

Elevating Trust and Legitimacy for Prosecutors

What we learned bringing procedural justice into prosecutors' offices

Building Safe + Just Communities Lunch & Learn, October 21, 2026



Why this project and why prosecutors

Procedural justice has been studied for decades in policing and courts, and ETL is among the first initiatives to systematically integrate these principles into prosecutorial practices.

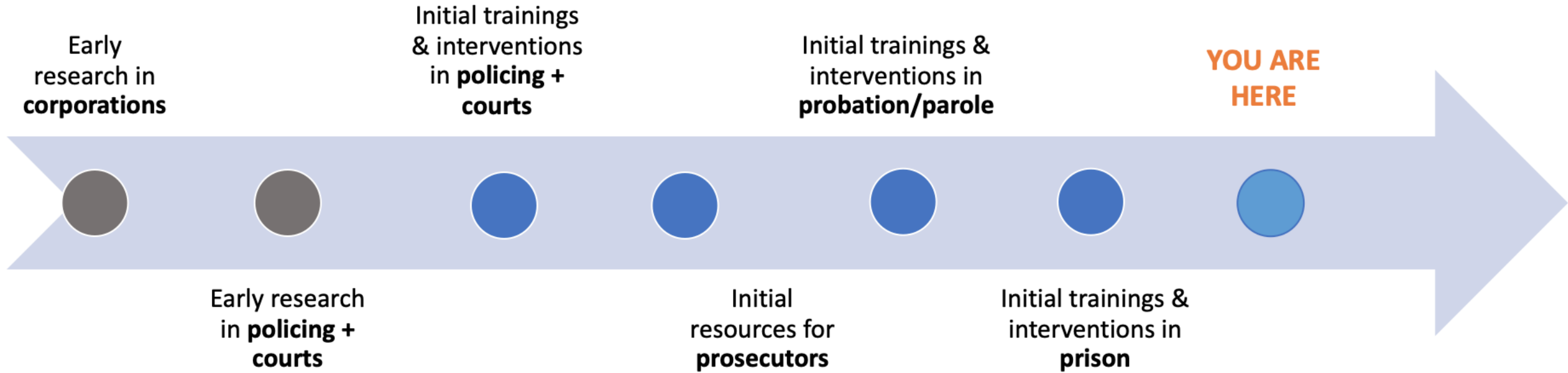
About ETL

- Seven prosecutors' offices since 2021
- A partnership of the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, the Justice Collaboratory, and LaGratta Consulting
- Embeds procedural justice into everyday practices
- Measured with research support from the Justice Collaboratory

Why prosecutors

- Serve as a critical bridge between communities and the justice system
- Shape how individuals experience the justice process
- Have opportunities to build trust at key stages of the justice process
- Can help foster a culture of fairness and trust across justice system partners

Quick history of procedural justice



- How do citizens/
litigants assess for
fairness and trust?

- What practices impact
perceptions of fairness?
- How can we support
professionals in implementing
and enhancing these practices?

How do authorities build trust?



Legitimacy → Compliance & Cooperation

Authorities' Behavior



Community Member Perceptions



Behavioral Outcomes

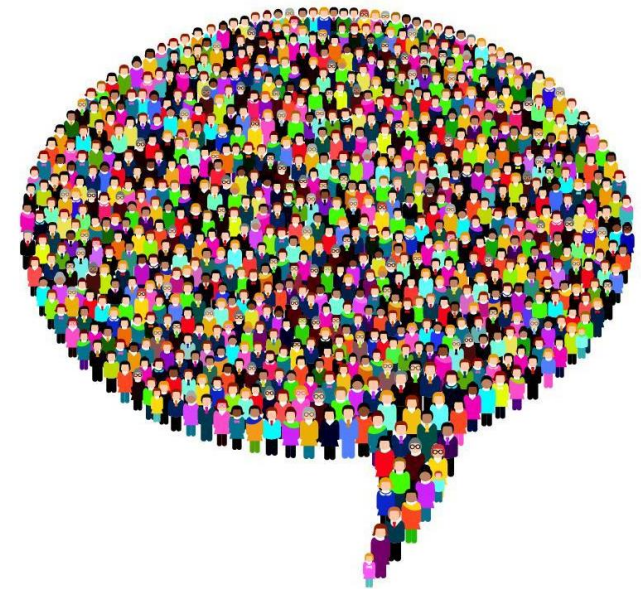
- ✓ Voice
- ✓ Neutrality
- ✓ Trustworthy
- ✓ Respectful

