

Justice  
Innovation  
Lab

# Growth Prospectus



**Understand** the world as it is. **Imagine** the world as it could be.

**Do** something about it.



# Introduction

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**Justice Innovation Lab builds data-informed, people-centered solutions for a more fair and effective justice system.** Our team of data scientists, human-centered design experts, former prosecutors, policymakers, and community advocates support local leaders in developing effective solutions to criminal justice challenges. We help communities improve public safety while reducing harmful outcomes, including unnecessary incarceration and unjust racial and economic disparities.



# The Problem

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**America’s justice system is broken by almost every measure.** The U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world. Over 10 million people cycle through America’s jails each year, mostly for low-level, non-violent offenses. Our courtrooms, jails, and prisons are filled with people suffering from mental health challenges, addiction, homelessness, and poverty. Reliance on criminal enforcement has resulted in approximately 2 million people living behind bars on any given day, including over 400,000 people held in jail without a conviction while awaiting trial.

The United States spends more than \$300 billion on policing, the legal system, and incarceration annually. And yet, many existing public safety strategies are often not only ineffective but counterproductive. For example, incarceration for low-level offenses is shown to increase the likelihood of future criminal conduct. With regards to violent crime, nationally, law enforcement is solving only 37% of the most serious cases.

As a result, 45% of Americans have no or very little confidence in the current criminal legal system. 58% of victims of violent crime don't even report their victimization to law enforcement. Across the country, even though violent crime is falling, Americans report feeling less safe.

**The Post and Courier**

Charleston, South Carolina  
August 10, 2022

*Justice Innovation Lab provides  
“a common sense we-can’t-believe-  
this-isn’t-already-being-done program.”*

## JIL’s Approach

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**Redefining what it means to achieve justice** requires new tools, new skills, and a more holistic approach to addressing public safety. Justice Innovation Lab (JIL) helps communities improve their justice systems by harnessing the power of data, facilitating values-driven decision-making, and building innovative solutions.



JIL partners with decision-makers who have the power to make impactful changes to the criminal legal system. We collaborate extensively with local prosecutors who have widespread authority and discretion to drive

reforms and who bring 95% of all criminal cases in the United States. We also work with judges, police departments, health departments, and community organizations, who each bring unique capabilities to foster positive change.

Working with our local partners and their data, we integrate systems mapping, data analysis, human-centered design, and interactive workshops to drive innovative change through our collaborative approach. Insights gained through our partnerships allow us to both generate solutions tailored to individual jurisdictions and develop broadly-applicable and scalable interventions.

**Forbes**  
November 15, 2023

*“Fundamental to Justice Innovation Lab is design thinking, an approach to problem identification that focuses on the root causes and finding practical solutions.”*

## JIL’s Tool Box

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**JIL’s approach integrates data analysis, systems mapping, and human-centered design.** We help our partners understand their jurisdiction as it is. Imagine what it could be. And then build something better.

1

**Understand**

2

**Imagine**

3

**Build**

### UNDERSTAND

- **Map** existing justice system practices and procedures to identify unique challenges and opportunities in each jurisdiction’s operations.
- **Assess** data sources and practices to identify gaps, shortcomings, and flaws.
- **Analyze** jurisdictional outcomes on key metrics such as disparities in arrests, charges, and sentences; time-to-disposition; case backlogs; and alternative resolutions.

- **Lead** workshops with multiple stakeholders inside and outside the justice system to set public safety priorities, improve data literacy, and identify system levers to improve outcomes.

## IMAGINE

- **Foster** effective conversations on challenges facing the community around public safety and justice
- **Help** stakeholders develop alternatives to existing practices
- **Identify new metrics** to measure what is important to community stakeholders.
- **Assist** communities in designing prototype solutions to identified problems.

## BUILD

- **Use** data analysis and human-centered feedback processes to assess program/policy effectiveness and identify opportunities for improvement.
- **Scale** prototypes into fully-realized solutions.
- **Implement** technical data solutions that create a sustainable process for extracting, cleaning, and returning data to allow for accurate analysis and decision-making.
- **Measure** effectiveness of interventions and modify, as needed.
- **Share** outcomes and learnings to inform and advance the field.

In addition to this approach, JIL pursues other avenues to maximize our impact. As we develop tools and mechanisms that have wide applicability, we look for ways to disseminate them quickly



