

Appendix C: Technological and Service Innovations

Legal Aid Plan	Name of Innovation/Initiative	Description	Timeline	Beneficiaries	Expected Outcomes
Alberta (AB): Legal Aid Alberta	Client Access and Service Enhancement	Legal Aid Alberta (LAA) has implemented Client Access and Service Enhancements (CASE) to improve access to legal aid services. These enhancements streamline the application process, reduce the need for clients to repeat their legal situation, and improve access to legal counsel particularly in rural areas. This initiative aims to increase efficiency and ensure equitable access to legal representation across Alberta.	Implemented	Clients	As outlined.
	The Criminal Trial Group	The Criminal Trial Group (CTG) provides legal representation for youth and adults facing criminal charges who have had multiple lawyers work their file and experience challenges such as mental health concerns, addition, and housing instability. These clients have overlapping legal and personal issues that complicate the matter beyond legal complexities. The CTG enhances Legal Aid Alberta's capacity to support and assist adults and youth facing criminal charges, from start to finish, including appeals.	Implemented	Clients	As outlined.
	Tariff Modernization	LAA's Tariff of Fees structure came into effect on April 1, 2023. The Tariff Modernization Project has increased efficiencies by simplifying the invoicing process, providing roster lawyers with the proper recognition based on the complexity of the legal matter. The review has led to a new tariff structure based on block fees that can build on one another as files evolve, better reflecting the work required on a file.	Implemented	Roster lawyers	As outlined.
	Lawyer Panels	In alignment with LAA's commitment to provide quality legal representation to clients across the province, we have established lawyer panels. A lawyer panel is a group of LAA staff and roster lawyers who commit to excellence in a particular area of law. These panels ensure consistent, high-quality representation in matters requiring in-depth knowledge in certain legal practice areas. At present, LAA has lawyer panels in the following areas: youth criminal law, child representation, child welfare, complainant counsel, and major cases.	Implemented	Clients	As outlined.
	Centralized Duty Counsel Scheduling	As outlined in the 2024 Governance Agreement, LAA provides duty counsel services in courthouses across Alberta to help ensure the rights and freedoms of Albertans are protected in courts. Duty Counsel services are available at no cost to any Albertan in courts where those services are scheduled. To help deliver these critical services, LAA has a centralized duty counsel scheduling system called Shiftboard that helps efficiently manage duty counsel shifts across the province.	Implemented	Staff and Roster lawyers	As outlined.
	Family Law Assessment	As part of our Assessment services, Family law assessments are completed by an experienced team of LAA staff lawyers and legal professionals who determine an applicant's eligibility. The Assessment Team also offers valuable legal advice to help clients understand the next steps in their legal matter. The team can provide referrals to the Government of Alberta's (GoA)Resolution Services as required, ensuring clients have support from the beginning of a matter through to its conclusion. GoA's Resolution Services can help with legal procedures, including mediation and court forms.	Implemented	Clients	As outlined.
	Choice of Counsel	Legal Aid Alberta believes in Choice of Counsel and works to help ensure that clients get to choose their counsel through our travel policies. This means that a client living in a remote rural area will have the same access to the roster of lawyers in urban areas. Regardless of where our clients live, or are charged, they are given equitable access to an experienced and knowledgeable staff or roster lawyer of their choice. LAA cannot always guarantee that the preferred lawyer of choice will accept the matter. There are some circumstances beyond our control where that service cannot be delivered to our clients.	Implemented	Clients	As outlined.
	Duty Counsel Triage Program	Legal Aid Alberta has implemented a triage system to help assess the seriousness of a legal matter and the resources it may require. Duty Counsel Triage helps match clients with the LAA service that best aligns with their legal circumstances.  The Duty Counsel Triage Program implemented at LAA allows individuals who are charged with a crime, but not held in custody, to speak directly with a duty counsel before their court date. At that time, duty counsel can discuss options and help “triage” the case and determine if the person is at risk of a jail term, which then may result in an LAA lawyer being appointed to take the matter to the next step.	Implemented	Clients	As outlined.
	Change of Counsel	Legal Aid Alberta recognizes that a strong, trust-based based relationship between clients and their lawyers is essential for effective representation. In most cases, clients can request a change of counsel with necessary, with the exception of priority matters such as child welfare and high-conflict child representation matters. This process ensures clients have legal representation suited to their needs while maintaining continuity in essential cases.	Implemented	Clients	As outlined.
