



The Law Foundation of Ontario
Building a better foundation for justice in Ontario

www.lawfoundation.on.ca

Linguistic and Rural Access to Justice Project
CONSULTATION GUIDE

Finding information about legal rights and obligations or getting help from a legal professional can be especially difficult for people who don't speak English or French or who live in rural or remote areas of Ontario.

The Law Foundation of Ontario is leading an innovative project to improve access to justice in these areas. We want to hear your perspectives and ideas.

May 2008

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This Consultation Guide is designed to help interested organizations and individuals provide input to The Law Foundation of Ontario's *Linguistic and Rural Access to Justice Project*. The Guide contains the following sections:

Introduction

Background information on the project and proposed guiding principles for developing solutions

Linguistic Access Rural or Remote Access

Context, challenges, and interesting practices drawn from research and discussions in the early stages of the project

Discussion Questions

Questions to guide input to the project (feel free to answer as many questions as interest you and to offer additional ideas for solutions)

How to Provide Feedback

Details about how you can provide input on the issues addressed in this Guide

A two-page summary of the Guide is available on The Law Foundation of Ontario website to assist organizations that want to discuss the issues with their clients. The full Consultation Guide is also available on the website:
www.lawfoundation.on.ca.

Background

The Linguistic and Rural Access to Justice Project

This project is looking at ways to improve access to legal information and legal services for persons who do not speak English or French and for persons living in rural or remote communities of Ontario. The project will recommend how The Law Foundation of Ontario, working in partnership with other organizations, can make a strategic investment in access to justice in these areas.

The Law Foundation of Ontario funds programs and initiatives that promote and enhance access to justice for all Ontarians. It works through creative partnerships to sustain and strengthen the development of a just society. The Foundation was established in 1974 under the *Law Society Act* and is funded by the interest earned on monies held in lawyers' and paralegals' mixed trust accounts.

Founding Premise

When people need legal information or services, they are often facing a time of crisis or experiencing pivotal events in their lives. Living in a rural or remote area of the province, or not speaking English or French, should not be barriers to meeting their fundamental legal needs.

Origin of the Project

The Law Foundation's vision is to be a catalyst for advancing the ideal of a truly accessible justice system. In reviewing grant applications to its Law and Innovations Fund, the Foundation was struck by the challenges to legal access faced by people who do not speak English or French and by people living in rural or remote areas of Ontario. In addition to its ongoing funding of community projects, the Foundation wanted to engage in a broader dialogue to generate more systemic solutions.

In February 2008, the Foundation asked two public policy experts, George Thomson and Karen Cohl, to lead the Linguistic and Rural Access to Justice Project. George Thomson is a former judge and deputy minister of justice and Karen Cohl is a former assistant deputy minister with the Ontario government. They are working closely with the Foundation in carrying out the project.

The project began with research on promising developments in the areas under review and informal consultations with people who have related experience and expertise. Formal consultations begin with the release of this Consultation Guide (May 2008). The goal of the formal consultations is to obtain feedback from a range of legal, community and government organizations.

This Consultation Guide has been made available in English and French, on the assumption that organizations can participate in one of these languages. Large print and audio versions are also available. Recognizing the purpose of this initiative, the Law Foundation will, upon request, make every reasonable effort to facilitate discussion in languages other than English and French.

A final report with recommendations to the Foundation is planned for the fall of 2008.

Project Scope

Individuals who face problems that include a legal element can have a range of needs:

1. They need information to understand their legal problem and to identify the next steps to take.
2. They may need to connect with a lawyer, paralegal, or community legal worker for legal advice, to understand how the law applies to their specific circumstances, to consider their legal options, or to obtain legal representation to act upon their rights.
3. Where legal services are not available, they may need information to help them understand how to access the justice system on their own or represent themselves.

This project focuses on the first two needs. The project recommendations may be of help in the third area, because good legal information and good legal advice can help those who proceed on their own. However the project will not deal directly with the development of self-help strategies and tools.

Improving access to legal information and services can help people who need to go to a court or tribunal. However, what happens in those institutions (such as the use of court interpreters or holding hearings by videoconference) is outside the project scope.

