

CONNECTING REGION INITIATIVE

ACTIVITY REPORT #17

Submitted to the
Law Foundation of Ontario
Access to Justice Fund

On behalf of the

CONNECTING OTTAWA NETWORK

DECEMBER 31, 2020

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INTRODUCTION

This is the seventeenth Activity Report describing the implementation and outcomes of the Connecting Ottawa/Connexion Ottawa project, funded by the Law Foundation of Ontario (LFO) under the Connecting Region Initiative of the Access to Justice Fund.

The report describes our interim activities and performance milestones for the six-month period July 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020.

As per our 2020-21 funding agreement, our key objectives for the project were to:

- Connect community legal services and community health and social services.
- Promote the use of electronic and other resources among trusted intermediaries.
- Conduct public outreach and education.
- Share lessons learned.
- Manage project coordination and review.

To achieve the above, our core activities for 2020-21 were to:

- Maintain and grow our partnership network and maintain regular communication with them;
- Connect community legal services and community health and social services in ways that will strengthen the network's capacity to respond to the complex issues often presented by our focus populations through consultation with our front-line professionals;
- Provide capacity building opportunities on legal issues relevant to our target populations to trusted intermediaries and our network of partners through Lunch and Learn workshops, Connecting Ottawa co-hosted workshops with other organizations, educational presentations delivered upon request at partner agencies' on-site locations, and webinars;
- Provide capacity building on social issues relevant to our target populations to our network of legal partners through direct one-on-one support and consultation opportunities;
- Host the Connecting Ottawa annual conference;
- Promote the use of resources developed by Connecting Ottawa and other resources posted on our website to trusted intermediaries, including staff and volunteers of partner organizations;
- Maintain and expand the updated Connecting Ottawa website.
- Explore opportunities to work with paralegal schools to work with trusted intermediaries to connect clients to community and legal services to which they have been referred;
- Direct the existing PLEI resources of our legal services partners to most effectively reach our focus populations and the trusted intermediaries with whom they connect, by providing logistical support for regularly scheduled PLEI events at fixed locations accessible to our focus populations;

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- Work with our legal services partner organizations and community service organizations to help “fill the gaps” of legal services available to our target populations via providing workshops, seminars and clinics;

For the period of this report, we have made progress in most core activities; however we have been required to adapt some activities due to COVID-19. Activities receiving increased focus over the six months were: continuing with our capacity building of the social services and legal services sector to increase access to justice for individuals with communication barriers via an expanded education program; re-introducing case consultations for front-line workers to assist them to provide appropriate legal information and referrals for clients with communication barriers; expanding our services to include more partner agencies; maintaining and regularly communicating with our partnership network; re-developing our website; and continuing to effectively manage and administer the project.

Below, please find a summary of project highlights and a detailed overview of our activities for each strategic objective as well as Connecting Ottawa’s LFO reporting numbers to December 31, 2020 and a financial report to December 31, 2020.

We thank the Law Foundation of Ontario for their continued support of the Connecting Ottawa project and our efforts to improve access to justice for those with communication barriers across the Ottawa region.

HIGHLIGHTS OF ACTIVITIES

CONNECT COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES AND COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

- Maintained and supported active partnership network of 53 agencies.
- Explored new opportunities to work with existing and new potential partner agencies, including reinstating case-consultations online.
- As a result of 100 case consultations, trained 98 trusted intermediaries and served 110 clients of partner agencies through joint consultation with a partner agency staff member, or through consulting with a partner agency staff member.
- Offered 12 online training/education sessions to over 425 Ottawa front-line workers on issues related to social and legal services during COVID-19.
- Presented at 1 CLEO online training/education session to over 375 Ontario trusted intermediaries on issues related to social and legal services during COVID-19.
- Conducted 3 in-house online training/education sessions at the request of individual partner agencies for 100 staff related to issues of immigration and COVID-19, including one to the City of Ottawa.
- Partnered with 9 network partners and/or private lawyers as part of our legal education sessions for front-line workers.
- Initiated testing of educational video clips for posting online.
- Explored new partnerships to fill gaps in legal support for individuals with communication barriers.

PROMOTE THE USE OF ELECTRONIC AND OTHER RESOURCES BY TRUSTED INTERMEDIARIES

- Promoted new CLEO and *Steps to Justice* resources via Connecting Ottawa communique, website, and social media.
- Maintained and increased a list of social and legal resources on the Connecting Ottawa/Connexion Ottawa websites.
- Finalized website redesign for Connecting Ottawa and Connexion Ottawa websites.
- Maintained existing website and online resources:
 - Users of the connectingottawa.com website maintained relatively steady at 24,539 compared to 25,619 in the previous period. Users of the connexionottawa.com website decreased to 847 from 1,015 in the previous period.
 - Number of sessions of the connectingottawa.com website maintained relatively steady at 29,233 as compared to 30,615 in the previous period. Number of sessions of the connexionottawa.com website decreased to 1,957 from 1,143.
 - Page views on the connectingottawa.com website decreased to 50,638 as compared to 53,701 in the previous period. Number of page views on the connexionottawa.com website decreased to 1,704 from 2,023 in the previous period.
 - Followers to Connecting Ottawa Twitter and Facebook social media feeds maintained relatively steady in relation to the previous period.

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

- Presented 8 individual public legal education sessions in collaboration with partner agencies on issues of social and legal services related to those with a communication barrier reaching 132 individuals and 33 front-line workers.
- Invited guest speaker at Gender Based Violence and COVID-19 Roundtable, organized by Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI).
- Supported outreach activities related to our target populations.

SHARE LESSONS LEARNED

- Published 12 issues of Connecting Ottawa *Partner Communique*.
- Participated in the “Law and Community in 2020” Conference organized by Ontario Justice Education Network (OJEN).
- Participated in several sector tables/organizations.
- Explored options for hosting a 2021 Connecting Ottawa Conference.

PROJECT COORDINATION AND REVIEW

- Maintained effective and efficient management of operations and administrative requirements.
- Held regular staff meetings to coordinate activities.
- Project Manager regularly met with Advisory Group Chair to review operations.
- Held one Advisory Group meeting.

• **ACTIVITY REPORTS**

CONNECT COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES & COMMUNITY HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

OUR CHALLENGE

The challenge was set by Thomson and Kohl:

- Develop a multi-sectorial network of organizations with the potential to build sufficient capacity for legal services to work in closer cooperation with community health and social services, local agencies serving immigrants, and services for disabled persons with a view to ensuring a more integrated service response for clients from the our focus populations, and
- Build the capacity to advocate at a systemic level whenever the system itself has created barriers to accessible legal services.

OUR INTENT

At an inaugural conference in Ottawa in January 2011, Connecting Ottawa developed a multi-sectorial network of local service organizations committed to finding new ways of working to ensure access to justice for our focus populations. They endorsed a plan that would add staff resources to the network: a social services worker and a legal services worker that would be available to advise and consult with front-line providers of information, assessment and referral services to people with issues that would benefit from legal services. The intent of Connecting Ottawa is not to relieve the overflow of demand for case management services, but to strengthen the existing capacity for competent case management among our partners and, where appropriate, support advocacy efforts for system-level changes.