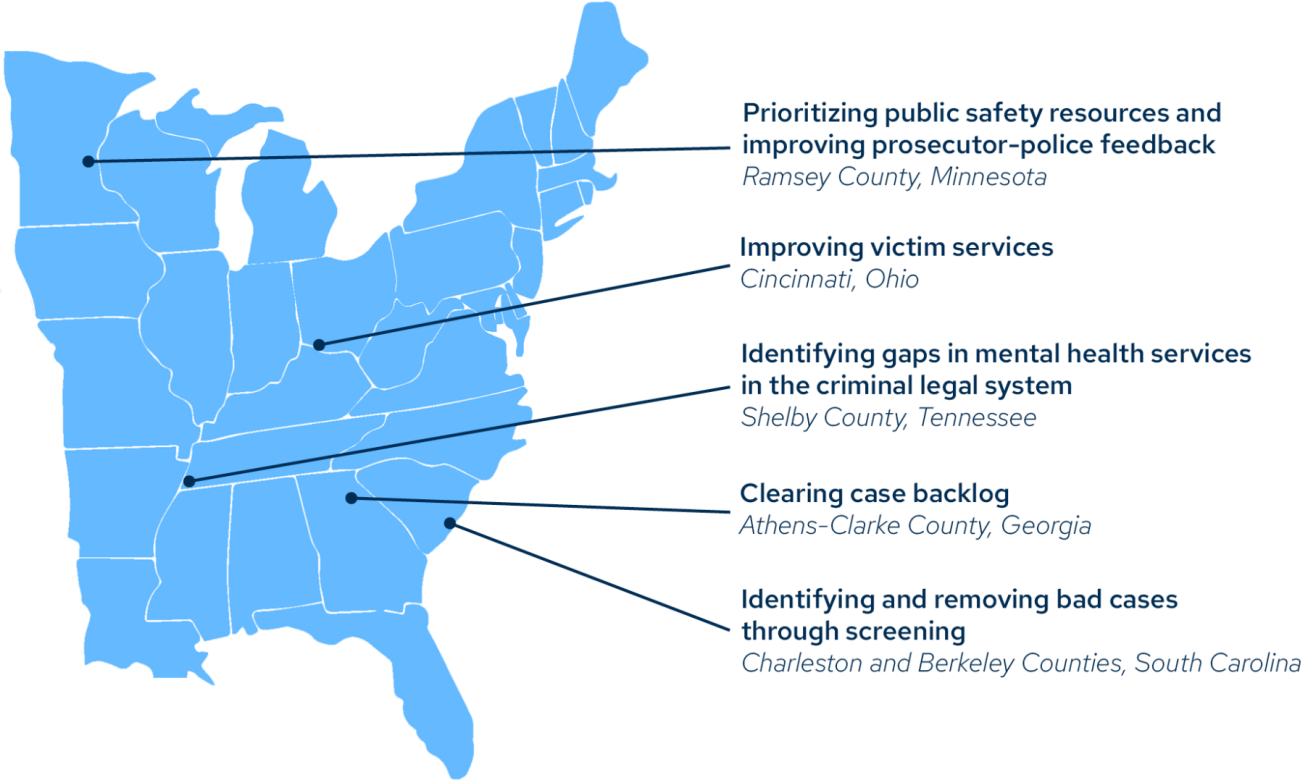
and broadly. This takes the form of accelerated engagements with individual communities, published academic research, and the creation of open-source toolkits and playbooks.

# Where We Work

**JIL is intentional in selecting geographies** that can serve as models for the rest of the country. In prioritizing jurisdictions, we seek communities with:

- 1. Leaders** who are willing to ask hard questions, explore data for answers, and demonstrate a commitment to problem solving.
- 2. Sufficient quality** and quantity of data to identify compelling opportunities to improve justice and to evaluate impact.
- 3. Available** community resources and actively invested stakeholders.
- 4. A significant challenge** impacting many people for which a solution could serve as a model for other jurisdictions.

## Criminal justice challenges we are tackling with our jurisdictional partners:



## Charleston Case Study

In April 2015, Walter Scott, a 50-year-old Black man, was pulled over for a broken taillight in North Charleston, South Carolina. Less than two minutes later, Scott was killed by a police officer, though



Scott was unarmed and posed no risk to the officer.

Fishman led the successful Federal prosecution of the police officer who killed Scott. During the investigation into Scott's death, JIL's founder Jared Fishman, then a senior prosecutor with the U.S. Department of Justice, and Solicitor Scarlett

Wilson, the chief prosecutor for the Charleston area, worked together to secure justice in the case. Walter Scott's murder exposed many structural inequalities in Charleston's criminal legal system, and Solicitor Wilson wanted to know whether her office could use existing data to answer the question: are we being fair?

In 2020, Fishman created Justice Innovation Lab to partner with Solicitor Wilson and the Ninth Circuit Solicitor's Office in Charleston (SOL9) to pursue a more innovative, proactive, and cost-effective approach to justice and public safety.

JIL led conversations around public safety priorities and fairness in the community and worked with SOL9's data team to create a sustainable process to improve the accuracy of criminal justice data.

JIL analyzed 24,000 criminal charges – covering all prosecutions from 2015–2020 – and created a first-of-its-kind [Disparity and Prosecution Report](#). The report identified systemic contributors to negative community outcomes, sparking a much-needed public conversation around public safety and justice.



JIL then led a series of multi-day [workshops](#) bringing together prosecutors with community stakeholders. These sessions helped participants identify opportunities for more effective collaboration. One formerly incarcerated community member described having a seat at the table with prosecutors as “a life changing experience,” while a prosecutor said the workshop helped her see “the system through the eyes of the defendant” for the first time.

The workshops resulted in the creation of a novel [case screening process](#) that is effectively identifying and removing cases with insufficient evidence, reducing inequitable outcomes, and eliminating hundreds of years of unnecessary incarceration, all without negatively impacting public safety. JIL is currently running a first-of-its-kind randomized control trial (RCT) of Charleston’s new screening process, and we expect to have initial results by November 2024.

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**JIL helped me see the institutional and systemic issues in our prosecution system. The folks at JIL and their staff have a certain gravitas to them as they have been here before and walked in our shoes. They are trustworthy. Together, we brainstormed a better way forward to provide true justice for all.**

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**-Solicitor Scarlett Wilson  
Chief Prosecutor, Charleston  
and Berkeley Counties (SC)**

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JIL is also fortunate to benefit from partnerships with institutions that share our commitment to a more data-informed and equitable justice system, including The George Washington University Law School's Equity Institute, Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy's Massive Data Institute, Georgetown Law's Institute for Technology Law and Policy, Excellence in Policing and Public Safety Program (EPPS) at the University of South Carolina School of Law, Vanderbilt Project on Prosecution Policy (VPOPP) at Vanderbilt Law School, and Harvard Law School's Access to Justice Lab.