The project will recommend solutions to improve access to legal services for people living in rural or remote areas. This should assist lawyers and their clients who live in those areas, especially clients who are most vulnerable. Although the project won't address the shortage of lawyers in these communities or the availability of legal aid, it is looking at ways to connect people with the legal resources that are available. It may also highlight the fact that improving ways to connect is an important but only partial solution to a much broader set of issues.

In the context of linguistic access, the project will look at communication barriers in serving people with disabilities related to hearing and vision. In addition, we hope that strategies to overcome distance and connect rural Ontarians with legal services will also help address the needs of people who have mobility disabilities.

Finally, although the design and timelines of the project do not permit an in-depth examination of the unique needs of Aboriginal communities, we expect that some solutions will be of interest to Aboriginal people living in remote Ontario communities. We also hope to learn from innovative practices that have been tried in these communities. The Foundation recognizes that a separate process, involving Aboriginal leadership, would be required to identify specific solutions for Aboriginal communities.

Guiding Principles

The following are proposed principles to guide the project in the development of solutions. We welcome feedback on these principles and your suggestions for additional principles that you think are important.

Answers for Ontario

Solutions should be designed to work in Ontario, having regard to services and structures that already exist, community leadership and strengths, demographics, and areas of greatest need. Promising practices in other jurisdictions may be instructive, but they are not necessarily transportable to the Ontario context.

Collaboration

Many existing organizations have a mandate to promote access to justice. Viable solutions require collaboration among various legal, community, and government organizations to create synergy and use our collective strengths.

People rarely experience legal problems without facing non-legal problems at the same time. We should look for ways to foster planning and collaboration among a range of legal and non-legal organizations in order to respond to people's needs in a holistic way.

Respecting Roles

The Law Foundation of Ontario can play a catalyst role through strategic funding and fostering innovative partnerships to promote access to justice. Implementation and delivery will rest with the funding recipients. Nothing should detract from the essential role and responsibility of other organizations whose primary obligation it is to enhance access to justice in Ontario.

Diversity and Adaptability

The right solution will not be the same for every community. Rather than coming up with static solutions, we should be open to trying different answers in different communities.

Ontario's demographic profile will continue to change. Solutions need to be flexible to respond to future shifts in immigration and settlement patterns.

Technology will also continue to change. Moreover, many Ontarians do not have access to the latest technology. We have to be careful not to over-invest in any one solution that relies on current technology.

Practicality and Evaluation

Solutions should be practical and sound. They should also include mechanisms for formal, objective evaluation to determine how they are working and how they can be improved. Solutions also need to be sustainable over the long term. In some cases, solutions should be tested in a limited way and then evaluated to determine whether full implementation is warranted.

LINGUISTIC ACCESS

Context

Ontario has two official languages, but many Ontarians speak languages other than English or French. According to 2006 census data, about 1.8 million of us spoke a language other than English or French most often at home. The mother tongues of groups of 10,000 or more people who spoke a non-official language at home were, in order of prevalence, Chinese (not otherwise specified), Cantonese, Punjabi, Italian, Spanish, Urdu, Portuguese, Tamil, Polish, Arabic, Mandarin, Russian, Persian, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Korean, German, Gujarati, Greek, Serbian, Romanian, Hindi, Bengali, Ukrainian, Croatian, Hungarian, and Somali. The three most prevalent Aboriginal languages were Ojibway, Oji-Cree and Cree.

According to the same census, nearly 270,000 people in Ontario had no knowledge of either official language, defined as the ability to carry on a conversation. The number of people who would need some form of language assistance to access legal information or services is probably higher than this, but lower than the number who speak another language at home.

Industry Canada has estimated that about one million people need interpreter services. Since Ontario has about half the national population that usually speaks a non-official language at home, and about half the population with no knowledge of official languages, Ontario's need could be estimated at about half a million people.

Of the approximately 1.8 million people in Ontario whose mother tongue was not English or French and who spoke a non-official language most often at home, more than 97% lived in urban centres. Centres with populations of more than 10,000 people who spoke a non-official language most often at home were from the following defined census areas, in descending order: Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, Kitchener, Windsor, London, St. Catharines, Oshawa, and Guelph. In addition, Leamington has a large population of Spanish and German speakers.

