



CELI

**Community Empowerment
Literacy Initiative**

Summary Report Key Informant Interviews

February 2023 (Updated October 2025)

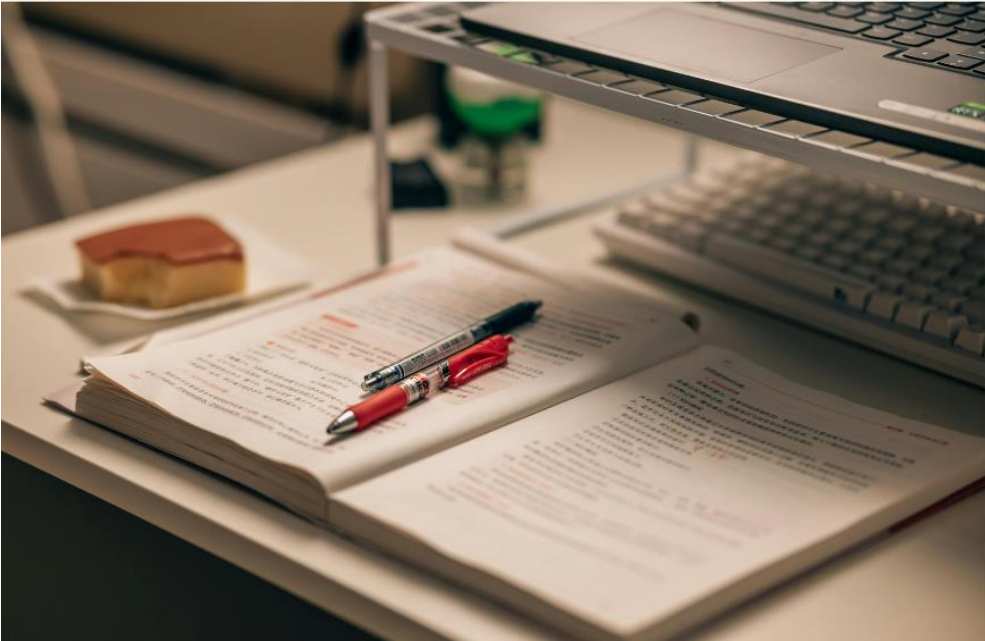
Empowering the English-Speaking Communities of Quebec
through Enhanced Literacy and Essential Skills



Literacy Quebec

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Preface

Literacy Quebec (LQ) is a network that connects and represents community-based literacy organizations to empower people, impact lives and build a stronger society. Literacy Quebec envisions a Quebec where everyone has the literacy skills they need to live a fully engaged life.

Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), a department of the Government of Canada, provides financial support to the Community Empowerment Literacy Initiative (CELI) through a funding agreement with the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN). QCGN is a non-profit organization led by a Director General and governed by a Board of Directors, in accordance with the requirements of the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec. Under this agreement, Literacy Quebec is the project lead for CELI.

In response to the evolving labour market and changing skill needs, the Government of Canada launched the Skills For Success (SFS) model with a Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) [report](#) defining nine key skills needed by Canadians to participate in work, education and training, and modern society more broadly¹. The SRDC report modernizes an older English literacy and essential skills framework. CELI's community grants fund pilot projects that activate SFS.

Core results of detailed key informant interviews conducted across the Literacy Quebec membership during summer 2022 are summarized in the following report, which is one of CELI's initial outputs. We researched and documented current needs and service delivery capacity across regions and programming areas of English literacy and essential skills, to help properly develop and propose actionable next steps.

We identified:

- Priority areas for pilot projects and professional development topics
- Existing gaps in service delivery, and
- Opportunities for collaboration and partnerships

Findings were also compiled from other key information gathered from members, including both quantitative and qualitative data.

¹ Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (2021, May). *Research report to support the launch of Skills for Success: Structure, evidence, and recommendations: Final report*. Srdc.org. Retrieved July 2023, from <https://www.srdc.org/publications/Research-report-to-support-the-launch-of-Skills-for-Success-Structure-evidence-and-recommendations-Final-report-details.aspx>

Glossary

- CELI** Community Empowerment Literacy Initiative
- COP** Community of Practice
- ESCQ** English-Speaking Community of Quebec
- ESDC** Employment & Social Development Canada
- IAF** Impact Assessment Framework
- LQ** Literacy Quebec
- OLMC** Official Language Minority Community
- SFS** Skills for Success
- SRDC** Social Research and Demonstration Corporation



Executive Summary

“ Thank you for this research. It is reassuring and important that Literacy Quebec is undertaking this research initiative.

Rachel Wagner, South Shore Literacy Council

This report, one of the Community Empowerment Literacy Initiative’s (CELI) early outputs, presents an overview of existing programs and services offered by English language literacy and essential-skills organizations working across the English-Speaking Communities of Quebec (ESCQ). It also identifies existing gaps and proposes approaches for both new and augmented programs.

These findings reflect the outcome of detailed interviews with leaders and key staff of Literacy Quebec’s member organizations. Respondents provided considerable insight on needs, issues, and methods to fully support them as they activate the recently modernized Skills for Success (SFS) framework. The support methods ranking highest in popularity include *sharing promising SFS practices* and *sharing SFS tools and resources*, with an average of 82% of respondents describing this suite of supports as very helpful. Further, the *provision of webinars and workshops about SFS* was also identified by 55% of respondents as very helpful.

This report also documents and analyzes a thorough cross-section of community-based literacy training, assistance, and support resources encompassing three categories: Adult Education, Vocational Training, and Workplace Training. When asked about the current state of services and resources, on average, over 77% of respondents reported that gaps exist or somewhat exist in all three categories (80%, 79%, and 73%, respectively). Sub-category areas of elevated concern include workplace literacy, programs to improve French language skills for English speakers, programs to improve digital literacy, support for people facing multiple employment barriers, and programs to support people with disabilities.

Recurring themes of particular importance across the services and resources discussed highlight programmatic issues as well as broader infrastructure concerns affecting successful outreach, outcomes, and impact. These include:

FUNDING

- Government funding is insufficient for the need. More requests for programs are received than literacy councils are currently able to meet with existing financial and staffing resources.

THE URBAN/RURAL DIVIDE

- Many respondents noted that services are more readily available in urban areas, Montreal in particular. In rural and more remote areas of Quebec, services are often limited.
- Access to transportation, travel time and related costs (i.e., childcare, food, etc.) are significant barriers in rural areas.

GEOGRAPHY

- Large geographic regions are often served placing a strain on organizations trying to cover sprawling territories with limited resources.

POVERTY

- English literacy and essential skills providers need additional resources and help with outreach to support vulnerable populations to upgrade their literacy skills. Strong links exist between disability, lack of employment, and poverty.

AGE

- Employment support-related literacy development programming is often geared only to those under 40, leaving a significant gap in services for older workers. In some instances, programs set the age limit at 25 years old.

LANGUAGE

- Services to learn French are widely available to new immigrants. For non-immigrant English speakers in Quebec, however, only very limited programming is available to improve their French language skills. Demand for such programs is very high.
- English-language services were often mentioned as not being readily available. Even if advertised as bilingual, services are not always available in English.
- The lack of conversational French courses imposes a significant gap.

COVID-19 AND DIGITAL LITERACY

- Covid-19 increased the need for digital literacy for people to communicate more easily with others, access learning opportunities, and gain access to health and community services.
- Low levels of digital literacy skills are especially prevalent among seniors and vulnerable populations.

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

- Residents and remote communities without access to a reliable broadband connection, or lacking broadband access entirely, face greater risks and issues, leaving them increasingly isolated and/or disadvantaged.
- The pandemic also revealed the depth of the digital divide.
- The need for better digital literacy is apparent across all regions and programming areas. Some groups now embed digital literacy within their ongoing literacy programs. Others now explicitly and specifically design and deliver stand-alone digital literacy, yielding an enhanced ability to reach more learners.
- As touched on briefly above, access to a reliable broadband connection can exacerbate the digital divide issues for some. Beyond that, the absence of broadband access altogether in some rural communities and for residents of outlying and isolated areas brings to light a deeper layer of this divide, such that basic infrastructure must be in place before any kind of digital learning and growth can occur.

Project delivery through partnerships (with community development groups, libraries, seniors' centres, for example) is a mutually beneficial model that has kept literacy councils closely connected with their communities. Building on existing alliances and developing projects to shape more collaborative ones is needed to implement new and innovative approaches, maximize access to additional resources, enhance capacity to best serve communities, and meet the needs of learners. Aligning with the feedback about their desire for peer-to-peer learning – such as sharing SFS promising practices, how effective partnerships have been established and how they operate in other regions – would prove useful.

With these elements as its foundation, the report synthesizes a broad variety of perspectives, insights, and suggestions for future projects, collaborations, partnerships, and prospective informal alliances to help advance English-language literacy, including among Indigenous peoples and newcomers to Quebec. The report's findings will inform how CELI builds out its community grants framework so that identified gaps in services and capacity are considered; it will also help CELI align its professional development training, tools, and resources, as well as inform its research activities to gain evidence-based insight into issues and causes, and its design of partnership development strategies.

Looking ahead, CELI will continue to conduct surveys with Literacy Quebec's membership as well as with broader constituencies that intersect with English language literacy and essential skills across the ESCQ.



Goals and Methodology

“ This is important work that Literacy Quebec is doing. Members really need this kind of support. It’s so helpful to share ideas and strategies with others. We are isolated, so having the chance to share our needs and issues with Literacy Quebec is important.

Johanna Bateman, Literacy in Action

As part of the first phase of this project, we conducted key informant interviews with leaders and key staff of Literacy Quebec member organizations. We adopted this approach to ensure that subsequent steps will – to the broadest extent possible – benefit from their full range of input and insights to enrich literacy development in Quebec.

Respondents were questioned in depth and asked on a confidential basis to provide their approaches and suggestions to meet the following goals:

- A. How best to support English literacy and essential skills providers in Quebec to better understand the federal government’s Skills for Success (SFS) model and take full advantage of the tools and resources this framework provides.
- B. Fully research and document existing literacy and employment services available in various regions of Quebec to support English-speakers facing literacy, essential skills, and employability challenges.
- C. Better identify gaps in literacy and employment services facing English-speakers dealing with literacy, essential skills, and employability challenges in Quebec.
- D. Develop an inventory detailing the community partnerships already in place to assist English-speakers facing literacy, essential skills, and employability challenges.
- E. Explore needs and priorities for potential pilot projects organized around implementing the new SFS framework to provide enhanced services to English-speakers in Quebec facing literacy, essential skills, and employability challenges.

Using a scripted series of questions developed in May and June 2022, key informant interviews were conducted from July to October 2022.

Interviews were held over Zoom and screen recorded. Each generally took an hour to complete. In total, 11 of 13 Literacy Quebec members (at the time of the report) were able to take part.

Key informants were asked for information and insight regarding programs and services currently available in or across their particular communities to support English-speakers dealing with literacy, essential skills, and employability challenges.

We asked the following three core questions across a broad array of specific categories within the areas of Adult Education, Vocational Training, and Workplace Training:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Do these services exist for English speakers? | Are they used by English speakers? | What are the gaps in services facing English speakers? |

Respondents were also asked about:

- Their familiarity with the Skills for Success, and the implementation supports needed
- Their involvement with community partners
- Their ideas for potential pilot projects

A confidential written summary was prepared following each interview.



Participating Organizations and Regions

Literacy Quebec is particularly grateful to our members across the regions for their enthusiastic participation in these key informant interviews and their valuable contributions embodied in this report. Their insights—along with their abundance of shared wisdom and knowledge – have proven invaluable.

PROGRAM

Frontier College

Gaspésie Literacy Council

Laurentian Literacy Centre

Literacy in Action

Literacy Unlimited

Quebec City Reading Council

Reclaim Literacy

South Shore Literacy Council

The Learning Exchange

Western Quebec Literacy Council

Yamaska Literacy Council

REGION

Capitale-Nationale
Chaudière-Appalaches
Estrie
Montréal
Nord-du-Québec

Gaspésie – Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine

Laurentides

Estrie

Montréal
Part of Montérégie

Capitale-Nationale

Montréal

Montérégie

Laval

Outaouais

Montérégie

Partnerships

“ We have active community partnerships with many community organizations. We use these partnerships to deliver tutoring services, family literacy programs, and gain access to complementary services for our clients.

Cathy Nolan, Quebec City Reading Council

As opportunities arise, Literacy Quebec’s member organizations partner with multiple other groups to enhance support for English speakers facing literacy and employability challenges in their communities. These partner organizations work across many sectors. They include:

- Adult Education centres of local English-language school boards
- Youth Employment Services
- Community centres
- Non-government organizations offering health and social services
- Libraries
- Organizations serving people with disabilities
- Organizations and services for Indigenous peoples
- Services for newcomers
- Organizations and associations supporting family literacy
- Community resource centres
- Carrefour jeunesse-emploi
- Emploi Quebec
- Literacy Quebec and Quebec Literacy Councils
- Service Quebec
- Mental-health services
- Women’s centres
- Small-business support networks
- Community economic development organizations
- Social planning councils
- English-language networks and support groups
- Food banks
- Municipalities
- Seniors’ centres
- Colleges



Implementing the Skills for Success

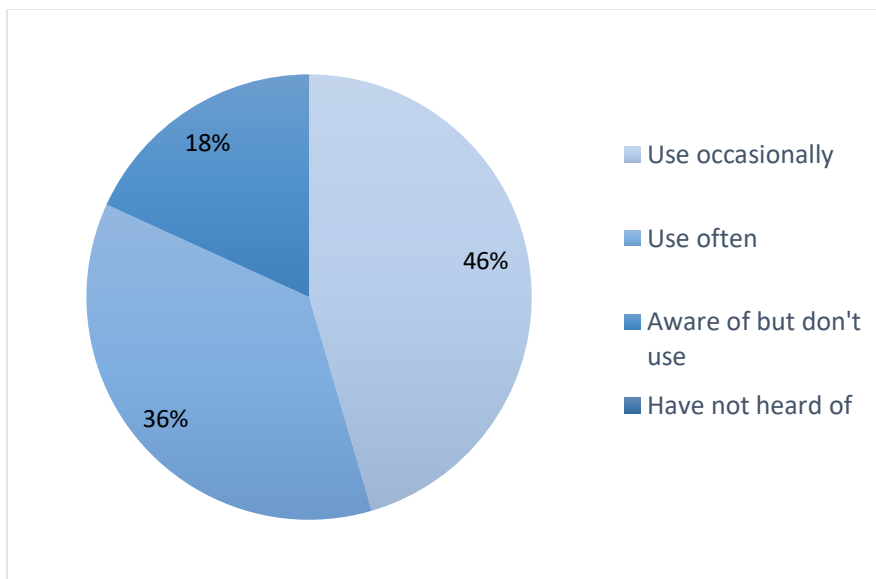
One goal of this project is to support literacy and essential skills providers across English Quebec by empowering them to both better understand the model and to make maximum use of the tools and resources provided by the federal government's Skills for Success (SFS) framework.

This framework is designed to provide Canadians with skills required for work, learning, and life. These key informant interviews provided pragmatic insights and perspectives into how to better support member organizations to take full advantage of SFS.

“ The Skills for Success are excellent stepping stones towards employability and confidence building in adult literacy.

Johanna Bateman, Literacy in Action

Current level of awareness among respondents of the SFS framework



Use often = 36%
Use occasionally = 46%
Aware of but don't use = 18%
Have not heard of = 0%

Support Literacy Quebec could provide to help members better understand and use the SFS framework

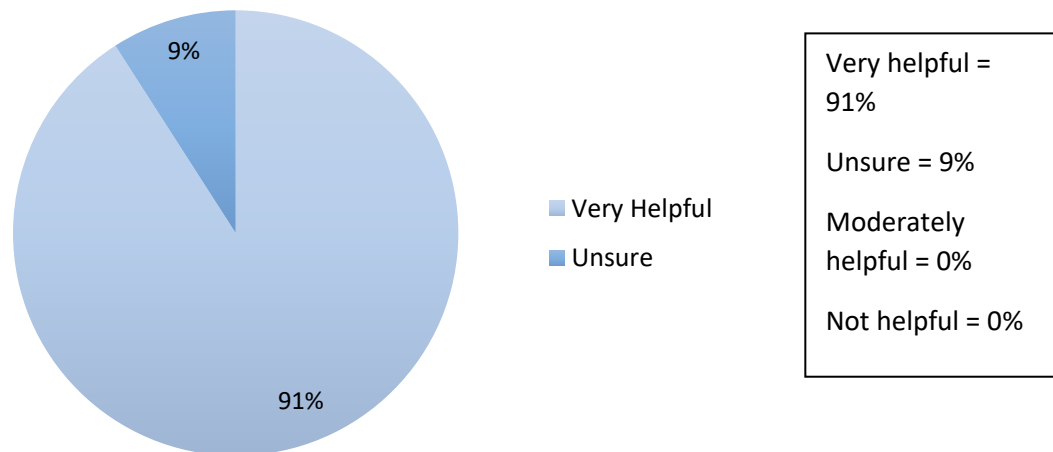
Respondents were asked to identify initiatives to be offered by CELI to help organizations implement the SFS concepts and framework programmatically. They were requested to focus on the best ways to help support their work and goals, and to put forward their own ideas. While each support method listed below proved popular, some ranked higher.

“ We want to use the Skills for Success to give what we offer in our literacy program more strength, form, and structure.

