

# FSA ULaval and Centraide: A Case Study

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## A partnership born of a need to meet community goals

United Way Centraide of Québec and Chaudière-Appalaches (Centraide) coordinates the disbursement of donations via a vast network of over 220 community nonprofit organizations. Managers of these nonprofits find themselves having to provide complex financial reports, a role for which they have not necessarily been trained. In addition, these managers have limited professional development opportunities (continuing education, soft skills) as they are often immersed in a resource constraint environment. Consequently, Centraide approached FSA ULaval with this problem, looking for a solution more personalized than a standard accounting/finance or management class. FSA ULaval responded with a proposal to codevelop a program to meet this very specific need. Rather than a unidirectional transfer of business knowledge to the community nonprofit organizations, the proposed program would incorporate contextual expertise from Centraide, as well as feedback from successive cohorts. In this way the program would be owned in an iterative fashion, until it perfectly met the needs of both Centraide and the many community nonprofit organizations.

### **| The program: Management of community organizations**

Iterative development. The primary objective of the program is to provide community nonprofit managers the opportunity to network, train and receive coaching in the latest management techniques, regardless of the prior level and area of education. Originally, entitled Management of community organizations and philanthropic leadership (now simply Management of community organizations), the program's graduates emerge not just better equipped for the reporting challenges, but for their roles as leaders and succession planning.

Cohorts are kept to a maximum of around 30 participants. The first cohort comprised only managers from organizations supported by Centraide. With each successive cohort, more places were opened for managers from community nonprofits not affiliated with Centraide. The program extends over an eight-month period and comprises nine modules, plus 20 hours of personalized coaching. Course delivery includes a mix of in-person and online meetings, with each module including three weeks of online meetings and one weekend in person. Following adjustments made after the first iteration, today's program includes:

- Introduction to the community world: the individual manager in this context
- Developing your leadership
- Human Resource Management in Community Organizations
- Governance of community philanthropic organizations
- Performance management and accountability
- Issues and challenges in philanthropic development
- Change and crisis management
- How to better position and communicating your service offering
- Community or philanthropic organization final project

A financial model that fits the need. Benchmarking the cost of such a program revealed that the average cost ranged from \$5,000 to \$8,000, a sum well beyond the budgets of community nonprofit organizations. To bring down the cost of offering the program, FSA ULaval offers it at cost, waiving the usual internal fee for managing the program. iA Financial Group, a long-term external partner of FSA ULaval, provided a generous \$20,000 donation to help defray the cost of the program for the participants in the first three cohorts. Centraide also provides financial support to managers to allow them to attend the program, reimbursing half of the per-participant cost upon completion. This three-way partnership allows community nonprofit organizations to participate a high-quality program that they might not otherwise be able to afford.

### **| A fit with FSA ULaval's strategic goals**

FSA ULaval's mission and vision stem from its identity as an agent for positive change. While there has always been a keen sense of responsibility toward community, recent discussions have resulted in a broadening of the notion of community. The School's mission now emphasizes that internal and external stakeholders are part of the same community and must work together on the creation of knowledge and its dissemination for the benefit of individuals, organizations, and society as a whole. Indeed, FSA ULaval recognizes that its mission goes beyond delivering business courses and publishing scientific articles in peer-reviewed journals. It aims to have a lasting positive impact on its students, its faculty and employees, and on society in general. As such, the School feels that preparing individuals to become influential leaders goes hand in hand with the development and promotion of socially responsible values.

The Management of community organizations program provides an excellent example of the benefits of going beyond unidirectional transfer of business knowledge and embracing the role that community plays in offering relevant education.