small sample size, can be useful for reasons other than traditional generalizability (e.g., the responses have some level of relevance to those that come across them, or the ability for report readers to think about the results in relation to their own settings and scenarios).

7.2 Recommendations and Future Directions

The recommendations and future directions in this section are largely based on data gathered and analyzed in the focus group. The purpose of providing these suggestions is to inform potential next steps that the researchers can take in the larger project about advancing continuous improvements in the family justice system.

To determine the next steps in the action research process (what, when, how) for transforming the family justice system in Saskatchewan, it may be helpful to understand:

1. The importance of continued work (indicated by successes, issues, needs, gaps, uses)
2. Potential approaches for continued work (e.g., a framework for all continued efforts)
3. Who should be involved in the continued work (e.g., which groups are involved in the system, the roles of different groups involved in the system, who could be consulted for what purposes)
4. Potential challenges that may be encountered in continued work, and possible solutions

Table 12 organizes the recommendations and future directions according to these matters, concluding with some examples of some next steps for the researchers to consider.

Recommendations and/or future directions	Why are these actions recommended?	Report Data to Consult
Importance of Continued Work		
1. Use the results of the focus groups to assist with efforts for continued funding.	This focus group project was one of the initial steps in a long-term action research process. The results point to many ongoing issues with the family justice system in Saskatchewan, suggesting the need for continued work that will help address the issues. The results of this project also point to a variety of	

Recommendations and/or future directions	Why are these actions recommended?	Report Data to Consult
	next steps, which will likely require additional funding (see recommendations 8 – 16).	
Approaches for Continued Work		
2. Consider approaching systems change with developmental evaluation, incorporating elements of realist evaluation and collective impact evaluation. All three are appropriate for complex change efforts, offering different strengths, lenses, and steps. Use of the approaches should be flexible, to accommodate differences in the approaches.	Developmental evaluation is used for addressing complex issues, in which there is “no known solution to priority problems; no certain way forward and multiple paths possible; need for innovation, exploration, and social experimentation” (Patton, 2010, p.23). Multiple participant quotes from the focus groups support the developmental evaluation direction: • Participants identified or indicated multiple strategies for addressing the same issues • Participants pointed to the complexity of issues by highlighting interrelated problems (e.g., between complexity of the family justice system process, time to resolution, and cost of resolution) and adjacent problems that amplify challenges experienced in the family justice system (e.g., domestic violence) • Participants communicated that there are roles for everyone who is involved in the family justice system in advancing improvements – not just legal professionals • In addition to participants’ recommendations for improving existing strategies, participants also implied the need for innovation in various parts of the focus groups. For example, innovation was indicated in discussions about strategies (e.g., specialized processes for different scenarios) and system design	Quotes about the complexity of issues and various efforts to address the issues: • Throughout Section 4.2.2 Quotes that indicate the variety of people who could have a role in system transformation: • Section 3 Quotes about system design considerations: • Section 4

Recommendations and/or future directions	Why are these actions recommended?	Report Data to Consult
	(e.g., drawing on wisdom from other cultural perspectives to guide system design) The focus group results also suggest that there is a role for realist evaluation in continued work on advancing the family justice system. The crux of realist evaluation is addressing the question: “What works for whom in what circumstances and in what respects, and how?” (Pawson & Tilley, 2004, p.2). The approach centers context by acknowledging that what might work for one person, in one situation, may not work for others and their unique situations. Participants indicated the importance of context throughout the focus groups: • Participants emphasized a person-centered, user-focused approach to change in order to “meet people where they are at” (CAR1) • Participants recognized potential group-based differences in experiences with the justice system based on ethnicity, gender, age, and background experiences such as domestic violence • Participants identified specific contexts to consider in Saskatchewan, such rural, remote, and northern contexts • Participants in each group called for consultations with people who have lived experience (i.e., those who have navigated family justice matters) to help inform strategies for improving the family justice system. One participant suggested collecting information from “a broad spectrum of different communities” to “identify	Quotes about a user-focused approach: • Section 2.4 Quotes about potential group-based differences in experiences of issues: • Section 4.4.2 Quotes about Saskatchewan contexts: • Section 4.2.1 Quotes about consulting those who have lived experience: • Sections 4.4.2 & 4.4.4

Recommendations and/or future directions	Why are these actions recommended?	Report Data to Consult
	where the gaps are” (CAR2), indicating that needs may vary based on demographic and background factors. Collective impact evaluation helps build a collaborative structure for evaluation across different groups, organizations, and/or sectors. Traditionally, the approach draws on shared measurement, allowing for assessment of the effectiveness of various initiatives that are working towards a common goal. Assuming the common goal is to “advance continuous improvements in the family justice system,” focus group participants identified several groups, organizations, and sectors that would play a role in system change. Participants in each group made it clear that collaboration will be essential in transforming Saskatchewan’s family justice system. Participants also acknowledged the complexity of collective impact evaluation, particularly with respect to resource-intensive data collection and measurement complexity. Researchers and evaluators may wish to incorporate collective impact evaluation with flexibility. The issue of family justice is complex, which suggests that shared measurement may not be possible (or, at least, in all circumstances). Any form of shared measurement system would need to be iterative and developmental, changing as continuous feedback is gathered and ongoing adjustments are made to strategies. Researchers and evaluators may wish to consider adapting the collective impact approach to suit future project needs, by looking to various use cases.	Quotes that indicate the variety of people who could have a role in system transformation: • Section 3 Quotes that convey the importance of collaborative efforts: • Throughout Section 2 • Section 3 • Section 5.2 Quotes about the complexity of collective impact evaluation: • Table 7 in Section 5.1.1

Recommendations and/or future directions	Why are these actions recommended?	Report Data to Consult
3. Use the guiding principles mentioned by participants to determine additional approaches to incorporate in future evaluations.	Participants mentioned a variety of principles that can be used to guide the development of a strategy map, and more generally, transformation of the family justice system in Saskatchewan (e.g., accessible, user-focused, culturally informed). These principles can help inform approaches to consider in future evaluative work (e.g., culturally responsive evaluation).	Guiding principles are listed in Section 2.4
4. Determine usefulness of a strategy map in Saskatchewan by reflecting on participant data and the evaluative approach(es) that will guide continued work. Expand and refine the list of potential uses for a strategy map through group brainstorming and consulting evaluation resources. Use the resulting list to inform decisions about the usefulness of a strategy map: • How might it be useful? • To whom? • At what points in the evaluation/ research process	Participants thought that the sample strategy map components were relevant, and identified a core set of uses for a strategy map (e.g., a tool for outlining goals and maintaining accountability). They also identified disadvantages of the strategy map (e.g., it lacks detail). The results indicated that while strategy maps can be useful tools, there are also shortcomings to consider. The evaluation approach that is taken may help decide the appropriateness of having a map and/or what a map could be useful for, and what its limitations are. For example, as suggested in recommendation 3, the map may need to be iterative with ongoing adjustments to components. The question might shift from “should we have a map or not?” to “what can we use a strategy map for and what should it not be used for?” Expanding on the list of uses can help clarify how such a map could serve as a living, iterative planning tool.	Quotes about the relevance of BC map components: • Section 2.1 Quotes about strategy map uses: • Section 4.1 Quotes about strategy map limitations: • Throughout Section 4.2

