MyLawBC:

Understanding Outcomes

A Report for Legal Services Society
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Executive Report

When the Legal Services Society (LSS) launched MyLawBC, it generated much interest because of its unique utilizations of guided pathways to deliver tailored legal information to the public. This has translated into the website drawing strong traffic and engagement from visitors. Since that time, engagement has remained consistent, but the question remains whether this traffic pattern is effective. This study is an investigation into developing an appropriate benchmark for guided pathway-based websites.

In the course of the research, we had the opportunity to speak to several practitioners from within the LSS, other agencies in British Columbia (BC), across Canada, and globally. Across the public legal education and information (PLEI) sector, some agencies articulated the desired outcomes for their users, but few were effectively measuring these outcomes. There is an opportunity not only to build a measurement protocol of internal benchmarks for the LSS, but also to share across the PLEI sector for comparison.

When considering the effectiveness of MyLawBC, this study recommends a few areas of focus. First, completion rate, as defined by a user reaching the Summary page, should not be the only metric of focus. Given the filtering nature of a guided pathway, it is important to understand how and why visitors discover MyLawBC, and then whether they successfully achieve their outcomes.

While getting to the Summary page is an ideal outcome, users might receive value along the way. This report introduces a four-step conversion funnel to guide the analysis of the visitors' broader journey to become educated and take action based on the information available on MyLawBC.

First, we recommend focusing on discovery, as those who complete guided pathways must first know that MyLawBC is available to address their needs. The dynamic nature of guided pathways poses specific challenges to optimizing visibility. This report makes initial recommendations for optimizing visibility as well as considerations for future work. More people visiting the website means more people able to act on the PLEI available on MyLawBC.

When considering whether users successfully achieve their outcomes, we recommend considering data from across three broad categories of measures: (1) Behaviour, (2) Action, and (3) Attitude. In addition to examining who has completed the path, we encourage continued focus on behavioural measures of how many started and abandoned their journey. We further recommend action measures of the numbers of downloads and the attitudinal measures of effort, success, and willingness to return.

The conversations with practitioners across different regions revealed that MyLawBC is recognized as a leading innovation in PLEI. Developing and sharing a benchmark to measure the effectiveness of user outcomes on guided pathways will provide an avenue to continue this leadership role.

Background

What was our question?

The MyLawBC website, built by LSS, is designed to support the citizens of BC in addressing several critical legal issues by providing a guided pathway. These guided pathways are a structured step-by-step approach to the law. Through diagnosis, triage, and an action plan, users can address their legal problem directly and be connected to resources that help achieve that goal. While a substantial number of people complete the entire pathway, questions emerged about how to evaluate the effectiveness of these pathways.

When this research began, the intention was to build a benchmark in comparison to similar websites used in the PLEI sector. Given different user types, frameworks for measurement, and even taxonomies on the data, very little comparable data exists across providers. As such, this study shifted the focus to better understand what is being measured and what types of data could most effectively be captured to create this benchmark across the PLEI sector.

How did we approach the answer?

This study used a mixed methodology for a comprehensive approach to this question. In addition to traditional interviews and surveys, we have many new digital tools at our disposal to embrace new practices in understanding whether users achieve their desired outcomes. In order to investigate this question, we used a range of methods, including the following:

- Interviews [n=19], typically 60 minutes by phone and some in person with PLEI practitioners. They came from within the LSS, other agencies in BC, across Canada, and globally.
- Reviews of relevant research studies conducted/recommended by interview subjects, including MyLawBC user research testing (from fall 2017); preliminary MyLawBC evaluation research (results due early 2019); research of the BC Commons Metric Committee for PLE; and user research conducted on similar websites.
- Digital data gathering tools including Google Analytics, Moz, and Hotjar.
- Research study, n=14 completes (some overlap with the interview subjects), deployed over Survey Monkey (~8 minutes long). Respondents included those using guided pathways and online dispute resolution as well as other digital tools to improve legal education and/or information.

This study embraced the spirit of trial and error, approached this question from different perspectives, and used various research methods. Our conclusions incorporate recommendations on how to approach future user studies on guided pathways.

Key Findings

How are outcomes defined and measured?

In this study, we asked PLEI practitioners what *outcomes* they want their users to achieve and whether their digital evaluation tools were designed with these outcomes in mind.

- For most practitioners, many of whom were not involved in the design stage, it is a challenge to articulate the objectives that informed the design of the tool. It is when they begin to examine the effectiveness that they clarify those definitions.
- Most capture *attitudinal* measures, almost too many to be meaningful, while few are measuring the *actions* taken by users. Key outcomes measured are as follows:
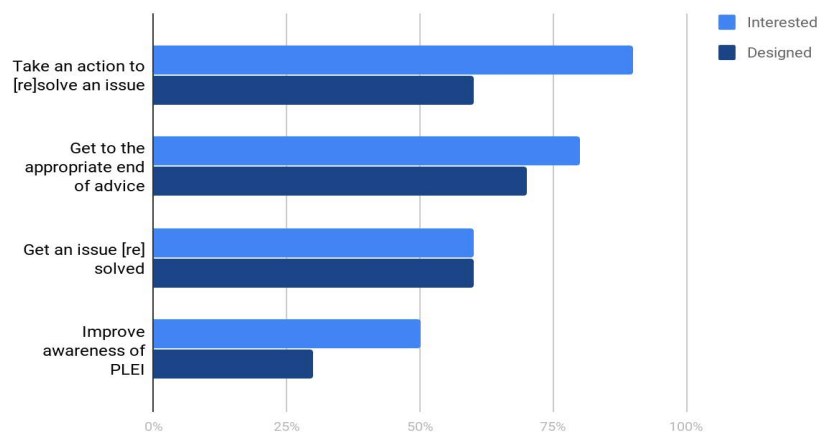
Measurement of outcomes can broadly fall into three categories of measures: (1) Behaviour, (2) Action, and (3) Attitude. Within these, a variety of data is of interest and gathered by practitioners.

*What **behaviours** are of interest/being collected?*
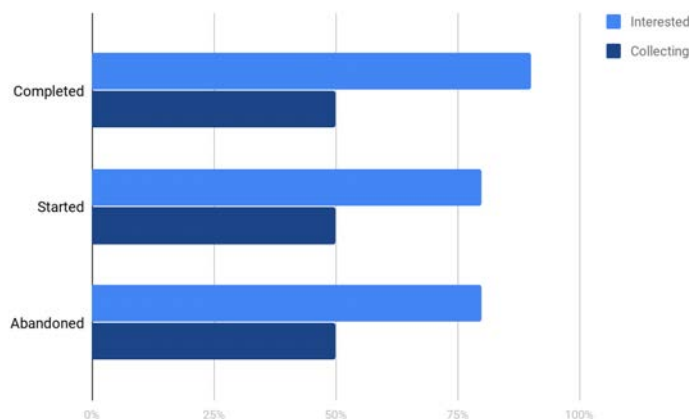
*What **actions** are of interest/being collected?*

*What **attitudes** are of interest/being collected?*
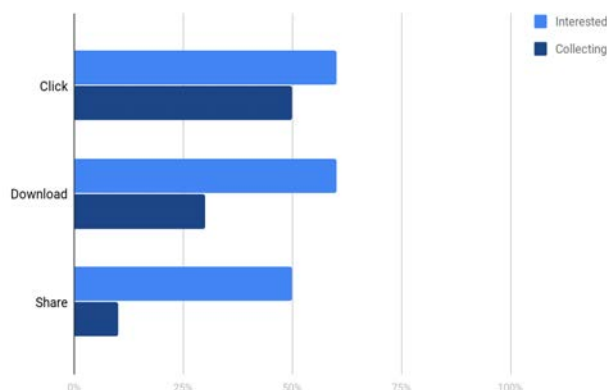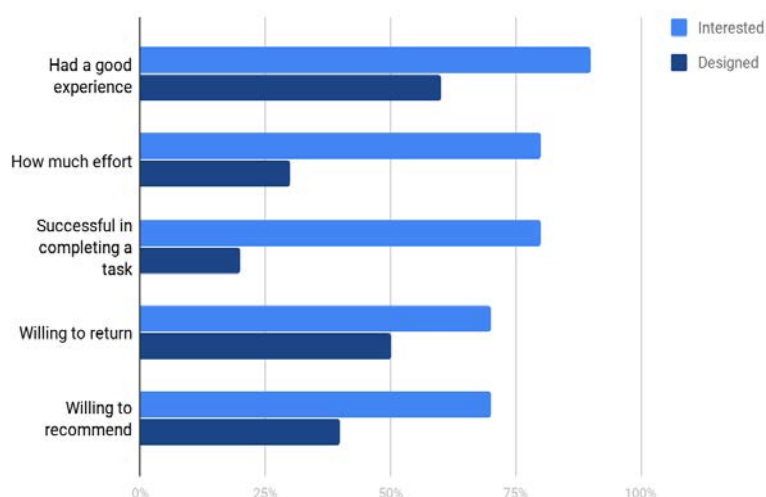

Many are using tools to capture some form of data, whether through surveys or analytics, but few find them effective for a unique website like MyLawBC. This confirms the appetite for a recommendation on the appropriate tools and data to be captured.
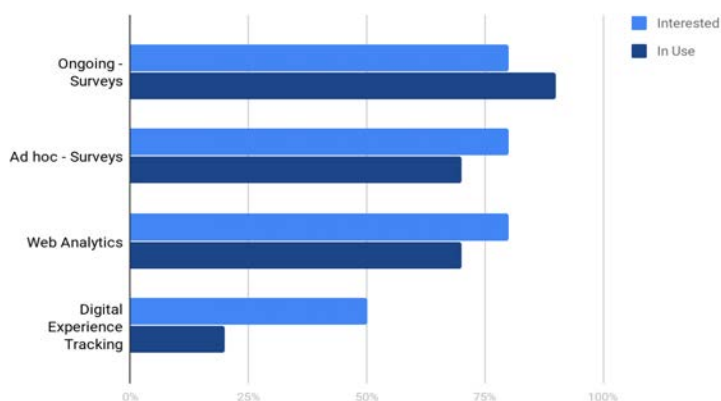
How should the LSS measure outcomes?

In trying to understand the outcomes of the pathways, this study initially began with a focus on *completion rates.* Opinions vary on how to define "completion" with many practitioners focused on the final outcome, such as the end page or plan presented.

Our opinion is that MyLawBC completion rates that focus only on the final Summary page will not fully illustrate who receives value from this tool. End points will vary in guided pathways as users can discover valuable information at different stages of their journey. Upon discovering the information they require, they could filter themselves out of the pathway. If we assume this, the Summary page is not the only end point of value to users. In trying to determine how to approach measurement, perhaps it is useful to turn to an understanding of the user journey through the tool.

User journeys come in many forms. For the purposes of this research, it is useful to consider the *conversion funnel* for users. "Conversion funnel" is a term used to describe the path visitors take between their initial visit to the website and ultimately achieving a goal. Understanding the way users browse the website informs which improvements can be made by optimizing each stage in the funnel. As such, the conversion funnel creates a framework allowing for measurement of those making it to the end point of the Summary page as well as for those receiving advice as they move through the guided pathways of MyLawBC.