Greg Graham, Western Quebec Literacy Council

Priority 1 | Share promising SFS practices

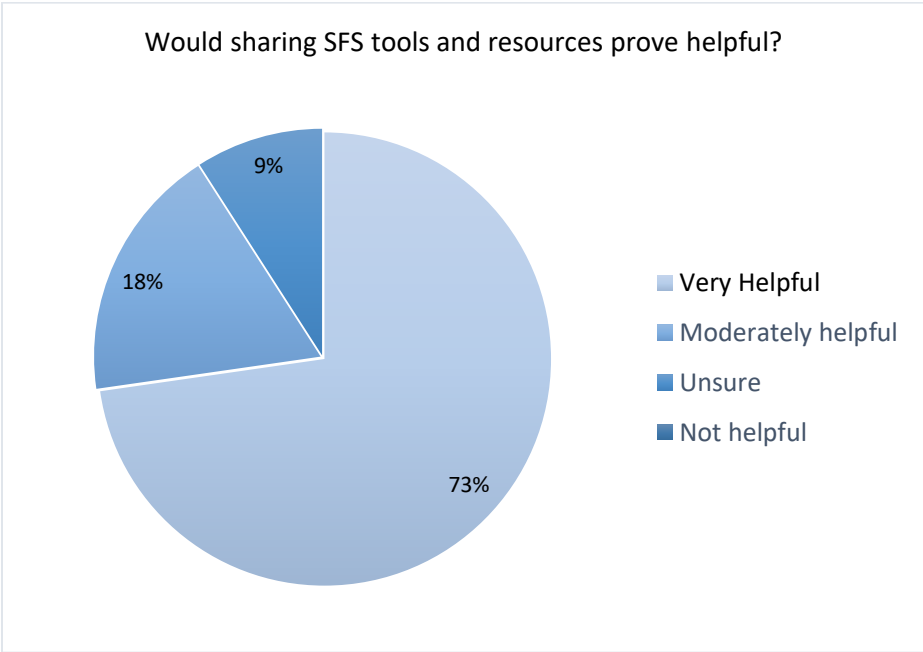
Would sharing SFS promising practices prove helpful?



“ Providing opportunities for Literacy Quebec members to learn and share about how the Skills for Success are being implemented would be very helpful. Literacy councils approach issues in different ways, so learning from one another is key.

Rachel Wagner, South Shore Literacy Council

Priority #2 – Share SFS tools and resources



Very helpful = 73%
Moderately helpful = 18%
Unsure = 9%
Not helpful = 0%

Priority #3 – Provide webinars and workshops about the Skills for Success



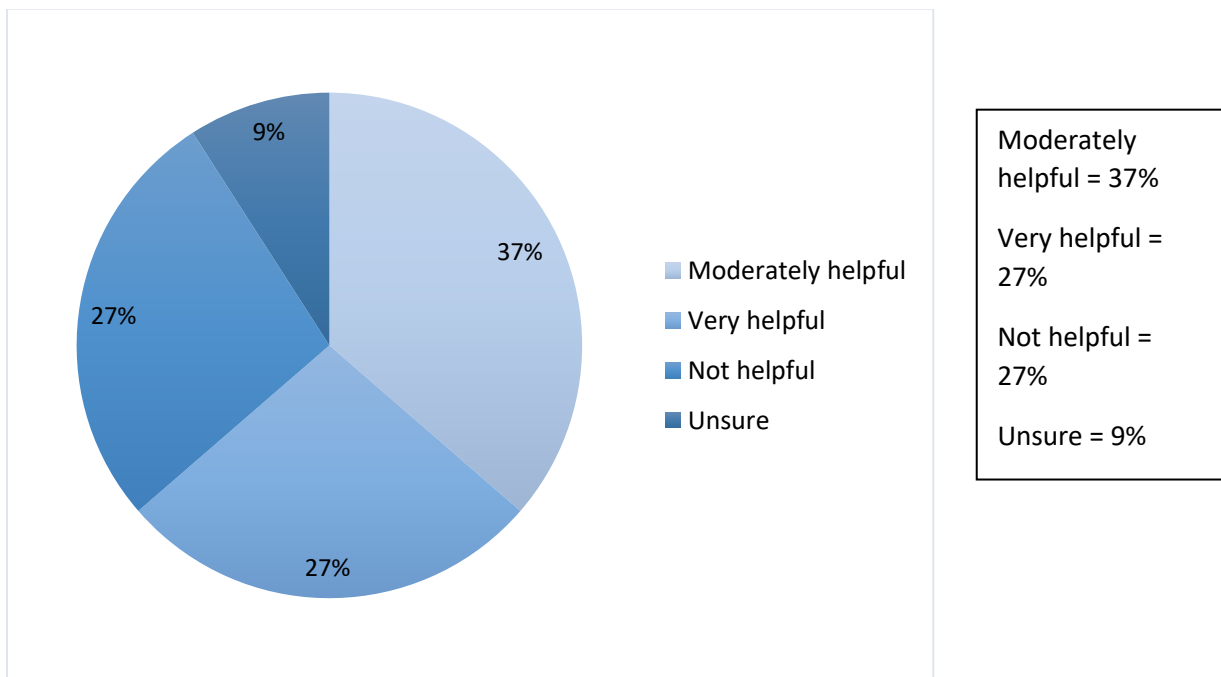
Very helpful = 55%
Moderately helpful = 27%
Unsure = 9%
Not helpful = 9%

“ The Skills for Success website doesn’t make it clear how their resources are helpful to people working directly in the literacy field. The SFS resources often do not seem relevant and are too focused on employment. Literacy Quebec could offer support/training to help programs see the link between SFS resources and literacy programming.”

Wendy Seys, Yamaska Literacy Council

Priority 4 | Promote the benefits of using SFS

Would promoting the benefits of using SFS prove helpful?



Respondents who were less familiar with SFS were particularly open to learning how to showcase ways that demonstrate the benefits of the framework to learners – including as part of promotional activities such as outreach campaigns and conversations. This element received a lower priority ranking from respondents already more familiar with SFS. As well, some expressed a desire to better understand SFS concepts in order to be able to better apply the framework to their particular programs and services.

“ We need highly practical, concrete resources and training that provides immediate benefit to learners and is easy to use.

Marlene Dagenais, Laurentian Literacy Centre

Needs and issues identified to further support SFS implementation

Respondents suggested multiple additional actionable steps and supports to more successfully deliver English literacy and essential skills programming within the SFS framework:

Basic Training

- Face-to-face SFS training to ensure English literacy and essential skills service providers are equipped with substantial opportunities to learn and network.
- For organizations with less knowledge and experience, basic training through SFS 101 webinars could provide a solid preliminary foundation for moving forward.

Peer-to-Peer Learning

- More opportunities to learn from colleagues directly involved in providing adult literacy within the SFS framework, including sharing of practical resources and tools, learning materials, help with outreach and engagement strategies
- While the CELI project will provide training and resources on a group basis, respondents also underlined a strong desire for peer-to-peer learning, also to be organized as part of the project.
- One very targeted approach suggested in the per-to-peer sphere to encourage continuous learning and sharing about the SFS framework was to organize a variety of informal online opportunities. These could include Zoom chats, lunch and learn sessions, and/or an online resource sharing fair

Adaptation and Development of Materials

- Also suggested were opportunities to learn how to adapt current learning materials to link them more effectively to the SFS.
- Develop training materials for volunteer tutors based on the SFS framework.

Promoting the Use of SFS Standardized Messaging in Engagement and Outreach Efforts

- Provide opportunities to learn and share how to best use standardized messaging offered by SFS to promote programs to learners and to create program delivery partnerships.
- Develop necessary supports to use the SFS framework to engage employers.

Evaluation

- Consider the potential of the SFS framework for performance management and evaluation in English literacy and essential skills.

Community Services and Resources: Availability, Use, and Gaps

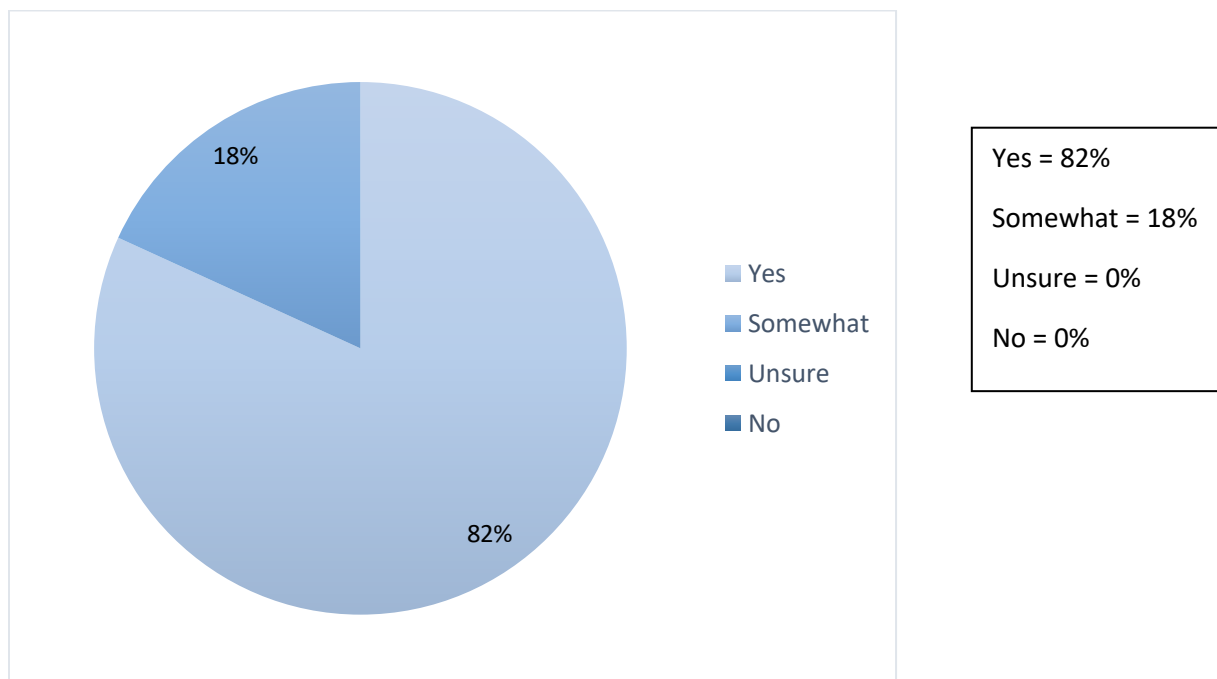
Adult Education Services

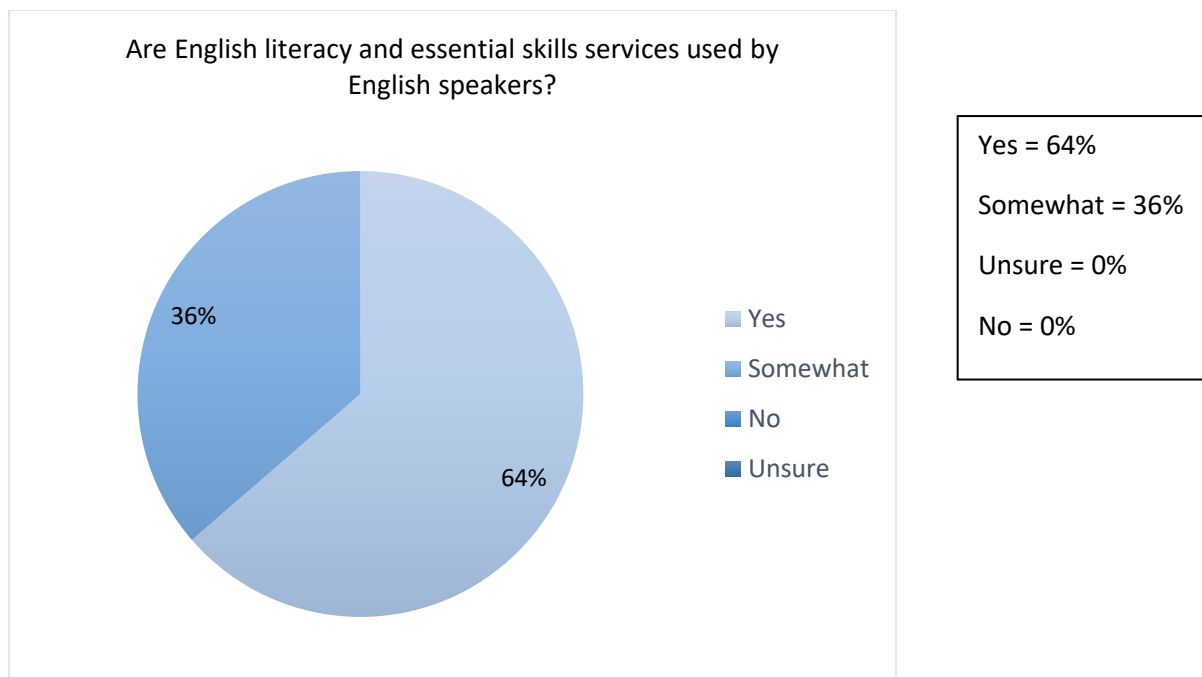
English Literacy and Essential Skills

“Our Literacy Council exists, as does the Adult Education centre of the school board. The region is extremely large however, which makes service provision problematic.

Greg Graham, Western Quebec Literacy Council

Do English literacy and essential skills services exist for English speakers?





“We have moved most of our services online to broaden their reach. Some people find it hard to attend in-person classes due to work and family commitments.”

Darlene Brown, The Learning Exchange

Synthesis

Respondents strongly indicated that English literacy and essential skills services offered in their communities and regions are provided by Literacy Councils and Adult Education centres (operated by local school boards). Often, Literacy Councils serve learners with lower levels of literacy; school boards generally concentrate on learners already equipped with higher literacy levels.

VARIETY OF DELIVERY MODELS

Literacy Councils may offer in-person, blended, and/or online learning. The mix depends on the needs of the community and the resources of each council. Programming may be delivered by staff or by volunteer tutors.

GROWTH OF ONLINE LEARNING

Online learning opportunities grew exponentially during the pandemic: Literacy Councils expanded digital programming offered to learners and also launched entirely new digital-literacy programs. In many cases, this yielded an enhanced ability to reach more learners.

PARTNERSHIPS

Typically, many mutually beneficial partnerships develop and referrals take place between Literacy Councils and Adult Education centres. Other partners are sometimes also involved in delivering literacy programming (for example, libraries). The partnership model keeps Literacy Councils closely connected with their communities and makes extra resources and opportunities available for learners.

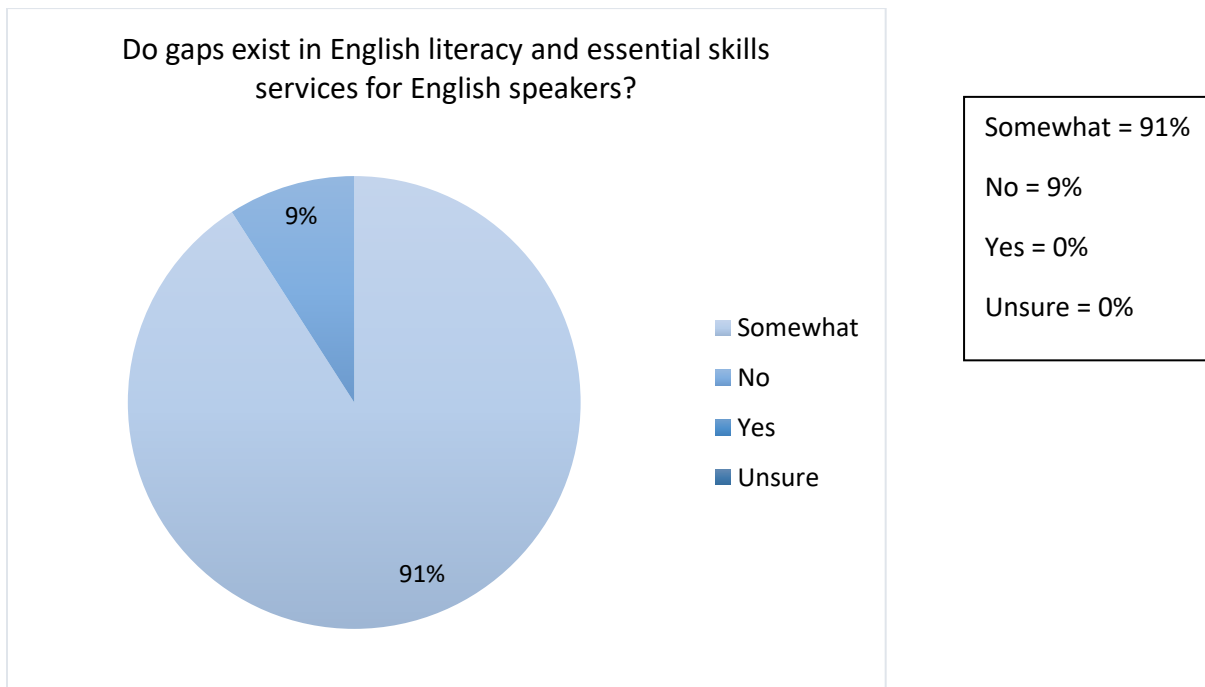
CREATIVE AND NIMBLE

Quebec’s English literacy and essential skills providers are creative and nimble, and in the face of exceptionally limited resources, try their utmost to meet learner needs despite low budgets and increasing demands.

Gaps Identified

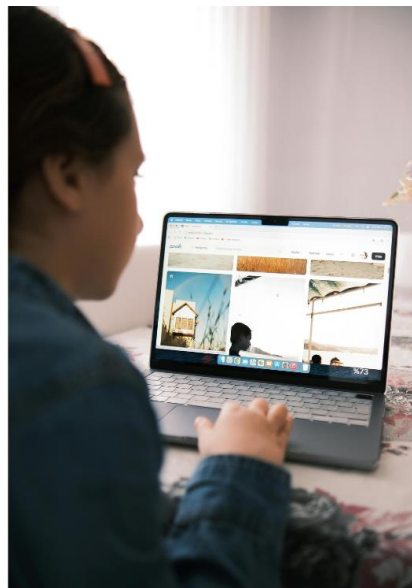
“Our region is almost the size of New Brunswick. It is hard to match tutors and learners who live in various parts of the region. The population is spread out over far-flung parts of the region.”

