

# Access to Justice through **Data and Research**

A People-Centered Approach  
to Evidence-Based Policymaking  
by the Federal Government



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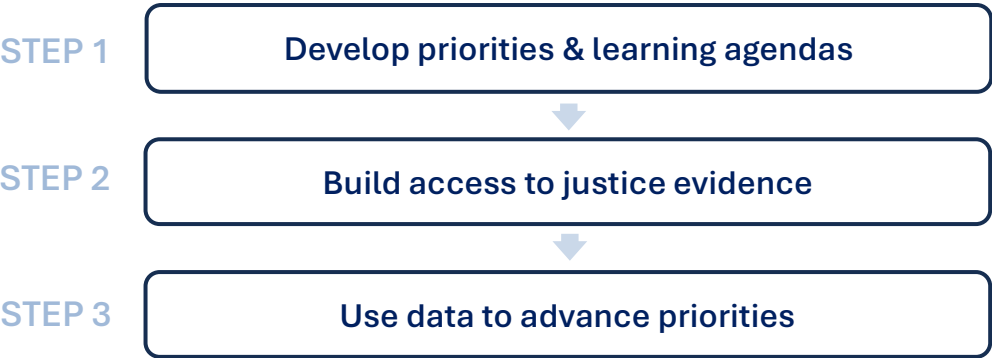
# Executive Summary

Every day, millions of people in the United States face problems that affect their basic needs and rights, including those related to healthcare, housing, public benefits, education, employment, family stability, and safety.<sup>1</sup> These problems often implicate the law in some way—from getting evicted to struggling to negotiate child custody, falling victim to an online scam, or facing workplace discrimination or sexual harassment.<sup>2</sup> Federal agencies play a critical role in advancing and protecting these rights through people-centered programs, priorities, and solutions.

Federal data are essential not only to develop and improve government activities to advance access to justice priorities, but also to empower the public and external stakeholders, including researchers, courts, state agencies, policymakers, advocates, community-based organizations, and Tribal leaders and organizations. The 2024 Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable (LAIR) Report highlights the importance of collecting, using, and sharing data in a people-centered way and provides a framework for data collection and use to advance access to justice.

The Report identifies key data challenges—**understanding and accessing available federal government data, linking data across agencies, navigating privacy and data security concerns, and addressing resource constraints**—and provides examples of how federal agencies are working to overcome these gaps and **create new areas of data collection** to advance their access to justice priorities. As outlined in the Report, federal agencies have developed exemplary approaches to collecting and using justice data to improve federal program design, implementation, and evaluation. The agency activities highlighted in the Report demonstrate that while data and evidence challenges remain, they are not intractable.

The priorities and strategies outlined in this Report reflect our nation’s ongoing commitment to advancing access to justice for all Americans. This Report emphasizes that high-quality, cross-disciplinary data relating to these topics can enable agencies to develop effective and targeted policies and details a **Roadmap of key strategies and practices to assist agencies in strengthening their evidence-based policymaking.**



Through this Report, LAIR aims to chart a path forward for agencies and other stakeholders seeking to utilize data and research to inform evidence-based access to justice policymaking.

# Letter from the Co-Chairs



Dear Mr. President,

America was built on the foundational promise of equal justice under the law. The Biden-Harris Administration has been committed to restoring and expanding the federal government's role in ensuring that all Americans have equal access to the justice system and to upholding their legal rights.

Recognizing that this work cannot be accomplished alone, this Administration reestablished the White House Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable (LAIR) to provide a whole-of-government approach to address barriers and inequities in access to justice.

Federal agencies play a critical role in facilitating access to justice, protecting individuals' procedural rights, and ensuring just outcomes. LAIR aims to equip federal agencies to effectively expand access to their programs and activities and to work together to achieve this shared commitment to equal access to justice.

The 2024 Report centers on how federal agency data and research advance access to justice efforts. Through LAIR's work this year, agencies have developed, implemented, evaluated, and improved federal policies and programs that individuals and advocates use to resolve legal and justice problems. This Report offers strategies for agencies to overcome gaps and challenges and to maximize the benefits of data and research.

We remain dedicated to the pursuit of equal justice for all Americans. We are pleased to submit this Report on the work of the White House Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable and its member agencies. Thank you for your continued commitment to this critical work.

**Merrick B. Garland**  
Attorney General

**Ed Siskel**  
White House Counsel

# Message from the Director of the Office for Access to Justice



I am pleased to report that the Office for Access to Justice (ATJ) continues to make great strides, working towards our goal of breaking down barriers to the founding principle and enduring promise of the Department of Justice: equal justice under law. We have developed and solidified a range of critical core programs to advance our mission within the Justice Department, across the federal government, and nationally.

Legal and justice sectors cannot comprehensively solve the access to justice crisis alone. LAIR, which our office directs and staffs, is a cornerstone of these efforts. Federal agencies play an essential role in enabling individuals and advocates to address their legal needs, vindicate their rights, and even solve harms before legal interventions are needed. Recognizing this, our broad partnerships through LAIR allow us to chart new and impactful courses. As Attorney General Merrick Garland noted in 2023, “[LAIR] has unique tools and opportunities to dismantle barriers to justice. In so doing, we can make advances in public safety, food security, housing, employment, and so much more.”<sup>3</sup> As our work has made clear, agencies have taken up this mantle, driving forward impactful innovations to expand people’s access to benefits and services. LAIR, in turn, amplifies and supports those efforts, within and across agencies, by forging needed partnerships and enabling a whole-of-government approach to access to justice.

Data and research are essential to these goals. Solutions are more effective and impactful if developed based on evidence and a complete understanding of the problem. LAIR’s member agencies collect and use data to develop, implement, evaluate, and improve policies and programs related to essential access to justice topics—including legal assistance, simplification, burden reduction, and clear and effective communication with the public. LAIR’s 2024 work and this Report highlight examples of this evidence-based access to justice policymaking from across the federal government. The Report also urges an understanding of the links between seemingly disparate access to justice data.

Together, these data can enable new insights and interventions and inform a holistic, people-centered approach to understanding the public's experiences with justice problems. Additionally, when shared, those data can equip researchers, other agencies, community-based organizations, and the public to better understand and evaluate access to justice work and to partner in the development of access to justice solutions.

These strategies further LAIR's mandate to "advance relevant evidence-based research [and] data collection."<sup>4</sup> Collectively, these actions also support U.S. efforts to implement United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, which focuses on tracking the United States' effectiveness in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all, and building effective and accountable institutions. ATJ is mandated to assist the United States to implement SDG 16, a role we continue to advance in coordination with interagency partners and local stakeholders.

I am thrilled that this year LAIR worked to dive into this critical topic, to understand where data are driving access to justice solutions through promising practices underway across the federal government, and to identify gaps where additional data and research are needed. Our work this year and this Report underscore the critical role of data to ensure evidence-based and people-centered approaches to access to justice policymaking.

We are deeply grateful to LAIR's Co-Chairs for their continued leadership, energy, and vision, and for the excellent work of LAIR Executive Director Allie Yang-Green and her LAIR staff at ATJ. We also extend our thanks to LAIR's agency members for the creativity and commitment to equal justice recognized in the Report and, far more importantly, for their often-unrecognized day-to-day work.

**Rachel Rossi**

Director, Office for Access to Justice  
U.S. Department of Justice

# Background

The White House Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable (LAIR) and its 28 federal agencies and offices are charged with examining federal programs, developing strategies, and mobilizing resources to address barriers to access to justice. Through interagency collaboration and stakeholder engagement, LAIR is mandated to:

- Increase the availability of meaningful access to justice for individuals and families, regardless of wealth or status,
- Improve coordination among federal programs,
- Develop policy recommendations that improve access to justice, and
- Advance relevant evidence-based research, data collection, and analysis of civil legal and indigent defense.<sup>5</sup>

LAIR began as an informal convening of agencies in 2012. Its early accomplishments prompted the issuance of a [Presidential Memorandum](#) in September 2015 that elevated the interagency effort by establishing it as a White House initiative, co-chaired by the Attorney General and the Domestic Policy Council. Since that time, LAIR has focused on raising federal agencies' awareness of how legal assistance can help advance a wide range of federal objectives, including public safety, employment, family stability, housing, and consumer protection. In May 2021, LAIR's work was reinvigorated, with the White House Counsel joining the Attorney General as Co-Chair. Since its inception, LAIR and its members have increased the effectiveness of federal programs by developing creative, evidence-based solutions for advancing access to justice.

## Past priority areas and accomplishments

LAIR's recent work and reports focused on simplification of government forms, processes, and language (in 2022) and on access to justice in federal administrative proceedings (in 2023). This year's Report focuses on what we refer to as access to justice data: data that offer insight into people's civil justice problems and that help agencies develop, implement, evaluate, and improve federal programs. It highlights that such data are essential to efforts to expand access to justice and offers a Roadmap for the improved collection and use of such data—including for evidence-based policymaking, cross-agency sharing, and public transparency. The Report reflects the input and efforts of LAIR staff and LAIR member agencies, who also engaged with justice system stakeholders and external experts.

Beyond the Report, LAIR has spearheaded several important initiatives this year:

First, LAIR developed resources to help legal aid and other community organizations easily access federal funding. Many federal programs provide grants to civil legal aid organizations to help meet federal objectives, but some organizations encounter difficulty identifying and applying for those grants. In response, LAIR developed an [online federal funding resource](#), which brings these opportunities together in a single, user-friendly tool. In addition, LAIR hosted multiple widely attended webinars on the federal funding landscape and strategies for applications for federal grants.

LAIR's agency members have continued to pursue projects, both individually and collectively, to further LAIR's previous recommendations. Below are a few examples, among many, of agency work:

- The **Department of Veterans Affairs** simplified and combined multiple forms used to claim service-related post-traumatic stress disorder when applying for related benefits or services. By combining the forms, adding new instructions, and improving unnecessary questions, the average time burden was reduced from two hours to 45 minutes. The new form is streamlined, easier to navigate, and more veteran-centric.
- In July 2024, the **Department of Justice's** Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) announced the launch of the [Respondent Access Portal](#), a secure online platform allowing individuals to view their case information, download electronic records, and file pleadings online. The Respondent Access Portal aims to help unrepresented respondents access information, avoid additional trips to file documents at the immigration court, and navigate the procedures of the immigration court system.

Additionally, in August 2024, EOIR announced the launch of [EOIR University](#) in order to enhance the efficiency of immigration proceedings and increase case completions consistent with due process. Completion of EOIR University's curriculum will provide applicants for accreditation with proof of adequate training to streamline their application process and will provide attorneys and currently accredited representatives with the knowledge they need to take cases on a pro bono basis.

- The **Department of Health and Human Services** (HHS) expanded its pilot program to simplify Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs) for grant programs. Under its pilot, the simplified NOFOs reduced the average time to complete an application by 31 percent, the page count by 17 percent, and the reading level by 4 grade levels. HHS's Administration for Children and Families has embraced these strategies, utilizing plain language, removing unnecessary questions and information, and reorganizing NOFOs to improve navigation and make critical information easier to find.<sup>6</sup>
- In February 2024, the **Department of Homeland Security's** Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Removal Operations launched [ERO eFile](#), a new web-based system, streamlining the process for immigration attorneys and accredited representatives to file a form (G-28), Notice of Entry of Appearance, to represent noncitizens in ICE custody.<sup>7</sup>
- In September 2024, the **Administrative Conference of the United States** published the [Model Rules of Representative Conduct](#) to help federal agencies amend or develop policies governing lawyers and nonlawyers representing individuals in their agency proceedings, following an 18-month effort by a working group comprised of public- and private-sector members to identify best practices.



Second, LAIR participated in several community engagement and training events with its agency and community partners. These engagements—conference presentations, webinars, and listening sessions—demonstrated the federal government’s leadership and LAIR’s impact beyond the federal government by participating in a collective endeavor to close the justice gap.

Finally, LAIR launched three committees to carry out LAIR’s priorities: the Simplification Committee, the Innovation Committee, and the Data and Research Committee. These committees use shared strategies of building capacity and developing a common knowledge base through expert presentations, facilitate cross-agency information sharing through agency presentations and discussions, and develop deliverables that contribute to LAIR’s mission.

We thank all the LAIR members for their continued commitment and dedication:

## **Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable Members**

U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)  
U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)  
U.S. Department of Defense (DOD)  
U.S. Department of Education (ED)  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)  
U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI)  
U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)  
U.S. Department of State (State)  
U.S. Department of the Treasury (Treasury)  
U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)  
U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
Administrative Conference of the United States (ACUS)  
Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB)  
Corporation for National and Community Service (AmeriCorps)  
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)  
Federal Communications Commission (FCC)  
Federal Trade Commission (FTC)  
National Science Foundation (NSF)  
Office of Management and Budget (OMB)  
Domestic Policy Council (DPC)  
Office of the Vice President (OVP)  
U.S. Digital Service (USDS)  
Legal Services Corporation (LSC)  
Social Security Administration (SSA)

# 2024 Focus: Improving data collection and use to increase access to justice

Data and evidence enable agencies to better understand the public's needs and center their experiences when crafting solutions to justice problems. For others who are also invested in addressing people's justice problems, such as state and local governments, researchers, community-based and legal aid organizations, and courts, federal agency data and research can inform innovative solutions.

It is important to first recognize that **federal agencies' actions substantially impact people's ability to achieve justice**. Someone has meaningful access to justice only if they can resolve justice problems fairly and without unreasonable burdens or barriers, whether on their own or with assistance. Unresolved justice problems can have cascading effects. For example, a parent experiencing domestic violence may suffer physical and emotional harm, lose custody of their children (which could also negatively impact the children's well-being), and lose access to critical material resources and services, such as stable housing, income, healthcare, and education.<sup>8</sup>

A number of federal programs are designed to address the problems presented in this example, including funding for legal services and navigators to help obtain a restraining order and petition for custody and child support, funding for state agencies to enforce child support arrangements, administering essential benefits for healthcare and income support, and enforcing individuals' legal rights to educational services.

