



The Community Learning Centre Initiative

Framework for Action

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Community Learning Centre Initiative

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In the province of Quebec, English language-minority communities do not always have equitable access to education, health and/or social services. This challenge is particularly acute for English educational institutions and communities, especially in those regions where Anglophones make up a small percentage of the total population and the English school is the only English-language public sector institution in the community.

The Community Learning Centre (CLC) Initiative helps to address this gap by building partnerships between English schools and organizations/institutions in their communities. These partnerships, facilitated by a Community Development Agent (CDA), leverage resources that benefit students, their families and the broader community. Recognizing the value of the CLC Initiative, the Association of Directors General of English School Boards of Québec (ADGESBQ) has supported its development since its inception.

Through their partnerships in the community, CLC schools experience increased volunteerism rates and access to local expertise as well as increased material and financial support. In turn, schools are increasingly opening their doors after school hours to facilitate access to social services, recreational activities, and lifelong learning opportunities for students, their families, and the broader English-speaking community.

Over the last ten years, diverse partnerships maintained through the CLC Initiative and participation in local and regional tables have also helped the voices of the English-speaking community to be heard. The collaborative nature of the Initiative also helps position English School Boards as both educational and community leaders. Since 2006, the CLC Initiative has developed hundreds of partnerships in over 75 CLC schools and has leveraged millions of dollars in in-kind contributions to support local activities. The Initiative has contributed to increased student engagement in school and community service, an improved sense of wellbeing and belonging, and increased access to resources and services for English-speaking community members.

Since its inception, the CLC Initiative has been supported by a small Provincial Resource Team (PRT) that provides coaching, training and guidance to each CLC throughout its development and implementation. In addition the PRT serves as a central coordinating body, bringing a whole systems perspective to the network, delivering PD opportunities (such as the annual conference), developing relationships with province-wide partners, overseeing network level research and development, reporting to the DG table, and advocating for the Initiative itself as well as the broader English-speaking community.

At a local level, the development and maintenance of a CLC is overseen by a CLC Leadership Team, comprised at its core of the CDA and the school principal(s), and over time including additional stakeholders such as CLC champions from within the school(s) and core partners.

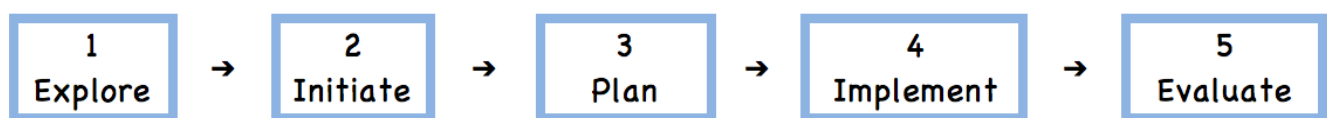
The Framework in Brief

A new idea, no matter how promising, will not take hold of its own accord. It must be nurtured and given adequate support so that these changes can be successfully implemented and sustained over time. The purpose of this Framework is to provide the foundation for successfully developing a community school. The Framework for Action, Guidebook, Workbook, From Theory to Action are available on the [CLC Network Resource website](#).

Relationships between schools/centres and the community include both short-term and longer-term interactions between individuals, families, groups, or organizations. The Framework envisages an ongoing collaboration of various partners coming together around common outcomes.

This Framework is based on lessons learned from the 'real world' experiences of holistically planned action for educational and community change. It maps the steps that experience has shown can lead to socially important results that are sustainable over time. The intended audience for the Framework is the CLC Leadership Team, and in particular the CDA, who will take the lead on implementation.

The Framework consists of **five major action steps** to be undertaken by a CLC school and its community partners in order to promote student success and community vitality. Key terms used in this Framework are defined in the **Glossary of Key Terms** found on page 37.



| | |
|-----|---|
| 1 | EXPLORE |
| 1.1 | See what CLC schools look like in other communities |
| 1.2 | Create an image of a CLC school for your community |
| 1.3 | Decide how to proceed |
| 2 | INITIATE |
| 2.1 | Map your needs & assets |
| 2.2 | Develop a mission statement |
| 2.3 | Explore the partnership and conclude the agreement(s) |
| 3 | PLAN |
| 3.1 | Determine desired results |
| 3.2 | Determine programs & services to be offered |
| 3.3 | Determine capacity to deliver services |
| 3.4 | Determine means to evaluate actions & results |
| 3.5 | Complete action plan based on Theory of Change |
| 4 | IMPLEMENT |
| 4.1 | Allocate resources and begin service delivery |
| 4.2 | Allocate resources and conduct capacity building |
| 4.3 | Monitor service delivery & capacity building |
| 5 | EVALUATE |
| 5.1 | Collect the data |
| 5.2 | Analyze the data |
| 5.3 | Report to stakeholders |

Guiding Principles

1. The Framework recognizes the fundamental importance of **reciprocity**; it must respond to the needs, aspirations and contexts of partners as well as those of the CLC School. Thus, as much as possible, it's helpful to seek out partners with common agendas.
2. The Framework is based on a **holistic** approach to planning/managing educational and community change. It is an approach concerned with the complete system characterized by a view of the parts as intimately interconnected and understandable only by reference to the whole.
3. The Framework is **advisory, not prescriptive**. It sets forth the issues to be dealt with but leaves many details to be decided by the CLC leadership team.

Your Steps, Your Sequence, Your Timeline

In conversation with the Provincial Resource Team (PRT) and in response to your CLC's actual context, you may decide to modify the sequence of chosen steps and/or the details of what you do in each step. For example, if you are already involved in some form of school-community collaboration, Step 2 may be the place to start, or you may wish to defer signing the partnership agreement until the planning stage (Step 3) has been completed.

If you are starting at the beginning, then you can expect a timeline of approximately one year to complete the first three major steps - Explore, Initiate and Plan. However, it may take more or less time depending on the complexity of the venture (for example in multi-site models) and whether some steps have already been accomplished.

Whatever your situation, it would be useful to sketch out a provisional timeline to provide some sense of direction before actually proceeding beyond Step 1.