Recommendations and/or future directions	Why are these actions recommended?	Report Data to Consult
Who Should Be Involved		
5. Generate a comprehensive list of groups involved in or affected by the family justice system and begin identifying what their roles might be in systemic transformation.	Participants emphasized that improving the family justice system requires contributions from multiple groups of people, such as legal professionals, community-based service providers, academics, healthcare providers, and more. Moreover, participants called for strategy accountability. For example, one participant questioned, “Who are these strategies targeted to? Who is going to take action on it?” (RE3). Having a comprehensive list of people who are directly and indirectly involved, and what their roles and responsibilities might be, would help determine who to collect certain data from. For example, some focus group participants called for changes to existing programming in Saskatchewan. Those service providers could be consulted to inquire about the feasibility of suggested changes, as well as the resources that would be needed to implement such changes. The list could also help determine who to include on future advisory committees and research/evaluation teams.	Quotes on potential roles of different groups: • Section 3 Different groups of people that were mentioned in relation to strategy map components: • Section 4.4.2
Potential Challenges and Solutions for Moving Forward		
6. Consider participants’ various suggestions for effectively tracking and measuring systemic change. Explore best practices and lessons learned	While participants outlined a variety of challenges to tracking and measuring change (e.g., datasets that lack detail, challenges gathering information from people with lived experience, and inefficiencies due to disconnected systems), they also provided insight into helping factors. For example,	Quotes about complexities of tracking and measuring change: • Section 5.1

Recommendations and/or future directions	Why are these actions recommended?	Report Data to Consult
through literature searches, if needed, to back up suggestions.	having a set of actionable indicators could facilitate efficient, meaningful collection and measurement strategies and outcomes. Additionally, having low-barrier feedback options and providing participant incentives may boost participation in data collection efforts for those with family justice matters. Reflecting on challenges and helping factors aligns with one participant's suggestion for prospective planning: "Think really clearly about [the] plan at the beginning" (RE2). These reflections may provide justification for the next steps in the action research process, by shedding light on what could be done to mitigate potential challenges.	Quotes about helping factors for tracking and measuring change: • Section 5.2
7. Conduct environmental scans and narrative literature reviews on initiatives that aim to improve the experiences of those with family justice matters. Focus on cases that specify their evaluative approach.	As participants identified, continuously improving the family justice system will require a large amount of time-consuming data collection, involving multiple datasets that may or may not be comprehensive, and will require participation and accountability of various groups. One helping factor mentioned by a participant was learning about "other collective impact multi-sector evaluations and seeing what has worked and what has not worked for them" (RE1). Conducting narrative literature reviews on initiatives that aim to improve family justice-related experiences (especially cases which specify the evaluative approaches), and exploring similar efforts pursued in other jurisdictions, could help:	Quotes about complexities of tracking and measuring change: • Section 5.1 Quotes about helping factors for tracking and measuring change: • Section 5.2

Recommendations and/or future directions	Why are these actions recommended?	Report Data to Consult
	• Understand how other jurisdictions address family law-related issues (i.e., strategies) • Identify best practices for continued data collection • Document lessons learned, so that pitfalls can be avoided (e.g., for data collection or the general pursuit of measuring system change) • Choose evaluation approaches based on best fit • Learn how to adapt evaluation approaches to suit systemic transformation of a family justice system	
Examples of Next Steps		
8. Identify misconceptions, misinformation, and/or points of confusion in the focus group data. In combination with other informational sources that provide feedback about Saskatchewan's family justice system processes (e.g., existing academic and grey literature; informal feedback; future research), explore the extent to which myths and misunderstandings exist, and in which groups.	Misconceptions, misinformation, and/or points of confusion may be indicators of informational gaps that participants may have. Additionally, such misunderstandings may indicate unavailability and/or inaccessibility of information. These informational gaps may exist in other groups that were not reached by this focus group project. By understanding the informational needs of different groups, strategies can be developed to effectively dispel misunderstandings.	N/A
9. Identify research gaps on the topic of the needs of individuals navigating the family justice system in Saskatchewan.	Participants listed various strategies to consider implementing in Saskatchewan to address challenges and barriers that may be faced by those with family justice matters. Moreover, some participants indicated that the current strategies in Saskatchewan are not enough to meet the needs of people who have family justice matters. Their responses point to unmet needs, suggesting that more steps, actions, and	See the following sections for strategies mentioned by participants: • Section 4.2.2 (Issues that could feed into strategies for a Saskatchewan map)

Recommendations and/or future directions	Why are these actions recommended?	Report Data to Consult
	programming are required to see widespread improvements for those with family justice matters. Individuals and families who have experienced family justice matters are in the best position to relay barriers that they have faced, unmet needs, and actions that could have helped them through any challenges they experienced. Identifying research gaps will help justify ensure that future needs assessments are not duplicative and instead focus on areas requiring deeper understanding and innovation.	• Section 2.3 (Current strategies in Saskatchewan) Quotes about the narrow/siloed scope of existing programs: Section 4.2.2
10. Collect data from those with family justice matters, including those who have interacted with the system and those who have not. Be intentional about sample diversity and make attempts to mitigate barriers to participation in data collection.	Participants called for data collection with people who have lived experience (i.e., those with family justice matters), and identified potential challenges to gathering information from this group of people. As communicated by participants, this group of people could provide feedback about the processes and third-party initiatives related to the family justice system and speak to outcomes through sharing their experiences. Some participant responses indicated the need to define what “support” and “well-being” means for different people and families. These definitions could be developed through data collection with those who have (or have had) family justice matters.	Quotes about the importance of collecting data from those with lived experience: • Section 4.4.2 Quotes about participation challenges for tracking and measuring change: • Section 5.1.2 Quotes about defining ‘support’ and ‘well-being’: Section 4.2.3
11. Beginning with the results of this focus group project, develop an inventory of:	Though participants generally found the sample strategy map components relevant, some recognized that the map was a high-level document, and felt that it was missing some key details (e.g., it was unclear how certain terms were being	Quotes about details that were missing from sample strategy map: • Section 4.2

Recommendations and/or future directions	Why are these actions recommended?	Report Data to Consult
• Perceived issues with Saskatchewan's family justice system • Strategies for addressing the issues • Outcomes • Areas for capacity development	defined, who the strategies were targeted to, how different strategies were being implemented, etc.). Participants identified a variety of strategy map components ranging from high-level items (e.g., wraparound services and supports) to more specific items (e.g., free hours of mediation). This information could help begin an inventory of issues, outcomes, strategies, and capacity development areas. Creating an inventory of strategy map components to accompany a high-level strategy map could: • Support decision making about the next steps in the research/evaluation process (Where are there gaps that could be filled by further data collection?) • Inform the prioritization of strategies (Is there a particularly prominent issue that should be addressed? Are there strategies that are easier to implement than others?) • Guide funding proposals, by showcasing documented needs and potential solutions from various sources • Enable shared understandings of issues and strategies amongst those who are and/or will be involved in the system transformation • Be used as a monitoring tool (e.g., as strategies are implemented, researchers/evaluators can revisit and update the inventory to document changes in issues, strategies, and capacity needs over time)	For strategy map components, see Section 2.2