ACTIVITIES

- Maintained and supported active partnership network of 53 agencies.
- Explored new opportunities to work with existing and new potential partner agencies, including reinstating case-consultations online.
- As a result of 100 case consultations, trained 98 trusted intermediaries and served 110 clients of partner agencies through joint consultation with a partner agency staff member, or through consulting with a partner agency staff member.
- Offered 12 online training/education sessions to over 425 Ottawa front-line workers on issues related to social and legal services during COVID-19.
- Presented at 1 CLEO online training/education session to over 375 Ontario trusted intermediaries on issues related to social and legal services during COVID-19.
- Conducted 3 in-house online training/education sessions at the request of individual partner agencies for 100 staff related to issues of immigration and COVID-19, including one to the City of Ottawa.
- Partnered with 9 network partners and/or private lawyers as part of our legal education sessions for front-line workers.
- Initiated testing of educational video clips for posting online.
- Explored new partnerships to fill gaps in legal support for individuals with communication barriers.

Connecting Ottawa partnership network

The Connecting Ottawa network of partners currently includes 53 organizations. This network includes 18 community service agencies, 17 agencies serving immigrants, 10 organizations providing legal services, 7 agencies serving people with disabilities, and 1 organization providing interpretation and translation services.

We are maintaining engagement with our partnership network through regular communiques and telephone/zoom meetings to discuss ways to assist their efforts during COVID. We also encourage organizations to reach out with any questions or issues.

During the period, and in response to COVID-19, we kept in regular contact with our Tier 1 partners, or those who have large numbers of clientele who align with our target populations. Meetings with these partner agencies helped to identify ways to best adapt in-house hours for one-on-one case consultation and upcoming education and consultation needs moving forward.



Connecting Ottawa developed deeper connections with some of our legal partners in an effort to ensure that information received by our front-line social service partners on key issues related to COVID-19 was consistent and maximized available legal resources. Of note was our closer relationship with Reach Canada, the Ontario Legal Information Centre, the University of Ottawa Community Legal Clinic and the new COVID-19 Employment Legal Clinic that was opened temporarily in Ottawa.

In the fall, Connecting Ottawa was honoured with the Community Navigation of Eastern Ontario “Partnership Award” in recognition of our close relationship with this organization and our efforts to inform and educate around issues of legal information and referrals related to COVID-19.

Capacity building via one-on-one case consultation

Prior to COVID-19, most of our legal team’s work involved one-on-one consultations with front-line agency staff to address the legal needs of our target populations. The consultations provided front-line staff with needed information and advice, helped them to assess the legal issues and communication challenges at play, and helped them to connect their clients with needed information and services while at the same time increasing their knowledge and capacity to provide similar information and referrals in the future. For extremely complicated cases, we would meet with both the worker and the client to more effectively help the worker provide appropriate information and referrals. Our intent is not to increase the legal services available in the community; instead, we view case consultation as an opportunity to build the

referring organization's capacity to better respond to the needs of our focus populations, and to provide support to partner agencies whose clients fall into gaps existing within the current legal aid system.

Before the government of Ontario initiated the state of emergency in the Spring of 2020, Connecting Ottawa was regularly conducting in-house consultations for six organizations. These consultations encouraged front-line workers to set appointments with our legal staff independently, or in conjunction with their clients, to receive one-on-one case support. In addition, any front-line staff within our partner agencies could reach out to our legal team via email or phone to request a consult for their clients. During the first wave of COVID-19, we suspended the in-house service due to the closure of partner agency offices and to respond to the increased need for partner education and support.

Throughout the COVID-19 emergency, we have continued to encourage front-line workers of our partner agencies to reach out for one-on-one case consultations with our legal team. We formalized this process by developing an "Intake sheet" and email for case consultations during the reporting period, which is working well.

In late summer, we re-instituted virtual in-house case consultations for two partner agencies that have a large number of clients in our target populations: CCI and OCISO. These virtual hours have been well received and we are looking to increase to more organizations across the partnership network in the Winter of 2021.

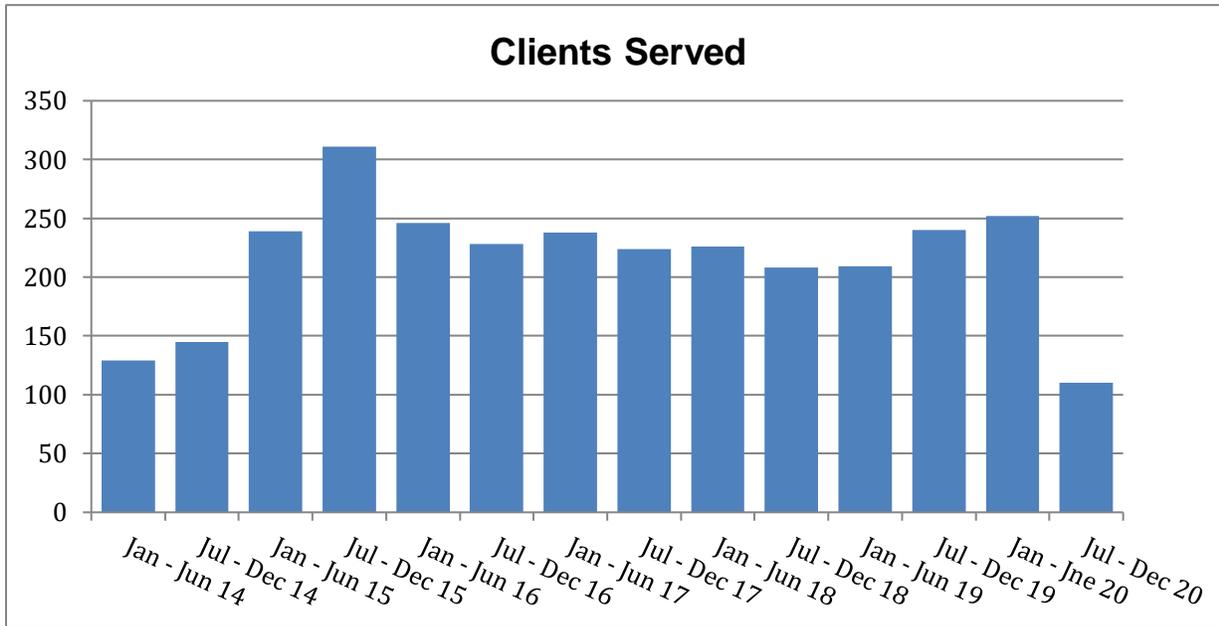
All consultation activities are logged, with source and reasons for referral, legal and communication issues tracked, and case notes maintained. The extent of our involvement varies greatly: in some instances we are consulted without clients being identified; sometimes we are briefly consulted to affirm a course of action; or, in many other instances our staff is extensively involved in researching a legal issue, determining appropriate connections to services and other time-intensive support activities. During the reporting period, there were 100 individual case consultations offered, representing 98 trusted intermediary capacity-building sessions and 110 individual clients (some consultations included multiple clients).