British Columbia (BC): Legal Aid BC	Family Legal Aid Expansion	Through this initiative, LABC has increased financial eligibility for family law clients, and added additional intake workers to reduce wait times. The initiative also led to the expansion of family law legal aid services to include the establishment of a multidisciplinary intensive family law clinic focused on providing family law legal aid services to those experiencing	April 2024- March 2025	Family clients (especially survivors of family violence) – expanded access to legal and non-legal services	Better outcomes for clients. Provide holistic multidisciplinary support to those experiencing family violence.

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	Family Violence (as defined in the BC <i>Family Law Act</i> ). Eligible clients who do not qualify for the clinic due to capacity limitations will still have access to increased hours with a private bar lawyer.				
	Early resolution expansion	The Early Resolution Process (ERP) under the Provincial Court Family Rules, which emphasizes front end services, diverts most parties to Family Justice Services for needs assessments, referrals and mediation. To support this new model an Expanded Family Duty Counsel (EXP FDC) approach was implemented in those registries that transitioned to ERP. The EXP FDC approach includes written advice, continuity of service for summary advice, administrative support, limited representation in court, and paralegal support with drafting court pleadings.	June 2024-March 2025	Self-represented family litigants – expanded family summary advice services	Help litigants represent themselves better Enhanced consistency and continuity of legal advice Fewer adjournments as clients are better prepared Reduced court time Reduced workload for court services staff working with uninformed clients
	Legal Aid Navigators	Non-lawyers who work for Legal Aid BC and provide holistic support to clients with contracts from private bar lawyers. Supports include assistance in accessing relevant PLEI, support in accessing virtual bail and bail support plans, support clients in lawyer communication, support clients with court appearances and understanding conditions, warm-referrals to community services, and help accessing social support and additional legal advice services, especially in accessing virtual services by providing technology and assistance in using relevant technology.	October 2023-present	Legal Aid clients with private bar lawyer representation contracts for criminal, family, child protection and/or immigration.	Help clients understand the legal process and empower them to take steps to resolve legal and other issues in a holistic way.
	Digital Transformation Program	The digital transformation program will impact our people, processes and technology. Initial years will deliver the necessary systems architecture and practices which will carry the program forward. This includes establishing a Project Management Office, Change Management Practice, IT Security Program, and Business Intelligence (BI) Program. The first projects being launched focus on migrating legacy systems (Internal Audit, Large Case Management) to the cloud, migrating BI assets from MicroStrategy to PowerBI, and upgrading the Financial System. LABC will also begin to leverage Artificial Intelligence (AI) and focus on data sharing with our service partners. Future years will bring more focus on leveraging AI while continuing to strengthen the organizations BI and IT Security capabilities.	March 2023 – March 2029	Legal Aid clients will experience a more informed and transparent process. Partners and Private Bar lawyers will benefit from more effective assignments and payment for services rendered. Employees will be better equipped, informed, and engaged..	Better outcomes for clients that comes from and improved and more informed lawyer assignment process. Increase efficiencies in intake. Improved client satisfaction that comes from more consistent and transparent processes. Improved employee engagement.
	Child Minding Pilot	Through the consultation process for the development of the Family Law Centre (FLC), survivors and service providers noted the lack of access to safe affordable childminding as a barrier to accessing legal services. LABC is piloting a childminding program under the License-Not Required provision. The child minder will be able to provide supervision to a maximum of 2 children (or a group of siblings). This will enable a parent or caregiver to receive services at the Family Law Centre (FLC) without the added stress of coordinating childcare.	April 2025-June 2025	Legal Aid clients who are parents and caregivers receiving services at the Family Law Centre (FLC)	This service will reduce barriers for clients who are accessing services at the Family Law Centre and work to provide better outcomes for clients
Nova Scotia (NS): Nova Scotia Legal Aid Commission (NSLAC)	Tariff Reform	NSLA's regulations were amended to implement an increase in the hourly rates for certificate lawyers, introduced a rate for articulated clerks and increased preparation hours for specific criminal and family tariffs.	June 2024 - onwards	Private bar – increased compensation and preparation hours supported ability of private bar to take certificates  For clients – expands access to legal services and quality representation	Increase the number of private lawyers accepting certificates; increase the quality of service provided to clients.