Challenges

New immigrants may come from countries with vastly different legal systems and may not be aware of their basic rights and obligations or the structure of the legal system in Canada. Their experience with a different justice system may not have been positive. Language barriers are often combined with cultural barriers, and attempts to address them need to be carried out in a way that is culturally sensitive and that addresses other concurrent needs. The needs of each linguistic community can depend on the legal issues its members tend to face and on a variety of other factors.

As with English and French materials, translations of public legal education materials into other languages have to be legally accurate and understandable for people who may have low reading skills. They must also be culturally relevant. Translating legal concepts can involve technical vocabularies that do not exist in other languages. Several stages of vetting the translation may be involved and the legal information has to be checked and updated as needed.

Language interpreters may be needed in a number of legal settings. Family or friends, and even minor children, are often called upon to interpret. This is widely considered unacceptable because of confidentiality concerns, conflicts of interest, and lack of assurance of accuracy. An alternative to interpreters would be to provide direct service in the clients' languages, but this is not practical in many situations.

Even with professional interpreters, ensuring quality can be a challenge because of the various ways in which interpreters are trained and assessed for their skills. Differences in dialects, or the confidentiality concerns of people living in small communities, can limit the number of suitable interpreters. Some organizations report challenges in funding the cost of interpreters. Organizations may also need training to work with interpreters effectively. Changing demographics means that organizations maintaining a roster of interpreters have challenges in matching the roster to the need.

Short of undue hardship, organizations have a legal duty to accommodate people with disabilities. However, people who are Deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing, or who are blind or have low vision, face compounded obstacles to accessing legal information and services. These include a shortage of sign language interpreters and a lack of materials in alternative formats.

Promising Developments

Multilingual Materials and Portals

Many organizations produce multilingual public legal information. Some focus on particular areas of need, such as housing or responding to violence against women.

Ethno-specific legal clinics and community organizations produce materials on issues of specific relevance to the communities they serve. While projects focusing on a single linguistic or cultural community may be most effective, this may not be practical for all groups or all issues in a linguistically diverse environment like Ontario.

Experience in the legal and health fields has highlighted some principles for translating materials:

- acknowledge culture as well as language
- collaborate with bicultural/bilingual people in the community
- use qualified professional translators with experience in writing for the desired audience
- test translated materials with bilingual lawyers or law students to make sure that legal meanings haven't changed with the translation
- test materials with the target audience to ensure accessibility and sensitivity to dialects and distinct cultures within a language group
- form steering or advisory groups made up of members of the target community
- support development, adoption, and dissemination of glossaries and dictionaries to standardize terminology, especially for small language groups

Community Legal Education Ontario's Linguistic Access Review is a good source of standards for legal translation. Standards include the development of translation protocols and testing procedures. They also include selection criteria for translators and for steering or advisory group members, focus group members, and bilingual collaborators.

Central online repositories of legal information materials help by reducing duplication and making it easier to update translated materials as needed. Websites or multilingual portals are also useful methods of distributing multilingual legal materials to organizations and end users.

Examples: Multilingual Materials and Portals

Community Legal Education Ontario is conducting a Six Languages Text and Audio project to produce selected legal text and audio materials in Chinese, Arabic, Tamil, Urdu, Spanish, and Somali. The **CLEONet** website is an online repository of public legal education and information materials produced by CLEO and other organizations and contains materials in over fifty languages.

MultiLingoLegal.ca is a multilingual legal website in BC containing public legal education and information materials in nine languages.

Ontario Women's Justice Network produces a series of fact sheets for immigrant and refugee women in fourteen languages.

Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic produces booklets, in Vietnamese and Chinese, on Divorce and Family Law, Employment Insurance Benefits, the Employment Standards Act, Family Class Sponsorship, and Police Powers.

Multilingual Hotlines and Referral Services

In Ontario, information and referral bodies (such as the 211 service) provide access through a combination of multilingual staff and telephone interpretation. Multilingual hotlines have been used in the US as an entry point to legal services for “low English proficiency” clients.

