

## Report on the 2020–2023 Café de Paris Manitoba Pilot Project

March 2023

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## 1. Background<sup>1</sup>

The Café de Paris concept was developed by the [Horizon Health Network](#) in New Brunswick, in partnership with the SSMEFNB ([Société Santé et Mieux-être en français du Nouveau-Brunswick](#)). The first Café de Paris was delivered in 2013 at the Saint John Regional Hospital, which is part of the Horizon Health Network, one of New Brunswick's two regional health authorities. Incidentally, Saint John, New Brunswick, is located in an English-speaking region, where francophones form a small minority, not unlike the situation here in Manitoba. The Café de Paris approach is now recognized as a best practice in Canada, having demonstrated positive results in the field, thanks to a high degree of transferability on the ground, according to the results of a rigorous evaluation carried out in New Brunswick. The initiative has been implemented in nine provinces and territories, in cooperation with [Santé en français](#) networks: British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon.

Three primary documents and one online resource were produced to support the transferability of the Café de Paris initiative among health and social service providers. Excerpts from those resources were used to create the first section of this report, with a view to accurately conveying the initiative, and its origins, philosophy, values and founders. The documents and resource in question, available mostly in French, are:

- [Café de Paris - An innovative approach to learning French or maintaining French language skills in support of the active offer](#)
- Café de Paris Initiative : Performance Assessment and Management Framework (available in the [Café de Paris initiative online training resource library](#))
- Assessment Report of the Café de Paris Initiative and its Impact in New Brunswick (available in the [Café de Paris initiative online training resource library](#))
- [The Café de Paris Approach](#), on the equity-link.ca platform

We would like to thank the Horizon Health Network, the SSMEFNB, and Réseau-action Organisation des services (RAOS) for their contributions to this best practice and their support for its transferability and implementation outside New Brunswick. From a knowledge mobilization perspective, the resources are of great use to any provider wishing to implement the Café de Paris initiative.

### What is Café de Paris?

The approach can be defined as follows:

Café de Paris is about creating an informal space where staff can acquire or maintain basic French-language skills, practise their spoken French, and access tools and resources to help them offer their services in both official languages.

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<sup>1</sup> **Note:** This section was developed using excerpts from the following official Café de Paris resource documents: [Café de Paris - An innovative approach to learning French or maintaining French language skills in support of the active offer](#), Assessment Report of the Café de Paris Initiative and its Impact in New Brunswick (available in the [Café de Paris initiative online training resource library](#)), and [The Café de Paris Approach](#).

The approach focuses on patient safety by supporting the active offer of health services in French and facilitating closer ties between both official language communities.<sup>2</sup>

Café de Paris therefore provides support for learning and maintaining French-language proficiency in health care facilities that operate in English but have an obligation to provide services to patients and the public in both official languages. The initiative enhances the ability to provide French-language health services.

## Values

The Café de Paris approach is based on four key values that permeate all stages of implementation, from planning to delivery:

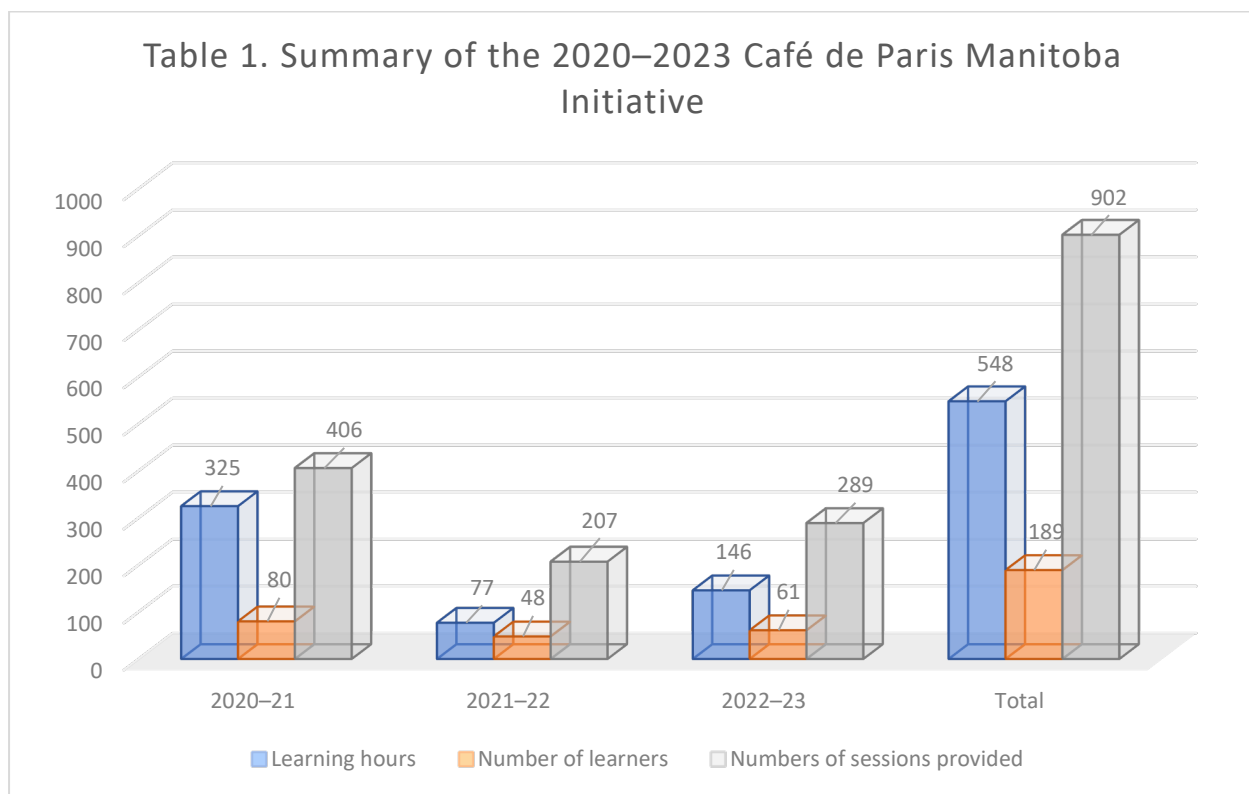
- **Flexibility:** The ability to continually adapt in order to meet learners' changing needs (schedule, duration, location, language level, etc.) and the context in which the initiative is taking place (language requirements, type of facility or department, links with other strategies, etc.).
- **A welcoming environment:** Welcoming learners and showing an interest in getting to know them well and creating a positive relationship. A positive relationship with the facilitator enables the tailoring of language support to learners' needs, objectives, scope of practice, profile and learning style.
- **Openness:** An awareness of others and their specific context, in all its complexity. Openness is about accepting differences and being able to agree on the basics, both from a teaching and relational perspective.
- **Trust:** A feeling of safety built on the positive assumption that people can be trusted. This value is at the heart of the relationship between facilitators and learners, as well as the relationships among the various stakeholders involved in developing the Café de Paris approach. All parties feel reassured by the relaxed, inclusive and non-threatening environment of the approach.

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<sup>2</sup> Société santé et mieux-être du Nouveau-Brunswick and Horizon Health Network. (2022) *Formation à l'initiative Café de Paris*. [Online] [Theme 1 – Introduction to the Café de Paris concept](#) | [eQUITY Link \(equity-link.ca\)](https://equity-link.ca)

## 2. Implementation in Manitoba

Santé en français conducted the Café de Paris Manitoba pilot project over three years, from 2020 to 2023. Two organizations participated in the initiative: St. Amant and the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority (RHA). Actionmarguerite St. Vital had initially committed to being a project site. However, the pandemic and the vulnerability of the organization's clientele forced it to withdraw from the initiative. In all, the project consisted of the following: over 548 learning hours delivered over 10 sessions (fall, spring and winter); 906 individual and group sessions; and 189 learners. Many students attended multiple sessions to improve their proficiency in French. The initiative also reached a number of professionals in positions not designated as bilingual, which seems to have strengthened the organizational culture with regard to French-language services and the ability of several teams to actively offer services in French and improve their services to francophone clients and kin.



Santé en français conducted the Café de Paris Manitoba initiative in keeping with its founding principle of offering free learning opportunities in the workplace to support staff wishing to acquire or maintain basic proficiency in French. The aim of the initiative was to complement formal language training, mirroring the principles of the Café de Paris approach. The Manitoba initiative was open to anyone wanting to practice their French. The format was flexible and tailored to participants' needs. Another aim was to help staff feel more comfortable actively offering services in French.

French-language service plans for designated bilingual facilities and programs pave the way for the development and implementation of initiatives that support the active offer of French-language health

services to clients and kin. Working with its health and social services partners, Santé en français plays a key role in supporting innovative initiatives and evidence-based best practices. Like the best practice developed by New Brunswick, and since the latter served as the basis for the Manitoba pilot project, it is important to clarify the context of the Café de Paris Manitoba initiative:

“[It is] not [...] the only resource being used [in Manitoba] to improve access to French-language services. It is part of a broader strategy that includes raising awareness of the importance of actively offering health services in French, providing formal [language] training in French, [...]”<sup>3</sup> testing the language skills of professionals in designated bilingual positions, and other support services offered by Santé en français to its partners.

