

CONNECTING REGION INITIATIVE

ACTIVITY REPORT #19 & FINAL REPORT

Submitted to the
Law Foundation of Ontario
Access to Justice Fund

On behalf of the

CONNECTING OTTAWA NETWORK

DECEMBER 31, 2021

(submitted January 31, 2022)

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INTRODUCTION

This is the nineteenth and final 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, 2021 to December 31, 2021. It also, where available, summarizes the cumulative impact of our activities since initially being approved for funding by the Access to Justice Fund in July of 2012. Effective January 1, 2022 Connecting Ottawa will receive funding via the Law Foundation of Ontario Catalyst Grant.

As per our 2021-22 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 2021-22 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 education 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 social service and 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;

- 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;
- Share the lessons learned from the program’s continued development in order to build upon the strengths of the network in Ottawa and to support similar and complementary initiatives in other communities; and
- Increase attention and support towards disability-serving agencies who work with people with communication barriers.

For the period of this report, we have made progress in most core activities; however, our activities remain constrained by COVID-19 restrictions. 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 education programming; continuing 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; work with legal partner organizations to expand the range of capacity building to our partnership network; and continuing to effectively manage and administer the project. We also hired a new lawyer to fill a staff position.

Below, please find a summary of project highlights, a detailed overview of our activities for each strategic objective, Connecting Ottawa’s reporting numbers to December 31, 2021, and a financial report to December 31, 2021.

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 an active partnership network of 55 agencies.
- Conducted 179 case consultations with partner agency staff members independently or with partner agency staff members and their clients, to develop the capacity of these front-line workers to support the legal information and referral needs of their clients.
- Offered 9 online training/education sessions to over 269 Ottawa front-line workers on issues related to social and legal services during COVID-19.
- Explored new partnerships to fill gaps in legal support for individuals with communication barriers, including coordinating the availability of multi-lingual notifications for housing-related legal documents for clients with language barriers.

PROMOTE THE USE OF ELECTRONIC AND OTHER RESOURCES BY TRUSTED INTERMEDIARIES

- Maintained and increased a list of social and legal resources on the Connecting Ottawa/Connexion Ottawa websites.
- Prepared 4 COVID-19 information sheets and updates for distribution to our network partners and online.
- Promoted relevant CLEO, *Steps to Justice* and other partner/legal resources via Connecting Ottawa Communique, website, and social media.
- Maintained and updated the Connecting Ottawa and Connexion Ottawa websites as required.
- Increased followers to Connecting Ottawa Twitter and Facebook social media feeds.

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

- Coordinated local panel member participation in “Justice on the Ground” panel discussion for Access to Justice Week.
- Supported outreach activities related to our target populations.

SHARE LESSONS LEARNED

- Published 12 issues of Connecting Ottawa *Partner Communique*.
- Participated in Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership Bi-Annual Conference.
- Participated in several sector tables/organizations.

PROJECT COORDINATION AND REVIEW

- Maintained effective and efficient management of operations and administrative requirements.
- Hired new immigration lawyer to fill vacancy.
- Project Manager regularly met with Advisory Group Chair to review operations.
- Held two Advisory Group meetings.

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 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 an active partnership network of 55 agencies.
- Conducted 179 case consultations with partner agency staff members independently or with partner agency staff members and their clients to develop the capacity of these front-line workers to support the legal information and referral needs of their clients.
- Offered 9 online training/education sessions to over 269 Ottawa front-line workers on issues related to social and legal services during COVID-19.
- Explored new partnerships to fill gaps in legal support for individuals with communication barriers, including coordinating the availability of multi-lingual notifications for housing-related legal documents for clients with language barriers.

Connecting Ottawa partnership network

The Connecting Ottawa network of partners currently includes 55 organizations. This network includes 20 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. From 2012 to 2021 the partnership network has grown from 42 organizations to 55 or by 30%.

We maintain 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 limitations, we kept in regular contact with our Tier 1 partners, which 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 has 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.

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.

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 dedicated email for case consultations, which is working well.

