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**The Department of Canadian Heritage (PCH), in
Collaboration with the QCGN**

*Assessment of the Priority Setting Process
for the English-Speaking
Communities of Quebec (ESCQ)*

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Network

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**Guide for the Focus Groups
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INTERVIEW GUIDE

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

The Department of Canadian Heritage (PCH) works with representative organizations from Official Language Minority Communities (OLMCs) to establish mechanisms which help OLMCs identify community issues, set broad priorities for action and results, inform funding decisions, and participate in the development of public policies and programs. The Department of Canadian Heritage recognizes the QCGN as the ESCQ community sectors' official representative and interlocutor with the Department.¹

In June 2011, the English-speaking Community of Quebec, represented by the QCGN, and PCH, signed a Cooperation Agreement to support the enhancement of the community's vitality, and its development. The Agreement's goal is to ensure that appropriate mechanisms were established to:

- Identify communities' development issues and priorities;
- Set common priorities for action and expected results;
- Promote intradepartmental, interdepartmental and intergovernmental cooperation;
- Draw on community knowledge for funding decisions and the development of public policies and programs; and
- Streamline administrative processes.

The Cooperation Agreement (Section 3) lays out the community priority-setting process, which is led by a Priority Setting Steering Committee. It establishes coordination meetings between PCH's regional office and the QCGN through a Follow-up Committee.

MANDATE

The Cooperation Agreement mentioned above remains in effect if each signatory continues to agree to its relevance.² At least every five years the parties agree to assess the need to modify or renew the Agreement. Given that 2017 represents five years that the Cooperation Agreement has been in effect and considering the launch of the new 2018-2023 Official Languages Action Plan, the Department of Canadian Heritage (PCH), in collaboration with the Quebec Communities Groups Network (QCGN), would like to evaluate the 2011 priority setting mechanisms and processes for the English-speaking Communities of Quebec (ESCQ). The specific objectives of the review are to:

- Conduct an assessment of the priority setting process;
- Assess the challenges in establishing and operating the ESCQ Priority Setting Steering Committee (over the last five years), and;
- Suggest possible short and medium-term strategies to improve the priority setting process.

¹ Paragraph 10 of the Cooperation Agreement indicates the following: Thirty-six community groups representing the ESCQ's regional and sectorial interests form the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN), a not-for-profit organization that supports and assists the development of the ESCQ and enhances its vitality. The Department of Canadian Heritage recognizes the QCGN as the ESCQ community sectors' official representative and interlocutor with the Department. As such, the QCGN plays a pivotal role in facilitating the development of a constructive and positive relationship between the Government of Canada and its departments and agencies, and the ESCQ.

² Paragraph 48 of the Cooperation Agreement indicates the following: *This Agreement will come into effect upon signature by the two parties and will remain in effect if each signatory agrees on its relevance. After each evaluation of the Agreement or at least every five years, the parties, working together, will assess the need to modify or renew the Agreement. The Agreement can be modified subject to the written consent of the authorized representatives of both parties.*

Ultimately, the review seeks to inform the development of a community-based priority setting process that will build consensus and empower the QCGN, as the spokesperson for the English-speaking community in Quebec, to lead the process of setting community priorities and to promote them to the various levels of government. In doing so, this will enable Canadian Heritage (PCH):

- To have access to a spokesperson (the QCGN) credible and legitimate in the eyes of the community;
- To identify community needs and priorities that could be considered in determining the allocation of financial resources under the "Cooperation with the Community Sector Program";
- To have the information necessary for the adoption of intra-ministerial, inter-ministerial or intergovernmental interventions.

To execute this mandate, KSAR will employ a participative, iterative, and flexible approach with an open feedback loop to PCH and the QCGN. It will conduct including

- Up to 25 individual interviews;
- Up to four focus groups (at least one must be on-line);
- Up to four facilitated conversations will be conducted.

