

First Steps to FLS Planning

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Introduction

Planning to deliver French Language Services (FLS) can seem overwhelming, particularly if your organization is new to working with Francophone communities and delivering services in French. For the past several years, HC Link has supported organizations in their efforts to deliver FLS. We have developed a series of [resources](#) and presented [webinars](#) based on our experiences engaging Francophone communities and supporting organizations to develop and deliver FLS. Our resources cover a variety of topics essential to delivering FLS, including recruiting and retaining bilingual staff, engaging Francophones when you don't speak French, and developing a bilingual organizational culture. This resource is focussed on how to start planning -- and ultimately delivering -- services in French.

Download this resource at 
<http://hclinkontario.ca/images/FirstStepstoFLSPlanning2015.pdf>

Cette ressource a aussi été développée en français

WHY DELIVER SERVICES IN FRENCH?

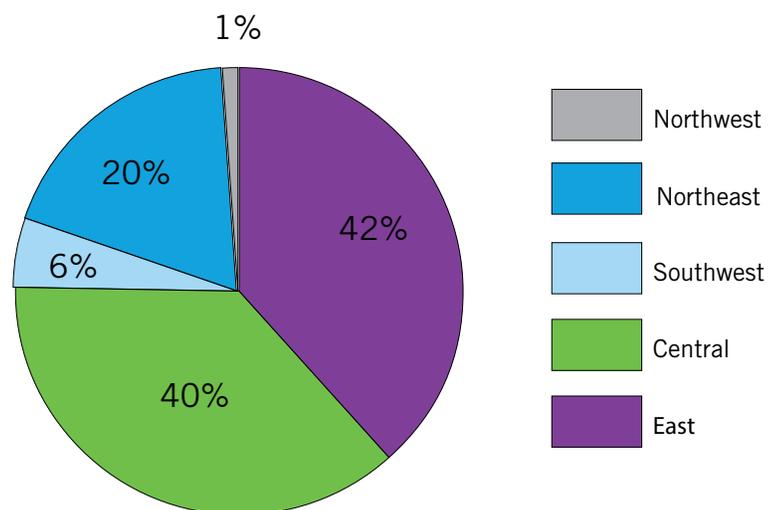
There are a variety of reasons your organization would want to deliver services in French. Currently Francophones represent 4.8 percent of Ontario's population. The proportion of Francophones varies from region to region. In the Northeast, almost one in four people is Francophone and in Eastern Ontario the ratio is one in six. The proportion of Francophones in the rest of the province ranges from 2.1 to 3.4 percent.¹ Francophones in Ontario have the right to request and receive services in French by provincial and government offices located in 25 designated areas throughout the province,² as well as by certain entities receiving funding from the provincial government. This means that many organizations are required to provide services in French.³

Despite these regulations, status as a linguistic minority often leaves Franco-Ontarians with limited access to services that many Anglophones take for granted. This lack of access to service can have serious implications on the health of Francophone communities.⁴ According to the *Second Report on the Health of Francophones in Ontario* (2005), Francophones have a poorer perception of their health than the overall Ontario population.⁵ Bouchard et al. (2009-10)⁶ found disparities in health status between Francophones and Anglophones in Ontario. There is evidence that people who receive services in their own language follow health advice and instructions more closely, have less need for hospital services and stay healthier.⁷

Ultimately, when we are aiming to build healthy communities, we must consider the needs and priorities of all who live, work and play within them.

Read more about this in our resources *Working Together with Francophones in Ontario*, [Part One](#) and [Part Two](#).

Where do Franco-Ontarians Live?



FIRST STEPS TO PLANNING FLS

A brief scan of grey and scholarly literature revealed no relevant models or frameworks for developing and delivering French Language Services. The following approach is based on our years of experience in supporting groups to develop and deliver services in French. We have largely drawn on program development processes, with a particular emphasis on understanding the context of Franco-Ontarians.

First Steps to Planning French Language Services

1. Know where your Francophone audience is, who they are, and the contexts in which they operate	2. Clearly identify the FLS needs of your audience and what service gaps exist
3. Prioritize service needs	4. Develop an FLS plan

1. Know your audience

Know where your Francophone audience is, who they are, and the contexts in which they operate.

It's important to do your homework before connecting with and planning services for Francophone communities. In particular, if you are not a member of the Francophone community, it's helpful to show that you have taken steps to understand the history and needs of Franco-Ontarians provincially and in your own community.

