IN THE KNOW:
Identifying multiple aspects of Quebec’s community sector
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Centre for Community Organizations (COCo) began the community-based action research project “In the Know: Identifying multiple aspects of Québec’s community sector” in October of 2008 to help develop a better understanding of the diversity of groups working for social change in Québec. The study, funded and supported by the Secretariat à l’Action Communautaire Autonome et aux Initiatives Sociales (SACAIS), aimed to survey English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups across Québec over a 3 year period. The research was carried out between 2009 and 2012.

BACKGROUND

Since its inception in 2000, COCo has identified trends within groups that are part of its network: the “ethno-cultural, bilingual and English-speaking community groups” (Blumel & Ravensbergen, 2011, p. 2). Through its work with approximately 400 groups per year, COCo suspected that these groups are more diverse in their services and programs, less connected to formal networks in Québec and working with less government funding than their francophone counterparts. While not all groups want to be connected to formal networks or government funding, there are those in the COCo network who do. After organizing two forums about government funding, it became obvious to COCo that most groups in their network have little knowledge of SACAIS, Québec government funding or the formal network system that exists among community groups in Québec. Discussions between COCo and SACAIS officials identified the need to more fully document the reality of English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural groups. In the Know has sought to do this.
THE STUDY

Objectives of the research¹

- Locate Anglophone, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups in Québec.
- Develop a portrait and understanding of Anglophone, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups working in Québec.
- Identify the characteristics and patterns that emerge about the recognition of groups by the Québec government, and the types of activities and structures of these groups.
- Advance and test the hypothesis about why these groups are marginalized or excluded.
- Propose strategies to support the recognition and inclusion of these groups in the Francophone community sector.

Methodology: a community-based action research approach

COCo decided that a community-based action research (CBAR) approach would reflect its desire to see changes occur in the relationship between the English-speaking, ethno-cultural and bilingual community groups and the Québec government. CBAR also requires meaningful participant involvement in all phases of the research (Reason & Bradbury, 2006; Jordan, 2003).

In the spirit of the CBAR approach, a questionnaire was developed, tested and analyzed with study respondents, leader organizations in the English-speaking sector, the funder of the research (SACAIS), and Deena White, a researcher from the Université de Montréal who had published an evaluation of the Politique de reconnaissance et de soutien à l’action communautaire (a policy created by the Québec government to provide support and recognition to the community sector, primarily through core funding that covers basic salaries, rent and the basic activities of fulfilling the mission of the organization) or its implementation.

1. Although not a goal at the beginning of the study, an emergent objective of the research was to collaborate with francophone community groups who are also experiencing exclusion (Metivier, 2011; RIOCM, 2008; White, 2008) to sensitize government decision-makers and to promote changes to the Politique de reconnaissance et de soutien à l’action communautaire (a policy created by the Québec government to provide support and recognition to the community sector, primarily through core funding that covers basic salaries, rent and the basic activities of fulfilling the mission of the organization) or its implementation.
The survey was launched in regions of Québec where there is a presence of English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural groups. The questionnaire was developed using the on-line survey tool, Survey Monkey. Altogether, groups from 14 regions of Québec participated in the survey: Montréal, Laval, Estrie, Outaouais, Laurentiens, Lanaudière, Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Capitale Nationale, Montérégie, Iles-de-la-Madeleine, Côte Nord, Gaspésie, and Chaudière Appalaches (groups serving all of Québec are counted as one region).

For the purposes of this study, in some cases regions were combined and in other cases, reported on separately. This was done to reflect how English-speaking communities identify themselves. (For example: Gaspésie and Iles-de-la-Madeleine were reported on separately, even though they are considered one region, as they have two distinct English-speaking communities.)

The questionnaire was launched with a mailing to COCo’s e-bulletin list in April 2009 and was also distributed via other networks. This random sampling approach (McMillan, 2004) was followed, in each year of the study, by a more targeted approach where a specific list of community groups was compiled and phone calls to specific organizations were made. Altogether, close to 800 community groups were identified and 290 completed the questionnaire.

FINDINGS

Regions groups work in

Of the 290 participating groups, the Montréal region represented slightly over half of the respondents (146 groups). Strong participation was also noted in the following regions: Laval, Capitale Nationale, Estrie, Côte Nord, Iles-de-la-Madeleine and Outaouais.
**Executive Summary**

**Annual yearly budget**

The overall budget of most of the groups is small: 103 out of 237 reporting groups (43.5%) have an annual budget that is less than $100,000, while 53 groups (22.4%) have an annual budget of between $100,000 and $250,000. 33 groups (13.9%) have no real budget at all and are mostly comprised of volunteers.

**Funding: Funding other than from the Government of Québec**

Groups have a wide diversity of types of funding from both government and non-government sources that include: the federal government, foundations, independent fundraising, fees for services and products, municipal government and in-kind support. However, as the survey did not ask what percentage of the groups’ budget these sources account for, it is impossible to tell how important these sources of funding actually are to the groups.
Funding: Government of Québec sources

Groups receive two types of funding from the Québec government: project or service funding which is short in duration, which must be renewed and which responds to government rather than community priorities. The other type of funding is global mission funding, which is recurring and covers basic salaries, rent and the basic activities of fulfilling the mission of the organization. Global mission funding represents a more stable source of funding.