OVERVIEW OF PRIORITY-SETTING PROCESS 2012-2017

In 2011, the QCGN led a consultative process within the English-speaking Community of Quebec, which resulted in the development of a community-wide strategic development plan entitled "2012 - 2017 Community Priorities and Enabling Strategies of the English-speaking Community of Quebec". This plan identified six priorities:

- Access to Service in English
- Community Building
- Economic Prosperity
- Identity and Renewal
- Leadership and Representation
- Strong Institutions

The implementation of the priority setting process was overseen for, i.e. the Priority Setting Steering Committee (PSSC). In addition to the PSSC, three specific mechanisms were created by the Cooperation Agreement (2012-2017) to support the priority setting process.

1. Mechanism to Set Priorities (*Paragraph 20*)

The Cooperation Agreement identified a QCGN Board of Directors' appointed committee, i.e. the *Priority Setting Steering Committee (PSSC)* as the mechanism that would be used to (a) facilitate the identification of ESCQ development issues, and (b) set multi-year priorities and results.³

³ Paragraph 20 of the Cooperation Agreement indicates the following; *The ESCQ's community sector identifies its common development issues and priorities for action and expected results through a community consultation process facilitated by the QCGN Board of Directors' ESCQ Priority Setting Steering Committee (PSSC) described in Section 3.1.*

2. Mechanism to Ensure Follow-up (*Paragraph 30*)

The Cooperation Agreement identified the *PCH/PSSC Follow-up Committee (PPFC)* as the mechanism to facilitate ongoing information sharing and follow-up on the ESCQ's development issues, priorities for action, and results.⁴

The document review and initial interviews indicate that the PSSC was convened once-a-year in the Spring to both provide an opportunity for PCH to inform the ESCQ of the previous fiscal year's results and gather the ESCQ's input related to priorities for the coming year.

3. Mechanism to Facilitate National Liaison (*Paragraphs 31, 32, 33*)

The Cooperation Agreement identified the *Tripartite National Liaison Committee (NLC)* as the forum within which the parties to the agreement could: (a) foster coordination between PCH regional/national levels in support of the ESCQ, and; (b) take into consideration views and observations that could inform decisions that affect policy and program delivery, as well as interdepartmental and intergovernmental actions.⁵

TABLE 1

	Priority Setting Steering Committee (PSSC)	PCH/PSSC Follow-up Committee (PPFC)	Tripartite National Liaison Committee (NLC)
Identify ESCQ development issues and priorities	✓		
Set priorities for action and results	✓		
Draw on community knowledge for funding decisions and the development of OL policies and programs		✓	✓
Promote intradepartmental, interdepartmental and intergovernmental cooperation			✓
Streamline administrative processes.	✓	✓	✓

⁴ Designed as a bi-annual forum, the PPFC brought together representatives from PCH's regional office and the QCGN.

- The initial plan was that the first meeting of the PPFC would have been held in the Spring (usually June) to review results from the previous year.
- The second meeting of the PPFC was to be held in the Fall. It was designed as an opportunity for the ESCQ/QCGN to dialogue with PCH about priorities for the coming year.
- According to the Cooperation Agreement, one of the PPFC's meetings could incorporate a review of the final distribution of funds under the programs covered by the 2011 Cooperation Agreement.

⁵ The NLC brought together the ESCQ/QCGN and both the national and regional offices of the Department of Canadian Heritage (PCH)⁵. The NLC was to meet twice a year in January and June.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS FROM DOCUMENT REVIEW AND INITIAL CONSULTATIONS

A document review and the first round of in-depth interviews were conducted to provide background information about the priority setting process. This results of these two activities were discussed with PCH and the QCGN. They have been used to inform the approach and content of these Lines of Inquiry.

The document review described the following:

- Key elements of the 2012-2017 Cooperation Agreement;
- The priority setting process and mechanisms contained in the 2012-2017 Cooperation Agreement;
- The implementation priority-setting process.