Recommendations and/or future directions	Why are these actions recommended?	Report Data to Consult
12. When strategy map inventories are created, supplement the inventories with other information sources. For each component, keep track of where each item was extracted from (e.g., informal conversations, environmental scans, research, gray literature, expert consultations, etc.) and which group of people it was brought forth by (e.g., someone from the general public belonging to a specific demographic; someone with lived experience; a certain type of lawyer; a judge; a student, researcher, or research team with a specialized background; a service provider from a specific sector).	Issues related to the family justice system were a central topic in all three focus groups. Participants relayed several perceived issues and ideas about how they could be addressed. Creating comprehensive inventories of issues and strategy map components, informed by multiple sources of data, will strengthen the justification for continued work. This inventory can serve multiple purposes, such as supporting grant applications, informing literature reviews and academic outputs, grounding future evaluation efforts, and orienting new groups to the core challenges.	Quotes about issues related to the family justice system: Section 4.2.2
13. Using the inventory of issues and strategy map components, generate proposed pathways for addressing family justice system issues. Pathways could be demonstrated in the form of physical or digital tables or charts or could be showcased on an interactive dashboard. Collect additional data, as needed, to fill in pathway gaps (e.g., through hosting pathway workshops). Continuously update pathways as more information is collected.	The focus group results provide an initial glimpse into pathways for addressing family justice system issues. Although it was not expected that participants would explicitly make these connections, many naturally linked perceived issues to potential strategies. Building visual pathways from participants' contributions, and refining them through continued data collection could: • Show how specific strategies connect to intended outcomes and which issues they aim to resolve, helping researchers avoid fragmented or duplicative planning	Table 7 in Section 4.2.2 illustrate issues that could be linked in the future to strategy map components

Recommendations and/or future directions	Why are these actions recommended?	Report Data to Consult
	• Highlight gaps in current knowledge (e.g., missing strategies or unaddressed outcomes), guiding targeted data collection efforts • Support collaborative planning, so that different groups of people involved in the system transformation could see where their contributions fit and how efforts align toward common goals	
14. To facilitate collaboration and continued data collection, generate widespread awareness of research and evaluation work that is being conducted on the topic of improving Saskatchewan’s family justice system.	Multiple participants thought that transforming Saskatchewan’s family justice system would require multi-sector collaboration. Specifically, some participants conveyed that system change efforts should be informed by everyone who is involved in, and affected by, the family justice system. One way to build momentum for collaboration, and trust in the research, is to generate widespread awareness of the work that is being done to advance continuous improvements to Saskatchewan’s family justice system. Some examples of awareness-generating efforts include: • Developing a website for all related research and evaluation efforts, including information about the overall body of work, the core team, partners, funders, project results, media attention that the work has gained, where to find more information, and sign-up forms (e.g., for newsletters or to generate recruitment lists for future efforts). • Host a public gathering (e.g., a town hall) to present initial findings and engage in activities to gather feedback from the public, such as thoughts about the	Quotes about multi-sector collaboration: • Section 2 • Section 3 • Section 5.2

Recommendations and/or future directions	Why are these actions recommended?	Report Data to Consult
	results, what information is missing, future directions, and how to engage with the target audience. Such an event could involve roundtable discussions, storytelling, brief presentations with interactive components (e.g., Mentimeter), feedback forms, and voting activities. This could be another opportunity for generating recruitment lists, whether for advisory committees or targeted data collection. • Forge relationships and partnerships with service providers and/or organizations who may work with those who have family justice matters. Seek their assistance in generating awareness about ongoing studies, evaluation efforts, and other related events (e.g., through thoughtful placement of posters throughout the community, advertising in newsletters, or word of mouth promotion). Determine interest in joining advisory committees.	
15. Host an “expert event,” such as a planning meeting, to determine additional next steps based on the focus group data.	Hosting an expert planning meeting provides a structured opportunity to bring together diverse groups invested in improving family justice systems. The goal could be to collaboratively interpret the focus group findings, plan the next stages of research and evaluation, and build or strengthen relationships that will support long-term systemic change. Hosting an expert planning meeting could help: • Facilitate collaboration between interested and involved groups • Build trust in ongoing transformation efforts	

Recommendations and/or future directions	Why are these actions recommended?	Report Data to Consult
	- Jointly explore the usefulness of a strategy map (and to whom) - Deepen understandings of focus group findings - Create a roadmap for next steps based on priorities - Develop a communication list (e.g., for a newsletter about continued research and evaluation efforts) Activities might include: - Educational activities/training (e.g., about using evaluation for system change) - Storytelling from those with lived experience - Group discussions (e.g., to learn more about the needs of different groups involved, so that strategies can be improved and implemented) - Brainstorming sessions (e.g., to start identifying the “who” and the “how” for specific strategies) - Decision-making methods to determine priorities (e.g., dot voting, the Delphi method, nominal group technique) - Opportunities to sign up for ongoing engagement	
16. Consult with people who are involved in the programs, processes, and initiatives that were mentioned in the focus groups.	While focus group participants were adept at suggesting strategies to address perceived issues in the family justice system, there was less discussion about capacity development areas needed to successfully implement these strategies. Conversations about capacity development areas tended to	See Section 4.2.2 for capacity development areas that were mentioned or alluded to

Recommendations and/or future directions	Why are these actions recommended?	Report Data to Consult
	stick closely to the areas that were listed in the sample map. This limitation likely stems from two factors: 1. Although participants were given informational materials and a brief explanation during the sessions, they likely did not have prior experience with evaluation concepts like capacity development. 2. Identifying capacity needs is inherently tied to those responsible for delivering or overseeing programs and initiatives. For example, if a recommended strategy is to expand a specific program, the staff managing that program are best positioned to determine the additional resources, training, or infrastructure required. By consulting directly with people who are involved in the programs, processes, and initiatives mentioned in the focus groups, researchers can: • Gather insights into challenges (e.g., lack of resources, administrative constraints) that may hinder certain strategies from being successfully adopted • Learn what funding, personnel, materials, physical space, and knowledge are needed to operationalize proposed strategies • Draw on the practical expertise of program staff and service providers to adjust participant-suggested strategies, making them more feasible and contextually appropriate • Ensure that system improvements are grounded in the real-world operational capacities of the people,	

Recommendations and/or future directions	Why are these actions recommended?	Report Data to Consult
	organizations, and sectors expected to carry out changes	

Table 12

References

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Appendix A – Recruitment Emails

A. Email Sent to Initial Round of Potential Participants

Subject: Share your thoughts! Measuring change in SKs family justice system

Hi [name],

My name is Shaneice, and I am helping the College of Law on a project about transforming the family justice system in Saskatchewan. You are invited to participate!