Greg Graham, Western Quebec Literacy Council



Synthesis

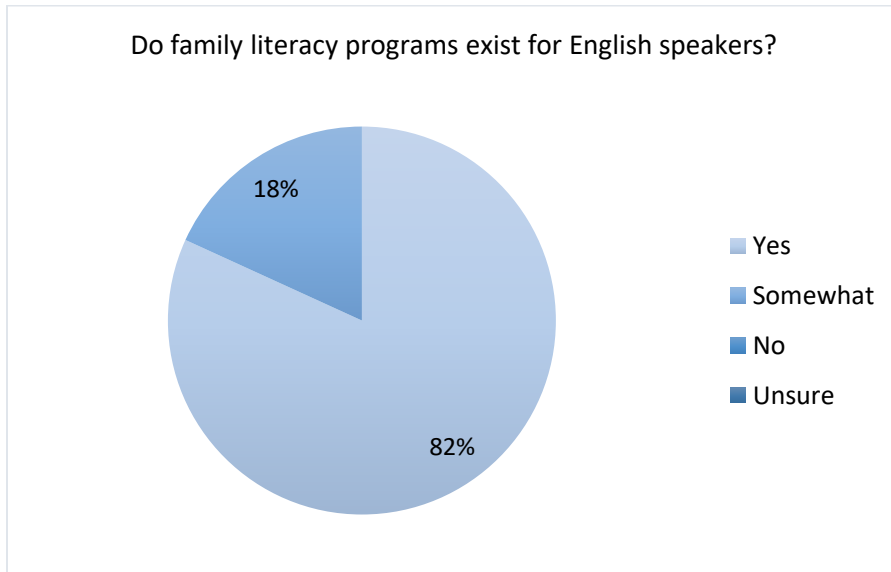
- **FUNDING.** Government funding is currently insufficient to meet the needs; staff levels at most Literacy Councils are typically very small. Available capacity far outstrips demand.
- **GEOGRAPHY.** Large geographic regions are often served. This places a strain on organizations trying to cover sprawling territories with limited resources. As well, access to transport in rural and remote areas imposes significant hindrances on participants.
- **URBAN/RURAL DIVIDE.** Many respondents noted that services are more readily available in urban areas, Montreal in particular. In rural and more remote areas of Quebec, services are often limited.
- **COVID19.** The pandemic has changed everything. English literacy and essential skills programs need help to design and develop methods and programs to move forward to meet the new future. The many challenges posed– if they are met with imagination and adequate resources – also present huge opportunities.
- **POVERTY.** Poverty remains a persistent and particularly stubborn barrier. English literacy and essential skills providers need additional resources and help with outreach to support vulnerable populations to upgrade their literacy skills.
- **INDIVIDUAL RESOURCES.** Transportation, childcare, and snacks were mentioned as important parts of the support and resources required to enable people to participate in programming.



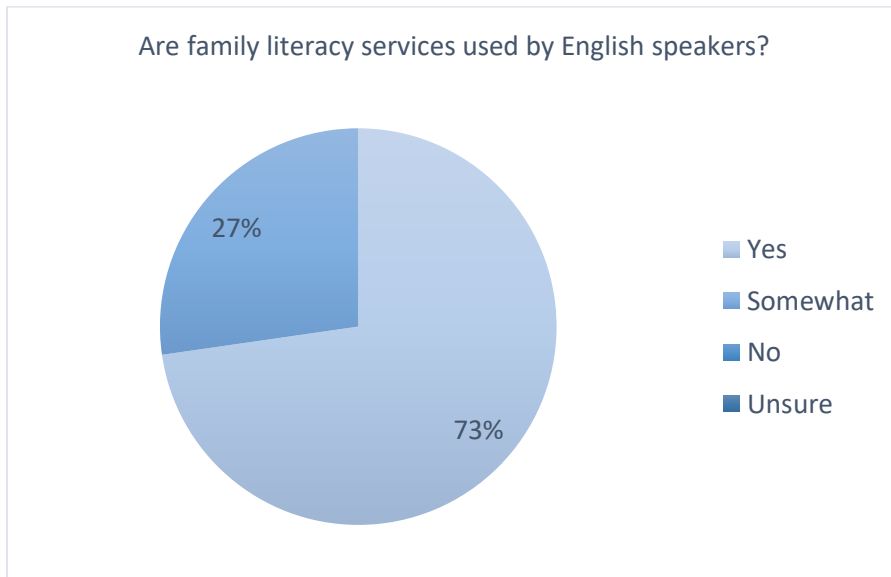
Family Literacy

“We have held Zoom events to engage in reading with children. We do in-person events where volunteers go into the classroom with crafts and interactive books. Via our Move into Literacy Book Bags, we’ve given out 800 book bags.”

Darlene Brown, The Learning Exchange



Yes = 82%
Somewhat = 18%
No = 0%
Unsure = 0%



Yes = 73%
Somewhat = 27%
No = 0%
Unsure = 0%

Synthesis

VARIETY OF DELIVERY MODELS

Most Literacy Councils offer family literacy programming. Some offer multiple types. Others are limited to one or two. Typically, these are structured in conjunction with partners (for example, daycares, schools, libraries, women’s shelters, and/or family resource centres).

PROGRAM DIVERSITY

The family literacy programs offered by English literacy and essential skills programs are remarkably diverse. A phenomenal range is provided. This includes: Mother Goose; homework clubs; family literacy and reading nights; Move into Literacy; Storytime in the Community; Reading Buddies; Book Bags; workshops for parents to learn homework tips; author visits to classrooms; reading workshops; sharing learning resources and books with families; and many more. Most Literacy Councils are involved in Family Literacy Day activities each year.

DYNAMIC AND POPULAR

Family literacy provides an active and dynamic area for many Literacy Councils. This approach furnishes an impactful and effective way for them to more fully engage their particular communities.

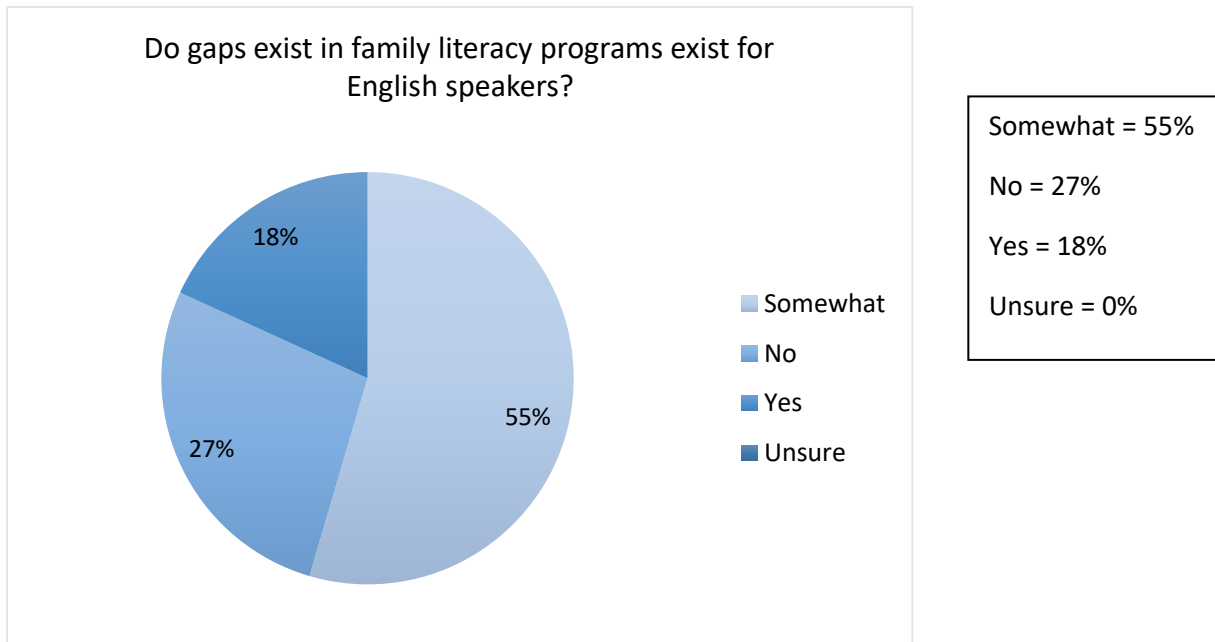
IN-PERSON AND ONLINE DELIVERY

Programming is offered mainly in-person. Some organizations provide on-line family literacy programming. As an example, story time over Zoom is proving increasingly popular. The volume and scope of online programming grew sharply during the pandemic, as Literacy Councils tried to meet the challenges of continuing to reach and engage families by taking a more virtual approach during that difficult time.

Gaps Identified

“The Food Bank also does a “back to school” backpack. We purchased new books from Books First Canada at a discount for inclusion in these backpacks. In the back of these books, we inserted a QR code with a link to family literacy activities.”

Lucy Baum, Literacy Unlimited.

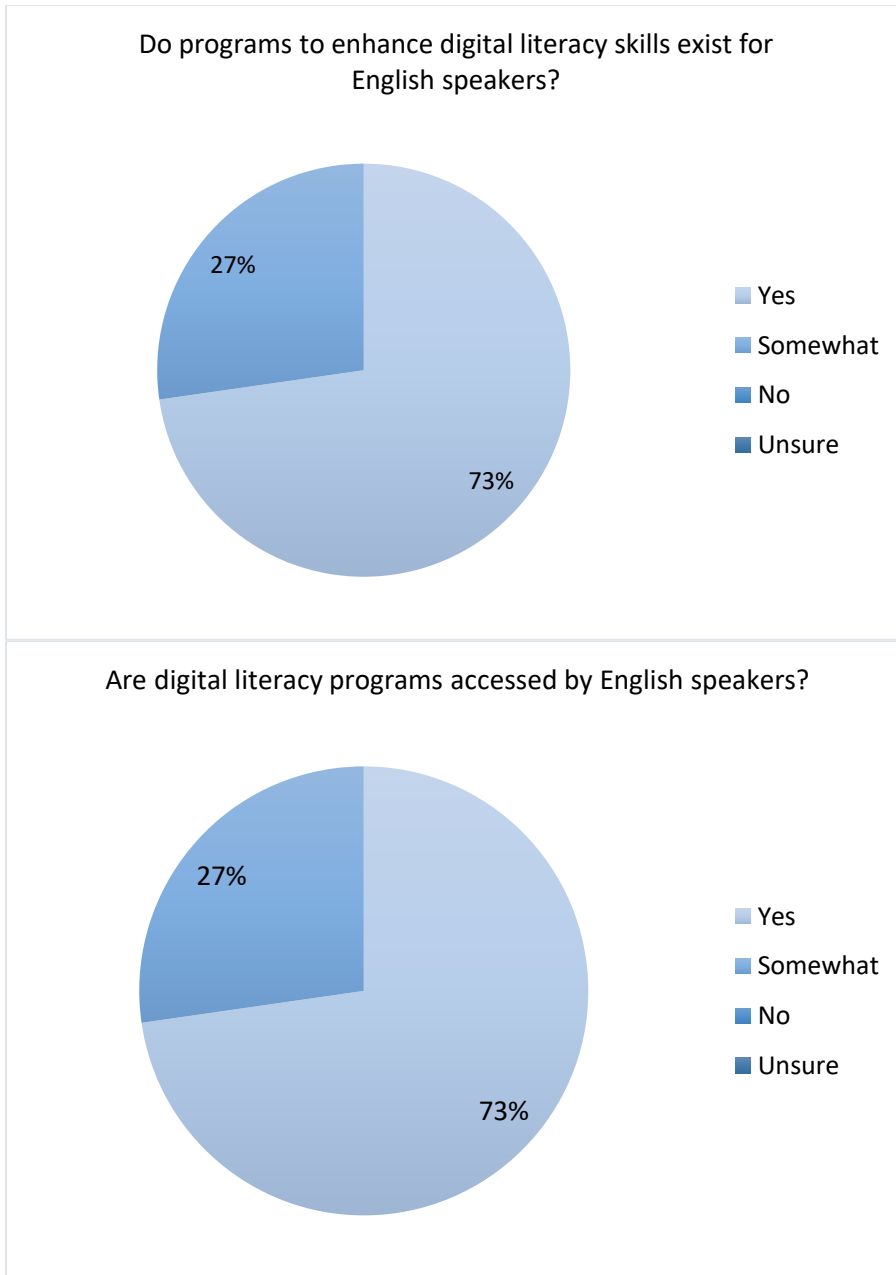


- **FUNDING.** Government funding is insufficient for the need. Additional funding is required. More requests for family literacy programs are received than Literacy Councils are currently able to meet with existing financial and staffing resources.
- **GEOGRAPHY.** Large geographic regions are often served. This puts a strain on organizations to serve sizable territories with limited resources. Access to transportation in rural areas constitutes one of the most difficult gaps.
- **LANGUAGE LAWS.** Limited services are available to English speakers. As well, some English speakers are not used to receiving community services. They make the assumption that services are not accessible to them because they do not speak French. This client group must be actively encouraged to access services.
- **POVERTY.** Poverty constitutes a substantial barrier. Funding is required so that potential participants are able to cover the costs of food, travel, supplies, and in some instances childcare. Vulnerable families often face the most barriers to attend and receive the benefits of programming.

Enhancing Digital Literacy

“During the pandemic, more local organizations started offering digital skills. The pandemic revealed the depth of the digital divide and how many people needed enhanced digital literacy skills.”

Johanna Bateman, Literacy in Action



Yes = 73%
Somewhat = 27%
No = 0%
Unsure = 0%

Yes = 73%
Somewhat = 27%
No = 0%
Unsure = 0%

Synthesis

IMPACT OF COVID

Many Literacy Councils offer some type of programming to help community members improve their digital literacy skills. Prior to COVID-19, digital skills training was taking place, but on a relatively limited basis. As a result of the much higher demand for these skills triggered by the onset of the pandemic, organizations made a quick pivot to provide more training in this area. The pandemic experience clearly demonstrated the negative impact and depth of the digital divide.

PROGRAM DIVERSITY

Programming may be geared to a general population or specifically designed to meet the needs of those in a specific category, for instance, seniors. General digital literacy programming is offered to build skills for home and employment. Specific skill sets are also offered. Among them: how to use Zoom or Facebook Messenger; how to use an iPad; the basics of using a cellular phone; setting up an app; filling out a form online; or effective ways to fully access health information online.

SENIORS AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Low levels of digital literacy skills are particularly prevalent among seniors and vulnerable populations. For many low-income people, a lack of access to digital devices and internet access imposes significant issues and obstacles. The average annual income in some regions of Quebec is very low. This can be particularly true for those in rural, remote, and northern regions.

DIGITAL HYGIENE: AWARENESS, SECURITY, AND PRECAUTIONS

It is believed that less digitally aware community members are particularly prone to falling for “phishing” and other forms of online fraud, whether via e-mail spam or pop-ups. This is one area in particular where a substantial boost in digital training for newcomers is essential.

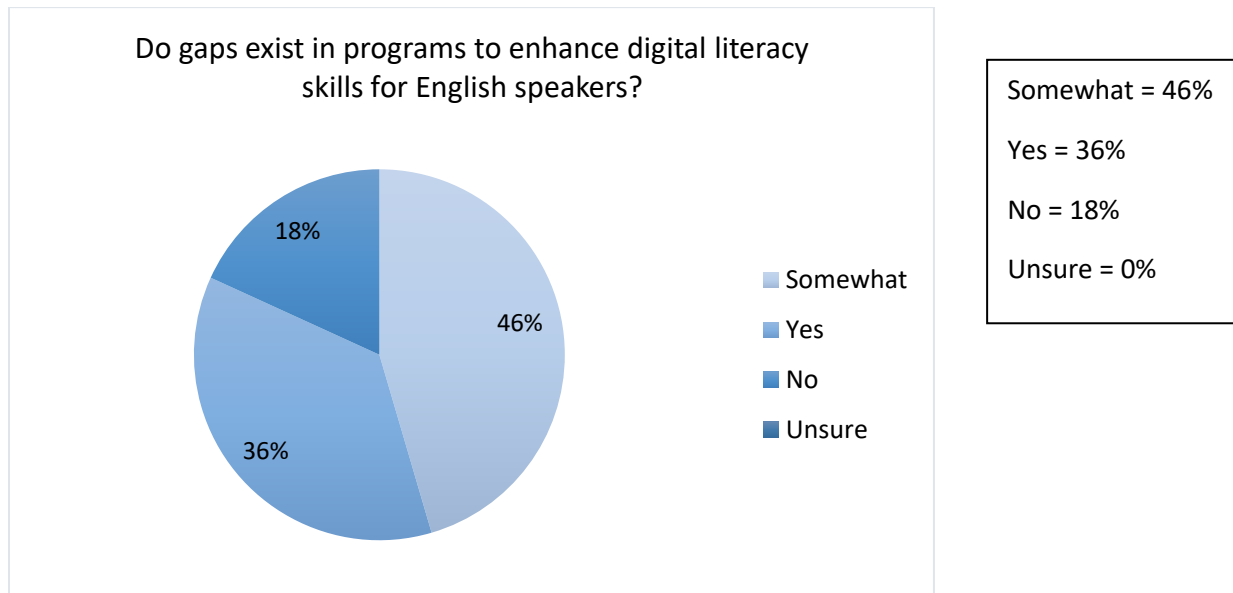
PARTNERSHIPS

Sometimes, Literacy Councils deliver digital literacy programs on their own. In other instances, such programming is delivered in partnership with libraries, Seniors' Centres, community development groups, or similar organizations. In several cases, Literacy Councils, in partnership with others, offer programs where secondary students tutor seniors in digital literacy.

DIGITAL INNOVATION

Digital literacy provides an area of considerable innovation, as many Literacy Councils continually embrace change and offer a wider array of digital learning opportunities. Some groups are now embedding digital literacy within their ongoing literacy programs – opting for integration rather than explicitly and specifically designing and delivering stand-alone digital literacy programming.