Examples: Multilingual Hotlines and Referral Services

“**211**” services exist in many parts of Ontario and are currently expanding. They provide referral and information service by telephone, on a range of topics including referrals to help clients resolve legal issues. “211 Toronto” has multilingual staff and uses telephone interpreters for additional languages.

Reach Canada links people with disabilities—including clients who are Deaf—to lawyers to help resolve legal issues. Its network of over 180 lawyers in the Ottawa region provides clients with up to three hours of free initial consultation. They also refer callers to appropriate community resources.

The Legal Interpreter Project of the Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center, Washington D.C., runs an intake and referral hotline staffed mostly by law students who collectively speak ten Asian languages. The hotline serves as an entry point and navigation aid for the existing legal services system for Asian Pacific Americans who have limited English proficiency. The service refers all cases to legal service organizations or pro bono attorneys and monitors cases to ensure successful placement. Referral relationships and protocols have been developed and a central pool of interpreters serves the referred clients.

Interpretation Services

Where the staff of a legal or community organization cannot speak the client's language, interpreters are required. Some organizations maintain a roster of interpreters or subscribe to professional interpretation services that can provide an interpreter, either in person or by telephone.

People who are Deaf may require sign language interpreters or Deaf interpreters to communicate with lawyers and other legal service providers. The Canadian Hearing Society's Ontario Interpreting Service provides sign language interpreters (with advance notice) and offers after-hours interpreting services for health and mental health emergencies.

Examples: Interpretation Services

Vancouver Community College Certificate Program in Court Interpreting has developed a Multilingual Legal Glossary of over 5,000 Canadian legal and court-related terms in plain language, and their equivalents in seven other languages.

Kensington Bellwoods Community Legal Services, Jane Finch Community Legal Services, and Parkdale Community Legal Services in Toronto share the services of a full-time Spanish interpreter.

Parkdale Community Legal Services in Toronto provides mini-clinics in six languages. There are set times each week when interpreters in each language are available to clients.

Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration funds nine agencies to provide spoken language interpretation, in over sixty languages, to shelters and social, legal, and healthcare services that work with victims of domestic violence in specific geographic locations.

Outreach

Some community and legal organizations collaborate on legal information workshops for specific language groups. Other projects may target populations with special needs, such as women or seniors. New immigrants may receive some legal information as part of the curriculum of English or French as a second language classes. Outreach projects often use ethnic media for publicity or content delivery.

Examples: Outreach

People's Law School's Law-Related ESL Program has developed a law-related study plan for ESL classes in BC and employs an ESL teacher to conduct class visits.

Dixon Hall's Legal Awareness Outreach Project plans to target Mandarin-speaking newcomers to downtown Toronto with workshops, on twelve different legal subjects, delivered in partnership with legal clinics.

WoodGreen Community Services Violence Awareness and Solutions for Chinese Older Adults Program plans to provide outreach, translation, and support for PLE for older Mandarin-speaking adults, including a manual, posters, and training resources.

The South Asian Women's Centre, a settlement and support agency in Toronto serving the needs of South Asian women in fourteen

languages, plans to run legal information workshops in Tamil, Bengali, Urdu, Punjabi, and Tibetan. The Centre partners with legal clinics to give clients legal advice.

Legal Aid Ontario funds specialist legal clinics with language or ethno-specific mandates. These clinics conduct advocacy, education, and outreach activities in their target communities, and offer services in the clients' own languages. Specialist clinics also exist for Aboriginal people and people with disabilities.

Arising Women's Place, an organization serving abused women and girls in Toronto, has organized a number of legal education workshops and clinics as part of their "Legal Knowledge Project." The workshops are targeted to the specific communities AWP serves, with lawyers supplied by partner organizations.

RURAL OR REMOTE ACCESS

Context

“Rural” can be defined in terms of demography, economic activity, and social and cultural factors, alone or in combination. In the working definition of “rural” at the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), rural Ontario is the entire province except most of

- ┆ the cities of Hamilton, Ottawa, London, Windsor, Thunder Bay, and Greater Sudbury
- ┆ the regions of Niagara and Waterloo
- ┆ the Greater Toronto Area

Within the above areas, municipalities with populations of less than 100,000 are considered rural.