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 179 individual case consultations offered. Over the course of our funding to date, we have consulted on 3,492 cases cumulatively. This service remains the most sought-after service for our partnership agencies. We have noticed that the nature of the consultations has become more complex, with many of the agencies' clients being in very serious situations. COVID-19 has exacerbated this reality and we expect that the demand for consultations 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 9 online training/education sessions to over 269 Ottawa front-line workers on issues related to social and legal services.

The response to our education sessions has been generally strong; however, we experienced reduced participation during the reporting period due to zoom fatigue, increased online sessions presented by other organizations, and due to many of our partner agencies' front-line caseworkers dealing with competing priorities as a result of mandated home-schooling periods.

The following sessions were held during the reporting period:

- Housing and the Duty to Accommodate (July 13)
- Community Legal Services Clinic Update (August 12)
- Afghan Refugee Update (September 28)
- Hands on workshop: Housing Letters (October 5)
- Vaccination and Employment (October 13)
- The End of Canada's Recovery Benefits (October 19)
- The ABCs of Housing Subsidies (November 2)
- Supporting Clients Applying for OSAP (November 11)
- Updates to the Residential Tenancies Act (November 29)

Seven of the above 9 events featured guest speakers from partner organizations or private practice. That is a positive development; and it responds to a recommendation from the 2018 evaluation of our program, that we partner with other agencies to present on topics that extend beyond our staff members' expertise.

Connecting Ottawa has also actively promoted legal information education sessions that are coordinated by other organizations and partners. Specifically, during the reporting period, we promoted sessions held by Reach Canada, Ontario Legal Information Centre, ARCH Disability Law Centre, Community Legal Education Ontario, Canadian Council of Muslim Women, HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario, Black Legal Action Centre, Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, and the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly.

Since 2012, Connecting Ottawa has presented 258 education sessions.

Connecting partners and resources to fill gaps

We continue to explore opportunities to fill gaps in legal information and referral services to address partner needs. Connecting Ottawa has been effective in helping to fill the gaps in the following areas.

Multilingual notifications for housing documentation

During the reporting period, a housing partner reached out to us to discuss the issue of housing documentation not being read by those with language barriers. We reached out to our partnership network to explore options and identified existing multilingual notifications that stated that the documentation being received was important and that clients should get assistance in understanding its contents. Connecting Ottawa shared these resources with our housing partners and worked with staff members of Action Logement to encourage city housing providers to provide similar notification on all documentation.

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 from several settlement partners indicating that this support was unavailable in Ottawa. PBSC works under the direction of lawyers from Borden, Ladner & Gervais law firm; Connecting Ottawa arranges for the location and promotion of the clinic. Due to COVID-19 and the University of Ottawa moving to online learning due to the pandemic, we have not been able to offer these clinics during the reporting period. When appropriate, we will resume these clinics.

Commissioning and Notarizing of Documents

Early in COVID-19, 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 released an information sheet and two updates to the partnership network.

Education Law

In a 2019 meeting with a lawyer from the Justice for Children and Youth legal clinic (JFCY), a gap in education law services in Ottawa was identified. Staff members of Community Legal Services of Ottawa (CLSO) and Connecting Ottawa then 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, 2020 Connecting Ottawa and CLSO hosted an education law 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. During the reporting period, Connecting Ottawa shared JFCY resources with our partnership network.

Powers of Attorney & Wills

In 2019-20, two agency partners approached Connecting Ottawa for support and resources to assist their clients with wills and powers of attorney. Ottawa's legal clinics do not offer these services and many individuals within our target populations were identified as falling through the cracks. As a result, in January of 2020, Connecting Ottawa invited lawyer Gina Rea of the Renfrew County Legal Clinic to present a Powers of Attorney & Wills information session to the Canadian Hearing Society staff members and clients. We also started to explore opportunities to host occasional clinics on these issues, staffed by pro bono private bar lawyers, but we suspended this activity due to a lack of time and COVID-19. However, the demand for this information has escalated due to COVID-19 health concerns among our target populations. In response, Connecting Ottawa partnered in May, 2020 with REACH Canada and Nelligan Law to present an informational workshop for front-line workers; and we arranged for CLEO to offer a training session in March, 2021 for front-line workers on their "Simple Wills and POA" guided pathways tools. We continue to promote this resource to front-line workers.