In the case of MyLawBC, we recommend a focus on four key stages in order to measure effectiveness of outcomes as shown in the following diagram.

Conversion Funnel for Pathways
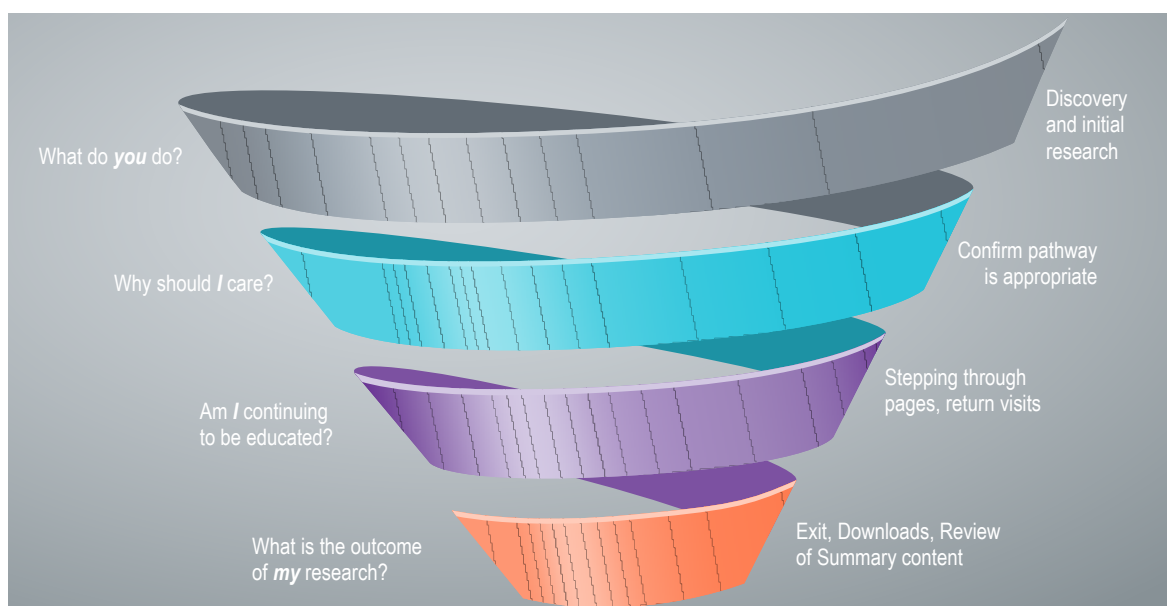
If we put this into practice for the "Separation plan" pathway of MyLawBC, we see how the dynamic nature of the tool changes how users are categorized into these stages.

A traditional approach to the Separation plan user pathway would be as follows:

Conversion Funnel for Separation Plan

However, users to the educational page about "Spousal Support" might have two key outcomes. Some may proceed through the path to the Summary page. Others may exit the tool without visiting the Summary page. The latter user is presently not counted as "completed," but could likely be satisfied as their objective is met. For example, someone planning to separate might learn in greater detail what is required and that might change their approach to separation.

Conversion Funnel for Separation plan – User B

Understanding this perspective of the user changes how stakeholders of MyLawBC collect data to measure this new definition of outcomes.

However, at present, the MyLawBC website is not fully configured to capture the *effective* completion rate, that is, the completion rate across the full conversion journey. With some changes to the website and the tracking tools, stakeholders of MyLawBC could start to capture benchmark data that tracks these different parts of the journey.

Recommended measures include the following:
- *Behavioural* measures of movement through the conversion funnel in order to capture how many users started, completed, and abandoned.
    - We recommend Google Analytics for this measurement given its widespread adoption among practitioners. Presently, measurement of the number of visitors who started their MyLawBC journey can be captured, but some changes to the back-end will be required to measure the final stages.
- *Action* measures of downloads (using Google Analytics) and *attitudinal* measures of effort, success, and willingness to return. To further measure behaviour on MyLawBC, a tool such as Hotjar can confirm user behaviour at various exit points.
    - Presently, few of these measures are captured. Once the website evaluation is completed in early 2019 (by Malatest), stakeholders of MyLawBC may have these measures or alternative recommendations to consider.

How are users finding MyLawBC?

This study objective was focused on pathway completion, but we recommend considering the discoverability of the website itself. While part of the question about completion is how users move *through* the MyLawBC website, another important consideration is how visitors *find* the site and what they expect when they arrive. A range of adjustments to the site could be made, ranging from minor code changes to adjustments to the text within the pathway itself. Below is a summary of the recommended changes, which should improve site traffic. Before implementing any of these changes, it is important to consider what has been attempted previously and the barriers that exist when moving forward with these recommendations.

Recommendation / Highlight
- Improve approach to heading tags - Structure and add targeted keywords to the heading tags.
- Improvements for keyword content - Conduct a *Search Volume Analysis* to identify high-value key terms and allow search engines to crawl the pathways.
- Use publications to drive traffic - Restructure the Publications section and feature content more prominently, update descriptions to include key terms, and better utilize tools like Google Search Console to help it find and parse them correctly.
- Improve traffic through backlinks - Consider collaborative posts with partners and asking other relevant sites to link to MyLawBC.

What could measurement look like?

In this study, we had the opportunity to scan the literature associated with PLEI, speak with practitioners, and evaluate the MyLawBC website in order to create an approach to

evaluation. In considering what a benchmark could look like, this report modifies the *Care-Do-Impact* approach to data favoured at Google. We suggest **opening** with *why care* (data, insights); move to what should be **done** specifically (crystal clear actions); and then close with the organizational **impact** (predicting specific outcomes).

MyLawBC: User Visits and Outcomes

Timeframe:	September 1, 2018 - November 30, 2018				

MyLawBC Traffic

Users	New Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration
11389	9526	14317	32.14%	4.26	7.88
% Change to last period					
+7.52%	+1.2%	+2.7%	+ 3.4%	- 8%	- 32%

Pathway for:	Foreclosure				

Conversion Funnel

Stage 1/Discovery		Stage 2/Confirmation		Stage 3/Education		Stage 4/Outcome	
Sessions [#]	38	Sessions [#]	18	Sessions [#]	tbd	Sessions [#]	13
Proceeded	n/a	Proceeded	47.4% [of 38]	Proceeded	tbd	Proceeded	72.2% [of 18]
Made to this stage	52.60%	Made to this stage	27.80%	Made to this stage	tbd	Made to this stage	25.40%
% Change to last period	+ 6.2%	*% Change to last period*	+2.7%	*% Change to last period*	tbd	*% Change to last period*	+ 3.4%

Attitudes and Actions

			Publication downloads		
Effort	Success	Willingness to return	*Publication#1*	*Publication#2*	*Publication#3*
tbd	tbd	tbd	tbd	tbd	tbd
% Change to last period					
-11.7%	+7.9%	+4.5%			

Care

Overall, traffic is consistent from month to month (stable but not growing). Bounce rate (single-page sessions) is very low and users view a relatively high number of pages over a relatively long session duration.

[More to be added related to attitudes and actions]

Do

Recommend improve approach to heading tags [at minimum], also consider updating text to reflect keywords that visitors are using.

[More to be added related to attitudes and actions]

Impact

With the removal of the robot.txt, you should be able to increase traffic by 3% over the next quarter.

While some adjustments to the website and tracking mechanisms will be required for the comprehensive view we are recommending, we believe this will provide value to stakeholders of MyLawBC as well as the broader community of practitioners.

In order to fully implement these recommendations, a few additional steps/studies are suggested for consideration:

Recommendation / Highlight
- Confirm key steps in the conversion funnel as well as desired outcomes for users. This will inform the data that will be captured to create benchmarks.
  - In order to fully understand the conversion funnel, begin tracking why visitors come to MyLawBC as well as why they exit and what actions are taken once they exit.
  - At this stage, we have hypotheses, but they need to be validated through tracking in order to have comprehensive data.

- Improve SEO/discoverability of MyLawBC in order to improve visibility and bring more visitors to the website.
- Develop community for PLEI practitioners to share about digital tool usage not only for tracking benchmarks, but also to share knowledge around these newer approaches for engaging with visitors.

Full Report: Research into Completion rates

How are outcomes defined and measured?

In trying to understand the effectiveness of the pathways, this study initially began with a focus on *completion rates.* After conducting preliminary research, we recognized that completion rates are not the most appropriate area of focus. MyLawBC completion rates on the Summary page will not fully illustrate who is receiving value from this tool. The information provided throughout the pathways often delivers great value by educating the user about the appropriate legal mechanisms at their disposal.

Recommendation / Highlight
- End points will vary in guided pathways, particularly if the objective is to help users filter themselves out of a path. As such, completion rates should not be the sole focus for evaluation.

Given this shift in perspective, we adjusted our method to investigate how the broader group of practitioners conceive of *outcomes* in order to develop a suite of metrics for evaluating effectiveness. From a mix of qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys, we see a pattern emerge for how practitioners define and measure outcomes.

In this section of the report, we present the data for those using guided pathways [n=10]. In the appendix is the broader data set of respondents [n=14] using tools such as Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) and other digital tools to aid in PLEI.

What outcomes are recognized and captured by practitioners?

When looking beyond completion rates, we asked practitioners what *outcomes* they would like their users to achieve and whether the tool was designed for these outcomes. The data below highlights a theme repeated throughout this report, so we will mention it only at this first data point. There are multiple objectives behind most tools and interest in gathering a broad range of outcomes. However, the objectives are rarely defined clearly or mapped to the design in a way that they can be collected.
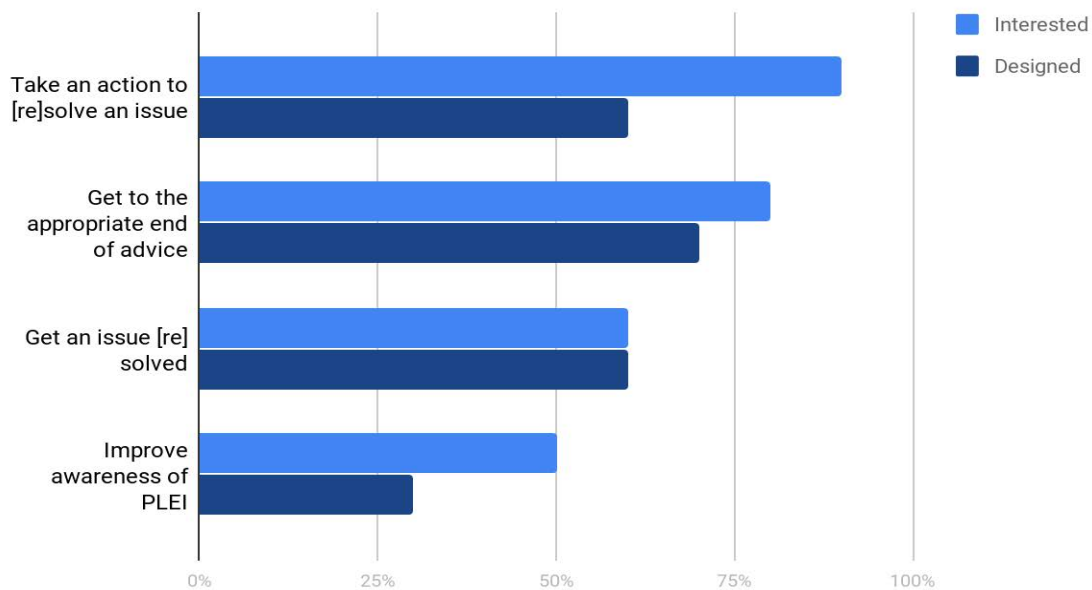
How are outcomes/completion being defined?

