

CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION TOOLKIT

BUILDING LOCAL INFORMATION SUPPORT TO ONTARIO NEWCOMERS | InformOntario 2014



TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Introduction</u>	page 2
<u>Identifying Players in a local Settlement Landscape</u> (Module 1)	page 3
<u>Assessing Local Information and Referral Context</u> (Module 3)	page 4
<u>Identifying Local Information Needs – Community</u> (Module 1)	page 5
<u>Identifying Organization’s Information Needs – Service Providers</u> (Module 1)	page 6
<u>Identifying Organization’s Information Management Needs</u> (Module 1)	page 7
<u>Assessing Readiness for Information Management</u> (Module 1)	page 8
<u>Assessing Working Relationships</u> (Module 2)	page 9
<u>Starter List for Creation of Meaningful Information Resources</u> (Module 2)	page 10
<u>Assessing Potential for Future Collaboration</u> (Module 3)	page 11
<u>Example of a Letter of Intent</u> (Module 3)	page 12
<u>Roles Partners Can Play in Community Information Management</u> (Module 3)	page 13
<u>Example of an Agreement of Understanding</u> (Module 3)	page 14
<u>Cross-sector Collaboration Standards</u> (Module 3)	page 15

INTRODUCTION

InformOntario is a provincial organization that serves the Community Information and Referral sector. Since 1972, it has provided support to its member organizations with certification and training in data management and information and referral service standards.

Building Local Information Support to Ontario Newcomers (BLISON) Project (2012-2015) has been developed to strengthen professional relationships between the settlement sector and community information agencies. The two local community information centres in York Region and Waterloo Region undertook the three-year intensive partner engagement initiatives and documented the process and the learning. They created a series of tools to guide them on the way. We are publishing the tools as they were found to be useful in starting and maintaining collaboration regarding good community information management with organizations from the settlement sector. The toolkit can be used regardless of the sector you work with.

The toolkit can:

- *Promote better use of existing community information data*
- *Enhance knowledge of local community information needs and resources*
- *Prevent duplication of information management work in a community*
- *Acknowledge roles played by different organizations in data management and information sharing*
- *Sustain successful cross-sector partnerships over time*

The tools offered can be used as:

- *Self-assessment tools*
- *Individual tools as needed to initiate conversation around good information management practice*
- *A package to guide the cross-sector collaboration process in its different phases*
- *A starting point in discussing cross-sector collaboration standards of practice*

The learning materials and the toolkit are available online at <http://earnining.informontario.on.ca>.

If you want to access the full training, you can request your login information at blison@informontario.on.ca.

We would like to hear from you about the application and adaptations of the tools and if they impacted community information and collaboration practice in your organization and/or community.

Aleksandra Petrovic,
BLISON Project Coordinator



Identifying Players in a Local Settlement Landscape



There are different players providing information and referral services in local communities, from both settlement and community information sectors. List the names of organizations that fit in each sector and type of organization. If you can think of no organizations for any category provided in the table below, leave that section blank.

Once done creating your list, rate your relationship to each of the organization using the following scale:

- Assign 3 if you have current working relationship with this organization;
- Assign 2 if there has been a working relationship at some time in the past;
- Assign 1 if you have some knowledge or contact or
- Assign 0 if you have no direct contact at all

Sector	Type of Organization	Organizations You Know Of	Relationship Rating
Settlement sector	Settlement agencies		
	Settlement programs or services (in non-settlement agency)		
	Settlement support or planning network or partnerships		
	Informal groups (settlement support or ethno-cultural groups)		
Community information sector	Community information centres		
	Libraries, Municipalities		
	Other		
Settlement partnerships and networks (such as Local Immigration Partnerships)			
Other sectors important to settlement e.g. specialized information services (health, housing, etc.)			



Assessing Local Information and Referral Context



Assessing the context in which you provide community information includes mapping of the players in a landscape or identifying and assessing existing information sources as discussed in the Module “Knowing Your Community”.

You can start there but you have to include some more specific questions about the capacity of local organizations, existing collaboration practices, funding and policies in order to understand the current I&R system and assess the context for the reliable and sustainable information management.

Where do you fit in your community’s I&R system?

What are the types of issues that you face in your community to achieve good information management?

What is the state of collaboration in your community around good information and referral service delivery?



Identifying Local Information Needs – Community



For residents, information is a means to find something to help them in their life.

- Clear and accessible information
- Information appropriate their life stage
- Available in formats that work for them – print, electronic, in person
- Available at locations they already know and use – i.e. one stop access
- Accurate, timely and up to date
- Provided in ways they can understand – i.e. culturally sensitive and in their own language

Priority Information Needs

Which information or issues are priority for your community? **What is the most urgent need?**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Identifying Organization’s Information Needs – Service Providers



For service providers, information is a means to do their work.

- Comprehensive - About all services and resources available in the community
- Easy to find, access or use
 - In different languages depending on what clients need/culturally sensitive
 - Provided in formats and ways that work for people and can help in navigating the system
- Reliable & Accurate - To help people navigate local service systems
 - Up to date
 - Referral protocols to other agencies
 - Available informal supports
- Timely - That can help them with:
 - Appropriate information and referral
 - Interpretation and access to interpreters as needed
 - Networking and coordinating with others in the community
- Adapted and adaptable to meet the needs – in different formats so it ca easily be shared and used
- Cost-effective
-

Priority Information Needs

Which information or issues are priority for your organization and your work? **What is the most urgent need?**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____



Identifying Organization's Information Management Needs



Priority Information Management Needs

You can use this as the foundation for your own information management action plan and strategy.