The first round of in-depth interviews provided initial views on:

- The overall priority-setting process;
- The PSSC and its role and responsibilities in the priority-setting process;
- The priority-setting support mechanisms outlined in the Cooperation Agreement;
- The mechanisms to promote ESCQ priorities across federal departments and agencies and between the federal and provincial governments;
- The connection of the priority-setting process to the allocation of funding;
- A perceived QCGN conflict of interest related to the fact the QCGN is facilitating a priority-setting process that determines priorities to inform federal Official Languages funding from which it benefits.

LINES OF ENQUIRY / FOCUS GROUPS

You have been provided with this Guide to help you prepare for your participation in one of four focus groups related to reviewing the current ESCQ priority-setting process and envisioning improvements for the coming years.

Each focus group will explore four sets of questions in order to, i.e. (a) identify views/attitudes/perceptions about priority setting for the ESCQ; (b) envision an effective priority-setting process for the ESCQ in the coming years; (c) discuss the role of the QCGN in leading and supporting an effective priority-setting process for the ESCQ, and; (d) other relevant considerations.

Please note that the Lines of Inquiry for the focus groups are like those employed to conduct twenty-five in-depth interviews. This allows for the collection of comparable data from different sources, which in turn helps to validate the significant themes emerging from both research activities.

Section 1 : Views/Attitudes/Perceptions About Priority Setting for the ESCQ

1. In your view, should the “par et pour” principle (please see the text box to the right) apply to the priority-setting process of the ESCQ?

2. Please share your views about/reactions to the following statements:

- Community sector organizations and institutions serving English-speaking Quebec should work together to identify and pursue common development goals.
- An ESCQ priority setting process capable of identifying community priorities:
 - Is necessary/valuable?
 - Will help to establish a more coherent and coordinated approach to strengthening the development and vitality of the ESCQ;
 - Will help to ensure that various levels of government are informed of the ESCQ’s critical needs and development priorities.
 - Will help to mobilize the community
 - Will support actions for change

The “par et pour” principle

adopted by many groups in the Official Languages space indicates that Official Language Minority Communities should be enabled to create opportunities to live in the Official Languages of one choice.

It has also come to mean that decisions about the community need to be made “by and for” the community”

3. Please carefully consider the working definition of priority setting below and share your views about it with the interviewer?

WORKING DEFINITION OF PRIORITY SETTING

A collective community process that results in choices being made about: (a) what is more important to strengthen ESCQ vitality over a specified period; (b) what are the best strategies for achieving identified priorities, and; (c) what is the expected contribution of individual organizations/institutions to specific strategies?

Section 2: Envisioning the ESCQ Priority Setting Process

4. What would the main elements of an effective ESCQ priority-setting process be – one that is inclusive, capable of determining priorities, and reaching agreement about the expected contributions of different community organizations (examples: QCGN members, community groups and institutions that are not members of the QCGN, etc.)?

4. Please share your views about the three most essential conditions of success that must be put in place to establish and implement your envisioned ESCQ priority setting process?

5. Please share your views about the significant risks that need to be addressed when designing and implementing your envisioned ESCQ priority-setting process?

WORKING DEFINITION OF CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS

That which is required to enable the ESCQ, as community, to achieve the priorities which result from its priority setting process

WORKING DEFINITION OF RISKS

That which could impede/derail the achievement the priorities which result from its priority setting process

Section 3 : Exploring the Role of the QCGN in the ESCQ Priority Setting Process

6. As the recognized interlocutor organization regarding the design and implementation of the ESCQ priority-setting process, please share your views about: (a) the scope of the role, and; (b) the expected contribution of the QCGN in designing and supporting the implementation of an ESCQ priority-setting process?

Section 4 : Other Relevant Considerations

7. Are there other, relevant considerations that you would like to share about envisioning and implementing an effective ESCQ priority-setting process in the coming years?