- Legal authorities serve the best interests + are worthy of respect

- Voluntary respect for rules and laws
- Cooperation with authorities
- Employees feel less stressed

How we worked with the prosecutors' offices

- **Engaged Leadership and Staff** to understand office culture, practices, and challenges, including non-lawyer staff
- **Conducted Surveys** to gather perspectives on procedural justice, fairness, and organizational culture
- **Assessed Existing Practices** to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities
- **Developed Tailored Strategies** based on each office's needs and survey findings
- **Supported Implementation** through ongoing technical assistance and collaboration



Who we heard from

494

Prosecutors and non-lawyer staff

361

Victims and witnesses

~50

Statements rated by prosecutors and staff

Prosecutor and staff surveys and victim and witness surveys were each conducted in three participating offices

Inside the office

Strength

Staff generally felt respected by their supervisors

Biggest gap

Having a voice and clear communication from leadership

Felt least heard

Mid-career prosecutors

Views on gun violence work

Agreed

Many people charged by the office have experienced trauma from gun violence

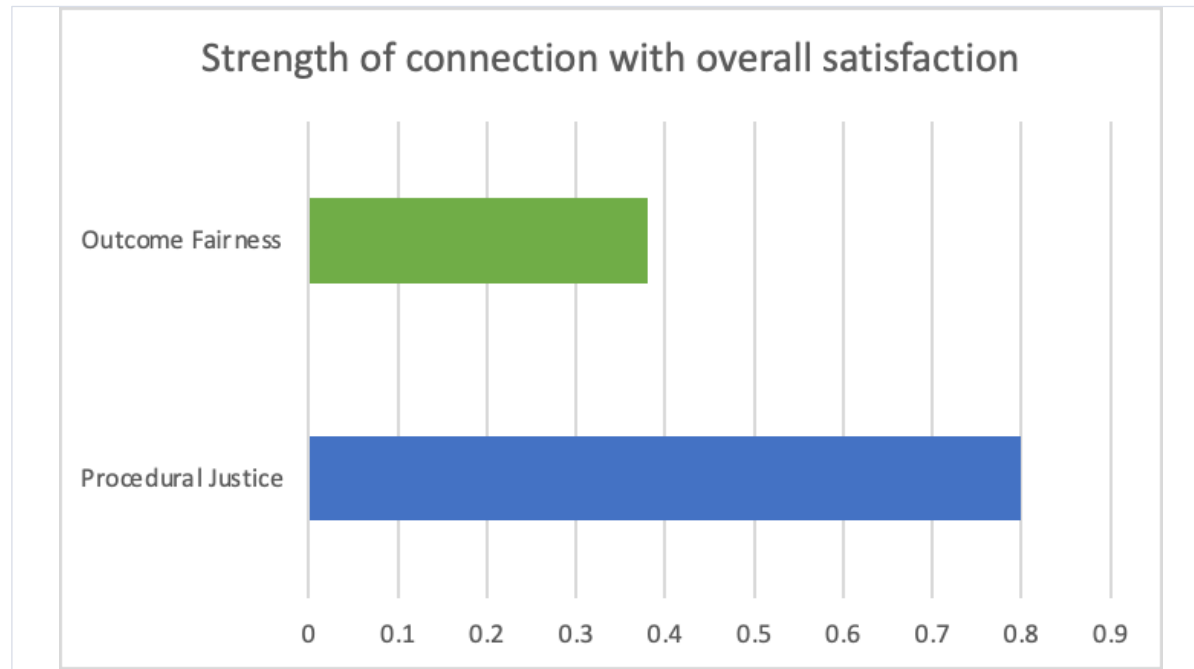
Agreed

The office has a role in supporting community members affected by gun violence

Unsure

Whether the office's handling of gun violence cases builds community trust

How victims were treated mattered more than the outcome of their case



Strength of connection with victims' overall satisfaction, one participating office

- Being heard was the strongest predictor of satisfaction with prosecutors
- Poor communication was the most common concern

Promising practices: Internally and Externally

Internal staff newsletter

Created after staff said they didn't understand the work of colleagues in other teams and roles

Enhancing victim outreach

Revised templates for victim notifications and outreach to maximize transparency and voice at key stages

