

How Feedback Shapes **Better Reporting Systems**



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How Advocate Feedback Shapes Better Reporting Systems

Technology is often described as a “tool.”

However, in survivor services, the systems organizations rely on every day are far more than that. They shape how services are provided, influence reporting processes, and affect how advocates spend their time.

When reporting systems are designed without understanding the true realities of advocacy work, even well-intentioned technology can create friction. Workflows may not reflect how services are delivered. Reporting tools may miss critical data points. Navigation may slow down documentation and hinder support rather than empowering it.

The difference between systems that frustrate users and systems that truly support the work often comes down to one thing: listening.

Listening to the Field

Advocates and program leaders know the reality of survivor-centered work, because they live them every day.

They understand what it means to document services carefully while protecting survivor confidentiality. They know the pressure of preparing reports for multiple funders, tracking the right information, and helping staff use

systems that may not always reflect the way services are actually delivered.

That kind of knowledge matters.

It helps reveal where workflows feel clear and also where reporting becomes difficult. It helps identify what leaders need in order to understand program activity, demonstrate impact, and support their teams well.

Feedback from the field is much more powerful than assumption alone. When technology developers listen closely to these experiences, they gain insights that cannot be found in documentation manuals or technical specifications.

These insights are essential to building systems that function effectively in the real world.

When Systems Are Built Without Feedback

Many organizations have experienced technology that feels disconnected from the realities of their work. This can happen when systems are developed without input from advocates or when feedback from users is treated as an afterthought.

The result is often familiar:

- Workflows that don't match real documentation processes
- Unnecessary steps that slow down data entry
- Reporting tools that require manual workarounds
- Systems that feel rigid instead of adaptable

When this happens, advocates spend valuable time navigating the system rather than focusing on the work that matters most.

While this is certainly a failure of technology, it is really due to a failure of collaboration.

Building Systems *With* the Field

When organizations and technology partners collaborate, the development process changes.

Feedback becomes a central part of improvement. Real-world experiences inform design decisions. Systems evolve to reflect the needs of the people using them.

Collaborative development leads to:

More intuitive workflows

Systems mirror the way advocates actually document services.

More useful reporting tools

Reports reflect the requirements of funders and program leaders.

More responsive systems

Technology evolves as the field evolves.

This process ensures that systems remain practical, relevant, and supportive of advocacy work.

How Collaboration Shapes Vela

At Vela, collaboration plays a vital role in how we build and improve our platform. Our team includes former advocates and program leaders with more than 100 years of combined experience in survivor services. It's why our software is By Advocates For Advocates™.

In fact, our new-feature team lead, Erica Nanney, spent 11 years as an executive director for a domestic violence program. When her program started using Vela, she found herself energized to discover how a new system could support their work and provide good data. Her wonder led to a career pivot.

Erica now works for Vela where she leads development updates, funder reports, and new features. She approaches her work with the lived experience of DV/SA data collecting and reporting. Erica's background and those of the other members of our team give us a unique perspective and a strong foundation in the work of advocacy.

Still, here at Vela, we know the field continues to evolve. We recognize that we must continue to learn from the organizations we serve.

Client feedback plays a critical role in shaping our system. Organizations share insights about their workflows, reporting requirements, and operational

challenges. Those insights help us refine features, improve reporting tools, and strengthen the overall user experience.

These conversations ensure that the system continues to reflect the realities of survivor services and reinforce our role as a partner in this work.

Systems That Grow With the Field

We recognize that advocacy work does not stand still.

Reporting requirements change. Community needs evolve. Organizations expand programs and develop new approaches to supporting survivors.

Technology *must* evolve alongside these changes.

Systems built through collaboration are better positioned to grow with the field because they are shaped by ongoing dialogue with the people who rely on them.

This approach creates systems that remain relevant, adaptable, and aligned with the mission of survivor services.

Collaboration as a Path to Better Systems

Strong reporting systems do not emerge from technical expertise alone. They cannot. They must emerge from partnership.

At Vela, we are deeply grateful for the organizations that continue to share their experiences, ideas, and honest feedback with us. Your insight helps us better understand the daily realities of advocacy work, from documentation and reporting to training, workflows, and long-term program needs.

We know that meaningful improvement does not happen in isolation. It happens through ongoing conversation with the people closest to the work.

To our current clients, thank you for the time, care, and perspective you have contributed. Your feedback continues to shape Vela in ways that strengthen the system for your organization and for the broader field.

We hope you will continue sharing what you are seeing, what your teams need, and where Vela can better support the work ahead.

...and for organizations exploring a reporting system that is built with the field in mind, we would welcome the opportunity to learn from your experience as well. Connect with our team to see how Vela collaborates with survivor-serving organizations to create technology that supports the realities of advocacy work.

Vela is driven by our core values to support survivor-serving organizations with compassion, integrity, innovation, collaboration, and gratitude.

Want to learn new ways to simplify your work or explore features you may not be using yet? Visit veladirect.com or reach out to our team. We're always here to help.



Developed with input from advocates at every stage, Vela by Element 74 is a trauma-informed case management and reporting platform built specifically for domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking organizations.

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