- Experienced and trained staff _____
- Following standards of practice _____
- Sufficient resources to ensure quality _____
- Having information sharing agreements with other community organizations _____

If most of the answers are **positive**, your organization has the capacity to lead the community information initiatives, to collaborate and help build the capacity in the community regarding sound information management.

If most of the answers are **negative**, your organization should rely on more experienced and knowledgeable community partners to create information resources, should collaborate in order to ensure funds for joint information projects and if there is a wish to improve its knowledge and practice in information management, you should join InformOntario.



Assessing Readiness for Information Management



The following are some points to consider if you want to enhance community information management capacity in your organization and/or community.

Readiness Element	Assessment
Key players in the local landscape have been identified	
The local landscape has been mapped and relationships assessed: strong relationships and engagement needs identified	
Information needs have been determined	
Information needs are urgent and must be addressed	
Current sources of information have been assessed and goals for change set	
Areas where information management practices should be enhanced have been identified, options determined and goals defined	
A concrete plan is in place for enhancing capacity and/or reaching out to potential partners	
The necessary resources (time, skill or other) needed have been identified, are available or have a plan is in place to provide the necessary resources	



Assessing Working Relationships – First Step toward Strategies



Your Working Relationships to Other Players in a Local Community

List the names of organizations that you have current working relationships with or that you need to establish a relationship with. It can be useful placing them in the respective sectors and types for an easier overview. Once done, map your relationship with each of them and see what direction the relationship should take.

Specify type of relationships (examples)

- Maintaining data
- Providing updates
- Data sharing
- Joint creation of information resources
- Use of data / information resources
- Promoting use of data / information resources
- Providing continuous feedback

Rate the relationship

- 0 no current relationship
- 1 provides input or information when asked
- 2 provides regular updates and input
- 3 proactive in sharing information about joint work
- 4 participates in regular meetings/ decision-making
- 5 contributes directly in staff time, funding, etc.
- 6 longstanding partner

Sector	Type of Organization	Organization	Type of Relationship	Current Relationship	Desired Relationship



Starter List for Creation of Meaningful Information Resources



Once the information needs have been identified and key players brought together, you can chart the characteristics of a meaningful information resource(s) that would respond to the information need by using standards of practice with other organizations in your community.

- 1. Define the inclusion criteria**
- 2. Determine how the information should be organized**
- 3. Define description of categories to be used in organizing information**
- 4. Define a process for ongoing information updates**
- 5. Define a process for ongoing feedback on the usefulness of the content and presentation**
- 6. Make explicit information such as the description of the organization responsible for quality of the data, inclusion criteria, frequency of updates, contact information**



Assessing Potential for Future Collaboration



After the successful initial working relationship, a discussion about the future needs to happen if we want to go beyond informal relationships. Here are the questions asked of local partners that were useful for pilot communities in the project in order to find ways of continuing with the initiative.

- 1. How current results can be sustained or expanded?**
- 2. What benefits do we anticipate for the organization and the community?**
- 3. What obstacles do we anticipate in continuing to work together?**
- 4. Who else needs to be involved?**
- 5. How will information needs in the community/organizations be assessed on ongoing basis?**
- 6. How do we keep relationships alive?**
- 7. How do we improve the community's I&R system overall by working together?**



Example of a Letter of Intent



[Name of the initiative] is comprised of [PARTNERS] who are interested in ensuring [OBJECTIVE].

AGENCY DESCRIPTION

Name of Organization:	
Mailing Address:	
Key Contact Person:	
Telephone Number:	
Fax Number:	
E-mail Addresses	

As a partner, [Name of the organization] commits to the following (chosed what applies):

1. Attend meetings
2. Use data
3. Respect the roles of other organizations
4. Promote information resources in the community
5. Promote standards of practice in its organization and its networks
6. Other

Signature

Date



Roles Partners Can Play in Community Information



Roles that different players can have in collaborating on joint information management project:

- Maintaining data
- Providing data
- Giving feedback on community needs not met
- Creating information resources
- Making information and/or information resources available to others
- Using information
- Supporting others in using the information
- Promoting the resources, information and/or collaboration
- Developing the resources
- Continuing to improve local information
- Evaluation and assessment of usability and quality of information resources
- Administering an agreement to ensure the important activity areas are maintained
- Communication
- Other...

Each organization can specify who from its team will provide specific roles, how and with what resources.



Example of an Agreement with Respective Partner Roles



Activity Area	Role distribution for an agreement			Other Conditions...
	Who in the Community Information Centre	Who in your organization	How will it be done (how often, how long...)	Resources, communication, benefits...
Maintaining data				
Providing data				
Giving feedback on community needs not met				
Creating information resources				
Using Information				
Supporting others in using information...				
Developing this and other resources				
Other...				

If collaboration is to be done – who does what? Community Information Centre and _____.



Cross-sector Collaboration Standards



Building on the AIRS standards of cooperative relationships with information and referral service providers (*Standard 15 & 16, AIRS 2013*), we can specify some good practices suited to be considered as future foundation of Ontario cross-sector collaboration standards.

Good Practices	Comment
Ongoing objective assessment of the local community landscape over time and where your organization fits in it as new players appear and as roles and relationships change.	
Support training and capacity building for new staff and specialized information & referral providers on how to use the existing information resources and about the information management standards of practice.	
Ensure resources to support collaboration work within your organization (funding, staff time, professional development, communication and promotion).	
Dedicate staff time and resources for working together with other organizations over long-term in all community information related projects (funding, staff time, promotion).	
Have plans in place for continuous partner engagement and capacity building regarding collaboration and community development.	
Commit to participation in a broader service delivery system & planning by ongoing validation of priority information needs in your community and your organization.	
Join advocacy for recognition and adequate funding of non-profits in general, particularly local community information and referral organizations.	