

Practice #14: The Fédération des aînés et des retraités francophones de l'Ontario (FARFO)'s Information Fairs (Ontario)

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Practice #14: The Fédération des aînés et des retraités francophones de l'Ontario (FARFO)'s Information Fairs (Ontario)

This practice contributes to improving:

- Community resources: collaboration of the organization with key community stakeholders.

The organization implementing this practice:

The Fédération des aînés et retraités francophones de l'Ontario (FARFO), Ontario.

The information contained in this file was mainly acquired from documentary research and these sources are cited in the references. The information was validated by Jean-Louis Schryburt, President of the Fédération des aînés et des retraités francophones de l'Ontario (FARFO), Ottawa Region.

Background

The Fédération des aînés et retraités francophones de l'Ontario (FARFO) was created in 1978 and its 10,000-strong membership brings together individuals and affiliated organizations from across the province. Its mandate is to promote the interests of all Ontario Francophone seniors and retirees and to enhance their quality of life. In addition, it aims to encourage a positive outlook on aging and community engagement.

Since 2015, the FARFO is in charge of managing information fairs intended for Francophone seniors.¹ Previously, these were held under the direct auspices of the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat (2004–2009). Since their launch in 2004, information fairs have been part of a larger educational initiative targeted at Francophone seniors and funded under the Canada/Ontario Agreements on French Language Services.² As a result of this initiative, the FARFO is also able to convey the needs of its members to health and social service providers, including the need to access these services in French.

Objectives

The objective of the fairs is to provide information to Francophone seniors in their own language, on a variety of topics that may have an impact on their quality of life. They also foster networking between various organizations that provide French-language services and Francophone community groups.

Furthermore, this practice also intends to ensure that Francophone seniors contribute to the vitality of Ontario's Francophone minority community.

¹ FARFO. (n.d.) *Foires d'informations de la FARFO*, Accessed at : <http://farfo.ca/foires-dinformatiions-farfo/>

² This initiative is funded by equal contributions from the Federal government, under the Canada/Ontario agreements on French-Language Services. The agreement reached between the FARFO and Ontario's Seniors' Secretariat covers a five-year period (2013 – 2018).

Features of the practice

Information fairs are valuable awareness-raising and educational tools to address issues that affect seniors' health and quality of life (for example, abuse and fraud prevention, nutrition, financial and legal issues, mental and physical health, safety, as well as locations where these services are offered in French). In addition, information fairs are networking platforms and an opportunity for participants to establish/renew partnerships. By participating in information fairs, Francophone seniors gain better knowledge about the services available in French while organizations become better acquainted with the needs of Francophone seniors.

Information fairs are led by the FARFO's provincial body, in collaboration with each regional entity. Privileged partners are: host organizations, community care volunteers, seniors' clubs and French-language health services networks.³ While a great majority of information fairs organized since 2004 were held in urban areas, the project currently aims to promote these activities in rural and remote locations.⁴

Challenges

The first challenge is that seniors must travel to these activities, particularly in major regions. The second challenge emerges from a misunderstanding on the part of organizations that wish to participate in information fairs while providing no French-language services to the area's Francophone population. When launching activities, organizing booths or transmitting information, organizations must be able to do so in the official minority language, which, for many of them, is not the case.

Analysis⁵

Why is this practice considered innovative?

This practice meets a community need. It aims to fill an information gap for Ontario Francophone seniors and organizations who serve this population. Furthermore, each information fair report⁶ contains positive comments about these events providing better information to Francophone seniors living in a linguistic minority context, by addressing relevant themes and helping these seniors age in good health. In a few cases, organizations that provide French-language services indicated that information fairs enabled them to uncover many of this population's needs.

This practice is perceived as innovative by all partners because it encourages Francophone seniors to play a part in highlighting needs related to services in their own language and community vitality.

3 *Rapport annuel de la FARFO 2015-2016* at http://farfo.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/FARFO-RAPPORT-ANNUEL2015-2016_final.pdf

Rapport de la Présidence et des réalisations 2013-2015 at <http://farfo.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Rapports-annuels-2013-2015.pdf>

4 The five targeted Ontario areas are: East, Far North, Mid-North, Ottawa and Southwest.

5 This analysis is based on criteria defined in the *Innovative Practices Evaluation Framework* designed by the Health Council of Canada, available at: https://healthcouncilcanada.ca/files/IP_Framework_Eng_final_1.pdf also outlined in Appendix 1.

6 Available at: <http://farfo.ca/foires-dinformations-farfo/>

Emerging, promising or leading: A promising practice

- **Quality of evidence:** The practice has not been researched. However, some reports contain indicators that specify the number of participants and other relevant information.⁷ The FARFO's annual reports⁸ also provide facts about some of the outcomes generated by information fairs. In general, these reports emphasize the positive aspects of these activities. Host organizations may use a template for the final report that seems to frame data collection in such a way that enables the evaluation of these activities.
- **Impact:** Based on the information collected about this practice, three types of impacts were identified: a) the information better equips Francophone seniors living in a minority context; b) community mobilization leads to awareness-raising among service providers about the importance of active offer in the user's preferred language; c) information fairs are networking opportunities, increasing collaboration between organizations that promote the continuum of care in the minority official language.
- **Applicability:** Between 2013 and 2016, seventeen information fairs were held across Ontario, accounting for six fairs per year, which, in our view, is a good success indicator for this practice.
- **Transferability:** It seems possible to transfer this practice to other organizations and provinces. The main point is that it requires vast community participation and a good amount of volunteer work. Moreover, financial resources are also required to fund the event's logistics.

7 These reports are available at: <http://farfo.ca/foires-dinformations-farfo/>

8 Available at: <https://farfo.ca/rapports-annuels/>