

BUILDING THE KNOWLEDGE BASE FOR COMMUNITY VITALITY

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENGLISH-SPEAKING QUEBEC IN
THE NEXT ACTION PLAN FOR OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

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Presentation

This brief calls on the next federal Action Plan for Official Languages to strengthen support for credible university-based research on Quebec's English-speaking official language minority community (OLMC). Research is not a peripheral activity. It is a cornerstone of community vitality. Communities need evidence to understand their realities. Governments need evidence to design effective policies. Organizations need evidence to adapt to changing circumstances.

Our recommendations speak directly to the Action Plan's objective of strengthening support for official language minority communities. To achieve that objective, the federal government must invest not only in programs and services, but also in the research infrastructure that informs them. Stronger research capacity will help ensure that investments are targeted, effective, and responsive to community needs.

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About QUESCREN

Created in 2009, the Quebec English-Speaking Communities Research Network (QUESCREN) is the only university-based research network dedicated exclusively to Quebec's English-speaking communities. QUESCREN provides opportunities to promote the understanding and vitality of English-speaking Quebec through fundamental and applied research, knowledge mobilization, networking, and outreach. Among its activities, QUESCREN participates in identifying, gathering, and sharing benchmarked data on key indicators of English-speaking Quebec's vitality, helping identify challenges, opportunities, and trends over time and providing evidence to inform planning, services, policy, and investment while strengthening community capacity and public understanding.

Activities

- Producing and [publishing original research](#)
- Mobilizing knowledge through [events](#), [videos](#), [newsletters](#), [social media](#), and other outreach activities.
- Building and maintaining research tools, including the [Bibliography on English-Speaking Quebec](#), the [Community Knowledge Open Library \(CKOL\)](#), and the [Data Portal on English-Speaking Quebec \(DESQ\)](#)
- Developing and supporting [a network of 80+ researcher-members](#)
- Connecting the English-language education sector through the [Inter-Level Educational Table](#).
- Training the next generation of researchers to sustain long-term research capacity on English-speaking Quebec.

For more information about recent results, see our [latest annual report](#).

Strengthen the Knowledge Base for Community Vitality

The [Discussion Guide for the 2026 Cross-Canada Official Languages Consultations](#) identifies culture, education, innovation, youth, demography, and inclusion as major themes for discussion. The [consultation webpage](#) lists population aging, labour shortages, digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and demographic change as important challenges facing official language minority communities.

The vitality of official language minority communities depends on their ability to understand and respond to these realities. Research is the foundation, the first step, that makes this possible. Communities cannot address challenges they do not understand. Governments cannot design effective policies without reliable evidence. Organizations cannot demonstrate results without data. Research provides the knowledge base that turns good intentions into effective action and helps communities adapt to change.

We recommend that the next Action Plan clearly identify community knowledge infrastructure, knowledge mobilization, and the university-based research that supports them as areas of investment. These are not stand-alone activities. Recognizing them as foundational and cross-cutting priorities would help ensure that Action Plan investments remain targeted, evidence-based, and accountable.

Mobilize Knowledge to Strengthen Social Cohesion

The policy landscape has shifted considerably since the previous Action Plan. As a [recent working paper](#) shows, English-speaking Quebec institutions have never brought so many court challenges against the Quebec government, a sign of a fraying linguistic peace in the province.

In this environment, credible research is essential. Evidence helps policymakers distinguish perception from reality and build public policies grounded in facts rather than assumptions. Evidence consistently shows that English-speaking Quebecers are largely bilingual, integrated into Quebec society, with institutions committed to the vitality of French. Research therefore plays an important role in fostering understanding and strengthening social cohesion.

We recommend that the next Action Plan recognize the role that research on Quebec's English-speaking communities can play in challenging assumptions, countering misinformation and disinformation, fostering mutual understanding, and strengthening social cohesion.

Advance Substantive Equality in the OLMC Research Sector

The “substantive equality” framework adopted in the [2023-2028 Action Plan](#) was focused on the greater vulnerability of the French language vis-a-vis English, which is the global lingua franca.

However, the [Official Languages Act](#) is not concerned with language preservation alone. It also commits the Government of Canada to “enhancing the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities” (emphasis mine, s. 41(1)(a)). English-speaking Quebec faces unique socioeconomic and social cohesion challenges. The principle of substantive equality should therefore apply not only to language protection, but also to the institutions and knowledge infrastructure that support community development.