Federal agencies also deliver vital programs and services that can prevent problems from arising or compounding, such as educating tenants on their rights, issuing rules, or taking actions against predatory loan servicers and fraudsters. As highlighted in LAIR's previous reports, agencies continuously work to expand people's access to government programs and to simplify processes in federal administrative proceedings. Indeed, the federal government can play a critical role in closing the justice gap by engaging in the "development of new approaches and best practices that provide meaningful access to justice today, and into the future, consistent with our foundational ideal of equal justice under the law."<sup>9</sup>

**Data and research play a critical role in federal agencies' ability to accomplish their goals effectively.** Developing effective interventions starts with high-quality and cross-disciplinary data. A strong evidence base enables agencies to accurately identify people who have justice problems; understand the scope, nature, and life impact of these justice problems; craft strategic interventions targeted to these identified people and justice problems; and assess how and whether the interventions result in intended outcomes.

Further, federal data and research **also benefit state and local governments and agencies, courts, community-based and advocacy organizations, and researchers**—an ecosystem of programs and services that, along with federal agencies, helps people address justice problems. For example, local consumer protection agencies use consumer complaint data from FTC and CFPB to identify marketplace problems and fraud trends affecting their communities, enabling them to target enforcement and outreach resources effectively.<sup>10</sup>

In another example, state courts collaborate with VA to streamline the process of identifying people involved in the criminal legal system who might be eligible for veterans treatment courts.<sup>11</sup>

This Report presents a people-centered approach to justice data as an essential tool in agencies' efforts to build evidence and fulfill their missions, highlights relevant strategies and promising practices that agencies are deploying, and discusses additional opportunities to overcome challenges and improve outcomes.

# Defining access to justice data

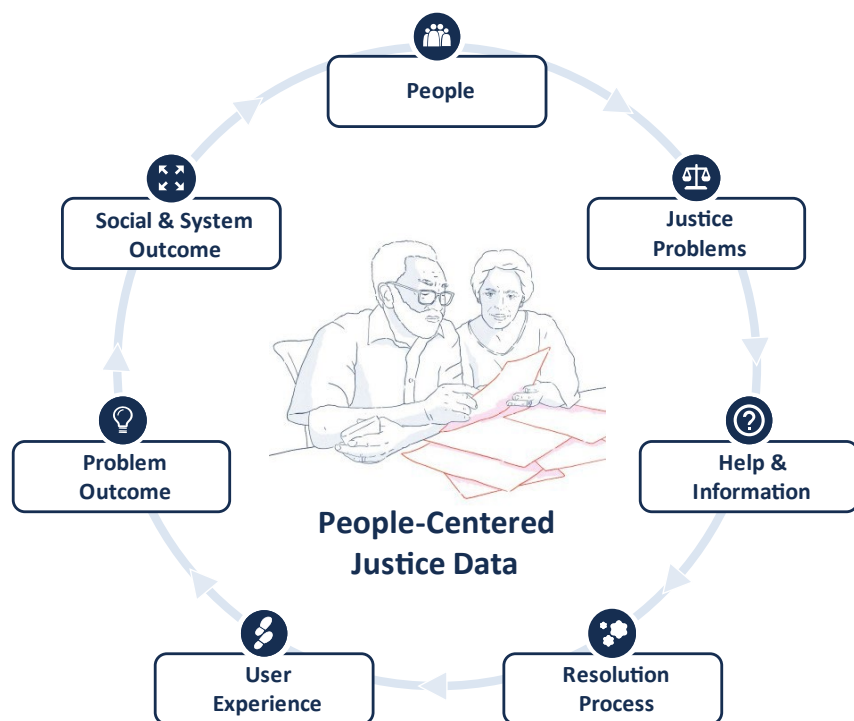
Federal agencies hold many types of data that can improve our understanding of various justice problems. This Report uses the term “**justice problems**” to refer to those problems that have legal aspects, raise legal issues, and have consequences that can be shaped by law.<sup>12</sup>

Importantly, such data can be useful in developing, implementing, evaluating, and improving federal programs that help resolve or prevent justice problems both on individual and societal levels. A **people-centered approach** to thinking about these data involves examining how federal agencies, and others, can collect and use data relating to various aspects of people’s experiences with justice problems. For each key aspect of people’s experiences with justice problems, as illustrated in Figure 1, agencies can develop a set of questions to indicate which data can be collected and used to understand and improve people’s experiences.

This Report uses the terms “**access to justice data**” and “**people-centered justice data**” to denote any information held by federal agencies, no matter its form or source, that is potentially useful in understanding how people experience justice problems and interact with federal programs relating to justice problems.

**Figure 1:**  
**People-centered justice data**

This figure shows seven key aspects of people’s experiences with justice problems and corresponds with justice data topics listed in Table 1 below. This content was adapted from USAID’s “Infographic: Data Along the Justice Journey.”<sup>13</sup>



**Table 1: Examples of Federal Access to Justice Data**

This table identifies access to justice data topics and questions that agencies can address and contains examples of agency data that can help answer those questions.

Access to Justice Topics	Examples of Responsive Federal Data
 <p><b>People</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How many people have justice problems? Who are they?</li><li>• What is their capability to understand relevant legal issues?</li><li>• What is their perception of and prior experience with the justice system/service providers?</li></ul>	<p><b>DOJ's</b> Office on Violence Against Women collects <b>grantee performance data</b> for its Justice for Families Program, which funds programs that allow noncustodial parents to visit with children while prioritizing the safety of both children and adult survivors of domestic violence. Data collected from grantees include demographic information on families served, number of families not served and why, types of services provided, and reasons for terminating services.</p>
 <p><b>Justice Problems</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are people's justice problems?</li><li>• How prevalent are different types of justice problems?</li><li>• What is the severity of these justice problems?</li><li>• Do the prevalence and severity of problems vary across different demographics?</li></ul>	<p><b>VA</b> collects <b>survey data</b> under Project CHALENG (Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Groups), which brings together providers, advocates, veterans, and other concerned citizens to identify the needs of homeless veterans. The project includes an annual survey in which participants rate the needs of homeless veterans in their local communities. The results are used to identify unmet needs and develop interventions to effectively assist homeless veterans. In recent survey findings, homeless veterans identified legal assistance as an unmet need in eight areas, to include credit issues/debt collection, expungement, and family law.</p>
 <p><b>Help &amp; Information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Where and when do people turn for help? Why?</li><li>• Are people aware of available sources of information, advice, and representation?</li><li>• Is this information, advice, and representation accessible? Is it useful and effective?</li></ul>	<p><b>FTC</b> regularly reviews <b>survey data and website analytic data</b> to understand user behavior regarding the FTC's websites with consumer education information and improve website services. FTC also collects the language used to report fraud and other consumer issues whether it comes through its call center, through its reporting websites, or through data contributors, if they share that information.</p> <p><b>LSC</b> collects <b>administrative grantee data</b> from 131 civil legal aid organizations that provide civil legal services to individuals with justice problems and regularly report casework and other data to LSC.<sup>14</sup> The grantee data include information about the people who receive legal services, case types, and case resolution. The reported data also include data on legal education, outreach, and referrals, as well as grantee website analytics on the number of users, page views, and more.</p>



## Resolution Process

- What formal and informal resolution mechanisms are available? Are they accessible and effective?
- What is their capacity to provide services (i.e., number of institutions/providers, level of funding, caseload, etc.)?
- How timely is service provision?

**SSA** collects **administrative data** regarding various steps of customer efforts to obtain Social Security benefits. For instance, SSA measures and publicizes data regarding wait times for those calling SSA's national 800 phone number; processing time for Retirement, Survivor, or Medicare claims; time to process initial disability claims; and time to process appeals of disability determinations.



## User Experience

- Are resolution processes/services user-friendly (accessible, affordable, timely)?
- Can users easily understand the process? Is it perceived as fair?
- What is the emotional cost of the resolution process and its impact?

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) at **Treasury** conducts an annual **survey** (Comprehensive Taxpayer Attitude Survey), which gathers information about taxpayers' attitudes around taxes and their service channel preferences. The survey includes questions about taxpayers' point of view regarding filing and paying their taxes, their satisfaction with their personal interactions with IRS, and the importance and value of in-person, online, and telephone service channels. These data are used to inform IRS efforts to improve taxpayer service.



## Problem Outcome

- Are people's justice problems being solved? Are they likely to recur?
- Is the outcome perceived as fair by all parties? Are there disparities in outcomes for different groups?
- Are any decisions made by authorities (e.g., courts or agencies) complied with by people? Are they well understood?

**HUD** collects **administrative grantee data** for the Eviction Protection Grant Program. Grantees report data on household demographics, services provided, and outcomes (e.g., prevented eviction filing, negotiated agreement or settlement, client remained in home) of legal services funded by the program. Grant reporting also includes narrative responses, which provide details on the operating environment in which the legal aid providers are working, including success, hurdles, and progress toward benchmarks.



## Social & System Outcome

- What are the economic impacts of the justice problem?
- What are the social impacts of the justice problem?
- Have users' perceptions of justice systems, services, or providers changed?

**HHS's** National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded a **research project**, beginning in 2023, to explore the impact of a patient-informed medical legal partnership intervention in resolving health-harming legal needs related to housing, food, job, insurance insecurities, and home safety concerns among low-income, racially and ethnically diverse families.

# Access to justice data challenges

Although recent federal investment has enhanced evidence-based, data-driven policymaking,<sup>15</sup> gaps and challenges in the effective collection and use of federal access to justice data can hinder these efforts. To inform this Report and to better understand these gaps and challenges, LAIR solicited input from its federal member agencies and external stakeholders and reviewed relevant literature.

## Assessing the challenges

LAIR member agencies shared information about their own experiences, responding to questions about the kinds of justice data that agencies collect and use; how they leverage those data to develop, implement, or evaluate policies and programs; and any related challenges they experience.<sup>16</sup>

To gather external stakeholder input, LAIR hosted a virtual public listening session in June 2024 and received comments from a diverse group of speakers representing advocates, researchers, service providers, and community leaders. LAIR also informally consulted access to justice experts for their feedback on these topics. The Report is also informed by a research workshop held in January 2024 in Washington, D.C., with funding from the National Science Foundation in coordination with the Office for Access to Justice and LAIR, and its report, [Access to Justice Research as a Tool for Advancing Federal Priorities](#). The workshop convened over 50 researchers and federal agency staff, representing more than 30 agencies and academic institutions, to engage in structured discussions regarding opportunities to collaborate through data and research across key areas of law and policy.<sup>17</sup>

Many of these stakeholders—including community leaders, researchers, service providers, and federal agency officials—reiterated a key insight: **the access to justice mission crosses disciplines**. The institutions, activities, tools, and information with which people engage to address and prevent justice problems are not limited to those related to courts or other adjudicatory bodies, or even to those that are strictly legal in nature. Rather, they can include other state and federal programs across a wide array of issues that impact various facets of people's lives. For instance, as one stakeholder described, an individual might present with a challenge of housing stability but also face an underlying issue with veterans benefits or a disability claim. The **people-centered approach to access to justice data** calls for federal agencies to leverage multi-disciplinary data from across agencies and facilitate the public's access to such data, where permissible.

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The data are there, but we have to tie them together, learn to interpret them, and share. Then we can pinpoint what support is needed and who can provide it. People feel overwhelmed with the needs of people with justice problems, but the key is looking at the data.

KATHERINE ALTENEDER  
SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGATION NETWORK



LAIR members and stakeholders identified the following key challenges to effective agency data collection and use: understanding and accessing available federal government data, linking data across agencies, navigating data security and privacy concerns, and addressing resource constraints. Addressing these challenges is crucial for agencies to meaningfully advance their access to justice priorities and develop new areas of justice data collection.

## Key challenges

### 1. Understanding and accessing available federal government data

Several stakeholders identified barriers to understanding what federal government data are available and securing reasonable access. As noted below, many agencies have taken substantial steps to share information about their data and make data usable for the public through data inventories and interactive data visualization tools; however, advocates and researchers repeatedly voiced a lack of information about federal data relevant to access to justice work, such as what relevant data agencies collect, which datasets external stakeholders can access, and how they can access that data.<sup>18</sup>

For researchers in particular, the logistics of data sharing agreements often pose a barrier to effective data access and use. At LAIR's listening session, several stakeholders urged agencies to help facilitate data access through clear points of contact and, where possible, straightforward data use agreements with researchers and universities. These steps would help combat a lack of clarity about what data are accessible and through what processes.<sup>19</sup>

### 2. Linking data across agencies

Data linking across agencies and external researchers' access to such data are often limited. One key limitation involves federal agencies' data quality and interoperability—the ability of different systems to work together and exchange information effectively—between agencies, among programs, and among grantees.