The French presence in Ontario dates nearly 400 years. The French were the first to explore the province and establish permanent settlements and are an integral part of Ontario's history. Ontario's Francophones have created numerous organizations to defend their rights and promote their culture. Accomplishments include the establishment of bilingual and French language schools, the creation of the Franco-Ontarian flag in 1975, the Courts of Justice Act in 1984 and the French Language Services Act in 1986.⁸ Learn more about the history and experiences of Franco-Ontarians by visiting the Office of Francophone Affairs [website](#) and consulting our resource, [Working Together with Francophones in Ontario Part 1: Understanding the Context](#).

The Franco-Ontarian community is highly diverse in religion, age, physical ability, economic status and education. Ontario attracts 70% of Francophone immigrants who have chosen Canada as their place of residence, with a strong representation of immigrants from the Caribbean, the Middle East and Africa.⁹ Therefore there is no *one* Francophone community.

It is also critical to understand the Francophone communities within *your* community. From a local perspective, identify who your audience or potential audience is, where they are located in your community, their history, and the environments in which they live, work and play. Learn what the challenges and barriers are for local Francophones, as well as the strengths and opportunities that exist. Identify existing groups, networks, initiatives and programs. Are there key champions, influencers and decision-makers? Research your organization's previous efforts related to engaging Francophone communities and delivering FLS. What did you try and how did it go? What worked and what did not? It may be helpful to connect with partner organizations while conducting your research, particularly those with strong connections to Francophone networks.

2. Identify the needs of your audience

Clearly identify the FLS needs of your audience and what service gaps exist.

Once you have identified your Francophone audience, you can begin to identify and understand their needs. There may already be information about Francophones and their needs available in your community. Contact the health unit in your region and any relevant partner organizations, including your community's French Planning Entity and LHIN, to identify any local reports that could contain data relevant to your work. Public Health Ontario's [Situational Assessment](#)¹⁰ tools provide a helpful outline for this step.

In addition to examining existing data, you might need to engage directly with local Francophone communities to identify their needs. HC Link's 2011 resource, [Community Engagement @ a Glance](#), provides an overview of community engagement. At the organizational level, engaging community members helps to ensure that the organization's efforts reflect the local population and that services continue to be relevant to the intended users, even if there are changes in demographics. Often, the terms community engagement and consultation are used interchangeably. While consultations are inevitably a part of community engagement, these two concepts are distinct. Consulting a community involves obtaining input and feedback from members to help identify needs and assets, set priorities or make decisions. Examples include citizens' panels, focus groups and community surveys. Community engagement, on the other hand, is a more integrated process. Tamarack defines community engagement as "the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people...to address issues affecting the well-being of those involved."¹¹ Key in this definition is collaboration. Community engagement is an ongoing process of planning and decision-making where community members provide advice and recommendations that are reflected in the final outcome.

Carefully consider the purpose of your consultation or engagement strategy in order to select the appropriate mechanisms for implementation. Clearly communicate your intentions with your audience. Without truly involving the Francophone community in the planning process, it will be difficult to accurately identify their needs. For more information on community engagement, consult [The Health Planner's Toolkit: Community Engagement and Communication](#).

3. Prioritize service needs

Understand specific and pressing needs for services.

Typically, needs assessments unearth a large variety of needs within a community. You may need to prioritize these needs in order to achieve success moving forward. Involve the community in this step, if possible. It's also critical to work with other organizations currently delivering FLS to explore opportunities for expanding or contributing to an existing service. Public Health Ontario's [overview of priority setting](#)¹² and [Priority Setting Checklist](#)¹³ can provide guidance on how to select priorities.

4. Develop an FLS plan

Consider governance and accountability, communications and promotions, human resources planning and evaluation.

Now that you have identified and engaged your audience, and established and prioritized their needs, you are ready to start developing your FLS plan. Keep the plan simple, manageable and realistic. Aim for a three to five year plan with a mix of short- and long-term activities and objectives. Your FLS plan should include activities beyond the delivery of services. It should consider the necessary infrastructure that the organization will need to sustain delivery of FLS such as governance, communications, human resources and evaluation.

