Practice # 24: Welcoming Community 2.0 (Ontario)

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Josée Benoît

Djenaba Sarah Dagnogo

Alexandre Renaud

GREFOPS
Groupe de recherche sur la
formation et les pratiques en santé
et service social en contexte
francophone minoritaire

uOttawa

ABOUT THE FACT SHEET

This fact sheet is part of the *Directory of Innovative Practices in Health and Social Services in Official Language Minority Contexts* (available at: https://www.grefops.ca/directory_innovative_practices.html)

The *Directory of Innovative Practices* (formerly the *Handbook of Innovative Practices on the Integration of Official Language Minority Health and Social Services*) is a complementary resource to the *Organizational and Community Resources Self-Assessment Tool for Active Offer and Social and Health Services Continuity*[1]. It presents initiatives that have been put in place, most often at the local level, that respond to a community need and are perceived as innovative by the various actors involved in their implementation. The practices were identified, analyzed and classified according to an evaluation framework developed by the Health Council of Canada. This framework allowed us to distinguish between emerging practices, promising practices and leading practices. Some of these practices were suggested by the *Société Santé en français* and the provincial, territorial and regional French-language health networks, or other partners.

The reader is referred to the Introduction and Method document for information about the authors and collaborators, background on the project, a description of the methodology used to create the fact sheets, definitions of the following concepts:

- Leading Practice, Promising Practice, Emerging Practice
- Quality of evidence, impact, applicability, transferability
- Service coordination, service integration, liaison
- Active offer

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This practice contributes to improving:

- Community resources: collaboration with key community players
- Organizational resources: hiring, retaining and training bilingual healthcare staff

The organization implementing this practice:

The information described in this fact sheet comes mainly from four sources: 1) the web page of the Réseau franco-santé du Sud de l'Ontario; 2) an activity report on the *Welcoming Community 2.0* project; and 3) a webinar featuring some of the members and players in the *Welcoming Community* pilot project. 4) the eQUITY Link training resource - Communities of practice: a collaborative approach to increasing French-language services.

The documentation was completed by a telephone interview with Ms. Nancy Larivière, Project Coordinator of the French Health Network of Central Southwestern Ontario, on June 7, 2021, and updated on May 22, 2023, with the support of Ms. Geneviève Laferrière, Project Coordinator, French Health Network of Central Southwestern Ontario.

Background

Recruiting, integrating and retaining healthcare workers with the language skills to offer services in French are major challenges facing many healthcare organizations. The *Société Santé en français'* 2013-2018 national strategy sought to support community-based initiatives as a means of building collaborative and supportive processes to ensure better integration and retention of health and social services professionals in Francophone communities. In 2014-2018, *Welcoming Community* was part of a pilot project to promote the recruitment and retention of bilingual human resources in the health and social services field. This project found that community involvement can generate opportunities for networking, community engagement and internships. The positive results of the *Welcoming Community* 2014-2018 pilot project encouraged Health Canada to extend this project to a larger number of communities, for the 2018-2021 period. As a result, the French Health Network of Central Southwestern Ontario worked with five communities of practice: 1) Windsor and London, 2) Waterloo, Wellington and Guelph, 3) Niagara, 4) Mississauga Halton and 5) North Simcoe Muskoka. In 2023, in order to disseminate the lessons learned from this project, the French Health Network of Central Southwestern Ontario produced a learning resource for eQUITY Link users and for health-care partners interested in improving access to French-language health services in francophone minority communities.

In the training resource - Communities of practice: a collaborative approach to increasing French-language services from the Société Santé en français and the French Health Network of Central Southwestern Ontario[2], the following definition of a community of practice is used: "Communities of

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[2] Société Santé en français and the French Health Network of Central Southwestern Ontario (2023). Communities of practice: a collaborative approach to French language services, https://equity-link.ca/courses/communities-of-practice-a-collaborative-approach-to-increasing-french-language-services/

practice are groups of people who come together to share and learn from each other, either face-to-face or virtually. They are linked by their common interest in a field of expertise and are driven by a desire and need to share problems, experiences, models, tools and winning practices. Members of the community of practice deepen their knowledge by interacting on an ongoing, long-term basis to develop innovative practices together." (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002). As part of the 2018-2023 project, the communities or clusters named above were targeted because of 5 keys to success: their multidisciplinary and inclusive perspective, their shared vision, the commitment of champions, their strategy adapted to the community, their sustainable hosting strategy.

