



# Pathway to Potential

## Research Report for the Windsor-Essex Working Table

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University  
of Windsor



**PATHWAY TO  
POTENTIAL**

Windsor Essex County's  
Poverty Reduction Strategy

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## Executive Summary

This report has three main objectives. First, to provide an overview of existing data consortium programs in other communities; second, to identify a comprehensive descriptions of key components of successful data programs; and lastly, to explore various consortium program governance models and structures within Ontario.

Extensive literature reviews and five semi-structured interviews with coordinators of existing consortium were conducted.

Findings and responses were analyzed and organized into seven main categories:

1. Overview and Purpose of Community Data Program
2. Membership Make Up
3. Funding Structures
4. Data Processes, Planning, and Coordination
5. Critical Factors to Successful Data Programs
6. Benefits of Data Consortium.
7. Governance Structure Models

## Executive Summary

**Overview and Purpose of Community Data Program.** Municipalities and community organizations are able to access a large pool of data from various reliable sources at a low cost, such as Statistics Canada and Taxfiler. Members in the consortium have the opportunity to network and collaborate to achieve their respective missions much more effectively. Furthermore, social planning and strategies are more informed, as they are supported by a large set of data and greater empirical evidence.

**Membership Make Up.** Community data consortiums are composed of various types of organizations, which allow organizations with different resources and backgrounds to collaborate effectively on related social issues within the community.

**Funding Structure.** In addition to the \$125 annual membership fee, the consortium is required to pay the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) a fixed fee. The cost of maintaining a community consortium for each member depends on various factors, including the size of the community and the funding structure.

**Data Planning Process and Coordination.** The data is maintained and coordinated by lead representatives of each consortium. Purchased data are uploaded to an online catalogue that is housed by the CCSD. The quality of the data are held at a standard by their respective sources.

**Critical Factors to Successful Data Programs.** Three main factors are critical to the success of data consortium in the community. Specifically, these factors are members' involvement in the consortium; adequate training to analyze and interpret datasets with the tools provided; and integration and transformation of data to accessible format across geographical levels.

**Benefits of Data Consortium.** The consortium benefits both the community at large and member organizations in various ways. These benefits include: more informed and insightful planning on social and community related issues, consistent evidence across organizations, effective knowledge generation within the community, collaboration between members, and accessible data that meets various needs.

**Governance Structures.** Three governance structure models for community data consortiums are explored in this report. The first structure has one lead representative organization that manages and coordinates related activities and responsibilities within the consortium. The second structure has multiple lead representative organizations that delegate various tasks between the leads. The last structure has one lead representative organization with multiple working tables; this structure is often adopted by community data consortiums that are composed by multiple regions or districts.

## Background

Pathway to Potential is a multi-sector, collaborative network that aims to reduce and prevent poverty in the Windsor-Essex County region. Pathway to Potential is composed of a diverse group of stakeholders who collectively work to bring awareness about poverty in order to advocate and support individuals, groups, and organizations to engage in poverty reduction work. Overall, the mission of Pathway to Potential is to ensure the social and economic well-being of residents in the Windsor-Essex community.

Many social sector organizations have mandates related to poverty alleviation and other quality of life issues in the Windsor-Essex region. Through recent collaborative processes, several of these organizations have expressed interest in working to improve coordination and effectiveness of data collection and dissemination of research in the community. Many community stakeholders have identified increased data sharing between organizations, and increased capacity to use data effectively, as potentially helping in the areas of resource allocation and strategic planning.

Understanding the impact surrounding data ownership and data sharing, the Erie-St. Clair Regional Data Consortium was developed to support a collective network of data across Chatham-Kent region, Sarnia-Lambton region, and Windsor-Essex region. The goal of this regional consortium is to foster collaboration between organizations, with improved data knowledge and sharing on related social issues across three working tables: Chatham-Kent working table, Sarnia-Lambton working table, and Windsor-Essex working table.

This report provides the foundation of a needs assessment for the Windsor-Essex working table of the Erie-St. Clair Regional Data Consortium, including three main objectives. First, this report provides an overview of existing data consortium programs in other communities, including the purpose, structure, and membership makeup of successful data programs. Second, this report identifies and provides a list of comprehensive descriptions of key components of successful consortium programs, such as the funding structure, the data processes, and coordination of data programs. Third, this report explores various consortium program model structures, outlining the relationship between members, stakeholders, and other related components within effective data programs. Considering that the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) created a network of Community Data Programs across Canada, much of the information discussed in this report is associated with CCSD.