Through both qualitative and quantitative research, we identified a broad range of outcomes, but "taking an action to [re]solve an issue" and "getting to the end of advice" are largely of interest and often part of the design. While "resolving an issue" or "improving awareness of PLEI" are useful, outcomes can vary significantly given the different types of PLEI pathways in practice.

When asked in the interviews about completion, here are some responses:

> *"...Real value for us is up front, [users] not getting to the click button is not a failure for us."*
> *- PLEI Practitioner*

> *"Completion is getting to the advice page."*
> *- PLEI Practitioner*

> *"...willing to return is the end goal - continue to trust [our] legal aid as reliable amidst all the different information sources available ...[and] makes them consider or further think about their situation."*
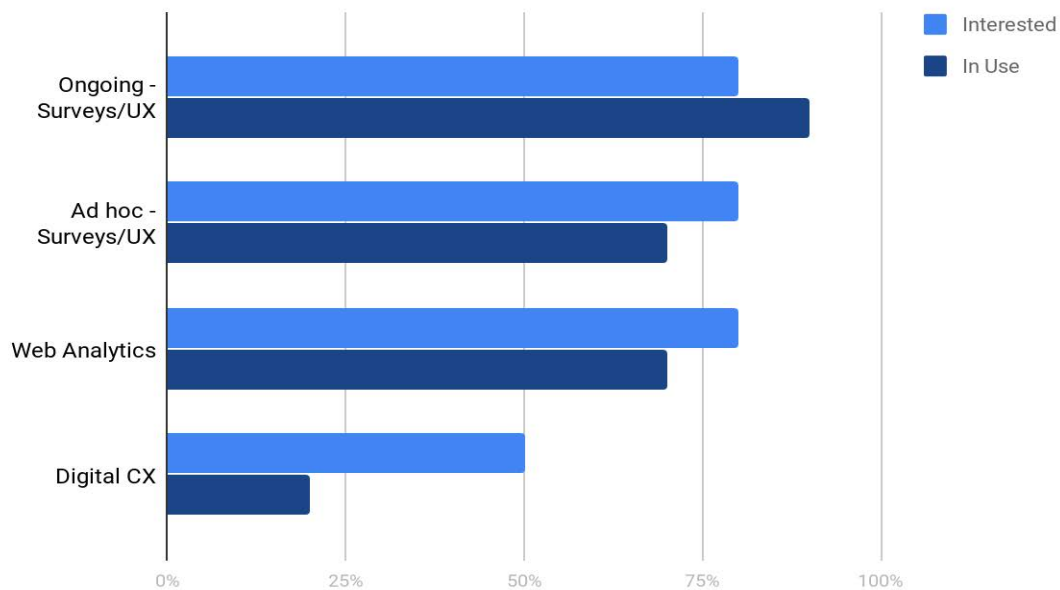> *- PLEI Practitioner*

Recommendation / Highlight
- For most practitioners, many of whom were not involved in the design stage, it is a challenge to articulate objectives that informed the design of the tool. It is when they start to examine effectiveness that they often clarify those definitions.

- Key outcomes to consider are "taking an action to [re]solve an issue" and "getting to the end of advice."

What tools and metrics are associated with these outcomes?

While almost all respondents indicate they collect some form of data, few review it on a regular basis. At most, the data is part of an annual review or report to a funding body and is not often used to improve the user experience.

Survey tools such as Survey Monkey and UX research studies are most often in use. Many practitioners are aware that Google Analytics have been installed, but few practitioners had access to the data or could share the benefit of this tool with the organization. Digital Consumer Experience (CX) tools such as Hotjar had been considered by a few and are of interest to more.

When asked in the interviews about tools, here are some responses:

"User input is necessary. Naturally a positive user experience is a prerequisite to reaching [our] goals of providing low threshold information aimed at giving conflict parties the tools to solve conflicts, where possible without the help of professionals, and in as constructive a fashion as possible."
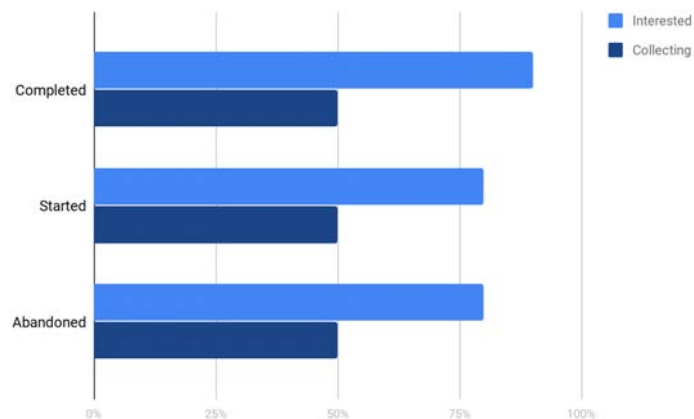*- PLEI Practitioner*

"It is meant to be completely anonymous, no IP being set, no tracking pixels, [we are] using session cookies, and user data [is] flushed every 30 days."
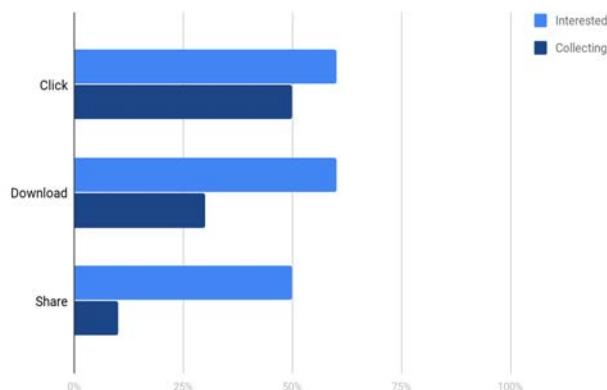*- PLEI Practitioner*

We also wanted to understand the measures being captured to learn whether these PLEI tools are effective. They broadly fall into three categories of measures: (1) **Behaviour**, (2) **Action**, and (3) **Attitude**. Within these, a variety of data is of interest and gathered by practitioners.

*What **behaviours** are of interest/being collected?*

For behaviours, "completion" remains a key focus for almost all practitioners, followed by understanding how many "started" and how many "abandoned." We agree these are key measures to capture.

*What **actions** are of interest/being collected?*

Understanding the actions taken by users will vary significantly across different types of PLEI tools. While "clicking on a link," "downloading" something, or "sharing" information are of some importance to practitioners, these actions are presently of least interest or measurement. We believe that understanding desired actions is important for understanding and tracking with any tool.

*What **attitudes** are of interest/being collected?*
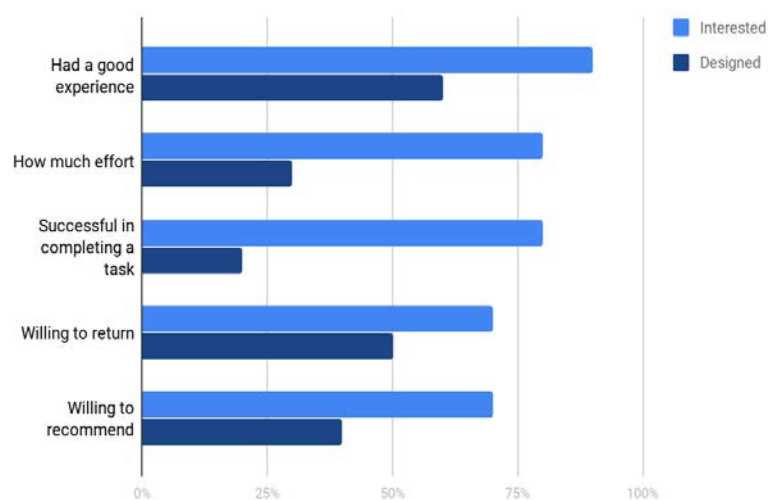
The most interesting data captured is around attitudinal measures. Standardization around key attitudinal measures is found, for example, in BC, where the Common Metrics Committee gives an opinion on outcomes that includes a broader set of measures. However, given the range of measures that will be meaningful, we recommend using a narrower set of measures as a benchmark.

"It is a navigation guide which brings confidence to [the user] in the information they are gathering."
- PLEI Practitioner

"They care about positive resolution."
- PLEI Practitioner

"...Willing to return is the end goal...[and] makes them consider or further think about their situation."
- PLEI Practitioner

While capturing benchmark data from a wide group of similar organizations was an initial objective of this study, it is not possible to capture this type of information at this time. Given different user types, frameworks for measurement, and even taxonomies of the data, very little comparable data exists across providers. However, what emerges is an opportunity to create a set of measures to be shared across practitioners. This would allow for using these measures as benchmarks against themselves as well as against others. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of these tools for PLEI, further testing needs to be conducted to confirm the most valuable data points that need to be captured. In a later section, we provide recommendations on data that should be gathered to begin creating these benchmarks.

- Many use tools to capture some form of data, whether it be surveys or analytics, but few find them effective, confirming the appetite for a recommendation on the appropriate tools and data to be captured.
- Digital CX is relatively new and rarely used, but we recommend pursuing.
- Most organizations capture attitudinal measures, almost too many to be meaningful, while few measure the actions taken by users. Preliminary data shows significant variation in how data is captured, and presently no standardization exists. An opportunity exists to create a standard set of metrics to be shared broadly across practitioners.

User Journey

Building the user journey

Another initial objective in this study was to understand the user journey through pathways in order to more effectively understand what requires measurement. Typical journey maps are built with a combination of user attitudes, experiences, and behavioural inputs.

Given past user research conducted by LSS in late 2017 and current MyLawBC evaluations underway by Malatest (to be delivered in early 2019), this report will focus on the user journey that can be uncovered based on data available digitally. Once the Malatest research is finalized, the information can be combined for a richer understanding of user journeys through the pathways and to confirm this is the most appropriate course of action.

User journeys come in many forms. For the purposes of this research, it is useful to consider the conversion funnel for users. The *conversion funnel* is a term used to describe the path visitors take between initially visiting the website and ultimately achieving their goal. Understanding the way users browse MyLawBC informs which improvements can be made by optimizing each stage in the funnel.

As noted, in order to validate an appropriate journey, this study not only looked at past user research, but also examined user flow charts designed for these pathways and discovered the information that could be analysed through different digital mechanisms (Hotjar and Google Analytics).

In the spirit of a trial, this study focused on three pathways which would allow testing of different factors and which were recommended by LSS staff:

- **Foreclosure** - given the simplicity, but also limited traffic;
- **Separation plan** - has more moderate complexity and high traffic; and
- **Wills** - for both high complexity and traffic.

