

Alberta Legal Services Mapping Project Charter

The purpose of this Charter is to ensure a shared understanding of the *Alberta Legal Services Mapping Project* and to clarify the roles of all Collaborators.

Project Description – The *Alberta Legal Services Mapping Project* (the Project) is a collaborative action research project being undertaken by the Canadian Forum on Civil Justice (the Forum) and stakeholders from throughout the justice community. The Project is designed to gain an understanding of the legal needs of Albertans and of the legal services available in Alberta, and will provide a province-wide ‘map’ of all legal services that are provided to the Alberta public including information, education, legal advice, legal representation, and/or other supports relating to legal problems. The map will extend to civil, family, criminal and administrative justice programs and services.

Detailed information about the Project, including the Project Proposal, may be found at <http://cfcj-fcjc.org/research/mapping-en.php>¹.

Benefits - The Project will benefit all Collaborators and residents of Alberta, by:

- ✓ Providing a comprehensive directory of legal and other related service provider agencies and individuals in a searchable database;
 - This will enable members of the public to find the services they need, and
 - Enable service providers to increase awareness about their organizations
- ✓ Strengthening relationships among legal and other related service providers by providing information about a broad spectrum of legal services so that service providers can learn about each other and make more accurate and effective referrals;
- ✓ Revealing strengths in current programs on which to build and gaps in services that need to be addressed, in order to improve access to legal services for all Albertans;
- ✓ Providing funders with accurate information so that they can be kept apprised of the supply and demand of legal services and more easily recognise where gaps exist.

Collaborators - This Charter will be accepted by all Collaborators in the Project, being those individuals and organizations involved in the Project in one or more of the following roles:

- the Forum and its Research Team,
- the Research Directors,
- Stakeholders who expect their role to be limited to receiving updates and providing feedback on occasion,
- Advisory Committee members, and
- Community Working Group members.

¹ It should be noted that the “Steering Committee” referred to in the project proposal, is now referred to as the “Advisory Committee”.

The Collaborators agree to the following shared understanding of the Project and their roles:

1. Goals - The specific goals of the Project are to:

- (a) gather and organize information about existing legal services in each judicial district in Alberta and create a searchable database in which to store and share this information with service providers and the public;
- (b) identify the demographics for the population in each of the eleven judicial districts, including primary industries and other characteristics which will assist in predicting legal needs;
- (c) facilitate the development and maintenance of information networks among service providers; and
- (d) identify both current service strengths and gaps in legal service delivery and resources.

2. Research Approach - A *Collaborative Action Research* approach is one in which community stakeholders are actively involved in generating research knowledge. This process is defined as:

Working together in a cooperative, equitable and dynamic relationship, in which knowledge and resources are shared in order to attain goals and take action that is educational, meaningful, and beneficial to all.

The “mapping” approach allows stakeholders to contribute perspectives and experience, thus ensuring that the research is valuable to those it will impact as well as fostering ownership of the recommendations to bring about positive change.

3. Commitment to Ethical Conduct of Research - All research conducted by, or including, any person or organization associated with a Canadian University requires a Certificate of Research Ethics Board (REB) Approval, which must be renewed annually. The purpose of the Ethics approval process is to comply with the Canadian Research Tri-Council Policy Statement *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (http://pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/pdf/TCPS%20October%202005_E.pdf). Approved projects demonstrate respect for human dignity including the concepts of free and informed consent; privacy and confidentiality; justice and inclusiveness; maximization of the benefits of the research and minimization of any potential for harm; and specific protection for the interests of vulnerable persons. The *Alberta Legal Services Mapping Project* has received REB approval certificate #1546 (TJ-0707-461).

4. Anticipated Time Commitment – This is a multi-year project beginning with a 2 year pilot and with the full study expected to be completed in three to four years. Each Collaborator agrees to participate in this Project from the date of signing this Charter and the anticipated time commitments are as follows:

- The Research Directors will meet every one to two months as needed, for the duration of the Project.

- The Advisory Committee members will meet two to four times a year as needed, for the duration of the Project.
- The Community Working Groups will meet monthly during the months that their respective Judicial Districts are being mapped and at least once to review Project findings.

