

Project Backgrounder: Connecting Consortium

What

CLEO has received funding from The Law Foundation of Ontario (LFO) to lead the development of an organizational model for a consortium that would establish and enhance connections between legal and non-legal community organizations. The purpose of this “Connecting Consortium” would be to improve the ability of non-legal community organizations to provide basic legal information and referral to their clients.

Why

After extensive research and province-wide consultations, the LFO recently released the Connecting Report. The Report focuses on improving access to legal information and services for people who do not speak English or French or live in rural or remote communities, and recommends the formation of a community capacity-building consortium. This Connecting Consortium would bring together non-legal and legal community organizations – each of which offers unique experience and expertise in its area of work and in meeting its community’s needs – so that they can share ideas and work together to more effectively reach their communities with the legal information and referral help that they need.

Ultimately, the Consortium would identify, support and undertake initiatives in the areas of:

- legal information and referral training for front-line workers
- real-time legal help for front-line workers (particularly when they are serving clients in crisis)
- increasing the availability of public legal information available in non-official languages.

How

The project will be conducted during the summer and fall of 2009, based on a collaborative, community partnership-building approach. Building on the research and province-wide consultations already conducted by Karen Cohl and George Thomson for the Connecting Report, CLEO’s consultations will focus on key questions relating to the consortium. In addition to meeting with organizations likely to be involved in the consortium, CLEO will investigate other community-based consortium projects to identify useful practices.

The LFO has provided CLEO with “Key Guidelines” as a framework for the development of the Connecting Consortium. It has asked CLEO to report back to it with a proposed model, for consideration and approval by the LFO, by November, 2009.