These data quality and interoperability issues also appear for federal programs that run through state agencies, such as the unemployment insurance program, where the federal agency relies on the data that state agencies collect. Some of these limitations relate to privacy laws and authorizing statutes, while others stem from technology, resource allocation, and data standardization across programs.<sup>20</sup> One agency representative summarized these challenges: “[We collect justice] data ... from a variety of sources, and there may be inconsistencies in how data are collected and reported. This can make it difficult to compare data across different programs or jurisdictions.”<sup>21</sup>

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**Cross-agency data linkages are hugely important. To understand an individual's involvement in HUD, then with VA, and then another agency to develop adequate contextual information, you need those agencies' data. If you have to negotiate a data sharing agreement with each agency separately, it gets very burdensome. Data agreements to access data are often one-offs, and negotiating and keeping track of different ones can be challenging.**

**TANINA ROSTAIN**  
GEORGETOWN LAW SCHOOL



### 3. Navigating privacy and data security concerns

Protecting data privacy and confidentiality is critical to maintaining public trust, but data privacy policies and concerns over data security can also sometimes limit data sharing among programs, across agencies, and with the public.<sup>22</sup> Privacy policies address issues of data ownership and consent required for data sharing.<sup>23</sup> Accordingly, federal agencies' data sharing requires carefully navigating applicable privacy laws and regulations and "the tension between the public's trust in data confidentiality and increasing data access."<sup>24</sup> For instance, one agency noted that it collects, but cannot share, sensitive demographic and financial information that it receives through a complaint filing process relating to workplace justice problems. Certain communities may also have distrust of government data efforts and may face "heightened risk of harm if their privacy is not protected."<sup>25</sup>

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**Federal data enable us to target services to the most vulnerable individuals in our state. For example, access to aggregated eviction data for public housing residents and voucher recipients would allow us, a state agency, to better allocate eviction defense resources to intervene before tenants are displaced.**

**PHILIPPE KNAB**  
THE WASHINGTON STATE  
OFFICE OF CIVIL LEGAL AID

At the same time, experts point out that people are often puzzled and frustrated that they must provide the same information repeatedly to different government offices and that agencies cannot share information to streamline the process.<sup>26</sup> The Chief Data Officer Council's Data Sharing Working Group has also found that, "[o]ften, an agency's aversion to risk, especially concerning the interpretation of statute[s] supporting data-sharing, leads to a historical posture of inaction."<sup>27</sup> Stakeholders repeatedly urged agencies to ensure that the public benefits from permissible and secure data sharing while also addressing privacy and security concerns.

### 4. Addressing resource constraints

Constraints related to resources and capacity can hinder data collection and reporting for both federal agencies and their grantees.<sup>28</sup> Some agencies expressed the need to build the technical capacity of their staff to collect and analyze data, including through funding for staff training. Some also noted the potential benefit of hiring more staff with data science skills. One agency pointed to the technology modernization funding made available through the Inflation Reduction Act as a unique opportunity that helped bring the agency into this digital age. Some agencies partnered with the U.S. Digital Service to bolster their capabilities.<sup>29</sup>

Resource constraints also impact collaboration between federal agencies and state and local partners. Many agencies implement their programs through community-based organizations or state and local agencies, and some reported that those implementing partners have varying levels of capacity and resources to collect and report data. One agency shared that its grantees find data collection and reporting to be burdensome and overly labor-intensive, particularly when they are required to report to multiple agencies differently.

## 5. Developing new areas of justice data collection

Identifying gaps in data requires an iterative process. It requires engaging stakeholders, setting access to justice priorities, and understanding existing data—a process described in more detail in the Data Roadmap. For instance, agencies might undertake new data collection to help answer the key questions identified in Table 1—e.g., *How many people have legal problems? Who are they?*—that will, in turn, enable improved programming and policymaking. Despite the vast amount of data that agencies collect and hold, there are still critical gaps in this information, including data that are not currently collected and data that are too low-quality or not collected with enough frequency.

This year, federal agencies made significant strides to close these gaps by leveraging existing data to inform areas for new data collection to increase their access to justice efforts. The efforts illustrated in the next section provide examples of how federal agencies have addressed access to justice data challenges and engaged with stakeholders to identify priority areas and bring a people-centered approach to building new policies and programs.

# Agency actions to meet the challenges

The following tables list actions of federal agencies organized by the access to justice data challenge areas identified above. These agency actions are presented under the most responsive challenge area, but many address more than one area.

These agency action examples can inform and guide other agencies in identifying and addressing barriers to access to justice data collection, identifying priorities, and policymaking. They are just some of the ways that agencies are meeting challenges and advancing access to justice.

## CHALLENGE 1.

### Understanding and accessing available federal government data

AGENCY	ACTION
<b>Administrative Conference of the United States</b>	In 2024, ACUS launched a <a href="#">project</a> to map and define the spectrum of assistance that parties to administrative proceedings may (or may not) have available to them. The project studies what types of nonlawyers appear in proceedings on behalf of individuals or assist individuals in preparation for such proceedings, what they do, and the regulatory schemes governing them. Furthermore, the project examines areas in which certain forms of assistance may be underutilized or overutilized in administrative proceedings. Finally, the project identifies best practices for agencies to develop and expand nonlawyer representation and assistance and provides guidance for making it more accessible and transparent.
<b>Department of Education</b>	In 2022-2023, ED developed two microsites focused on students' access to education. The first, the <a href="#">Equity in Education Dashboard</a> , compiles key findings and trends on the current state of educational equity in the United States drawing from the framework in the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine report, <a href="#">Monitoring Educational Equity</a> . The second, entitled <a href="#">Education Across America</a> , provides in-depth information regarding access to education. It includes information about family involvement in education, student enrollment, graduation rates, and more across various geographies, with a focus on rural areas.
<b>Department of Health and Human Services</b>	Housed within HHS's Administration for Children and Families, the Child Welfare Court Improvement Program (CIP) funds states, territories, and Tribes to perform ongoing assessment and system improvements in child welfare court processes. Each year, HHS collects high-level program data for each CIP that are aggregated, analyzed, and shared with the CIP community. Information is also made available through the <a href="#">Court Improvement Program Data Dashboard</a> . The data are also used by HHS to understand trends to inform operations and related technical assistance.

AGENCY	ACTION
<b>Department of Housing and Urban Development</b>	<p>The <a href="#">Annual Homeless Assessment Report</a> is a HUD report to the U.S. Congress that provides nationwide estimates of homelessness, including information about the demographic characteristics of homeless persons, service use patterns, and the capacity to house homeless persons. The report is based on Homeless Management Information Systems data about persons who experience homelessness during a 12-month period, point-in-time counts of people experiencing homelessness on one day in January, and data about the inventory of shelter and housing available in a community.</p>
<b>Department of Justice</b>	<p>DOJ offers various data sources that allow the public to use and explore its justice data. DOJ's statistical agency, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), provides various dashboards, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal criminal data from the <a href="#">Federal Justice Statistics Program</a>,</li> <li>• Prison data from the <a href="#">National Corrections Reporting Program</a> and the <a href="#">National Prisoners Statistics</a> survey, through the <a href="#">Corrections Statistical Analysis Tool</a>, and</li> <li>• Crime victimization survey data through the <a href="#">National Crime Victimization Survey Data Dashboard</a>, showing select victim, household, and incident characteristics.</li> </ul> <p>DOJ's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) funded the development of <a href="#">Treatment Court Maps</a>, an interactive tool that provides an overview of the total number of treatment courts, which are specialized court programs that connect individuals to judicially supervised treatment and recovery services as an alternative to incarceration, by court type and location. Data were gathered from four sources: the Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Report, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and the U.S. Census Bureau. Data can be mapped geographically, alongside treatment courts, at the state and county levels.</p> <p>BJA also provided funding to develop the <a href="#">Racial and Ethnic Disparities (RED) Program Assessment Tool</a>, designed to assist treatment courts in examining areas where racial and ethnic disparities may exist in their systems and processes.</p> <p>Additionally, BJA leads <a href="#">Justice Counts</a>, an effort started in 2022 to improve the accessibility and usability of criminal justice data and create tools and resources for policymakers.</p> <p>DOJ's U.S. Trustee Program compiles data regarding telephonic interpreter services offered to individual debtors in bankruptcy proceedings. In FY 2023, more than 9,000 calls were made for interpreter services. The most-requested language was Spanish, followed by Korean, Vietnamese, and Mandarin.<sup>30</sup></p>

AGENCY	ACTION
<b>Department of Labor</b>	<p>DOL published an <a href="#">Unemployment Insurance Program Letter (No. 01-24)</a>, a comprehensive, first-of-its-kind guidance on “Equitable Access in the Unemployment Insurance Program.” By delineating the barriers that many experience when accessing unemployment insurance (UI) benefits and describing the steps required to achieve equitable access, including collecting, maintaining, and analyzing demographic data for key UI metrics to detect and rectify gaps in access, the Letter offers states a comprehensive approach to ensuring equitable access to UI benefits for all eligible workers, including workers from historically underserved and marginalized communities.</p> <p>In addition, DOL’s Mine Safety and Health Administration shares a broad range of mine safety and health data through its <a href="#">website</a>, including information about mine inspections, accidents, injuries, illnesses, violations, and employment, and makes public the <a href="#">Pattern of Violations Calculator</a>, which allows tracking of a mine’s violation and injury history.</p>
<b>Equal Employment Opportunity Commission</b>	<p>In January 2024, EEOC launched its <a href="#">REACH initiative</a> to ensure that its outreach and education efforts are reaching the workers that are the least likely to seek the agency’s assistance, despite their great need. EEOC has held in-person and virtual listening sessions with a broad range of stakeholders around the country to examine how EEOC can bolster its efforts to reach vulnerable and underserved communities. Over the course of seven months, the REACH initiative held 22 events with workers and advocacy organizations and visited 10 states. This outreach data revealed barriers that vary by population. Many vulnerable workers don’t know their rights, don’t understand the differences between government entities, and fear retaliation. The data from this initiative helped EEOC identify best practices for reaching vulnerable and underserved communities, expand its presence in rural areas, and improve its outreach practices.</p> <p>Further, the EEOC collects a significant amount of data related to its administrative and enforcement processes. EEOC’s <a href="#">enforcement and litigation statistics data</a>, including regarding charges of employment discrimination, filings, and resolutions, are available to the public through downloadable tables and data visualizations. EEOC also collects and shares <a href="#">demographic data</a> about the federal workforce, including through special reports like “<a href="#">African American Women in the Federal Sector</a>,” “<a href="#">Second Chances Part I – Federal Employment for Workers with Past Arrests or Convictions</a>,” and “<a href="#">The EEO Status of Workers with Disabilities in the Federal Sector</a>.”<sup>31</sup></p>

AGENCY	ACTION
<b>Federal Communications Commission</b>	<p>FCC’s <a href="#">National Broadband Map</a> provides information about the internet services available to individual broadband serviceable locations across the country, including mobile service coverage, as reported by Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in FCC’s ongoing <a href="#">Broadband Data Collection</a>. The map helps FCC to identify unserved and underserved locations in need of government agency funding to help support high-speed internet infrastructure investments. FCC also verifies and improves the accuracy of the data by permitting <a href="#">consumers</a>, state and local and Tribal government entities, and others to file challenges to the ISP-reported data. FCC’s <a href="#">website</a> also makes detailed broadband mapping data available for download—including by state and other geographic areas, by provider, and by technology—and enables the public to view data regarding challenges and their resolution.</p>
<b>Federal Trade Commission</b>	<p>FTC analyzes consumer reports to identify trends and makes that information available to the public through a <a href="#">Tableau Public website</a>. The site provides data visualizations on key topics like age and fraud, fraud and identity theft, and debt collection. Additionally, FTC’s <a href="#">Data Spotlights</a> offer easy-to-understand in-depth analysis on certain data trends to highlight important consumer protection topics. FTC also publishes research, including reports such as <a href="#">Serving Communities of Color</a> based on consumer reports and case-specific data highlighting disparities in the marketplace and <a href="#">Protecting Older Consumers</a>, which analyzes key trends based on fraud reports by older adults.</p> <p>In March 2021, FTC launched the <a href="#">Community Advocate Center</a> (CAC), a program partnering with legal services providers to strengthen consumer fraud reporting and share localized data for use by advocates. The program members use a customized link to report scams in their communities, enabling FTC to identify reports coming from legal services providers and their clients. In turn, FTC provides CAC members with relevant consumer protection information and periodic updates about the reports received from people living in the geographic areas served by each CAC member, including data mapped to the zip code level, the reported dollars lost, the categories of reports, and the age groups of the reporting consumers.</p>
<b>Social Security Administration</b>	<p>SSA collects and publishes a dataset on applicants’ language preferences in Retirement and Survivor Insurance, Disability Insurance claims, and Supplemental Security Income for blind, disabled, and old age programs.</p>

AGENCY	ACTION
<b>U.S. Agency for International Development</b>	<p>USAID’s new <a href="#">Rule of Law Innovation, Design, Experimentation, Acceleration, and Solutions (IDEAS) Lab</a> provides a central clearinghouse for learning, tools, and reference materials generated by and from USAID’s Rule of Law programming. It includes research and evaluation resources, such as technical notes summarizing relevant research findings and justice program impact evaluation reports, relating to people-centered justice and rule of law practices and programs.</p>

## CHALLENGE 2.

### Linking data across agencies

AGENCY	ACTION
<b>Consumer Financial Protection Bureau</b>	In 2023, CFPB published <a href="#">research</a> on junk fees and other consumer risks in public benefits and prepaid cards, exploring the challenges that recipients of public cash assistance encounter in accessing funds through financial products or services. The research, which focused on unemployment and other cash assistance programs, summarized CFPB consumer complaints and the results of focus groups with cash assistance recipients. In May 2024, DOL <a href="#">incorporated insights</a> from CFPB’s research when it released a revised Unemployment Insurance Program Letter to clarify how state workforce agencies can incorporate critical consumer protection measures when delivering unemployment benefits payments.
<b>Department of Agriculture</b>	USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service recently surveyed all Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) state agencies to understand the steps they have taken to provide individuals with limited English proficiency access to SNAP—including, for example, ensuring that vital documents like applications and participant notices are available in languages other than English.
<b>Department of Health and Human Services</b>	HHS’s Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed the <a href="#">Environmental Justice Index</a> , the first national, place-based tool designed to measure the cumulative impacts of environmental burden through the lens of human health and health equity. This Index uses data from EPA, CDC, the U.S. Census Bureau, and DOL’s U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration to rank the cumulative impacts of environmental injustice on health for every census tract. Similarly, the <a href="#">Social Vulnerability Index</a> from CDC’s Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry—released in 2022 and updated in May 2024 —provides a place-based index, database, and mapping application designed to identify and quantify communities experiencing social vulnerability. In addition, CDC’s <a href="#">Heat and Health Index</a> helps identify communities where people are most likely to feel the effects of heat on their health, in order to build towards a healthier and more heat-resilient future for all.
<b>Department of Homeland Security</b>	DHS’s Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) maintains the <a href="#">National Risk Index</a> , a dataset and online tool that helps to identify the United States communities most at risk for 18 natural hazards. It was designed and built by FEMA in collaboration with various stakeholders and partners in academia, government (including at the state, local, and federal levels), and private industry and leverages domain expertise and/or data from 91 entities.