The *Welcoming Community* version 2.0 project proposes strategies and tools to these communities, while encouraging them to collaborate with each other. This cross-sector, multidisciplinary approach fundamentally encourages the sharing of resources and mutual support between these communities. In fact, each of these communities has created and developed initiatives, activities and practices (relevant to the regional context) to engage bilingual students and professionals. In this respect, the need that motivated this project is linked to the challenge of recruiting and integrating future health and social services professionals. In other words, these communities need to find innovative strategies for recruiting and retaining bilingual employees in French-speaking minority communities. They need to find ways to support and sustain managers in their efforts to recruit and retain bilingual staff.

Objectives

Welcoming Community 2.0 aims to welcome, recruit, and retain future bilingual health and social service professionals in Francophone minority communities in southern Ontario[3].

The targeted partners are the 5 communities of practice or groupings of health and social services agencies named above, as well as their members, bilingual students and future professionals from nursing, social work, medicine, psychology, speech-language pathology and other programs identified in the regions, English- and French-language colleges and universities offering these programs in southern Ontario, and bilingual health and social services professionals wishing to be informed about community resources and career opportunities in these regions.

Although the five *Welcoming Community 2.0* communities of practice have implemented their own strategies and activities based on the needs of their region, they share common objectives: 1) to support the identification of future professionals enrolled in health and social services programs; 2) to implement and promote community welcoming strategies and activities to foster the recruitment, integration and retention of professionals in the communities; and 3) to promote strategies to increase the placement and recruitment of bilingual professionals among health and social services providers[4].

The *Welcoming Community 2.0* project enabled to set up a system for sharing resources, expertise, knowledge and innovative practices between regions, as well as sharing resources between levels. Information from the *Société Santé en français* or Health Canada, for example, could easily be distributed between regions.

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[3] https://francosantesud.ca/en/projects/welcomingcommunity/
[4] idem

Features of the practice

The five regions involved in the *Welcoming Community 2.0* project used different models of communities of practice. North Simcoe and Mississauga Halton used the inter-agency model, Waterloo, Wellington, Guelph and Niagara used the inter-sectoral agency model, and Windsor and London used the individual and community model.

The main activities implemented in the five communities of practice as part of *Welcoming Community 2.0* are described below.

Communauté de pratique pour les professionnels bilingues (CPPB) de Windsor London (Windsor London Community of Practice for Bilingual Professionals) CPPBSUD-OUEST.CA	Creation of an information website and access to a virtual community on HealthChat for professionals in the fields of health, addiction, social services and wellness; space to network, enhance the French-language community, exchange information, share news and resources, find internship and employment opportunities, discuss challenges and solutions for offering quality services in French. Collaboration with a group of 25 students from Western University Monthly CPPB meetings with bilingual professionals Promotion and advertising in newspapers, social media
Waterloo, Wellington, Guelph Concertation Table (WWG) www.FrancophonesWWG.ca	Group of 15 French-speaking agencies and service providers from a multitude of sectors Production of website and testimonial video *Café de Paris* style session led by Wilfrid Laurier University francophone volunteers for students and employees Dissemination of French resources to 15 McMaster University medical students New collaboration with Conestoga College's School of Health and Life Sciences Promotional videos Scholarship program for students from the French-speaking community

Niagara Interagency Table https://www.cerfniagara.com/ressources-francophones/table-inter-agences	Grouping of 35 French-speaking agencies and service providers from a multitude of sectors
	Dissemination of internship and recruitment opportunities to organizations
	Organize and contribute to job fairs with Brock University Career Zone
	Collaboration with McMaster University's health faculties
	Twinning for student internships
	Guided tours for bilingual professionals
	Production of video vignettes
Mississauga Halton LHIN Community of Practice www.rockonlearn.ca/-welcomingcommunity-fr/	Grouping of 22 health service providers and agencies
	Launch of promotional videos in English and French, to raise awareness among bilingual students and foreign-trained professionals of opportunities to get involved in the development of and access to French-language services in the region.
	Launch of the Welcoming Community web page in English and French, to promote collaborations and activities.
	Development of an online survey to identify the needs and interests of members of the Mississauga Halton Community of Practice.
	Developed a social media communications strategy to attract potential bilingual students/young professionals to join the Welcoming Community.
	Outreach to the University of Toronto, meeting with francophone medical students, to explore opportunities for collaboration
	Guided tours of service providers
	Scholarships and student internship matches
	Session de Speed mentoring en français

