

Results at a glance

Evaluation of the Access to Justice in Both Official Languages Initiative (June 2017)

The purpose of the Access to Justice in Both Official Languages Initiative is to provide Canadians from official language minority communities (OLMCs) with access to legal information regarding their rights and responsibilities in the official language of their choice and, where necessary, with access to a justice system that meets their needs in that language. The Initiative is based on two main pillars: the Information pillar and the Training pillar. The Information pillar aims to offer legal information services that will help minority Francophone and Anglophone Canadians learn about their rights, obligations and responsibilities in the official language of their choice. The Training pillar involves the training and development of bilingual justice professionals in order to improve their language skills, thereby increasing their ability to offer services in French outside Quebec and in English in Quebec as part of their work within the justice system, including in the area of criminal law.

WHAT WAS FOUND

- The evaluation confirms that the Initiative is aligned with the priorities of the Department of Justice and the federal government, and that there is an ongoing need to support language training for legal professionals, for actions to ensure that OLMCs become aware of their rights and obligations, and for the provision of legal information in both languages, especially to support self-represented litigants.
- Under the Information pillar of the Initiative, legal information was disseminated to a wide range of legal system users, with many of the services being delivered through the Legal Information Hub organizations. The information was deemed useful and tailored to the needs of groups and subgroups within OLMCs, such as newcomers to Canada.
- Activities under the Training pillar were targeted towards justice professionals to improve their second language skills. Most respondents agreed that the training was effective, resulting in an increased ability of justice system professionals to offer their services in French outside Quebec and in English in Quebec. Jurilinguistic centres were effective in producing materials serving legislative authorities, translators and the academic community.

- The Advisory Committee and the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group on Access to Justice in Both Official Languages were also found to be effective in terms of facilitating cooperation between partners.
- The evaluation concludes that the Initiative is efficient, that the Gs&Cs agreements are appropriate, and that the level of funding is adequate. The percentage of program costs dedicated to administration is deemed acceptable.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- That the Official Languages Directorate undertake a needs assessment with respect to the Initiative's information pillar to identify gaps and with the view of better understanding where coordination between projects can occur.
- That the Official Languages Directorate review the structure and mandate of the Advisory Committee, in consultation with Committee members.
- That the Official Languages Directorate determine the extent to which the activities of the jurilinguistic centres are in line with the objectives of the Support Fund.
- That the Official Languages Directorate develop a more rigorous reporting template for funded projects, including standard indicators and measures to be used by recipients to report on progress.
- That the Official Languages Directorate explore the possibility of modifying the intellectual property clauses in its agreements.

ABOUT THE EVALUATION

The Department of Justice Canada's programs are evaluated every five years to meet the accountability requirements of the Treasury Board's Policy on Results, address requirements of senior management, and inform the renewal of programs and agreements.

This evaluation covers the activities of the program carried out during a period of four fiscal years, from 2013–14 to 2016–17, using information collected through three lines of inquiry to assess the relevance and performance of the Initiative.

For the full report, please visit the Evaluation Division website: <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cp-pm/eval/2017.html>