The value of this service was clearly stated in a recent note from a front-line service worker:

"I speak for me and these words are my own initiative, but also I am so sure my team would be in total echo with this. I just wanted to let you guys know how precious this collaboration with C.O. has been for our department. I introduce my clients and consult with Liz regularly and it's always been so beneficial, helpful and informative (from first hand witness because I so eagerly HAVE to assist). Thanks Liz for the hard work and caring you always show for your work, our collaboration and the clients. Appreciated."

The chart below shows the trend in our case consultations for the past six years. The reduced number of interactions for July – December, 2020 reflects the impact of COVID-19 and the changing work circumstances of our partner agencies. Across our partnership network,

organizations have been forced to cancel or move activities online, which have reduced client interactions. It is important to note the grave concern among our partner agency staff that the COVID-based closures and changes in support programs has resulted in many clients being unable to access needed services and that, once these organizations reopen, client numbers will increase significantly, with many individuals being in very serious situations. Hence, we expect that this aspect of our programming will increase as partner agencies re-open when the pandemic ends.



Capacity building via education

In addition to one-on-one case consultations, Connecting Ottawa develops access to justice capacity within our network through education. During the reporting period, Connecting Ottawa offered 12 online training/education sessions to over 425 Ottawa front-line workers on issues related to social and legal services during COVID-19; was the guest presenter at 1 CLEO online training/education session to over 375 Ontario trusted intermediaries, on issues related to social and legal services during COVID-19; and conducted 3 online in-house training/education sessions, at the request of partner agencies, for 100 staff related to issues of immigration and COVID-19.

The topics of the partner education sessions held during the period were:

- July 16: Consumer Scams and Safety
- July 22: Housing and Tenant Issues during COVID 19
- August 19: Sponsorship in the Era of COVID
- August 20: Returning to Work and COVID
- August 27: COVID-19 & Children Returning to School
- September 4: Humanitarian & Compassionate Applications
- September 16: New Pathway to Immigration for COVID Essential Workers Update

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October 1:	Income Benefits Update for Front-line Workers (via CLEO)
October 15:	Income Benefits Update for Front-Line Workers
October 27:	Housing and Tenant Issues Update
November 17:	Employment Rights During COVID
December 15:	Uncontested Divorce
December 17:	Helping Clients Make Complaints under the ESA

Seven of these events also featured guest speakers, responding to a recommendation in the 2018 evaluation report of our program that we partner with other agencies when we present on topics outside of our staff members' expertise.

The response to our education sessions has been extremely strong, because we identified timely topics to address clients' COVID-19 needs. In December, 2020 we conducted a survey, asking our partnership network about issues for which they need information. Responses included more information on supporting clients who must complete various administrative forms; and family law issues. We will be including this feedback into our programming for Winter, 2021.

Connecting Ottawa staff also conducted 3 professional development information sessions with partner agencies. These sessions allow us to tailor information to the specific agency's staff and/or client issues. Together, more than 100 partner agency staff attended these workshops. Of note was a session provided to City of Ottawa staff about the intersection of immigration processes and the Ontario Works program. The City of Ottawa sought out our lawyer, Alexandra Derisier, for this session. The session was extremely well received with positive comments. We hope to expand this partnership in the future.

Connecting Ottawa has also been active in promoting partner organization education sessions. Specifically during the reporting period, we promoted session held by Reach Canada, Ontario Legal Information Centre, ARCH Disability Law Centre and Community Legal Education Ontario.

Video education sessions

Connecting Ottawa has been exploring opportunities, over the past year, to develop and post online video education sessions for easy access by partners. During the reporting period we purchased a subscription to an online video recording platform, tested the platform and developed a process and plan to roll out 4-6 sessions by June 30, 2021. These sessions will be short 10-15 minute information pieces on key issues related to supporting clients in our target populations and will be shared via our email Communique, website and social media platforms.

Connecting partners and resources to fill gaps

ID Clinic

In 2019-20, Connecting Ottawa initiated a partnership with Pro-Bono Students Canada (PBSC) to host a series of newcomer ID clinics to help individuals replace missing or stolen permanent resident or citizenship documentation. The partnership emerged due to a number of our settlement partners indicating that this support was unavailable in Ottawa. PBSC works under the direction of lawyers from Borden, Ladner & Gervais to assist clients to identify and prepare required documentation; and Connecting Ottawa arranges for the location and promotion of the clinic. Due to COVID-19 and the University of Ottawa moving to online learning for 2020-21, we have not been able to offer these clinics during the reporting period

Commissioning and Notarizing of Documents

Early in COVID-19 closures, we were advised by a number of our partners that regular avenues for commissioning documents were no longer available for clients. Connecting Ottawa dedicated summer student capacity to researching and identifying where clients could have documents notarized during COVID-19, and we released an information sheet to the partnership network in the late summer.

Education Law

Discussions at a 2019 Lunch and Learn session with a lawyer from the Justice for Children and Youth legal clinic (JFCY) (based on an invitation facilitated by Community Legal Services of Ottawa (CLSO)), identified a gap in education law services in Ottawa. CLSO and Connecting Ottawa held further discussions with JFCY and with Parents for Diversity (P4D), a new group in Ottawa, to explore opportunities to increase JFCY's services in Ottawa. Connecting Ottawa and CLSO facilitated conversations among the two groups and introduced them to stakeholders in our partnership networks. In September, Connecting Ottawa and CLSO hosted an education session for Ottawa front-line workers, with guest speakers from JFCY and P4D, about "COVID-19 and Returning to School." We plan to continue finding ways to increase JFCY's presence in Ottawa.

Powers of Attorney & Wills

In 2019-20, Connecting Ottawa was approached by two agency partners seeking support and resources to assist low-income and vulnerable clients with wills and powers of attorney. This is an area of law that community legal clinics do not assist in, and many individuals within our target populations were identified as falling through the cracks. In January of 2020, Connecting Ottawa invited lawyer Gina Rea, on staff at the Renfrew County Legal Clinic, to present a POA & Wills information session to the Canadian Hearing Society and their clients. We also started to explore opportunities to host occasional clinics on these issues, staffed by private bar lawyers on a pro bono basis. A lack of time and COVID-19 suspended this activity. However, the demand from front-line workers to support clients escalated as a result of COVID-19 health concerns among our target populations. In response, Connecting Ottawa partnered with REACH Canada and Nelligan Law to present an informational workshop for front-line workers in May of 2020. We also updated an information sheet and are regularly sharing the resources available from CLEO on this issue with our network. The gap in service

for low-income and vulnerable clients remains, as many individuals still require legal assistance for this documentation. In December of 2020, Connecting Ottawa asked CLEO to offer a training session for front-line workers on their “Simple Wills and POA” guided pathways tools. This session will be held in March 2021.