I am conducting one **90-minute virtual focus group** with **[lawyers/legal researchers, academics, and educators/community agency representatives who do work related to family justice (or work with people in the family justice system)]** in Saskatchewan to gather perspective about how to advance and measure continuous improvements that are happening in family justice services, processes, programs, and organizations in Saskatchewan. Focus group questions will prompt participants to think about a strategy for coordinating and measuring change in Saskatchewan by viewing an example strategy and discussing related ideas. Participants will also be asked to share their perspectives about how we could track strategies and measure change in Saskatchewan, including potential challenges that may arise. **Please see the attached project overview for more information.**

In addition to attending the virtual focus group, participation would involve watching one 10-minute video and reviewing a brief informational document at some point before the focus group.

My research team (CHASR) is planning to host the focus group in early June 2025. A specific date/time will be chosen based on timeslots that most people are available for. If you are interested in participating, please fill out this scheduling poll:

[Link to scheduling poll]

Participating in this focus group may help the research team at the College of Law and its project advisory committee develop a strategy for helping to coordinate and track continuous improvements that happen in the family justice system. Your participation in the focus group is completely voluntary, and your responses will be kept confidential as much as possible (i.e., no identifying information of yours will be attached to your responses when I draft a report to share with the College of Law and focus group participants will be asked to keep your identity and responses confidential). **Note that participating in this focus group can count towards your continuing professional development hours.**

If you have any questions or concerns, please respond to this email and I would be happy to address them.

Thank you for your consideration!

B. Reminder Email

Hi [Name],

Just a quick reminder about the opportunity to join a 90-minute virtual focus group on measuring change in Saskatchewan's family justice system. If you're interested, we'd love to hear from you!

We need a minimum number of people per group to schedule a session. So far, we don't have quite enough responses to pick a time. If we don't reach that by **Monday morning (June 2nd)**, I'll send out a new poll for mid-June.

If you'd like to join (and we hope you do!), please take a moment to fill out the scheduling poll here:

[Insert Link]

We really value your time and input; it would make a big difference in shaping this work. And if the current times don't work for you, feel free to email back with other availability in **late June or early July**. We're open to options if our polls do not suit enough peoples' availability!

Thanks so much,

C. Follow Up Email to People Who Were Available During the Scheduled Time

Hi [name]

Thank you kindly for filling out the scheduling poll for the upcoming focus group: "Measuring Change in SKs Family Justice System."

The timeslot that works for the highest number of people is **[date/time]**. Please find below a link to the focus group:

[Insert Zoom info]

In preparation for the group, please:

- Watch the following 10-minute video, which provides an overview of the project: <https://tinyurl.com/FamilyJusticeSystemProject>
- Review the 2-page fact sheet attached about strategy maps (a way of visualizing system change)

I will be in touch with a reminder email next week. Don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns!

D. Follow Up Email to People who Filled Out the Poll, but Were Unavailable During the Scheduled Time:

Hi [name],

We scheduled the focus group, and unfortunately you are not available during the timeslot with the highest number of available people. The focus group will take place **[date/time]**.

If you end up having availability during this time, please reach out to me and I will send you the Zoom link.

Hope you have a nice weekend,

E. Follow Up Email to People Who Did Not Fill Out the Poll:

Hi [name],

This is a last invitation to participate in the focus group about measuring change in Saskatchewan's family justice system. The focus group will take place **[date/time]**.

If you are interested in participating and are available during this time, please respond to this email and I will send you the Zoom link.

Hope you have a nice weekend,

F. Email Sent to Those Who Were Invited Late in the Recruitment Process

Hi,

My name is Shaneice, and I am helping the College of Law on a project about transforming the family justice system in Saskatchewan. We have been scheduling focus groups and would like to send some **last-minute invites** to fill up focus group spots for our **[researcher/educator OR community agency rep]** group. **We would love if you could join and share your valuable perspectives!**

The **[researcher/educator OR community agency rep]** group will be held on **[Date/time]**. If you are available during this time, please see information about our study below, as well as two attachments that cover the details of this study:

- The project overview
- The consent form (no need to sign if you are interested in participating)

If this time does not work for you, but you are interested, we **may** have further opportunities to participate in the near future. Nothing is guaranteed or approved at this time, but please still let me know if there is interest just in case!

Study information:

I am conducting one **90-minute virtual focus group** with [**researchers/educator OR community agency reps**] who do work related to family justice in Saskatchewan to gather perspective about how to advance and measure continuous improvements that are happening in family justice services, processes, programs, and organizations in Saskatchewan. Focus group questions will prompt participants to think about a strategy for coordinating and measuring change in Saskatchewan by viewing an example strategy and discussing related ideas. Participants will also be asked to share their perspectives about how we could track strategies and measure change in Saskatchewan, including potential challenges that may arise.

In addition to attending the virtual focus group, participation would involve watching one 10-minute video and reviewing a brief informational document at some point before the focus group.

Participating in this focus group may help the research team at the College of Law and its project advisory committee develop a strategy for helping to coordinate and track continuous improvements that happen in the family justice system. Your participation in the focus group is completely voluntary, and your responses will be kept confidential as much as possible (i.e., no identifying information of yours will be attached to your responses when I draft a report to share with the College of Law and focus group participants will be asked to keep your identity and responses confidential).

If you are interested and available, respond to this email and I will send you a calendar invite!

Thank you for your consideration!

Appendix B – Project Overview

Project Overview

Advancing Continuous Improvements in the Family Justice System: The Collective Impact of a Well-being Focus in Family Law

Brief Project Background

- Members of CREATE Justice received funding from the CBA Law For the Futures Fund for a project about advancing continuous improvements in the family justice system in Saskatchewan.
 - The focus group that you are invited to participate in is one step in this project.
- **The overarching research questions guiding this project are:**
 1. In what ways can a more user-friendly public interface for supporting families in transition and in resolving family disputes be developed using innovative ideas from models and stakeholders in other jurisdictions?
 2. How can a Saskatchewan model in response to family justice needs be enhanced to recognize adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) experienced by parents in their childhood, reduce further harm to their (current) families, and increase well-being of families as they work through the transition of separation?
- **By addressing these questions, the project aims to inform:**
 1. Ongoing development of competencies in family law education
 2. Continuous system changes in individual programming and collectively across the Saskatchewan family justice sector.
 3. A more user-friendly public interface for supporting families in transition and in resolving family disputes.

The Focus Groups

- The focus groups are a joint effort between CREATE Justice, the Well-being Coordinator at the College of Law, a Project Advisory Committee, and the Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research (CHASR).
- **Purpose of the focus groups:** We want to gather information from key groups involved in the field of family justice that will help inform best practices, effective methods, and key considerations for measuring collective impact of family justice initiatives in Saskatchewan. We want to better understand HOW to measure changes that are happening in family justice services, processes, programs, and organizations in Saskatchewan.
- **Building on previous work:** The focus group portion of the project builds on the work that other provinces have completed to-date. For example, Alberta and British Columbia have developed a strategy map for the purpose of aligning and coordinating complimentary efforts to design, track, and measure continuous improvements and for transforming the family justice system.
- **How will the focus group results be used?**

- The results will help us develop ideas for collaboration, and for tracking and measuring change that occurs in Saskatchewan's family justice system: What might work in our provincial context?
- The results will guide future evaluative efforts: What do we need to keep in mind when exploring improvements to and impacts of initiatives in Saskatchewan that aim to better the health, wellbeing, and resilience of families that interact with the family justice system?