Groups find themselves in a precarious position in terms of receiving funding from the Québec government: 41% (52 of 107 reporting groups) report that project/service funding accounts for more than half of their budget. At the same time, for 56.6% (56 of 99 reporting groups), global mission funding accounts for less than half of their budget.

Groups have had a much harder time, as of 2003, securing global mission funding: of 99 reporting groups, 60.6% (60 groups) began receiving global mission funding before 2003. This is due to limited funds being made available for global mission funding in more recent years.

Funding: Québec government global mission funding eligibility

A very high percentage of groups have not applied for this source of funding in the last 3 years: of 119 reporting groups, 80.7% (96 groups) have not applied for global mission funding in this time period. Many of these groups seem to lack information about the existence of this type of funding. Of the original 106 groups that expressed interest in knowing more about the criteria for Québec government global mission funding, 71.7% (76 groups) appeared to meet the criteria for this type of funding after answering a series of eligibility questions. Of these 76 groups, 30 work with ethno-cultural communities.
There is a specific challenge for ethno-cultural groups to receive global mission funding. When these groups do not specifically identify their work as ‘integration into Québec society’, they appear to have difficulty obtaining funding from the Ministry of Immigration and Cultural Communities. When they identify their work with a specific ethno-cultural community, there is resistance from funders because of the unwillingness to fund specific populations (RIOCM, 2008).

**Networks**

Many groups appear to be active in networks. While some groups belong to one network only, most groups indicated belonging to at least two or three networks. Of 290 groups, 75.2% (218 groups) indicated belonging to a first network, 55.5% (161 groups) to a second network, and 41.4% (120 groups) to a third network. The highest rate of participation is in regional networks (cited 153 times), and English-speaking networks (cited 97 times). Participation in Québec-wide networks is cited 73 times. A total of 68% of 357 networks named are part of the broader francophone community sector.

The relatively low response rates for participation in Québec-wide networks (73 responses compared to 225 responses for involvement in local or regional networks) raises questions about whether there is adequate leadership of groups in the English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups at the decision-making and policy influencing networks. This finding speaks to the need for more action research into this area.
IMPLICATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

In response to the emerging data, COCo has initiated a variety of specific actions over the past three years. The following is a summary of some of these actions.

COCo designed a google map, which permitted groups to offer their coordinates and give a summary of their activities; permitting them to have a web presence. This action was in response to the fact that only 23% of the 559 groups identified in the first year of the In the Know project indicated having access to a website. Final statistics indicated that 34% of groups do not have a website (99 out of 290 groups). Altogether, 249 of the 290 participating groups have joined this google map. See (https://maps.google.ca/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&hl=en&msa=0&msid=103546236201983514608.0004704004b59e3619c25&z=7).

COCo has continued providing information to groups on funding from the Government of Québec. Specifically, free consultation sessions (info-COCos) have been given to groups to explain funding requirements and ‘e-note’s (info pieces) are available in the monthly COCo e-bulletin (http://coco-net.org/current-e-bulletin).

COCo shared the emerging data with government staff at a Comité Interministériel meeting in January 2011 and more informally at a SACAIS event in the fall of 2011. Emerging data was also presented 10 times to community groups and networking events connected with COCo’s work. In April 2010, COCo partnered with the Réseau québécois de l’action communautaire autonome (RQ-ACA) to hold an information session on the history and current context of funding from the Government of Québec.

Finally, COCo presented the research data at the Action Francophone Pour le Savoir (ACFAS) conference in 2010, 2011 and 2012. An article on Year One data was published with the Journal for Eastern Township Studies in April 2011 and a summative article is being written about the overall findings of the research.

2. A Québec government committee that brings together representatives from the ministries that fund community work (through the application of the Politique de reconnaissance et de soutien à l’action communautaire)

3. For a description of and link to RQ-ACA, see ANNEX XXI: LIST OF ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS in the full final report (See: link to final report)
More actions are needed. This research identifies several potential avenues that COCo would like to explore with its network:

- Do groups see the need for fuller participation or collaboration of members of the English-speaking, ethno-cultural and bilingual community sector in places of greater leadership in the Francophone community sector? What would this look like?

- How to provide more education to interested groups in the English-speaking, ethno-cultural and bilingual community sector about the Francophone community sector.

- How to foster stronger links and dialogue between the Government of Quebec and the English-speaking, ethno-cultural and bilingual community sector.

- Advance and test the hypothesis about why these groups are marginalized or excluded.

- Do we want to have a more precise idea of who is part of the English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community sector network? Do we need to more fully understand how these groups have emerged, survived and thrive?

For a copy of the full report available online, please see (http://coco-net.org/in-the-know-final-report/).
REFERENCES