Analysis of data across these pathways led to a better understanding of what is being captured and opportunities for further measurement, particularly for the conversion funnel. Based on the behavioural data that is broadly considered by practitioners as well as an

understanding that organizations must limit the amount of information they consume, we have chosen to focus on a four-step funnel.

Below is the conversion funnel for MyLawBC which is then illustrated through the example of the Separation plan pathway.

Conversion Funnel for Pathways
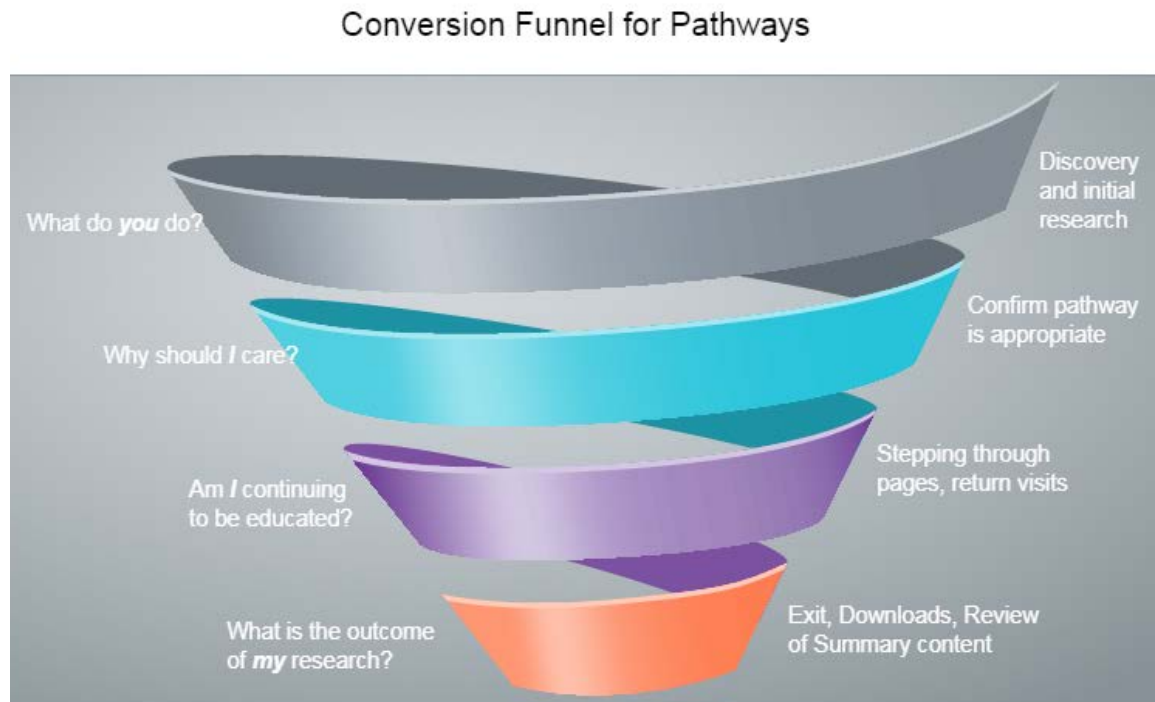
Recommendation / Highlight
- The user journey for determining the effectiveness of the pathway for users to achieve their desired outcomes is referred to as a *conversion funnel*.
- For MyLawBC, the four key points in this journey are "What do you do?", "Why should I care?", "Am I continuing to be educated?", and "What is the outcome of my research?".

Measuring the user journey: which tools

In considering what to measure, we must also decide on what tools to use. Earlier in the report, we observed that practitioners often install Google Analytics, but do not use it effectively and rarely use digital CX tools. We recommended these tools because of different benefits that they bring to allow for measurements:
- **Hotjar**: As a digital CX tool, not only can user visits be recorded to passively observe behaviours, but there is also the ability to generate heatmaps to show how users are spending time on key pages and funnels to track the journey; and
- **Google Analytics**: This is most often used to understand how users are coming to the site, but also has conversions built in so that the journey can be tracked.

In attempting to analyse data and measure the user journey, this study encountered a few challenges, including the following: webpages are rendered on the fly, so tracking separate pages in a user journey is not easily done; tags that have been embedded in the website

code include characters that break the tracking script; and the existing goals that we believe Malatest has built into Google Analytics have not been properly capturing user movements (see Appendix: Digital User Flows).

A dynamic approach to rendering information to users is one feature found with many guided pathways and is certainly the case for MyLawBC. It can be a challenge to capture data across all points of a journey in the case of dynamically generated and rendered content, particularly in the case where information is built into one page, not across new pages for a user to visit.

Given these experiences and knowing that Google Analytics is broadly adopted by practitioners, we recommend it for measuring behaviours and actions. Hotjar remains important for understanding the "why" behind actions. Rather than capturing data at one point in time, it passively measures and gathers a broad set of data for analysis.

The next section will provide further illustration of the implications of the tools used.

Measuring the user journey: behaviour, action, attitude

Despite these data gathering challenges, we were still able to use these digital tools to make recommendations on appropriate approaches for measuring the effectiveness of these pathways in guiding users to their outcomes.

Behaviour

The conversion funnel allows us to observe the challenge with defining completion solely through reaching the Summary page.

A traditional approach to the Separation plan user pathway would be as follows:

Conversion Funnel for Separation Plan
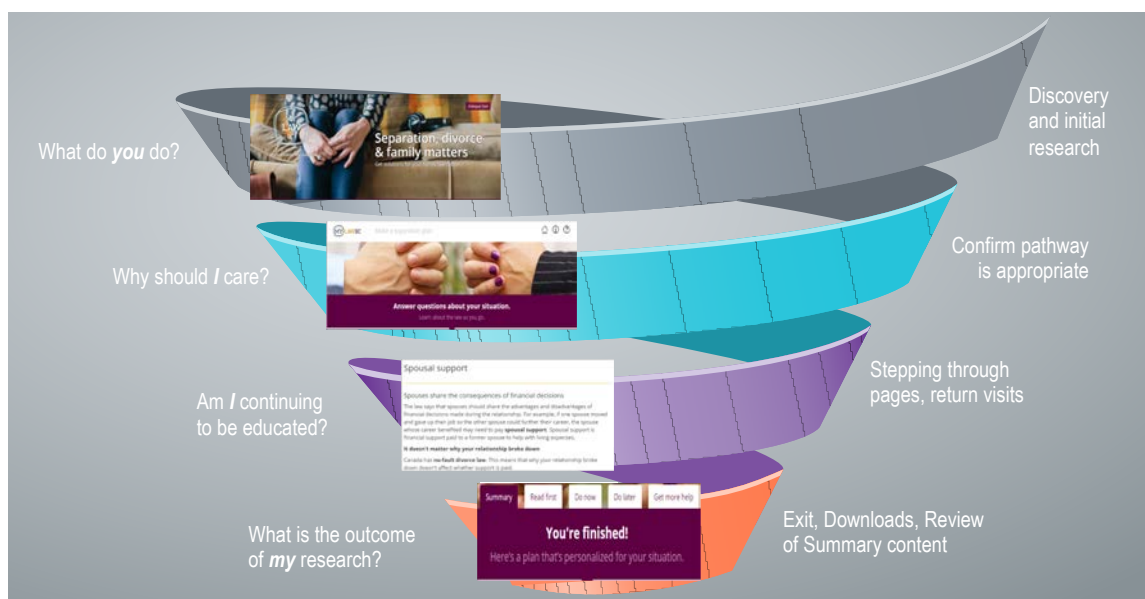
However, a user to the educational page for "Spousal Support" might have two key outcomes. Some may proceed through the path to the Summary page while others may exit the tool without visiting the Summary page. Currently, the latter user is not counted as "completed," but we believe they could likely be satisfied as their objective might have been met.

Conversion Funnel for Separation plan – User B

Understanding this perspective of the user changes how data will be collected to measure outcomes. Considering the conversion funnel has four stages, we recommend that data should be captured on users passing through three of the points in the funnel. In this case, that is "What do you do?", "Why should I care?", and "What is the outcome of my research?".

In order to understand how users get to desired outcomes, this proposed framework is essential for capturing varied behavioural data, such as how many people started, completed, and abandoned.

If we put this into practice for the "Separation plan" pathway of MyLawBC, we see how the dynamic nature of the tool changes how users will be categorized into these stages. In order to illustrate what could be captured, we have included a snapshot from the Separation plan conversion funnel. (Note that this data is illustrative, based on Hotjar tracking for November 2018, not Google Analytics.)

Conversion Funnel for Separation Plan: Data
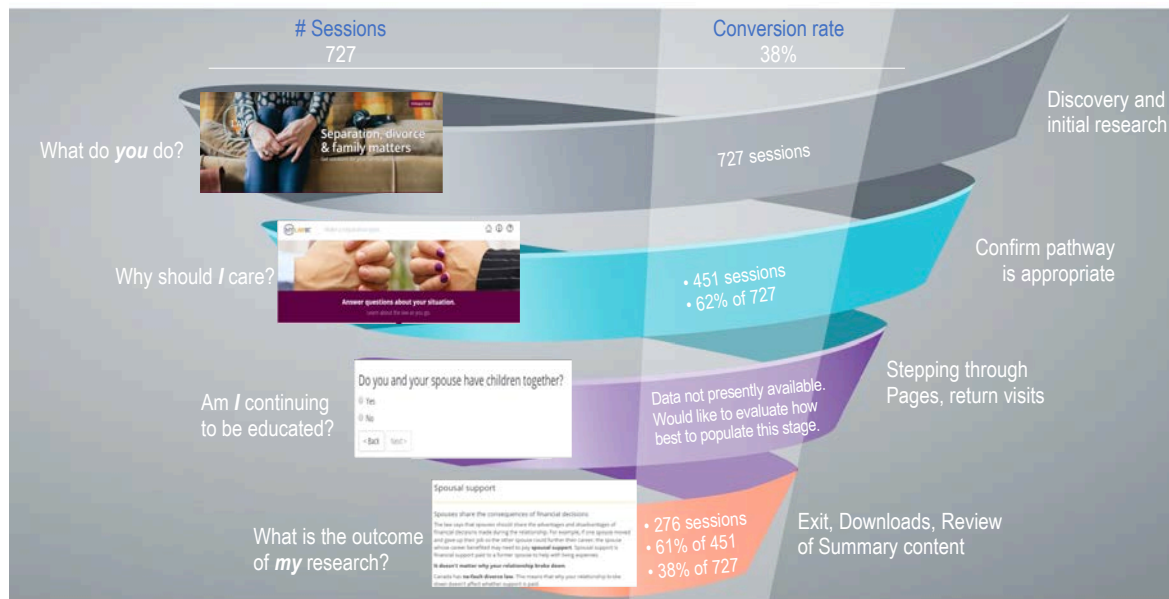
Actions and Attitudes

For MyLawBC, a few actions and attitudes have been identified as important. Just as was the case for many of the practitioners we interviewed, completion is the primary focus in the approach and design.