Gaps Identified

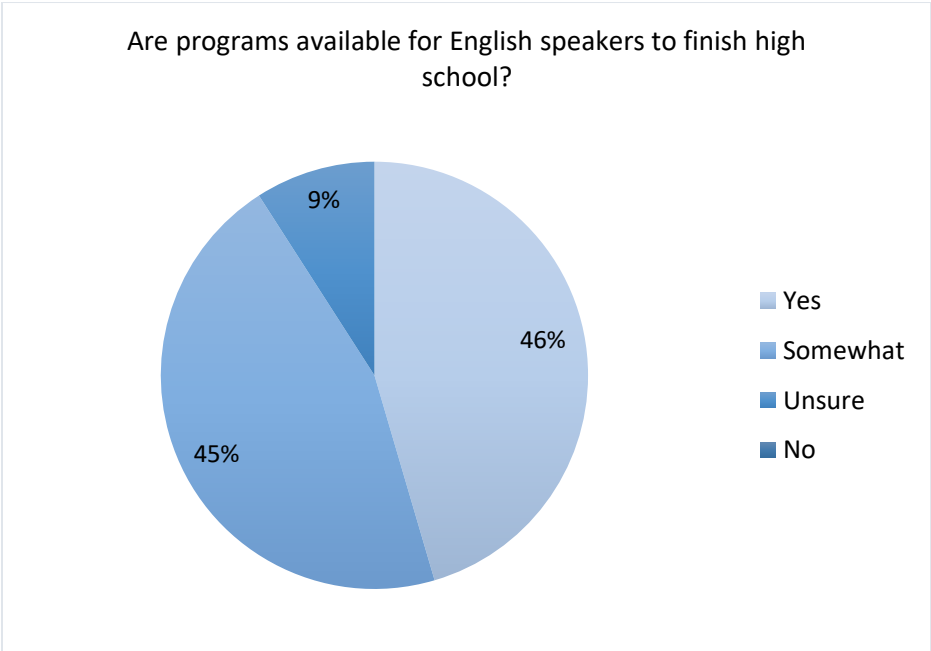


- **COVID-19 AND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE.** COVID increased the need for digital literacy in order for people to communicate more easily with others, access learning opportunities, and gain access to health and community services. The pandemic also revealed the depth of the digital divide.
- **INCREASED NEED** The need for digital skills has substantially increased. Digital skills are foundational for home, community, and work.
- **FUNDING.** Government funding is insufficient to meet the needs. Digital inclusion is critical for everyone, and more funding for digital literacy is required.
- **SENIORS.** Many seniors need enhanced digital literacy skills to access health and community services. This is part of a broader requirement to help them combat isolation as well as better link with family members and friends.
- **POVERTY.** Poverty also imposes a substantial barrier. The digital divide includes a lack of access to digital devices and internet access. Owning a cellular phone or other device and acquiring home access to internet services is beyond the reach of many low-income people.
- **LANGUAGE LAWS.** Limited services are available to English speakers and bilingual services are restricted.
- **RURAL ISSUES.** A distinct urban/rural digital division exists, with fewer services offered in rural areas. The absence of broadband access in some rural communities and for residents of outlying and isolated areas presents a particular issue as well.

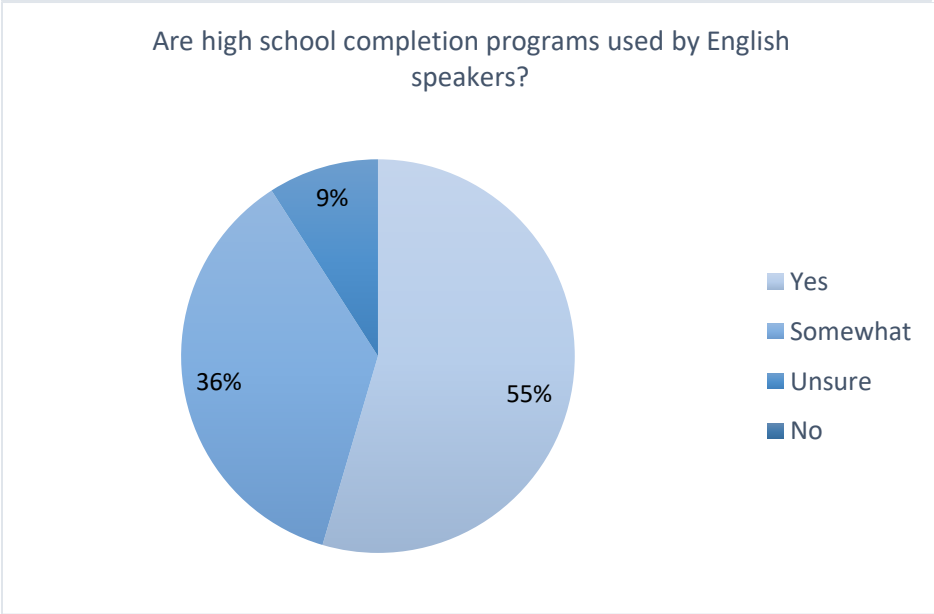
Supporting High School Completion

“Three of the seven Adult Education centres offered by the school board support high school completion as a priority. The school board does an excellent job and is really good at filling gaps.”

Joy Fyckes, RECLAIM Literacy



Yes = 46%
Somewhat = 45%
Unsure = 9%
No = 0%



Yes = 55%
Somewhat = 36%
Unsure = 9%
No = 0%

Synthesis

Respondents strongly emphasized that more of these services should be available:

ADULT EDUCATION CENTRES

Programs to support adults to complete high school are offered by the Adult Education centres of local English-language school boards. For students still in high school, local secondary schools offer some programming options. The extent, type, and availability of such programming varies widely across different regions.

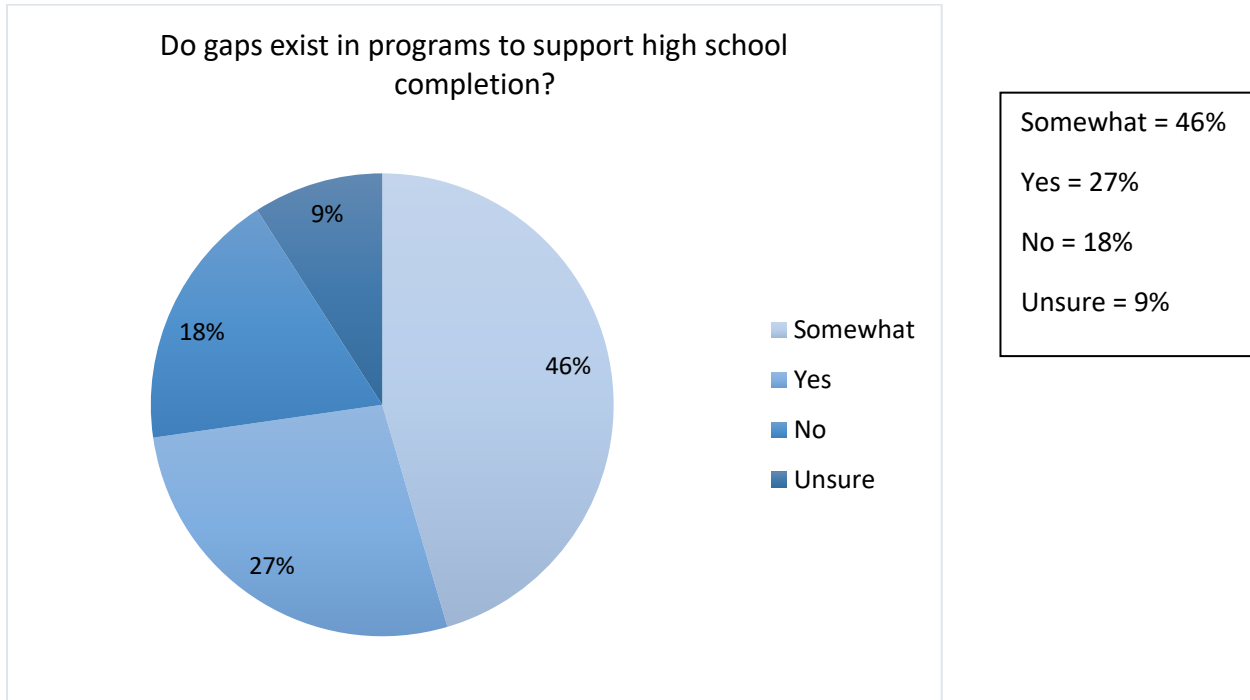
SUPPORT FROM ENGLISH LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILL PROGRAMS

In addition, some Literacy Councils provide support to address gaps in services to support high school completion. For example, several of the groups interviewed mentioned offering help with numeracy instruction. Councils also promote the services of Adult Education centres to potential clients.

Some Literacy Councils received funding to offer programming in this area. For example, one council received government funding for a *“Keep the Youth in School Program.”*

In another region, once a high school categorizes a student as “unlikely to graduate,” the Literacy Council is allowed to provide services to them. As well, several councils provide study skill tutors or supported peer tutoring in their local high schools. Notably, this type of programming conducted in partnership with the high schools typically ceased during the pandemic and is only slowly restarting.

Gaps Identified

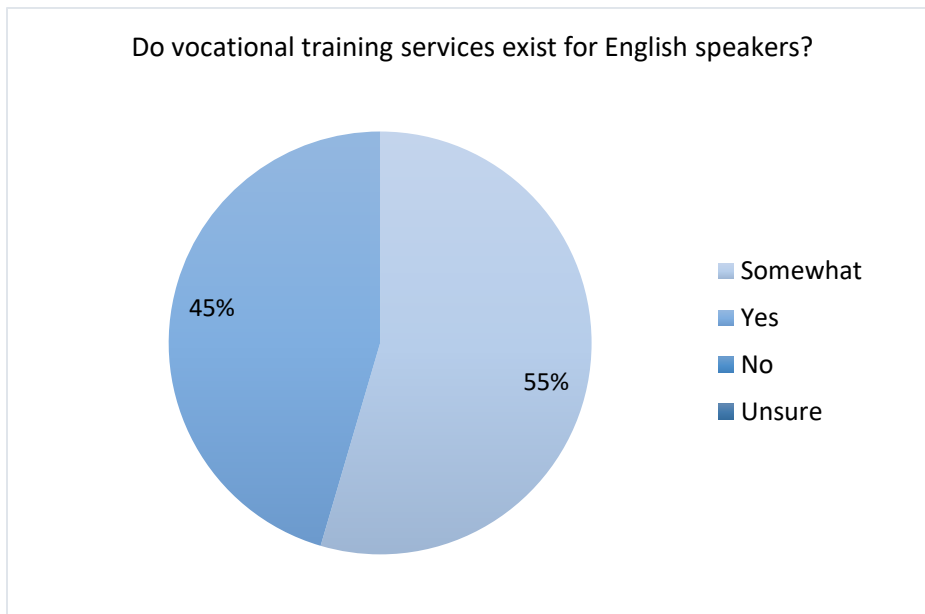


- **IMPROVING FRENCH-LANGUAGE SKILLS.** Some high school students need extra help with improving their French-language skills to be able to graduate. This important support can be difficult to access.
- **GEOGRAPHY.** In large geographic regions, transportation costs and travel time impose significant barriers to accessing high school completion programs.
- **ENCOURAGING STUDENTS TO GET THEIR HIGH SCHOOL LEAVING DIPLOMA.** **Specific measures are needed** to encourage students to obtain their diploma, despite current relatively high employment rates. For some students, the incentive to stay in school is lacking. Even though jobs seem plentiful now, these young people will very likely need a diploma in future.
- **FUNDING.** High school completion is a foundation stone for full participation in our society and our economic structure. More resources and funding should be allocated by the government for support activities.
- **PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT.** Partnerships and more collaboration are often needed to successfully deliver services that support high school completion. Sharing models of how effective partnerships have been established and how they operate in other regions would also prove useful.

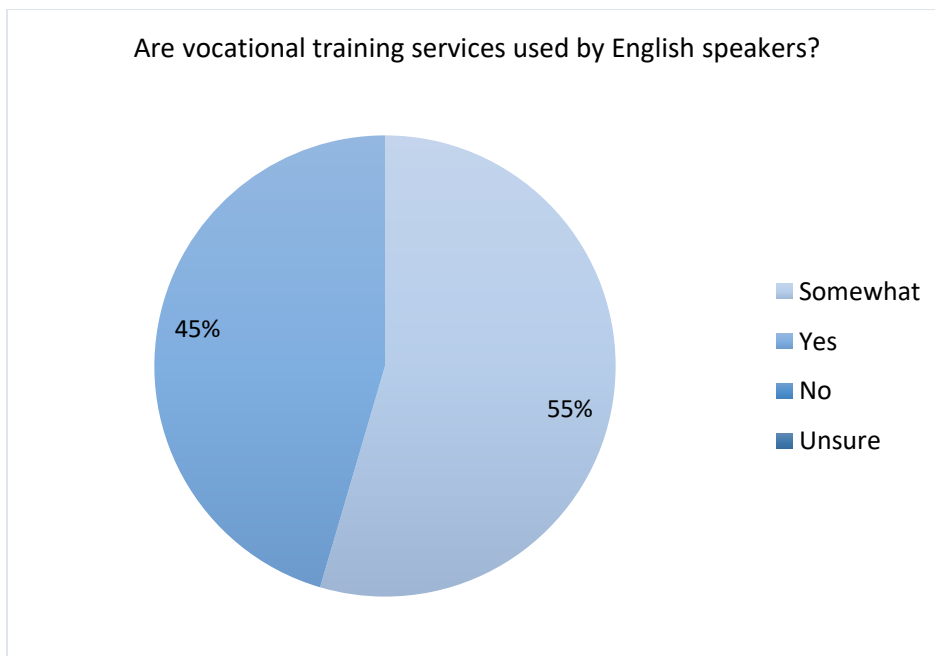
Vocational Training

“The school board’s Adult Education centre offers vocational programming. They are expanding all the time and include a wide variety of options.”

Darlene Brown, The Learning Exchange



Somewhat = 55%
Yes = 45%
No = 0%
Unsure = 0%



Somewhat = 55%
Yes = 45%
No = 0%
Unsure = 0%

Synthesis

ADULT EDUCATION CENTRES

- Vocational training is offered by the Adult Education centres of local school boards. For students still in high school, secondary schools offer a variety of programming.

PROGRAM AVAILABILITY VARIES

- The availability and scope of vocational programming varies sharply, with some regions offering a wide array of opportunities. In other regions, only limited types of training is available.

SUPPORT FROM ENGLISH LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS PROGRAMS

- In some cases, Literacy Councils provide support to adult students enrolled in vocational programs. One council mentioned using the Skills for Success resources to support vocational students. Others mentioned providing tutoring to vocational students.

“Our Literacy Council uses the Skills for Success to support learners enrolled in vocational programs.”

Cathy Nolan, Quebec City Reading Council

Gaps Identified



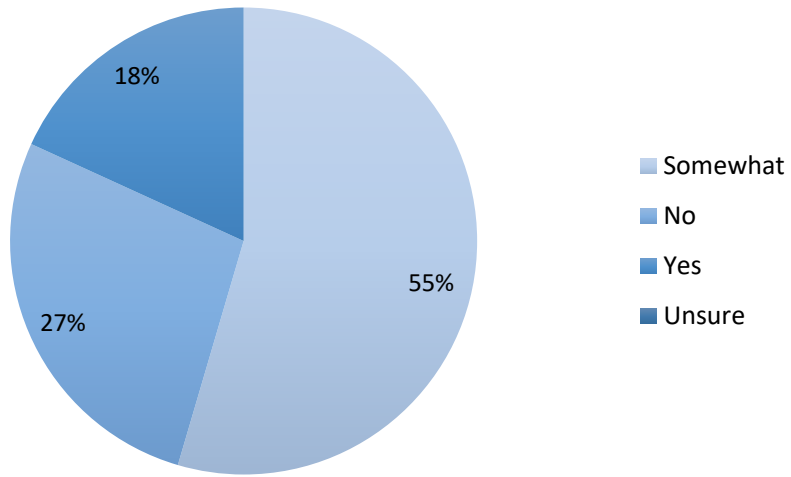
- **LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES.** While vocational services do exist, these often provide only a limited array of opportunities for English speakers. This is especially the case in regions outside Montreal.
- **TRANSPORTATION.** Transportation costs and the travel time to and from vocational training opportunities represent serious barriers. Public transportation is often limited in rural areas. As a result, access to a car is often a necessity to take advantage of training opportunities.
- **RURAL ISSUES.** The rural/urban divide is a major factor. Many more vocational training opportunities are offered in Montreal than in rural, remote, and northern regions.
- **ACCESS ISSUES WITH BILINGUAL SERVICES.** Sometimes bilingual services did not appear welcoming for English speakers, who perceive that service on the ground is offered only in French. As well, in some instances, services that are promoted as bilingual fall short of this promise. Some respondents framed this as a source of tension.
- **LANGUAGE LAWS.** English-language services were often mentioned as not being readily available.

Improving French-Language Skills

“If you received your high school education in Canada in English, there are very few places you can go for this training, and the courses would not be free. Some conversational French classes are available, but they fill up quickly. Demand is much higher than availability.”

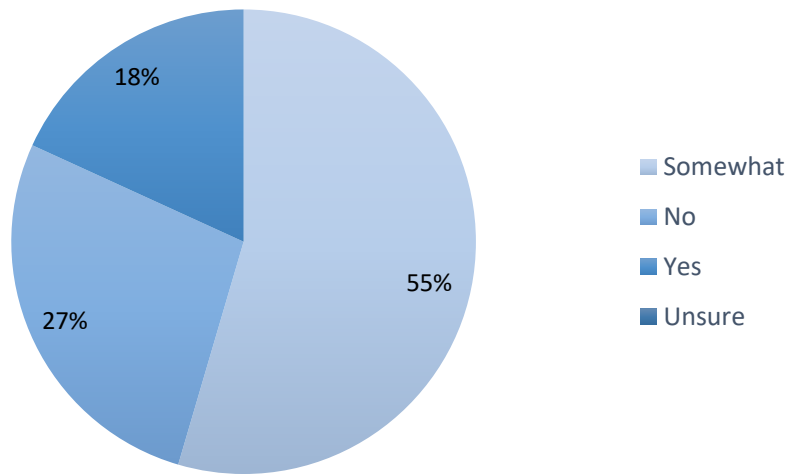
Wendy Seys, Yamaska Literacy Council

Do programs to improve French-language skills exist for English speakers?



Somewhat = 55%
No = 27%
Yes = 18%
Unsure = 0%

Are programs to improve French-language skills used by English speakers?