This report is structured as followed. First, this report reviews the methods involved in this project, including literature review and interviews. Second, this report organizes the results into five categories. Lastly, this report explores various consortium governance models and structures in Ontario.

# Windsor Essex Data Program

## Method – Literature Review

An extensive literature review was conducted for the purpose of this report. Specifically, information was gathered through published journal articles, CCSD website ([www.ccsd.ca](http://www.ccsd.ca)), and Community Data Program website ([www.communitydata.ca](http://www.communitydata.ca)).

A list of journal articles and related materials can be found in the reference section (See Appendix A)

## Method – Interview

In addition to the literature review, interviews were conducted with coordinators and managers of existing data programs in Ontario. A list of interview items and potential participants was first generated through a review of the Community Data Program website. A total of 16 recruitment emails were sent to potential interviewees, and 7 coordinators/managers responded with interest to participate (See Table 1). Follow up emails were sent to the coordinators with the list of interview questions.

**Table 1. Windsor-Essex Data Program, Interview List**

| Community Data Programs                       | # of Coordinators Contacted |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Halton Region Consortium                      | 2                           |
| <b>Hamilton Consortium</b>                    | 3                           |
| London Consortium                             | 1                           |
| Niagara Region Consortium                     | 1                           |
| Ottawa Consortium                             | 1                           |
| <b>Peel Region Consortium</b>                 | 1                           |
| <b>Toronto Consortium</b>                     | 1                           |
| <b>Waterloo Region Consortium</b>             | 1                           |
| <b>Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Consortium</b>  | 2                           |
| Winnipeg Consortium                           | 1                           |
| York Region Consortium*                       | 1                           |
| <b>Canadian Council on Social Development</b> | 1                           |
| Total Contacted:                              | 16                          |
| Interviewed                                   | 6                           |

\* - responded directly on item document; **bold** interviewed

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 5 community data program coordinators, and 1 representative from the CCSD. One coordinator responded directly on the interview question document due to scheduling conflicts. The interviews were approximately 30-minutes to 1-hour long each. The participants were asked questions related to their data programs, such as the purpose, structure, funding agencies, and processes. Example questions include – “How is the program structured?”, “How is your local data consortium funded?”, and “How do member organizations benefit from your consortium?”. For a full list of interview questions, please see Appendix A. Interview responses were recorded using a word processing program (Microsoft Word). The responses were organized and analyzed using a spreadsheet program (Microsoft Excel).

## Findings

Results from literature review and responses from the interviews were analyzed using Microsoft Excel. They were organized into six categories, including:

1. Overview and Purpose of Community Data Program
2. Membership Make Up
3. Funding Structures
4. Data Processes, Planning, and Coordination
5. Critical Factors to Successful Data Programs
6. Benefits of Data Consortium.
7. Governance Structure Models

## Overview and Purpose of Community Data Program

The Community Data Program (CDP) is housed and maintained as part of the CCSD. Collectively, community data consortiums have three main purposes: to increase data accessibility, to promote community partnerships, and to facilitate strategic planning.

**Data Accessibility.** Community data consortiums act as a gateway for municipalities, community based organizations, and non-profit organizations to access a large pool of quality data from various reliable sources efficiently at a low cost. Examples of these sources include Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, Survey of Household Spending, Census, Welfare Incomes, Building Permits, TransUnion, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Members of data consortiums are also able to access data at various geographical levels depending on their needs and purposes of the data, such as: neighbourhood level data, community level data, regional level data, provincial level data, and national level data. Furthermore, data are also available across various time periods. That is, data consortium gives member organizations the ability to analyze and compare related social issues between various geographical levels and time periods.

**Promote Community Partnership.** A community data consortium encourages collaboration between organizations. It creates a network that supports communication between members, and enhances input and discussions on collective community issues with data evidence. It also creates a higher capacity for information and knowledge sharing between members. For example, members with advanced data analytical resources may also help other members by providing data consultation and training within the consortium.