AGENCY	ACTION
<b>Department of the Interior</b>	DOI's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, in conjunction with other federal agencies, established an Indian Country Data Working Group in 2022 to identify shared goals and possible actions to be presented to Tribes through formal Tribal consultation. The Working Group is committed to ensuring that high-quality data is available to the public to inform policymaking, resource allocation, and effective program management to ultimately advance the well-being of Indian Country. The Working Group's objectives encompass a spectrum of efforts, including honoring Tribal sovereignty across practices, improving the quality of existing data, creating new data sources, increasing data integration capabilities, and producing new data-driven research products.
<b>Department of Justice</b>	<p>Through an interagency agreement with the U.S. Census Bureau, DOJ's Bureau of Justice Statistics links individual-level data from the <a href="#">National Corrections Reporting Program</a> and <a href="#">Survey of Prison Inmates</a> with other federal and state datasets, including employment and earnings data from the <a href="#">Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics program</a>. The linkage allows estimates of the percent of formerly incarcerated people who are employed in the four years after release, their earnings, and their employment sector. The combined data and analyses enable a greater understanding of post-prison employment and inform relevant policies.</p> <p>In addition, BJS re-launched the Civil Justice Survey of State Courts in 2024 as a pilot program to modernize and rebuild its state and local civil court case collection. The pilot project is collecting and standardizing one year of administrative case data from several jurisdictions at state and local levels of judicial systems.</p>
<b>Department of Transportation</b>	In 2024, DOT launched the <a href="#">Airline Passenger Protection Partnership</a> with 22 state attorneys general—memorialized in a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)—to protect aviation consumers from unfair and deceptive practices. Under the MOU, State AGs will investigate airline complaints they receive to determine whether airlines or ticket agents are violating aviation consumer protection requirements. In return, DOT will expedite review of State AG-referred complaints, consult with State AGs regarding next steps, if appropriate, and provide State AGs with access to the federal complaint database to better track alleged misconduct within their respective states. <sup>32</sup>
<b>Department of the Treasury</b>	Treasury partners with HUD to use administrative data from Treasury's Emergency Rental Assistance Programs (ERAP) to study how rental assistance affects eviction rates. In addition to the <a href="#">public data</a> , ERAP's administrative data are available to interested researchers via a data license agreement through HUD's Office of Policy Development and

AGENCY	ACTION
<b>Department of the Treasury</b> (continued)	Research. Treasury also partners with the General Services Administration to conduct <a href="#">research</a> . One study found that <a href="#">streamlining income verification</a> for application processors in Kentucky increased application approval rates by at least 7 percentage points.
<b>Legal Services Corporation</b>	LSC launched the <a href="#">Civil Court Data Initiative</a> in 2019 as a pilot project to leverage real-time civil court data for informed responses to changing legal needs. The Initiative now collects civil court records from over 1,200 counties across more than 30 states and territories, covering issues like eviction, domestic violence, and consumer debt.
<b>National Science Foundation</b>	An NSF-funded <a href="#">workshop</a> , held in January 2024 in collaboration with DOJ’s Office for Access to Justice, brought together over 50 researchers and federal government principals from many U.S. government agencies—including DOJ, HHS, HUD, VA, USAID, and others—to focus on access to justice research. The workshop participants recommended similar research-sharing workshops, data sharing between agencies and academic partners, collaboration on research activities, and improved communication across agencies and scholars. <sup>33</sup> NSF has also funded numerous research projects on access to justice issues. <sup>34</sup>

### CHALLENGE 3.

## Navigating privacy and data security concerns

AGENCY	ACTION
<b>Chief Data Officer Council</b>	In 2020, the Chief Data Officer Council established a Data Sharing Working Group to help understand the varied data-sharing needs and challenges of all agencies across the federal government. In 2022, the Working Group issued a <a href="#">report</a> addressing that topic. The report noted that cross-agency data sharing agreements—which outline how data from one agency will be shared with, protected by, and used by another agency—are generally prepared one at a time and can take months to complete. <sup>35</sup> The Working Group is developing agreement templates to improve the efficiency and timeliness of the process for new agreements. <sup>36</sup>
<b>Department of Health and Human Services</b>	HHS’s Administration for Community Living publishes an annual report that summarizes data on Older Americans Act Title III-B legal assistance as part of its state performance reporting (SPR). SPR data includes de-identified, aggregated information on client demographics, type of legal case, and intensity of legal intervention (e.g., advice, limited/brief service, or extended representation). This allows HHS to publicly share important demographic and other data without violating individual privacy and confidentiality.
<b>Department of Housing and Urban Development</b>	HUD maintains the <a href="#">Public Housing Data Dashboard</a> , which offers a variety of data points and visualizations. For instance, the dashboard displays resident characteristics, unit occupancy trends, scores from the Public Housing Assessment program, funding information, eligibility information, and energy data. It also enables sorting by region, state, field office, and public housing authority. HUD consistently updates its dashboard data. This anonymized information protects residents’ privacy and sensitive information while still providing a useful, public-facing data tool.
<b>Federal Communications Commission</b>	FCC’s <a href="#">Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Center</a> helps consumers file informal complaints and disability-related requests for dispute assistance, inviting consumers also to “ <a href="#">share your story</a> ” to comment on good or bad telecommunications experiences. FCC analyzes the information internally to identify trends and inform policymaking and potential enforcement activities. FCC also <a href="#">makes aggregated, anonymized data available</a> on its website.

## CHALLENGE 4.

### Addressing resource constraints

AGENCY	ACTION
<b>Corporation for National and Community Service</b>	<p>AmeriCorps’ Office of Research and Evaluation provides grants to researchers to engage in comprehensive studies pertaining to civic engagement, volunteering, and national service. Some research projects involve access to justice issues. For example, a recent <a href="#">project</a> titled “Neighbors in Need: Housing the Most Vulnerable in Morris County” facilitated a community-based participatory action research for a landlord support program, which brought together university faculty, students, community residents, organizations, and government representatives to help end homelessness in their community.<sup>37</sup></p>
<b>Department of Justice</b>	<p>DOJ’s Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) reviewed application data for its Legal Assistance for Victims program from the last 10 years to identify applicants working with underserved populations that had never received funding. OVW then used cross-referenced data to inform targeted outreach strategies for a new initiative designed to help organizations develop the capacity to offer in-house legal representation. In the following year, 83% of successful applicants under this new initiative were population-specific organizations representing underserved communities. OVW continued this process of targeted outreach across two consecutive years and saw a 60% increase in applications in the FY 2024 grant application cycle.</p> <p>Also, OVW funds the <a href="#">Measuring Effectiveness Initiative</a> through a cooperative agreement with a university to analyze grantee performance data, maintain databases, and provide training and technical assistance for programs addressing domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. The initiative aims to ease data collection and reduce performance reporting barriers for grantees.</p> <p>From the data collected through its grantee performance reports as well as anecdotal data collected from its training and technical assistance providers, DOJ’s Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) identified legal assistance as a significant need for sex and labor trafficking survivors in the United States. As a result, OVC has, for a number of years, included “specialized services” as a category within its Services for Victims of Human Trafficking solicitation and, in FY 2024’s funding solicitation, included a category focused specifically on supporting legal assistance for trafficking survivors.<sup>38</sup></p> <p>Beginning in 2020, based on data from listening sessions and other stakeholder engagement, OVC also removed barriers to Tribes’ access to <a href="#">Tribal Victim Services Set-Aside Formula Grant Program</a> awards by making the program noncompetitive, adopting an administrative formula</p>

AGENCY	ACTION
<b>Department of Justice</b> (continued)	<p>for distribution and offering additional support during the application process.</p> <p>Between FY 2020-2023, the number of Tribal grantees using these funds to offer victims legal assistance nearly tripled, rising from 54 to 151. These Tribal grantees used their funds to help victims obtain 4,396 protective orders, up from 850, and assisted crime victims with family law issues 3,706 times, up from 271.</p>
<b>Environmental Protection Agency</b>	<p>EPA’s National Center for <a href="#">Environmental Economics</a> offers training, workshops, and guidance to educate analysts on the basics of conducting environmental justice analyses for rulemaking, explores ways to better leverage existing data and methods, and identifies opportunities to improve data and methods.</p> <p>Also, to address the data and reporting struggles of grant recipients representing small, underserved, and/or Tribal communities, EPA launched a <a href="#">program</a> funding technical assistance providers to help EPA grantees with strategies, tools, and training that enhance their capacity for data, reporting, and evidence-building.</p>
<b>U.S. Digital Service</b>	<p>USDS supports other agencies on hiring technical talent by developing standardized templates for technical roles, making it easier for government technology teams to share applicants across agencies, and training Human Resources leaders. USDS currently partners with over ten agencies to build technical capacity in federal government.</p>

## CHALLENGE 5.

### Developing new areas of justice data collection

AGENCY	ACTION
<b>Consumer Financial Protection Bureau</b>	<p>CFPB monitors consumer complaints and analyzes complaint data to inform agency-wide work to assess risk in consumer financial markets and to prioritize agency action to supervise companies, enforce federal consumer financial laws, and write better rules and regulations.</p> <p>Shortly after borrowers began repaying federally owned student loans after a few years of pandemic-related suspension, CFPB issued the <a href="#">Issue Spotlight: Federal Student Loan Return to Repayment</a>, which contains aggregate anonymized observations of the return to repayment on extended call hold times, income-driven repayment application processing delays, and inaccurate billing and disclosure statements. This report builds on CFPB’s previous student loan servicing work and draws directly upon its data collection and analysis efforts.</p>
<b>Corporation for National and Community Service</b>	<p>AmeriCorps recently revised its <a href="#">2022-2026 Learning Agenda</a> to include a more intentional focus on meeting the standards and best practices of federal evidence-based policymaking. For instance, one of its questions guiding the agency’s evidence-building priorities is: “How can the agency increase access and utilization of AmeriCorps resources in underserved communities?” Since its learning agenda revision, the agency has identified opportunities to make the full range of evidence available to its decision-makers and strengthen its organizational learning culture.</p>
<b>Department of Defense</b>	<p>Within DOD, the Department of the Navy (DoN) utilizes Interactive Customer Service surveys to collect data on client satisfaction with provided services as well as to measure availability of services for eligible Service members, DoN civilians, and military retirees. Similarly, the U.S. Army’s Legal Assistance offices evaluate customer feedback data to analyze ongoing legal assistance needs and opportunities for improvement.</p> <p>In addition, DOD offers direct legal assistance to eligible Service members, DOD civilians, and retirees. Direct feedback from the assisted populations, as well as other administrative data from the legal assistance programs, illuminates relevant access to justice issues and enables DOD to better serve its constituents and strengthen military readiness.</p> <p>Within DOD, the Department of the Air Force (DAF) utilizes data from its direct legal service provision to proactively reach out to present and former Service members and provide education on trending legal assistance matters. For example, in 2021, DAF established a new</p>

AGENCY	ACTION
<b>Department of Defense</b> (continued)	<p><a href="#">Exceptional Family Member Legal Assistance and Policy Branch</a> to assist Service Members and their families with special education issues.</p> <p>DAF has since used data on the number of clients seeking special education legal assistance, tracked by location, to inform the need for additional outreach at specific installations to ensure that military families are aware of the availability of legal support.</p>
<b>Department of Health and Human Services</b>	<p>HHS’s National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded a <a href="#">study</a> examining the effects of legal services on primary care outcomes for communities that lack access to medical services. Potential health-harming legal needs include illegal denial of adequate health insurance coverage, disagreements between insurance companies and patients about medical treatments, unsafe housing conditions, access to food security programs, work permits, and immigration issues.<sup>39</sup> Researchers are collecting data on patients’ clinical outcomes, legal needs, and risk factors. The study’s findings could help inform policy to address health disparities and state provision of social and legal services.</p> <p>The NIH also funded a <a href="#">study</a>, beginning in 2023, to explore the impact of a patient-informed medical-legal partnership intervention in resolving health-harming legal needs related to housing, food, job, insurance insecurities, and home safety concerns among a low-income, racially and ethnically diverse sample of families.<sup>40</sup></p> <p>HHS’s Office of Child Support Services (OCSS) provides funding to all states and territories to help noncustodial parents provide financial and medical support to their children and gain access to and spend time with their children, including through legal services.<sup>41</sup> Some state grantees collect data on participants’ reported parenting role, race, marital status, income, service type, and increases in parenting time.</p> <p>These data prompted OCSS to develop a guide to help grantees assess current service delivery, identify gaps, and learn of promising practices for reaching priority populations. Using the guide, several states transitioned some legal services to telephonic and remote options. Data from these states, in turn, have helped OCSS aid other states expand remote legal assistance.</p> <p>OCSS also administers the Safe Access for Victims’ Economic Security national demonstration grant, funding 12 states and one Tribal child support agency to increase safe access to child support, parenting time, and other services for survivors of domestic violence. OCSS analyzes child support administrative data to assess rates of domestic violence disclosure, disparities in protections granted, and economic outcomes for survivors. It also uses data from listening sessions, lived experience advisory panels, and state and Tribal government staff input to identify</p>