More information: Should you participate in the focus group, you will be asked to watch a video that explains the project in more detail and review a fact sheet about examining system change.

Appendix C – Consent Form

Focus Group Consent Form

Advancing Continuous Improvements in the Family Justice System: The Collective Impact of a Well-being Focus in Family Law.

Researchers: **Brea Lowenberger** (Principal Investigator), CREATE Justice, College of Law
Email: b.lowenberger@usask.ca or Phone: 306-966-1679

Shaneice Fletcher-Hildebrand (Sub-Investigator), Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research
Email: shaneice.fletcher@usask.ca or Phone: 306-966-1679

Judy Jaunzems-Fernuk (Sub-Investigator), College of Law
Email: judy.fernuk@usask.ca

Leah Howie (Sub-Investigator), College of Law
Email: leah.howie@gmail.com

Purpose: You are invited to participate in a focus group project entitled “Advancing Continuous Improvements in the Family Justice System: The Collective Impact of a Well-being Focus in Family Law.” Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask any questions you might have about the study.

The focus groups are a joint effort between CREATE Justice, the Well-being Coordinator at the College of Law, a project advisory committee, and the Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research (CHASR). The purpose is to gather information from key groups involved in the field of family justice that will help inform best practices, effective methods, and key considerations for measuring collective impact of family justice initiatives in Saskatchewan. We want to better understand how to measure changes that are happening in family justice services, processes, programs, and organizations in Saskatchewan.

This study is being led by Brea Lowenberger in the College of Law at the University of Saskatchewan and facilitated/conducted by CHASR, a research consulting service at the University of Saskatchewan.

Procedure: If you are interested in participating, you will be asked to review pre-focus group materials (a brief information sheet about strategy maps and a video about the project). Then you will be asked to take part in one audio-recorded virtual focus group lasting approximately 90 minutes. Focus group questions will prompt you to think about a strategy for coordinating and measuring change in Saskatchewan by viewing an example strategy and discussing related ideas. You will also be asked to share your perspective about how we could track strategies and measure change in Saskatchewan, including potential challenges that may arise.

The focus groups will be conducted virtually by a CHASR employee via Zoom (you will *not* be video recorded). A student from the College of Law will be hired to take notes during the focus groups. It is

important that you only answer questions that you feel comfortable responding to. At the end of the study, you will be given a chance to ask any further questions that you might have. A CHASR employee will transcribe the audio-recorded focus groups. CHASR will provide the College of Law researchers with the de-identified transcripts, as well as a fully de-identified report summarizing the results.

Please feel free to ask Shaneice questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role.

Funding: This study is funded by an internal grant from the University of Saskatchewan.

Potential Risks: There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. However, please feel comfortable asking the focus group moderator for assistance if needed.

Potential Benefits: You will not benefit directly from participating in the project. However, your participation will help us develop ideas for collaboration, and for tracking and measuring change that occurs in Saskatchewan's family justice system. Further, your perspectives will help guide future evaluative efforts.

Confidentiality: All efforts will be made to keep your identity private. CHASR will use direct quotations from the focus groups when analyzing and reporting on the data, though all personally identifying information mentioned during the focus groups will be removed before summarizing and reporting on the focus groups (e.g., names, geographic locations, and your workplace). The researchers listed on page 1 and the note-taker will know who participated. However, the College of Law researchers (Brea, Judy, and Leah) will only receive de-identified transcripts and reporting deliverable(s).

We cannot guarantee that focus group participants will keep your identity private. The focus group moderator from CHASR will ask participants not to share any details about the focus group outside of the group (e.g., who was present and what was said). In providing your consent to participate, you agree that you will not make any unauthorized recordings of the interview session.

All focus group quotes used in reports, journal articles, presentations, and other project deliverables will be reported using pseudonyms. All published or presented data will be de-identified. CHASR will keep a password protected Excel file that links your name with the pseudonym in case you would like to withdraw your data from the study before the data is published or presented on. This Excel file will be password protected and stored separate from your data.

Please note that although we will make every effort to safeguard your data, we cannot guarantee the privacy of your data, due to the technical vulnerabilities inherent to all online video conferencing platforms. Please refer to Zoom's privacy statement: <https://zoom.us/privacy>. The focus group will not be recorded using Zoom. An external recording device will be used.

The audio recording of your focus group will be transcribed for analysis. Rev.com is a third-party platform used to support transcription. Your audio will not be used to train Rev.com's artificial intelligence. Audio files are only kept on the system for the duration of transcription (3-5 minutes) and quality review check (up to approximately 3.5 hours). It is immediately and permanently deleted from

the platform once the transcript has been reviewed. It is recommended to not include any personal or sensitive information within the recordings transcribed with the third-party AI platform. However, if you do decide to disclose any of this information, it poses less risk to your privacy than posting on a public social media page. University of Saskatchewan IT has reviewed and vetted the data security and privacy of Rev.com. You can view their security and privacy terms and conditions here:
<https://www.rev.com/legal/privacy>.

The focus group moderator from CHASR and the note-taker will be located in a private area that will not be accessible to others while the focus group is occurring. We suggest that you also find a private area of your home or preferred location during the focus group to ensure that your responses remain confidential.

Storage of Data: All the data from the focus groups will be stored securely in CHASR's data storage system. The server is accessible to CHASR employees and is managed by the University of Saskatchewan ICT department (data is backed up daily). The participant tracking Excel sheet is accessible to the College of Law researchers via a shared OneDrive folder, so that purposive sampling can be employed. CHASR employees will have access to all the raw data. The student note-taker will have access to the notes that they took during the focus groups and will share the notes with CHASR employees via a shared One Drive folder (separate from the folder with the participant tracking sheet). CHASR will share the de-identified transcripts and report deliverable(s) with the College of Law research team via a One Drive folder (separate from the folder with the participant tracking sheet).

The following documents will be stored separately and securely by CHASR for a minimum of five years post-publication: a participant tracking Excel sheet, an Excel sheet connecting participant names to pseudonyms, the transcripts with identifying information, de-identified transcripts, audio files, and consent forms. In the OneDrive folders shared by CHASR and the College of Law Researchers, the participant tracking Excel sheet will be stored separate from the focus group notes and the de-identified transcripts and report. This data will also be stored in the OneDrive folders for a minimum of five years post-publication. After five years, when the data is no longer required (i.e., after the study has been reported on, published, and shared in conferences and/or presentations), it will be destroyed beyond recovery.

Right to withdraw: Your participation is voluntary, and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the focus group project for any reason, without explanation or penalty of any sort. Should you wish to withdraw from the focus group, please contact Shaneice using the information at the top of page 1. You can withdraw your focus group data before data analysis begins (approximately June 1, 2025). If you request to have your data withdrawn, your responses will be removed from all versions of the focus group transcript, and your name will be removed from the Excel file connecting names to pseudonyms.

Follow up: To inquire about the results from this study, please email the project team using the information at the top of page 1. We estimate that the findings will be available in September 2025.

Questions or Concerns:

- If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Shaneice using the information at the top of page 1.
- This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board on May 13, 2025 (ID 5500). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee at the University of Saskatchewan's Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free 888-966-2975.