## Objectives

Santé en français had five objectives in mind with respect to the pilot project:

- identify two or three sites for roll-out
- develop and deliver the initiative in cooperation with the French-language service coordinators of the facilities in question
- provide financial support and consulting expertise for the project’s implementation
- lay the groundwork for the project to continue and for participating facilities to take ownership of the initiative
- approach, and extend the initiative to, other facilities in Years 2 and 3, particularly in rural areas

The financial support and consulting expertise took the following shape:

- hiring facilitators
- training those facilitators in the Café de Paris approach drawing on the expertise of the RAOS
- providing technical support for session programming
- developing the initiative’s visual identity
- purchasing material and educational resources for participating facilities

All of the pilot project’s objectives were achieved, with the exception of reaching other facilities in Years 2 and 3. That objective could not be met owing to the COVID-19 pandemic declared in Year 1, which constituted a major external factor beyond our control. Following the withdrawal of Actionmarguerite St. Vital, the Interlake-Eastern RHA was approached, and it agreed to take part in the pilot project. The latter’s participation allowed the initiative to reach an organization located in a rural area. The Southern Health-Santé Sud RHA was also approached in Year 2, but it was unable to participate at the time. Santé en français therefore focused on rolling out the initiative at St. Amant and in the Interlake-Eastern RHA.

The aim of this report, which comes as the pilot project draws to a close, is to support efforts to ensure the project’s continuation, and to support facilities that wish to implement the Café de Paris Manitoba initiative. Various internal processes have been developed and implemented to ensure the initiative’s transferability in Manitoba, not only within participating facilities, but also with any other interested health

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<sup>3</sup> Société santé et mieux-être du Nouveau-Brunswick and Horizon Health Network. (2022) *Formation à l’initiative Café de Paris*. [Online] [Theme 1 – Introduction to the Café de Paris concept | eQUITY Link \(equity-link.ca\)](#)

and social services partner. Participation data were collected throughout the project, and a learner satisfaction survey was distributed in Years 1 and 3. Santé en français, St. Amant and the Interlake-Eastern RHA adapted the Café de Paris initiative format over the course of the sessions in response to the data collected and survey results gathered, with a view to better meeting the organizations' needs and those of the learners. The data and surveys were also used to create the next section.

### 3. Analysis and findings

#### Overall assessment

The survey results show that the Café de Paris Manitoba initiative complements current active offer measures and formal language training offered in designated bilingual facilities. The initiative was well liked by learners, who expressed satisfaction with how the initiative met their expectations, allowed them to reach their goals and improve their French, as well as with the quality of the teaching, facilitator availability, and so on. Learners also stressed that Café de Paris enabled them to improve their understanding of the language and their confidence communicating in French. In the end, the initiative proved to be more structured and far-reaching than informal French discussion groups run by the facilities themselves.

