

Results at a glance

Evaluation of the Access to Justice in Both Official Languages Initiative

The Access to Justice in both Official Languages Initiative (the Initiative) helps 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 to access a justice system that meets their needs in that language. The Initiative includes two main pillars:

- The information pillar supports activities that aim to offer legal information to help members of the OLMCs learn about their rights, obligations and responsibilities in the official language of their choice.
- The training pillar involves the training and the development of bilingual justice professionals to improve their language skills, thereby increasing their ability to offer services in French outside Quebec and in English in Quebec.

The Initiative provides support to the Advisory Committee on Access to Justice in Both Official Languages, which brings together representatives from Justice, community organizations, jurilinguistic centres and law faculties from OLMCs. It also supports the Working Group on Access to Justice in Both Official Languages, which includes representatives from Justice, the Public Prosecution Service of Canada, and representatives from provincial and territorial governments. The Initiative provides operational and core funding to strengthen the internal capacity and financial stability of eligible organizations working in the field of access to justice in both official languages.

WHAT WAS FOUND

- The Initiative ensures that official languages considerations are directly integrated in efforts to promote access to justice in Canada. It is well aligned with the vision included in the federal action plan on official languages.
- Significant progress was made towards the goals set in relation to the information component. However, there is a need to further expand and diversify delivery strategies to secure a broader reach of the targeted population.
- The Initiative is the driving force behind the efforts in Canada to enhance the capacity of the justice system to operate in both official languages. It has facilitated the process of identifying needs and establishing priorities, and has supported organizations that have successfully designed and delivered training activities to various categories of justice professionals.

- While the Advisory Committee and the Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Working Group have enhanced collaborations among key stakeholders, further interactions between these two structures would facilitate their respective work.
- The Initiative rests on a solid delivery structure, and stakeholders are generally satisfied with the current reporting requirements.
- Justice has been including considerations related to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in the ongoing management of the Initiative, and has conducted a Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) that allowed for data gaps to be identified.
- Stakeholders are generally satisfied with the current process used to allocate funding. The application process, the review of these applications, the allocation of funding are all seen as operating efficiently.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation 1: To ensure the broadest reach possible of individuals and communities who may benefit from the activities funded by the Initiative, including those who are more isolated or marginalized, the Programs Branch, in collaboration with the Official Languages Directorate, should facilitate the engagement of a broader range of organizations as part of its information pillar.

Recommendation 2: To maximize the contributions of the Advisory Committee and the FPT Working Group, the Official Languages Directorate should consider having each hold two meetings per year, including one in-person (when feasible), and to find opportunities for both entities to collaborate directly when appropriate.

Recommendation 3: To further include EDI considerations in the ongoing management of the Initiative, the Programs Branch, in collaboration with the Official Languages Directorate, should explore new data sources that can support its ongoing GBA+ efforts.

ABOUT THE EVALUATION: The evaluation of the Access to Justice in Both Official Languages Initiative was conducted by the Department of Justice Evaluation Branch and covered fiscal years 2017-18 to 2020-21. 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).