PROMOTE THE USE OF ELECTRONIC AND OTHER RESOURCES BY TRUSTED INTERMEDIARIES

OUR CHALLENGE

There are excellent public legal education and information (PLEI) resources available, especially given the leadership of Community Legal Education Ontario (CLEO) and their web site initiative Steps to Justice. However, the fact remains that navigation of the legal system remains challenging for many front-line service providers in Ottawa.

OUR INTENT

Develop a local web site and electronic resources that includes comprehensive and current information about local legal services, and promote its use by project partners to ensure access to justice by for focus populations.

ACTIVITIES

- Promoted new CLEO and *Steps to Justice* resources via Connecting Ottawa communique, website, and social media.
- Maintained and increased a list of social and legal resources on the Connecting Ottawa/Connexion Ottawa websites.
- Finalized website redesign for Connecting Ottawa and Connexion Ottawa websites.
- Maintained existing website and online resources:
 - Users of the connectingottawa.com website maintained relatively steady at 24,539 compared to 25,619 in the previous period. Users of the connexionottawa.com website decreased to 847 from 1,015 in the previous period.
 - Number of sessions of the connectingottawa.com website maintained relatively steady at 29,233 as compared to 30,615 in the previous period. Number of sessions of the connexionottawa.com website decreased to 1,957 from 1,143.
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 - Followers to Connecting Ottawa Twitter and Facebook social media feeds maintained relatively steady in relation to the previous period.

Promote current information about local legal and social services

Connecting Ottawa publishes a monthly Communique, distributed via email to partner agency members (please also see information below under “Share Lessons Learned”). In each issue, new legal information resources that are available online or via hardcopy are shared with our partnership network for them to distribute among their staff. We also periodically share information about local legal and social services via our social media sites: Facebook and Twitter.

COVID-19 resources

From March, 2020 – December, 2020, Connecting Ottawa has distributed 18 information sheets or updates to information sheets to assist front-line workers to develop their capacity on legal issues related to COVID-19 and support their clients accordingly. Over the reporting period, Connecting Ottawa updated these resources as required including:

- EI Benefits During COVID (November 10).
- Infectious Disease Emergency Leave (October 8).
- Federal Benefits (September 9).
- Permanent Resident Status and Humanitarian & Compassionate Application (August 28).
- Immigration & COVID (August 26).
- Commissioning Documents during COVID-19 (August 13).

These resources were distributed via our Communique and distribution lists and shared on social media platforms. Many partners also shared across their networks and Connecting Ottawa was contacted from organizations all over the province requesting permission to share and or adapt for use within their organization.

In addition, Connecting Ottawa also shared resources from other organizations across the province including:

- CLEO & Steps to Justice COVID-19 Resources and Updates.
- CLSO Tenant Tip Sheet.
- Durham Community Clinic Housing Issues Flow Charts.
- Renfrew County Legal Clinic COVID-19 Programs/Benefits Summary.
- Refugee 613 Multi-lingual Videos on COVID-19 restrictions in Ottawa.
- West Scarborough Community Legal Services CERB Multilingual videos and information.
- Action Logement/Housing Help Tenant Tip Sheet.
- Department of Justice Multilingual Fact Sheets on Divorce.

Connecting Ottawa website

Over the period, Connecting Ottawa's websites have been available in both English (connectingottawa.com) and French (connexionottawa.com). The domain registrations have been extended until April 2021 and we have arranged for hosting services through a monthly agreement with a hosting service.

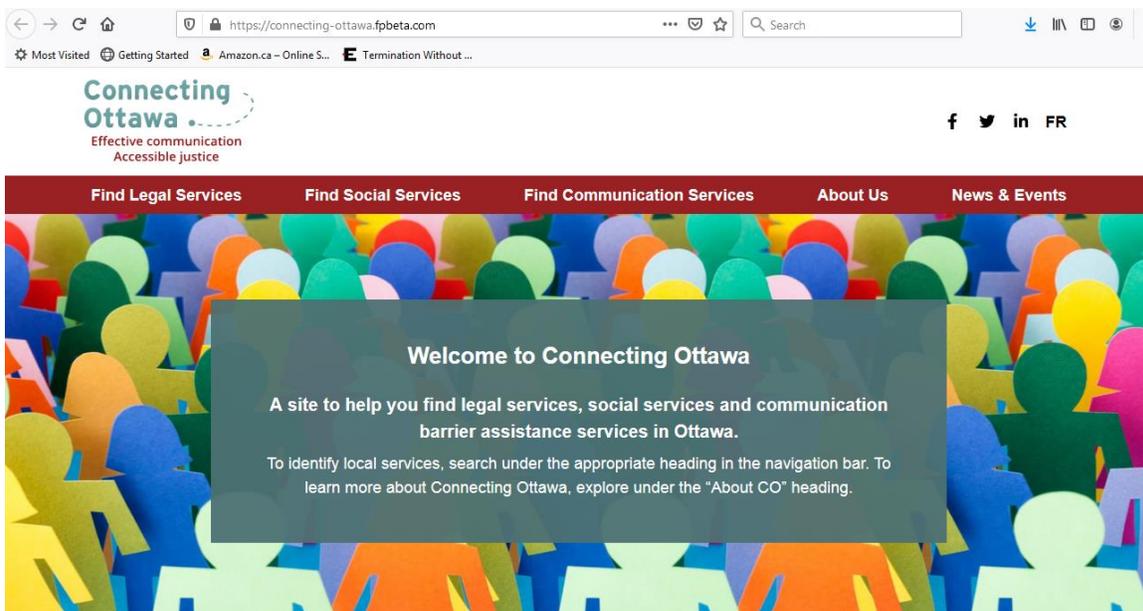
The Connecting Ottawa websites are our primary means for sharing information about local legal and social services to partner agencies, other community groups, and the public. The 2018 Law Foundation of Ontario evaluation reported how well regarded and utilized our site was by local social service and legal service professionals to help them identify information and services to assist their clients. A key element of the Connecting Ottawa site is the portal to the Community Navigation of Eastern Ontario (CNEO) 211 data base and ease of access to legal and social services resources found there.

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In addition, Connecting Ottawa promotes and integrates the following resources via our website and social media efforts:

- Connecting Ottawa Legal Health Check Up (“What the clients may say”).
- Steps to Justice Portals.
- CLEO Connect Resources.
- Connecting Ottawa multi-lingual rack cards on legal issues.
- Various tools/resources on immigration and refugee processes.
- Various tools/resources specific to assisting those with disabilities.
- Resources developed by Connecting Ottawa for front-line workers.
- Upcoming Connecting Ottawa events.
- Upcoming partner events.