Oral Consent:

I read and explained this consent form to the participant before receiving the participant's consent, and the participant had knowledge of its contents and appeared to understand it.

Name of Participant

Researcher's Signature

Date

Appendix D – Informational Document on Strategy Maps

Focus Group ‘Quicksheet’

Advancing Continuous Improvements in the Family Justice System: The Collective Impact of a Well-being Focus in Family Law

Welcome!

- Thank you for your participation in this focus group! You will be invited to provide feedback on a “strategy map” and its relevance to family justice given our geographic context. See the attached **BC Transform the Family Justice System Strategy Map** (Separate Document).
- You bring valuable expertise and perspectives. In case strategy maps (also known as logic models) are unfamiliar we want to ensure you feel confident engaging with the content.
- We have put together this **quicksheet** to ensure all participants are (literally) on the same page!

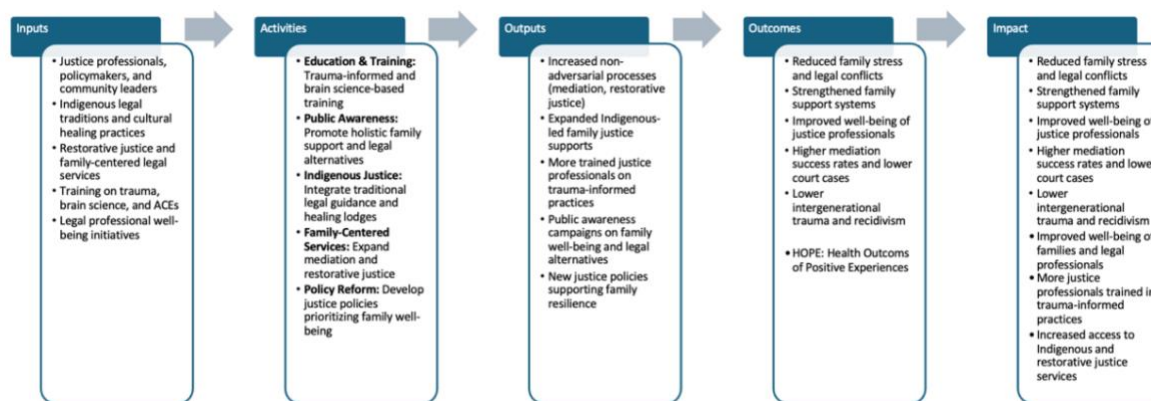
Our Invitation to You:

- In the focus group, we will be going through each section of the BC strategy map 1-by-1. For each section, the facilitator will be asking you to reflect on which content would make sense to include in a SK context, AND additional capacity developments/strategies/outcomes/principles that would make sense to include in a SK strategy map.
- **The focus group questions will require you to understand and think about the following:**
 1. *what each of the components are,*
 2. *existing components of the BC strategy map, and*
 3. *to think about additional components that are not in the BC strategy map that could be reflected in a SK map.*

Some Definitions:

- **Having a basic understanding of strategy maps and their components will help when answering the questions.**
 - **Strategy Map:** A strategy map is a “visual presentation of an organization’s critical success factors and the cause-and-effect relations between them.”⁶
 - **A strategy map is a common synonym for a logic model**, which can be used to evaluate, describe, or share an understanding of relationships/connections among elements necessary to operate a program or change effort.⁷
 - **Logic Models & Strategy Maps show the flow of inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact within programs or systems.**

Sample Logic Model Based on the Family Justice System Transformation Project (Zoom on the next page to see the components):



This Logic Model shows a simplified version of the strategy map, highlighting activities and results.

⁶ Heba Mohamed Adel, “The relationship between strategy mapping and the strategy formulation, communication and implementation” (July 2010), online: < researchgate.net/publication/364959195_The_relationship_between_strategy_mapping_and_the_strategy_formulation_communication_and_implementation >.

⁷ Lisa Wyatt Knowlton & Cynthia C Phillips, *The Logic Model Guidebook: Better Strategies for Great Results*, (California: Sage Publishing, 2012) at 4.

Other Defining Features of This Process:

- **Capacity Developments:** Capacity developments are defined as “the process whereby people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time.”⁸
 - **Example: Judicial and Legal Training on Brain Science and ACEs** – Educating judges, lawyers, and mediators about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and brain science to improve decision-making in family law.
- **Strategies:** Strategies are defined as “a plan of action or policy designed to achieve a major overall aim.”⁹
 - **Example: Interdisciplinary Legal-Wellness Clinics** – Establishing legal clinics that integrate mental health and social work professionals to provide holistic support for families navigating the justice system.
- **Outcomes:** Outcomes are defined as “something that follows as a result or consequence.”¹⁰
 - **Example: Increased Legal System Trust and Engagement** – Higher levels of public confidence in the family justice system, with increased engagement in non-adversarial legal processes.
- **Pathway:** How a capacity development might lead to a strategy, which in turn, might facilitate an outcome. E.g. “If we want to see X happen in SK [an outcome], then strategies such as YZ might need to be implemented, and in order for that to happen, we will need more capacity in ABC areas.” This “if-then” thinking also invites reflection about facilitators and barriers that might be encountered if certain 'pathways' were implemented.
- **Principles:** Principles are defined as “a comprehensive and fundamental law, doctrine, or assumption.”¹¹
 - **Example: Harm Reduction in Family Law** – Minimizing the negative impacts of legal processes on families by reducing conflict, stress, and retraumatization.

⁸ BetterEvaluation, “Evaluating capacity development” (last visited 1 February 2025), online: <betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/themes/evaluating-capacity-development#:~:text=The%20Organisation%20for%20Economic%20Coordination,and%20maintain%20capacity%20over%20time.%E2%80%9D>.

⁹ Oxford University Press, *Oxford Languages*, (Oxfordshire: Oxford University Press, 2000) sub verbo “strategies”.

¹⁰ Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*, (Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Inc, 1996) sub verbo “outcomes”.

