



Department of Justice
Canada

Ministère de la Justice
Canada



A People-Centred Approach to Administrative Justice: How to Simplify and Support the Journey

Pre-conference Workshop

2024 OECD Global Roundtable on Equal Access to Justice
Tuesday, October 8, 1:30 to 4:30 p.m.
Chateau Laurier, Ottawa, Canada

Hosted by Justice Canada and OECD and moderated in collaboration with United States Department of Justice

Overview

Promoting a people-centred approach to administrative justice is crucial to provide access to justice for all and ensure effective, accountable, and transparent governance, in keeping with SDG 16 and particularly targets 16.3, 16.6 and 16.7. Global data shows that 19%, or almost one in five of the most common justice problems that people face are related to accessing public services. Administrative justice represents a key avenue for people to interact with the state and resolve disputes on basic entitlements and benefits that are vital to their well-being. As such, administrative justice systems tend to be at the frontline of state delivery of services and raise critical questions related to redistribution, inclusion, and fairness.

Importantly, while government services touch practically every aspect of human life, accessing public services is often challenging. When disputes arise over entitlements and services, available resolution mechanisms don't always provide the justice people need and want. Although in some settings they are less formal and more people-centred than court-based dispute resolution mechanisms, administrative justice bodies often develop complex proceedings, with complicated documentation and rules of procedure. These challenges with government interactions and dispute resolution mechanisms impact vulnerable individuals and communities and negatively affect their well-being and livelihoods. Meaningful engagement with communities is important to ensure that government programs and services are inclusive and responsive to the needs of the individuals and communities meant to benefit from them.

Recognising the varied justice ecosystems and different approaches to administrative justice throughout the world, participants at this workshop will be invited to share innovative strategies that help to reduce challenges, make government programs and services fairer and more accessible for all, and support the effective resolution of administrative justice problems for all.

Format

The workshop will be structured as follows:

Part I – Introduction

The first segment will begin with a brief overview of the plan for the technical workshop. There will then be a framing presentation from an expert in administrative access to justice. This framing will focus on the mismatch between administrative justice as it is currently organised, and what would be needed for the relevant institutions to become better at solving people’s justice problems. It will highlight cross-cutting themes that will emerge throughout the day—including legal regulation, simplification of processes, the promise of technological interventions, and the relationship between administrative justice and citizen trust in government and democratic institutions.

Part II - The Administrative Justice-Seeker’s Journey

This part of the workshop will aim to convey the administrative justice-seeker’s journey, from awareness and knowledge of the available programs, services, and processes; to efforts to claim or use these benefits/services; to accessing resolution mechanisms when disputes arise. This will be accomplished through sharing of experiences from workshop attendees. The interventions will come from a combination of justice-impacted individuals, legal representatives, community leaders, and others who have experienced administrative justice problems or worked with individuals who have. The aim is that the contributors will convey what people experience on their justice journey in a diverse array of administrative justice systems, including western systems and from the global south.

A moderator will lead the discussion. Audience participation will be strongly encouraged both in sharing experiences and asking questions of those who do share. Attendees will be provided with the themes of the session and asked to reflect on experiences with administrative justice in advance.

Part III – Breakout Groups Discussion of People-Centred Solutions

The goal of this session is for participants to discuss existing and possible future solutions to increase access to justice and help people resolve their administrative justice problems identified in the previous session. For this part, session attendees will be divided into breakout tables of approximately 6 individuals and a facilitator. The task of the breakout groups will be to discuss key themes and record promising solutions. Attendees will be provided with guidance in advance.

Break

Part IV - Group Discussion of Solutions

In the last part of the technical workshop, there will be an open moderated discussion of promising practices and solutions unearthed in the breakout groups. This will be structured as a read-out by the facilitators and by open sharing by participants. At the conclusion of the technical workshop, the promising solutions identified by the breakout groups will be recorded and consolidated into a document and shared with attendees.