AGENCY	ACTION
<p><b>Department of Health and Human Services</b> (continued)</p>	<p>barriers preventing survivors’ access to the legal and economic benefits of child support and parenting time services.</p> <p>OCSS’s data gathering has contributed to legal navigator services for survivors to safely access child support and parenting time services; simplified processes for survivors; access to legal assistance with safe parenting time orders for survivors; and legal triage teams that develop customized case management and child support enforcement plans.</p> <p>HHS’s Office of Medicare Hearings and Appeals (OMHA) collects data through an ongoing Appellant Climate Survey (ACS) to monitor OMHA’s progress in serving the public. The survey is designed to measure appellant satisfaction with OMHA and the overall experience of the appeals process. In FY 2023, survey topics included satisfaction with the hearing scheduling process, clarity of documents provided by OMHA, interactions with staff and Administrative Law Judges, use of OMHA’s websites, and respondent demographics. OMHA hired a contractor to complete the ACS multimode survey (web, telephone, and mail) with beneficiaries, suppliers, and providers identified from a stratified random sample of cases closed by OMHA. OMHA conducts the ACS annually, allowing the agency to track trends in appellant satisfaction from FY 2009 through FY 2023.</p> <p>HHS’s Office of Community Services launched the <a href="#">Medical-Legal Partnerships Plus</a> (MLP+) program in 2023. MLP+ is the first ever federal funding specific to medical-legal partnership programs, which address the social determinants of health through wraparound legal and social services in healthcare settings. HHS is conducting an implementation evaluation of the MLP+ program, which explores how funded projects strengthened their capacity to address health-harming needs and understand participant experiences. The implementation evaluation will include the collection of administrative data on service delivery, beneficiary characteristics, and case resolution; conducting interviews with medical, legal, and social services providers about implementation strategies, practices, and barriers; and conducting interviews with patients about their experience with services from medical-legal partnerships.</p> <p>HHS’s Administration for Community Living began its collaboration with LSC in 2024 to leverage publicly available civil court data to better understand inter-courtroom processes on adult guardianship. The data collected under this project will be used to analyze the number of petitions filed and granted, the time taken from filing through adjudication, and adherence to due process requirements, such as evaluations and court appearances by proposed protected persons.</p>



AGENCY	ACTION
<b>Department of Homeland Security</b>	<p>DHS’s Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is developing several processes that will improve people’s ability to apply for FEMA benefits by collecting additional data from applicants. For example, FEMA has added two questions to their application for disaster assistance: (1) “Do you require language assistance in a language other than English?”; and (2) “Do you require a reasonable modification [to improve] ease of access?” Information from these questions will help make the programs more accessible and inform the agency’s work going forward.</p> <p>At DHS, Coast Guard’s Office of the Chief Administrative Law Judge (ALJ Program) adjudicates the suspension and revocation of merchant mariner credentials to promote safety at sea. In 2023, the ALJ Program transitioned from processing its administrative suspension and revocation cases via paper files to utilizing an electronic case management system. This shift has enhanced the agency’s capability to access and analyze data related to access to justice. The agency now tracks the number of cases involving unrepresented respondents and compares case outcomes between represented and unrepresented respondents.</p> <p>DHS’s Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties and other components obtained feedback from Indigenous migrant communities about language access for Indigenous migrants served and encountered in DHS programs. In 2024, this feedback, including expert information on Indigenous cultures and languages that impact communication, resulted in the development of the first of its kind <a href="#">Indigenous Languages Plan</a> for DHS.</p> <p>DHS’s U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) used data to develop a new Indigenous language identification feature in the myCBP mobile application that contains pre-recorded audio files of the phrase “do you speak [insert language]?” in over 20 indigenous languages. DHS’s U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has collaborated with CBP to make the language identification feature available to ICE personnel as well.</p> <p>DHS’s Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman (CIS Ombudsman) has the statutory mission to assist individuals and employers with problems with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The CIS Ombudsman provides free case assistance for petitioners and applicants who have been unable to resolve the matter directly with USCIS. After a request for case assistance is closed, the CIS Ombudsman sends a customer satisfaction survey to gauge the impact of the assistance provided. In FY 2024, the CIS Ombudsman received 820 survey responses, which showed 74% of respondents said it was easy to complete the request for case assistance and that the instructions on the</p>

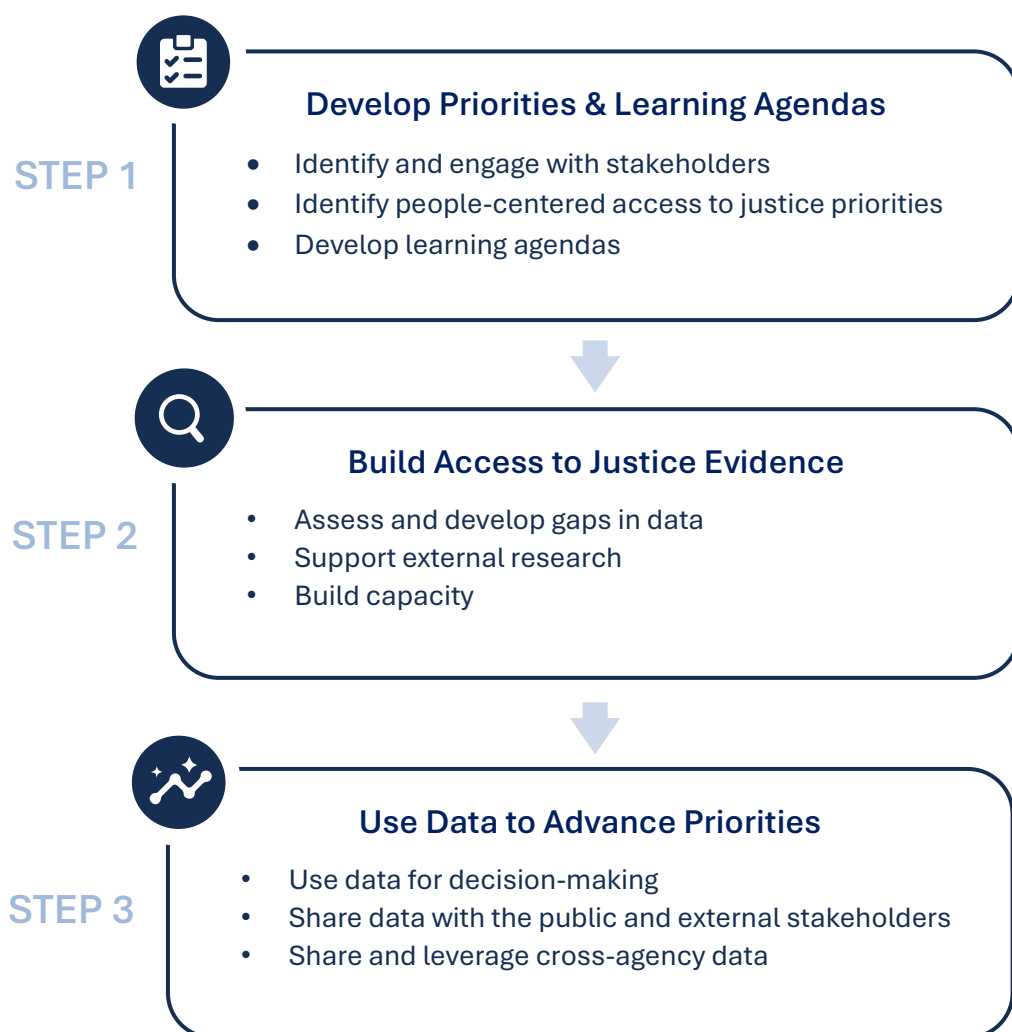
AGENCY	ACTION
<b>Department of Homeland Security</b> (continued)	<p>website were easy to understand. The CIS Ombudsman has undertaken a review of its case assistance process enlisting support of DHS customer service leaders and others, in which observed customers, with their permission, complete the case assistance form. This review may result in process enhancements for requesting case assistance from the CIS Ombudsman.</p> <p>DHS’s Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) identified over 40 ICE forms requiring a detained noncitizen’s signature. In recent years, including 2024, ICE translated these forms into multiple languages: Spanish, Punjabi, Portuguese, French, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Russian, and Turkish.</p>
<b>Department of Housing and Urban Development</b>	<p>HUD funded an external evaluation researcher to collect qualitative and quantitative data about its <a href="#">Eviction Protection Grant Program</a>, which partners with legal aid and community organizations to provide legal services to people facing evictions. Combined with other data sources, iterative program evaluation findings have helped inform HUD leadership on program administrative processes, program policy and design, and other HUD policy and rulemaking initiatives.</p>
<b>Department of Justice</b>	<p>Through the <a href="#">Access to Justice Design and Testing Program</a>, launched in 2023, DOJ’s Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), in collaboration with the Office for Access to Justice, seeks to identify and fill gaps in its statistical coverage of access to justice for civil legal needs. A primary goal is to better understand the interaction of the criminal justice system with civil justice. This project aims to (i) develop and pilot a household-based civil legal needs survey and (ii) identify, develop, and conduct feasibility testing for other data collection related to access to justice for civil legal needs. This will include an evaluation of strategies to collect household-level data and to identify and test options to collect complementary civil justice data from courts or other relevant sources.</p> <p>In 2021, BJS also re-launched the <a href="#">National Pretrial Reporting Program</a>, which compiles information regarding the criminal justice processing of people charged with felony offenses in state courts. This program collects case-level data from courts, jails, and pretrial services from a sample of populous counties.</p> <p>In October 2024, BJS published the <a href="#">Survey of Public Defenders Pilot Report</a>, about the results of a pilot test of a new data collection effort that aims to capture information directly from public defenders about their demographics, working conditions, caseloads, interactions with clients, and access to resources. The report describes the pilot sampling frames and sample design and provides key findings, including recommendations</p>

AGENCY	ACTION
<b>Department of Justice</b> (continued)	<p>on sampling design, survey instrument modifications, roster development, respondent recruitment, and survey administration.</p> <p>DOJ’s Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) supports the collection of demographic data by funding an annual <a href="#">Juvenile Court Statistics Report</a> that draws on data from the National Juvenile Court Data Archive. The most recent report profiled 437,300 delinquency cases and 51,500 petitioned status offense cases handled in 2021 by U.S. courts with juvenile jurisdiction. The report also tracked trends in delinquency and petitioned status cases between 2005 and 2021. The report used data contributed by nearly 2,400 courts with jurisdiction over 83% of the juvenile population in 2021. This data includes information on the number of youths who are arrested, adjudicated, and detained by race, gender, and age. OJJDP also funds a similar <a href="#">Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement</a>, in which data are disaggregated based on race, gender, and age.</p>
<b>Department of State</b>	<p>State supports data collection projects in Mexico aimed at refining project designs and informing efforts of the Mexican government. For instance, State funds a research project to develop Mexico’s annual Rule of Law Index, helping to assess access to justice indicators like absence of corruption, government openness, and civil justice. State also funds a research project on pre-trial detention in Tunisia and Kenya. That effort focuses on generating evidence on the effectiveness of legal assistance in reducing the overuse and misuse of pretrial detention, including against members of marginalized communities. The project will utilize a randomized controlled trial to measure the impact that well-trained, well-resourced, full-time public defenders can have on pretrial detention rates when they have access to suspected and accused persons within 24 to 72 hours of arrest.</p>
<b>Department of the Treasury</b>	<p>In early 2024, Treasury’s IRS launched <a href="#">Direct File</a>, a pilot program that allows qualifying taxpayers to electronically file their federal tax returns directly with the IRS for free. The pilot included a survey to learn more about taxpayers’ expectations with filing systems. More than 15,000 Direct File users participated in the General Services Administration’s Touchpoints Survey.</p>
<b>Department of Veterans Affairs</b>	<p>VA’s Legal Services for Veterans grant program, which provides legal services to eligible veterans who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, is currently partnering with program evaluators from VA’s <a href="#">Quality Enhancement Research Initiative</a>, a national program that partners with VA providers, leaders, and veterans to scale-up and spread effective practices. The <a href="#">evaluation</a> will generate insights about effective</p>

AGENCY	ACTION
<b>Department of Veterans Affairs</b> (continued)	legal interventions to address veterans' homelessness and inform the future development of the grant program and the VA's other efforts to facilitate veterans' access to legal services. VA also promotes the medical-legal partnership model throughout the Veterans Health Administration and evaluates the model's effectiveness.
<b>Legal Services Corporation</b>	LSC's Rural Justice Task Force has used a variety of tools and methods, including surveys, grantee data, and listening sessions, to identify justice priorities and gather qualitative data. The Task Force's work has helped yield new strategies to recruit and retain rural attorneys, leverage technology for service delivery, and foster effective community partnerships.
<b>Social Security Administration</b>	<p>SSA gathered information from internal and external stakeholders and developed a 2022-2026 Learning Agenda to support its strategic goals and identify priority questions. Priority questions relating to people's justice problems include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the effects of changes to our service delivery methods on the accessibility, use, efficiency, security, and equitable delivery of our services?</li> <li>• What are the effects of simplifying administrative rules and requirements on reducing the burden on program participants and supporting program integrity?</li> <li>• What factors contribute to federal court remands of disability decisions, and what are the effects of modifying relevant factors on the percentage of final decisions that are affirmed upon judicial review?</li> </ul> <p>Answers to these priority questions inform the agency's performance and promote evidence-based decision-making.</p>
<b>U.S. Agency for International Development</b>	In 2024, USAID funded a user experience survey in Serbia, which collected quantitative and qualitative data on justice and legal services users' views and experiences with court informational materials and facilities, including legal aid services. The survey data has informed monitoring, evaluation, and learning plans and efforts to identify potential future activities.

# Recommendations for future agency action: The Data Roadmap

LAIR engaged with member agencies and other justice system stakeholders, listened to feedback, and reviewed agency information to identify a path towards the effective collection and use of data to address gaps and to advance access to justice priorities. Informed by this engagement, LAIR developed the Data Roadmap, illustrated below, for federal agencies—including individual programs, offices, departments, and cross-agency efforts—as a tool to strengthen their evidence-based policymaking. The practices described in the Roadmap may not apply to all agencies equally and, for some agencies, may work best as a complement to their existing work.