**Facilitate Strategic Planning.** A community data consortium facilitates strategic planning in several ways. Having access to a large pool of quality data allows members to strategize with evidence, and to make informed decisions accordingly. In addition, a community data consortium allows members to access data from various geographical levels and timeline series, which allow organizations to analyze and compare data that best fits the agenda of the community. For example, an organization may make income level comparisons between neighbourhoods within the community, create analyses on income differences between cities or provinces, compare poverty levels between community and federal level data, or conduct trend analyses on related issues within the community. On the other hand, the network of member organizations within a consortium allows enhanced communication, which facilitates the process in report planning, data purchasing, and data sharing. Organizations are able to disseminate unique reports effectively, and allocate resources with informed planning.



## Membership Make Up

The Community Data Program is a membership-based program that is composed of data consortiums from various regions and communities. Each consortium has one or two lead representatives that act as the liaison between members of the consortium and CCSD. There are 19-community consortiums in Ontario, led by 22 representative organizations. Of the 22 lead representatives, 13 are the Municipality, 3 are community Social Planning Councils, and 6 are community organizations (See Table 2, pg. 9).

Data consortiums across Ontario are comprised of various types of member organizations. These members include municipalities, social planning councils, regional or district school boards, health units, police services, community services, and community organizations. That is, data consortiums allow members from various backgrounds and qualifications to work collaboratively on collective social issues within the community. For example, community organizations are able to collaborate with district school boards to create an after-school youth program based on the evidence provided by the consortium; municipalities and health units can collaborate to provide comprehensive health reports within the community using shared data; and members from community organizations are able to disseminate accurate reports to the public with reliable and shared evidence.

## Windsor Essex Data Program

**Table 2. Community Data Programs - Ontario**

| <b>Regions</b>                                     | <b>Lead</b>   |
|--|---|
| Durham Region                                      | Regional Municipality of Durham   |
| Erie-St. Clair                                     | TransForm Shared Service Organization   |
| Halton Region                                      | Regional Municipality of Halton   |
| Hamilton   | City of Hamilton  |
| Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton                      | City of Kawartha Lakes  |
| Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox, and Addington (KFL&A) | United way of KFL&A<br>City of Kingston   |
| London   | City of London  |
| Niagara Region                                     | Niagara Workforce Planning Board  |
| Ottawa   | Social Planning Council of Ottawa   |
| Oxford County                                      | Oxford County Public Health & Emergency Services                                      |
| Parry Sound-Nipissing                              | District of Parry Sound<br>District of Nipissing Social Services Administration Board |
| Peel Region  | Region of Peel  |
| Peterborough                                       | Peterborough Social Planning Council  |
| Simcoe County                                      | County of Simcoe  |
| Sudbury  | Social Planning Council of Sudbury<br>Sudbury and District Health Unit                |
| Toronto  | City of Toronto   |
| Waterloo Region                                    | Region of Waterloo  |
| Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph (WDG)                   | Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health  |
| York Region  | Regional Municipality of York   |
| <b>Leady by:</b>                                   | <b>Total</b>  |
| Municipality                                       | 13  |
| Social Planning Council                            | 3   |
| Community Organization                             | 6   |

# Windsor Essex Data Program

## Funding Structure

The cost of the community data consortium with CCSD has two annual components: consortium and membership fee. The annual consortium fee is a flat rate, calculated based on the population within the community – ranging between \$5,000 - \$20,000 (See Table 3, pg. 11). In addition to the annual consortium fee, an annual membership fee of \$125 is required to be paid by each member of the consortium to CCSD.

The funding structure is different for each community consortium. Responses from the interview suggest that consortium funding structures can be generally organized into three main categories (See Below).

| Funding Structures for Community Data Consortium |                                   |                          |
|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
|  | Municipality                      | Community Organizations  |
| Funding Structure 1                              | Full Cost                         | No Cost                  |
| Funding Structure 2                              | Subsidize Large Portion           | Split the Remaining Cost |
| Funding Structure 3                              | Split Evenly Amongst Every Member |                          |

**\*Note: Every member is required to pay \$125 annual membership fee regardless of the funding structure.**

**Funding Structure 1.** Some community consortium programs are funded fully by the Municipality or the lead organization, and community organizations are able to join at the lowest cost possible at \$125/year. In some cases, the annual consortium cost is shared between departments within a Municipality. Communities that are made up of more than one Municipality would split the cost evenly.

**Funding Structure 2.** The second funding option is to have the Municipality cover a large portion of the cost for the community consortium. Member organizations, on the other hand, split the remaining cost of the annual fee evenly.