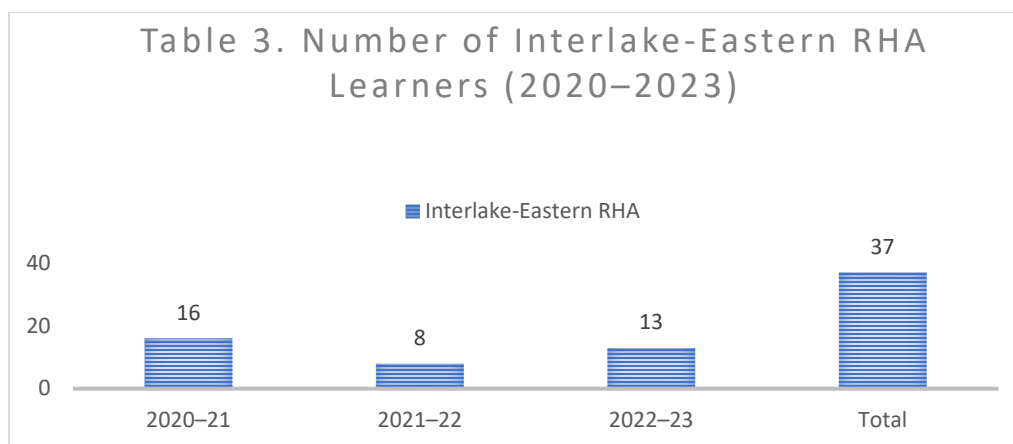
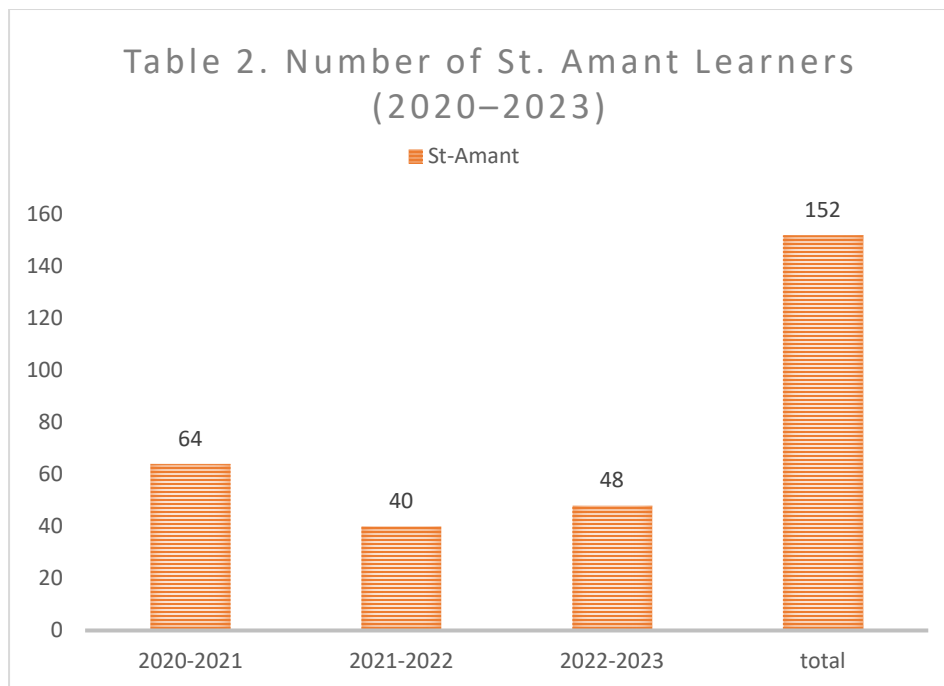
The cumulative results of the satisfaction surveys support this finding:

- 86% of respondents said they had a clear understanding of the services offered by the initiative when they signed up for sessions
- 98% said the sessions helped them improve their French in the areas of communication, reading and confidence in expressing themselves in French
- 91% said that Café de Paris met their expectations
- 94% were pleased with their facilitators
- 85% felt that the resources they received from Café de Paris helped them achieve their learning goals.

Quotations :

- "Very engaging, the facilitators were very open and very friendly." - Comment from a learner
- "They made it accessible for people with busy schedules." - Comment from a learner
- "Facilitators were phenomenal, safe and non-judgmental atmosphere to try language skills." - Comment from a learner

Tables 2 and 3 show the number of learners at the two participating sites.



### Learner profile

The three-year pilot project demonstrated that Café de Paris can help reduce language barriers for clients and kin. Indeed, when staff improve their French proficiency through the availability of informal language training, they increase their ability to communicate with French-speaking clients and kin. Language barriers prevent effective communication between clients, kin and medical staff, and ineffective communication leads to medical errors, misunderstanding of symptoms and treatments, and potential loss of trust between the three groups. Overall, 62% of the satisfaction survey respondents say they signed up for professional reasons. A number of learners acknowledged the benefits of the Café de Paris sessions on both a personal and professional level.



#### Quotations:

- “French is important for the organization, it’s important for us to have some French-language skills.” - Comment from a learner
- “Staff who participated in the pilot project found it very helpful. The overall impression was that they liked having some flexibility in the schedule. Feedback regarding the facilitators was very positive, they enjoyed meeting other staff within the organization who were also working on their French language skills, and liked that there were different groups for different skill levels.” - Comment from a French services coordinator

The initiative helped reach a wider audience of health and social services professionals, not just those in designated bilingual positions. Tables 4 and 5 show learner position by facility for 2022–2023.

#### Quotations:

- “Though my role is not formally designated bilingual, I feel that being able to at least provide active offer and demonstrate my willingness and interest to communicate in a person’s preferred language has gone a long way in relationship building.” - Comment from a learner

