



Impact Report

Organisation name

Law and Advocacy Centre for Women

Your name and position

Jill Prior - Principal Legal Officer

Please tell us a short story about someone who has benefited from this funding.

When Tessa* first contacted our service, she had a range of issues impacting her life - she was dealing with the trauma of fleeing a relationship of violence, she had a large number of fines relating to driving which were the responsibility of her abusive ex-partner, and she was also facing minor criminal charges resulting from her association with people she was sharing a house with in order to try to save money. Added to this were significant mental health issues and previous discrimination which was still impacting on her. Without a dedicated, in-house case-manager, the lawyers at LACW were struggling to assist Tessa with the range of non-legal needs she presented with. Since employing a case-manager using the funds received from The Funding Network, LACW has been able to fully support Tessa and provide a wrap-around service that addresses her non-legal needs as well as her legal problems. Our case-manager has helped Tessa access the support she needs to assist with her mental health, trauma and housing issues. She has a plan in place to tackle her fines, and she is getting her life back on track. With the support of our case manager, Tessa is able to deal with the issues in her life that brought her into the justice system in the first place, and find a pathway out.

* Name has been changed.

Please describe the impact that the specific TFN funding has had.

The impact of the TFN funding has been significant for our clients and for our organisation overall. The addition of a case manager to our staff has greatly increased our ability to provide a comprehensive, wrap-around service to our clients. We can properly address the non-legal needs, in particular those arising out of our clients' experiences of family violence, that have brought our clients into contact with the justice system. In doing so, we can implement long-term solutions that will help get their lives back on track and avoid further contact with the justice system.

Please provide a quantitative breakdown of how TFN funds have been used

Funding received: \$35,658

Salary and on-costs for part-time case manager: \$34,390

Telephone and IT expenses: \$500

Administration, recruitment: \$750

Describe any ways the funding was used that differs from that described your original pitch

While we were very keen to get going with our case-management program, it took some time to find the right person to fill the position. Accordingly, our case manager will still be working with us into the new year as the full amount of funding has not yet been exhausted.

How many people have been affected by programs or activities that were supported with TFN funding?

This will be on-going into 2018. We estimate that once the funding has been exhausted, our case-management services will have directly assisted over 50 of our clients. The indirect benefits are immense - the addition of a case-manager to our staff has freed up our lawyers to concentrate on the legal issues our clients present with, thereby providing an enhanced level of service delivery to all of our clients. In addition, the benefit of a case-managed, wrap-around service that seeks to improve the lives of the women that we assist will have further positive impacts on their family members, in particular their children, as well as assist them in forging pathways out of the justice system so that they become engaged positively as members of their communities.

What measures did you use to assess the impact?

Once a clients' matters have been completed, they are provided with a survey to complete which seeks feedback on their experience of our service overall and also assesses their engagement with non-legal service providers. We have also completed telephone surveys with a number of clients to assess the impact of the assistance we have provided in the short and medium term.

Describe three ways that your organisation has changed in the last 12 months since the event

The past 12 months have been a period of significant growth and achievement for LACW. In July we received a grant from the Maddocks Foundation which has enabled us to employ a paralegal assistant/volunteer coordinator. This has greatly increased the capacity of our volunteer program and enabled us to reach more women who would otherwise receive little or no assistance in navigating the justice system. We have also moved to a larger premises. We are now located within the Centre for Innovative Justice at RMIT University and are part of a Multidisciplinary Practice that also includes the Mental Health Legal Centre. Working together, our organisations are dedicated to improving access to justice and providing an enhanced model of service delivery to clients. Finally, our inclusion on Victoria Legal Aid's indictable crime panel has enabled us to support clients with more serious charges and has assisted us in becoming a more financially sustainable organisation.

Over the last 12 months, did you receive any additional financial support from anyone you met through TFN?

No

Over the last 12 months, did you receive any goods in-kind and/or pro-bono services from anyone you met through TFN?

No

How important was TFN funding in helping you achieve your objectives this year?

We wouldn't have been able to achieve our objectives without TFN funding

Has the TFN pitch coaching and mentoring helped you successfully secure funding from other sources you did not meet through TFN?

Yes

How much and from whom?

The pitch coaching has indirectly assisted us in securing funding as it has improved the way in which we approach potential funders.

What were some of the other benefits of participating in TFN?

The Funding Network has provided us with access to a broad range of donors who we may otherwise not have been able to reach. It has provided us with confidence going forward that our mission and goals as an organization resonate with a broad section of the community, and that people are willing to invest in the long-term solutions that we are providing to women in the criminal justice system who are impacted by family violence. It has provided us with funding – a significant amount in the context of our fledgling organization – that has enabled us to implement a service model that may otherwise have been some years down the track. We feel more energized in our mission and goals, and more confident that these resonate with a broad section of the community.

Do you have any other comments or feedback on the TFN experience or funding process?

Thank you so much to all the team at The Funding Network. It is hard to express our gratitude for everything you have done for us and for our clients. We are so grateful that you have given us this opportunity and look forward to staying in touch in the future.