In addition to behaviours that help track completion, it is useful to understand a few additional measures. These are measures that have been broadly used by practitioners and can better augment the understanding of how effective the tool is in helping users achieve their desired outcomes.

Among the actions considered, we recommend capturing *how many people download* something at end points. It would also be helpful to understand the value users receive as they exit pathways at earlier points. At this point, we do not have many mechanisms in place to measure this, but could consider adding certain publications as downloadable or even asking an "exit" question in order to better capture experiences here.

As for attitudes, while the BC Common Metrics Committee has outlined a broad range of measures, we recommend a focus on attitudes that best reflect effectiveness of the tool. That is measures of *effort*, *success*, and *willingness to return*. In this research, we studied whether two additional measures of *satisfaction* and *willingness to recommend* were used. They are often standard measures, but it is our opinion there is not sufficient differentiation to understand how users meet their desired outcomes.

Another benefit of adopting this type of streamlined journey approach is the means to focus the analysis of user experiences. While outside the scope of this research, as previously noted, this study provided the opportunity to observe user behaviours on MyLawBC. The digital journey tools confirm the concerns that were identified in the user research of 2017.

While many of the usability issues have been addressed, certain issues persist.

In the case of the Separation plan, see below.

Conversion Funnel for Separation plan – User Challenges
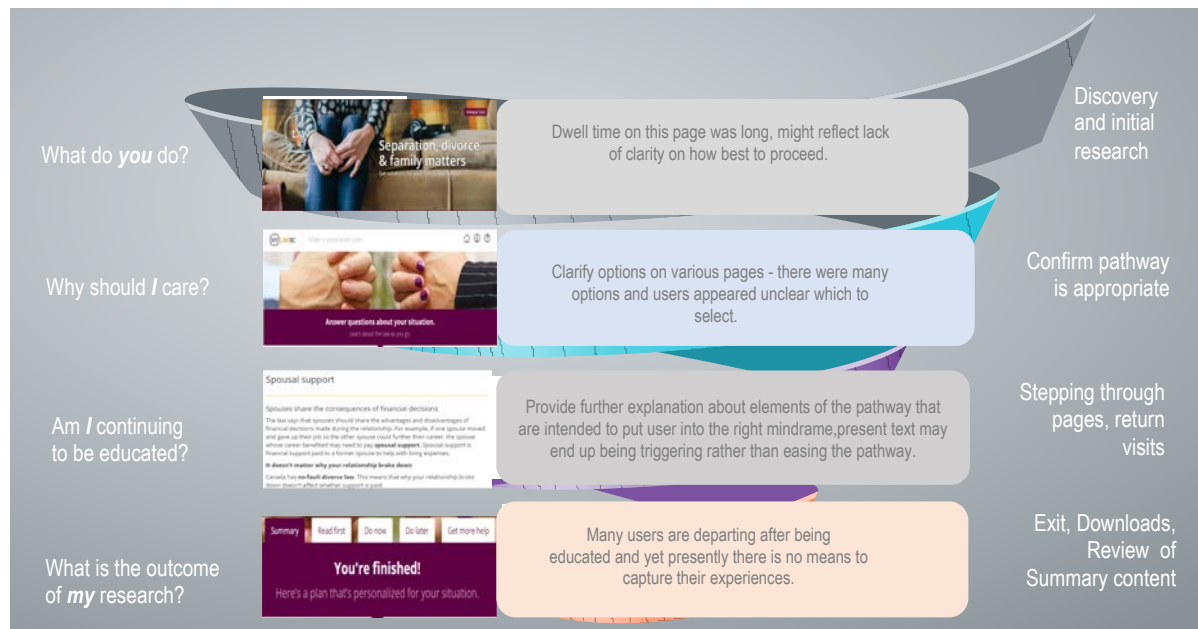
It should be noted that this user journey focuses on what happens once users arrive at MyLawBC. This raises another point of consideration around how users arrive at the site, which is addressed in the next section.

Recommendation / Highlight
- Google Analytics can be an effective tool to capture the user journey and related behavioural measures given the dynamic approach to building the MyLawBC website.
- Hotjar (or similar digital CX tools) can be effective mechanisms for ongoing understanding of the user experience. With these passive behavioural tools in place, observations of the users' experience on the pathways can be captured.
- Recommended measures include the following:
  - *Behavioural* measures of movement through the conversion funnel in order to capture how many users started, completed, and abandoned.
    - We recommend Google Analytics for this given its widespread adoption among practitioners. At present, it is possible to measure how many visitors started a pathway on MyLawBC, but changes need to be made in order to measure the final two stages.
  - *Action* measures of downloads (using Google Analytics) and *attitudinal* measures of effort, success, and willingness to return. Consider tools like Hotjar to confirm user behaviour at various exit points in order to build in effective evaluations.

○ Presently, few of these measures are captured. Once the website evaluation is completed in early 2019 (by Malatest), a recommendation or alternative recommendations may be issued about these measures.

SEO and Discoverability

Another perspective on *Completion*

This study objective was focused on pathway completion, but we also recommend considering the discoverability of the MyLawBC website itself. Improving the numbers of people who visit the site will lead to more people benefiting from the legal information provided through the pathways. While a full analysis is outside the scope of this project, we outline some key considerations.

Some Definitions and Differences: SEO and Discoverability

We have been using discoverability to refer to practices that fall under both SEO (search engine optimization) and discoverability strategies. SEO refers to strategies for driving traffic to the website by getting it to appear higher in search engine results. To help people find MyLawBC, the website requires clear markers that help search engine algorithms match to keywords and search strings that will capture traffic, such as "help understand a demand letter in foreclosure."

Discoverability, on the other hand, is the "findability" of content. This term is used in two senses - both finding MyLawBC, and then being able to navigate the website to get appropriate information.

Here we discuss practices that cross both strategies to improve how users can benefit from the services offered on MyLawBC. All data in this section was gathered over a quarter (September - November 2018).

Traffic Sources

Let's begin with a high-level understanding of MyLawBC sources of traffic:

Source	Users	New Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration (min.sec)
Direct traffic	7065	6821	10161	29.62%	10.91	9.04
Google / Ads (CPC)	1432	1386	1704	40.43%	4.01	2.30
Google / Organic	697	579	1210	31.07%	13.59	8.80

*Total users will vary in Google Analytics due to differences in how the information is captured.

- **Direct traffic**: Tend to be new users who view a lot of pages.
  - *In other words:* This includes a variety of untrackable sources, but it indicates that the URL is getting to the right people.
- **Google Ads (CPC)**: New users with a high bounce rate.

- *In other words:* Ads are only somewhat targeted to the audience and/or site content.
- **Organic Search**: New users with a fairly low bounce rate and a lot of page views.
  - *In other words:* When they find the site, they really like it.

Referral Sources

If we turn to how traffic is referred to MyLawBC, we find that after the LSS, the provincial court is a significant source of traffic.

Source	Users	New Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration (min.sec)
lss.bc.ca	148	125	287	27.87%	12.54	9.95
provincialcourt.bc.ca	121	112	140	25.71%	5.13	2.81
familylaw.lss.bc.ca	43	31	130	58.46%	7.15	6.35
legalaid.bc.ca	29	24	40	37.50%	5.20	2.16
clicklaw.bc.ca	21	17	23	34.78%	12.52	4.23
justice.gov.bc.ca	16	15	24	29.17%	10.54	6.74

Search Rank

"Search engines have two major functions: crawling and building an index and providing search users with a ranked list of the websites they've determined are the most relevant." (Rand Fishkin). We need to know and to uncover the words and phrases that searchers are using to solve or to find answers to the problem they are having. In the case of MyLawBC, users are not generally searching for the site; rather, they are trying to solve a problem, and that is what brings them to the website.

MyLawBC fares poorly in search. For high-value search terms, even for terms copied directly from the site, MyLawBC rarely reaches the first page, let alone the top five.

Search Term	Position	Links To
mylawbc	1	/
click a pathway to get started	2	/paths/family/
create will BC	5	/paths/wills/
this abuse & family violence pathway will ask you questions	7	/pathways/index.php?rpath=w9tkvBPOnCPXjJ3xaAEK4g%3D%3D
divorce help BC	10	/paths/family/
separation agreements BC	11	/assets/dialogue/sample-agreement.pdf
how to write a will BC	12	/assets/wills/will-m1.doc
family law BC	15	/paths/family/
abuse & family violence BC	20	/paths/abuse/

is your client safe?	21	/resources/pdfs/pubs/Encouraging-Disclosure-eng.pdf
BC family law	22	/paths/family/
free legal help in BC	29	/tools/get-help.php
divorce in BC	29	/paths/family/
foreclosure BC	33	/paths/foreclosure/
foreclosure lawyer BC	41	/resources/pdfs/pubs/Cant-Pay-Your-Mortgage-eng.pdf
how to file for divorce in BC	45	/assets/dialogue/sample-agreement.pdf
divorce lawyer BC	47	/tools/get-help.php
aboriginal child protection BC	57	/pubs/detail.php?pub=342
foreclosure lawyer BC	56	/resources/pdfs/pubs/Cant-Pay-Your-Mortgage-eng.pdf
file for divorce BC	58	/assets/dialogue/sample-agreement.pdf
estate administration BC	98	/resources/pdfs/pubs/Estate-Administration-On-Reserve-Templates-package-eng.pdf
BC lawyer	No Rank	

Publications/Resources

MyLawBC's publications are largely invisible to Google's search engine. Most titles can't be found, and even lengthy direct quotes get no results. Many of the publications are in PDF form, but that generally has no effect on ranking. In other words, the site content contains quite a few keywords for which it should be ranking, but it is likely that the site itself is effectively hiding them from search engines.

Considerations to improve outcomes

MyLawBC has very high-quality content that users find highly relevant and useful. The website and its content, however, are difficult for users to find. This is due to a variety of factors which, if fixed, will lead to a substantial increase in relevant traffic.

Some recommendations based on analysis from digital tools such as Google Analytics and Moz are listed in the next section.

Heading Tags

These are HTML tags used to designate the page and section titles of a page. Google relies on these to determine a page's subject matter and structure. They are not decorative, but rather are semantic tags. MyLawBC heading tags are sending Google mixed messages about the website. The highest-level headings (H1 tags) rarely contain keywords and are sometimes used multiple times on a single page. As such, Google cannot parse what content might be relevant to searchers.

This is why MyLawBC ranks number two for the search term, "Click a pathway to get started." On the website, the term is consistently formatted with an H1 tag, so Google has determined this is what the website is about because the website formatting leads to confusion between the semantic value of H1 to Google versus its appearance as a bolded

header font.

Furthermore, lower level tags are used more for text formatting than page structure. Not only does this further diminish search rank, but it also creates an accessibility problem for those using screen readers. This should be corrected by using H1 as a semantic markup and not for text formatting. CSS would be more appropriately used in this example.

Keyword Content

MyLawBC's content, though relevant and useful to target audiences, does not effectively convey this to search engines. For example, when discussing divorce, the term "separation process" is used. That term has very low search volume, which means it will rarely attract search traffic.

