

Results at a glance

Evaluation of the Legal Support and Awareness to Address Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Initiative (SHW Initiative)

The SHW Initiative was launched in 2018-19 to support the federal government in its goal of eliminating gender-based violence and harassment. It is comprised of two components, the Public Legal Education and Information Outreach (PLEI) component, and the Legal Advice for Complainants of Workplace Sexual Harassment component.

The PLEI component supports the development and dissemination of PLEI in a pan-Canadian outreach campaign. The goal is to better inform workers, especially the most vulnerable, about their rights, and the resources they can access regarding sexual harassment in the workplace.

The Legal Advice component supports organizations that provide legal information, advice and ancillary services across each province and territory to persons who have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. The Initiative ensures that the services are accessible to populations who may be more vulnerable to sexual harassment, such as workers in precarious jobs; those who provide personal services; women working in male dominated fields; youth; Indigenous and racialized women; persons with disabilities; those who identify as 2SLGBTQI+; and women newcomers to Canada.

WHAT WAS FOUND

- The SHW Initiative is well aligned with federal government priorities related to sexual harassment in the workplace. It is also consistent with federal roles pertaining to assisting those who have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace.
- Target populations as originally identified for the SHW Initiative are varied and inclusive. Additional needs of these target populations and additional target populations have emerged and projects have adapted accordingly. Some gaps remain, including supports for psychosocial needs, and access to legal representation, although the latter is outside the scope of the SHW Initiative. Given the pervasiveness of sexual harassment in the workplace, until workplace cultures and norms change, the needs of target populations are likely to persist without meaningful, continuous support.
- Projects are contributing to increasing access to legal advice and PLEI. Making services and information available online, in multiple languages and available through intermediary organizations already known to those accessing the information are key enablers to

accessibility. However, people who have experienced SHW are fearful and hesitant to seek information or advice, which limits their access to advice and information. These include fears of being identified (particularly in rural/small communities) and lack of confidentiality.

- Multi-sectoral and multi-agency collaborations helped increase outreach and contributed to the achievement of project outcomes. Partnerships were used to connect with more difficult to reach target groups, to refer clients, and to cross-promote services between the collaborating organizations. Knowledge-exchange and sharing of resources had a positive impact on outcomes.
- The main challenge facing the SHW Initiative was COVID-19, which affected timelines, project design, delivery approaches and reach. Best practices were built into the SHW Initiative at the design stage, such as requiring projects to adopt trauma-informed approaches, apply GBA Plus in project design, and encourage the involvement and collaboration with organizations already trusted by target populations.
- GBA Plus was a requirement for all projects in the planning phase. Some projects integrated GBA Plus into their project delivery, but it is difficult to confirm whether GBA Plus (as opposed to seeking a diversity of participants) was used to inform the project delivery of most funded projects.
- While there is limited information about the efficiency of the SHW Initiative, funding organizations that were already delivering PLEI, as well as collaborations between organizations to expand reach and services, were seen as efficient.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

No recommendations are included as the SHW Initiative has been implemented as expected, and there are no identified barriers to the achievement of expected results.

ABOUT THE EVALUATION: The Evaluation of the SHW Initiative was conducted by the Department of Justice Evaluation Branch and covered fiscal years 2019-20 to 2022-23. Its main objectives were to examine the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of the Initiative, in accordance with the Treasury Board's *Policy on Results* (2016).

