

Private Bar Billing & Payments Modernization Project STATUS UPDATE January 2024

The Private Bar Billing and Payments Modernization Project began in October 2022. LAS extended the Project timelines to September 2024, to account for delays in advancing project deliverables related to technology and process changes – namely, the development of an online billing and payments platform.

Policies:

LAS has made progress with regard to its private bar policies.

- LAS drafted a Private Bar Billing and Payments Handbook in 2023. The Handbook consolidates all policies related to billing and payments. Some members of the private bar are reviewing the Handbook to determine its usefulness and identify where improvements are needed.
- LAS has run two private bar pilots over the last six months, one in criminal law focused on exceptional circumstances payment requests and case management, and another in family law focused on exceptional circumstances. LAS is preparing an interim evaluation report on the pilots and is scheduling a focus group in February to discuss the results of the pilots.

Technology and Process:

LAS is happy to share that it hired MNP Consulting in December 2023 to lead a Phase 1 functional requirements assessment and technology review. Phase 1 will inform changes to how the private bar bills accounts and is paid. Phase 1 is expected to last until March/April 2024.

Phase 2 will see the development of an online billing and payments platform that will modernize, simplify and streamline interactions between the private bar and LAS, and make billing and payment processes more efficient and effective.

Private Bar Satisfaction:

LAS will survey the private bar in 2024 to determine their satisfaction with LAS billing and payments services. The survey results will lead to improvements in the way LAS serves the private bar.

LAS is also looking at ways to recognize the invaluable service that the private bar delivers to legal aid funded clients. LAS will seek input from the bar in this respect.

Measurement:

LAS is developing standards for service delivery, including measures such as “time to process private bar requests” and “time to pay”. LAS will consult with the private bar on these measures in early 2024.

For more information on the Modernization Project , please see LAS’ website:

<https://legalaid.sk.ca/lawyer/private-bar-process-review/>

Should you have any comments or questions, please contact the Private Bar Services Director Cameron Schmunk, central@legalaid.sk.ca