Simcoe Nord Muskoka LHIN Community of Practice	Grouping of 11 health service providers and agencies
	Creation of a web page and promotional material to showcase CoP members
www.lacle.ca/cfc	Created a community partnership with La Clé d'la Baie to help promote recruitment and develop the French-language capacity of health and social service professionals in the region.
	Organized a virtual fair to recruit bilingual students and professionals.
	Identified 22 schools and 25 service providers and community organizations to participate in CoP activities.

Challenges

Community collaboration can certainly create some challenges, as several organizations and service providers work together in each community to achieve project goals. That said, according to one of the presenters of a webinar on the Communities of Practice approach[5], the challenges of community collaboration include: succession, the time required to move projects forward, long-term commitment, the involvement of English-speaking employers, the demands of decision-making, the rotation of participants (employees) and the lack of ongoing funding and administrative support.

Also, the COVID-19 pandemic was an obstacle to the realization of events that brought together large numbers of people, such as fairs. Communities of practice had to show flexibility in modifying their activities to comply with health regulations, such as organizing fairs or virtual meetings.

Analysis[6]

Why is this practice considered innovative?

The Welcoming Community 2.0 project targets an important need in improving French-language services: finding strategies and initiatives to recruit, integrate and retain bilingual human resources. Community collaboration and the approaches prioritized by the Welcoming Community 2.0 project help to promote and enhance exchanges and the quality of services offered to Francophones in a minority context. It enhances their visibility and, by extension, fosters a certain cultural sensitivity with regard to the French-speaking community.

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[5] Paul Levac, Annie Boucher, Tina Christman and Nancy Larivière. *L'approche des communautés de pratique, un outil pertinent pour le travail collaboratif*. Société Santé en français Webinar, December 9 2020, available at : https://www.santefrancais.ca/ressource-ssf/lapproche-communautes-de-pratique-outil-pertinent-travail-collaboratif/

[6] 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 and also outlined in the Introduction and Method document.

Emerging, promising or leading: A promising practice

Quality of evidence: A report[7] (March 2021) presents the findings and recommendations emerging from the summative evaluation of the Welcoming Community 2.0 project implemented from 2018 to 2021 by the *Réseau franco-santé du sud de l'Ontario.* The qualitative approach was used as a methodological framework to evaluate the data collected. Directed interviews with the leaders of the 5 communities of practice were conducted to ask them about the process of implementing the activities and the findings achieved. Two online questionnaires were also distributed to project participants in the five regions. Nine people responded to the questionnaire addressed to students (6 of whom completed it), while 15 people responded to the one addressed to organizations (8 of whom completed it). This response rate is insufficient to draw valid and reliable conclusions. A documentary analysis of all the documents produced as part of the project, as well as other relevant documents, was also carried out. The evaluation report lists the findings.

Impact: As a result of these practices, links and contacts have been established between students and health and social service organizations. Hence, this could improve the retention of a greater number of bilingual staff and, by extension, improve certain issues related to active offer.

Applicability: Welcoming Community 2.0 is currently being implemented in Southern Ontario, with a particular focus on the 5 target regions: Windsor and London, Waterloo, Wellington and Guelph, Niagara, Mississauga Halton and North Simcoe Muskoka.

Transferability: We are unaware of any such collaborations in other minority language communities, but evaluations and informal observations of the Welcoming Community 2.0 lead us to believe that the initiative could easily be adapted to other regions.

It was with the intention of facilitating the transferability of knowledge that the training resource was created. This training enables other healthcare partners to discover the benefits of working in Communities of Practice, and how to use this collaborative working method to plan, implement and effectively manage strategic projects to support the active offer of French-language healthcare services.

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[7] Lapierre, L. and Beaulieu, D. (2021). *Évaluation sommative : Communauté accueillante 2.0.*, https://francosantesud.ca/wp-content/uploads/Rapport-final-Evaluation-CommAccueillante-2-0_-juin-2021-vc-1.pdf