STEP 1

EXPLORE

STEP 1: EXPLORE

STEP 1 presents the first in a series of *actions* designed to foster student success and community vitality by implementing the CLC approach in one or more schools. More specifically, the exploration stage is meant to ground your vision in current and relevant understanding of what will work in your context. During all steps in the CLC development process, collaboration and inclusion of stakeholders is necessary for success. At this early stage it is particularly important to engage school leaders and the school community, while gradually building trust and openness to connecting with the greater community and partners. Be patient, this will take time.

Within CLC schools, core partnerships should form an *ongoing collaboration*, rather than a one-off venture.

Step 1 is comprised of three tasks:

- 1.1** See what CLCs look like in other communities
- 1.2** Create an image of a CLC for your community
- 1.3** Decide how to proceed

At the end of Step 1 the CLC leadership team (CDA, Principal, other core stakeholders) should feel comfortable with and confident in the CLC Approach and its viability in their school's context.

For the multi-site/extended models, please revisit this step to ground your vision of an extension model that aligns with a common purpose.

1.1 See What CLCs Look Like in Other Communities

Other CLC schools in the network provide relevant examples for the CLC leadership team to consider. For instance, it may be particularly helpful to see what is happening in other CLC elementary schools in the network and your own school board if the new CLC is an elementary school.

Other resources for you to explore to help understand the community school concept and what CLCs look like in other communities:

- The CLC Network Resource Site: <http://clcnetworkresources.weebly.com/>
- Blogs by the PRT on Community-Based Service Learning (CBSL) and other work being done in CLC schools: (clc-blog.learnquebec.ca and clcpresents.blogspot.ca)
- [Coalition for Community Schools](#) has developed an abundance of resources and tools to support community school development.

- Examples of CLCs in our network with a comprehensive Facebook page or webpage:
 - [Parkdale Elementary CLC](#) - English Montreal School Board
 - [Monteregie Community Network Facebook Page](#) – Richelieu Valley CLC (Riverside School Board). This is a closed group, please request membership.
 - [Baie Comeau High School](#) – Eastern Shores School Board. This is a fully integrated CLC/School Facebook Page. This is a closed group, please request membership.

In Extension Models, the primary example of what CLCs look like in other communities naturally comes from the existing site. In the first meetings they have together, principals from the schools who will be engaging in the extension model get to know what has taken place as the CLC approach has been implemented at the originating site. The new principals may already have had some contact over the years through shared communication about such things as lifelong learning opportunities and intergenerational projects. They may also already receive support from some of the originating CLC school's partners. Many examples of what other school systems have done when choosing to expand their community school networks are provided in the Coalition's [Guide to Scaling Up School and Community Partnerships](#) (Melaville, Jacobson & Blank, 2011).

Community School Models Outside Quebec

CLCs are the Quebec model of what is known internationally as *community schools*. Although each CLC is unique, a common thread of values and beliefs runs across our network. Generally, they reflect a holistic approach to school and community, an organic whole, rather than as totally separate entities. Like an **ecosystem** in nature, communities are complex and characterized by diversity rather than uniformity.

Community schools in the USA are often called ‘**full service**’ schools to emphasize their extended offerings and hours of operation. One of the best sources of information on these schools is the [Coalition for Community Schools](#), whose capsule definition is cited below.



A community school is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Community schools offer a personalized curriculum that emphasizes real-world learning and community problem-solving. Schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone – all day, every day, evenings and weekends.¹

The [Children's Aid Society](#), based in New York City, founded the National Center for Community Schools in response to increased demand for information and advice about community schools implementation. They

¹ Coalition for Community Schools, n.d., p. 2.

describe a community school, as: “an integral part of the neighborhood, a focal point in the community to which children and their parents could turn for a vast range of supports and services.”²



**Harvard Family
Research Project**

Visit the [Harvard Family Research Project](#) for research on the benefits of school-community collaboration.

Research on community schools in the United States found that in general, community schools provided four major benefits:

1. Improved student learning;
2. Enhanced family engagement with students and schools;
3. More effective functioning of schools;
4. Increased community vitality.³

A CLC school won't provide the same benefits in every community it can meet a wide range of expectations in different contexts, as suggested below.

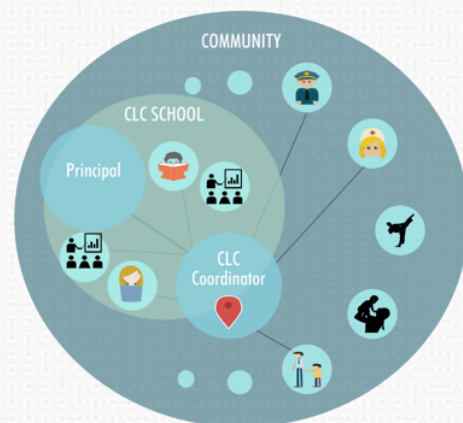
Expectations

Generally, a CLC can be expected to:

- Contribute to establishment of conditions deemed necessary for student success;
- Develop sustainable services, activities and programs through collaboration with partners that are accessible to the broader community by responding to the particular culture and needs of the communities it serves;
- Integrate, don't duplicate, existing services and resources;
- Increase awareness of and respond to community needs;
- Demonstrate flexible and innovative approaches to service delivery.

Helpful Metaphors – Learning Community and Hub

The image of the **hub** places the CLC at the centre of a network of services such as those illustrated here. The school/centre might provide the major locus of CLC activities or they might be delivered in a variety of locations. In any case, the aim is to diminish or eliminate barriers between the school/centre and the community and encourage collaboration.



² Children's Aid Society, 2001, p. 8.

³ Blank, Melaville & Shah, 2003

A good start ... more to learn

Even after a few months of intentional exploration, school leaders will have only begun to develop their conceptualization of what a community school approach involves. Their knowledge will grow with attendance at CLC conferences, visits to other CLC schools, and if possible, participation in community school conferences in other places in North America (the New York Children’s Aid Society, Coalition for Community Schools, etc.).

1.2 Create an Image of a CLC for Your Community

We recommend that early discussions amongst the principals and CDA give everyone an opportunity to understand as fully as possible what the CLC approach might look like in their context.

