Canadian Council on Social Development
Community Data Program

Community Data Consortium Primer

What is the Community Data Program?

The Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) established the Community Data Program (CDP) in the mid-1990s as a gateway for municipalities and community sector organizations to access customized tables from Statistics Canada and other providers to monitor and report on social and economic development trends within their communities. Relying on a Community Data Consortium model, the CDP reduces the cost of acquiring community data, builds community data analysis capacity and connects a cross-Canada network of data users.

How does the Consortium Model Work?

CCSD supports the establishment of Community Data Consortia, a grouping of organizations operating at a municipal level and "focused on the implementation of a public service goal". The boundaries of the Consortium correspond to the Consortium member with the largest sub-provincial service catchment area, typically a municipality. Organizational membership in a Consortium includes some combination of municipal governments, Social Planning Councils, United Ways, library, school and police boards, public health/regional health authorities, community health centres, non-profit housing corporations, economic development agencies, and a variety of other community sector agencies.

Each Community Data Consortium is led by an organization which assumes responsibility for entering into a Memorandum of Agreement with CCSD and maintaining communication with the Consortium membership.   Consortium Leads are typically municipal governments, but can be voluntary sector organizations.

What do Member Organizations get for their Membership Fee?

1)   Data – members are given direct access through a secure website to all of the data for their consortium as well as the data for all the other consortia across the country. The Program also connects members to free online data products.

2)   Training – member organizations receive training to orient them to the data packages, ensuring an understanding of how to access data tables and analytical tools; and are provided responsive technical support by the Community Data Program Team.

3)   Networking –Consortium Lead Organizations from across Canada meet on a trimesterly basis by teleconference and at annual face-to-face events. Members have contact information for all local consortium members so that they can exchange information and peer support with colleagues across the country.

What unique Community Data products will be available through the Program?

The Community Data Program works closely with over twenty public and private data providers in order to negotiate preferential pricing and licensing arrangements in order to provide over 60 customized data products involving special orders, cross-tabulations, and unique geographic boundaries, especially those corresponding to neighbourhoods.

The CDP concentrates on acquiring national data sets at the smallest geographic levels available, including Dissemination Area and six-digit postal code where possible. These include Census and National Household Survey tables, Taxfiler data and Credit Report Characteristics including credit risk and bankruptcy risk. The CDP also works with Statistics Canada to make available custom geography data products, reflecting the unique boundaries of each Consortium. Data acquisition also includes products available at the scale of municipal boundaries (Census Division and Census subdivision), such as Statistics Canada's General Social Survey, Population Projections, and inter-censal population estimates, and data tables on income, housing, immigration and labour force statistics.

In addition to data tables, the Program acquires analytical tools with the capacity to generate neighbourhood profiles, create community atlases and convert postal code geographies into Census geographies.

Finally, the Community Data Program offers a portal to facilitate access to free online data. Under the terms of the Government of Canada's Open Data initiative, increasing numbers of standard data products are being made available online at no cost by various Federal Government Departments. The CDP strongly supports this policy shift and facilitates members' access to and use of these free online data sets.

The scope and sequence of data acquisition is subject to the following conditions:

- Acquisition priorities established by CCSD and the Consortium Lead Organizations
- The Community Data Program budget
- Availability of data products from data providers

How is the Community Data Program used by Members?

Data tables acquired through the CDP cover an incredibly wide array of issues and themes. The most popular uses of CDP data by Consortium members respond to local issues in the areas of poverty, children and families, aging populations, immigration and affordable housing. CDP data have also been used by community practitioners in the areas of planning and development, local economic development, social planning, public health, and education, to name but a few examples.

Program Members make good use of the data tables and tools, enhancing their own data products such as neighbourhood profiles and fact sheets, printed and interactive online mapping, thematic reports, presentations, briefing notes & media releases. Some of the practical purposes for which Consortium data are regularly used by members include Strategic Planning, Research, Policy development, Service program design, Monitoring Evaluation, Advocacy, Community Education, and Performance Measurement and funding proposals.

How much does Membership cost?

The annual cost of Membership is based on two components: a flat Consortium Fee shared among members of each Consortium, and a Program Membership Fee paid by every Member organization.