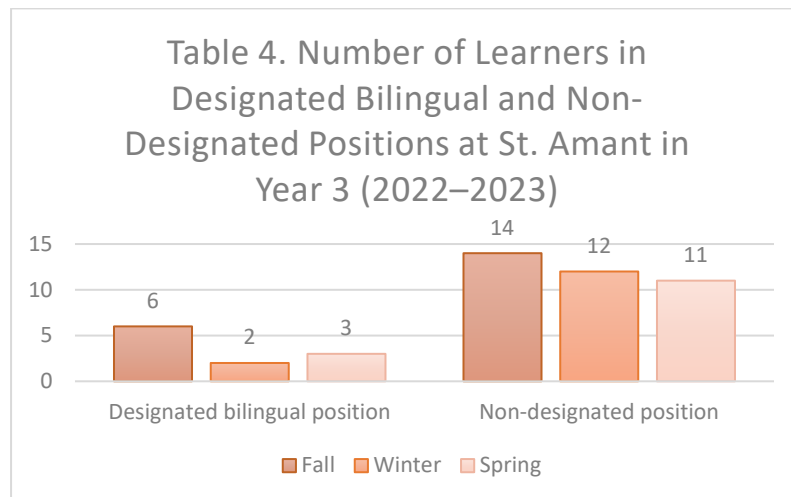
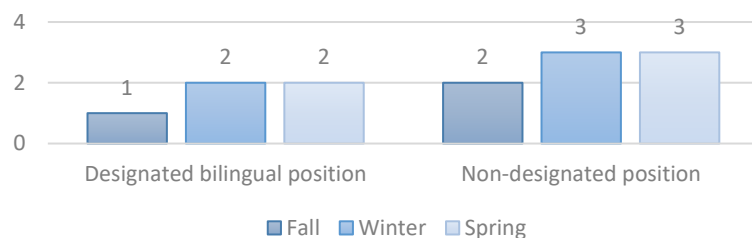
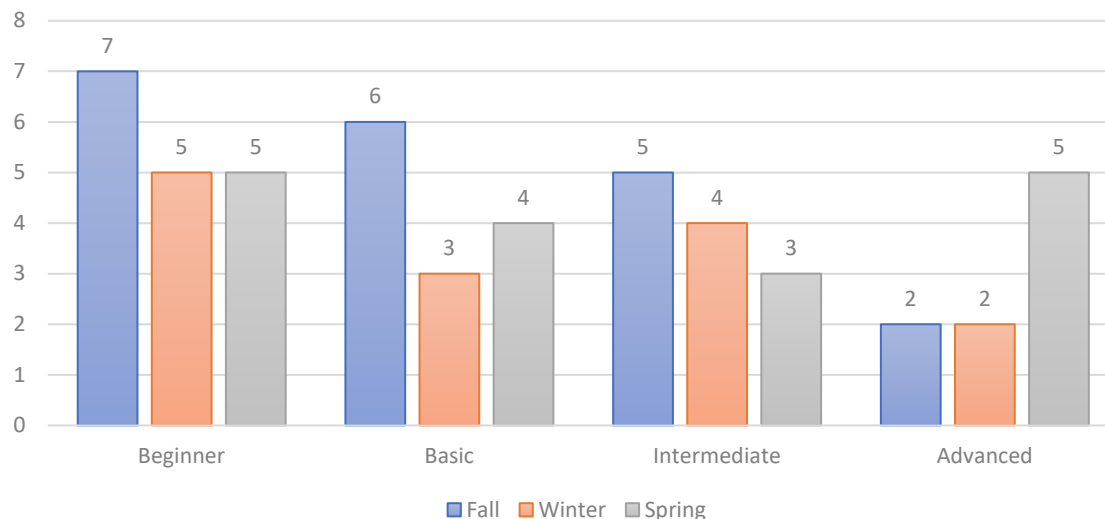


Table 5. Number of Learners in Designated Bilingual and Non-Designated Positions in the Interlake-Eastern RHA for Year 3 (2022–2023)