Testing the Waters

As you start to develop the CLC approach in your school, the CLC leadership team needs to involve *stakeholders* in a conversation about what is involved in creating a CLC school. This expanding dialogue should begin with members of the school/centre staff and governing board, a community group, and/or representatives of local/regional organizations that you believe might have an interest in the broad goals of CLC development.

At this point in the process you need to think about potential partners for your CLC. Some partners (e.g. a health and social service centre - CISSS) may be part of a larger organization at the regional or provincial level while others, such as a community group, may be a purely ‘stand-alone’ organization or group.

This initial conversation with potential partners must be grounded in some vision of the nature and purpose of the CLC, enabling stakeholders to answer two questions:

What is a CLC?
and
Why do we want one?

We have learned from experience the importance of how these questions are answered as well as the messages that are then communicated. All schools already have some community involvement so it is very important that the school principal and CDA acknowledge their school’s past and present efforts to connect and collaborate with their community. The rationale for adopting the CLC approach needs to focus on the addition of a CDA whose role it is to network with community organizations. To prepare for engaging with the community, the CDA needs to become knowledgeable about the school’s existing connections: who is the school working with already? Who are the key contacts each school has with their community? Who should be involved in early conversations about the adoption of the approach?

Building Trust

A successful partnership is built in stages but the foundation of all these stages is trust. All partners must feel that they are valued, that their opinions matter, and they will be treated with respect.

School-Community Connections Mapping

To ground the exploration efforts, the PRT developed a process for **mapping school-community connections**. It begins with an in-depth interview with the school principal and CDA that aims to surface all of the school's existing connections with the community and the engagement of all stakeholder groups (students, teachers/staff, parents, school board representatives, community organizations and community members).

The development of this visual tool has a number of purposes.

- * The interview process allows the CDA to learn from the principal's reflections about the existing assets, resources, and connections in their communities, and vice versa.
- * Each school will receive a visual map that can be displayed in a central spot that will help to facilitate discussions with their teachers, staff, parents, partners, and community visitors about their school-community connections.
- * Over time, as connections increase, the school community will see their map evolve. Photos of the map at the beginning of the extension process will capture the starting point and later photos and will facilitate reflection and evaluation of the approach's evolution.
- * Overall, the CLC team should be able to clearly see who they have already mobilized to support youth success in learning and life. Gaps will also naturally be surfaced, indicating where efforts can be focused strategically to improve the support for students and the interaction between community and the school.

Below is a sample of a "completed" map from Rawdon Elementary school, part of the Lanaudière CLC.



Further Preparations

- * Speak to the Principal about the School MESA goals – start to think about possibilities for alignment.
- * Write your ‘elevator speech’. Examples of and instructions on how to complete this can be found on the CLC Network Resource website.
- * How will you describe the community you serve and the CLC to partners and potential stakeholders? Adapt and use the presentation which is found on CLC Resource website. Many of the resources are also in French. Draft a ‘presentation’ in collaboration with your Principal and PRT support person.

Introduce CLC Concept to School Staff

In the early stages of your CLC development you will want to include and engage teachers and school staff in a discussion around what it means for the school to now be a CLC school. This often looks like a joint presentation from the school principal and CDA at a staff meeting.

Who are your school’s potential CLC champions?

Who might the CDA build relationships with to get to know the community?

Who is likely to support the CLC in its development?

Some suggestions from CLC principals and CDAs:

“Start with people who express a sense of belonging to the whole school...people who organize assemblies, socials, and events”.

“I befriended the hot lunch lady...she offered good insight and a way in”.

“Gym teachers were the first teachers I met at the elementary school...working with them, I secured funding for health initiatives.”

“You can build a CLC champion, like a teacher, in each school. Nurture that...they talk to other staff. I connected with daycare, got Zumba classes going...allowed us to create a connection. Now the daycare supervisors are reaching out...”.

Decide on Potential Partners

Once you have an initial sense of what your CLC wants to focus on in terms of positive change to support your community (as you have defined it), you can begin to identify community partners who have a shared interest in these outcomes. For example, if you are concerned with student health and wellness then the CISSS and/or CHSSN NPI would be a natural partner because their goals are aligned with yours.

Define Your Community

Get a sense of the demographics: cultural, socio-economic, linguistic etc..... Then write a paragraph about who is the 'community'. You will have multiple definitions of your community: school families, ESC at large, municipality. Who will your CLC serve? Much of this data can be found in the school MESA, TTFM results and other statistical resources:

- [Statistics Canada](#)
- [CityData.com](#)
- [CHSSN](#)
- [QCGN](#)
- [Foundation of Greater Montreal](#)
- [Institut de la statistique du Québec](#)

By the end of the School-Community Connections Mapping process and your community conversation (see below), the CLC leaders should be ready to **Decide on Potential Partners and Define the Community to be served**, two of the key tasks of STEP 1: EXPLORE. Please note that more formal data gathering about the needs of the community will take place in STEP 2 – INITIATE.

At this point school leaders need to decide if they are ready to move ahead. This means taking the conversation that has so far primarily involved principals, school staff, school board representatives, and the CDA, and expanding it to include the schools' other key stakeholders, existing partners, and potential partners.

Community Conversation

One way to identify assets and needs, foster collaboration and drive engagement is through a Community Conversation - a facilitated exchange between key members of your CLC school and community. Guides and other resources to help you plan and facilitate this can be found on the [CLC Network Resource](#) website. The outcome of this conversation should be 2-4 focus areas that emerge from theming the topics of conversation.

Your Vision of a CLC

The *vision* of your CLC will provide an image of your long-term goal(s) - how the community will be a better place because of the results you achieves. For example, visioning the local school as *a place where students, staff, families and community members work together, a school community environment that is stimulating, healthy and safe, a community that is economically and socially viable, that provides a future for its young people.*

The vision provides an *image* of its goals, as shown by the example in the text box below from SUN, the [Schools for Uniting Neighborhoods](#) initiative.⁴ One of the goals of the [SUN](#) initiative is based on an image of schools as a “a *safe, supervised and positive environment for expanded experiences that improve student achievement, attendance, behavior and other skills for healthy development and academic success.*”

The vision underpins the mission of the CLC and provides the answer to the questions:

Why are we doing this?

and

Why does it matter?