**Funding Structure 3.** Another funding option is to split the annual fee evenly amongst every member within the consortium, including Municipality and community organizations. For some consortium communities that are made up by multiple municipal regions, costs are divided evenly on a regional basis, and members within each region would pay the average cost per region.

## Windsor Essex Data Program

**Table 3. Annual Consortium Fee per Population**

| <b>Consortium Catchment Area Population</b> | <b>Annual Consortium Fee</b> |
|---|------------------------------|
| <b>1000000+</b>                             | \$19,990                     |
| <b>950,000 - 999,999</b>                    | \$19,241                     |
| <b>900,000 - 949,999</b>                    | \$18,491                     |
| <b>850,000 - 899,999</b>                    | \$17,742                     |
| <b>800,000 - 849,999</b>                    | \$16,992                     |
| <b>750,000 - 799,999</b>                    | \$16,243                     |
| <b>700,000 - 749,999</b>                    | \$15,493                     |
| <b>650,000 - 699,999</b>                    | \$14,744                     |
| <b>600,000 - 649,999</b>                    | \$13,994                     |
| <b>550,000 - 599,999</b>                    | \$13,245                     |
| <b>500,000 - 549,999</b>                    | \$12,495                     |
| <b>450,000 - 499,999</b>                    | \$11,746                     |
| <b>400,000 - 449,999</b>                    | \$10,996                     |
| <b>350,000 - 399,999</b>                    | \$10,247                     |
| <b>300,000 - 349,999</b>                    | \$9,497                      |
| <b>250,000 - 299,999</b>                    | \$8,748                      |
| <b>200,000 - 249,999</b>                    | \$7,998                      |
| <b>150,000 - 199,999</b>                    | \$7,249                      |
| <b>100,000 - 149,999</b>                    | \$6,499                      |
| <b>50,000 - 99,999</b>                      | \$5,750                      |
| <b>0 - 49,999</b>                           | \$5,000                      |

(Canadian Council on Social Development, 2014)

## Data Process, Planning, and Coordination

The community consortium is maintained and coordinated by the lead representative organization(s). The lead representative of each consortium acts as the liaison between members and CCSD. Collectively speaking, more than half of the consortiums in Ontario are led by their respective Municipalities, 6 of the consortiums in Ontario are lead by community organizations, and 3 are lead by Social Planning Councils.

Most of the consortiums in Ontario are managed and supported by one to two coordinators, who are paid staff from the respective lead organizations. However, consortium coordinators are not full-time dedicated staffs for the data program; rather, only a small portion of their working times are spent on consortium related responsibilities and activities. While most of the coordinators are able to fulfill their responsibilities for the consortium, some coordinators had voiced concerns over the interview regarding the lack of manpower required to use the consortium to its full capacity. That is, while one coordinator is sufficient to support administrative related duties for the consortium, it is often difficult for one coordinator to manage other non-administrative related tasks (i.e. providing data consultation to member organizations, recruit new member organizations, etc).

**Coordinator Responsibility.** One or two staff members from the lead organization hold the responsibilities of coordinating and maintaining the community data consortium. Responsibilities of the coordinators include: representing the community consortium group in annual conferences and meetings with other consortium leads, maintaining and keeping the community's data up to date, liaising with the CCSD on behalf of consortium members, ordering data as requested by consortium members, as well as notifying and sharing relevant data sets with consortium members. Some coordinators also help extract the data into more accessible format before sharing it with the members, help members interpret and analyze the data, and train the member so they are better equipped and informed to work with the data sets.

**Data Process.** The purchased data are uploaded to an online data catalogue maintained by the CCSD. The data sets can be downloaded by members in the Beyond 2020 .ivt format. The Beyond 2020 software can be downloaded on the Community Data Program website at no charge. Training of the software is also made available. Data sets downloaded with .ivt format can be translated into Microsoft Excel and other data analyses tool formats.

**Data Quality and Confidentiality.** Data purchased through the consortium are from reliable sources – mainly through Statistics Canada. Therefore, given the sources of data, they are already subjected to a high level of confidentiality. Data are provided at the aggregate level, and no raw individual data can be obtained through the consortium. The quality of the data is subjected to each source. Typically, the quality of the data is held at a high standard, and any errors or mistakes on the data can be reported to the source through CCSD – proper revisions are then made accordingly.