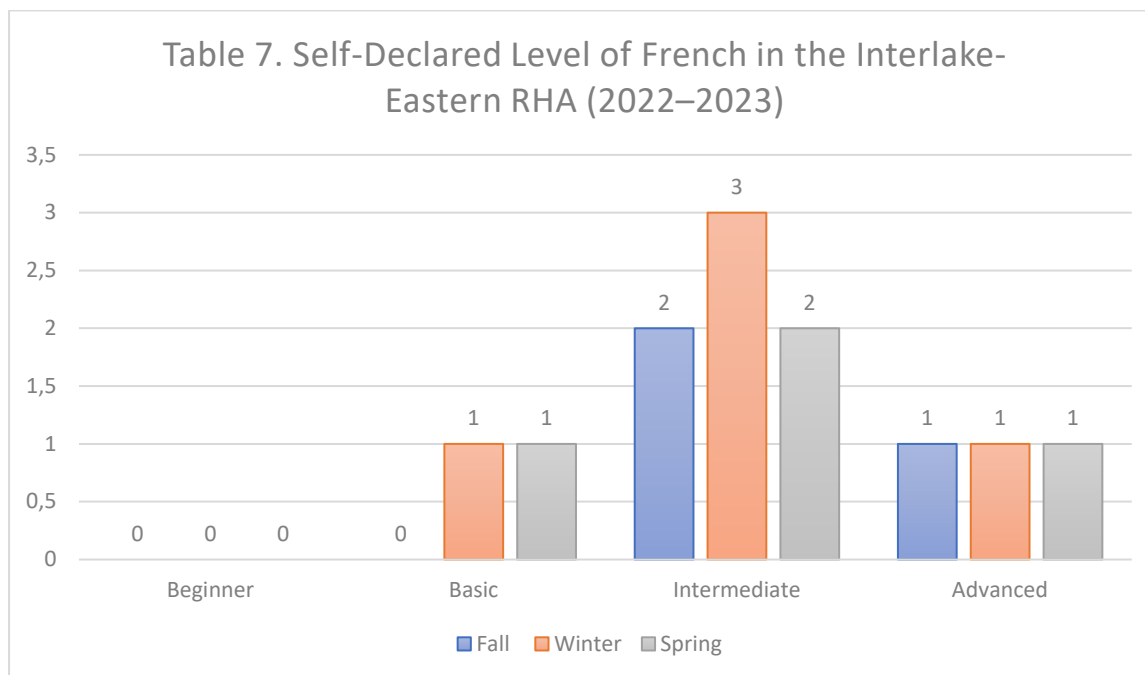
The range of levels of self-declared knowledge of French is reflected in the data. Tables 6 and 7 illustrate that diversity by facility for 2022–2023 in four categories, from beginner to advanced.

Table 6. Self-Declared Level of French at St. Amant (2022–2023)



**Legend:**

- Beginner (no knowledge of French)
- Basic (can speak and understand some words)
- Intermediate (some knowledge of French, and desire to maintain and improve)
- Advanced (good knowledge of French, but wants to be able to interact and speak French regularly to maintain the language)



**Legend:**

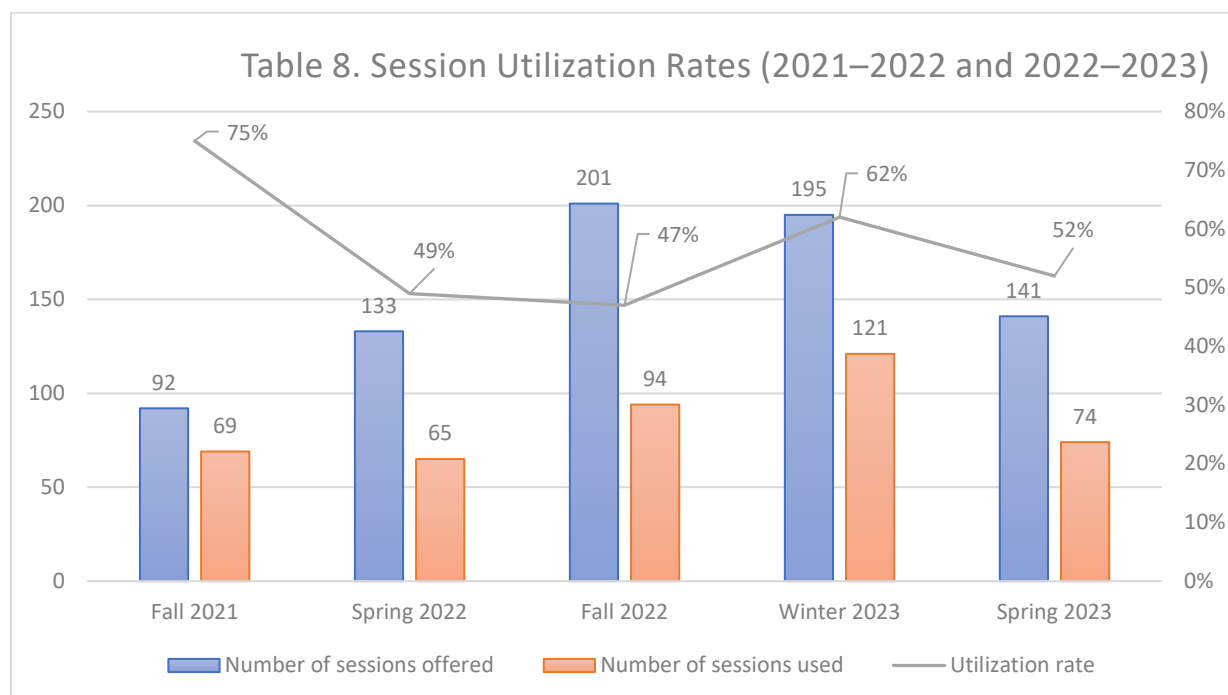
- Beginner (no knowledge of French)
- Basic (can speak and understand some words)
- Intermediate (some knowledge of French, and desire to maintain and improve)
- Advanced (good knowledge of French, but wants to be able to interact and speak French regularly to maintain the language)