The topic areas and practices in this Roadmap are interconnected and are part of an iterative cycle, informed by other practices and continued evaluation and feedback from stakeholders.



## Step 1. Develop access to justice priorities and learning agendas

### Identify and engage with stakeholders to understand people's justice needs and experiences.

What access to justice issues are most critical to address to fulfill our agency's mission? And what do we need to know to address them? The first phase of the Roadmap starts with asking these questions to help agencies identify relevant priorities and evidence needs. In answering these questions, a people-centered approach calls for identifying and engaging with stakeholders, including individuals with relevant lived experiences. Stakeholder engagement can take many forms, including listening sessions, focus groups, structured interviews, and requests for information. Engagement can also involve hearing from individuals with lived experiences as well as community-based organizations, including legal aid and faith-based groups, to learn from their experiences addressing community needs, and other civic engagement strategies with public participation.

The federal government's [2022 Life Experiences initiative](#) for disaster recovery offers a powerful example of starting with a mapping of people's needs and experiences.<sup>42</sup> Disaster recovery involves many access to justice issues. For example, disaster survivors often need to replace identification papers, such as birth certificates, driver's licenses, and Social Security cards; apply for disaster benefits; and deal with insurance claims.<sup>43</sup> Many must also navigate other legal issues, from preventing unlawful evictions and foreclosures to combating contractor scams.<sup>44</sup> Under this 2022 initiative, DHS, HHS, and HUD—agencies with interconnected missions to assist people with disaster recovery—began by speaking to disaster survivors and frontline workers to understand their experiences.<sup>45</sup> These interviews and listening sessions identified pain points in the relevant government processes and helped agencies develop priorities for targeted interventions.<sup>46</sup>

As the disaster recovery example illustrates, agencies should take steps to **engage with stakeholders**, especially the communities that their programs aim to serve, in various ways to **understand people's justice needs and experiences relating to the agency's mission**.

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As a Latine community health worker, educator, and leader with firsthand experience with disabilities and language barriers, I am familiar with barriers to government services facing those with disabilities and who are not proficient in English. Using plain language and continually seeking feedback from the public, especially marginalized communities, can help address those barriers.

DORIS MALDONADO MENDEZ  
FAMILY VOICES NATIONAL

## Identify people-centered access to justice priorities connected to agency mission.

Learning from impacted communities can help agencies identify access to justice priorities connected to the agency’s mission. Answering this question of “what access to justice issues are most critical to fulfilling our agency’s mission?” builds another foundational building block of effective evidence-based policymaking. For instance, in response to learning from stakeholder engagement that many vulnerable workers don’t know of their workplace rights, EEOC may develop a priority relating to strengthening its know-your-rights education in a targeted manner. Accordingly, agencies should **leverage learnings from stakeholder engagement to identify agency priorities that help address people’s justice problems.**

## Develop or refine learning agendas to support justice priorities.

Learning agendas have emerged as central evidence-building tools for federal agencies since the passage of the Evidence Act of 2018, which called on agencies to make data more accessible and develop evidence-building and evaluation plans to accompany their broader strategic plans. For example, HUD published a [Learning Agenda for 2022-2026](#), which sets forth a robust pipeline of research and data collection from across HUD and aligns with its strategic goals and objectives.

Some learning agendas ask questions to build evidence on cross-government priorities, such as the [President’s Management Agenda \(PMA\) Learning Agenda](#), the [American Rescue Plan Equity Learning Agenda](#), and the [Federal Evidence Agenda on LGBTQI+ Equity](#). These cross-agency learning agendas provide an opportunity to coordinate learning and evidence building across agencies on key priorities and to catalyze coordinated innovation with external stakeholders.

Once agencies identify access to justice priorities aligned with their respective missions, they can **develop a learning agenda or refine their existing agenda to outline the data and strategies needed to build relevant evidence.** Further, to advance the government-wide imperative to address access to justice priorities, agencies should **collaborate to develop and implement a people-centered, cross-government learning agenda specifically on access to justice.**

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Just as non-medical social determinants influence health outcomes, many factors drive legal needs and justice problems—including economic, environmental, and behavioral factors. Justice problems and their outcomes, in turn, impact other social outcomes, including health. Understanding these dynamics can help us create effective policies and interventions.

BETHANY HAMILTON  
NATIONAL CENTER FOR MEDICAL-LEGAL  
PARTNERSHIP



### What is a learning agenda?

Also known as evidence-building plans, [learning agendas](#) are systematic plans for identifying and addressing research questions relevant to agency priorities.





## Step 2. Build access to justice evidence

### Develop data needed to support justice priorities.

Agencies should use their learning agendas to **continually assess the strengths and gaps in existing evidence** as necessary to effectuate their access to justice priorities. For example, in line with a key recommendation from the federal government's Equitable Data Working Group, many federal programs can strengthen their evidence base by collecting disaggregated demographic data. Those are data that can be broken down and analyzed by race, ethnicity, gender, disability, income, veteran status, age, or other key demographic variables and can shed light on the people experiencing justice problems.<sup>47</sup>

Agencies should **take steps to develop any new data needed to support their access to justice priorities and answer their learning agenda research questions**. By reassessing and building new data, agencies can gauge their programs' impact on people's experiences and their effectiveness. This includes consulting impacted individuals on an ongoing basis, as the needs of the public and how they interact with government agencies are constantly changing. For example, agencies with administrative proceedings can benefit from boosting data collection and analysis about the role of nonlawyers in helping people address justice problems, including people's experiences with nonlawyer assistance and any changes or improvements in outcomes.

### Support external research projects to inform access to justice policies and programs.

Complementary to the work done by federal agencies' internal research arms, external researchers' efforts can yield crucial insights that benefit agencies, particularly when they are responsive to agencies' policy priorities. Many agencies fund such research projects, which help generate evidence in support of federal agencies' learning agendas and priorities.

Agencies should **cultivate partnerships with external researchers, develop shared research priorities** in support of their learning agendas, and **fund targeted research projects** to inform their access to justice policy priorities.

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**To generate research findings to inform federal agencies' policy planning and implementation, we need to connect academic researchers and federal agencies, build a community of practice and shared interests, and find ways for agencies to signal and communicate such interests to researchers.**

REBECCA SANDEFUR  
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY AND  
AMERICAN BAR FOUNDATION



## Build and maintain capacity for data collection and evidence building.

Evidence-building takes time, effort, and “sustained investment in financial and human capital.”<sup>48</sup> As the Chief Data Officer Council’s reports demonstrate, many agencies have developed substantial institutional infrastructure around data and evaluation, but capacity building for agency programs and their program partners is an ongoing imperative.<sup>49</sup>

Agencies should strive to **build staff expertise** in statistical evaluation and data science through strategic hiring and ongoing training. Agencies should also **invest in technical assistance programs to support data collection and reporting and share and adopt best practices across federal programs**. Finally, because certain capacity issues are driven by the limitations of legacy systems and agencies’ technological capabilities, agencies seeking robust evidence-building activities should also **invest in technology and infrastructure**.

### U.N. Sustainable Development Goal 16

The [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), in particular SDG 16 and its associated indicators, offer another useful framework for federal agencies, state and local governments, and civil society organizations to collect justice data and build evidence.

U.S. agencies collect data on relevant [indicators](#), which measure progress on access to justice under SDG 16 and include:

- Proportion of victims of (a) physical, (b) psychological and/or (c) sexual violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms,
- Unsentenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population, and
- Proportion of the population who have experienced a dispute in the past two years and who accessed a formal or informal dispute resolution mechanism, by type of mechanism.



## Step 3. Use data to advance access to justice priorities

### Use justice data for decision-making.

As the above examples demonstrate, agencies should strive to **use justice data to shape policies and programs that address justice problems, assess their effectiveness, and facilitate systemic improvements** to advance justice in the long run.

### Make data available to the public and external stakeholders.

Agencies disseminate information relating to their justice data in a wide variety of ways, such as dashboards with data visualization, user-friendly websites in multiple languages, publications, and downloadable databases.<sup>50</sup> People, advocates, and other stakeholders can use the data to safeguard their rights and help prevent and address justice problems by better understanding the landscape of justice problems and identifying underserved demographics. And, as noted in the [U.S. Open Government Action Plan](#), public access to appropriate government data promotes transparency and accountability.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, researchers can study federal justice data to advance collective understanding of issues and effective interventions.

To realize these potential benefits, agencies should take steps to **streamline access to data for the public and external stakeholders** while safeguarding data privacy and security. Such steps could include **creating user-friendly dashboards** of justice data, **identifying a point of contact for data sharing inquiries**, and **developing a low-burden and consistent process for external parties to access federal data** when those data are available for dissemination.

### Share and leverage cross-agency data.

Data from a single agency are often insufficient to support a comprehensive, nuanced understanding of access to justice issues and to fully inform multi-disciplinary interventions.<sup>52</sup> Cross-disciplinary, cross-system data from multiple sources can shed light on interlinked justice problems—between eviction and educational outcomes, between retaliatory firing from a job and health harms, and between natural disasters and consumer fraud. For example, DOJ uses in its environmental justice



To help increase understanding of federal agencies' data and research available to the public, this Report offers the following resources in its appendix:

Appendix B | **Federal Data Authorities & Guidance**

Appendix C | **Federal Data Sharing Resources**

Appendix D | **Federal Data & Research Clearinghouses**

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My clients often navigate multiple government programs. Timely data on those programs—like typical wait time, rate of denial, and common issues impacting applications—let us know in real time what is working and not working. That allows us to strategize and develop effective, efficient service delivery models.

BERTHA SANCHEZ HAYDEN  
BET TZEDEK LEGAL SERVICES

enforcement work, where appropriate, the [Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool](#), which EPA developed by leveraging data from multiple agencies and other sources, combining environmental and socioeconomic indicators.<sup>53</sup> Cross-agency sharing can also include sharing data with local and state governments.

Agencies should **evaluate their positions on data sharing** to balance privacy and security concerns with opportunities to advance their missions and access to justice priorities through data sharing. This balancing effort should **include engagement with stakeholders, including historically marginalized communities**. Agencies should also take steps to **establish or strengthen their data sharing infrastructures to make it easier to share and link data** to support evidence-based policymaking.

★ ★ ★

The Roadmap and the highlighted agency efforts offer a selection of approaches for agencies seeking to bolster their justice data practices. Together, these practices can help agencies augment their current work, strengthen their evidence-based policymaking, and bring a people-centered approach and an access to justice lens to their policies and programs.

# What's next

LAIR's work this year has inspired and surfaced many innovative initiatives that mobilize federal resources towards expanding access to justice and making federal programs more effective in serving the public. This coming year presents promising opportunities to build on this work and facilitate additional impactful collaborations.

LAIR will continue to push forward its work in a variety of ways:

- **Committees.** The Simplification, Innovation, and Data and Research Committees have demonstrated the value of expanded opportunities for cross-agency information sharing, informal discussion, and learning through expert presentations. The Committees will continue to serve as the primary vehicle to help agencies implement relevant recommendations from LAIR's reports.
- **Community engagement.** Building on this year's active community engagement, LAIR will continue to prioritize sharing responsive information with justice system stakeholders by developing online resources, presenting at conferences and webinars, and soliciting input through listening sessions and other forums to learn from stakeholders outside of the government. In addition, LAIR will offer guidance and support to other government entities developing access to justice strategies and initiatives.
- **Federal funding resource.** Recognizing the ongoing need based on stakeholder feedback by legal aid and community organizations for support to identify and leverage federal resources, LAIR will continue to innovate and improve its online resource hub and explore developing other potential resources.

## Cross-Agency Learning Agenda on Access to Justice

LAIR plans to publish an access to justice learning agenda that can be used across agencies in 2025, building on the Data and Research Committee's work this year. LAIR's 2024 work has demonstrated that learning agendas are valuable tools for identifying key questions to build evidence and advance agency priorities. With input from a wide variety of stakeholders, including agency partners and impacted communities, this learning agenda on access to justice will:

- Identify cross-government access to justice research priorities for planning, implementing, and evaluating federal programs;
- Provide a framework, including example questions, that agencies can use to embed an access to justice focus within their existing learning agendas and evidence-building activities;
- Facilitate interagency coordination and collaboration in access to justice-related evidence-building and learning; and
- Encourage agencies to identify opportunities to partner with outside experts and stakeholders in evidence-building and learning.

## LAIR's 2025 Focus

In 2025, LAIR will focus on federal agency efforts and opportunities to expand access to justice for victims and survivors of crimes and other violations.

Over the past few years, there have been historic decreases in violent crime and many other forms of victimization from pandemic highs. That progress reflects the dedication and work of law enforcement at every level—federal, state, and local—as well as the work of federal agencies, grantees, and community partners to increase community safety and provide support services to vulnerable populations. Still, too many Americans are victimized each year. That includes people who experience violent and non-violent crimes, such as domestic violence, human trafficking, elder abuse, financial crimes, fraud, and identity theft. It includes people who experience civil violations of their rights affecting their safety and ability to thrive at their workplaces, schools, and homes. It is imperative that federal agencies work to expand resources for victims and survivors of these violations and eliminate barriers to these individuals' access to the legal help and the supports to which they are entitled.

Many federal agencies have already established policies and programs to support victims' and survivors' access to legal help and support services through education, self-help resources, rights enforcement, and grant programs. LAIR's 2025 focus on access and assistance for victims and survivors will help agencies share promising practices across the federal government, strengthen collaboration, and mobilize resources to advance access to justice. These efforts, including activities throughout the year and an annual report highlighting agencies' work, will strengthen the federal government's ability to improve the lives of victims and survivors and help them achieve justice in its fullest sense. These efforts will continue LAIR's critical work to advance access to justice and promote public safety for the American people.