There are many ways to make up Leadership Team, however, in all cases, the active presence of the CDA is crucial to fulfill a leadership role and provide technical assistance. Depending on the scope of the CLC, this individual may be full or part time.

Over time the CLC Leadership Team will consist of the CDA, the principal, other champions from within the school, representatives of the partners and key stakeholder groups, as well as any other resource persons as needed.

At this stage it is appropriate to begin thinking about *how students can be actively involved* in the development of the CLC. There is ample evidence from both research and practice that students of all ages can make a *real*, not merely a symbolic, contribution to the development of innovations in school. Whether this means including students in the room during the visioning, reviewing TTFM data, organizing student focus groups, it’s important to consider their needs, wants, interests at this point.

“By including children and youth ... you will help ensure that your school **reflects the needs of its young people**, and you will give older students genuine opportunities to develop leadership skills and a sense of responsibility for their community.” (Children’s Aid Society, 2001)

1.3 Decide How to Proceed

At this point, having explored the potential for CLC development, you should have the information needed to make an informed decision about next steps. In collaboration with your key partners and stakeholders you need to decide how to strategically proceed. However it is possible that further reflection or confirmation of certain preconditions may be required. What else needs your attention before moving forward?

It is important to ensure that *sufficient* conditions are in place to warrant moving forward. Being *too cautious* creates a risk of losing momentum but moving *too quickly* may cause the process to come to unravel, making it difficult to convince people to start again.

What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for you, your partners, and stakeholders to embark on this joint venture?

⁴ Hamann, 2003, pp. 7-8

The readiness to proceed depends on several factors, including the leadership and motivation of each partner. At this stage it is helpful to be explicit about what each party needs in order to invest in next steps. Some tools available to help you analyze your community's readiness include SWOT and SOAR.

SWOT stands for: Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat. A SWOT analysis guides you to identify your organization's strengths and weaknesses (S-W), as well as broader opportunities and threats (O-T). Developing a fuller awareness of the situation helps with both strategic planning and decision-making.⁵

A strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results (SOAR) analysis is a strategic planning tool that focuses an organization on its current strengths and vision of the future for developing its strategic goals.⁶

Making the Decision to Proceed

Are your schools truly ready to commit to integrating partners in the lives of students and to making deeper connections with families and community members? Are there issues of trust and relationship building that need to be worked on before you introduce intentional coordination efforts?

Before deciding to proceed to Step 2, you should be able to answer affirmatively to all of the questions in the text box below:

Checklist: Are you ready to proceed to Step 2?

- As a CLC leadership team, are you ready to engage stakeholders, partners, and community in dialogue about your adoption of the CLC approach?
- Do your exploratory conversations with key stakeholder and partner representatives indicate that they are ready to work with you to implement the approach?
- Have you prepared a presentation that can be adapted for different audiences that includes:
 - an explanation of your rationale
 - an initial definition and portrait of the community you plan to serve
 - your vision (when you look into the future what you see people doing, how your schools and the community are connecting in ways that lead to a new picture from what you see today)
 - examples of your existing school-community connections

If you are unsure about how to respond to the above questions, then you will likely need to invest more time in the EXPLORE stage, to ensure a strong foundation before moving forward.

⁵ <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/swot-analysis/main>

⁶ http://www.excellenceforchildandyouth.ca/sites/default/files/docs/inttoolkit/AppendixC_SWOT_SOAR.pdf

STEP 2

INITIATE

STEP 2: INITIATE

The purpose of this step is to develop stakeholder engagement and initiate the partnership(s); it is comprised of four tasks:

- Map your assets and needs (step 2 of the community conversation)
- Develop mission statement
- Identify result areas
- Explore the Partnership & Conclude Agreement (Note: this may also happen at Step 3: PLAN).

This is a key transition point where **commitment replaces contemplation** though the actual actions taken will depend on the scope of the CLC being undertaken

2.1 Map Your Needs & Assets

It is important to situate the proposed CLC School in terms of the assets and needs of the school and community. There is little point in developing a CLC if it does not respond to **real needs** or merely duplicates existing resources. Community assets come in a variety of forms, including tangible resources (e.g. a gymnasium), human resources (e.g. volunteers), and intangible resources, such as goodwill or community spirit.

Example: some adults might possess a range of skills in technical drawing, but not be up-to-date on how to use computer-assisted design programs. The need is the gap between their current skill set and that required for employment in this field.

Asset mapping is meant to be *realistic*, by starting with what you have; *positive*, through a discovery of community assets; and *inclusive*, recognizing a range of public, community and private assets.⁷

⁷ Fuller, Guy & Pietsch, 2002, p. 4.

2.2 Develop Mission Statement

The mission should inspire and motivate participants and other stakeholders, providing the basis for **organizational transformation**.⁸ It provides the foundation of the partnership, articulating its:

- Values and purpose
- Desired results

The mission statement should serve to situate the CLC in its context and to inspire and motivate stakeholders, answering questions such as:

- Why is it necessary?
- Whose interests will it serve?

Values and Purpose

Each community has a unique mix of values. A CLC school should reflect on the values of its school and community and use them to guide policy and practice as it develops its vision and mission.

Research shows that successful organizations are actually guided by their mission statement, ensuring that its core values and beliefs are firmly in place and are not compromised or blurred over time.

A school's mission statement is contained in its educational project (MESA) likewise, community partners will likely come to the table with their mission statement. A key challenge facing a new CLC in drafting its mission statement is first to understand where each partner is coming from individually and second, where, together, they want to go and the results they want to achieve. It is important to review the mission statements of your partners together and see the extent to which each partner's mission supports a common vision and mission for the CLC.

Desired Results

Since a mission statement is not something that an organization should be continually revising, it is preferable to limit this exercise to determining 'results areas' - a general statement of the type of results foreseen at each level, rather than making a list of specific results. This task is better left for STEP 3: Planning (page 23).