## Critical Factors to Successful Data Programs

Several factors are critical to the success of community consortium programs, specifically members' involvement, adequate training, and data accessibility.

**Members' Involvement.** One of the most critical factors to maintain a successful data consortium within a community is its members' involvement with the program. Informed communication between members is crucial in fostering collaboration, and facilitating strategies. Members who are involved are also more able to allocate resources and share data more effectively. Additionally, networking between members allows more informed planning, which leads to effective use of data sets provided by the consortium. Collaboration and networks between members can also attract new members to the consortium, which can subsidize portions of the cost depending on the funding structure. Without active involvement, a data consortium becomes less valuable and effective in the community, as members would not be able to use the consortium to its full capacity.

**Adequate Training.** Adequate training in data analytical knowledge and tools is another critical factor to maintain a successful data consortium. Well-informed members are able to use the data to its full capacity. Members without proper resources and personnel to use the data would not benefit from the consortium; in fact, a few organizations have left the consortium due to lack of skills and resources to analyze data properly. In addition, training for the CCSD website is also necessary to effectively navigate and access valuable data.

**Data Accessibility.** Another critical factor to maintain a successful data consortium is to have data that are accessible between members in the consortium. Integration and transformation of data into accessible format is important to some consortiums. Additionally, it is important for the consortium to be responsive to the members to their data needs, and to ensure that the needs are met in an efficient manner.

## Benefits of Data Consortiums

With improved data accessibility and fostered community collaboration, a community data consortium benefits both the community at large and member organizations in many different aspects.

***Benefits for Community.*** A data consortium allows for more informed and insightful planning on social and community related issues. That is, it allows community organizations and the municipality to understand community needs with data evidence. Planning and strategies become more consistent with quality evidence. The consistency of evidence allows organizations to generate comparable reports within the community; and the community benefits from the knowledge generated at an efficient pace. Furthermore, members are more able to respond to specific issues within the community, which facilitates the development and implementation of necessary programs for related issues. In addition, the national network of data consortiums allows a community to partner with other communities to collaborate on issues that are prevalent within the community.

***Benefits for Member Organizations.*** With a data consortium in place, member organizations are able to access a large pool of quality data evidence at a very low cost. Furthermore, members have access to different levels of data, including various geographical level data and time or trend series data. In addition, members are able to generate consistent reports that are supported by evidence. Collaboration between member organizations is also fostered through the consortium; members are able to share similar missions, and understand the social issues from a consistent perspective. The networking opportunity between member organizations and the Municipality is also facilitated, strengthening collaboration between the community members and the Municipality.

## Governance Structure Models

Three governance structure models for community data consortiums are explored in this report (See Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3). Generally, data provided in the consortium are housed and maintained by the CCSD, and the community consortium is managed and led by one representative organization within the region (See Figure 1). The lead representative acts as the liaison between member organizations and the CCSD, and member organizations have a structure implemented within the consortium for effective communication and collaboration.