Somewhat = 55%
No = 27%
Yes = 18%
Unsure = 0%

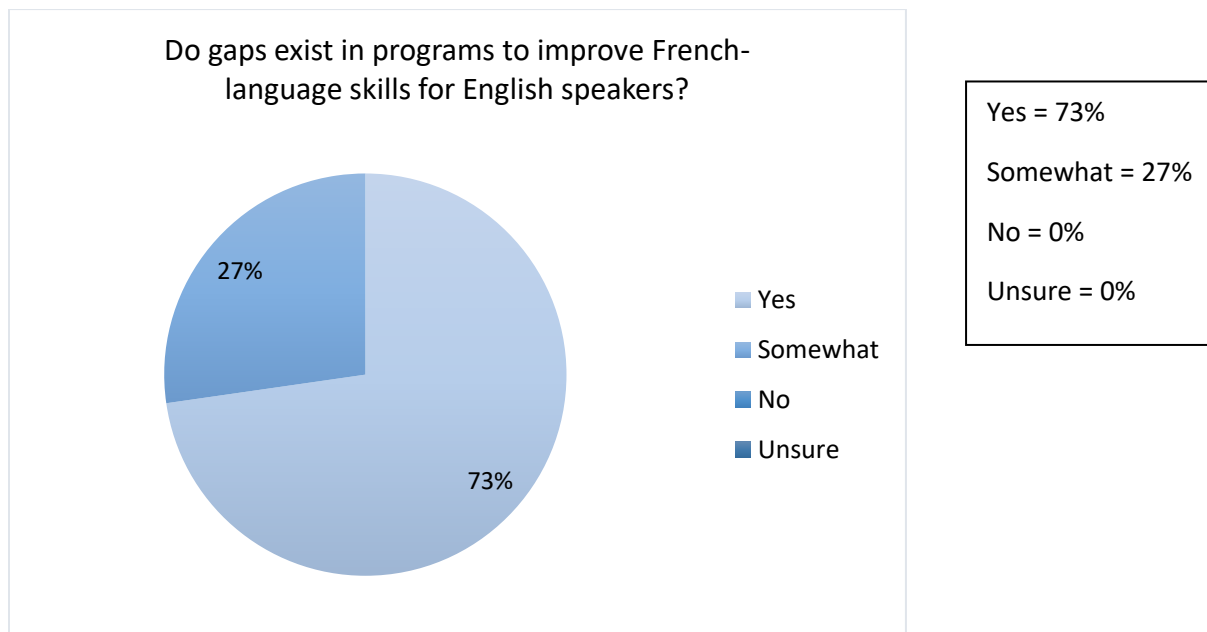
Synthesis

Demand is high for programs to improve French language skills, but such services are not readily available to English speakers. French classes fill up very quickly. Demand is consistently higher than available seats. Occasional programming may be offered (for example, a one-day session on conversational French). However, comprehensive services are generally not available. Some people pay for private instruction and tutoring to meet the need.

Gaps Identified

“There aren’t many services, and people do not know where and how to access these courses.”

Lucy Baum, Literacy Unlimited



In an exceptionally clear way, respondents identified this as an area of high need.

LANGUAGE LAWS

- Literacy Quebec members noted that services to learn French are widely available to new immigrants. For English speakers, however, only limited programming is available to improve their French language skills. Demand for such programs is very high.

COMPLEXITY OF SERVICES

- Many noted that finding what services are available is extremely complex and difficult.

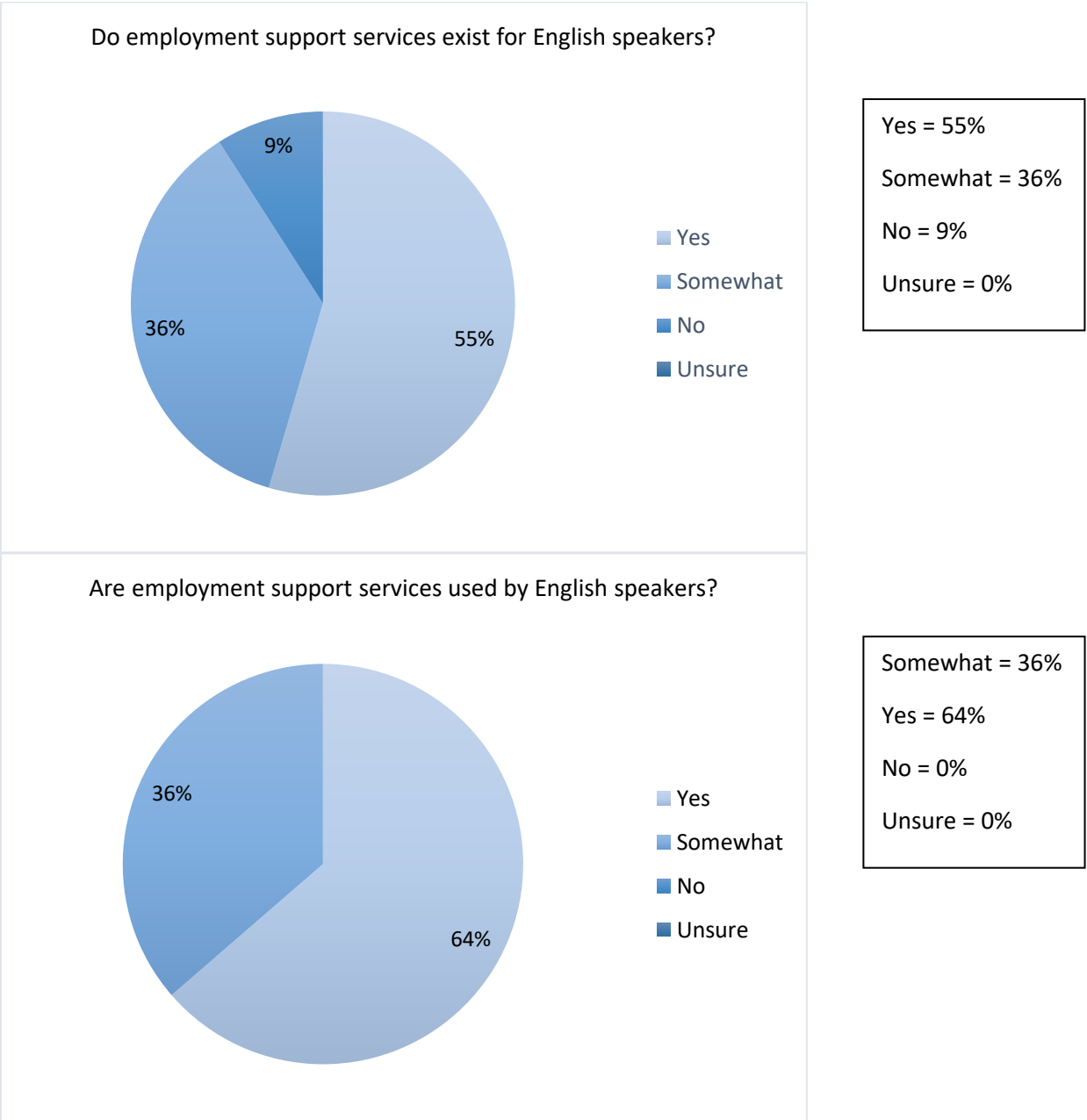
LACK OF CONVERSATIONAL FRENCH CLASSES

- Many respondents specified that the lack of conversational French courses imposes a significant gap.

Employment Support Services

Job Search Services

Employment support services were defined as services related to preparing people to enter the workforce. Examples include job search services, career counselling, and job retention.



Synthesis

“A one-stop shop for employment services for English speakers is a gap, where providing employment services to English speakers is their mission and their mandate.”

Wendy Seys, Yamaska Literacy Council

VARIETY OF PROVIDERS

- Members noted that job search services for English speakers are delivered through a variety of different providers, including:
 - YES (Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship)
 - Carrefour jeunesse-emploi
 - Adult Education Centres of the local English language school board
 - Emploi Quebec
 - Other community-based providers including: Job Links Employment services; OBOULO; OPEX; The FORT Program; New Horizons, and others.

WORKSHOPS:

- These centre on how to write a resume and cover letter, and how to find job listings online.

PARTNERSHIPS

- Literacy Councils often engage in partnerships with job search services. These encompass mutual referrals, help with promotion, and initiatives to support job search activities for learners.

LITERACY INSTRUCTION

- Many Literacy Councils also embed job search strategies within literacy instruction.

LANGUAGE

- Employment support services are not always available in English.

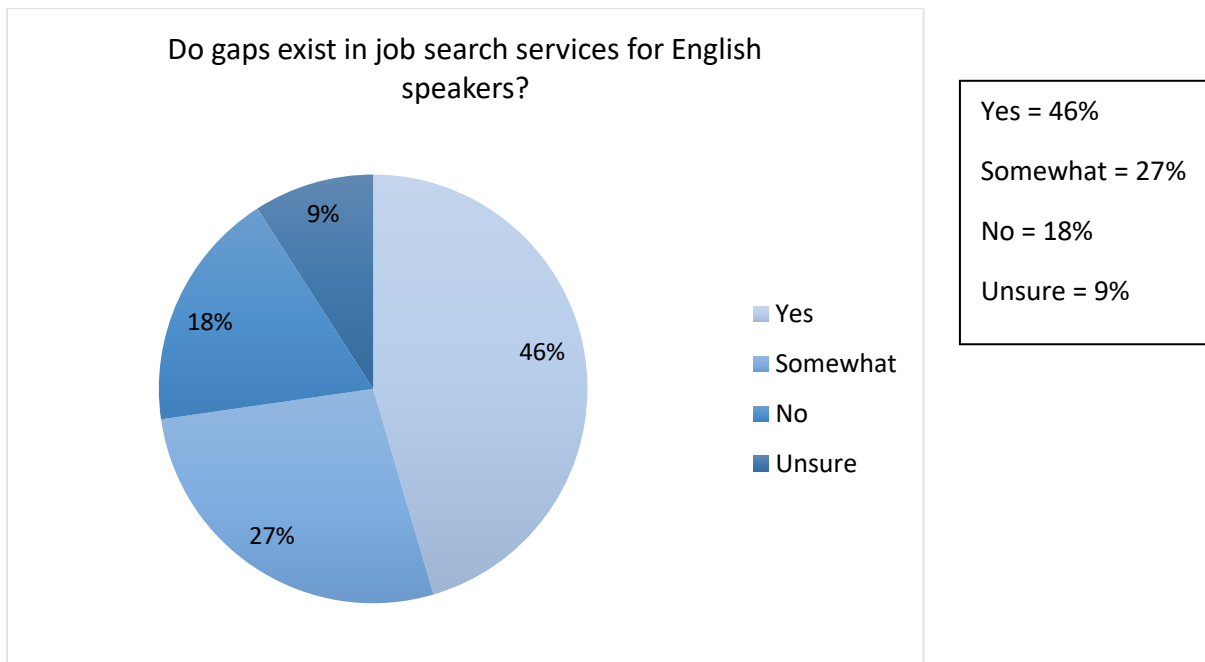
“The school board’s Adult Education program and Emploi Quebec offer job search services. We provide support and resources, but we don’t duplicate. We embed job skills and job search into our literacy instruction, and we teach using the Skills for Success to support preparing for employment.”

Darlene Brown, The Learning Exchange

Gaps Identified

“Centre Jeunesse provides job search services to younger people. However, for those over 35, there are not many services.”

Cheryl Henry, Gaspésie Literacy Council



Respondents noted the following gaps:

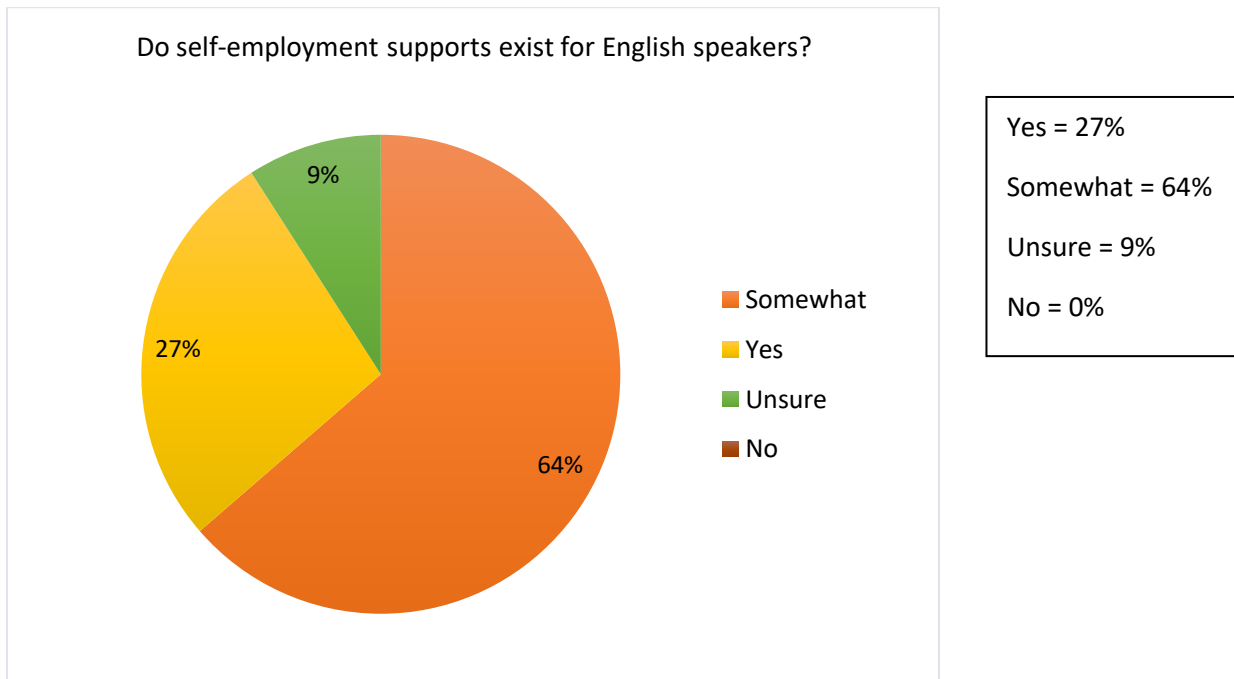
- **LACK OF SERVICES FOR THOSE OVER AGE 40.** Job search services are more readily available for younger people. For those over 40, not many such services are offered. This is part of a clear absence of literacy-related programming oriented toward older workers.
- **LACK OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SERVICES.** Services, even if advertised as bilingual, are not always available in English. If a staff person at a job search organization is willing and able to speak English, then services might be available. In other instances, however, service is available in only one language and is thus reserved only for individuals who speak French.
- **RURAL/URBAN DIVIDE.** Job search services are broadly available in Montreal. However, rural areas are not well covered.

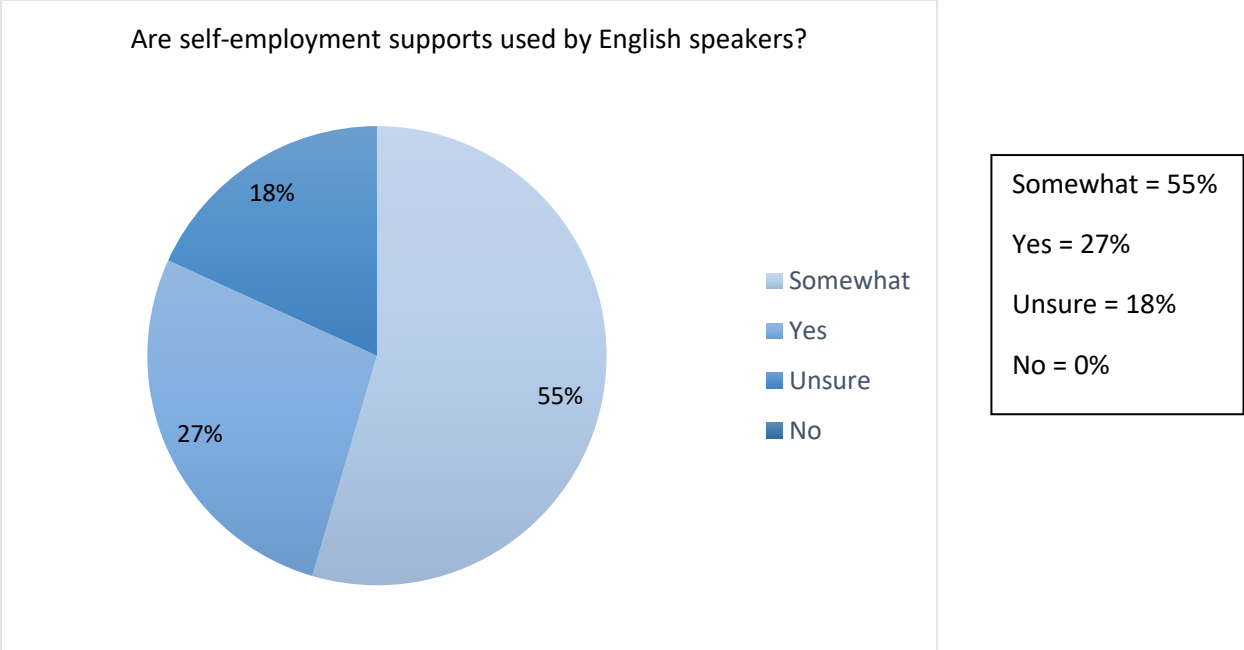
- **RURAL ISSUES.** In rural areas, the large geographic areas render transportation a particular challenge. Job search services for English speakers in rural areas may also have limited capacity, with just a handful of staff available to serve a large region.
- **STRUCTURAL ISSUES:** Different levels of government offer a range of services with differing mandates in different areas, leading to what is sometimes described as turf issues. Additionally, services offered within the boundaries of one region may only be available to a portion of the region and not the entirety of the region

Self-Employment Services

“Services are very sporadic and not necessarily available in English.”