⁸ Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999, p. 70

2.3 Exploring the Partnership & Concluding the Agreement

The purpose of this step is decide on how the CLC and the partnership should be **structured** and to explore how roles and responsibilities could be assigned.

Because the scope and complexity of a CLC can vary widely, this section can only present a general overview of the range of roles and responsibilities to be considered. However, in all cases, the key concepts are:

- **Reciprocity:** a CLC is not a one-way street, with purpose and benefits defined by and on behalf of only one partner, be it the school or any other organization or group.
- **Equal voice:** even if the partnership comprises large and small organizations, or has one partner that contributes the lion's share of the resources, *all* partners should have an equal say at the table.
- **Collaboration:** successfully pursuing common goals through a new organizational structure requires more than a formal relationship; it requires a collaborative culture.
- **Flexibility:** not only does 'one size' not fit all CLCs, one size will not fit any CLC all the time; one must always be prepared to adapt as changing circumstances require.

These could be considered the 'guiding principles' of the CLC.

Structuring the CLC & the Partnership

The structures of school-community ventures vary but the most successful CLCS follow an integrated model, where the previously separate mandates are replaced by a new hybrid structure.

Allocation of Resources

All activities foreseen for the CLC School will require resources - financial, human and material. Although the first will typically be used to purchase the latter types, some of these non-financial resources may come as in-kind contributions from one or more partners. In-kind contributions refer to any kind of partner/stakeholder donation that doesn't involve an exchange of money.

The Provincial Resource Team and the school boards require CLCs to monitor individual and network level progression. Using the online journal reporting tool, a CDA can capture information/data about the various partnerships, grants and donations, activities and programs developed through the CLC approach.

At this stage, it is important to determine the broad parameters of the resources that each partner is - or might be - willing to contribute and any conditions that are likely to be attached to their allocation. For example, a funding agency might make its contribution contingent on being matched by another agency or upon the approval of the CLC Action Plan (Step 3).

It is equally important to consider resources with a view to the long-term, especially if the CLC has received start-up funding that eventually must be replaced.

The Partnership Agreement

This step marks the end of the initiation process when you decide if you are ready to proceed. A joint venture such as a CLC needs to be formalized so that the partners and other concerned stakeholders have a clear understanding of what has been agreed. This can be done in a **written document** that could take several forms, including a contract, protocol, or a memorandum of understanding.

All systems are go!

- Partners are fully committed;
- CLC mission is clearly defined;
- CLC structure and roles determined;
- Resources allocated;
- Enabling conditions in place

In a formal written agreement, it is inappropriate to include details that are subject to change. For example, rather than include a detailed budget as part of the agreement, it is preferable to specify the financial and other resources to be provided by each partner during the life of the agreement, as well as the terms and conditions for the approval and revision of annual budgets.

The length and amount of detail of a partnership agreement will vary with the nature and complexity of the CLC, but any agreement should contain the following:

- An identification of the partners
- The mission statement
- Responsibilities of partners and the CLC Leadership Team
- Any other relevant provisions (e.g. duration of agreement)

The conclusion of the Partnership Agreement will typically involve the following tasks:

- Drafting each section of the agreement
- Reviewing all provisions in a consolidated draft
- Referring tentative agreement to partners for approval
- Signing the agreement

NOTE. In some cases, it will not make sense to sign the partnership agreement until the action plan has been developed. In such cases, laying out a preliminary agreement makes sense but the signature and final details can be deferred until the end of STEP 3.

STEP 3

PLAN

STEP 3: DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN

The purpose of this step is to complete the Action Plan for the operation of the CLC School; it comprises five steps:

1. Determine desired results
2. Determine programs and services to be offered
3. Determine capacity to deliver services
4. Determine means to evaluate actions and results
5. Complete Action Plan.

This step is based upon a change management approach called [Theory of Change \(ToC\)](#). The Action Plan maps the steps towards the change as represented in the mission and vision and the Partnership Agreement. Planning is a balancing act; too much planning may lead to 'gridlock' but too little planning may lead to chaos. The Action Plan of a CLC can also be seen as a key means of *managing risk*. Risks may be obvious and visible, with immediate effect, or they may be more subtle or hidden, threatening the long term sustainability of the venture.

3.1 Determine Desired Results

The first planning task is to determine the results that the CLC wishes to achieve or to which it intends to contribute, based on the various results areas decided by the conversations with partners in Step 2.2 (page 19).

Planning alone will not guarantee success, but the lack of appropriate planning will likely guarantee failure.

Making the Vision Concrete

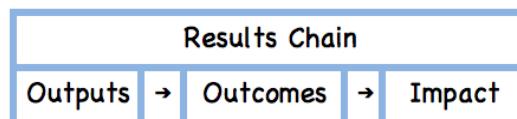
Images of the **impact** of program work can seem quite vague; for example:

- A more prosperous economy.

These images usually become clearer with **outcomes** and more concrete with the **outputs**; for example:

- Graduates are employed in their chosen field (outcome);
- Students in a vocational centre graduate (output).

In a joint venture, determining results means seeking points of **convergence** between the results sought by the various partners. This leads to establishing a **mutually beneficial results chain**.



Establishing the Results Chain / Theory of Change (ToC) Process

Results-based planning begins at the end of this chain by specifying the long-term results that we wish to see occur. Then one uses the technique of **back mapping** to determine the medium and then the short-term results that must first occur to achieve them. The next link in the results chain - the activities that will produce these short-term results - is dealt with in Step 3.2.

As this is a joint venture, the CLC seeks to achieve results that align with partner goals. For example:

- A community group wishes to see young women who are either pregnant or single mothers adopt a healthy lifestyle and become more effective caregivers (short-term result).
- If successful, this will lead to healthier children, who are then more successful in school (medium term result).
- The school is equally supportive of pursuing this result and so they create a CLC that offers, among other services, a support program for young women who are either pregnant or single mothers.

Even if you cannot determine the precise steps to be taken on the path to longer-term results, you should be able to map out broad strategies to achieve them and the approximate time frame for each. Determining short-term results is a much more concrete and immediate exercise, as the results are to be achieved, not in some future time but for example, by the end of the school year.