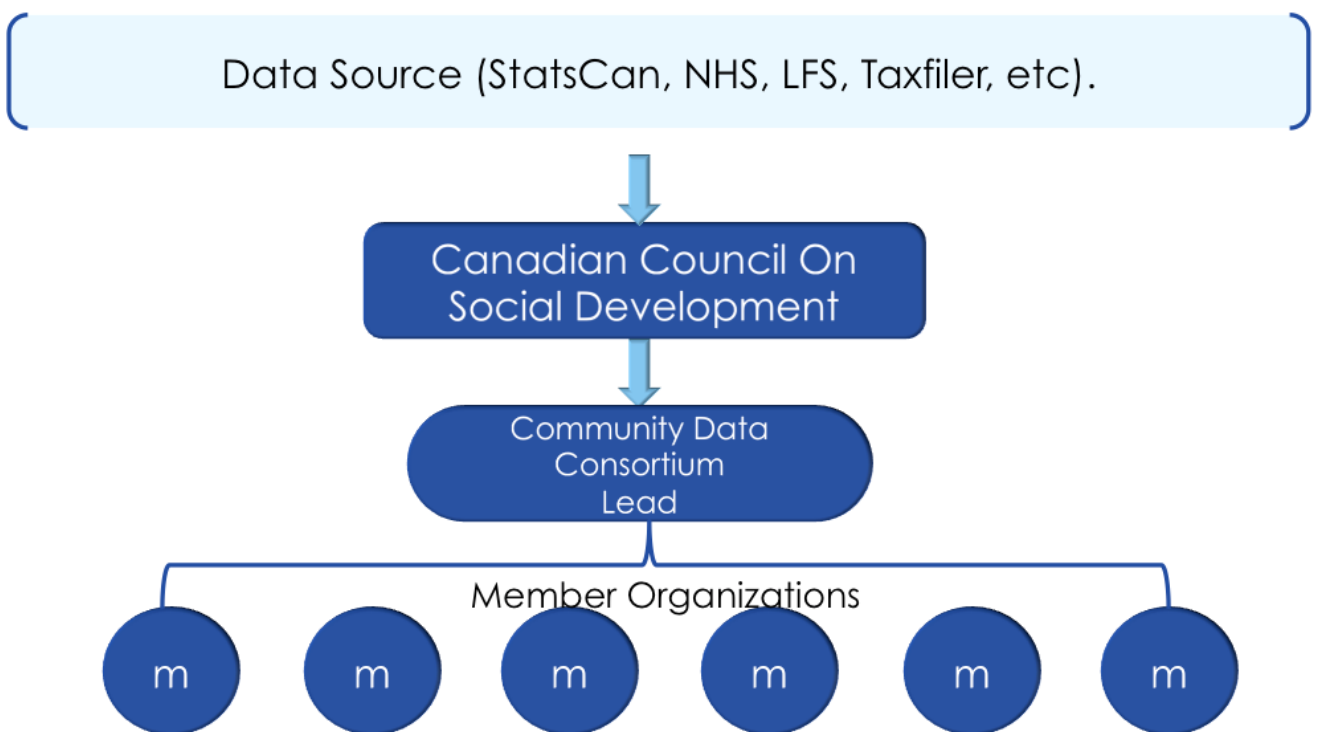


Figure 1. General Data Consortium Model, One Lead Organization



## Windsor Essex Data Program

In the second structure, the community consortium is managed and led by two or more representative organizations (See Figure 2). This structure allows the community consortium to delegate various tasks and responsibilities to multiple lead organizations. For example, one lead organization may be responsible for administrative tasks (i.e. keeping the region's data up to date, and disseminating relevant datasets to member organizations) and the other lead organization may be responsible for financial and recruitment activities (i.e. collecting and invoicing member organizations with their annual membership fees, and recruiting new members for the consortium).