5. Responsibilities of All Collaborators –All Collaborators will:

- (a) provide relevant information to the Research Team about the services that their respective organizations provide as well as general data such as; how many clients they serve and referrals they receive and make to other organizations;
- (b) advise the Research Team of the name of a contact person for the purposes of the Project;
- (c) provide the Research Team with input and feedback relating to the Project;
- (d) undertake to observe any confidentiality of documents, information, and any other data received in relation to the Project even after the Project is complete.
- (e) participate in Project evaluation activities, such as reviewing interim and final reports.
- (f) ensure that Project information is shared effectively within their respective organizations.
- (g) determine who will undertake the responsibility of the ongoing maintenance of the database that will be created after this Project is complete.

6. Responsibilities of the Forum - The Forum will:

- (a) administer the funding for the Project from the Alberta Law Foundation and other funders;
- (b) oversee the day-to-day management of the Project;
- (c) ensure the ethical conduct of the Project, including maintaining ethics approval for the Project, as well as the safe storage and protection of confidential data²; and
- (d) ensure that the Project’s final report reflects the Project findings and that these findings are shared with the stakeholders and the interested public.

7. Responsibilities of the Research Directors - The Research Directors will:

- (a) provide the Research Team with ongoing input, feedback and direction relating to the Project; and
- (b) facilitate contacts with key stakeholders in Alberta’s eleven judicial districts.

8. Responsibilities of the Research Team – The Research Team will:

² In this Charter, the term “confidential data” means any data that the person disclosing identifies as confidential, or is confidential under the project ethics certificate.

- (a) circulate drafts of research instruments, reports and other relevant materials to the Collaborators;
- (b) ensure that the Collaborators receive Project updates on a regular basis; and
- (c) convey feedback from Collaborators to the Research Directors.

9. Responsibilities of the Advisory Committee - The Advisory Committee will:

- (a) provide the Research Directors and the Research Team with input, feedback and in kind or other resources as they are able;
- (b) assist in identifying and facilitating entrée to relevant services in the eleven judicial districts;
- (c) provide feedback on draft Project reports, as requested;
- (d) participate in scheduled meetings to share Project information;
- (e) assist in the dissemination of the report within their respective organizations and where possible, within their sector; and
- (f) consider participating in future collaborations aimed at addressing project recommendations.

10. Responsibilities of the Community Working Groups - The Community Working Groups will:

- (a) provide the Research Team with input, feedback and support relating to their respective judicial district;
- (b) assist in identifying and facilitating access to the services in their respective judicial district;
- (c) provide feedback on draft Project reports, as requested; and
- (d) participate in scheduled meetings to share Project information.

11. Communication - Clear and open communication between all of the Collaborators is essential to the successful completion of this Project. Communication may take place in person, by telephone or via electronic media, as is convenient.

12. Conflict Resolution Process - Conflict is a natural occurrence in any collaborative endeavour. In fact, any effective "team" *is expected* to experience some elements of conflict, because the purpose of collaboration is to bring together different perspectives and ideas, collaborators have differing mandates and goals, and individuals have unique personalities, roles and motivations. The two main forms of conflict are:

Organizational - Organizations will have different mandates and operational styles. Organizations are encouraged to share with each other their requirements, goals, and restrictions, and to negotiate shared goals and approaches that can assist the Project.

Personal - Individuals also have different personal styles and goals. It is important that every individual feel comfortable expressing their options and ideas openly and honestly. It is important to maintain a respectful collaborative environment in which every individual is treated fairly and given equal voice.

These differences are invaluable to the success of any collaborative venture. The potentially advantageous products of conflict can be lost, however, if conflict is not managed effectively to ensure that working relationships are maintained. For this reason, the Collaborators agree to the following processes for addressing conflict:

- (a) If any challenges or conflicts arise which the parties are unable to resolve between themselves, they are encouraged to bring their concerns to any one of the Research Directors or the Forum's Research Coordinator.
- (b) The Research Directors or Research Coordinator will seek a resolution to the conflict on an informal basis, in collaboration with the parties involved.
- (c) If a resolution cannot be agreed upon, an outside professional mediator may be called upon, with the agreement of the parties involved and the Forum, in its role as Project Administrator.

13. Independence of Collaborators – This Charter recognizes and does not affect the rights of any Collaborators to carry out their respective legal responsibilities, obligations and mandates, and creates no additional legal obligations.

14. Withdrawal from Participation – A Collaborator may withdraw from participation in this Charter and the Project at any time by providing written notice to the Forum.

15. Acceptance of the Charter – Please respond via email or formal letter, on behalf of your organization, to confirm your understanding and acceptance of this Charter.