The OMAFRA definition of rural Ontario is one of the more inclusive; according to it, the 2006 census counted about 4.8 million rural Ontarians. Two less-inclusive definitions used by Statistics Canada counted about 1.4 million “rural and small town” Ontarians (people living outside major commuting zones of cities and towns over 10,000), and about 1.8 million Ontarians living in “rural areas” (areas with population densities of less than 400 people per square kilometer or populations less than 1,000).

In general, “remote” communities are defined by their distance from urban centres. For practical purposes, however, remoteness can depend on other factors, such as the availability of transportation.

Linguistic access to justice is often seen as an urban issue, but it also arises in rural or remote areas. A number of Aboriginal languages are spoken in remote communities, some rural communities are working hard to attract new immigrants, and many seasonal workers in agricultural areas come from other countries. (For example, about 15,000 Caribbean and Mexican migrant farm workers live in Ontario for up to eight months each year.) Migrant agricultural workers often face rural isolation as well as linguistic barriers, and they are frequently unaware of their rights in Canada.

Challenges

A serious obstacle to obtaining legal information and services is the relative scarcity of lawyers and legal clinics in rural areas. While this project is not seeking ways to increase the number of lawyers in communities, it is looking at ways to connect people to legal resources.

Distances and weaker economies of scale mean that rural services often cost more, and declining populations have led to the movement of many government and commercial services from small towns to regional centres. Remote communities tend to be affected more severely than rural communities that can access resources in nearby urban centres.

Over and above the direct impact of these trends, access to legal information and services is affected by limited access to other services. Many areas lack high-speed Internet access or cellphone service. Closures or reduced hours have limited the information libraries can provide. Social services are traditional gateways to legal information or services and their scarcity further complicates awareness and access.

Public transportation is rare or non-existent in many rural communities. Some places have community transportation programs, but they are targeted to specific populations such as seniors. Even for people with private transportation, distances, poor roads, and weather conditions can be obstacles to accessing services.

In many situations, the small size of rural communities may create personal conflicts and make confidentiality difficult. There can be cultural barriers in some rural areas, as well, including a reluctance to be seen to be seeking legal help.

As in urban areas, children, women, immigrants, seniors, people with disabilities, and Aboriginal people are the most vulnerable to poverty, but limited services and the facts of rural life exacerbate the effects. Poverty further limits access to services—including the ability to afford lawyers, transportation, long-distance calls or basic telephone service, or computers and Internet services.

Promising Developments

Use of Community Locations and Partnerships

During our informal consultations, we heard that access points for legal information and services are best located in places where people already go. In rural and remote areas, that might be where people shop or access other services. We also heard that, especially in rural and remote communities, a key to success is that legal services are offered in partnership with local, established service providers.

Libraries are often a place where people go for information or to get access to the Internet (though not all communities have libraries). Some legal information projects have used libraries as resource centres. Health centres have also been used as a place for delivering legal services, especially to vulnerable people.

Ontario has a network of community legal clinics, funded by Legal Aid Ontario, including sixty that target specific geographic areas. Some clinics have one or more satellite offices to expand their geographic reach.

Examples: Use of Community Locations and Partnerships

BC Courthouse Library Society's LawMatters Project plans to provide public libraries with financial assistance to buy legal materials. The libraries will also receive bibliographies of recommended current resources, research guides for specific legal topics, training for public library staff, reference and referral support, and consultation and advice.

State Library of New South Wales in Australia runs a Legal Information Access Centre. The program includes a website repository of multilingual public legal education materials,

training for librarians in how to use the website, a "Law Books for Libraries" collection, and ongoing training of staff at designated "LIAC Libraries." It also includes a key person in each region to whom complex requests can be sent.

Community Legal Services in the UK have delivered legal information and advice through both rural and urban health care settings by placing legal advisers in doctors' offices and other health service centres. In this way, hard-to-reach clients can obtain legal information and advice in a trusted environment.