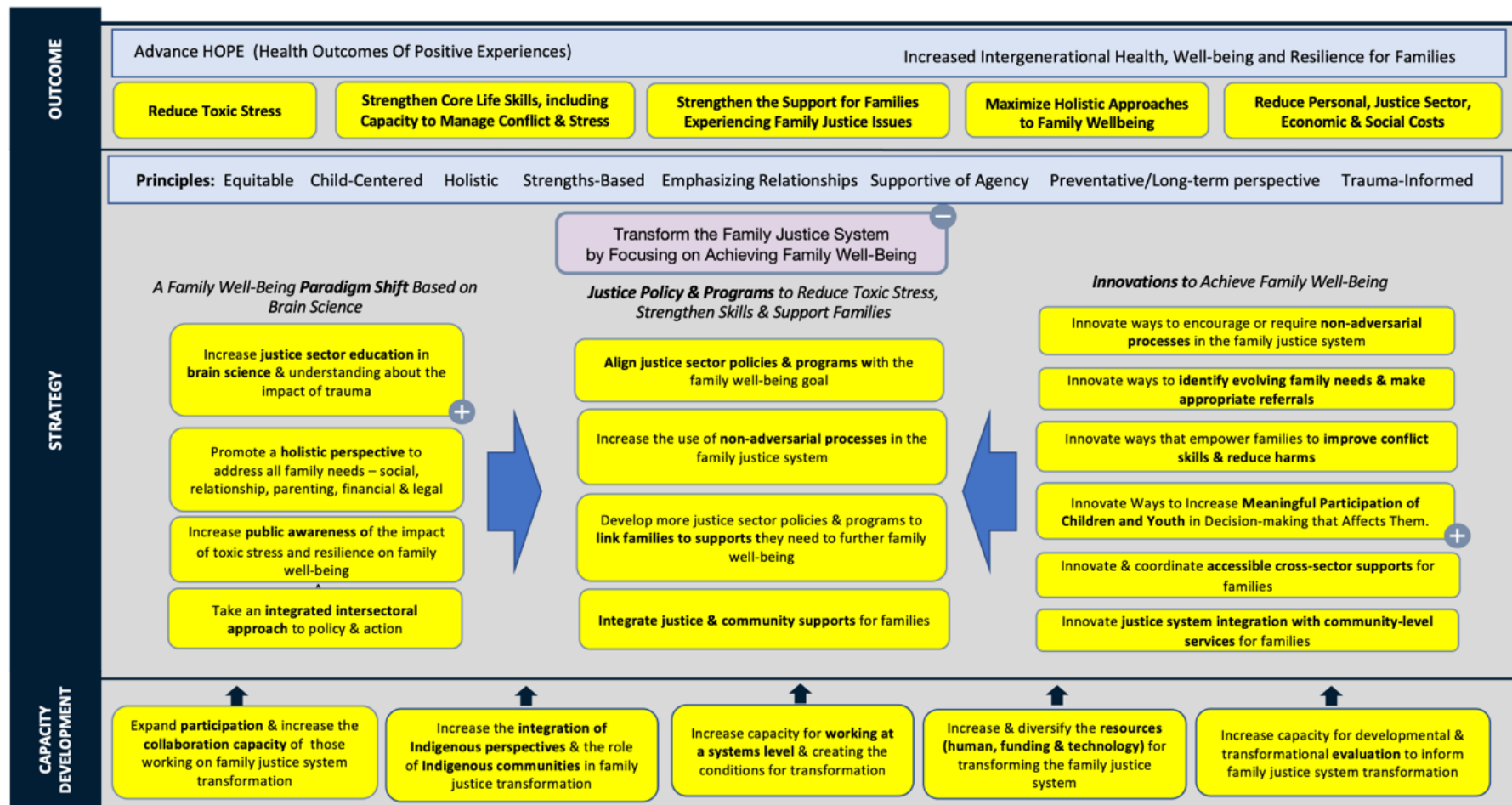
¹¹ Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*, (Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Inc, 1996) sub verbo “principles”.

Appendix E – Project Overview Video

<https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fapp.animaker.com%2Fanimo%2FmkZgFw6sPOzZvK8O%2F&data=05%7C02%7Cshaneice.fletcher%40usask.ca%7C8a5d0ed6f7104712387c08dd45484ffb%7C24ab6cd0487e47229bc3da9c4232776c%7C0%7C0%7C638742899354648813%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMilslkFOljoITWlFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=k8Km0B2iX98oSj7PVgbONvjkJdOdoSj26A7%2F0x6dT40%3D&reserved=0>

Appendix F – Sample Strategy Map

BC's Transform the Family Justice System (TFJS) Strategy Map



April 2022

Appendix G – Focus Group Guide

Focus Group Guide Continuous Improvements to the Family Justice System in Saskatchewan 90-minute focus groups

Introduction (Approximately 4 minutes)

Hi everyone, my name is Shaneice. I work at an organization within the University of Saskatchewan called the Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research (or CHASR). I will be leading the 90-minute focus group today. You will also notice Michael in the background of our discussion, who will be quietly taking notes for me and handling the chat while I moderate the group. The focus group is part of a project that is being led by a team at the College of Law, but I am a third-party evaluator who is not associated with the College of Law, nor do I have a background in law. My background is in evaluation and social psychology.

I am conducting focus groups with groups of people who have some level of involvement in Saskatchewan's family justice system. We want to better understand **HOW to measure changes** that are happening in family justice services, processes, programs, and organizations in Saskatchewan. This project builds on the work that other provinces have completed to-date. For example, AB and BC have developed a strategy map to track and measure continuous improvements and for transforming the family justice system. The work that we are doing now, including these focus groups, **would** help us develop a similar strategy map for change in Saskatchewan specifically.

It is assumed that everyone has watched the video that was sent to you via email. After I go through the focus group guidelines and ethical points with you, we will talk about the BC strategy map that was presented in the video.

[*Start audio recorder*](#)

Over the next few minutes, I will overview some focus group guidelines and ethical points:

1. In focus groups you don't have to speak in any specific order, but it is important to try and not interrupt others while they are speaking. So, I'll ask that you use the "Raise your hand" button on Zoom. If you click on the button on the bottom of the screen that says "Reactions" you will see a raise hand button. Once you are done speaking, there is a button that says "Lower hand" that you can click.
2. Make sure that when you are not speaking, you are muted. You can mute and unmute yourself using the button on the bottom left hand of the screen.
3. If you are new to focus groups, you do not need to speak in any specific order, nor do you need to respond to every question. Though, I may call on people if they have not spoken for a while.
4. You might disagree with one another on something, and that is completely okay, but it's important to be respectful of other people's thoughts.
5. I will be audio-recording the focus group to make sure that I don't miss anything that you share today.
 - The audio recording will be transcribed using an AI software called Rev that is approved by the university's ethics board. The audio file will be permanently deleted from Rev once the transcript has been reviewed (it's usually only in the software for ~3.5 hours).

- As with anything on the internet, it is recommended that you do not share any personal, sensitive information.
- 6. To protect everyone's privacy, I will ask that you do not share any details about this conversation outside of the group (e.g., who was here and what other people said). My team at CHASR will also keep the findings confidential. This means that even though I will use quotes from this focus group when reporting on it, your name will not be linked to the quotes, and neither will any other identifying information.
- 7. The College of Law researchers that I am working for will know who chose to participate because we used a purposeful sampling strategy to get input from people with diverse backgrounds, but they will only be provided with de-identified transcripts and reports.
- 8. All data (the audio recordings, transcripts, and reports) will be stored securely, and separate from participant tracking sheets, for up to 5 years minimum post-publication. Only my team at CHASR will have access to the audio files and identifying transcripts.
- 9. Lastly, there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. I am just interested in hearing your thoughts and opinions!

If you consent to participate in this focus group, and to being audio recorded, please say yes as I call on your name and correct me if I mispronounce your name.

Introduction/Context (Approximately 4 minutes)

1. To start it would be great to do some brief introductions. I will call your name in the order that I see you on my screen. Please tell us the city or town where you are joining from.

Opinions about the BC Strategy Map & translation to a SK context (Approximately 55 minutes, or 13-14 minutes per set of questions, to cover asking the questions, responses, and prompting)

As I mentioned earlier, the team that I am working with is hoping to develop a 'strategy map' in Saskatchewan to track continuous improvements, and as necessary, transform the family justice system. As you likely saw in the pre-focus group video and the quicksheet, strategy maps are visual representations of an initiative's goals, and what resources and steps are needed to work towards those goals. Having a strategy map in SK would help guide how change is measured in the province, as different strategies are implemented to address issues with the SK family justice system.