That does not mean that MyLawBC should be packed with high search-volume phrases as Google would actually penalize a website for this. Rather, a search-volume analysis should be conducted to determine the terms that real people are using, then incorporate variations of these phrases wherever appropriate.

In addition, MyLawBC actively blocks search engines from crawling all content contained within the Pathways. The Robots.txt file is set to "disallow" crawling "/pathways," which effectively removes that content as a ranking signal for individual pages and the site as a whole. It is worth further conversation to better understand this decision and whether it can be amended.

Publications

The publications are filled with the kind of content that Google likes, but they rarely appear in search results. This is likely due to the fact that the documents are found deep within the site, giving the impression that MyLawBC does not deem it to be high-value content.

By bringing these documents to the surface, adding keyword-rich descriptions, and even adding publication dates (and updating them regularly), Google will see this as fresh, high-value content that will not only appear higher in searches, but also will improve the ranking of pages throughout the website.

Backlinks

Backlinks are links to a website's extremely powerful ranking signal. Currently, MyLawBC has thirty-one valid inbound links. This is a good start, but more links would substantially improve search rankings.

Recommendation / Highlight
- MyLawBC enjoys consistent traffic, reflecting very high-quality content that users find highly relevant and useful. However, some back-end coding approaches are sending mixed messages to Google about the website. Some modifications can improve traffic.
- Improve approach to heading tags - Structure and add targeted keywords to the heading tags.

- Improvements for keyword content - Conduct a Search Volume Analysis to identify high-value key terms and allow search engines to crawl the Pathways.
- Use publications to drive traffic - Restructure the Publications section and feature content more prominently, update descriptions to include key terms, and better utilize tools like Google Search Console to help it find and parse them correctly.
- Improve traffic through backlinks - Consider collaborative posts with partners and asking other relevant sites to link to MyLawBC.

Conclusion

Overall, this study is an attempt to investigate the question of what an appropriate benchmark would be for those who complete visits to the MyLawBC website. As few organizations effectively measure these benchmarks, an opportunity exists not only to build a measurement protocol of internal benchmarks for MyLawBC, but also to share across the PLEI sector for comparison.

When considering the effectiveness of MyLawBC, this study recommends a few areas of focus. First, completion rate, as defined by a user reaching the Summary page, is not the only metric. Rather, given the filtering nature of a guided pathway, it is more appropriate to better understand how people move through MyLawBC and whether they successfully achieve their outcomes.

Another initial objective in this study was to understand the user journey through pathways in order to more effectively understand what requires measurement. For the purposes of this research, it is useful to consider the user journey as the conversion funnel for users. The *conversion funnel* is a term used to describe the path visitors take between initially visiting the website and ultimately achieving their goal. Understanding the way users browse MyLawBC informs which improvements can be made by optimizing each stage in the funnel.

Furthermore, while part of the question about completion is how users move *through* the MyLawBC site, another important consideration is how people *find* the website. We recommend considering the discoverability of the MyLawBC website itself. Improving the numbers of people who visit the website will inevitably lead to more people who benefit from the education provided through the pathways. While a full analysis is outside the scope of this project, we provide some key SEO considerations.

Lastly, we provide as appendices several more detailed findings of the research.

Appendices

Appendix: Methodology

This study used a mixed methodology for a comprehensive approach to this question. In addition to traditional interviews and surveys, we have many new digital tools at our disposal to embrace new practices in understanding whether users are achieving their desired outcomes. In order to investigate this question, we used a range of methods, including the following:

- Interviews with PLEI practitioners. They came from within the LSS, other agencies in BC, across Canada, and globally.
  - We completed [n=19], typically 60 minutes by phone and some in person.
  - Interviews were fielded from September to November 2018.
- Reviews of relevant research studies conducted/recommended by interview subjects, including MyLawBC user research testing (from fall 2017); preliminary MyLawBC evaluation research (results due early 2019); research of the BC Commons Metric Committee for PLE; and user research conducted on similar sites.
- Digital data gathering tools including Google Analytics, Moz, and Hotjar.
- Survey Monkey study where respondents included those using guided pathways and online dispute resolution as well as other digital tools to improve legal education and/or information.
  - n=14 completes (some overlap with the interview subjects, ~8 minutes long.
  - Study in the field from November - December 2018.

This study has embraced the spirit of trial and error. We began this study with one approach, but once our initial hypotheses were proven invalid, we revised our method. We had intended to rely heavily on Hotjar, and then recognized the dynamic nature of MyLawBC renders data in a manner that requires an innovative approach to data collection. Our conclusions incorporate recommendations for how to approach future user studies on MyLawBC. Some specific elements to consider include the following:

- Two key considerations for MyLawBC analysis: First, the website dynamically generates content onto a page, rather than loading content onto distinct and separate pages. That content is generated based on a user's responses to a previous [set of] questions. As such, any measurement builds around these limitations.
- With dynamically generated pages, additional script needs to be added to the website in order for other digital tools such as Google Analytics to recognize where a user is on their journey.
  - When building scripts to aid in further analytics, consider plain text over adding in extra characters or spaces. Otherwise, it might not be used on all digital platforms. For example, the use of extra characters and spaces meant that Hotjar could not always evaluate the user journey.

Interview Guide: MyLaw BC Pathways Completion

Interview Introduction
We are conducting research into guided pathways to better understand typical completion user rates. For this study, we would like to understand your target audience for the

pathways, what types of materials are delivered to the user and expected next steps for the users, the typical completion rates, and any benchmarks you might collect.

The conversation will be approximately thirty minutes, and if you prefer, you could independently complete the interview guide in less time. The questions are below in case you need to gather any data on completion rates in advance. Your input is appreciated, and as a token of your time, we can share back our benchmark findings on completion rates.

Interview Guide
A. Who
1. To begin, at a high level, who is the audience for your pathway?
2. If you have different personas, what are they?

B. What
1. With your pathway, it would appear that users are *[insert from secondary research]*. Is this how you would define completion?
2. What are typical next steps for users after completing the pathway?
3. The next set of questions are to help us create benchmarks for completion rates.
   a. Do you capture any data on how many users complete the pathway? **Please note**, here we are referring to completion rates through the pathway itself, not overall completion of the end goal the pathway is designed to support.
   b. *If not,* why not?
   c. What are typical *overall* completion rates?
   d. When it varies, what is the range of completion rate?
      i. (If time permits) Why does it vary? (Probe: Is it type of user or type of pathway content?)
4. What mechanisms or data tools do you use to gather completion rates?
5. Do you capture benchmarks against any other organizations? If so, how do you compare?

C. Why (in person, if time permits)
1. Why did your organization implement a guided pathway for your users? Would you implement this in other parts of your organization if the opportunity arose?

Comment: What terms are used to refer to the...Guided Pathway?

In the course of the interviews, we had the opportunity to discuss with practitioners how they referred to their guided pathways when speaking with users. The majority of those we spoke to used the term "guided pathways," which might reflect the example set by MyLawBC as well as the network effect of working with some of the same people at the technology company (Tyler Tech). In addition to "guided pathway," some practitioners used other terms:

<div align="center">

guided pathways   dynamic faq

online triage   diagnosis tools

decision trees   explorer tool

</div>

For all practitioners, the interest was in finding a term that could resonate with users, and

many questioned what term would be most appropriate. There is an interest in sharing best practices and approaches as they learn to engage with users using these new digital tools.

Interview Contacts

This study was completed thanks to input provided by many members of the larger PLEI community of practitioners. Some we spoke with are named below:

Contact Name	Title	Organization
Tim Veherij	Justice Sector Advisor	HiiL // Rechtwijzer
Kevin Conn	Director, Business Transformation and training	Court Services, HQ//BC
Corry van Zeeland	Dutch Legal Aid Board	Rechtwijzer, // Uitelkaar
Tanja.Rostec	User Experience Lead for the Small Claims Solution Explorer,	Project Delivery Division, BC Ministry of Attorney General
Laura Kistemaker	Founder	Uitelkaar
Isabella Chin	IT lead	Property Assessment Appeal Board,
Dave Nolette	Digital Program Director	Justice Education Society,
Julie Matthews	Executive Director	Community Legal Education of Ontario (CLEO)
Keri Morris	Client Director of the Family Dispute Resolution (FDR)	Fairway
Stuart Rosove	Director, Business Development	Tyler Tech
Larry Friedberg	Former CMO, Modria	Modria/Tyler Tech
Colin Rule	VP, ODR	Tyler Tech
Darren Gingras		Common Sense Divorce
Judy Clarke	Writer/Editor, Community and Publishing Services	LSS
Bridget Greenwood	Writer/Editor, Community and Publishing Services	LSS

This study includes research with two other public legal education platforms [who did not want to be named], and other members of the MyLawBC project team

Survey

The study remains live in Survey Monkey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/mlbcreport

Appendix: Outcomes research for broader sample

Earlier in the report, we shared the results of the research specific to those who had guided pathways. Here are the results of the research including the full sample [n=14] of those with guided pathways, ODR, and other digital tools. There is no significant variation in the findings between the two groups given the number of those with other tools who had some form of guided pathway preceding their users' visit to their tool.

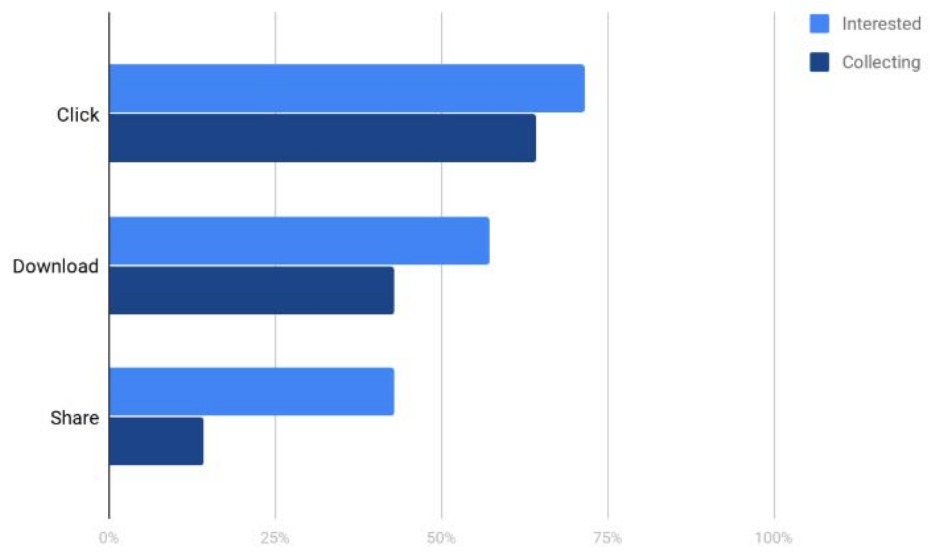> What **outcomes** are of interest/being collected?