Special Outreach

Some projects focus on getting specific information to target groups, like family law information to women or pertinent information to migrant workers. Outreach projects focusing on agricultural workers typically include language-sensitive workshops and materials and public legal education materials, possibly in alternative media. These programs and services are delivered in a variety of locations where the workers generally go (churches, malls) and are offered in partnership with advocacy groups.

Examples: Special Outreach

Family Law Education for Women (FLEW) aims to provide accessible information to women to help them understand their family law rights and how they can exercise them. The Project focuses on Aboriginal women, francophone women, immigrant, refugee and non-status women, rural women, women with disabilities, and women in faith communities.

Justicia for Migrant Farm Workers, a collective working in southern Ontario, and **Industrial Accidents Victims Group of Ontario** run a joint project delivering workshops, advice clinics, and Spanish and English PLE materials for Caribbean and Mexican farm workers.

Urban-Rural Partnerships

Several projects in Canada, the US and Australia have explored ways of using urban lawyers to offer pro bono services to rural clients. Projects usually involve a rural legal aid office, charity group, or community legal service provider as the local organizer and point of contact. Some jurisdictions have programs designed to provide specialist legal support to legal or non-legal services, including those in rural or remote locations, that may lack expertise in a legal area. Urban partners can include bar associations, law firm pro bono programs, and government or corporate in-house counsel, as well as legal aid or community legal services

providers. Projects are usually confined to a small number of legal subjects and include some training for volunteer lawyers.

Success factors for urban-rural partnerships include engaging the local community, using technology to facilitate long-distance participation, and the effective use of volunteers.

Students do a significant amount of clinic and pro bono research and support work in urban areas. Rural areas usually lack a local base of law students to support legal service delivery. A number of projects have brought law students to rural areas. To be effective, law students require support, training, and supervision.

Examples: Urban-Rural Partnerships

Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services/Pro Bono Law Ontario “Ask a Lawyer” Project.

Community legal workers can consult with pro bono lawyers specializing in a wide range of legal fields through queries on a website.

Southeastern Ohio Legal Services and Interfaith Legal Services pro bono clinic.

Local churches host monthly drop-in clinics staffed by urban pro bono lawyers and a project staff lawyer with the poverty law experience the volunteers may lack. Law students do intake and the clergy act as hosts. The aim is to overcome barriers that urban lawyers may experience as outsiders in rural communities.

Legal Services Commission (England and Wales) offers telephone consultancy, ongoing

assistance with complex cases (including the option to take over cases completely), and training. Service providers include barristers, solicitors, and not-for-profit specialist agencies.

Pro Bono Students Canada has developed a Long-Distance Placement Program to reach communities that do not benefit from having a law school and other legal services nearby. Law students are placed for the summer in a variety of rural organizations.

Legal Assistance of Western New York runs a Law Students in Action Project, a rural internship and placement program in partnership with area law schools.

Telephone Information and Referral

Most legal hotlines offer a combination of information, referral, and advice services. Some hotlines, like the BC and Alberta Law Lines run by their provincial legal aid providers, also offer some services such as written opinions, help with documents, and correspondence with third parties. The range of services offered may be subject to eligibility criteria. Some hotlines offering legal information are run by generalist agencies.

Examples: Telephone Information and Referral

The Law Society of Upper Canada operates a public referral hotline, the Lawyer Referral Service, which charges \$6 per call. Participating lawyers agree to provide a free 30-minute consultation.

Citizens Advice Bureau in the UK runs a hotline called Citizens Advice Direct. This generalist hotline helps assess and support a wide range of problems associated with legal

questions. It can also identify legal problems when they exist and refer the caller to specialist legal agencies.

Legal Line, a national organization in Canada, runs a free information hotline providing recorded voicemail messages on a wide range of legal topics. The same material is also available on the Internet.

Videoconferencing

In many communities, there are no lawyers nearby, or none with the specialized expertise needed, or none who take legal aid certificates. Videoconferencing has been tried as a solution to deliver legal information and advice—or more frequently, to deliver health services—in several jurisdictions. While clients and staff seem to have had relatively little discomfort or difficulty using videoconference systems, videoconferencing, for most people, requires traveling to an access point site.

