



Albertans have all kinds of legal needs and legal questions. Often, there are services that can help, but finding the right service can be challenging. The Canadian Forum on Civil Justice (the Forum) is currently conducting the Alberta Legal Services Mapping Project (ALSMP). The ALSMP is designed to gain a better understanding of what legal needs Albertans have, the extent to which these needs are currently being met and how access to legal services can be improved. The ALSMP aims to create a province-wide “map<sup>1</sup>” of legal services including information, education, legal advice, legal representation and/or other supports or assistance related to legal problems.

The ALSMP has received funding from the Alberta Law Foundation (ALF) and Alberta Justice. The Research Team for this project is being overseen by six Research Directors who represent the Forum, ALF, Alberta

Justice, Legal Aid, the Edmonton Community Legal Centre and Calgary Legal Guidance. An Advisory Committee has also been established which currently has 25 members representing justice and social services stakeholders. Additionally, local service providers from each judicial district will participate in Community Working Groups to advise the Team as we work in their districts.

This unique project will involve funders, government, legal service providers, educators, law reform organizations, the Bar, the judiciary, courts administration and the public in a joint initiative aimed at better understanding our justice system in Alberta. The collaborative approach is designed to strengthen relationships within the Alberta justice community, helping to ensure that the way of doing business evolves into a coordinated, effective and user-focused approach. The broad partnership expected to be involved in the collaboration will encourage the sharing of knowledge, increased cooperation among service providers, support for recommended reforms, and will ultimately result in improved programs and services for the public.

The ALSMP will provide an opportunity for members of the public and legal service providers to talk about their service knowledge, availability and access experiences. The findings will also provide a better understanding of existing strengths and gaps in legal services in communities across Alberta and enable the Team to make solid recommendations for legal service providers about how to improve access to justice for all Albertans.

A major product of the project will be a searchable online database of available legal services in the province of Alberta. This database will be more comprehensive than any that currently exist, will be easy to use and will be available to everyone to use.

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<sup>1</sup> A “mapping process” is a form of needs assessment research that takes a collaborative network approach to creating a picture of what programs and services exist, and how they are experienced. This process will also reveal strengths in current programs on which to build and gaps in services that need to be addressed, in order to improve the administration of justice in Alberta.

The goals of this project are to:

- Collect and share information about existing legal services in Alberta.
- Gain a better understanding about the characteristics of people and communities across Alberta and their legal needs.
- Identify strengths and gaps in current legal service delivery and resources.
- Strengthen relationships between legal service providers through sharing knowledge and expertise.

The Research Team is currently mapping the Calgary Judicial District. A Community Working Group has been established and meetings held on April 21 and June 9, 2008.

- Action Plan <<http://cfcj-fcjc.org/docs/2008/mapping-actionplan-en.pdf>>
- Project Charter <<http://cfcj-fcjc.org/docs/2008/mapping-charter-en.pdf>>
- Research Directors <<http://cfcj-fcjc.org/docs/2008/mapping-directors-en.pdf>>
- Advisory Committee Members <<http://cfcj-fcjc.org/docs/2008/mapping-advisory-en.pdf>>
- Project Partners <<http://cfcj-fcjc.org/docs/2008/mapping-partners-en.pdf>>
- Legal Services – Questionnaire & Interview Part 1 <<http://cfcj-fcjc.org/docs/2008/mapping-legal1-en.pdf>>
- Legal Services – Questionnaire & Interview Part 2 <<http://cfcj-fcjc.org/docs/2008/mapping-legal2-en.pdf>>
- Social Services – Questionnaire & Interview <<http://cfcj-fcjc.org/docs/2008/mapping-social-en.pdf>>
- City of Calgary — Preliminary List of Legal & Social Services <<http://cfcj-fcjc.org/research/alsmp-calgaryservices-en.php>>

## Publications

- Community-Based Mapping: A Research Tool for Justice System Research <<http://cfcj-fcjc.org/publications/mapping-en.php#map>>
- Reaching out with Research: Engaging Community in Mapping Legal Service Accessibility, Effectiveness and Unmet Needs <<http://cfcj-fcjc.org/publications/mapping-en.php#map>>
- Alberta Legal Services Mapping Project - Pilot District Interim Report <<http://cfcj-fcjc.org/publications/mapping-en.php#alsmp>>
- Alberta Legal Services Mapping Project - Brief Overview <<http://cfcj-fcjc.org/publications/mapping-en.php#alsmp>>
- Alberta Legal Services Mapping Project - Research Proposal <<http://cfcj-fcjc.org/publications/mapping-en.php#alsmp>>

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