With the broader dataset, taking an action is of most interest, though practitioners were also interested in reaching the end of advice and getting issues resolved.
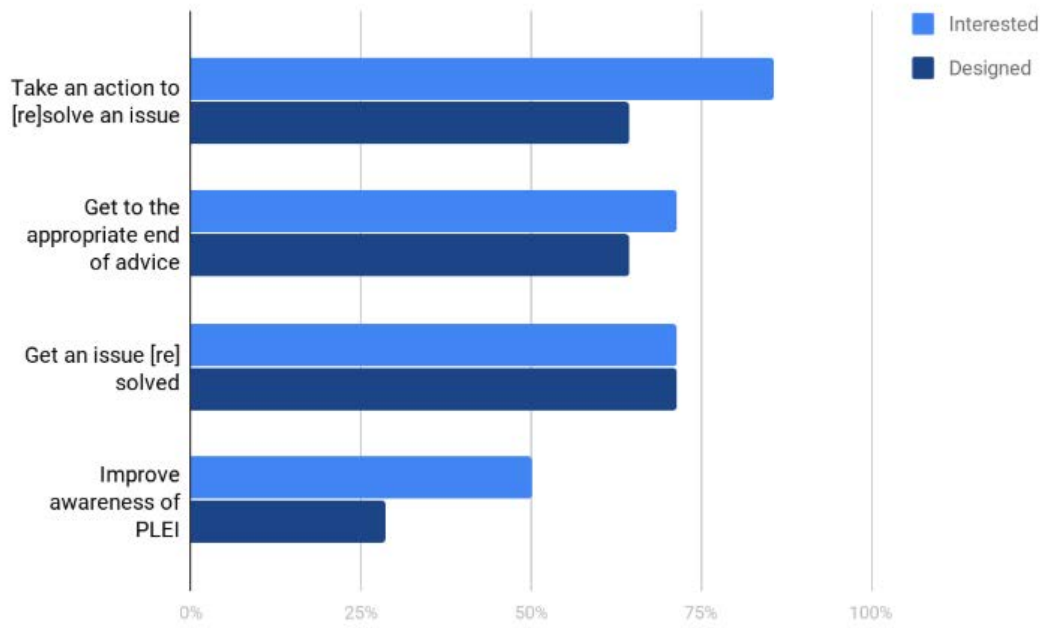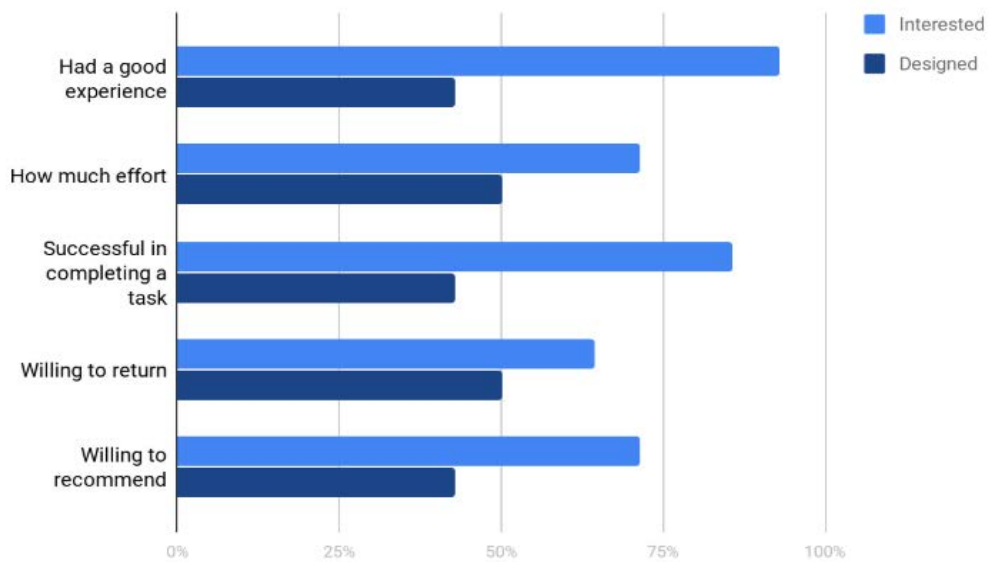
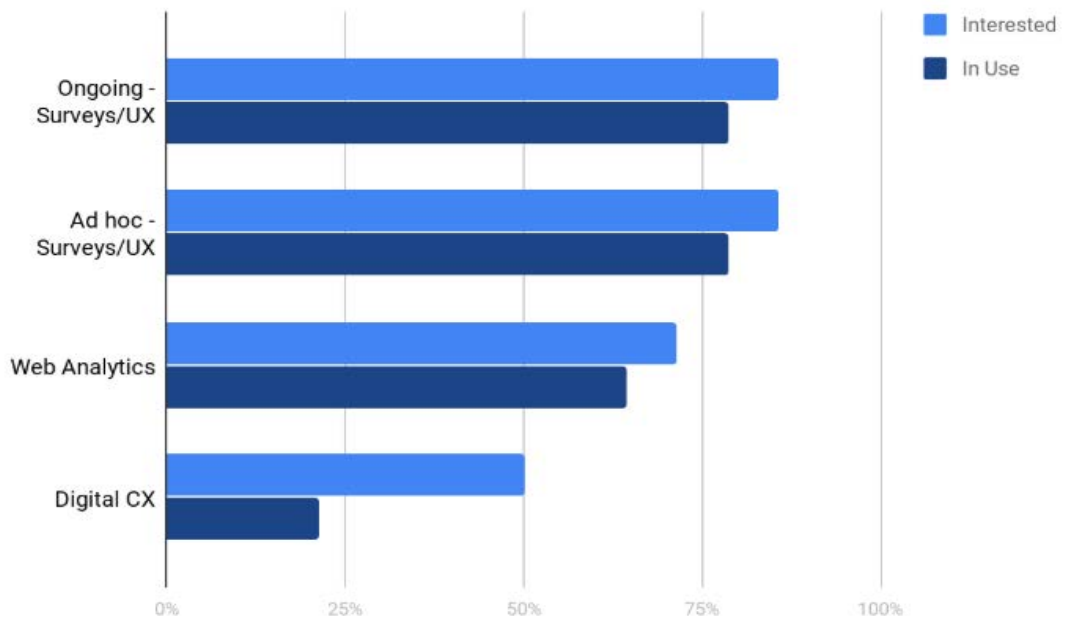*What **behaviours** are of interest/being collected?*
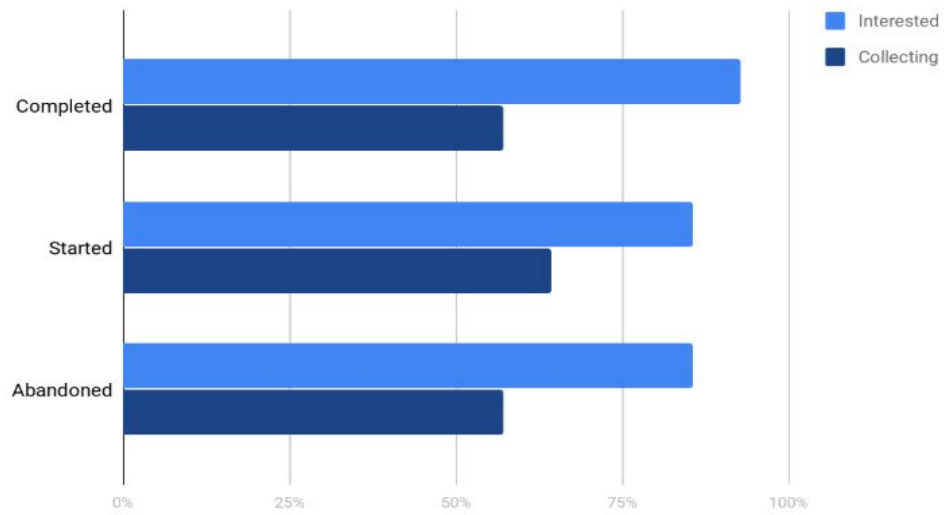
*What **actions** are of interest/being collected?*

*What **attitudes** are of interest/being collected?*

*What **tools/metrics** are associated with these outcomes?*
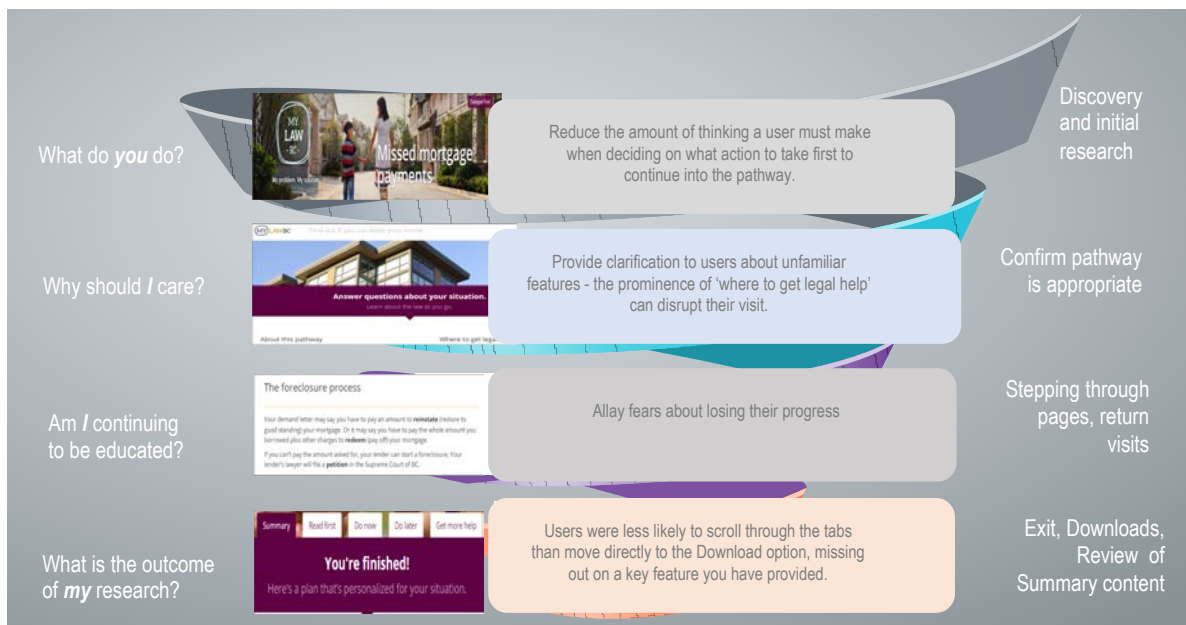