	Prison law reform	With funding obtained through the Justice Partnership and Innovation Program, NSLA hired a prison law support worker (plsw) for the province. The PLSW travels across the province visiting federal and provincial facilities to meet with clients, focusing on Indigenous and racialized clients. The PLSW also provides educational sessions in community and is creating educational materials for incarcerated clients	April 2023-April 2027	Supports incarcerated clients by providing service in an area of law that previously had not been provided by NSLA	Increase the provision of prison law services, specifically Indigenous and Black and African Nova Scotian clients who are over represented in the criminal justice system.
	Financial eligibility pilot	Implemented a pilot project in Cape Breton, NS utilizing an updated financial eligibility table to assess the increase in demand for criminal, family and social justice services. The pilot noted limited impact on criminal matters but 10% increase in family service coverage	September 2023-April 2024	Clients – increasing the financial eligibility thresholds supports increase to legal services for clients	The pilot and subsequent report and costings will support the ongoing ask to government to fund an increase in financial eligibility thresholds
	Mental Health Legal Services Navigator	The navigator works with offices across the province to support lawyers representing clients with mental health needs by identifying resources available in their community. The navigator also works directly with lawyers on specific client files and works closely with community partners; eliminating silos and fostering collaborative approaches	April 2024-onwards	Staff lawyers – who are aware of more resources to support their clients. Clients – who benefit from the wraparound services the navigator can provide	Improve the delivery of service for clients with mental health needs across the province, develop comprehensive resources; and foster collaborative relationships with community partners supporting the same client base.
	Intake reform	Implemented a pilot centralizing intake process across the province. Previously financial eligibility was determined locally in each office across the province	January 2024-onwards	Benefit staff – streamline intake processes and reduce administrative workloads in administrative staff in each office.	Result in an intake and financial eligibility process that consistent, fair, efficient, accessible and transparent.

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				Benefit clients – improve response time in determining eligibility and reduce inconsistent application if they move from one region of the province to another	
	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion reform	With funding from the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia, NSLA has hired a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisor to oversee the implementation of NSLA’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan. The Plan includes improved community engagement, increased diversity in staffing, hiring practices, retention practices, professional development, creating inclusive and safe spaces for clients, supporting the work of NSLA’s Indigenous Justice Committee and Equity Racial and Diversity Committee and ensuring the built environment will meet accessibility standards	April 2023-onwards	Benefits staff – by ensuring the organization that supports the success of all employees.  Clients – by enriching the delivery of client services that are inclusive and reflect the communities they live in.	The Strategic Plan is a call to action for the organization and the larger justice community. As a living document, the plan reflects NSLA’s commitment to creating an organization that leverages diversity, equity, and inclusion as a source of enrichment and strength in delivering client service experiences and fostering a workplace that supports success for all employees, while sharing common fundamental values that are grounded in justice, civility, and respect.
	Sipekne’katik Legal Aid Office	In September 2024, in partnership with Sipekne’katik First Nation, NSLA established a legal aid office in Sipekne’katik; staffed by members of the Mi’kmaq legal community providing family and criminal law services, outreach, education and support to the community	September 2024 -	Sipekne’katik community	Culturally responsive delivery of service in criminal and family; increase in applications for legal service by eliminating many barriers that interfered with applying for legal aid. Working with community and the staff to ensure the delivery of legal aid services reflect and meet the needs of the Sipekne’katik community.
Ontario (ON): Legal Aid Ontario (LAO)	Tariff Reform	LAO implemented a set of amendments to the Legal Aid Rules which increased hourly rates for roster lawyers and the amount paid for block fees (15% over a 6-month period); increased the number of hours allocated under the hourly tariff and the block fee rates for certain additional criminal proceedings; allowed per diem counsel to bill according to their tier rate; created new areas of coverage under the tariff; expanded eligibility for criminal cases costing between \$8K-\$20K; and introduce new hourly and block fee rates dealing with global resolution, IRCA assessments, fitness hearings, and use of interpreters.	Oct 2023 – Jul 2024	Roster members – increased compensation structure, more hours under the hourly tariff, coverage for steps that were previously not covered by LAO.  Clients – expanded access to legal services, more quality legal representation.	To reflect increased time and complexity of providing legal aid services.  To further support and increase roster membership while also expanding the services that low-income clients need.