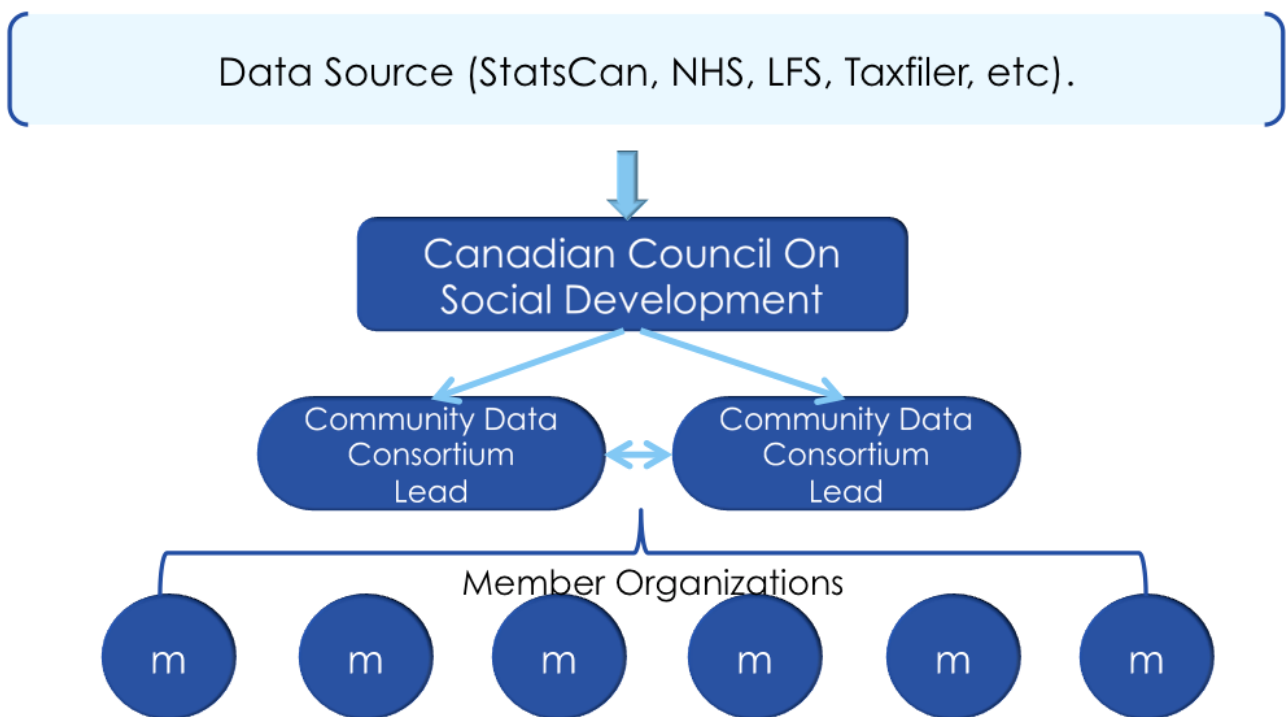


Figure 2. Data Consortium - Multiple Lead Organizations

## Windsor Essex Data Program

In the third structure, the community consortium is managed and led by one representative organization, and multiple working tables (See Figure 3). This governance structure is often adapted by community consortiums that are composed by multiple regions or districts. For example, if a community consortium is formed by multiple regions, each region would form a working table that corresponds to the lead representative – acting as the liaison between the lead organization and the member organizations.