In 2019, Connecting Ottawa was advised that our current website platform would soon become obsolete and we awarded a contract to re-design and relaunch our Connecting Ottawa/Connexion Ottawa websites, maintaining the feed of the CICO databases, increasing accessibility and translation, and better promoting the mandate and activities of Connecting Ottawa. Our intention was to launch the new site by June 2020; however, in January of 2020 CNEO/211 informed us that they required a platform upgrade and this would delay the launch of our new site by 3 – 4 months. We have been working closely with the website contractor and CNEO/211 throughout the reporting period and finalized the design and testing at the end of December, 2020. **The website will be going live in mid-January, 2021.** Following a soft-launch to ensure that all bugs are removed, we will be developing a concerted communication plan to inform network partners and other interested parties of our new site and the capabilities available on it following the launch.



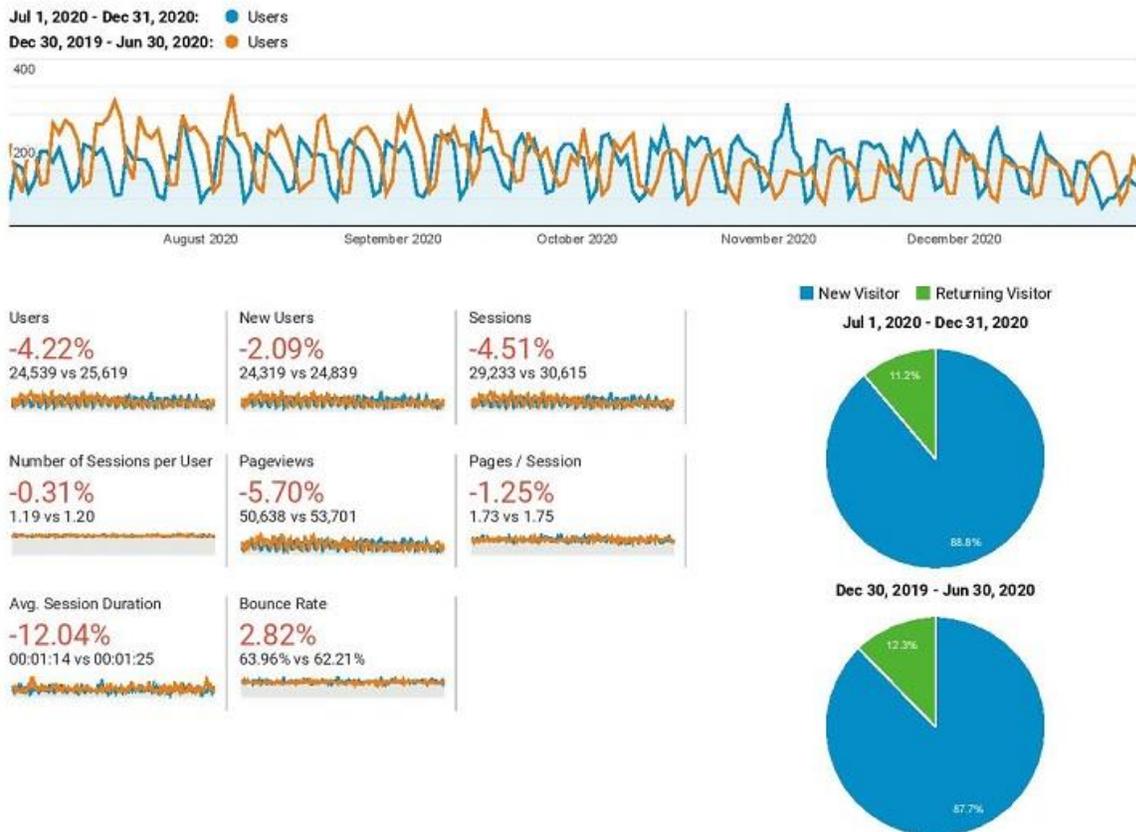
Website traffic

Due to our running an unsupported website during the reporting period, traffic to our websites remained relatively stable or decreased during the reporting period. We anticipate that with the launch of the new site and the new capabilities available on it that we will soon re-establish this site as the go-to portal for information on legal information and resources, social services information and resources and communication barrier information and resources in Ottawa.

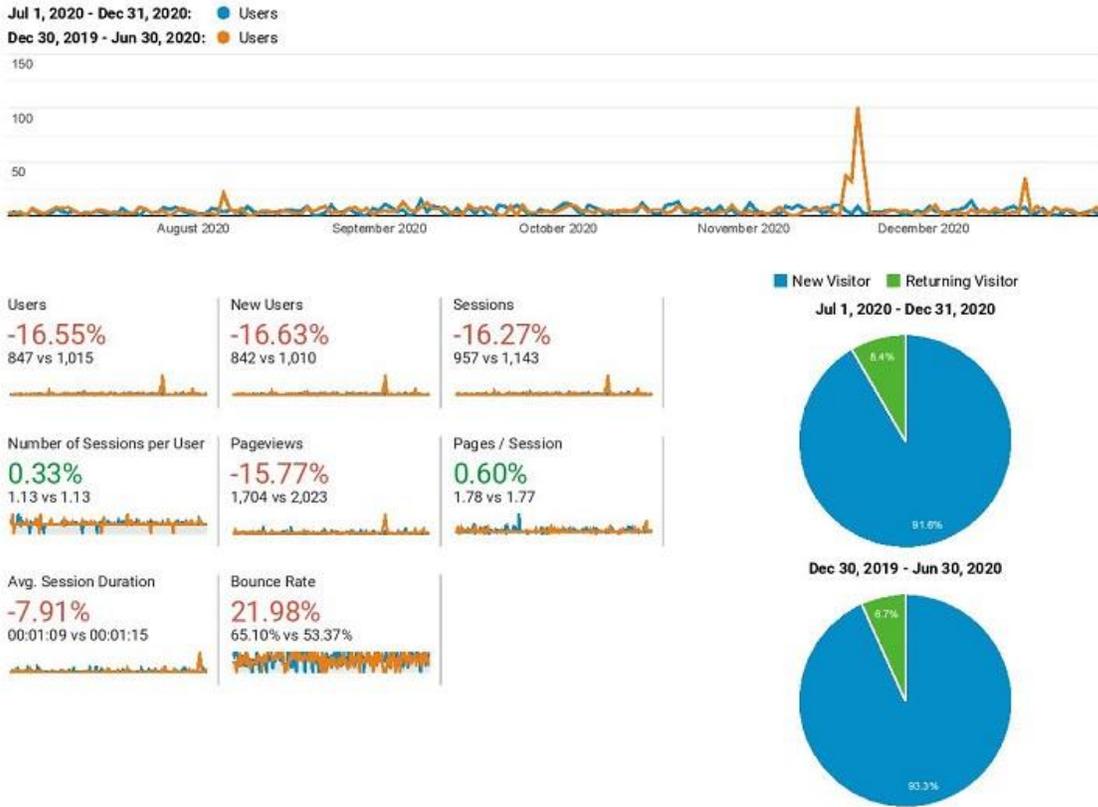
The number of sessions on the connectingottawa.com website for the six month reporting period maintained relatively steady at 29,233 as compared to 30,615 in the previous period. Number of sessions of the connexionottawa.com website decreased to 1,957 from 1,143. When compared to the previous period, the number of users to the connectingottawa.com site was 24,539 compared to 25,619 in the previous period. Users of the connexionottawa.com website decreased to 847 from 1,015. Page views on the connectingottawa.com website decreased to 50,638 as compared to 53,701 in the previous period. Number of page views on the connexionottawa.com website decreased to 1,704 from 2,023 in the previous period.

