



The Law Foundation of Ontario
Building a better foundation for justice in Ontario

THE CONNECTING REGION: FAQs

The Law Foundation of Ontario (LFO) is inviting applications from regions interested in being selected as a candidate for the Connecting Region.

The deadline for submitting applications is JANUARY 22, 2010.

1. What is the Law Foundation of Ontario?

Established under the Law Society Act in 1974, the LFO is a grant making organization which supports community participation in the legal system, enhances excellence in the legal profession, and promotes access to justice.

2. What is the Connecting Region?

In January, 2009, the LFO released a report called “Connecting Across Language and Distance: Linguistic and Rural Access to Legal Information and Services” (the Connecting Report) which made recommendations as to how to improve access to legal information and services for linguistic minorities and residents of rural and remote communities. A copy of the Connecting Report may be found at the LFO website www.lawfoundation.on.ca, Linguistic and Rural Access to Justice Project.

The Connecting Report recommended the creation of a group of legal and non-legal organizations that would work together to test strategies to improve linguistic and/or rural access to legal information and services in a region of the province (the Connecting Region).

The Connecting Region would provide a model for a coherent system which would support people at every stage of the legal continuum: recognizing that they have a legal problem and understanding how the law might help them; getting information to understand the problem; obtaining appropriate referrals and summary advice;

and connecting with a lawyer or other legal professional for advice and representation.

Once developed and tested, experience gained could be shared with other regions of the province.

3. Who will be served by the Connecting Region?

The Connecting Region will focus on serving linguistic minorities (persons who speak languages other than official languages) and/or residents of rural or remote areas. It can focus on linguistic minorities or rural residents or both.

The applicant organization can define the region with approximate boundaries. The region should make co-ordination feasible and have the potential to act as a model for others (whether by virtue of the geography, population or linguistic minorities served).

4. What are the benefits of becoming a Connecting Region?

The benefits of becoming the Connecting Region are that:

- Your region will be on the cutting edge of legal service delivery
- Organizations will be funded to work together to make a difference
- Funding will be available to organizations to develop and deliver innovative strategies to improve the legal information, referral and service available to the individuals that they serve
- Barriers to access to justice experienced by persons isolated by language and/ or distance will be reduced
- Individuals in your region will better understand and address their legal problems
- Your region will have the opportunity to share your strategies and experience with other regions in the province.

5. What happens if my region is selected as a candidate for the Connecting Region?

a) Selection of a Candidate

The LFO invites organizations to apply and ask that their region be selected as a candidate for the Connecting Region. The LFO may choose one or more candidates.

If a region is selected as a candidate, the LFO will fund an organization to plan a regional conference and/or series of meetings to launch this initiative. It would fund reasonable costs and a modest stipend for other organizations attending meetings.

The purpose of the regional conference and/or subsequent meetings would be to canvass participants for interest in participating in the Connecting Region, define its mandate and determine how the Connecting Region consortium would operate, communicate and make decisions.

They would determine which member organization would volunteer to provide administrative and planning support. This organization could be different from the organization which initially planned the regional conference and/or series of meetings.

b) Confirmation of the Region

The candidate would then report back to the LFO with a list of member organizations, mandate and a governance structure which (among other things) would identify which organization would provide administrative and planning support. It also would provide a timeline for the future development of a regional plan and funding proposal package. At this point, LFO would determine whether to confirm this region as a Connecting Region. LFO could confirm one or more Connecting Regions.

b) Regional Plan and Funding Proposal Package

If the LFO confirms a Connecting Region, it will provide funding to an organization to provide administrative and planning support and it will consider the funding proposal package developed and subsequently submitted for the Region. The funding proposal package would be aimed at improving linguistic and/ or rural

or remote access to justice. It would ask for funding for member organizations to deliver innovative strategies to improve the legal information, referral and service available to the individuals that they serve.

6. Who applies on behalf of a region which wishes to be selected as the Connecting Region?

Any organization, legal or non-legal, can apply on behalf of a region which wishes to be selected as the Connecting Region and offer to act as the organization which plans the regional conference and/or series of meetings.

7. How does my organization apply?

The organization should complete the Connecting Region candidate application form. A copy of this form can be found at www.lawfoundation.on.ca under Special Announcements: the Connecting Region. The application should address the criteria for the selection of a candidate for the Connecting Region.