The initiative, which enhances the active offer of services in French, gives staff an additional option for acquiring language skills to increase their ability to communicate effectively with French-speaking clients and kin. They can study common French phrases and expressions that facilitate communication, learn to ask clear and concise questions, and understand the answers given by clients and kin. The initiative also seems to help improve understanding of linguistic differences. Staff learn to be more sensitive to needs and tailor their communication accordingly.

### Utilization and attendance

The pilot project evolved over the three years to meet the needs of the facilities and learners. Various parameters, such as session length, were adjusted. Examples included a change from 15 and 30 minutes per individual session in Year 1 to 20 minutes in Years 2 and 3, and the addition of levels (beginner/intermediate) and varied formats (Meet & Greet, Happy Hour, French Friday and Jeudi jasette - Drop in Lunch). Most sessions during the pilot were one on one. The virtual mode worked well and was appreciated by learners for offering greater flexibility in scheduling. It also made it possible to offer the initiative to professionals in rural areas, which is an added value in terms of implementation. In-person sessions create a strong bond with returning learners and is a factor that increases the latter's support for the initiative.

The utilization rates in Years 2 and 3 show that the format adopted could accommodate more learners should the initiative continue. In fact, as Table 8 shows, the average utilization rate for Years 2 and 3 was 57% of the sessions offered. This indicates that more people could benefit from this informal language training from a cost-benefit perspective. The discrepancy between the number of sessions offered vs. utilized also reflects the flexible nature of the Café de Paris approach, which adapts to the staff's schedule and clinical obligations, whose first priority remains clients and kin. The attendance data also support this interpretation. The average attendance rate over the three years was 74%, and the vast majority of the 26% of absences were due to clinical obligations.



Moreover, the 74% attendance rate also indicates learner support and appreciation of the initiative. In that respect, management support seems to have played a role: 88% of satisfaction survey respondents felt supported by their direct manager to attend Café de Paris sessions. Freeing up staff during work hours is a key factor in the initiative's success, and the participating facilities offered that support, which contributed to the high participant attendance rate observed throughout the pilot. The Café de Paris Manitoba format can both be perceived by learners as less demanding than formal language training, which motivates their commitment to participate, and as a flexible way to maintain their learning skills after completing formal language training. Finally, the choice of facilitators also played an important role in the initiative's success. Facilitators are in direct contact with the learners, which influences the latter's commitment and investment in their learning journey. Some 94% of respondents were pleased with their facilitators.

### Importance of facilitators

The importance of the choice of facilitators and their role in engaging learners was demonstrated throughout the pilot project. Recruitment and turnover can, however, pose challenges. A turnover of

facilitators occurred midway through the pilot project, requiring a re-offering of Café de Paris approach training. Moreover, since facilitators are hired on a contract basis, scheduling and availability are parameters that need to be taken into account when delivering the initiative. The latter two were not an issue during the pilot project, but if the initiative continues, important consideration will need be given to creating a pool of facilitators.

### Continuation of the initiative

The satisfaction surveys were used to gauge respondents' views on the continuation of the initiative. The results indicate interest in the initiative and its relevance as a learning approach:

- 97% of respondents would recommend Café de Paris to a colleague
- 83% say they would very likely use Café de Paris services again if they were offered in the future
- 100% would like the initiative to continue (**Note:** This question was added in Year 3).

#### Quotations:

- “I would love to see Café de Paris continue in our organization as I truly believe it will support staff in providing services in French to those whom [sic] we support, and it will build a community within our organization.” - Comment from a French services coordinator

### Supporting the organizational culture of designated francophone and bilingual facilities

The Café de Paris Manitoba initiative appears to offer additional support for improving the quality and safety of care and services offered. The pilot project had a positive impact on the organizational culture of the participating facilities. Feedback in some of the surveys point to better communication and cooperation among staff who speak different languages and/or who may have French as a common language. Increasing linguistic capacity across teams can also help to reinforce a culture of cooperation and teamwork within the organization. The Café de Paris sessions resulted in some learners banding together to organize conversational activities in French outside the workplace, with a view to strengthening their language skills.

In Year 3 (2022–2023), four individuals who enrolled in the Université de Saint-Boniface's formal language training program offered by Santé en français had previously participated in the Café de Paris Manitoba initiative. While it is unclear whether their enrolment was a direct result of their participation in the initiative, it shows the potential for encouraging professionals in designated bilingual positions to take formal language training if they feel the need to strengthen their language skills.