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

- Maintained and increased a list of social and legal resources on the Connecting Ottawa/Connexion Ottawa websites.
- Prepared 4 COVID-19 information sheets and updates for distribution to our network partners and online.
- Promoted relevant CLEO, *Steps to Justice* and other partner/legal resources via Connecting Ottawa Communique, website, and social media.
- Maintained and updated the Connecting Ottawa and Connexion Ottawa websites as required.
- Increased followers to Connecting Ottawa Twitter and Facebook social media feeds.

Publish current information about local legal and social services

Connecting Ottawa maintains a list of social and legal resources on the Connecting Ottawa/Connexion Ottawa websites. These resources include legal information developed internally, by partners and by other organizations.

Connecting Ottawa also 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

During the reporting period, Connecting Ottawa prepared and distributed 4 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. The specific sheets published or updated during the reporting period were:

- Canada Recovery Caregiver Benefit (August 10).
- Canada Recovery Caregiver Benefit (September 7).
- Canada Recovery Caregiver Benefit (October 25).
- Infectious Disease Emergency Leave (October 25)

These resources were distributed via our Communique and distribution lists and shared on our website and social media platforms. Many partners also shared the information across their networks; and organizations outside of Ottawa contacted us for permission to share and or adapt the information for use within their organization.

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

- Infographic: Access to LTB Terminals
- Queer Refugee Hearings Program Toolkit
- Multi-lingual refugee hearing preparation guide
- Mental health toolkit for refugees and refugee claimants
- Letter writing tool to request record of employment.
- Family Court Operations Guide
- Action Logement/Housing Help Tenant Tip Sheet.
- Income Assistance Advocacy Centre factsheets and participation guide for federal election
- Information sheet on OW and ODSP rates for 2021
- Information sheet: New City Rules and Standards for Rental Housing
- Justice for Children & Youth Special Education Guidebook
- Refugee 613 Multi-lingual Vaccine Bulletins
- Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario: Tenant Tips for Digital Hearings at the LTB
- Community Advocacy and Legal Clinic: Keeping Seniors Safe resources

Connecting Ottawa website

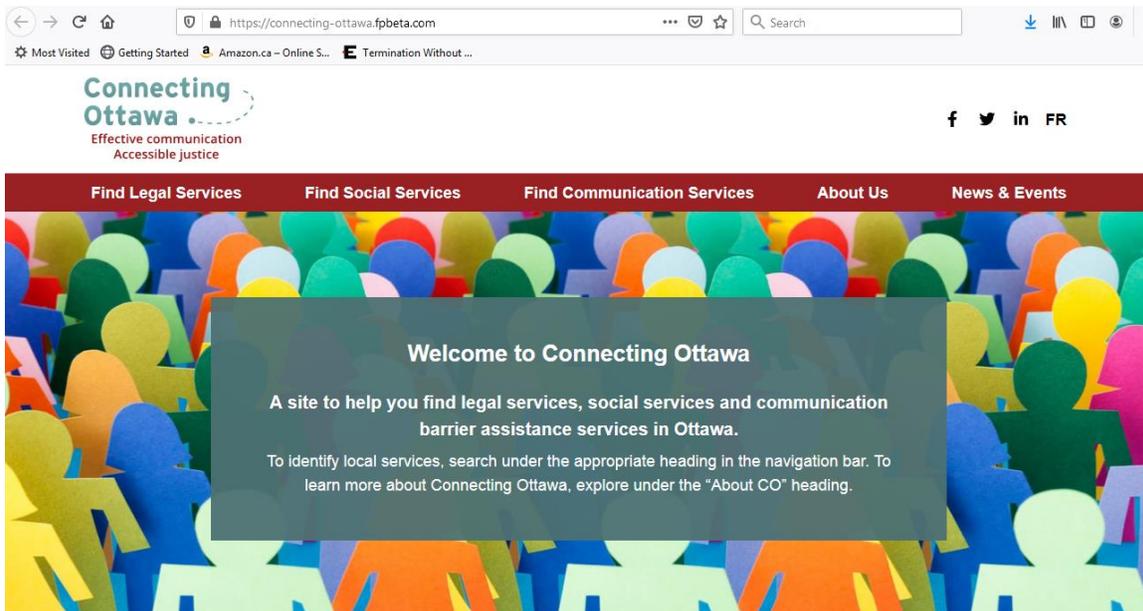
Over the reporting period, Connecting Ottawa's websites have been available in both English (connectingottawa.com) and French (connexionottawa.com). The domain registrations have been extended until April 2022 and we have arranged for hosting services through a monthly agreement with a hosting service.