In the OLMC knowledge and research sector, substantive equality remains a work in progress. As noted in [our 2022 Action Plan consultation brief](#), at least 37 university-based research centres and chairs primarily support Francophone minority communities across Canada. Quebec's English-speaking community has one: QUESCEN.

Despite its unique role in supporting community organizations, public institutions, policymakers, and researchers, QUESCEN received only about one-third of the federal program funding it requested from PCH during the last Action Plan period, while the Quebec government provided the full amount requested. Community demand has grown, but the capacity to respond has not kept pace. The next Action Plan should help close this gap.

We recommend that the next Action Plan take concrete steps to strengthen community knowledge infrastructure on English-speaking Quebec to advance substantive equality in the OLMC knowledge and research sector.

Provide More Stable Program Funding

To make up for gaps in PCH program funding, organizations serving English-speaking Quebec, including QUESCEN, often piece together support from several short-term funding streams. Each stream has its own objectives, timelines, reporting requirements, and administrative processes. Managing multiple grants takes time and effort that could otherwise be spent on activities directed to the community.

In some cases, reporting requirements appear excessive. One of our project grants required three interim reports per fiscal year and a mandatory external audit, paid for from project funds, at the end of the grant. This was in addition to the financial controls, auditing processes, and oversight already required by the university administering the funds.

Delayed funding decisions further compound the problem. When funding fluctuates and arrives well into the fiscal year, it becomes harder to hire and retain staff, offer stable employment, and plan activities over the long term. In a university environment like ours, funding delays can lead to short-term contracts that affect access to health and other workplace benefits. The result is more administrative work, greater stress for staff, and less organizational capacity to meet community needs.

Stable organizations produce better results. Predictable, long-term funding helps organizations plan ahead and focus on their work. It also reduces paperwork and administrative costs for both funding recipients and government. This means more time and resources can be spent delivering results for communities.

We therefore recommend that the next Action Plan increase core program funding for established recipients where need has been demonstrated, expand access to five-year funding agreements, and streamline reporting requirements.

Match Provincial Investments

The consultation guide highlights leadership and collaboration as central themes for the next Action Plan. One practical way to advance these objectives is through funding mechanisms that encourage partnership and shared investment between governments.

In Quebec, provincial support often serves as a critical foundation for community initiatives. Federal investments can have a greater impact when they match existing provincial commitments rather than operating through fragmented funding streams.

At the same time, Quebec's M-30 framework can make it difficult for some organizations and institutions to receive direct federal funding. Greater federal-provincial alignment would help ensure that eligible organizations are not excluded from opportunities because of administrative or jurisdictional constraints.

We therefore recommend that the next Action Plan better align federal and provincial investments, including through matching funding mechanisms, and take a proactive approach to working with Quebec on M-30 compliance issues rather than leaving organizations to navigate them on their own.

Conclusion

Research capacity is a community asset. It takes years to develop networks, train students, build partnerships, create datasets, and establish trusted sources of expertise. Once lost, this capacity can be difficult to rebuild, weakening the foundations of community vitality.

The next Action Plan should recognize the importance of sustaining the university-based knowledge infrastructure that supports official language minority communities. These investments strengthen community vitality, improve public policy, support accountability, and help ensure that government action remains evidence-based.

To that end, the next Action Plan should:

- **Clearly identify community knowledge infrastructure, knowledge mobilization, and university-based research as core priorities**
- **Recognize the role of evidence-based knowledge in addressing social cohesion issues and strengthening mutual understanding, a particular and growing challenge in Quebec.**
- **Advance substantive equality in the OLMC knowledge and research sector.**
- **Increase core funding for organizations with an established record.**
- **Provide five-year or longer-term funding options.**
- **Reduce reporting and administrative burden.**
- **Encourage federal-provincial funding partnerships and matching investments.**
- **Take a proactive approach to addressing M-30 barriers.**

For QUESCREN specifically, and to address some of the points above:

- **we recommend increasing annual program funding to \$500,000.**

As the only university-based research network dedicated exclusively to Quebec's English-speaking communities, QUESCREN fills a unique role. Increased funding would help it meet growing demand and strengthen the knowledge infrastructure needed for community vitality, social cohesion, and evidence-based decision-making.



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