#### Quotations:

- “I strongly feel that by changing our focus to actively advocate the Active Offer and support the organization to help staff feel comfortable offering services in French that will continue to make a difference. It is one step at a time, and I feel that we have already accomplished a lot. We need to continue offering Café de Paris sessions in order to continue to create a French culture within the organization. Staff indicated that they enjoyed meeting other staff who speak the language.” - Comment from a French services coordinator

Ultimately, the initiative seemed to contribute to the vitality of the organizational culture within the participating facilities. For instance, the opening of a Café de Paris space at St. Amant in October 2022

marked a commitment by the facility not only to the project, but also to its staff. The dedicated location offered a safe and friendly space for learners and benefited all those who wished to use it.

### Cost-benefit analysis

Santé en français spent \$33,535 on the pilot project, broken down into the following averages:

- \$61 per hour of training
- \$177 per learner
- \$37 per session

While these figures do not include time spent by the stakeholders (Santé en français and participating facilities) on human resources-related matters and in-kind contributions, the investment seems reasonable compared to the cost of formal language training, which is around \$330 per learner, per session.

Should the project continue, the investment and allocation of time among stakeholders on human resources-related matters and in-kind contributions will need to be considered. The time commitment is necessary for the project to succeed, but it may pose a challenge, depending on the capacity of the facilities and French-language services coordinators, in relation to other priorities affecting French-language health services for the francophone community. The time investment required is an important consideration for facilities wishing to take over the initiative.

For planning purposes, a one-year roll-out of the Café de Paris Manitoba initiative, consisting of three three-week sessions of 10 to 12 hours of language training, costs between \$14,500 and \$18,000, depending on the hourly rate of the facilitators, their training needs and the preparation time required for the individual and group sessions. If project coordination is done externally, an additional 20 to 25 days of work would be required, at an annual cost of between \$12,000 and \$16,000. Combining the above amounts, the annual cost of the initiative is somewhere between \$26,000 and \$34,000, not including the time required by French-language services coordinators for implementation.

## 4. Conclusion

Generally speaking, the pilot project was a success. The feedback, attendance rate and observed benefits support the continuation of the Café de Paris Manitoba initiative. The project had a noteworthy impact on the acquisition and reinforcement of language skills. The training appears complementary and relevant to current active offer measures and formal language training offered in designated bilingual facilities. The initiative was also greatly appreciated both by the learners and the participating facilities. The learners emphasized that Café de Paris helped them improve their understanding of the language and their confidence communicating in French. The pilot project also seems to have helped to reduce language barriers and improve understanding of linguistic differences. These are all factors contributing to the vitality of the organizational culture with regard to French-language services in designated francophone and bilingual facilities.

## 5. Recommendations

The following recommendations stem from the pilot project and the analysis and findings contained in this report.

If the decision is made to continue the Café de Paris Manitoba initiative:

- A cost-sharing arrangement should be struck between the stakeholders. Coordination and implementation should also be discussed. Santé en français cannot bear the costs alone and must re-assess the level of coordination it is able to ensure.
- The Café de Paris logic model developed by New Brunswick should be adopted, and partners would need to support its adoption. This would make it possible to create a more rigorous evaluation framework for Café de Paris Manitoba and better understand the impact of the acquisition and reinforcement of language skills by learners. It would also allow for better documentation of the complementary nature and relevance of the initiative in relation to current active offer measures and formal language training offered at participating facilities.
- Participating facilities should also consider providing financial support to allow learners to participate in francophone cultural activities, such as attending plays in French, viewing French-language films, and visiting historic sites and museums with French-speaking guides. The pilot project did not explore this avenue. According to the Café de Paris foundation framework, cultural activities give learners opportunities to better understand francophone culture, and Café de Paris sessions are enriched “[...] by integrative and cultural activities in the *[francophone]* community [...] [translation]”<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Société santé et mieux-être du Nouveau-Brunswick and Horizon Health Network. (2022) *Formation à l’initiative Café de Paris – Module 1: Everything you want to know about the Café de Paris approach, Theme 3: Foundational values and framework*. [Online] [Theme 3: Foundational values and framework | equity-link.ca](https://equity-link.ca/theme-3-foundational-values-and-framework)



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## Thanks

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## Acknowledgements

In a spirit of collaboration and solidarity, Santé en français recognizes that *Café de Paris* is a concept developed by New Brunswick's Horizon Health Network, in partnership with the Société Santé et Mieux-être en français du Nouveau-Brunswick.

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