The following analytics illustrate the trends identified over the reporting period:

Connectingottawa.com



Connexionottawa.com (FR)



Social media

Connecting Ottawa maintains a Twitter and Facebook feed to share news and information related to our partnership network, our focus populations, access to services, and emerging legal issues. Over the reporting period we maintained regular activity maintaining our followers on twitter at 673 and increasing our “likes” on Facebook from 168 to 215.



PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

OUR CHALLENGE

Our legal services partners have the mandate, experience, and resources to present public legal education and information at events throughout Ottawa. PLE materials have already been developed on a number of legal issues. However, PLE resources are not often directed to our focus populations in regularly accessed locations such as libraries, community centres, newcomer centres, rehabilitation centres and peer support groups for persons with disabilities.

OUR INTENT

Work with our partnership network to provide outreach and education opportunities to effectively reach our focus populations and the trusted intermediaries with whom they connect. Connecting Ottawa will become the local clearinghouse for PLE events that target linguistic minorities, a convener, and provider of logistical supports (when necessary) to enable regularly scheduled events at accessible locations.

ACTIVITIES

- Presented 8 individual public legal education sessions in collaboration with partner agencies on issues of social and legal services related to those with a communication barrier reaching 132 individuals and 33 front-line workers.
- Invited guest speaker at Gender Based Violence and COVID-19 Roundtable, organized by Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI).
- Supported outreach activities related to our target populations.

ACTIVITIES:

Public Legal Education sessions

During the reporting period Connecting Ottawa partnered with the YMCA of Ottawa Newcomer Information Centre to provide sessions related to immigration and refugee status in Canada. Our criteria for agreeing to participate in public legal education sessions is that the hosting partner must commit to having staff in attendance so that we can, in addition to providing public legal education, develop the capacity of their front-line workers.

The PLE sessions with YMCA reached 132 clients and 33 front-line workers across the 8 individual sessions. The sessions were offered in both English and French and explained the regulations and restrictions surrounding immigration during COVID-19.

In addition to the sessions with YMCA, Connecting Ottawa was invited to participate as a roundtable participant exploring the intersections of COVID-19, Gender based violence and non-status, immigrant and refugee women. This roundtable was hosted by Ontario Council of

Agencies Serving Immigrants and was attended by many individuals within our partnership network.

Outreach activities

During the reporting period, Connecting Ottawa continued its participation in a working group to develop an online database of COVID-19 resources available to newcomers and refugees in Ottawa. Spearheaded by Refugee 613, Connecting Ottawa reviewed beta sites and contributed material to the database.

SHARE LESSONS LEARNED

OUR CHALLENGE

To share our experience – good and not so good - with peers and colleagues so that the system of legal services is strengthened and is more readily accessed by our focus populations.

OUR INTENT

- Host an annual conference for network partners and interested stakeholders
- Seek out conferences, symposia and other opportunities to make presentations, participate on panels and offer workshops, to audiences of our peers and colleagues in community services, especially legal services.
- Share information and news with our network of partners

ACTIVITIES

- Published 12 issues of Connecting Ottawa *Partner Communique*.
- Participated in the “Law and Community in 2020” Conference organized by Ontario Justice Education Network (OJEN).
- Participated in several sector tables/organizations.
- Explored options for hosting a 2021 Connecting Ottawa Conference.

Connecting Ottawa Communique

Connecting Ottawa’s newsletter *Communique* is distributed electronically to members of our partnership network, other service professionals, as well as, periodically, attendees from our previous conferences and education workshops. Network partners are encouraged to distribute the newsletter to front-line workers each month. Newsletters include pertinent news and information relevant to access to justice for linguistic minorities and those with communication barriers, upcoming events, and resources most beneficial to those supporting clients with communication barriers. During the reporting period 12 issues of the Communique were created and distributed to our partnership network

Conference & meeting attendance

Due to COVID-19 many conferences and sector meetings were furloughed, restricting our ability to attend these events to share information about Connecting Ottawa and how we approach access to justice.

The Ontario Justice Education Network hosted a day long “Law and Community in 2020” Conference during the reporting period. Connecting Ottawa staff attended and participated in this online event.

Connecting Ottawa also attended the Community Legal Services of Ottawa Annual General Meeting at which our accomplishments were highlighted to the membership.

Participation in sector tables/organizations

Connecting Ottawa continues to be a member/regular participant of several different sector tables/organizations addressing issues related to our target populations. These include:

- Refugee Network of Ottawa (ReNoO).
- Connecting on Disability and Abuse (CODA).
- Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership (OLIP).
- Refugee 613 Stakeholders Table.
- Refugee 613 Executive (Project Manager appointed).
- Refugee 613 Housing Table.
- Refugee Hub Sponsorship Partnership Program.
- Steering Committee on Social Assistance.
- Workers' Rights Action Group.
- CLEO Training Community Workers Advisory Group.

Participation in these meetings allows our staff to understand the best practices and issues of our partners and professional associations so that we can incorporate this information into our interactions with front-line staff as well as share our learnings with other organizations.

Annual conference

Connecting Ottawa's 9th annual conference was scheduled to be held on May 13, 2020 but was cancelled due to COVID-19. In our survey to our partnership network regarding education needs, we asked participants to indicate if they would be willing to participate in an online community conference. The response was an overwhelming "yes" and we are currently exploring potential dates and topics for this event.

PROJECT COORDINATION AND REVIEW

OUR CHALLENGE

To manage a project that will move from being “a good idea” to being a demonstration of “good practice” and excellent outcomes.

OUR INTENT

Our purpose is to strengthen the capacity of network partners without creating another organization, by resourcing and coordinating activities, evaluating performance and outcomes, ensuring that all partners understand their contribution and role over time, and communicating regularly and effectively with our network partners and other stakeholders.

ACTIVITIES

- Maintained effective and efficient management of operations and administrative requirements.
- Held regular staff meetings to coordinate activities.
- Project Manager regularly met with Advisory Group Chair to review operations.
- Held one Advisory Group meeting.

Staffing

During the period, Connecting Ottawa maintained its staffing of 2.5 professional staff to support its mandate and project goals.