Theory of Change – Key Terms ⁹

Backwards Mapping to Create Pathways to Change

When building a Theory of Change, the planning team thinks together about how they will achieve results by **backwards mapping** from their goals, stated as **outcomes**, to the most immediate actions to be achieved. For each long-term goal, a **pathway** to change is created with outcomes/preconditions and **interventions** with **rationales and assumptions** fully explained.

Outcomes

Outcomes are the building blocks of your ToC. Except for the long-term outcome, all outcomes on your change framework are also **pre-conditions** for other outcomes.

Writing Outcomes: In the present tense, describe the desired state of children, families, your community, etc. if the change you see as needed is fully achieved.

- What knowledge, skills, and/or abilities (KSAs) will they have? What competencies will they have developed? “Parents know how to get support for their children’s learning needs”.
- What resources or assets do they have access to? “Students have mentors”.

⁹ Adapted from TOC Useful Terms and their Applications, ActKnowledge

- How can you describe changed attitudes/modified behaviour? Ex. “Young people trust and respect others”.

Ultimate Outcome = the ‘Pie in the Sky’ biggest picture goal(s) that you want to achieve. These will not be measured. They appear above the **“dotted line”**, a *dashed line drawn horizontally across an outcomes framework*.

Long-term Outcomes = the goals you want to reach which are the purpose of the Initiative

Pre-Conditions = Outcomes that must be realized to achieve the Long-term outcome

Outputs = The lowest level of results on the pathway that are defined, these short-term results lead directly to specific outcomes.

Interventions

Interventions are the things you will do to achieve your outcomes. Examples include:

- **Strategies** – i.e. for communication
- **Activities** – specific actions that you will undertake or make possible for others to do
- **Programs** – longer-term offerings that may include multiple activities

Rationales & Assumptions

Answering why and how your theory will work to achieve desired change.

Rationales answer the ‘Why’ question – they explain the logic and evidence behind what you are doing – why a pre-condition is necessary to achievement of an outcome, or why an intervention supports the accomplishment of a pre-condition

Example: Why should students have mentors? Answer: Youth with mentors are more likely to achieve their potential in times of transition.

Assumptions describe conditions that you believe already exist and will support the development of your program, i.e. “People in our community are available and willing to mentor youth”.

Because a Theory of Change provides a clear and testable hypothesis about how change will occur and what it will look like, it allows for accountability in the work process as well as credibility of results, because they are predicted to happen in a certain way. As a roadmap, a Theory of Change identifies measurable indicators of success and keeps the process implementation and evaluation transparent, so everyone knows what is happening and why.

3.2 Determine Programs & Services To Be Offered

Continuing the back mapping begun in the previous step, one looks for services that will produce desired results, thereby passing from: **Why and to what end?** to **How and by what means?** The challenge for the CLC is to be *guided*, but not *blinded*, by its vision: “Programs and projects need to be grounded in reality, not in the organizations’ *ideal* vision of how things *should* work.”¹⁰

No service can be determined without a consideration of the CLC’s capacity to deliver it. These capacities (dealt with in Step 3.3) include a range of human and material resources. Except for volunteers and other donated services, all these resources cost money. Therefore, determining which service to offer must include an analysis of costs, a key factor in deciding among alternative modes of delivering the same service, and in choosing one service over another.

Choosing services to be offered requires a blend of creativity and practicality. Most of all, it requires a clear **focus** on feasible but effective means to achieve desired results.

Given the wide range of community school initiatives across an equally wide range of contexts, a CLC can find inspiration in many existing services and programs. Making appropriate choices is critical as most organizations cannot afford to invest scarce resources if they do not support the results being sought.

Once the program of activities has been decided, provision must be made for monitoring them.

Monitoring: An ongoing process to ensure that planned activities or processes (including resources) are on track and that progress is being made toward intended results.

Monitoring: An ongoing process to ensure that planned activities or processes (including resources) are on track and that progress is being made toward intended results.

In this Framework, monitoring (which also applies to Step 3.3) is distinguished from evaluation, a systematic inquiry about the CLC’s performance (see Step 3.4). In monitoring performance, you are *keeping an eye* on the *warning lights* and other key *system gages* to ensure that the system is performing satisfactorily.

Evaluation: a systematic inquiry about the performance of an organization (e.g. CLC) for the dual purpose of accountability and improvement.

Evaluation: a systematic inquiry about the performance of an organization (e.g. CLC) for the dual purpose of accountability and improvement.

¹⁰ Delpeche et al., 2003, p. 14, emphasis added

3.3 Determine Capacity to Deliver Services Preconditions

The performance of any CLC will ultimately be judged on the basis of how well it delivers services and achieves intended results. However, organizations, like people, cannot perform unless they have *capacity* to do well. Capacity provides the **building blocks** of performance, while capacity building determines which blocks are important, how they should fit together and then assembles them.

Organizational capacity – also called *preconditions*: the resources, systems and other capabilities of an organization that enable it to attain and sustain high levels of performance in accordance with the expectations of its stakeholders.

Organizational capacity development: a continuing process by which an organization increases its capabilities to perform.

The lack of capacity is the most important reason why innovations fail and, more particularly, why they are not sustained.¹¹ Capacity is of obvious importance to a CLC, as the reason for its creation is to share the capacity of its partners so that together they can produce results that none of its partners could achieve singly.

Capacity development can be viewed as the last link in the results chain. In this Step, one back maps from the services that will produce desired results to the capacities required to deliver these services and, if necessary, to the actions required to build these capacities.

A CLC inherits some of the capacities of its partner organizations but it may not have all the capacities it needs, especially as a new organization. An important planning task, therefore, is to determine which pre-conditions are required and how they should be assembled to best meet its needs in its context.

Pre-conditions come in all sorts of tangible shapes - for example, facilities and equipment - and intangible forms - for example, inter-personal relations and organizational culture. Capacity building is not something that can be completed as a start-up activity but is a long-term endeavour. However, paying attention to capacity building from the start is perhaps the most important thing a new CLC can do to ensure its sustainability over time.

