



Ontario[®]

2021-2023 Strategic Plan

.....
PUTTING THE “HUMAN” BACK IN HUMAN SERVICES



211ontario.ca

Contents

3

Message from the
Executive Director

4

211 at a Glance

5

Our Value Proposition

6

2020-2023
Strategic Plan Highlights

7

Strategic Goals

8

Stakeholder Outcomes

8

2020-2021 Strategic Priorities

Message from the Executive Director

211 Ontario has been helping people find the right community and social service supports to meet their needs for nearly two decades – providing navigation support through our award-winning phone service and our online search portal. Reporting to decision-makers on the needs and unmet needs of Ontarians who contact us has also helped inform system planning and investment.

As the world evolves, so do the challenges Ontarians face. This is especially true now as we all work collectively to mitigate the very real health and socio-economic risks faced by Ontarians, in particular among vulnerable populations who have been hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic. New digital services have become the norm – especially during lock-down – but some people face barriers accessing services online and without support will continue to be at risk.

211 has established strong partnerships with governments, local service delivery agencies, health providers, emergency responders, and other provincial partners to improve access to critical services – from housing to food security to financial and mental health supports. We've become the front door for more than 350,000 people annually to learn about and connect to the services they need. But we know the demand for our services and the complexity of needs will continue to increase, as will the demands for new digital access channels.

Over the last year, our Board and staff set to work in establishing a new strategic plan for the 211 system in Ontario. We looked ahead to understand the trends and signals that are likely to impact the way we deliver our services. We engaged a wide range of stakeholders to take the pulse on our areas of strengths and areas of improvement. We received broad feedback on business and operational efficiency, system design, data navigation and infrastructure, and brand management. The results of the interviews provided invaluable insights and helped us develop an actionable roadmap for the future.



The 211 system in Ontario is committed to doing the necessary work to strengthen our service offerings – working collaboratively with our stakeholders and funders to achieve the goals set out in our plan. Our year-one plan includes a commitment to improving and expanding our online channels, improving resource data quality and consistency, and optimizing our operating model.

COVID-19 has shone a light on the critical role 211 can play – not only in emergencies but every day – especially for vulnerable populations. When many other services had to close their doors, 211 staff stepped up in a big way to support communities and meet the needs of residents. In many ways, the pandemic has made our work even more important and urgent. The road to recovery is a long one, and we are building a strong 211 system that can evolve to meet the needs of Ontarians in the long-term.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the development of this plan, and to everyone who will play a role in helping us achieve our vision for people in Ontario – Empowered people. Thriving, caring communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen".

Karen Milligan
Executive Director
Ontario 211 Services

211 Ontario at a Glance

About 211

211 is a **free** and **confidential** service that easily connects people to the critical social and community supports they need.

Whether it's access to mental health support, financial assistance for those facing job loss,

or programs for seniors, 211 is here to help all Ontarians, no matter their location.

Available 24 hours a day, in more than 150 languages by phone, chat, text and web, 211 makes it easy for Ontarians to quickly access the complex network of government services and community programs they need for their unique situation.



OUR VISION

Empowered People. Thriving, Caring Communities.



OUR MISSION

To enhance access to services and strengthen community planning by stewarding an integrated 211 system for the wellbeing of people in Ontario.



OUR PARTNERSHIPS

211 has over 130 unique community and government partners that are working hard to support Ontarians. These partnerships range from pilot projects, launched projects, advisory committees, and protocols to be implemented in the event of a community emergency. [Learn more](#) about our current partnerships and how they benefit Ontarians by visiting our website.



OUR FUNDERS

The work we do would not be possible without the generous support of our funders and partners. They share our vision for what 211 can be and are invested in helping us get there.

The majority of 211 Ontario's operational funding is provided by the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, local United Ways, as well as municipalities across Ontario.

In addition, in 2020, as part of its COVID-19 response, the Government of Canada provided additional funding to United Way Centraide Canada to increase capacity and expand access to 211 services for all Canadian residents. This funding has been critical in ensuring 211 has the capacity to respond to the surge in outreach from Canadians over the course of the pandemic.