# Appendix A | Acknowledgements

This Report is the product of the collaboration, vision, effort, and resources of LAIR agency partners and individual perspectives shared by legal aid and other access to justice community stakeholders who spoke at a LAIR listening session, presented at LAIR meetings, and provided feedback. This appendix lists those contributors in grateful acknowledgement.

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# Appendix B | Federal Data Authorities & Guidance

In recent years, the federal government has enacted several laws governing its use and sharing of data, with further guidance provided by commissions, working groups, and White House memoranda and executive orders. While the below authorities do not specifically focus on justice data, they create the overarching framework within which any federal data efforts must operate.

## 2016 Evidence-Based Policymaking Commission Act of 2016

Established the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking, which studied and issued a [final report](#) on a strategy for strengthening government evidence-building and policymaking efforts.

## 2018 Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018

Called on federal agencies to make data more accessible and develop evidence-building and evaluation plans to accompany their broader strategic plans. Under this Act, agencies developed learning agendas, designated evaluation officers to coordinate their evaluation activities, and established the Chief Data Officer Council to foster collaboration, share best practices, and address federal government-wide data challenges. It included the OPEN Government Data Act described below.

### Open, Public, Electronic and Necessary (OPEN) Government Data Act of 2018

Required that agencies make their data available in an open format, established the role of Chief Data Officer within each agency, and created the Chief Data Officer Council.

## 2021 Presidential Memoranda & Executive Orders

### Presidential Memorandum: Restoring Trust in Government Through Scientific Integrity and Evidence-Based Policymaking

Provided authority and processes for federal agencies to strengthen evidence-based policymaking.

### Executive Order 13985: Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government

Stated that “[a] first step to promoting equity in Government action is to gather the data necessary to inform that effort” and established the Equitable Data Working Group to study federal data collection to identify inadequacies and provide recommendations for measuring equity and representing American diversity.

# Appendix C | Federal Data Sharing Resources

This appendix outlines existing federal resources related to data sharing among federal agencies and with the public.

## Chief Data Officer Council and Data Sharing Working Group

The Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 requires that each federal agency designate a Chief Data Officer to lead the agency’s data policy and practices, and further established a [Chief Data Officer Council](#) composed of the Chief Data Officers of each agency.

The Council created a [Data Sharing Working Group](#) focused on data sharing across federal agencies and developed a set of diverse use cases. In 2022, the Working Group published a [report](#) in which it reviewed data sharing across federal agencies and developed a set of recommendations for improving methods to access and share data within and between agencies.

Recently, the 2022 CHIPS and Science Act required the development of the [National Secure Data Service Demonstration](#), which will inform efforts to develop a streamlined, innovative data sharing and linkage model to enable decision-making at all levels of government and in all sectors.

## Data Sharing Outside of the Federal Government

- The [Standard Application Process](#) is the avenue to apply to the nation’s statistical agencies and units for access to federal confidential data assets and is available at [researchdatagov.org](#). The site offers a single portal that researchers can use to apply for confidential data from federal statistical agencies. Various datasets are already available on the site for public access, and researchers can use the site to request access to nonpublic data.
- The [Evidence Project Portal](#) is part of Evaluation.gov’s effort to build stronger connections between external researchers and federal agencies. The Portal hosts open opportunities for researchers to partner with federal agencies on evidence-building projects.
- The [Federal Statistical Research Data Centers](#) (FSRDCs), hosted at the U.S. Census Bureau, enable qualified researchers to access restricted-use microdata from a variety of statistical agencies to address important research questions. Several federal agencies provide data directly through the FSRDCs. Many other agencies that sponsor surveys or collect administrative data collaborate with the FSRDC program by making available the data collected from respondents or program participants.
- The [National Secure Data Service Demonstration](#) (NSDS-D) project is required under the 2022 CHIPS and Science Act to inform a government-wide effort on strengthening data linkage and data access infrastructure. This effort facilitates statistical activities in support of increased evidence building for the American public. The goal of the NSDS-D project is to inform the development of a shared services model that would streamline and innovate data sharing and linking to enable decision-making at all levels of government and in all sectors.

# Appendix D | Federal Data & Research Clearinghouses

This appendix provides a list of LAIR member agencies and other federal data and research clearinghouses, which are centralized sources of available federal data and other evidence on topics important to federal agencies. While these resources are not specific to access to justice, they are premier sources of evidence, including federal data, that can inform access to justice issues.

## Data.gov

- [Data.gov](#) is the U.S. Government's official open data site, with hundreds of thousands of available datasets from federal, state, and local governments.

## Department of Justice

- DOJ's [Open Data](#) site provides information about the Department's data strategy and Data Governance Board, links to the Department's open data inventory, and links to the Department's most popular data assets.
- The National Institute of Justice's [CrimeSolutions](#) reviews and rates programs and practices in criminal and juvenile justice, victim assistance, school safety, and youth mentoring. Ratings are assigned from standardized reviews of rigorous evaluations and meta-analyses.
- The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is the Department's primary statistical agency, with a mission to collect, analyze, publish, and disseminate information on crime, individuals who commit crimes, victims of crime, and the operation of justice systems at all levels of government. BJS's [data webpage](#) provides public access to BJS data, tools, and dashboards of interactive data visualizations.
- The Executive Office for Immigration Review publishes its data on its [Statistics and Reports](#) webpage. Data are available in areas such as workload and adjudication statistics, agency decisions, and credible fear and asylum operational reports.
- The [FBI Crime Data Explorer](#) provides access and expands awareness of law enforcement data sharing, improving accountability for law enforcement and providing a foundation to help shape public policy. Crime data visualizations, tools, and publications are available.
- The Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention store many of their data collections at the [National Archive of Criminal Justice Data](#), which is housed within the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan.

## Department of Agriculture

- The [USDA Open Data Catalog](#) is the authoritative source of publicly available USDA data, including data related to food security, nutrition, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

## Department of Defense

- [Data.defense.gov](#) hosts its publicly available datasets, including data regarding DOD legal decisions.

## Department of Education

- ED's [Data landing page](#) hosts various agency data, including a link to ED's [Open Data Platform](#), which allows users to search and access all publicly available data profiles by the agency from one location.
- The [National Center for Education Statistics](#) is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the U.S. and internationally. Its [Data & Tools](#) resource links to various education datasets.
- [What Works Clearinghouse](#) is a central and trusted source of scientific evidence on education programs, products, practices, and policies. Research is reviewed and summarized after meeting rigorous standards.
- [Education Across America](#) provides in-depth information regarding access to education—including regarding family involvement in education, student enrollment, graduation rates, and more—across various geographies, with a focus on rural areas.

## Department of Health and Human Services

- [HealthData.gov](#) makes available government data on a wide range of topics, including environmental health, medical devices, Medicare and Medicaid, social services, community health, mental health, and substance use.
- The [Evidence-Based Practices Resource Center](#) of HHS's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) provides communities, clinicians, policymakers, and others with the information and tools to incorporate evidence-based practices into their communities or clinical settings.
- The [Tribal Data Homepage](#) provides a central location for Tribal data resources and information at HHS. This site includes HHS's agency-wide data access policies for Tribes and Tribal Epidemiology Centers; division-level information about data points of contact, data resources, and data access processes; and a webform to request assistance with data requests.

## Department of Homeland Security

- DHS's [Office of Homeland Security Statistics](#) provides reports and statistical data on a range of topics, including immigration, law enforcement, and international trade. The office's mission is to foster transparency and data-driven homeland security decision-making by analyzing and disseminating timely, objective DHS data and statistics. Its scope encompasses the entire DHS mission space.
- DHS's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) publishes [data reports](#) on various aspects of its operations. USCIS's data resources also include the [Eligible to Naturalize Dashboard](#), which displays data on the population of lawful permanent residents who may be eligible to naturalize.

## Department of Housing and Urban Development

- [HUDexchange.info](#) is an online platform that provides program information, guidance, services, and tools to HUD's community partners.
- [HUDuser.gov](#) is a resource for the research community that provides a vast array of housing research, data, and policy analysis published by HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research.

## Department of the Interior

- DOI's Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) operates the [Access Open Data](#) portal, a vital resource designed to collect and disseminate publicly available datasets that are essential for understanding and supporting the needs of Tribal communities. This portal encompasses a wide range of data related to Tribal and federal government activities, education, Tribal land management, and funding opportunities.

One of the key features is its incorporation of public Geographic Information System (GIS) data and applications. This functionality allows users to visualize and analyze geographic data, which can be particularly useful for Tribal leaders, policymakers, researchers, and community members in making informed decisions. By providing Tribal Open Data, the BIA aims to empower Tribes with the information necessary to advocate for their interests, enhance their governance capabilities, and support the advancement of Tribal sovereignty and community development.

## Department of Labor

- DOL's [Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research](#) (CLEAR) publishes systematic reviews of evidence on topics important to federal agencies and the public. The systematic reviews identify and summarize many types of research, including descriptive statistical studies and outcome analyses, implementation studies, and casual impact studies. CLEAR's mission is to make research on labor topics more accessible to practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and the public more broadly, so that it can inform their decisions about labor policies and programs.

- DOL provides access to confidential datasets through its [Secure Transfer, Restricted-Use Data Lake](#) program. Researchers can submit requests to conduct analysis of the restricted-use data to address important research questions. A list of the data can be found in [DOL's Enterprise Data Inventory](#) or on [Data.gov](#). DOL also provides online access to public use datasets through its [Public Use Data Lake](#) program.
- DOL released a new [Open Data Plan](#) and [Open Data Service](#) to streamline and simplify the process of finding and accessing DOL's data for the public. This new service allows users to more easily extract relevant subsets of data for analysis or visualization.

## Department of State

- The [Data Informed Diplomacy](#) webpage describes State's efforts to produce, use, and store data and to leverage it as a strategic asset to further the agency's mission.

## Department of the Treasury

- Treasury's [Open Data](#) resource provides links to various data sources, including from the Treasury International Capital reporting system, which is the U.S. government's source of data on capital flows into and out of the United States.
- The Statistics of Income (SOI) program of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) publishes a wide range of tables, articles, and data that describe and measure elements of the U.S. tax system. IRS also publishes an annual [Data Book](#), which provides data on collecting revenue, issuing refunds, enforcing the law, assisting taxpayers, and the budget and workforce. Finally, SOI's [Joint Statistical Research Program](#) offers an annual call for proposals that, if selected, will allow a researcher to access curated tax data to research tax administration-related issues.

## Department of Transportation

- DOT's [Bureau of Transportation Statistics](#) is the preeminent source of statistics on commercial aviation, multimodal freight activity, and transportation economics, and provides context to decision makers and the public for understanding statistics on transportation.

## Department of Veterans Affairs

- [Data.va.gov](#) is a new and robust portal where users can access data, Application Programming Interfaces, tools, and resources that can be used to develop web and mobile applications, design data visualizations, and create stories directly from VA resources.
- VA's [National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics](#) develops statistical analyses and reports on a broad range of topics, operates VA's data and statistics Web portal to disseminate veteran data and statistics, and develops estimates and projections on veteran populations.

## U.S. Agency for International Development

- USAID’s [Development Data Library](#) is the public’s gateway to USAID-funded, machine-readable data. Data are available on topics such as democracy, human rights, and governance; economic growth; education and social services; and humanitarian assistance.
- The [Rule of Law IDEAS Lab](#) provides a central clearinghouse for learning, tools, and reference materials generated by and from USAID’s Rule of Law programming, including research and evaluation resources relating to people-centered justice, which emphasizes the importance of justice services that help real people solve their problems, whether or not they see them as legal issues.

## U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

- [EPA.gov/data](#) is a landing page to explore and interact with EPA data resources. People can find data by topic or location, interact with those data in web-based applications, and understand how EPA uses data.

## Administrative Conference of the United States

- ACUS’s publicly available, online, and searchable [database](#) contains detailed information about each award of fees and costs entered against the government under the Equal Access to Justice Act.

## Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

- CFPB’s [Data and Research page](#) features research and reports on the consumer financial marketplace. CFPB also hosts a [Public Data Inventory](#) with links to various records and databanks.

## Corporation for National and Community Service (AmeriCorps)

- The [AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange](#) is a digital repository of research and evaluation reports, with resources focusing on national service, social innovation, civic engagement, and volunteering.

## Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

- [EEOC.gov/data](#) is the one-stop shop for data and analytics related to EEOC. This web resource allows the public to access EEOC’s publicly available workforce data, in-browser tools to easily explore datasets, and information products such as visualizations and data highlights on specific topics.



## Federal Communications Commission

- [Opendata.fcc.gov](https://opendata.fcc.gov) provides the public with access to over a hundred datasets collected by the FCC, including those relating to its Broadband Data Collection and Consumer Complaint Initiatives.

## Federal Trade Commission

- FTC's [Explore Data](#) page enables the public to access interactive consumer data on fraud, identity theft, unwanted calls, and other consumer problems based on reports from the public to FTC.

## National Science Foundation

- [NSF.gov/data](https://nsf.gov/data) provides the agency's open data policies, links to developer resources, and provides access to NSF's public data inventory and dataset.

## Legal Services Corporation

- LSC's [Research & Data](#) page provides data on civil legal needs and services, including economic and demographic data, as well as research initiatives such as the Civil Court Data Initiative, which collects millions of civil court records to help legal aid providers and the public understand trends in state and local courts.

## Social Security Administration

- SSA provides public access to data on policy, racial equity, disability, and more.
  - [SecurityStat](#)
  - [Open Government Select Datasets](#)
  - [Research, Statistics & Policy Analysis](#)
  - [Racial Equity Research, Statistics, and Data Resources](#)
  - [Advancing Equity](#)
  - [Actuarial Publications](#)
  - [Disability Research](#)

## U.S. Census Bureau

- [Data.census.gov](https://data.census.gov) allows the public to access and explore data gathered by the U.S. Census Bureau. Included data cover over 100,000 different geographies, with topics including education, employment, health, and housing.

# Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> One large-scale study found that 66% of the U.S. population experienced at least one legal issue in the preceding four years, but only 49% of those problems were completely resolved. See Brittany Kauffman et al., [Justice Needs and Satisfaction in the United States of America](#), Inst. for the Advancement of the Am. Legal Sys. (2021). A 2022 study by the Legal Services Corporation found that low-income Americans do not get any or enough legal help for 92% of their substantial civil legal problems. When people do not have what they need to resolve their justice problems, they face a justice gap. See Mary C. Slosar et al., [The Justice Gap: The Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-income Americans](#), Legal Servs. Corp. (2022).

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Rebecca L. Sandefur & James Teufel, *Assessing America's Access to Civil Justice Crisis*, 11 U.C. Irvine L. Rev. 753, 757 (2021).

<sup>3</sup> Merrick B. Garland, Attorney General, U.S. Dep't of Justice, [Attorney General Merrick B. Garland Delivers Remarks at the Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable](#) (Dec. 6, 2023).

<sup>4</sup> [Memorandum on Restoring the Department of Justice's Access-to-Justice Function and Reinvigorating the White House Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable](#), 86 Fed. Reg. 27793, 27794 (May 18, 2021).

<sup>5</sup> See *id.*

<sup>6</sup> Jeff Hild, [ACF has simplified our Notices of Funding Opportunities!](#), The Family Room Blog, Admin. for Children & Families, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs. (Mar. 26, 2024).

<sup>7</sup> [Welcome to ERO eFile!](#), U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement, U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec. (last visited Oct. 22, 2024).

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., [Domestic Violence and Homelessness: Statistics \(2016\)](#), Off. of the Admin. for Children & Families, U.S. Dep't of Health & Hum. Servs., (last visited Oct. 24, 2024) ("Between 22 and 57% of all homeless women report that domestic violence was the immediate cause of their homelessness."); [Intersections of Domestic Violence and Primary Healthcare Focus Survey](#), Nat'l Domestic Violence Hotline ("53% [of survey respondents] reported that a partner who chooses to abuse has also controlled and/or restricted healthcare access.") (last visited Oct. 24, 2024); Adrienne E. Adams & Marisa L. Beeble, *Intimate Partner Violence and Psychological Well-Being: Examining the Effect of Economic Abuse on Women's Quality of Life*, 9 Psych. of Violence 517, 523 (2019) (finding "that economic abuse contributes to IPV survivors' psychological well-being beyond the effects of physical and psychological abuse").

<sup>9</sup> See [Memorandum on Restoring the Department of Justice's Access-to-Justice Function and Reinvigorating the White House Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable](#), *supra* note 4.

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Stefanie Isser Goldblatt & Cheryl Parker Rose, [Using CFPB Complaint Data to Help Cities and Counties Protect the Public](#), Consumer Fin. Prot. Bureau (Nov. 18, 2022) (describing CFPB's Government Portal); [Consumer Sentinel: Law Enforcement's Source for Consumer Complaints](#), Fed. Trade Comm'n (featuring examples of law enforcement discussing uses of the Sentinel database) (last visited Oct. 23, 2024).

<sup>11</sup> See [Tiny Chat 123: Upstream – VA Data Sharing](#), Nat'l Ctr. for State Courts, Vimeo (discussing a collaboration between state courts in Indiana and the Department of Veterans Affairs).

<sup>12</sup> See Rebecca L. Sandefur, *Access to What?*, 148 Dædalus 49, 50 (Winter 2019); Rebecca L. Sandefur, *Legal Advice from Nonlawyers: Consumer Demand, Provider Quality, and Public Harms*, 16 Stan. J. C.R. & C.L. 283, n. 2 (2020).

<sup>13</sup> [Infographic: Data Along the Justice Journey](#), U.S. Agency for Int'l Dev. (last visited Oct. 23, 2024).

<sup>14</sup> See generally [2023 LSC By the Numbers: The Data Underlying Legal Aid Programs](#), Legal Servs. Corp. (2024).

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., [Fact Sheet: Biden-Harris Administration Launches Year of Evidence for Action to Fortify and Expand Evidence-Based Policymaking](#), The White House (Apr. 7, 2022).

<sup>16</sup> LAIR member agencies provided information responsive to the following questions:

1. What kinds of access to justice data does your agency collect and use?
2. Please provide one to five examples of how your agency is leveraging access to justice data to develop, implement, and/or evaluate policies and programs.

3. What gaps or barriers exist (outside of resource limitations) for your agency when it comes to collecting and using access to justice data for evidence-based access to justice policies and/or programs?
4. What resources or support would help strengthen your agency's collection and use of access to justice data for evidence-based access to justice policies and/or programs?
5. What's next for your agency? Please describe one to five upcoming programs, initiatives, or projects for collecting, analyzing, and using access to justice data, and/or any opportunities for improved usage of access to justice data to further your agency's mission.
6. Does your agency share certain access to justice data with other agencies, outside researchers, or the public? If so, please provide one to five examples of such data sharing efforts, including the objectives and impact of sharing the access to justice data in terms of advancing access to justice and/or the agency's mission.
7. Is there anything else your agency would like to share for possible inclusion in the 2024 LAIR report?
8. We are also soliciting updates to the 2022 and 2023 LAIR Reports – including follow-ups on relevant agency activities and Report recommendations. Are there any updates, accomplishments, or new initiatives from FY2024 related to people-centered simplification or the use of lawyer and nonlawyer assistance in administrative proceedings that your agency would like to share?

<sup>17</sup> Rebecca L. Sandefur et al., [Access to Justice Research as a Tool for Advancing Federal Priorities](#) (2024).

<sup>18</sup> *Id.* at 11 (stating that “[o]ne insight from the discussion was a pervasive lack of information about what [federal] data and expertise already exist”).

<sup>19</sup> See LAIR Listening Session (Jun. 27, 2024) (transcript on file with author); see also [The Promise of Evidence-Based Policymaking: Report of the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking](#), Comm’n on Evidence-Based Policymaking (Sept. 2017), at 36 (noting that “[c]ommenters said these processes can often be slow and confusing. Other agencies do not have formal programs for external researcher access, so the application process can be much more ad hoc”).

<sup>20</sup> [The Promise of Evidence-Based Policymaking: Report of the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking](#), *supra* note 19, at 105 (arguing that “the greatest problems facing evidence building today [are that] data access is limited, privacy-protecting practices are inadequate, and the capacity to generate the evidence needed to support policy decisions is insufficient”).

<sup>21</sup> LAIR Data Request Response submitted to DOJ Office for Access to Justice (June 2024) (on file with author).

<sup>22</sup> [A Vision for Equitable Data: Recommendations from the Equitable Data Working Group](#), The White House, at 3 (last visited Oct. 24, 2024) (noting that “as the federal government expands its use of disaggregated demographic data, it must be intentional about when data are collected and shared, as well as how data are protected so as not to exacerbate the vulnerability of members of underserved communities, many of whom face the heightened risk of harm if their privacy is not protected”); Sandefur et al., *supra* note 17, at 9; Nikolaos Ipiotis et al., [Data Sharing Working Group Findings & Recommendations](#), Fed. Chief Data Officer Council, at 7 (2022).

<sup>23</sup> [Coordinating Data Sharing Across Agencies: Strategies to Address Common Challenges](#), U.S. Dep’t of Health & Human Servs., Health Res. & Servs. Admin., at 4 (Mar. 2021).

<sup>24</sup> See [A Vision for Equitable Data: Recommendations from the Equitable Data Working Group](#), *supra* note 22, at 3; see also Ipiotis et al., *supra* note 22, at 2-3; [Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies: Guidance for Providing and Using Administrative Data for Statistical Purposes](#), Exec. Office of the President, Office of Mgmt. & Budget, at 14 (Feb. 14, 2014).

<sup>25</sup> See [A Vision for Equitable Data: Recommendations from the Equitable Data Working Group](#), *supra* note 22, at 3.

<sup>26</sup> Sandefur et al., *supra* note 17, at 9.

<sup>27</sup> Ipiotis et al., *supra* note 22, at 2.

<sup>28</sup> See [Evidence-Based Policymaking: Agencies Need Additional Guidance to Assess Their Capacity](#), U.S. Gov’t Accountability Off., at 4 (Aug. 2024) (finding that capacity for evidence-building varied widely across agencies and sources of evidence).

<sup>29</sup> See, e.g., [Health and Human Services: Empowering Beneficiaries with their Own Health Data](#), U.S. Digital Serv. (last visited Oct. 24, 2024).

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<sup>30</sup> See [Language Assistance Program Data](#), U.S. Tr. Program, U.S. Dep’t of Justice (last visited Oct. 27, 2024) (linking to FY 2023 data); see also [U.S. Trustee Program Provides Nearly 10,000 Language Interpretation Sessions in Fiscal Year 2023 for Debtors with Limited English Proficiency](#), U.S. Tr. Program, U.S. Dep’t of Justice (Nov. 20, 2023).

<sup>31</sup> See also [Enforcement and Litigation Statistics](#), U.S. Equal Emp’t Opportunity Comm’n (last visited Oct. 25, 2024); [Federal Sector Reports](#), U.S. Equal Emp’t Opportunity Comm’n (last visited Oct. 25, 2024).

<sup>32</sup> See [Bipartisan Partnership Between Secretary Buttigieg and State Attorneys General to Protect Airline Passengers](#), U.S. Dep’t of Transp. (last visited Oct. 27, 2024).

<sup>33</sup> Sandefur et al., *supra* note 17.

<sup>34</sup> National Science Foundation-funded research projects include:

- [Access to Civil Justice: Integrating and Advancing Theory and Practice](#) (2018–2019),
- [Bridging the Rural Justice Gap: Innovating & Scaling Up Civil Access to Justice in Alaska](#) (2022–2023),
- [Equitable Access to Justice: Determinants of Engagement with the Civil Justice System](#) (2024–2029),
- [Understanding Access to Justice: Social Sources of Variation in Everyday Relationships to Law](#) (2020–2025), and
- [When Place Matters: A Comparative Study of Access and Justice across Tribal and State Courts](#) (2022–2025).

<sup>35</sup> Ipiotis et al., *supra* note 22, at 2–3.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.* at 3–4.

<sup>37</sup> See also [Neighbors in Need](#) (last visited Oct. 25, 2024).

<sup>38</sup> [OVC FY 2023 Services for Victims of Human Trafficking](#), Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Dep’t of Justice (2023); [OVC FY 2024 Services for Victims of Human Trafficking](#), Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Dep’t of Justice (2024).

<sup>39</sup> See [Addressing Durable Health Disparities Through Critical Time Legal Interventions in Medically Underserved Latinx and Migrant Communities in the United States](#), Nat’l Inst. of Health RePORTER (last visited Oct. 25, 2024).

<sup>40</sup> See [A Systems-Level Perspective to Addressing Health Harming Legal Needs Via a Joint Health Equity Collective and MLP Network Approach](#), Nat’l Inst. of Health RePORTER (last visited Oct. 25, 2024).

<sup>41</sup> See [Access and Visitation](#), Office of Child Support Servs., Admin. for Children & Families, U.S. Dep’t of Health & Human Servs. (last visited Oct. 25, 2024).

<sup>42</sup> The Life Experiences initiatives use the Customer Experience (CX) framework, which improves service delivery by understanding experiences from the customer’s point of view. This approach also applies to the people-centered justice framework that is illustrated in the disaster recovery example. See [Recovering from a Disaster](#), Gen. Servs. Admin. (last visited Oct. 24, 2024).

<sup>43</sup> See, e.g., [Common Legal Issues After a Disaster](#), Legal Aid Disaster Res. Ctr. (last visited Oct. 24, 2024); [Recovering From a Disaster Journey Map](#), Gen. Servs. Admin. (last visited Oct. 24, 2024); [LSC Disaster Task Force](#), Legal Servs. Corp. (last visited Oct. 24, 2024); Rachel Rossi, Dir. of Office for Access to Justice, U.S. Dep’t of Justice, [Director Rachel Rossi Delivers Keynote Address at the Community Legal Services 57th Annual Pro Bono Awards Dinner](#) (Oct. 17, 2024).

<sup>44</sup> *Id.*

<sup>45</sup> [Recovering from a Disaster](#), *supra* note 42.

<sup>46</sup> [Recovering from a Disaster Journey Map](#), *supra* note 43.

<sup>47</sup> [A Vision for Equitable Data: Recommendations from the Equitable Data Working Group](#), *supra* note 22, at 2.

<sup>48</sup> Kelly Bidwell et al., [Building the Foundation Needed to Achieve the Evidence Act’s Potential for Transforming Federal Policymaking](#), Office of Management & Budget (Jan. 29, 2024).

<sup>49</sup> See, e.g., Ipiotis et al., *supra* note 22.

<sup>50</sup> [Consumer Complaint Databases](#), Admin. Conference of the U.S. (last visited Oct. 25, 2024); [Proactive Disclosure of Agency Legal Materials](#), Admin. Conference of the U.S. (last visited Oct. 25, 2024); [Public Availability of Settlement Agreements in Agency Enforcement Proceedings](#), Admin. Conference of the U.S. (last visited Oct. 25, 2024).

<sup>51</sup> See also [Fifth U.S. Open Government National Action Plan](#), The White House (Dec. 2022).

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<sup>52</sup> See [\*GPRA Modernization Act of 2010: Examining Constraints To, and Providing Tools For, Cross-Agency Collaboration\*](#), Admin. Conference of the U.S. (last visited Oct. 25, 2024).

<sup>53</sup> Another useful tool for environmental justice work is the [\*Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool\*](#), developed by the Council on Environmental Quality. The tool has an interactive map and uses datasets that are indicators of burdens in eight categories: climate change, energy, health, housing, legacy pollution, transportation, water and wastewater, and workforce development. The tool uses this information to identify communities that are experiencing these burdens.00A0