¹¹ Fullan, 2001, p. 18

3.4. Determine Means To Evaluate Actions & Results

This Framework has been designed to support ‘**self-evaluation**,’¹²an approach in which the CLC takes primary responsibility for evaluating its own *performance*, as defined previously in Step 2.2. This approach is consistent with both Québec’s public service management framework and the school-centred reform of education.

Self-evaluation is a **participatory process** involving all major stakeholders, including the youth. Like the overall process described by this Framework, it begins with planning, the focus of this Step (3.4), then proceeds to the actual conduct of the evaluation (Step 5), which ends with feedback loops that set the stage for the next cycle of planning and service delivery. Of course it is not as straightforward or linear in practice as it appears on paper, with a good deal of back and forth movement along the way.

“Youth participation in evaluation is a process of involving young people in assessing community programs that affect their lives. It is not ‘token’ involvement, but active engagement where youth have real influence in decisions.”¹³

Setting the Direction

Mindful of keeping the evaluation manageable, this Framework limits the scope of site-level evaluation by a CLC to **key areas of performance** addressed cyclically (e.g. annually). This limitation does not ignore the importance of more in-depth or specialized evaluations; it merely assumes that they will be a shared responsibility of the CLC, its partners, local and regional agencies or relevant government ministries, according to the nature and purpose of these evaluations.

Once the course of the evaluation has been set, the usual tasks of project/program management come into play, namely organizing the flow of work and allocating resources. Sketching out a preliminary time line may be the first ‘reality check’ of the exercise as the evaluation team compares the scope of the evaluation as originally envisaged and the *actual* amount of time available.

If the evaluation is to have credibility, the plan should outline the ethical and other standards it will respect. Any evaluation needs to be **trustworthy**; if stakeholders do not have faith that it paints a complete and accurate picture of whatever is being evaluated, they will ignore its findings. If this happens, all the investment of time and energy may be for nothing.

¹² See Smith, 2004

¹³ Horsch, et al., 2002, p. 1

Deciding What Will Be Evaluated

Organizational performance is concerned with the entire spectrum of the results chain discussed earlier, from:

- Building organizational capacity to provide services
- Delivering the services to students and the community, and
- Achieving intended results (short, medium and long term).

In order to focus the evaluation on the most important aspects of its performance, the CLC must decide precisely which aspects will be evaluated. This decision defines the **objects** of the evaluation - *what* performance will be evaluated but not *how good* that performance should be. The latter requires some expression of performance 'standards.' Once again, a confusion of terms abounds; in this Framework, we use the three terms defined below.

- **Performance standards** – specify the level(s) or degree(s) of desired performance, often using various *evaluation criteria* that enable us to observe and measure performance.
- **Performance targets** – specify the expected level of performance, often in a given space of time, with respect to some object of evaluation.
- **Benchmark** - a comparative reference point for setting *performance standards* and *targets*.

Once a CLC has decided what is to be evaluated, it must then ask itself: **How** do we measure performance in relation to each object?

Measuring Performance

Because organizational performance is neither simple nor straightforward, the evaluation is usually done by means of performance *indicators*.

Indicators tend to be viewed as specialized statistics that *quantify* performance; however, *qualitative* indicators - visual and narrative expressions - can be useful when quantitative measures are not feasible or a more *symbolic* representation of quality is desired.

The production of indicators requires **sources** of appropriate data and the **means** to collect and analyze them, which often involves the creation of 'instruments' such as questionnaires and rating scales. This exercise provides another reality check as the feasibility of using any given indicator depends on having the capacity to produce it.

Producing indicators can become quite technical; however, the most important point remains that the indicators must measure what matters to the CLC.¹⁴

An Example of Performance Measurement

- A desired result, that graduates obtain work in their chosen field within two years, becomes an object of the evaluation.
- A survey reveals two benchmarks: the average for all centres in Québec is 80% (employment in chosen field within two years) and the rate of the top ten centres is 90-95%.
- Aspiring to be a top centre, the standard of 90% is set.
- However, given its past performance (50-60%), successive targets of 70%, 80% and 90% are set for a three-year period.
- The chosen indicator is the percentage of graduates who report finding such employment.
- The sources/methods of data collection: a questionnaire mailed to graduates two years after graduation; of analysis: quantitative data will be analyzed using a spreadsheet, while qualitative data will be analyzed separately.

3.5 Complete Action Plan

This final step is used to consolidate and review all aspects of the Action Plan completed in steps 3.1 to 3.4, while taking into account each partner’s annual planning.

Review Partner Planning

The Action Plan will almost certainly affect the CLC’s success plan and the equivalent plans of each community group or agency involved in the CLC. The impact of the Action Plan on the success plan or its equivalent should be determined before it is presented to the partners for approval.

Once the plan has been reviewed, it needs to be approved in accordance with any relevant parameters of the Partnership Agreement. Sign a partnership agreement, if the actual signing of the partnership agreement (Step 2.5) was deferred until the action plan was completed.

The Action Plan

- Intended Results
- Activities
- Monitoring
- Evaluation
- Work Plan
- Resources

¹⁴ Stoll & Fink, 1996, pp. 166-167

STEP 4

IMPLEMENT

STEP 4: IMPLEMENT ACTION PLAN

The purpose of this step is to implement the Action Plan developed in the previous step; it is comprised of three steps:

- Allocate resources and begin service delivery;
- Allocate resources and conduct capacity building;
- Monitor service delivery & capacity building.

In this step, you will enter the first link of the results chain, by undertaking the activities that have been designed to produce the short-term results set for the CLC.

4.1 Allocate Resources and Begin Service Delivery

This step is, in theory, quite straightforward: simply do what the Action Plan says should be done: hire or reassign the staff and allocate the resources provided for each program and other service foreseen in the plan. However, in practice, this step may prove to be more difficult and some 're-tooling' of the Action Plan may be required.

4.2 Allocate Resources and Conduct Capacity Building

As noted earlier (page 27), service delivery requires capacity and it is possible that some capacity building activities may need to occur *before* some aspects of service delivery are undertaken. Others may take place at the same time or at a later date as circumstances warrant. The key point is that capacity development should not be neglected and put off until that mythical future state, when there will be time for such things.