We employ two full-time lawyers: Alexandra-Marjorie Derisier LLL, LLB and Liz Majic, J.D. Ms. Derisier has an extensive background in labour relations, human rights, and refugee law and has been actively involved, personally and professionally, with the settlement and immigration sector in Ottawa. Ms. Majic brings a depth of knowledge in landlord and tenant law, social assistance, and employment law drawing on an extensive background working with vulnerable populations and complex human rights issues. She previously worked at three community law clinics, Canada Without Poverty, and the Feminist Alliance for International Action. She also has strong education and PLE abilities with experience both as a University lecturer and in offering seminars to front-line workers and clients.

Gina Grosenick, Ph.D. is an independent consultant under contract for 2.5 days per week to provide project management services and coordination. Dr. Grosenick holds a Ph.D. in (non-profit) communication and has an extensive background managing and communicating about community based programs and networks.

Following a 9 month reduced work period, Alexandra Derisier returned to Connecting Ottawa full time as of November 1, 2020. During the summer period we hired a 3rd year University of Ottawa Law Student, Daphne Chu, to take on legal research, projects and other duties as

required. As of September 1, 2020, we have been working with a 2nd year PBSC law student, Aneka Oh, who is assisting us with legal research and public legal education resource development.

Office accommodations and human resources services continue to be provided by our partner agency Centre des services communautaires Vanier, a community resource centre. CSC Vanier is the “employer of record” for project staff, manages payroll and benefits administration, provides personnel policies and other human resources infrastructure, and provides office accommodations. In mid-March, the City of Ottawa declared COVID-19 an emergency. As a result, Connecting Ottawa staff were re-located to home offices and all in-person activities ceased. We have maintained most of our activities remotely and continue to follow public health protocols for when we may be able to resume in-person services. During the reporting period, we worked with CSC Vanier to register them as a “Civil Society Organization” with the Law Society of Ontario. As the employer of record for our legal staff, this will allow us to greatly reduce the LawPro Fees that we are required to pay for our staffs’ professional insurance.

Operations and administration

The project manager coordinates and maintains the effective and efficient management of the project. She coordinates the project, liaises with the Advisory Group, oversees project staff activities, approves all project expenditures, works with the bookkeeper to ensure the project’s financial health, and coordinates all project communication and planning.

Regular staff meetings and semi-regular meetings with the Advisory Group Chair are held to ensure effective communication and coordination of activities. During the reporting period, the project manager met bi-weekly with each staff member to discuss issues of workload, sharing of information, reporting, and activities moving forward. All-team meetings are held bi-weekly to set goals and objectives and review activities. Meetings with the Advisory Group Chair were held on an as needed basis and addressed issues related to funding, finances, staffing, project manager oversight, and Advisory Group planning.

Advisory Group

The Advisory Group met once during the reporting period. This Advisory Group is an essential resource to ensure that the programs and activities of the project meet the needs of the various groups within our partnership network.

During the reporting period, we welcomed a new member of the Advisory Group, Jewish Family Services (JFS). JFS has an active newcomer settlement program. The current membership of the Advisory Group is:

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NAME	SERVICES SECTOR	PARTNERING ORGANIZATION
Lois McIntyre	Community	Canadian Hearing Society
Mohamoud Hagi-Aden	Community	South East Ottawa Community Health Centre
Leah Landry	Legal	Community Legal Services of Ottawa
Nimo Farah	Community	Somerset West Community Health Centre
Mirela Dranca	Immigrant	The Economic and Social Council of Ottawa-Carleton (CESOC)
Christine Sharp	Community	Eastern Ottawa Community Resource Centre
Leigh Presseau	Community	Pinecrest Queensway Community Health Centre
Julie Lavergne	Community	Community Information Centre of Ottawa / 211
Gary Stein	Legal	Community Legal Services of Ottawa
Arber Zaplluzha	Immigrant	Catholic Centre for Immigrants – Ottawa
Sarah Caspi	Immigrant	Jewish Family Services
Basia Mair	Immigrant	Ottawa Community Immigrant Settlement Organization

Project review and direction

In June of 2018, the Connecting Regions Evaluation Report was released by the Law Foundation of Ontario. Connecting Ottawa had been integrally involved in the review process, with the Project Manager and Advisory Group Chair participating on the evaluation committee, arranging for interviews with key stakeholders, and providing data and support as needed. The Connecting Ottawa team reviewed the report to identify opportunities to integrate recommendations into current practice or identify what additional capacities would be required to expand the services as recommended in the report. These discussions were summarized in a formal response that was forwarded to the Law Foundation of Ontario in early November, 2018.

During the reporting period, we continue to look for ways to expand our reach and impact and integrate the recommendations of the evaluation report into our activities. In November of 2020 we held a staff planning session to set out goals and objectives to June, 2021. Our activities continue to be dominated by COVID-19 client issue response and our own limitations due to COVID-19 restrictions.

We very much value our relationship with the Law Foundation of Ontario and would like to thank David Kinsman and Helen Tewolde for their ongoing support and direction.

Financial Report

The financial report to December 31, 2020 is below. In our 2020-21 funding proposal, \$15,000 of unspent funds from 2019-20 were rolled over into our 2020-21 budget. Our current expenses are well within budget, with many line items below budget due to the circumstances surrounding COVID-19 and our staff working virtually.

LAW FOUNDATION OF ONTARIO – CONNECTING REGION INITIATIVE

CONNECTING OTTAWA		
STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS FOR THE SIX MONTH PERIOD ENDED		DECEMBER 31, 2020
	Budget	Actuals
REVENUE		
Law Foundation of Ontario		
Received During Year	294,750	139,875
Holdback Receivable	-	-
	294,750	139,875
	Total Revenue	
EXPENSES		
Website Hosting, Management and Administration	5,000	361
Education Sessions on New Areas of Law		
Training and Meeting Exoenses	300	282
Honoraria	750	-
	1,050	282
Legal Services/Social Services Collaboration		
Salaries and Benefits	194,400	72,566
Equipment Purchases	750	371
Printing/Supplies	1,000	17
Translation/Interpretation	1,250	40
Meeting Costs	500	233
Cloud/Mobile Services	2,200	1,044
Travel	2,500	-
Training/Professional Development	2,000	-
Office and Accommodation	14,500	7,763
	219,100	82,034
Shared Lessons Learned		
Annual Conference	3,000	-
Travel	750	-
Rack Cards/Resource Development	500	-
	4,250	-
Administration		
Project Co-ordinator and Administration Costs	56,650	26,630
Lead Agency Stipend	6,000	6,000
Accounting and Audit Expenses	2,700	842
Bank Charges		35
	65,350	33,507
	294,750	116,184
	Total Expenses	
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES (EXPENSES OVER REVENUE)	0	23,691

LFO REPORTING STATISTICS – July 1 – December 31, 2020

Organization: Connecting Ottawa	Grant file #: CONRE-09-20
Project title: THE CONNECTING REGION -- CONNECTING OTTAWA	