Consortium Catchment Area Population		Annual Consortium Fee
1,000,000	+	$ 19,990
950,000	999,999	$ 19,241
900,000	949,999	$ 18,491
850,000	899,999	$ 17,742
800,000	849,999	$ 16,992
750,000	799,999	$ 16,243
700,000	749,999	$ 15,493
650,000	699,999	$ 14,744
600,000	649,999	$ 13,994
550,000	599,999	$ 13,245
500,000	549,999	$ 12,495
450,000	499,999	$ 11,746
400,000	449,999	$ 10,996
350,000	399,999	$ 10,247
300,000	349,999	$ 9,497
250,000	299,999	$ 8,748
200,000	249,999	$ 7,998
150,000	199,999	$ 7,249
100,000	149,999	$ 6,499
50,000	99,999	$ 5,750
-	49,999	$ 5,000

The annual Consortium Fee, shown on the left, is calculated on the basis of the population of the Consortium catchment area. The price range reflects the relative complexity, cost and availability of data tables for larger communities. The Consortium Fee enables access to all custom cross-tabulation and custom geography data products, and associated Program services. Participation in the Community Data Program is based on a 5-year contractual commitment. Fees are paid annually to CCSD by the Consortium Lead on behalf of Members. **The cost of the Consortium fee can be shared among an unlimited number of Consortium member organizations.** Fees are exclusive of sales taxes and no fee increases will occur without the consent of all Consortium Leads.

The annual Program Membership Fee is paid by each member organization of each Consortium. This $125 annual fee – plus locally applicable sales taxes - includes a complementary membership in CCSD.

Where are the existing Community Data Consortia located?

The Program supports over 20 Community Data Consortia established across Canada, from British Columbia to the Maritimes. Consortia are based in smaller communities like Parry Sound-Nipissing, Ontario as well as Canada's largest urban centres. These consortia represent over 400 member organizations and over 1,400 registered data users.

I'm interested in creating a Consortium. What are the benefits of membership that I can present?

Cost Savings: Access to this breadth of data has a very high price point if bought individually by any one organization or municipality. There are also a large number of custom tabulations that are done exclusively for the Program and negotiated with each cycle. By pooling their resources, Consortia gain access to hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of community data at a fraction of the cost. Since there are no limits on the number of organizations that can join a Community Data Consortium, the CDP creates opportunities for further cost-savings.

Access to relevant data and analytical tools: The Community Data Program researches and negotiates partnerships with data providers from across Canada, ensuring members have access to current, reliable and relevant data sets and analytical tools. Cross-Canada networking by Consortium Leads and members ensures the data is relevant for current planning priorities and policy initiatives relevant to municipalities and their neighbourhoods.

Building Community Partnerships: Many municipalities and voluntary sector organizations are already involved in any number of collaborative initiatives; the Community Data Program complements and reinforces this function. Creating a Community Data Consortium strengthens local networks of data users and connects members to a Canada-wide network of hundreds of like-minded organizations.

Increased Capacity for better decision making: The Community Data Program is committed to building the capacity of members to make use of complex data tables. This is achieved through formalized training, email and telephone support, analytical tools, connecting members to a Canada-wide network of like-minded community data users, and providing all members and users with information updates on the state of community data in Canada.

History of the Community Data Program

In the mid-1990s, the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) launched a network of community data consortia in municipalities across Canada. The Community Data Consortium model was created to assist municipalities and community-based organizations to identify and better understand the social and economic trends within their community and to allow them to share both the costs and the benefits.

There are three core purposes to the Community Data Consortium:

- Purchase and facilitate access to social data at the smallest geographies possible
- Train organizations to analyze community data and use it for better decision making
- Communicate and disseminate the results as widely as possible

The Community Data Consortium model strengthens the Program's capacity to negotiate effectively with public and private sector data providers for the preparation and lower-cost purchase of a wide variety of data that are geographically relevant for planning local programs and services.

The Community Data Program is led by the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD). CCSD is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization, which was founded in 1920. CCSD's mission is to develop and promote progressive social policies inspired by social justice, equality and the empowerment of individuals and communities. CCSD does this through research, consultation, public education and advocacy. Its main product is information. Its sources of funding include research contracts, the sale of publications and memberships, and donations.

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