Community Development Plan for the English-Speaking Community of Quebec 2022-2027
Current Situation Report: Data Roundtable
October 2021

The Community Development Plan is a framework for collective action undertaken by the community sector of English-speaking Quebec to ensure its continued vitality. Through coordinated, strategic action, the community asserts collective control over resources allocated to it to ensure its development.

The purpose of this report is to offer a portrait of the current situation of English-speaking Quebec's Community sector with respect to the data development area. Together with similar reports in the other three areas, this provides a framework to help the Community Development Plan produce outcomes in line with our shared priorities.

Context

A successful development plan is one that is well-informed by a strong evidence base. To build a robust framework for collective action, the community must deepen its understanding of who their community represents and the challenges they face, while developing strategies for sharing and mobilizing knowledge between stakeholders to support collective action.

Demographic data on the English-speaking community is made available by Statistics Canada which compiles statistical profiles on communities across Canada following every census. However, the situation in English-speaking Quebec is complex. While the federal government and many in the community sector favour the First Official Language Spoken (FOLS) category, Quebec's provincial government prefers to define language communities based on Mother Tongue. This inconsistency between definitions can have an important impact on what services and programs are made available to English speakers.

Understanding sociodemographic data about our community is essential for many of the key activities of our organizations, from designing effective programs to advocating better policy. Organizations also generate essential data by tracking membership and participation, surveying their members and holding consultations, much of which is publicly reported. This kind of information is sometimes classified as "grey research" to distinguish it from more formal, academic sources of data.

What we heard

During consultations, many organizations expressed a lack of access to data due to cost. Data requests can also be complicated by geography, for example in regions with low English-speaking population numbers where Statistics Canada cannot release data due to privacy concerns. Other organizations pointed to the work and resources required to leverage data effectively, which require capacity support. Issues of concern to participating groups include:

- The "brain drain" or the out-migration of skilled workers from the community
- Retention of newcomers in the workforce
- How many English speakers attend French school
- English speakers' access to/experience of the healthcare system
- English speakers' experience in the judicial system

The examples given above describe demographic trends where the community lacks information, and where further study and understanding is needed to support the work of our organizations and enhance the vitality of our communities. Community data needs can also be understood as the need for other kinds of information ("grey research") critical to organizational success.

Many consultation participants expressed a need for updated databases to better track and share information about funding in their sector. Organizations also express a need for support in sharing information about their own programs and accessing information about others' services to be able to provide referrals and identify gaps. More information sharing and communication is needed between stakeholders to ensure that we are all working with an adequate portrait of both needs and available resources.

A number of organizations and institutions in the community have mandates to share information and lead community research projects. This list includes the QCGN as well as the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN), the Quebec English-Speaking Community Research Network (QUESCREN), the Black Community Resource Centre (BCRC). Both levels of government also recognize the importance of understanding and leveraging data to the community sector and have invested in tools and partnership programs to support the community sector in this regard.

The QCGN hosted an information strategy workshop in April 2021 with 23 community representatives in attendance. Workshop participants validated the strategic importance of information and confirmed interest in working towards the implementation of a community-wide information strategy. Challenges which were expressed by participants include a lack of resources as well as difficulty sharing information between organizations.

Moving forward

To guide the work of the Data Roundtable, the QCGN proposes the following statement of objective: *Support and contribute to the development, dissemination and utilization of an evidence base as a tool for collective action.* Potential strategies for action could include:

- Developing a community-wide information strategy
- Creating and strengthening partnerships with government and academic institutions
- Capacity-building and training for organizations to help them leverage information

Additional resources

CHSSN Document Centre. The CHSSN shares via its website archived research, government and community reports and other documents of interest to the community.

Government of Canada Official Languages Minority Communities Dashboard. This interactive map provides basic demographics, as well as socioeconomic, sociocultural, and demo-linguistic information. It locates the region on a map and offers comparisons between the majority and minority linguistic groups.

QUESCREN Bibliography on English-Speaking Quebec.

QUESCREN Community Knowledge Open Library. This online database stores resources from stakeholders in Quebec's English-speaking Community.