	Increased FET	LAO is proposing a three-year increase to its financial eligibility thresholds. The FET would be raised to \$45,440 for families of up to four people for family and duty counsel services and criminal certificate eligibility. LAO is also proposing to increase its asset thresholds for DC and criminal certificate services to \$15,000 regardless of size.	Dec 2024 – ongoing	Clients – increased access to services, faster handling of cases, less unrepresented litigants. Courts – reduce court backlogs, minimize strain of self-represented litigants	To allow more low-income Ontarians to access necessary legal aid services.  To support the province's broader goal of reducing the backlog in criminal courts.
	IRCA Funding	LAO is receiving \$1.4M over the course of five years (2023-2028) to produce IRCA reports. LAO funds reports for Black legal aid clients facing two or more years in jail and for Black youths facing custodial sentences. IRCAs are funded for non-Black racialized accused individuals when there is an endorsement from the Court.	2023-2028	Clients – Black and non-Black racialized clients are more able to access a fairer outcome	To ensure that the most vulnerable racialized clients have access to equitable and fair sentencing outcomes.
	Indigenous Services Division	LAO created the Indigenous Services Department to bring all Indigenous client services together in order to centralize the delivery of legal aid services to Indigenous clients.	May 2023 – ongoing	Clients – Indigenous clients will have increased access to LAO services	To enhance service delivery to Indigenous clients by using the ISD to provide them with higher quality, culturally appropriate, and relevant legal services.
	Lawyer Self-Report	In January 2024, LAO launched a revamped annual lawyer self-report, which is more user-friendly for service providers and allows LAO to efficiently collate and analyze roster member information, including tracking conditional status. The updated report captures additional information on the languages spoken by lawyers, assisting clients in identifying legal counsel in their language of choice.	January 2024	Roster members – better experience completing the self-report.  Clients – Ability to identify LAO rosters members by their language of choice.	Improved user experience of LAO’s roster members while also providing LAO with improved information to better manage the roster.
Saskatchewan (SK): Legal Aid Saskatchewan (LAS)	Private Bar Modernization Project	LAS reviewed its private bar processes to determine opportunities for modernization, digitization and improvement. As a result of that review process, LAS has: Created Private Bar Services department consolidating private bar function and oversight from other departments. Reviewed and updated private bar billing policies and procedures. Developed and launched Exceptional Circumstances (EC) polities, forms and procedures for both criminal and civil matters and Case Management (CM) for large budget criminal matters. Identified key service standards, developed accountability framework and performance	Spring 2022 - ongoing	Private Bar Panel members – provide standardized policies and procedures, clarity and support for processes from appointment, requests, to billing and payment.	To support Private Bar panel members in delivery of services and increase engagement and satisfaction levels with Private Bar service providers.  By reducing inefficiencies, ensure timeliness and clarity of service being provided to LAS

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	measurement plan. Enhanced engagement with Private Bar through regular town halls, pilot projects, satisfaction survey, workshop and training sessions. Development of Private Bar recognition strategy.					Staff – improved efficiencies through leveraging technological supports and tools in place of manual processes	clients.
						Clients – improved timeliness and quality of service being provided by Private Bar panel members	
	Online Private Bar Billing, Communication and Payments portal	As part of the overall Private Bar Modernization review, the design, development and implementation of an Online Private Bar Billing, Communication and Payments portal that will integrate and digitize all existing, outdated and manual private bar processes - from issuance of appointments, communication on files, submission and receipt of accounts, processing, taxing, paying and post payment analysis, metrics and reporting.	Jan 2023 – Oct 2027	Private Bar Panel Lawyers, Staff	One comprehensive service, available to all LAS Private Bar Panel members throughout the province, will better serve clients, private bar lawyers, Head Office staff, and increase accountability..		
	IRCA	Staff training and development completed, IRCA writer trained in Saskatchewan, business case under development	September 2023- ongoing	Equitable outcomes for black clients in Saskatchewan	Reduced sentencing ranges as a result of contextualizing the black experience in Saskatchewan.		
Yukon (YK): Yukon Legal Services Society (YLSS)	Development of new database system	YLSS has received over \$100,000 in funding to develop a new database system to replace an aging system that was no longer functional.	April 2021- ongoing	Staff and Government	To enhance YLSS’ ability to provide timely and accurate data for funding requirements		
	Legislative and Tariff Reform	Yukon Government has committed to reforming Yukon’s outdated Legal Aid Act and Regulations	April 2024- ongoing	Management, clients and roster lawyers	To enhance service delivery and expand services to low income individuals		