	Total #	Notes or comments
PLEI		
# of print resources produced, updated	8	
# of online text resources produced, updated	*note B	CO website is continually updated and used as a resource within the community
# of video or audio resources produced, updated	0	
# of PLEI training sessions	8 3 13	PLE Sessions Partner training sessions Online training education/sessions
# of people with legal needs or members of the public trained	132	Via PLE training
# of trusted intermediaries and / or front-line workers trained	835 98	Via training/education sessions & PLE Via consultations with front-line staff
# of sessions / page views	31,190/52,387	
# of print resources distributed	100	rack cards
# of online text resources downloaded		
# of video or audio resources viewed, downloaded or distributed	*note B	
Legal Services		
# of clients served	110	
# of clients provided legal advice or brief services	110	Our mandate is not to represent clients but to provide advice, education and limited services
# of clients represented	0	
# of services to support people through legal processes (e.g. court navigator)	0	
Pro bono		
# of students engaged in pro bono work	2	
# of paralegals engaged in pro bono work	0	
# of lawyers engaged in pro bono work	2	
# of pro bono hours volunteered by lawyers	0	
# of pro bono hours volunteered by students	0	

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# of pro bono hours volunteered by paralegals	0	
Growing the non-profit justice sector		
# of books, reports, oral histories or other significant legal research or policy work	0	
# of staff employed in the sector (full-time)	2	
# of staff employed in the sector (part-time)	1	
# of students employed in the sector	1	
# of professional development and learning events	0	
Building a culture of law and understanding of rights		
# of training events to build awareness of law, democracy and rights	See above	
# of participants in events to build awareness of law, democracy and rights	See above	
# of student/youth participants	*note B	
# of adult participants	*note B	
Encouraging partnerships and collaboration		
# of organizations you partnered with	60	53 partner organizations 8 sector organization and potential partner organizations

- Note A: We are unable to report specific numbers at this time.
- Note B: We have no means to collect this information at this time.

APPENDIX

COVID-19 RESONSE AND ACTIVITIES:

July 1, 2020 – December 31, 2020

July 2, 2020	Published: Communique
July 3, 2020	Training Session YMCA: COVID 19 & Immigration (Alexandra Dérisier)
July 6, 2020	Zoom meeting with Housing Partnership Group to discuss new issues re how best to support Front-line workers (Gina Grosenick)
July 7, 2020	Zoom Consultations: One on one worker consultations (Liz Majic)
July 13, 2020	Zoom Training Session: Online Consumer Scams (Elizabeth Majic and Alexandra Derisier)
July 14, 2020	Zoom Consultations: One on one worker consultations (Liz Majic)
July 16, 2020	Published: Communique Published: Resources for Commissioning of Documents in Ottawa
July 22, 2020	Zoom Training Session: Housing Update for Front-line Workers (partnership with REACH, Action Logement, & Ottawa's Legal Clinics)
July 31, 2020	Published: Communique Shared: Tenant Tip Sheet (Community Legal Services of Ottawa)
July 31, 2020	Training Session YMCA: COVID 19 & Immigration (Alexandra Dérisier)
August 13, 2020	OCASI Panel: Intersectional Impact of Covid-19 and GBV against NSRI women across Canada OCASI/IWSO (Alexandra Dérisier)
August 13, 2020	Published: Communique
August 14, 2020	Training Session YMCA: COVID 19 & Immigration (Alexandra Dérisier)
August 17, 2020	Published: COVID-19 & Immigration Update Information Sheet
August 18, 2020	Zoom Consultations: One on one worker consultations (Liz Majic)
August 19, 2020	Zoom Training Session: Sponsorship in the COVID Era (Alexandra Derisier)

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August 20, 2020	Zoom Training Session: COVID 19 & Employment (Guest speakers: Pro Bono Employment Centre)
August 26, 2020	Published: Communique
August 27, 2020	Zoom Training Session: COVID 19 & Returning to School (In Partnership with CLSO/Guest speaker: Justice For Children & Youth)
August 28, 2020	Training Session YMCA: PR Status with Humanitarian & Compassionate (Alexandra Dérisier)
August 28, 2020	Published: COVID-19 PR Status with Humanitarian & Compassionate Considerations Information Sheet
September 1, 2020	Zoom Consultations: One on one worker consultations (Liz Majic)
September 4, 2020	Zoom Training Session: Humanitarian & Compassionate Claims (Alexandra Dérisier)
September 9, 2020	Published: COVID-19 Federal Benefits Information Sheet
September 10, 2020	Published: Communique
September 11, 2020	PLE Session YMCA: COVID 19 & Immigration (Alexandra Dérisier)
September 15, 2020	Zoom Consultations: One on one worker consultations (Liz Majic)
September 16, 2020	Zoom Training Session: New Pathways to Immigration for COVID-19 Essential Workers (Alexandra Dérisier)
September 24, 2020	Published: Communique
September 29, 2020	Received: Community Navigation of Eastern Ontario Partnership Award
October 1, 2020	CLEO Webinar: Update CERB & EI (Liz Majic)
October 5, 2020	Zoom Consultations: One on one worker consultations (Liz Majic)
October 15, 2020	Zoom Training Session: Income Benefits Update for Front-Line Workers (Liz Majic)
October 22, 2020	PLE Session YMCA: COVID 19 & Immigration (Alexandra Dérisier)

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- October 27, 2020 Zoom Training Session: Housing Update for Front-line Workers (partnership with REACH, Action Logement, & Ottawa's Legal Clinics)
- November 2, 2020 Zoom Consultations: One on one worker consultations (Liz Majic)
- November 10, 2020 Published: Communique
- November 10, 2020 Published: Updated COVID-19 Federal Benefits Sheet
- November 16, 2020 Zoom Consultations: One on one worker consultations (Liz Majic)
- November 17, 2020 Zoom Training Session: Employment Rights During COVID (Liz Majic)
- November 18, 2020 In-House Training Session CCI: Immigration Q & A (Alexandra Dérisier)
- November 19, 2020 In-House Training Session OCISO: Immigration Q & A (Alexandra Dérisier)
- November 20, 2020 Zoom Consultations: One on one worker consultations (Alexandra Dérisier)
- November 26, 2020 Published: Communique
- November 26, 2020 PLE Session YMCA: COVID 19 & Immigration (Alexandra Dérisier)
- December 2, 2020 In-House Training Session City of Ottawa: Immigration Processes and Ontario Works (Alexandra Dérisier)
- December 7, 2020 Zoom Consultations: One on one worker consultations (Liz Majic)
- December 8, 2020 Zoom Consultations: One on one worker consultations (Alexandra Dérisier)
- December 8, 2020 Published: Communique
- December 15, 2020 Zoom Training Session: Uncontested Divorce (Guest speaker: Jessica Montpellier, Clinique Juridique)
- December 15, 2020 PLE Session YMCA: COVID 19 & Immigration (Alexandra Dérisier)
- December 17, 2020 Zoom Consultations: One on one worker consultations (Alexandra Dérisier)

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December 17, 2020 Zoom Training Session: Helping Clients Make Complaints under the
ESA (Guest speaker: Daniel Tucker-Simmons, Clinique Avant law)

December 21, 2020 Published: Communique