Governance and Accountability

The successful provision of FLS is the business of the entire organization, from front-line workers, administration and program staff, to management and Board members.¹⁴ Therefore, the FLS plan should include governance and accountability structures that consider the perspectives and needs of Francophone clients. FLS should be incorporated into your organization's strategic plan, policies and procedures, monitoring frameworks, financial management, outreach strategies and human resources management.¹⁵

One way to incorporate the needs and perspectives of Francophones is to include representation in governance and accountability structures. Many organizations include (or even reserve) positions on their Board of Directors for Francophones (e.g. Children's Aid Society of Sudbury and Manitoulin; CHIGAMIK; the Ottawa Children's Treatment Centre; and Health Nexus). Having a FLS planning committee is another a way to ensure the Francophone voice is heard within your organization. Include Francophones and bilingual staff, as well as non-French speaking staff in the committee. The committee will serve as an opportunity to build capacity and understanding. You can take a staged approach. For example, some organizations have designated board members and an FLS committee, while others may start with one and add the other over time.

Communications and Promotions

Think critically about what, how and when to communicate in French, and with whom. Consider all communications and promotions vehicles including signage, phone messages, websites, social media and print materials. Consider the different audiences for each communications vehicle, such as the general public, your clients, your staff and partners. What might each audience need in French? You can start small and build over time. Here are some suggestions based on our experience:

- ▶ Adapt the name of your organization/project into French and include both the English and French in communications wherever possible.
- ▶ Start with one French webpage which lists programs, services and resources available in French. Over time, this can be expanded to a full French website.
- ▶ Develop welcome signage in both languages. Provide opportunities for clients to select French options when calling your organization by phone.

Human Resources

Reflet Salvéo's [Health Provider Workbook](#) recommends that human resources policies should be revised to include designation of positions, recruitment, hiring, and testing of French-language skills as well as French-language training.¹² HC Link recently published a resource, [Finders Keepers](#), that details how to recruit and retain bilingual staff. We advise that organizations:

- ▶ Identify existing French capacity.
- ▶ Clearly identify what positions need to have French capacity – and how much.
- ▶ Increase training for existing staff, as well as provide opportunities for staff to speak and work in French to increase and/or maintain their level of French.
- ▶ [Build an environment](#) where working in both languages is supported.

Evaluation

Every program plan should include evaluation. Evaluation aims to assess the overall relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability or impact of the plan, implementation and outcomes in order to support decisions about what to do next.¹⁶ In particular, your evaluation strategy should provide data to enable you to:

- ▶ Continuously adjust and/or adapt the French services offered by your organization to ensure their quality and effectiveness.
- ▶ Expand your FLS through lessons learnt from initial implementation and continuous improvement.

It is important to develop the evaluation strategy as you develop the FLS plan. Follow [Public Health Ontario's ten steps](#) for conducting an evaluation.

CONCLUSION

Once you have gained an understanding of your Francophone audiences, defined and prioritized their needs and developed your FLS plan, you are on your way to delivering effective services in French. Thinking about developing French Language Services within your organization can be daunting. Keep in mind that even a little effort can go a long way to making Francophones in your community feel comfortable accessing your services. Starting small is a crucial step to growing the delivery of French services over time.

Ultimately, the key to delivering effective French Language Services is to first build effective relationships. Work closely with partner organizations (whether Francophone, Anglophone or bilingual) that deliver services in French and who have close ties to Francophone communities. Be sure to make the engagement of these communities meaningful. It is not enough to merely solicit feedback. Take the time to incorporate suggestions and involve the community in the planning process.

As with all services provided by your organization, French Language Services should be:

- ▶ Client-centred;
- ▶ Results-oriented;
- ▶ Integrated in the organization's overall service delivery model;
- ▶ Proactive and visible;
- ▶ Responsive to the needs of the target population; and
- ▶ Permanent.¹⁰



ENDNOTES

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HELPFUL RESOURCES

[HC Link's resources on engaging Francophones and delivering FLS](#)

[At a Glance: The ten steps for conducting an evaluation](#) *Public Health Ontario*

[HR Support Kit Pathway to Bilingual Services](#) *Rifssso*

[The Health Planner's Toolkit Module 5: Community Engagement and Communication](#) *Government of Ontario*

[Health Provider Workbook](#) *Reflet Salvéo*

[Moving toward a bilingual organization](#) *Health Nexus and Reflet Salvéo*

[Ontario 400](#)

[Ontario Office of Francophone Affairs](#)

[Priority Setting - Four Methods for Getting to What's Important!](#)

[Priority Setting Process Checklist](#) *Public Health Ontario*

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HC Link works with community groups, organizations, and partnerships to build healthy, vibrant communities across Ontario. We offer consulting services, learning and networking events, and resources in both English and French. Our services are funded by the Government of Ontario and are provided free of charge where possible.

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