

## Results at a glance

# Evaluation of the Ombuds and Informal Resolution Services Office (OIRSO)

Justice Canada's Organizational Ombuds was established in 2021, following a report by the Privy Council Office recommending that all departments put in a place an Ombuds-type function. Although Justice Canada already had an Informal Conflict Management System (ICMS), it was amalgamated with the newly established Ombuds to form what is now known as the Ombuds and Informal Resolution Services Office (OIRSO). OIRSO's mandate is to provide Justice Canada employees and managers with a safe and independent place where they can speak freely without fear of judgment or reprisal, about a variety of concerns affecting them in the workplace. OIRSO's key functions and activities include:

- Providing impartial, confidential, informal and independent services to discuss work related issues and explore options to help resolve and manage conflicts;
- Providing informal conflict resolution services, processes and tools;
- Identifying systemic issues and trends within the department and informing senior management;
- Providing outreach activities and presentations; and,
- Collaborating with key partners and stakeholders.

### WHAT WAS FOUND

- OIRSO is aligned with departmental and governmental commitments to promote healthy and safe workplaces and help in the resolution of conflict.
- There is a continued need for OIRSO services due to ongoing experiences of workplace conflict by Justice employees. There has also been a year over year increase in OIRSO's individual visitors, meetings and ICMS workshop participants, indicating a growing demand for OIRSO services.
- OIRSO actively collects and monitors performance data using various methods, which assists in reporting on emerging trends and issues. However, there is interest from departmental stakeholders in more data transparency and data disaggregation, where possible.
- OIRSO is supportive of EDI and GBA Plus and has begun to integrate these analytical processes and principles in its activities and initiatives.
- OIRSO is effective at using its upward feedback mechanism to provide recommendations to senior management and contributes to driving cultural change in the Department.

- OIRSO has developed collaborative working relationships with stakeholders in the Department with referrals happening in a reciprocal manner, both to and from OIRSO.
- OIRSO is actively being promoted through promotional materials and awareness presentations. OIRSO's awareness raising efforts have resulted in a large majority of Justice Canada employees having at least a slight level of awareness of OIRSO. However, there are still some employees who are not at all aware of OIRSO, as well as lower levels of awareness amongst those working in the regions (compared with the NCR) and amongst employees without managerial responsibilities (compared to managers).
- Most OIRSO clients were satisfied with the services they received and were likely to refer others to OIRSO. However, despite high levels of client satisfaction, some employees are unlikely to use OIRSO services in the future due to uncertainty around OIRSO's mandate and guiding principles.
- OIRSO has met its service standard for responding to requests and has been able to deliver services efficiently, with only a slight increase in expenditures, resulting in lower cost per activity delivered.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Recommendation 1:** OIRSO should review its communication strategy to enhance awareness and ensure that materials provide the best information on the Office's roles and responsibilities and clearly communicate how it operates within its mandate and four fundamental principals of confidentiality, informality, impartiality, and independence.
- **Recommendation 2:** OIRSO should continue to work with partners to find opportunities to strengthen reporting on activities and trends and improve information sharing while maintaining confidentiality.

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**ABOUT THE EVALUATION:** The Evaluation of OIRSO was conducted by the Department of Justice Canada's Evaluation Branch and covered fiscal years 2020-21 to 2022-23. Its main objectives were to examine issues related to design and delivery, along with relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, in accordance with the Treasury Board's *Policy on Results* (2016).