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.

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.
- 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 2021, we launched our newly designed website. We initiated the website redesign in 2019-20 because the platform we were using would no longer be supported. The new website maintains the feed of the CNEO/211 databases, increases accessibility and translation, and better promotes our mandate and activities. The site has been live since January, 2021 and has been regularly updated.



Website traffic

Statistics related to website traffic for the reporting period are included below. The numbers represent a significant decrease in website traffic compared to the previous site; however, in discussion with our website developers, we have been advised that it will take time for the new site to be optimized in search engines. We continue to work to drive individuals to our new site.

Website Statistics for January – June, 2021:

Number of sessions: 2,729
 Number of users: 2,272
 Number of pageviews: 6,395

Website Statistics: 2012 - 2021

Number of sessions: 422,933
 Number of users: 346,568
 Number of pageviews: 797,969

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 increasing our followers on Twitter from 673 to 690 and our followers on Facebook increased to 526.



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

- Coordinated local panel member participation in “Justice on the Ground” panel discussion for Access to Justice Week
- Supported outreach activities related to our target populations

ACTIVITIES:

Justice on the Ground Panel Discussion

During the reporting period Connecting Ottawa coordinated local participation in the virtual Access to Justice Week panel discussion event “Justice on the Ground”. We assisted in identifying a speaker for the panel and then helped to coach and support the speaker to share front-line social service experiences in supporting clients with diverse and critical legal information and referral needs. Connecting Ottawa promoted the panel discussion and shared the recording with our network via our Communique.

Outreach activities

Outreach activities have been limited due to COVID-19 protocols. 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 Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership Bi-Annual Conference
- Participated in several sector tables/organizations.

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. 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. We also have been working on expanding our distribution list to include more front-line workers and will be utilizing an e-marketing portal to expand the distribution of our newsletter in 2022.

Conference & meeting attendance

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

The Action Group on Access to justice hosted the 2021 Access to Justice week during the reporting period. Connecting Ottawa staff attended and participated.

The Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership hosted its bi-annual conference virtually during the reporting period. Connecting Ottawa staff attended and participated.

Connecting Ottawa staff 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

As part of its “Shared Lessons Learned” Connecting Ottawa hosts an annual conference for front-line workers.

The 2021 conference was held prior to the current reporting period. For the period 2012 to 2021: Connecting Ottawa hosted a total of 7 conferences, welcoming more than 577 participants.

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.
- Hired new immigration lawyer to fill vacancy.
- Project Manager regularly met with Advisory Group Chair to review operations.
- Held two Advisory Group meetings.

Staffing

During the period, Connecting Ottawa maintained its staffing of 2.5 professional staff plus a part time law student to support its mandate and project goals.

Gina Grosenick, Ph.D. is an independent consultant under contract for 2.5 days per week to provide project management 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.

At the beginning of the reporting period, we had two full-time lawyers: Alexandra-Marjorie Derisier LLL, LLB and Liz Majic, J.D. Ms. Derisier had an extensive background in labour relations, human rights, and refugee law and had been actively involved 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.