Wendy Seys, Yamaska Literacy Council





Synthesis

Organizations that provide such support include:

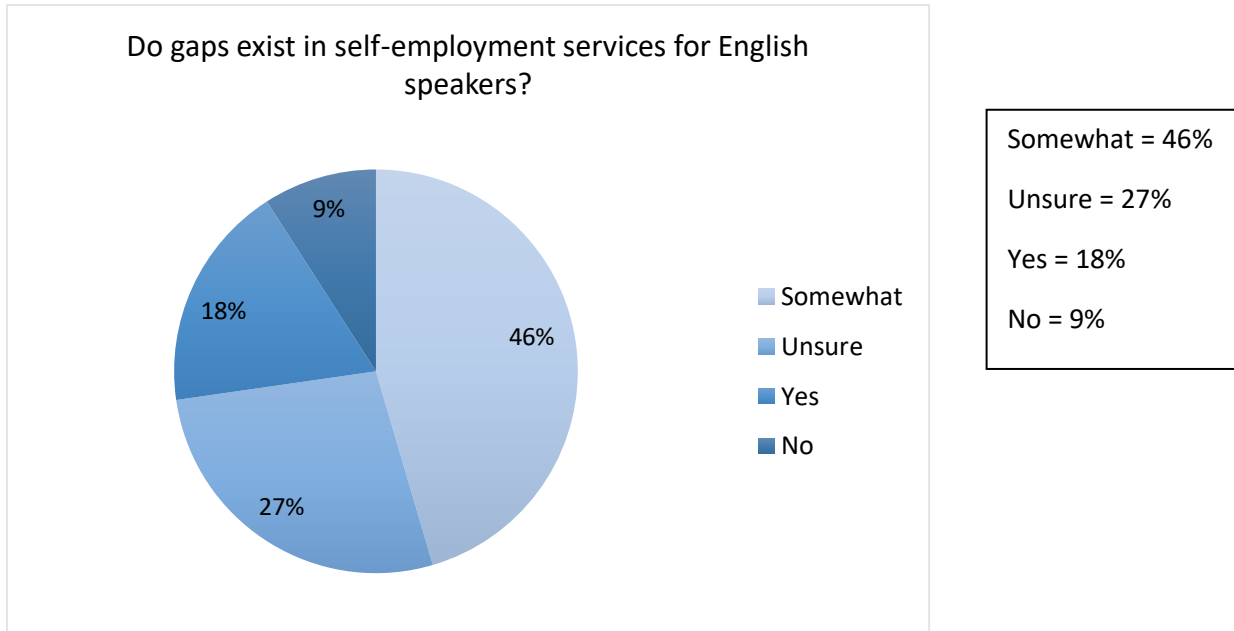
- YES (Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship)
- CEDEC’s Small Business Support Network (part of the Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation)
- Community Futures
- South Shore English Network
- FORT
- Government of Quebec

Some respondents mentioned that self-employment is a growth area, whether because of the changing employment landscape in a post-COVID world or because the government is promoting self-employment as a career option.

Gaps Identified

“There are no services specifically for English speakers. However, there is an organization that supports self-employed workers. While their services are provided in French, they have an openness to helping English speakers with creating business plans.”

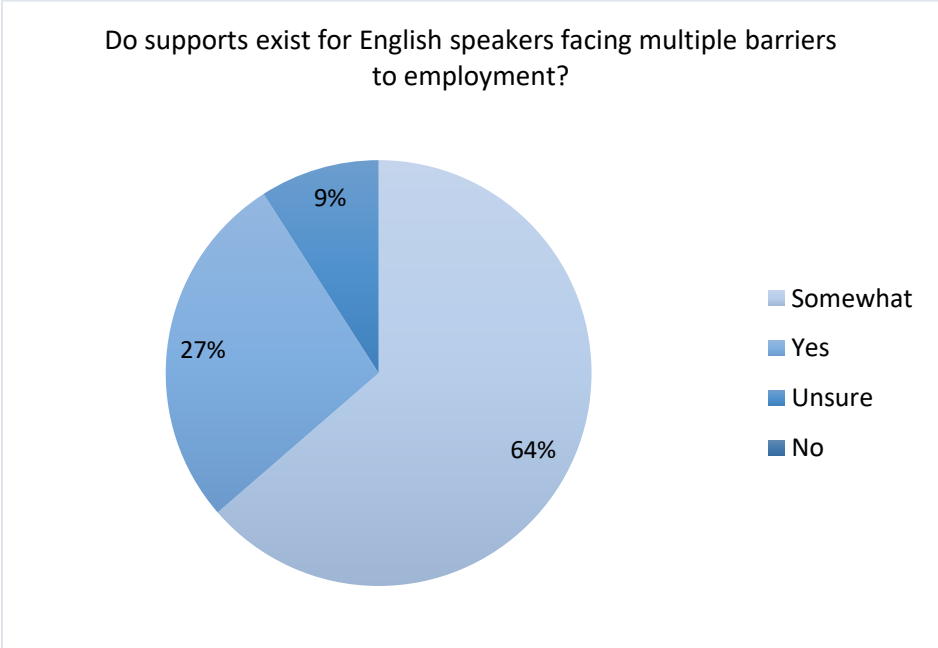
Marlene Dagenais, Laurentian Literacy Centre



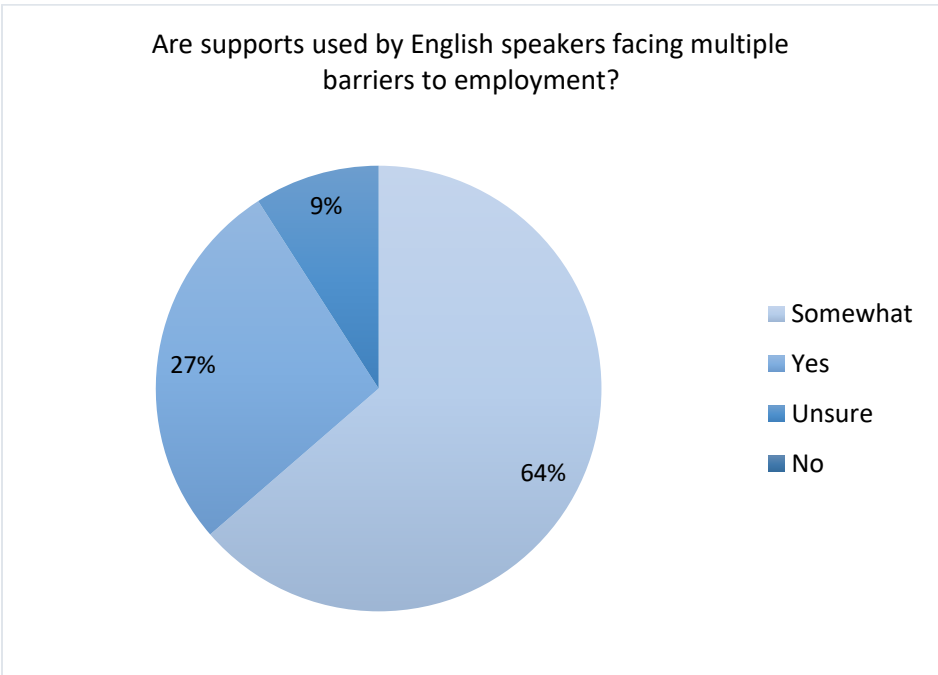
Respondents identified the following issues:

- **ON THE INCREASE.** Self-employment is increasing, and more support and funding are required.
- **LACK OF SERVICE.** A lack of services is apparent for English speakers.
- **LACK OF PROGRAMS FOR OLDER WORKERS.** In some communities, helpful self-employment services operate for youth. However, this programming is geared only to those under 40. This leaves a significant gap in services for older workers. In some instances, programs set the age limit at 25 years old.
- **LABOUR MARKET EVOLUTION.** As the labour market gives way to the gig economy and digital nomads in the wake of successive waves of automation, outsourcing, and downsizing, some underscore that self-employment support for those over the age of 40 is as important as for those under that age.
- **GEOGRAPHY.** In many areas outside of Montreal, services are only offered sporadically. As well, program offerings are limited.
- **TRANSPORTATION.** Transportation and travel impose significant barriers in rural areas.

Supports for People Facing Multiple Employment Barriers



Somewhat = 64%
Yes = 27%
Unsure = 9%
No = 0%



Somewhat = 64%
Yes = 27%
Unsure = 9%
No = 0%

Synthesis

“Almost all literacy students face multiple barriers to employment. The need is higher than the available services.”

Darlene Brown, The Learning Exchange

Diverse Services

Literacy Councils specified that a wide range of organizations provide diverse services to assist in meeting the needs of vulnerable, multi-barriered people in their communities. The scope varies. Depending on the community. Services can include:

- ✓ Food banks
- ✓ Health services
- ✓ Mental health supports
- ✓ Shelters
- ✓ Housing resource centres
- ✓ Community centres
- ✓ Referral centres
- ✓ Emergency services
- ✓ Organizations serving people with disabilities
- ✓ Women’s centres
- ✓ And more...

Multiple Barriers

Many literacy students face multiple barriers to successful learning and employment. Issues include: poverty; lack of affordable housing; disabilities; health challenges; and more. With high inflation rates, poverty levels are increasing. A housing crisis exists in many areas. For all these reasons, additional services are in high demand.

Demand Exceeds Supply

Respondents emphasized that services in all regions need more support, given that ongoing and increasing demand considerably exceeds existing capacity. The perception is that this gap appears to be widening.

Advocacy

Literacy Councils advocate for adult students and help them access relevant services.

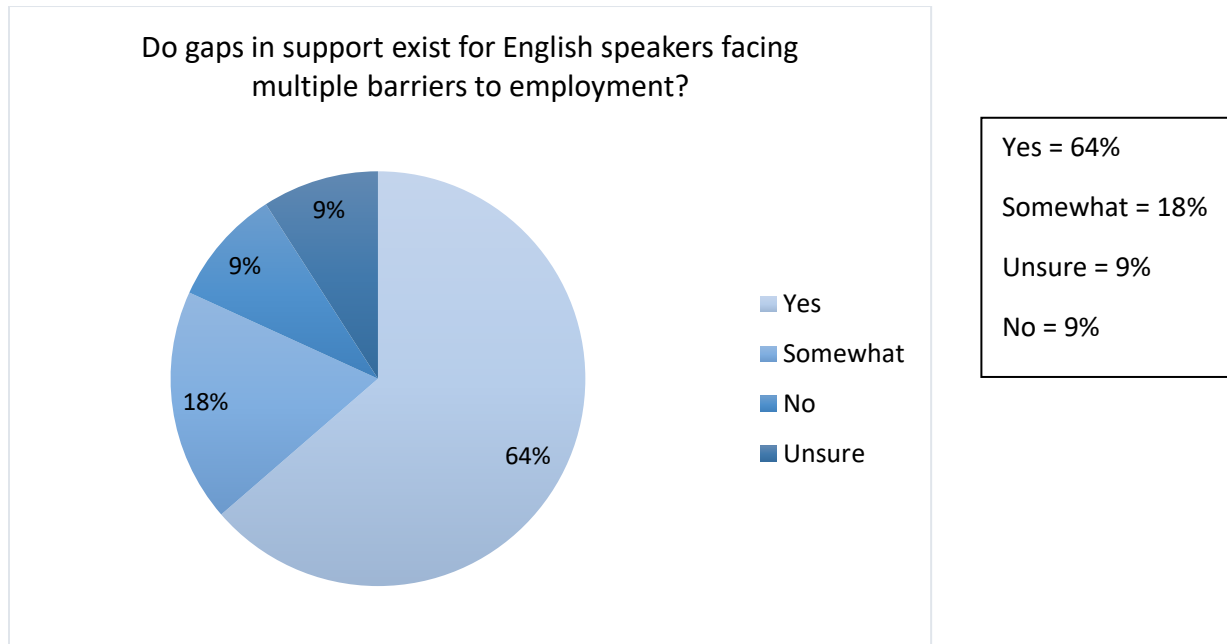
Partnerships

Some Literacy Quebec members are involved in partnership activities with local service providers. For example, one Literacy Council brings books and other learning materials for children and adults to the Women’s Shelter in their community.

Gaps Identified

“Social services providers are overwhelmed by the needs and are over-capacity. The need exceeds available services. Mental health is an issue requiring more support. Capacity in this area is limited.”

Joy Fyckes, RECLAIM Literacy



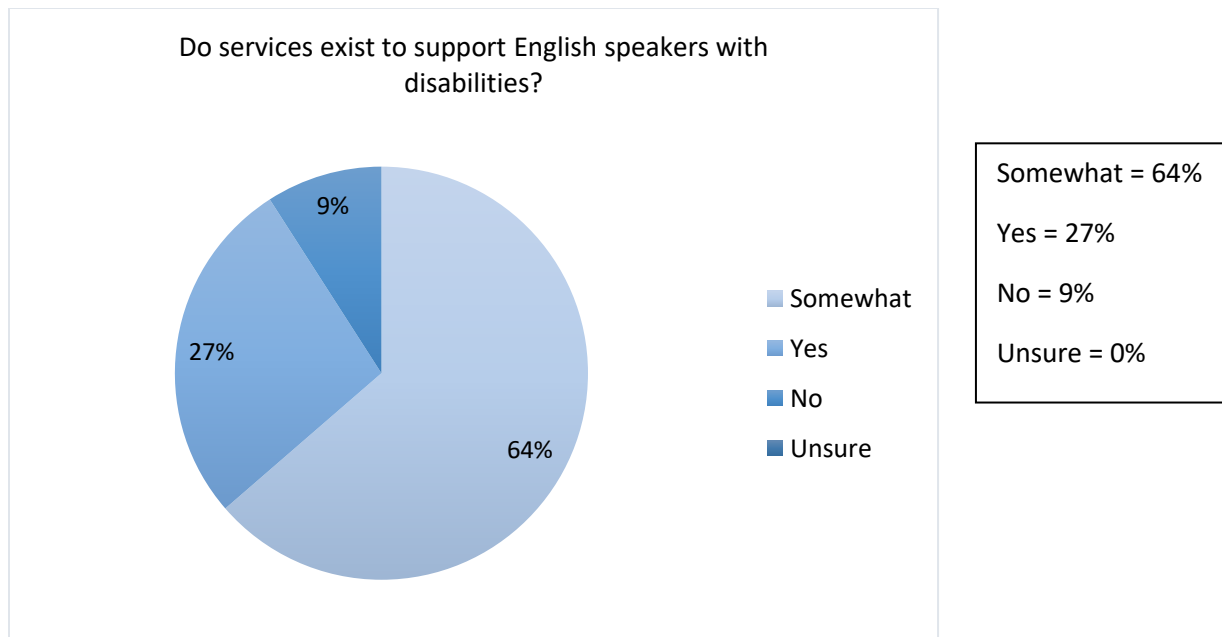
- **LIMITED SERVICES AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH.** Limited services are available in English, especially outside of Montreal.
- **RELUCTANCE TO ACCESS SERVICES.** Some English speakers express a fear of being discriminated against in terms of accessing services in English. As a result, they do not reach out for support.
- **MISINFORMATION.** For some, a mythology exists that all English speakers born in Quebec are wealthy, that everyone in the community is doing well, and that no social service needs exist for English speakers. It makes understanding social problems and developing and accessing services more difficult.
- **POVERTY.** High poverty rates exist among English speakers, in rural Quebec in particular. This is coupled with insufficient services. Rural poverty is a huge issue; this is generally not well recognized or sufficiently supported.

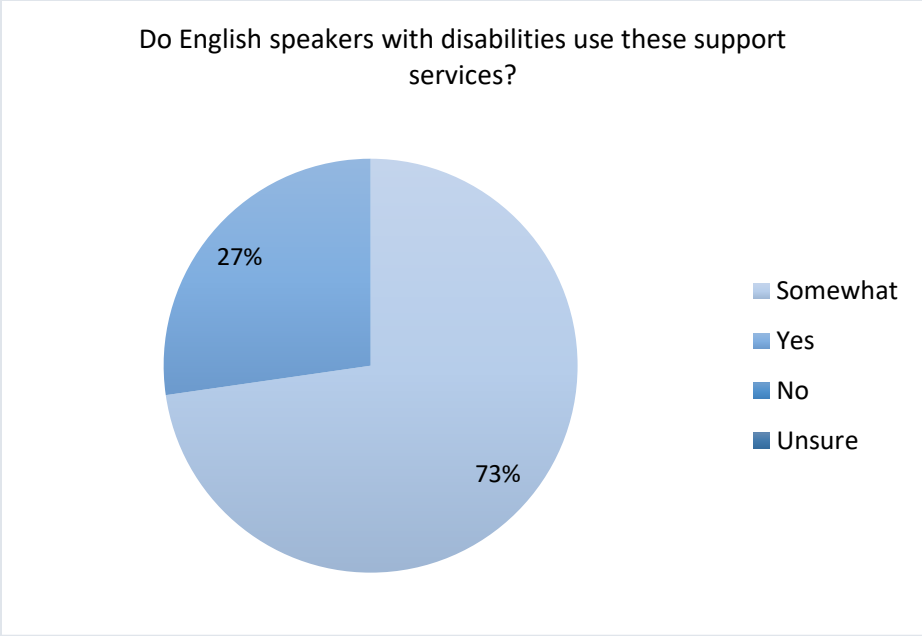
- **CRISIS IN SOCIAL SERVICES.** Because of the high rate of inflation and the housing crisis, social service providers are overwhelmed. The needs substantially outstrip available services.
- **MENTAL HEALTH.** The need for mental health services has dramatically increased.
- **TRANSPORTATION.** In large geographic regions, access to transportation and travel costs are significant barriers. Gas is very expensive to get to jobs, training, or services.
- **URBAN/RURAL DIVIDE.** Services vary between communities. Urban areas, in particular Montreal, provide a significantly broader range of services than available in rural and remote areas.

Programs to Support People with Disabilities

“Services are lacking in both languages for people with physical, mental, and other disabilities. They do exist but are insufficient for the need. This is a huge need, and the lack of support prohibits many people with disabilities from entering the workforce.”

Mark Anto, United for Literacy*





Somewhat = 73%
Yes = 27%
Unsure = 0%
No = 0%

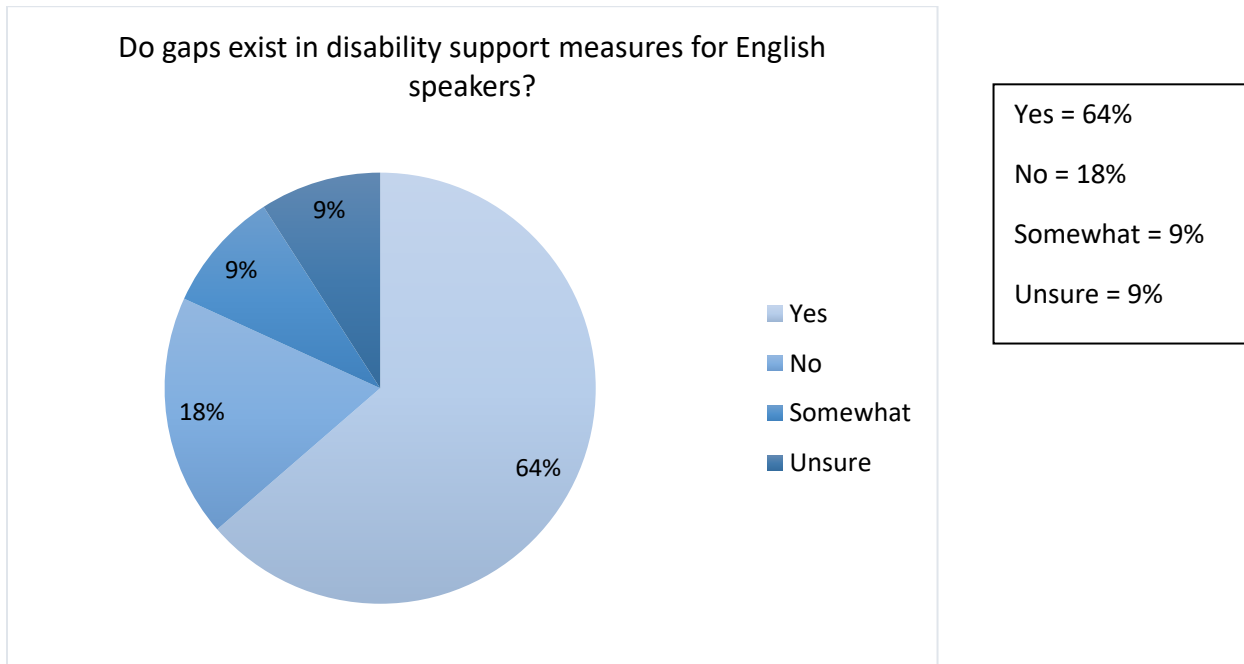
Synthesis

Respondents repeatedly underscored that there are simply not enough programs and services – whether provided in French or in English – to meet the needs of individuals facing physical, intellectual, visual, psychiatric, and other types of disabilities.