4.3 Monitor Service Delivery & Capacity Building

Once again, this step puts into practice the plan adopted for keeping both service delivery and capacity building on track in terms of progress toward results, conduct of activities and allocation of resources.

Does the CLC have, or can it acquire, the necessary resources to be sustainable over time?

STEP 5

EVALUATE

STEP 5: EVALUATE

The purpose of this step is to conduct the evaluation of the service delivery and capacity building carried out in the previous step; it comprises three steps:

- Collect the data;
- Analyze the data; and
- Report to stakeholders.

This step completes the programmatic cycle and sets the stage for the next one to begin.

5.1 Collect the Data

Data are simply *bits* of information used to produce the indicators described earlier (page 26). There are two major types of data:

- **Quantitative data** are numerical in nature, that is, information bits that can be counted; and
- **Qualitative data** are verbal or visual in nature, that is, information bits that cannot be counted.

There are a wide variety of methods for collecting data, including:

- Interactions with people;
- Observation of settings or activities; and
- Archival gathering of data.

The data collection process is largely pre-determined by the methods chosen to produce the indicators in Step 3.4 (page 28).

5.2 Analyze the Data

The principal task at this stage is to assemble the bits and pieces collected in the previous step and to make sense of them.

The processing of quantitative data consists of three major tasks:

- Entering the data in a computerized data file;
- Performing various statistical operations on the data; and
- Tabulating the results.

The analysis of qualitative data requires a very different process; however, they provide a richness not found in quantitative data.

Once all the data is in and analyzed, the evaluation team will be in a position to develop conclusions. It is at this point that the team needs to ensure that its findings accurately reflect the data collected and analyzed and that its conclusions are firmly grounded in these findings.

5.3 Report to Stakeholders

Just as CLCs vary in terms of purpose, scope, and so forth, evaluation reports vary widely from informal short reports to longer and more formal ones. There is no single format or one generic outline that will work for all CLC evaluation reports. However, in this day and age of *multi-media*, conventional *paper reporting* is hardly sufficient, reporting will also include web sites and other electronic media, as well as face-to-face communication.

As a learning community, a CLC needs to continually reflect on its experience. Like a reflective practitioner, organizations need to step outside the flow of everyday work in order to gather information about what has taken place, interpret that information in light of the organization's goals and context and generate *lessons learned* on the basis of this reflection. These lessons learned form an important part of the report and provide the basis for what the organization needs to do in future action plans.

If a CLC does not make real use of evaluation findings, it is extremely unlikely that the improvement purpose will be served. Accordingly, the outcomes of the evaluation include follow-up actions for future improvement. In addition to multiple uses of data by stakeholders, these actions become part of the feedback loops for the next planning cycle - the application of lessons learned from reflections on past experience to future policy and practice.

Reporting and the Partners

In the same way that planning the evaluation must relate to each partner's plan for evaluating its own performance, reporting on the evaluation of the CLC must either take this other reporting process into account or merge with it, depending on decisions made in the planning stage.

A Final Word

The evaluation report is the public proof that schools can speak for themselves. The report also marks a pivotal point between one planning cycle and the next. At the beginning of this cycle we asked: What is a CLC and why would we want one? Hopefully, at this point you will have a positive response to this question while asking another one: ***Yes, but how can we sustain it in the future?***

Sustainability is a key element in the theory of change underlying this Framework. That is why capacity building is given so much prominence, including the evaluation of capacity building activities. The buzz created by an innovation, especially if external support is provided, can lead to initial success but only organizational capacity can sustain a CLC over the long term. The evaluation report provides the basis for developing various capacities and ensuring that the vision that inspired the partners to create the CLC in the first place can be sustained over time.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

This document is available on the [CLC](#) section of the LEARN website. The following are some additional key publications to assist in the development of your CLC.

- *The CLC Guidebook: Implementing a Collaborative School-Community Partnership* provides detailed suggestions to implement the Framework, written for the person responsible for coordinating this process;
- *The CLC Workbook: Templates for Collaborative Action Planning*, which accompanies the Guidebook, also written for the person who is coordinating the implementation process.
- *From Theory to Action...*

PLEASE NOTE: The above mentioned publications are currently being updated and will be uploaded to the website when available.

More information on community schools in general, as well as this framework in particular can be obtained from a variety of sources, starting with the publications contained in the Reference List. Many of these publications can be obtained free online.

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

- 🔊 **Benchmark:** a comparative reference point for setting *performance standards* and *targets*.
- 🔊 **Evaluation:** a systematic inquiry about the performance of an organization (e.g. CLC) for the dual purpose of accountability and improvement.
- 🔊 **Indicator:** a *pointer* that provides a *proxy measure* or a symbolic representation of organizational performance.
- 🔊 **Monitoring:** An ongoing process to ensure that planned activities or processes (including resources) are 'on track' and that progress is being made toward intended results.
- 🔊 **Organization:** an entity composed of individuals, groups or other organizations, that act together toward some shared goals within an identifiable structure defined by formal and informal rules.
- 🔊 **Organizational capacity:** the resources, systems and other capabilities of an organization that enable it to attain and sustain high levels of performance in accordance with the expectations of its stakeholders.
- 🔊 **Organizational capacity development:** a continuing process by which an organization increases its capabilities to perform.
- 🔊 **Organizational performance:** the extent to which an organization or a system *operates* and *achieves results* in accordance with the expectations of stakeholders.
- 🔊 **Performance standards:** specify the level(s) or degree(s) of desired performance, often using various *evaluation criteria* that enable us to observe and measure performance.
- 🔊 **Performance targets:** specify the expected level of performance, often in a given space of time, with respect to some object of evaluation.
- 🔊 **Result:** a describable or measurable change that occurs because of some action supported by various resources:
 - 🔊 **Outputs:** short-term results (objectives);
 - 🔊 **Outcomes:** medium-term results (purpose);
 - 🔊 **Impact:** long-term results (goal).
- 🔊 **Results chain:** the sequence of change from program resources and activities to outputs, outcomes and impact.
- 🔊 **Risk:** uncertainty about the achievement of the intended result or what that result (or the attempt to achieve it) may cause.

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