In July of 2021, Ms. Derisier left the project. We then hired Heather Neufeld, commencing December 1, 2021. Heather was called to the bar in 2009 and has represented clients in all areas of immigration and refugee law, first as a staff lawyer with Community Legal Services of Ottawa (formerly South Ottawa Community Legal Services) and more recently in her own practice. She had been a contributor and periodic contractor with Connecting Ottawa, supporting our COVID-19 PLE sessions and providing consultation to front-line workers during the period that we conducted our employment search. Ms. Neufeld speaks English, French and Spanish and teaches part-time in the University of Ottawa legal program.

Connecting Ottawa has also hired, on a part time basis, a 2nd year PBSC law student, Anneka 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. Until we can return to the offices and in-person meetings, Connecting Ottawa staff maintain their activities remotely.

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 regularly with each staff member to discuss issues of workload, sharing of information, reporting, and activities moving forward. All-team meetings were also held regularly to set goals and objectives and review activities. An extended planning meeting was held in December of 2021 to discuss goals and objectives for 2022. 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 twice 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.

The current membership of the Advisory Group is:

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 Zapluzha	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. We continue to look for ways to expand our reach and impact and integrate the recommendations of the evaluation report into our activities.

During the reporting period, The Law Foundation of Ontario notified us with the good news that our application to its Catalyst Fund, for longer-term funding, was approved. Since receiving the notification, we have been working to close the current grant as of December 31, 2021 and set up our project plans and directions for the new funding that commenced on January 1, 2022.

We very much value our relationship with The Law Foundation of Ontario and we gratefully thank David Kinsman, Helen Tewolde and Lisa Cirillo for their ongoing support and direction. We look forward to working with Lili Pach as our Grants Officer under the Catalyst Fund.

Financial Report

The financial report to December 31, 2021 is below. Our expenses are well within budget, with many line items below budget due to the circumstances surrounding COVID-19 and reduced staffing costs due to one position being open for a short period of time.

LAW FOUNDATION OF ONTARIO – CONNECTING REGION INITIATIVE

CONNECTING OTTAWA			
STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS		DECEMBER 31, 2021	
FOR THE SIX MONTH PERIOD ENDED		Budget	Actuals
REVENUE			
Law Foundation of Ontario			
Received During Year			139,875
Holdback Receivable - 2020-21: Written Off			(27,975)
Total LFO		294,750	111,900
Registration Fees		-	-
	Total Revenue	294,750	111,900
EXPENSES			
Website Hosting, Management and Administration			
Translation			-
Website Hosting, Management and Administration		5,000	246
		5,000	246
Education Sessions on New Areas of Law			
Training and Meeting Exoenses		300	-
Honoratia		750	-
		1,050	0
Legal Services/Social Services Collaboration			
Salaries and Benefits		194,400	65,881
Equipment Purchases		750	114
Printing/Supplies		1,000	198
Translation/Interpretation		1,250	-
Meeting Costs		500	25
Cloud/Mobile Services		2,200	998
Travel		2,500	-
Training/Professional Development		2,000	-
Office and Accommodation		14,500	6,902
		219,100	74,119
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	27,612
Lead Agency Stipend		6,000	6,000
Accounting and Audit Expenses		2,700	1,850
Bank Charges			24
		65,350	35,486
	Total Expenses	294,750	109,850
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES			
(EXPENSES OVER REVENUE)		0	2,050

LFO REPORTING STATISTICS – July 1 – December 31, 2021

Organization: Connecting Ottawa	Grant file #: CONRE-09-21
Project title: THE CONNECTING REGION -- CONNECTING OTTAWA	

	Total #	Notes or comments
PLEI		
# of print resources produced, updated	4	
# 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	9	Online training education/sessions
# of people with legal needs or members of the public trained		
# of trusted intermediaries and / or front-line workers trained	269 179	Via training/education sessions & PLE Via consultations with front-line staff
# of sessions / page views	2729/6395	
# of print resources distributed		
# of online text resources downloaded		
# of video or audio resources viewed, downloaded or distributed	*note B	
Legal Services		
# of clients served	179	
# of clients provided legal advice or brief services	179	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	Part time student plus PBSC placement
# 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	

LAW FOUNDATION OF ONTARIO – CONNECTING REGION INITIATIVE

# 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 7 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.