“There is a huge need for more services for people with disabilities, for both English speakers and Francophones. They cannot effectively participate in the workforce with the limited support available.”

Mark Anto, United for Literacy*

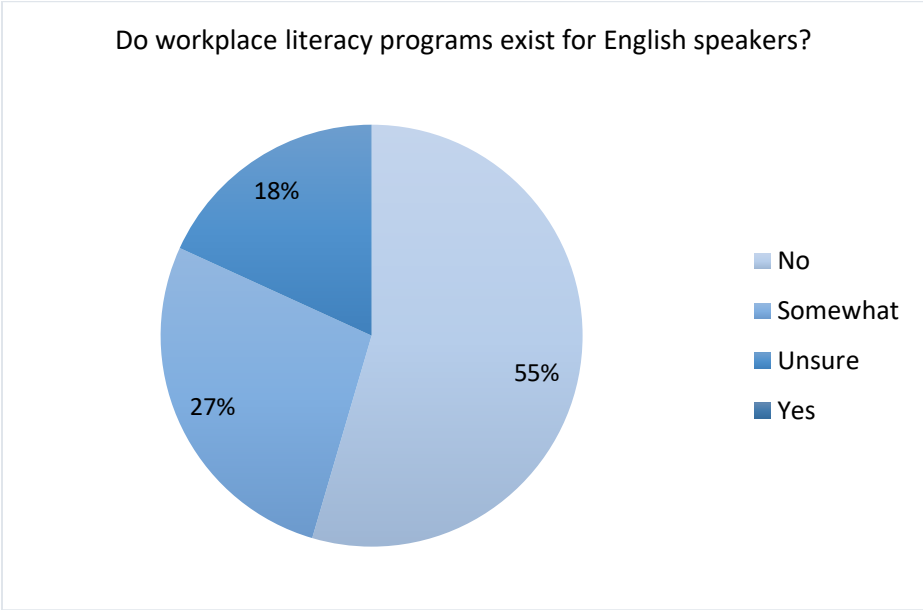
Gaps Identified



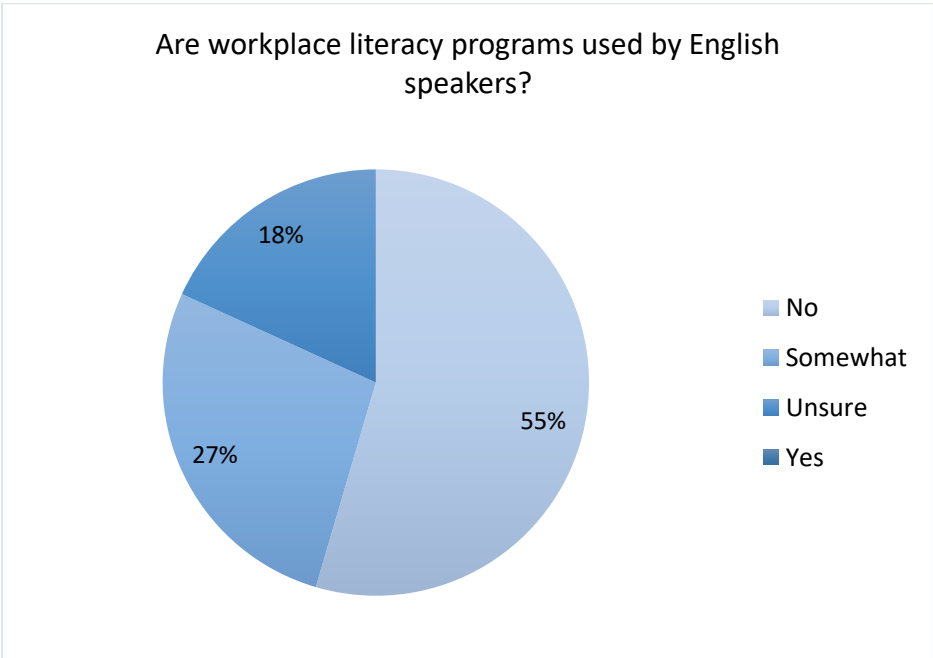
- **MORE SERVICES ARE NEEDED.** A strong need is apparent for more services to support people with disabilities.
- **AVAILABILITY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SERVICES.** Programming available in English is lacking.
- **TRANSPORTATION.** Transportation costs and accessibility persist as barriers in rural and remote regions.
- **RURAL ISSUES.** It is difficult to provide services in regions with small, geographically diverse populations.
- **SERVICE NAVIGATION.** It is often difficult for people with disabilities to find and to navigate services.
- **BARRIER TO EMPLOYMENT.** The lack of services for people with disabilities imposes a significant barrier to employment.
- **POVERTY.** Strong links exist between disability, lack of employment, and poverty.
- **UNDIAGNOSED DISABILITIES.** Many undiagnosed disabilities exist. These include dyslexia and various types of learning disabilities.

Workplace Training Services

Workplace Literacy



No = 55%
Somewhat = 27%
Unsure = 18%
Yes = 0%



No = 55%
Somewhat = 27%
Unsure = 18%
Yes = 0%

Synthesis

Only a limited number of workplace literacy programs are in operation. Several Literacy Councils noted that prior to the onset of COVID, some workplace pilot projects and as well as placements for high school students are under way. This programming simply ceased during the pandemic. It had not resumed when key informant interviews were being conducted. One organization offers workplace literacy classes in English over the lunch hour. This group hopes to expand this program in the future.

In another case, a school board developed a workplace-based training service via a new department created to go into workplaces. In a particularly powerful example, in northern Quebec, a workplace literacy program is offered in partnership with Canadian Tire.

INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT FROM LITERACY COUNCILS. As individuals, employees can and do access training from English language Literacy Councils for help in upgrading their reading, writing, and numeracy skills, along with other skills essential for the workplace.

SKILLS FOR SUCCESS AND EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT. Several respondents expressed hope that the Skills for Success model may assist Literacy Councils to make connections with more impact on employers. For example, the nine skills that form SFS's framework are closely aligned with the top skills employers rate as key. Additionally, the post-pandemic labour shortage may incentivize employers who would have previously disregarded workplace literacy programs to now partner with their nearest Literacy Council.

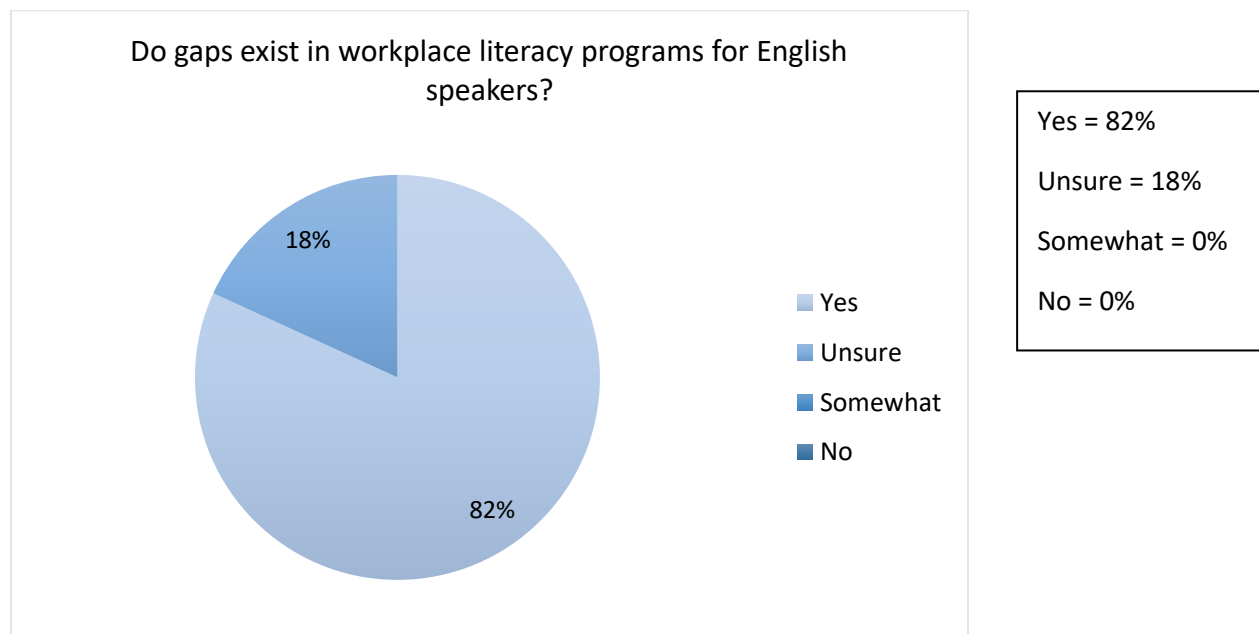
These are remarks from LQ members on this point:

- *LQ Member 1 tries hard to support people with employment goals and would like to get involved with workplace literacy. However, employers aren't interested; they don't want to pay their employees to develop literacy skills at work. Though these employers will offer other kinds of workplace training directly related to the job. There is a training and vocational centre that offers some internships. However, very little employer-based workforce literacy happens.*
- *LQ Member 2: There are services that exist. The school board has just developed a workplace-based training service. It is a new department that has been created to go into workplaces.*
- *LQ Member 3: Workplace literacy programs are very limited for English speakers. There aren't many English-speaking workplaces, and most programs are in French. Additionally, the shortage of workers complicates everything. There is no incentive for employers to train. Workers just leave. That said, the labour shortage is also an opportunity. People with low literacy skills are getting hired because of this, so there is a great need for workforce literacy.*

Gaps Identified

‘This is a huge gap for English speakers. In fact, it’s a desert!’

Wendy Seys, Yamaska Literacy Council



LANGUAGE LAWS

- Restrictions around the use of English in the workplace are perceived by some as contributing to the lack of workforce literacy programming available in English.

SKILL SHORTAGES

- Because of the broad shortage in skilled workers, employers are preoccupied with the challenge of finding and training employees in the skills needed to do the job. They thus do not have time, resources, or inclination to provide additional training.

LACK OF INCENTIVE FOR EMPLOYERS

- An absence of employer interest in offering workplace literacy training is often apparent. Many employers consider it is not their responsibility to pay their employees to develop literacy skills at work. No compensation is provided to employers to cover wages paid while employees are learning on company time.

OTHER WORKPLACE PRIORITIES

- The priority for employers who conduct workplace training is often to provide French instruction to employees who are new immigrants to Quebec.

LACK OF AWARENESS

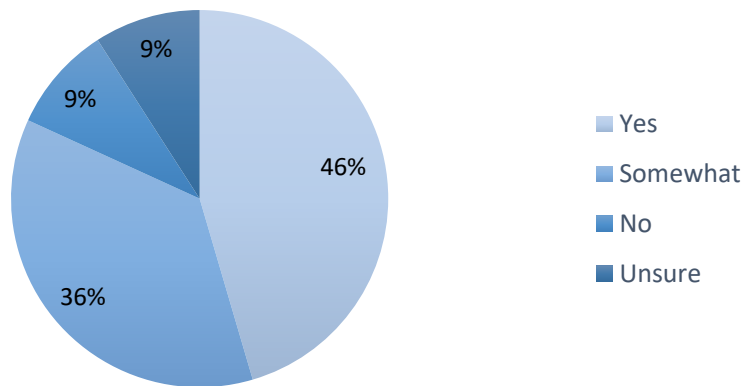
- Employers may not be aware that they can refer their English language employees with low literacy levels to Literacy Councils for individualized upgrading.

Pre-Apprenticeship and Preparation for Skilled Trades

“There is a critical gap here. Much more training is needed in this area. There is a dire need for the skilled trades. Most especially in the construction sector. With the housing shortage, many new houses need to be constructed.”

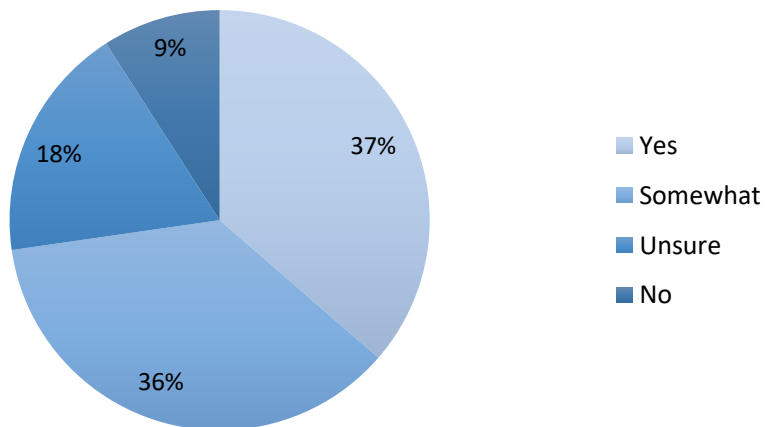
Mark Anto, Frontier College

Do pre-apprentice programs and access to preparation for skilled trades exist for English speakers?



Yes = 46%
Somewhat = 36%
No = 9%
Unsure = 9%

Are pre-apprentice programs and access to preparation for skilled trades used by English speakers?



Yes = 37%
Somewhat = 36%
Unsure = 18%
No = 9%

Synthesis

ADULT EDUCATION CENTRES

- Typically, pre-apprenticeship and skilled trades programming is provided by the Adult Education centres operated by local school boards.

COLLEGES

- For a few regions, colleges were also mentioned. For example, Nunavut Arctic College offers many skilled trade programs. For students still in high school, secondary schools might offer some kind of training.

ROLE OF LITERACY COUNCILS

- Literacy Councils provide support to adult students who want to upgrade their skills to enter the skilled trades or pre-apprenticeship programs.

ON THE INCREASE

- Several regions reported that skilled trades training opportunities were increasing. This is considered a priority, given the shortage of skilled workers.

“Employers in the skilled trades are so busy due to a shortage of workers that they do not have time to train new workers. Also, there is a shortage of people willing to go into the skilled trades.”

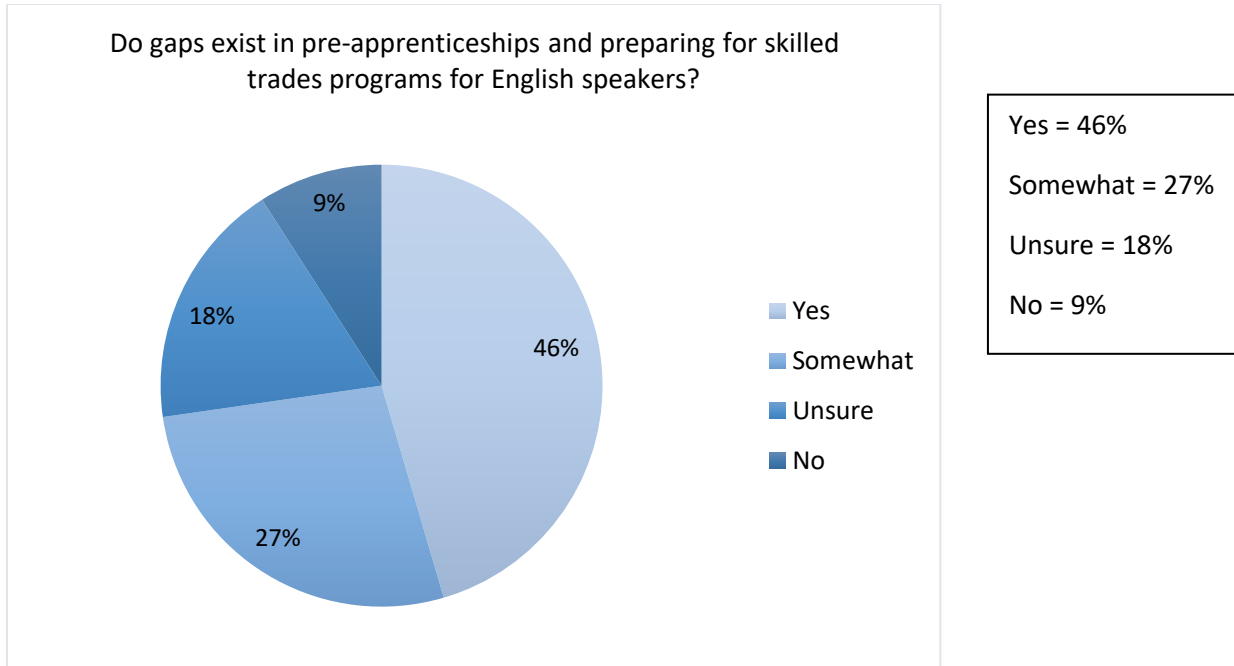
Cheryl Henry, Gaspésie Literacy Council



Gaps Identified

“Services mostly exist in French. If a person is bilingual, then they can access the services. If not, it is understood that they would have to seek courses in Montreal.”

Cathy Nolan, Quebec City Reading Council



Respondents clearly indicated significant issues.

- **LANGUAGE BARRIERS.** Language constitutes a major barrier. Program offerings available in English are often limited.
- **SKILL SHORTAGES.** An ongoing shortage of workers is coupled with an insufficient number of individuals expressing a willingness to enter the skilled trades.
- **TRANSPORTATION.** In large geographic areas, travel time and transportation are once again cited as significant barriers.