Examples: Videoconferencing

Centre de santé Communautaire Hamilton/Niagara received a grant from The Law Foundation of Ontario to establish virtual links between francophone lawyers in Toronto and Ottawa and clients in Hamilton.

Ontario Telemedicine Network provides for consultations and medical education between member sites. There are over 440 sites, including every hospital in the province, health organizations, and community health centres. In 2005/6, the network provided more than 23,000 medical consultations.

Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General uses videoconferences to bring together geographically separated participants in the justice system and increase access to justice for remote communities. Over 200 active video installations have enabled parties, lawyers, witnesses, experts, and sign language interpreters to appear remotely in a variety of court matters. Videoconferencing has also been used for administrative meetings and training of justice system officials.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Please answer any of the questions that interest you.

Project Premise and Principles

1. Do you have comments on the premise or guiding principles for this project? Are there principles that you would add?

Linguistic Access

2. Are you aware of best practices that help people who do not speak English or French obtain legal information or services? Are you aware of best practices that help people who have a hearing or vision disability?
3. Which of the following approaches (or other ideas you may have) would be most useful to enhance access to legal information or services and why? How can we build on what already exists?
 - ✦ multilingual materials and portals
 - ✦ multilingual hotlines and referral services
 - ✦ interpretation services
 - ✦ outreach to specific linguistic and cultural communities
4. In what circumstances is it critical that public legal information materials be translated into other languages and alternative formats?
5. When can telephone language interpreters (or TTY lines) be used and when are in-person interpreters necessary?
6. Should there be a centralized language interpreter service? If so, what would be its role and how could it assist clients who are most vulnerable?
7. What supports are required to assist organizations working with interpreters?

Rural or Remote Access

8. Are you aware of best practices that help people living in rural or remote communities obtain legal information or services?
9. Which of the following approaches (or other ideas you may have) would be most useful to enhance access to legal information or services in rural or remote communities and why? How can we build on what already exists?
 - ✦ use of community locations and partnerships
 - ✦ outreach for specific groups on specific topics
 - ✦ urban-rural partnerships

- ┆ legal or general telephone information and referral
- ┆ videoconferencing

10. If you think videoconferencing is a good idea, where could it take place? Are there circumstances when in-person contact is essential? What types of travel assistance might be necessary?
11. What supports do non-legal organizations need when they are called upon to provide legal information and referral to their clients?

Planning and Collaboration

12. What type of collaboration or structure would best support improved access to legal information and services? For example:
- ┆ What organizations should be involved, and how?
 - ┆ What sources of funding should be available?
 - ┆ How could The Law Foundation of Ontario act as a catalyst to support the collaboration or structure you recommend?
13. How should new processes or structures be evaluated?

Other Ideas or Comments

14. Do you have any other comments or recommendations to improve linguistic or rural access to legal information or services?

HOW TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK

Written feedback may be sent to The Law Foundation of Ontario in the following ways:

- ┆ Electronically to the attention of Barb Stewart:
bstewart@lawfoundation.on.ca
- ┆ By mail to 20 Queen Street West, Suite 3002, Box 19, Toronto, Ontario M5H 3R3
- ┆ By fax to (416) 598-1526

Electronic submissions may be in the form of emails or in documents attached to emails. Use the format you prefer, and make your feedback as brief or as lengthy as you wish.

Deadline for Submissions

We would appreciate receiving your comments by **July 15, 2008** so that they can be considered in developing possible solutions over the summer, but later submissions will be considered to the extent possible.

Other Opportunities for Feedback

Please let us know if your organization or network is having a meeting or conference where you would like someone from the project team to attend to obtain your input. You can do so by calling Barb Stewart at The Law Foundation of Ontario at (416) 598-1550. Given the time constraints, we cannot attend all meetings, but we are doing our best to participate in as wide a range of related events as possible.

Please let us know if your organization would be interested in being part of a focus group or teleconference to help us test some proposed solutions in the late summer/early fall of 2008. You can do so by calling Barb Stewart at The Law Foundation of Ontario at (416) 598-1550.