8. What are the criteria for the selection of a candidate for the Connecting Region?

The criteria for the selection of a candidate for the Connecting Region are:

- An organization, with demonstrated capacity, commitment and connections to other organizations prepared (with additional funding) to organize the regional conference and initial meetings and possibly provide ongoing administrative and planning support for the Region
- A proposed plan, budget and timeline for holding a regional conference and/or initial series of meetings and return to LFO for confirmation of the Region
- The range and needs of the linguistic and/or rural or remote communities to be served
- The range and nature of partners interested in the initiative including provincial, regional, legal, community based service and advocacy organizations
- A demonstrated history of co-operation between legal services providers (community legal clinics, LAO area offices, private bar)

- A demonstrated history of strong links between legal services providers and community based service and advocacy organizations
- Any participation of disability organizations representing those who have communication difficulties in obtaining legal information and services, including the deaf or blind
- The working definition of the region should make co-ordination feasible and have the potential to act as a model for others (whether by virtue of the geography, population or linguistic minorities served)
- Reasons given for selection of the region as a candidate and described difference this initiative could make for the region

9. How at this application stage can we provide information as to the range and nature of partners interested in this initiative?

At the application stage, the LFO does not expect the application to confirm that a range of organizations are committed to participating in the Connecting Region. However, a successful application will likely indicate that identified, key organizations in the region have been canvassed and are interested in the initiative and are willing to participate in the regional conference or initial series of meetings concerning it.

10. Once the regional planning conference and/ or initial series of meetings occur, what criteria will LFO use to decide whether to confirm the region as the Connecting Region?

Once a region had been selected as a candidate for the Connecting Region it would hold the regional conference and/or initial series of meetings. It then would report back to the LFO with a list of member organizations, mandate and a governance structure which (among other things) would identify which organization would provide administrative and planning support. It also would provide a timeline for the future development of a regional plan and funding proposal package. At this point, LFO would determine whether to confirm one or more Connecting Regions.

In addition to the selection criteria noted above, consideration will be given to the contemplated operational model for the Connecting Region with its respective

roles for the planning and administrative support organization, member organizations and lines of accountability.

Criteria for considering the proposed operational model include:

- *Clarity* – The respective roles of the organizations and their relationship to LFO must be clear.
- *Accountability* – There must be lines of accountability to LFO for financial management and performance, including project and administrative and planning performance.
- *Effective Decision-Making* – The management structure must allow for timely and effective decision-making. Leadership functions must be designed to ensure that the planning and implementation of projects occurs and results in improved service delivery to users.
- *Inclusiveness* – Membership in the Connecting Region should include those organizations best able to reach the identified communities.
- *Collaboration* – The members should work together in a collaborative manner respecting the experience and skills that each member brings to the initiative.
- *Coordination* – The Region should have the capacity to provide a coordinated plan with projects which work together to support its vision. Where appropriate, members should engage in joint projects or partnerships.
- *Excellence* – The Region should be committed to excellence and provide only superior funding proposals to LFO for its consideration. It should seek funding for its members who are best able to deliver a given project.
- *User- Driven* – The plan and projects should be driven by the needs of the users of legal information and services.
- *Improvement* – The Region should be committed to improvement through learning from experience and evaluation.
- *Sustainability* – The Region should have a sustainable structure that is flexible enough to evolve in response to changing circumstances.

Consideration could also be given to any initial consensus among the Connecting Region members about:

- Principles and overall goals that would guide the collaborative effort
- Priorities for improving linguistic and rural access
- Existing successful collaboration, service gaps and capacity within the Region
- Strategies to build on existing services and enhance collaboration and potential initiatives to enhance linguistic and rural access
- Proposed timeline to return to Law Foundation with funding package, including evaluation plan.

11. Where should the application be sent?

The application can be sent:

By mail – Attention, Tanya Lee, Project Director, Linguistic and Rural Access to Justice Project, Law Foundation of Ontario, 20 Queen Street West, Suite 3002, Box No. 19, Toronto, Ontario M5H 3R3

By fax – Attention, Tanya Lee, Project Director, Linguistic and Rural Access to Justice Project, 416-598-1526

By email – tlee@lawfoundation.on.ca

12. Who can I contact if I have any questions about the application process for the Connecting Region?

Please contact Tanya Lee, Project Director, Linguistic and Rural Access to Justice Project at tlee@lawfoundation.on.ca or phone 416-598-1550.