

## *Reflections on Research to Action...* On Improving Communication of Legal Information Project

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### An Invitation to Operationalize the Research Results

The Effectively Communicating Legal Information to Newcomers in Saskatchewan Project (the project) took an interdisciplinary, research-driven approach to evaluating the accessibility of legal information. In particular, the project evaluated whether newcomer populations understand certain modes of communication better than others. Using focus groups and experimental surveys, our team studied why certain methods of communication may be more effective than others. It is our hope that our user-testing methodology and research findings will provide an evidentiary foundation for developing future plain language legal resources. This interdisciplinary project was spearheaded by CREATE Justice, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice, College of Law, University of Saskatchewan, and the Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research (CHASR). Numerous other organizations and individuals offered support and guidance, for which we are grateful.



### Reflections on Next Steps from Project Team and Advisory Group Members

The immediate project team and Advisory Group members were invited to review the report and provide reflections on the findings and how they could utilize the results. The benefits of individual and collective reflection that can lead to generative dialogue and action is recognized as a critical component of improving access to justice:

*The capacity to reflect collectively with peers, colleagues, and others increases the rigour of reflection, interrogates assumptions, and supports learning from others. It also builds the capacity for generative dialogue to create new knowledge and envision new possibilities: this capacity is crucial for tackling access to justice challenges. A final component is “praxis”—making sure one acts on the insights gleaned from reflection.<sup>1</sup>*

The individual and collective reflections and hopes compiled on how organizations will utilize the research are as follows:

#### **1. Reflections on improving content areas of public legal education and information (PLEI) resources for newcomers**

- Prioritize legal needs information, specifically for ‘driving’ and ‘workplace’ needs and create more resources in these areas working with the right groups to get that information into peoples’ hands.

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<sup>1</sup> Michele Leering, “Enhancing the Legal Profession’s Capacity for Innovation: The Promise of Reflective Practice and Action Research for Increasing Access to Justice” (2017) 34:1 Windsor YB Access Just 189 at 198.

## ***2. Reflections on modes of delivery in creating PLEI materials***

- Organizations can review this work and ruminate on the idea that design and content co-exist as factors influencing understandability. Pg. 6 of the report provides recommendations that should be very accessible for organizations looking to improve the accessibility of their legal information in a cost-effective way.
- Low levels of "design" can make a difference. It's much easier to go through a website and increase font/use color. Organizations may review this and realize they can make impactful changes without huge investments.
- When creating legal information resources, ensure that videos – if used—have the mouth visible, which supports newcomers, as well as people with hearing disabilities.
- Use the research to ensure the various formats are easily translatable.
- Knowing topics and modes and features of delivery most desired can help in any planning, before beginning work to create new materials for newcomers. The same knowledge can also help in reviewing or refining of materials for newcomers that have already been produced and are now being offered. And the same holds true with respect to knowledge gained regarding improving accessibility/important factors to keep in mind, e.g. different views on justice systems may exist, the best colours, font sizes, places where emphasis could be added, and pointers for videos.

## ***3. Reflections on improving legal understanding of PLEI materials***

- It is also helpful to recognize that the more people believe what they are viewing, the more they will learn. Thus, we'll ask ourselves "what more can we do to punch the point that this work we have done is "trustworthy"?; e.g. more resources cited? more links? stronger use of first-languages? making clear we are an accredited, neutral, non-profit info provider? Etc.

Do you have reflections on the research findings and how you will use the findings? If so, contact us at [createjustice@usask.ca](mailto:createjustice@usask.ca).