Supervisory training

Focused on seeking staff input and explaining the reasons behind decisions

Transparency in case screening

Improved neutrality and transparency in screening; addressed backlogs



Lessons learned

□ Start at the top

How staff are treated by management shapes how they treat the public

□ Work to articulate what justice means

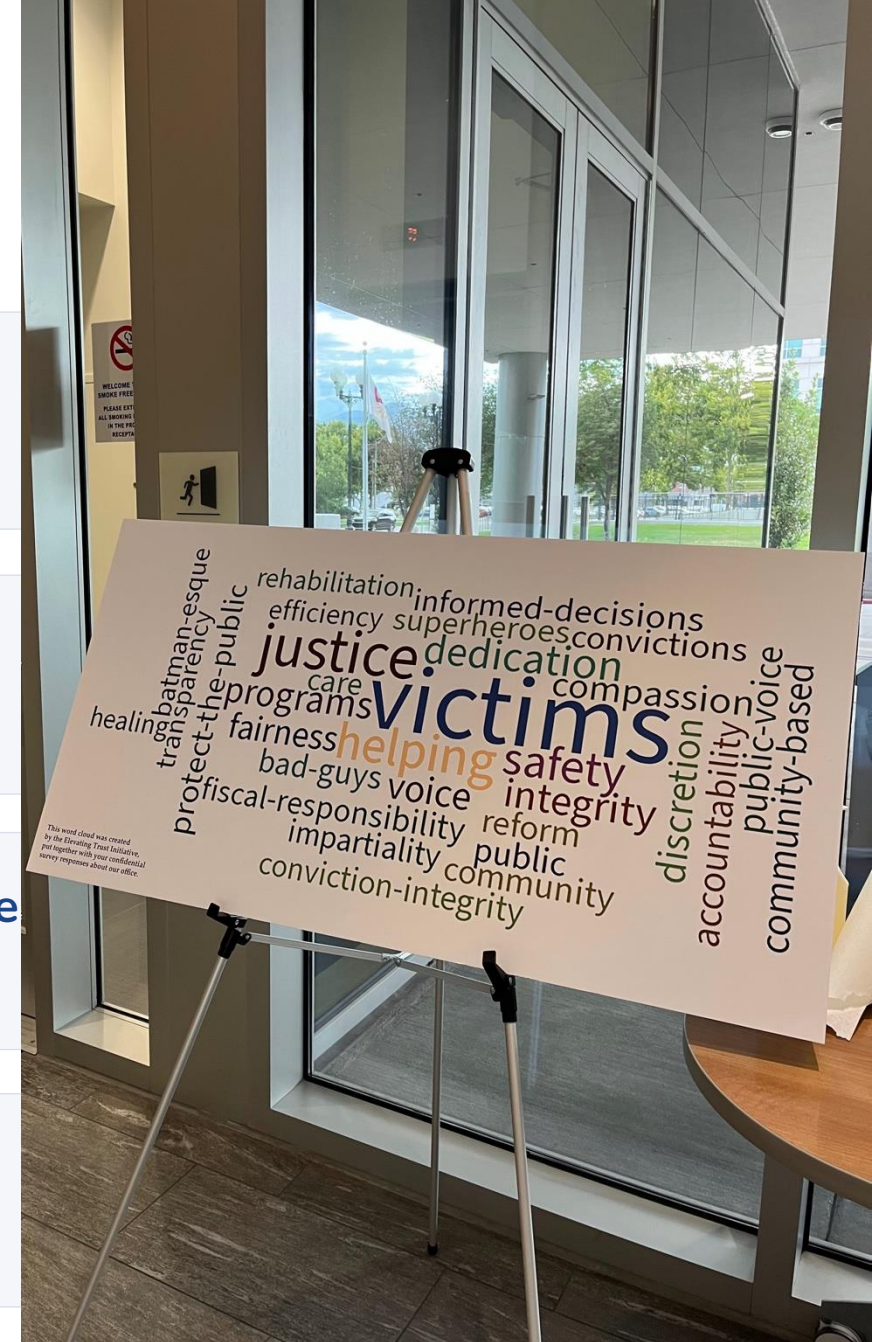
Use what we know about public perceptions of justice to expand definitions of success

□ Review templates and procedures to institutionalize improvement

Enhance notification templates, internal meeting agendas

□ Small interactions add up – and may soften the ground for more

Greetings, updates, and explanations shape how people see the office



Questions?



Thank you

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