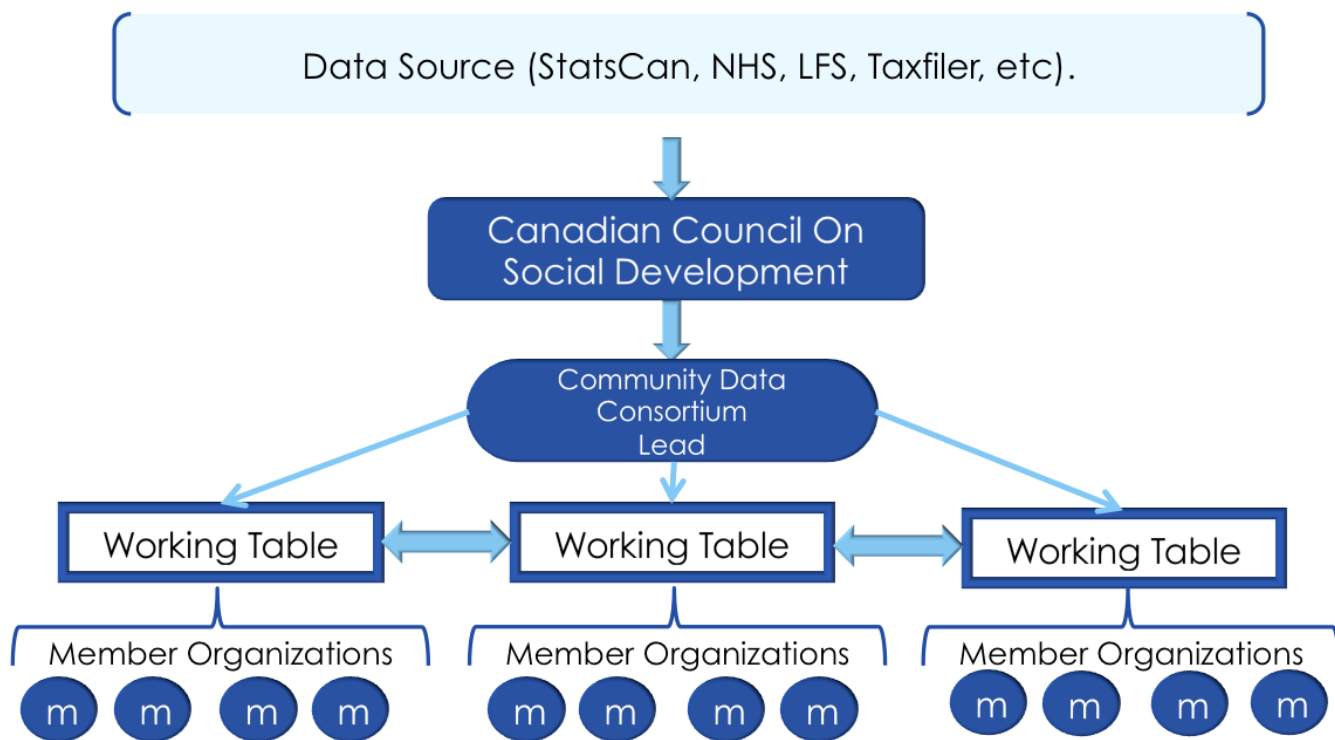


Figure 3. Data Consortium - One Lead Organization and Multiple Working Tables

## Conclusion

The goal of this report is to provide an overview of existing data consortium programs in other communities, to identify key components of an effective data programs, and to explore various consortium program model structures within Ontario. An extensive literature review and seven semi-structured interviews with current data consortium coordinators were conducted for the purpose of this report. Results of the literature research and interview responses were integrated and organized into seven main categories: 1. Overview and purpose of community data programs, 2. Membership make up, 3. Funding structures, 4. Data processes, planning, and coordination, 5. Critical factors to successful data programs, 6. Benefits of data consortium, and 7. Governance structure models.

The purpose of data consortium programs is to create a gateway for Municipality, community organizations, and non-profit organizations to access large pool of reliable data from a variety of sources. Data consortium programs also encourage partnership and collaboration between like-minded organizations, and it facilitates strategic planning processes between organizations within a community. Furthermore, data consortiums are composed of organizations from various backgrounds, which allows creative collaboration for collective missions between organizations.

The costs of data consortiums are comprised of two annual components: annual consortium fee and annual membership fee. Annual consortium fees are determined by the size of the community, and each member is obligated to pay the annual \$125 membership fee directly to CCSD. The funding structure of data consortiums are organized into three main categories: 1. Fully funded by the Municipality or lead organization, 2. Partially funded by the Municipality or lead organization, or 3. Cost is shared amongst member organizations within the community.

Generally, data consortium programs are managed and coordinated by one or two coordinators, who are paid staff from the lead organizations. Note that these coordinators are not full-time dedicated staffs for the program, and only a small portion of their working times are spent on consortium related responsibilities.

Successful consortiums are maintained through active involvement from member organizations, adequate training on tools and resources provided from the program, and accessibility of data from various reliable sources. Member organizations benefit from successful consortiums in many ways, such as access to a large pool of quality data evidence at a very low cost, and collaboration and networking opportunity with member organizations to facilitate planning processes within the community.

Finally, three governance structures are introduced in this report, including one lead with multiple member organizations, multiple leads with multiple member organizations, and one lead with multiple working tables of member organizations.

## Appendix A, References

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# Windsor Essex Data Program

## Appendix B, Pathway to Potential, Community Data Program Initiative – Interview Questions

### Overview and Purpose

1. Can you please briefly explain the purpose of your local data consortium?
2. How is the program structured?
  - a. What is the governance model?
  - b. How many member organizations are part of the local data consortium?
  - c. What are your local data consortium's strategic priorities or areas of focus?
3. What factors are critical to the success of your local data consortium?

### Funding

1. How is your local data consortium funded?
2. What, if any, challenges related to funding have your data consortium experienced?

### Planning Process and Coordination

1. What, if any, program, system, or software is used to manage the data between organizations?
  - a. What is the cost of the program?
2. How many paid staff, if any, are coordinating the local data consortium?
  - a. What are the responsibilities of a data program coordinator?
  - b. Do you think your local data consortium is adequately staffed?
3. What is the process to ensure data privacy and confidentiality?
4. How is the data processed and assessed to ensure a standard of quality?

### Benefit and Concerns

1. How does the community at large benefit from your consortium?
2. How do member organizations benefit from your consortium?
3. What role has your consortium played in fostering collaboration with the broader community?
4. What role has your consortium played in fostering collaboration between member organizations?
5. What has been your local data consortium's impact in the area of policy influence (e.g., at municipal, provincial and/or federal levels of government)?
6. What has been your local consortium's impact on the cost of data collection and production?
  - a. Has it led to reduced costs? Increased costs? Neutral? Can you please elaborate?
7. What has been your local consortium's impact on the planning, coordination and dissemination of community reports?
8. Are there any other challenges, concerns, or successes that you have experienced with your local data consortium?
  - a. If so, please explain.