Appendix: Conversion funnels

Funnel for Foreclosure

Conversion Funnel for Foreclosure

Conversion Funnel for Foreclosure – User B

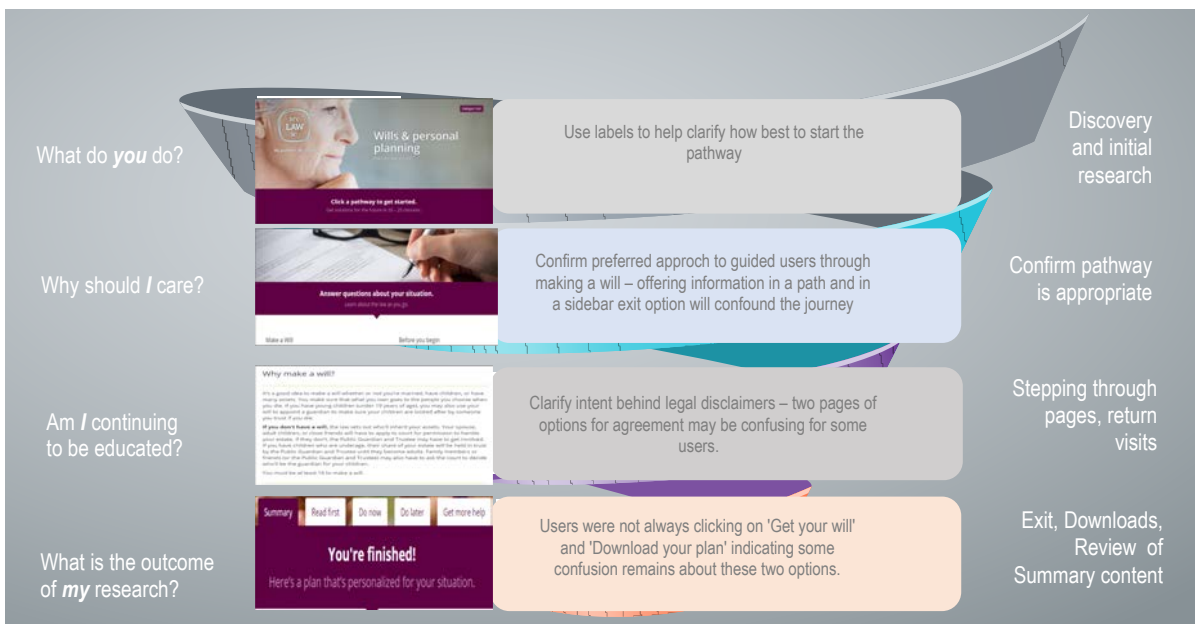## Conversion Funnel for Foreclosure – User Challenges

Funnel for Make a Will

## Conversion Funnel for Wills

Conversion Funnel for Wills – User B



Conversion Funnel for Wills – User Challenges

Appendix: Digital user flows

A deeper drill down can be achieved with Google Analytics. It can be a powerful tool to support the needs of the research. We recommend some additional work to leverage the tagging created on MyLawBC in order to capture this information and provide a streamlined view of user flow.
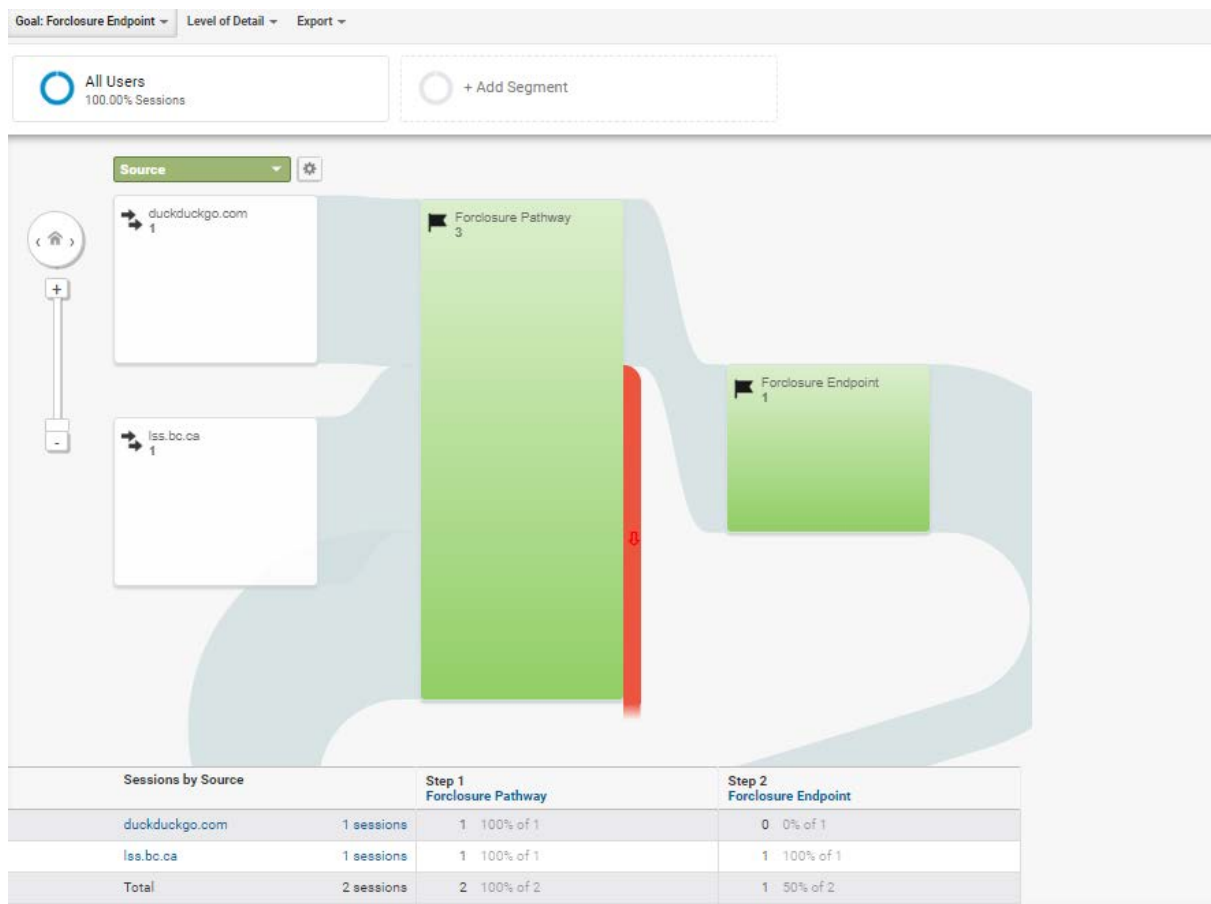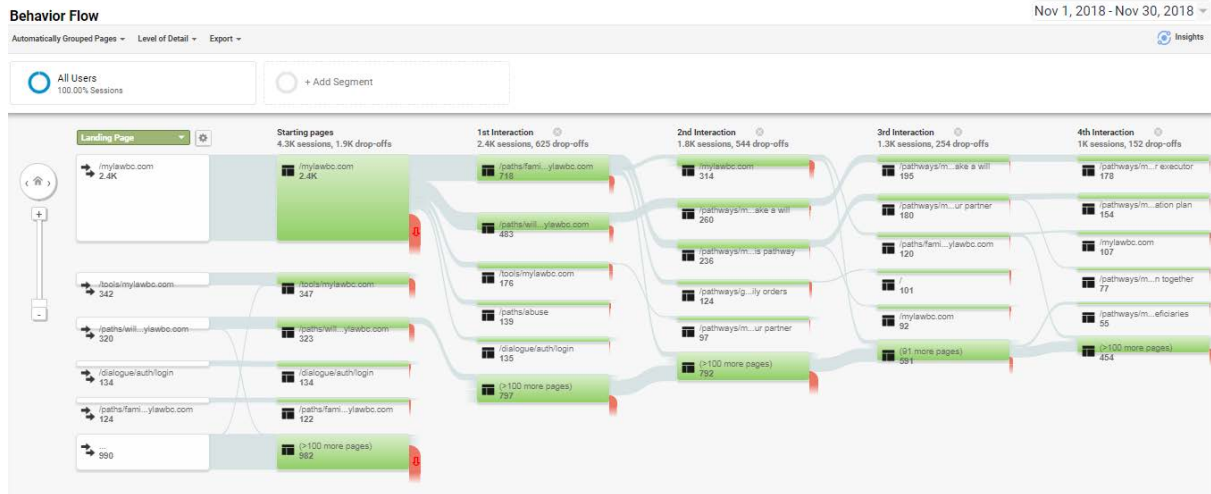
Appendix: Comparisons to other industry benchmarks

While the PLEI sector does not presently have benchmark data, other industries have captured data to better understand user experiences of discovering websites and achieving desired outcomes. For comparison, we look to conversion rate data from other industries. This data is based on actual data which tracks visitors to sites from first visit to outcome. With 12% conversion rates considered to be strong in e-commerce industries, the range for top conversion is 11% to 27%.
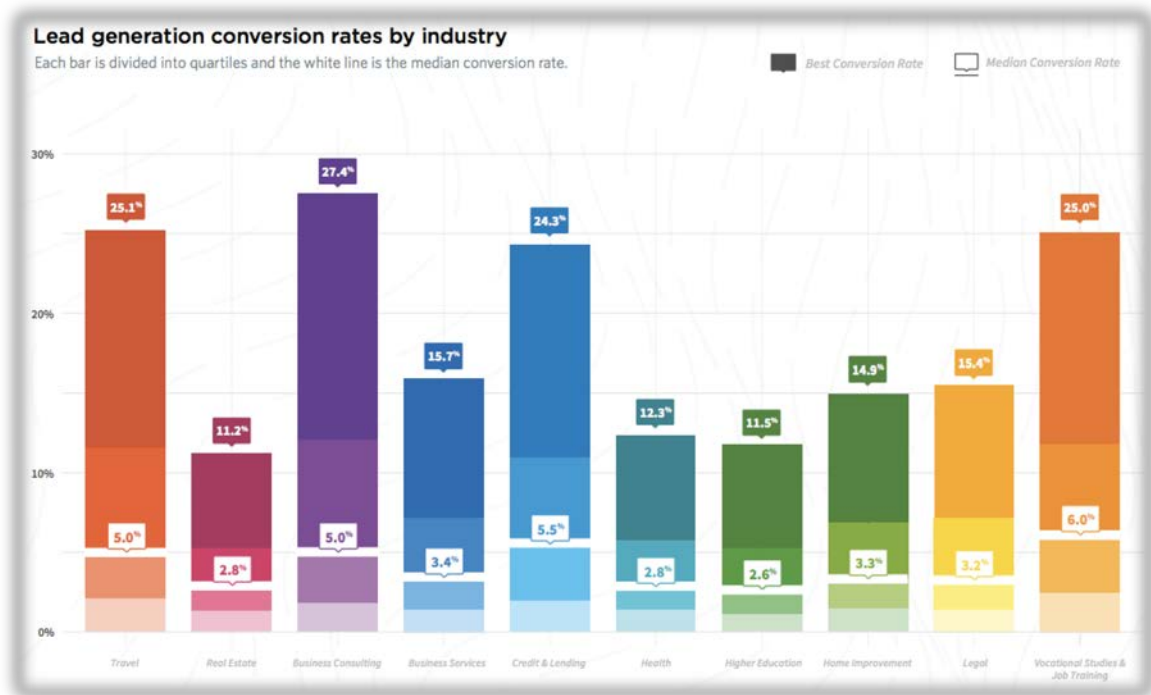
Source: https://unbounce.com/what-is-a-good-conversion-rate/

Furthermore, newsletter open rates are not an exact comparison, but they do provide some additional benchmarks.

Source: https://mailchimp.com/resources/email-marketing-benchmarks/