RURAL ISSUES. The types of programming offered varied greatly between regions, with urban areas typically offering many more opportunities. Rural and remote regions often had only very limited programming available locally.

Marginalized Populations

While Literacy Quebec and CELI are well aware of and recognize the long list of underserved and under-serviced populations, Indigenous peoples and Newcomers were especially addressed for the purpose of this report, given the unique nature of these communities.

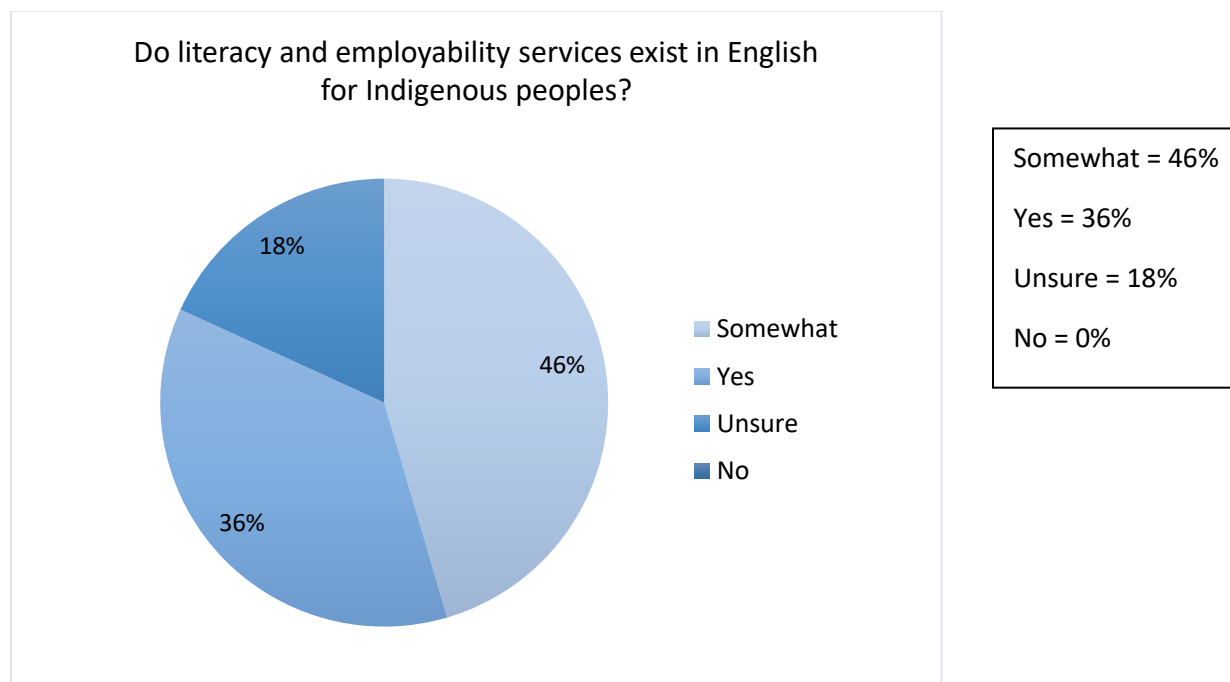
Indigenous Peoples

Respondents were asked to focus only on the first of the three survey questions: the existence of literacy and employability services in English to serve Indigenous communities. For this unique sector of Quebec's linguistic policy landscape, these responses helped clarify and contextualize the most promising approaches to English-language literacy and essential skills programs.

Respondents emphasized the particular challenges this presented. The scope of questioning for this section was constrained by design, given that respondent organizations considered themselves not equipped with the breadth of knowledge needed to speak with authority on whether such literacy services are used. Nor do they consider themselves in a position to identify gaps.

This quandary also reflects historical antecedents which continue to inform Indigenous life – on and off reserve in Quebec (and the rest of Canada). Similarly, it underscores the cautious approach literacy groups are likely to adopt – as non-Indigenous outsiders – in their work to develop and design outreach, as well as carry out program delivery.

As a result, this section in no way encompasses existing practices, partnerships, or specific needs. Rather, it serves simply as a starting point to better identify the needs and find ways to work together in the future.



Synthesis

- Priority approach for literacy groups is to cultivate engagement with Indigenous communities:
 - Create individual connections
 - Focus on relationship-building
 - Develop partnerships with bands
 - Emphasize peer-to-peer literacy delivery within the bands
- Community-driven programming
 - Indigenous communities need more funding, period.
 - Difficult to prioritize literacy amid basic shortcomings: issues relating to clean water and inadequate housing stock.
- Many Indigenous communities are French speaking.
- There is uneven access between urban and rural services and supports.
- Indigenous individuals often require multifaceted acclimation when leaving their communities for urban centres. Such challenges can impede their efforts to access and benefit from literacy supports.
- As well, additional training might be needed for literacy providers regarding cross-cultural work and working with those experiencing culture shock.

Respondents also shared the following insights:

- They would welcome additional connections and collaborations with Indigenous communities and opportunities to learn from them.
- More English literacy and essential skills and employment services should be available for Indigenous peoples. Indigenous populations would benefit considerably from more developed economic and social services.
- Many services for Indigenous peoples are offered – and would be supported and delivered directly – by individual band councils.
- Montreal provides a service hub, with a very strong array of diverse services for Indigenous peoples. This is very sharply in contrast with the limited services available in remote and rural areas.
- Some Indigenous people move to Montreal and other urban centres, away from their home communities. Service providers in urban areas continue trying to develop approaches to better serve this client group effectively.
- One Literacy Council noted that it had recently completed a project to learn more about how to better serve Indigenous clients.
- Literacy becomes less of a priority when basic needs like clean water and infrastructure services are not met or available. Indigenous populations generally would first and foremost benefit from more economic and social services.

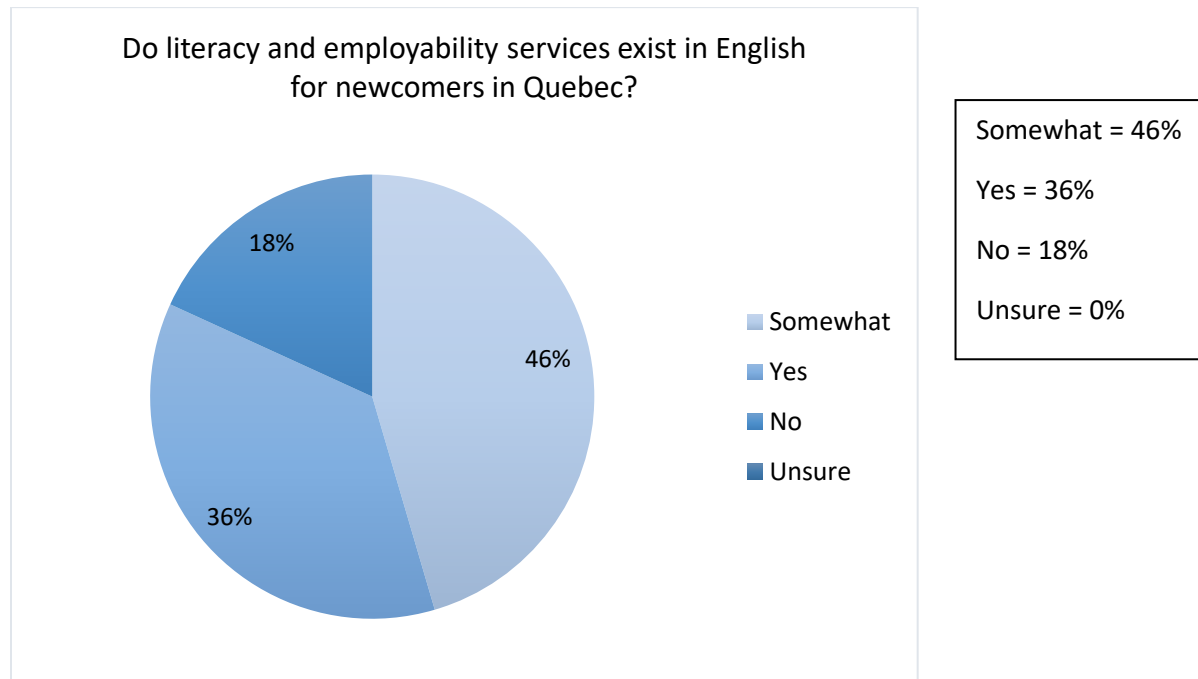
Newcomers

As with the section immediately above, respondents were asked to address solely the existence of literacy and employability services in English offered to newcomer communities. Program delivery with this sector echoes the remarks threaded throughout this report regarding the rural/urban split with respect to the availability and viability of specific services.

The particular context of Canada's two official languages within the province of Quebec impacts the accessibility of English literacy and essential skills programs and services for newcomers to the province.

"Our family literacy programs are very popular with newcomers. We offer seven early childhood programs per week and there are waiting lists for all programs. There are 26 different languages spoken amongst the newcomers attending these events!"

Rachel Wagner, South Shore Literacy Council



Synthesis

URBAN ISSUES

- Montreal is a large urban centre and a service hub. It provides a popular destination for newcomers because there are many services available, in contrast with remote and rural areas.

RURAL ISSUES

- Rural areas do not receive a lot of newcomers compared with urban locations, with newcomers flowing to locations where jobs, opportunities and services are more plentiful. However, respondents from organizations that serve rural areas noted that they assist newcomers as needed by providing informal support and referring them to relevant community programs and services.

FAMILY LITERACY

- Many respondents who provide family literacy programs emphasized that newcomer families provide the dynamic participation that strengthens these sorts of initiatives. Family literacy programming is very popular for newcomers, providing paths to socialize, practice conversational English, and engage with their new community.

LANGUAGE LAWS

- Services for newcomers focus on teaching the French language and culture. This presents unique challenges to newcomers interested in accessing English language literacy programs and services.

COMMUNITY TABLES AND NETWORKING

- In some regions, active Community Tables or other networking opportunities provide information, access to supports, and referrals for newcomers seeking English language supports. Information about such resources is widely shared among service providers.

GROWTH AREA

- Some respondents believe that providing supports to newcomers who speak English presents an area of opportunity and need. This is a growing clientele in some regions who need services.
 - For example, in Quebec City, Voice of English-speaking Quebec (VEQ) has a dedicated newcomers coordinator to assist all newcomers to the city. The FORT Programme and South Shore English Network also provide services.

Suggestions for Potential Pilot Projects

“ We need a project that will help us learn about the changed landscape. The pandemic has changed so much. We’ve been in survival mode. There are new players, new needs and issues, and new opportunities. We need a COVID Refresh!”

Wendy Seys, Yamaska Literacy Council

One of CELI’s aims is to fund pilot projects that activate the SFS framework through measures and programs for the English-speaking community in Quebec, which support the literacy program and service priorities identified in this report by Literacy Quebec members. Additionally, CELI is working with other research findings to identify project priorities.

A mix of collaborations and partnerships will be needed to provide new and innovative approaches. The key informant interviews thus also focused on the priorities suggested for potential pilot projects.

This summary of ideas identified for potential pilot projects is not listed in priority order.

ADAPTING TO THE POST-COVID LANDSCAPE

- Host a project that will help participants better understand the changed landscape and help identify how to adapt. The pandemic has changed so much. We’ve been in survival mode. There are new players, new needs and issues, and new opportunities. We need to connect with one another.

ENHANCED COLLABORATION

- Develop projects to build more collaborative and non-competitive partnerships with key organizations that operate across our communities. These alliances would be structured to encourage and maximize access to additional resources and enhance capacity to best serve our communities and meet the needs of learners.

SFS IMPLEMENTATION

- Provide funding for a variety of pilot projects to implement the Skills for Success in literacy programs.

SFS MATERIALS ONLINE

- Fund projects to ensure that a full range of SFS learning materials and resources are made available online for English literacy and essential skills programs.

SFS BEST PRACTICES

- Fund specific projects centred on techniques for literacy trainers and practitioners to share resources, tools, and best practices in using the Skills for Success to better serve learners and help them succeed.

OLDER WORKERS

- Provide projects geared to employability for those over 35 years of age. Remarkably few such services are available to English speakers for that age group.

IDENTIFY PROMISING PROJECTS, PLAYERS, AND PARTNERS

- Organize roundtables to spotlight promising projects and initiatives that have gotten underway, highlight the key players and partners, and develop avenues for all to work more closely together to enhance literacy in specific communities.

GETTING TOGETHER IN PERSON

- Get Literacy Quebec members together in person to discuss the challenges presented by this new environment and how we can best adapt and improve. What's working? What's changed? What are the new opportunities and ways of working?

GETTING TOGETHER ONLINE

- Create an online space for Literacy Quebec members to convene at regular intervals to learn and share specific tools and learning resources related to the implementation of the SFS. These presentations would be focused on best practices and conducted in a concise and efficient manner.

MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR BETTER REACH

- Fund projects geared to specific marketing strategies that better reach client groups. The old ways are not working as well. How can we attract new learners in this changed environment?

DEMONSTRATING VALUE TO KEY STAKEHOLDERS & FUNDERS

- Create projects to help clearly demonstrate the value of literacy training to the government. More core funding and support are essential for our community members to fully adapt to the post-pandemic environment. Groups operating on the front lines speak with a single voice to say: Governments need to better understand our value.

OVERCOMING GEOGRAPHIC BARRIERS

- Develop projects that provide pragmatic measures which address the geographic barriers hindering those serving vulnerable populations in large regions, including travel and accessibility, and reliable internet in remote areas.

CAPACITY-BUILDING IN VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

- Host and nurture projects within vulnerable communities that build capacity and knowledge, including staff development and support. Vulnerable communities are often the most in need of services, and most often face the most daunting barriers to accessing services. Enhancing internal capacity is needed.

WORKPLACE LITERACY

- Develop and host specific projects within the workplace to support people with low literacy levels. The initial focus should be placed on cooperating employers who grasp the increased need for digital literacy and higher skills in their workplaces.

CONVERSATIONAL FRENCH

- Sponsor projects that provide opportunities for English speakers to participate in conversational French classes.

TRAUMA-INFORMED SUPPORT

- Fund projects to offer training on how to provide trauma-informed support during literacy training with vulnerable people. Also, offer train-the-trainer sessions, and/or professional development for staff on this topic.

ADAPT TO LEARNER PROJECT PARTICIPATION NEEDS

- Ensure that all projects serving learners include specific budget allocations for providing childcare, assistance with transportation, and meals. Similarly, project budgets should cover the costs of any supplies, such as notebooks and resource material and access to tablets and computers.

COMMUNITY LINKAGES

- Fund projects put forward by organizations which have already forged strong community linkages. Build on existing partnerships and on networks which can demonstrate a track record of success.

NEWCOMERS

- Host projects to provide support to newcomers who speak English. This offers an area of opportunity and need.

DIGITAL DIVIDE

- Fund projects to help bridge the digital divide and support vulnerable learners, seniors, and others to increase their skills. Digital is an integral part of our lives, and we need to ensure that access and knowledge are increased.

FAMILY LITERACY

- This presents a particularly promising area for developing and funding imaginative initiatives to help improve early literacy, family literacy, and inter-generational literacy.

USE SFS TO BETTER DEFINE THE ROLE OF LITERACY COUNCILS IN THE COMMUNITY

- Fund projects to help more clearly define the vocation of Literacy Councils in order to better place them within the local network of community services. Roles could be more crisply expressed in the language of the SFS to ensure clarity for all stakeholders, both learners and referral partners.

SFS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Sponsor projects that clearly demonstrate expected learning outcomes from literacy instruction. This area is particularly likely to link well with the SFS.

ONLINE COLLABORATION TO IMPLEMENT THE SFS

- Develop a project that supports LQ member organizations to work together online to share and co-create resources, forms, processes, etc. This would encourage best practices as well as skills development while supporting the need to work more effectively with the Skills for Success.

EMPLOYABILITY

- Develop projects to increase employability in English language communities.

LEARNER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- Fund projects that assist Literacy Councils to best reach and retain students in today's environment, including ways the SFS might help with current issues.

Use of Findings to Inform CELI and Next Steps

Use of Findings to Inform CELI

The report's findings will inform how CELI builds out its community grants framework so that identified gaps in services and capacity are considered from development to implementation. For example, because CELI grants support pilot projects that activate the SFS model, what survey respondents report regarding especially vulnerable populations, and the hard-to-reach, will help CELI identify priority areas for project selection criteria and adjudication.

Additionally, respondents' reporting will help CELI align its professional development training, tools and resources to address identified learning priorities and knowledge gaps, particularly in the context of SFS, which is new to groups in the ESCQ. This same input regarding gaps, for example, may also inform CELI's research activities so that reports produced and resources allocated are in direct response to identified trends. By using this process, we gain evidence-based insight into issues and needs to better articulate and target our responses.

Lastly, based on the service and program partners identified by respondents, CELI will design its partnership development strategies to include these allies in planning and implementation.

Next Steps

CELI will continue to conduct surveys with Literacy Quebec’s membership as well as with broader constituencies that intersect with English language literacy and essential skills, across the ESCQ. And as we gain momentum, these findings will be applied across CELI’s multiple initiatives for strategic impact. For example, we already know from survey respondents that a Community of Practice (COP) is of value, and so CELI will integrate a formalized mechanism into its grants framework to develop and maintain regular opportunities for groups to meet as a cohort to share and identify what works and what doesn’t, including a lessons-learned log so community and institutional knowledge is documented.

The COP and its tools will be integrated into the CELI’s Impact Assessment Framework (IAF), a reporting tool customized for CELI’s grant recipients to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the pilot projects on the ground. The IAF will also assess the impact of the CELI project on the organizational evolution of grantee groups and include structured training on how to conduct assessments at the meta and granular levels. This “Report Card” approach will regularly pinpoint areas of improvement for grantee organizations and for CELI itself.

Research and reporting findings, along with our COP output, will be shared at CELI’s annual community forums to be held at the end of each of the three pilot project years. External stakeholders will be invited to join these forums to share their own related research, to offer additional training, and to expand CELI’s COP at-large.

With this approach, CELI is committed to fully leveraging member and stakeholder input, from project research and design to implementation, from outcomes, impact, and lessons-learned to best practices, and from knowledge production and translation to reporting, archiving, next steps and passing the baton.