2. To organize our discussion, I would like to hear your opinions about the BC strategy map in different sections. First, let's talk about the outcomes – in other words, the overall goals for, or changes that we hope to see in, the family justice system.

- a) [BC Map on Screen] What are some outcomes in the BC strategy map that would make sense to include in a Saskatchewan strategy map?
- b) [Word Document open to list outcomes] Let's think about outcomes in the context of Saskatchewan. In your opinion, what are some person-centered outcomes for the family justice system in Saskatchewan? (Prompts if needed: Changes/outcomes for people who access the system, changes/goals for families in the system, changes/outcomes at organizational or systemic levels)

3. Next, let's move on to discuss the strategies section. Strategies listed in this section are organized into three columns. On the left are strategies to prompt a new way of thinking about family well-being. On the right are new ways to achieve family well-being. Both of these columns feed into the middle column, which includes strategies for changing justice-related policies and programs.

- a) [BC Map on Screen] What are some strategies in the BC map that would make sense to include in a Saskatchewan strategy map?
- b) [Word document on screen with the outcomes listed] In your opinion, what are some strategies or innovations that would need to be implemented in order to achieve the outcomes we talked about?
- c) [BC Map on Screen] To your knowledge, what is currently being done in Saskatchewan to improve the family justice system in relation to the strategies and outcomes on the map? (e.g., initiatives or programs that are in place, strategies that have been taken)

4. Now let's talk about the capacity development section. The passages in this section indicate that capacity for different things may need to be increased in order to implement the strategies. In order for [X] strategy to be implemented, we will need to ensure that we have [Y].

- a) [BC Map on Screen] What are some capacity developments in the BC map that would make sense to include in a Saskatchewan strategy map?
- b) [Word document on screen with the outcomes listed] In your opinion, what would need to be in place in order for the strategies we talked about to be implemented (Prompts if needed: People, partnerships, time, funds, materials, information/knowledge)
- c) In your opinion, what is the role of the legal community in building capacity and/or promoting change in the family justice system?

5. The strategies in BC's map are influenced by a set of principles (e.g., equitable, child-centered, holistic, etc.). As well, the outcomes are organized into 2 overarching categories: 1) Advance HOPE (health outcomes of positive experiences) and 2) Intergenerational health, well-being, and resilience for families.

- a) If Saskatchewan was to implement a strategy map, which principles and overarching categories might be used to organize/influence the outcomes? These can be things that are outlined in BC's map, or completely different principles and categories.

Assessment and Measurement of Outcomes (Approximately 25 minutes)

If Saskatchewan has a strategy map, it could be used to track strategies that are being implemented in the family justice system (what things are happening), and measure key outcomes for different groups. This last set of questions I have for you will help us start thinking about how we could track strategies and measure outcomes in Saskatchewan.

6. If a strategy map was to be created and implemented in Saskatchewan:

- a) What are some frameworks, data, research, or resources that could be consulted to inform a strategy map in Saskatchewan?
- b) What would these information sources contribute to the strategy map?
- c) Who should be involved and consulted in creating a strategy map?
- d) How could the strategy map be used to help transform the system?

7. [Word document on screen with strategies and outcomes] **What are some challenges that may arise when it comes to keeping track of the strategies in the province, or measuring the outcomes that we have identified in this focus group?** (Possibly provide examples if needed, such as limited time and resources, lack of knowledge about assessment/measurement, etc.)

8. **On the other hand, what might help different groups keep track of strategies that are being implemented, and measure changes that are happening?** (Possibly examples if needed, such as developing new positions, training on measurement/assessment, etc.)

Conclusion (Approximately 5 minutes)

9. **Is there anything else that you would like to share before we end this focus group?**

Stop recording

Appendix H – Focus Group Note-Taking Template

Focus Group Date:

Focus Group Time:

Which Group:

- Judges
- Lawyers
- Researchers/educators
- Community agency representatives

Moderator:

Notetaker:

Participant Names (in order of entry into the chat):

Participants who entered after the introduction started:

-

Participants who entered after the focus group questions began:

-

Participants who left before the focus group ended:

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1. To start it would be great to do some brief introductions. I will call your name in the order that I see you on my screen. Please correct me if I mispronounce your name, and tell us the city or town where you are joining from.

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2a) To organize our discussion, I would like to hear your opinions about the strategy map in different sections. First, let's talk about the outcomes – in other words, the overall goals for, or changes that we hope to see in, the family justice system. **What are some outcomes in the BC strategy map that would make sense to include in a Saskatchewan strategy map?**

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2b) Let's think about outcomes in the context of Saskatchewan. **In your opinion, what are some person-centered outcomes for the family justice system in Saskatchewan?**

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3a) Next, let's move on to discuss the strategies section. Strategies listed in this section are organized into three columns. On the left are strategies to prompt a new way of thinking about family well-being. On the right are new ways to achieve family well-being. Both of these columns feed into the

middle column, which includes strategies for changing justice-related policies and programs. **What are some strategies in the BC map that would make sense to include in a Saskatchewan strategy map?**

-

3b) In your opinion, what are some strategies or innovations that would need to be implemented in order to achieve the outcomes we talked about?

-

3c) To your knowledge, what is currently being done in Saskatchewan to improve the family justice system in relation to the strategies and outcomes on the map?

-

4a) Now let's talk about the capacity development section. The passages in this section indicate that capacity for different things may need to be increased in order to implement the strategies. In order for [X] strategy to be implemented, we will need to ensure that we have [Y]. **What are some capacity developments in the BC map that would make sense to include in a Saskatchewan strategy map?**

-

4b) In your opinion, what would need to be in place in order for the strategies we talked about to be implemented?

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4c) In your opinion, what is the role of the legal community in building capacity and/or promoting change in the family justice system?

-

5) The strategies in BC's map are influenced by a set of principles (e.g., equitable, child-centered, holistic, etc.). As well, the outcomes are organized into 2 overarching categories: 1) Advance HOPE (health outcomes of positive experiences) and 2) Intergenerational health, well-being, and resilience for families. **If Saskatchewan was to implement a strategy map, which principles and overarching categories might be used to organize/influence the outcomes?**

-

6a) If a strategy map was to be created and implemented in Saskatchewan, **what are some frameworks, data, research, or resources that could be consulted to inform a strategy map in Saskatchewan?**

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6b) What would these information sources contribute to the strategy map?

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6c) Who should be involved and consulted in creating a strategy map?

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6d) How could the strategy map be used to help transform the system?

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7) What are some challenges that may arise when it comes to keeping track of the strategies in the province, or measuring the outcomes that we have identified in this focus group?

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8) On the other hand, what might help different groups keep track of strategies that are being implemented, and measure changes that are happening?

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9) Is there anything else that you would like to share before we end this focus group?

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Post-focus group thoughts

Speaking order:

Level of speaking:

Body language:

Agreement/disagreement:

Use of Zoom reactions:

Main takeaway(s) from the conversation:

Chat comments:

Other:

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