OUR COMMITMENT TO ONTARIANS

211 delivers a coordinated and integrated, one-stop gateway for the people of Ontario to access the quality community, health, and social services care they need when they need it most. Our services deliver an inclusive, human-centered, and responsive approach to emerging needs - we help break down barriers to improve access to human services that people need to thrive.



Our Value Proposition

Putting the “Human” Back in Human Services

Unlike search engines, 211 applies a human touch for personalized solutions. Our highly-trained and accredited Community Navigators know how to ask the right questions to get the full picture of a person’s needs. Navigators then provide referrals to services to connect them to the right supports. In addition, some partnerships include 211 registering individuals for services directly or providing a warm transfer to the program. 211 will also advocate on a contact’s behalf, at their request.

We Offer Ontarians Service Choice

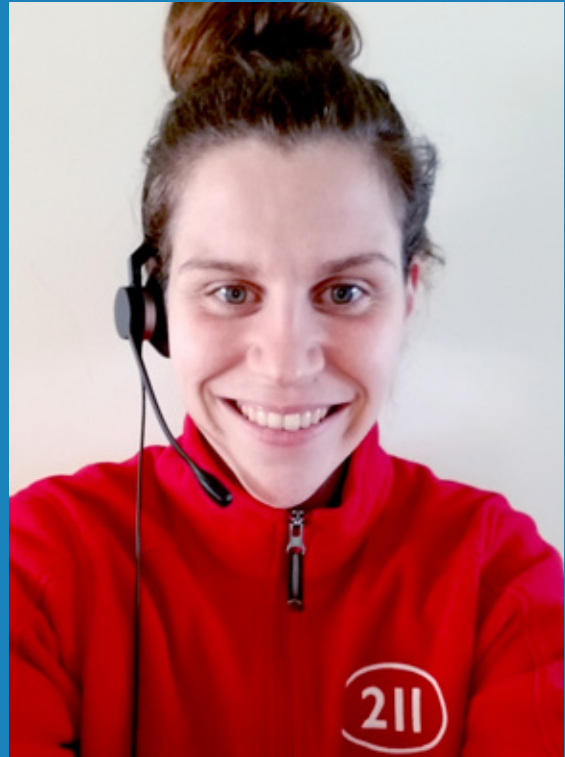
211 is available by phone for those looking to speak to a friendly voice or by text, online search, email or chat for those looking for convenience or who feel the stigma of asking for help. This makes our service available to all people of Ontario regardless of their level of digital understanding or ability to access the internet.

211 Makes Accessing Public Services Easy

For the People of Ontario – Connecting Ontarians to the programs and services they need when they need them.

For Government and Communities – Providing the data needed to identify service needs and unmet needs, improve responsiveness of support, and deliver better value for taxpayer dollars.

For Partners – Connecting agencies and non-governmental groups to improve access to services, build connections and gain insights.



Making a Difference During Covid-19

The Government of Ontario’s surge investment towards 211 last spring delivered immediate value for taxpayers. It ensured 211 was able to increase the support we could provide Ontarians, community agencies, and volunteers when it was needed most. Demand for 211 supports jumped 40 per cent within the first two weeks of the pandemic.

The additional funds ensured 211 was able to directly connect over 470,000 Ontarians to critical supports – from access to housing and food, to mental health services, income relief, employment services and more.

2020–2023 Strategic Plan Highlights

To achieve our vision of “Empowered People. Thriving, Caring Communities”, the Strategic Plan outlines how our services are delivered today, our strategic goals, and the desired outcomes for each of the stakeholder groups that we serve. Our plan will help us stay focused on continuously improving access to services through 211. We can help in the ongoing system design and implementation of a more efficient, flexible, and responsive public service delivery system through the data we collect on service availability, needs, service gaps, and barriers, improving access and quality of care for all Ontarians.

211 Core Functions



System Navigation

Helping Ontarians connect to the community, health, social, and government services they need to be well.

Data/System Mapping

Collecting, analysing, and reporting on the services available, the demand for those services, and the barriers to access/ service gaps.

System Design

Combining system navigation with data insights to inform better service design, integration, and delivery for Ontarians.

Our Strategic Goals

To guide us in our work to help improve the way people navigate the social services journey and how governments leverage human services data to design comprehensive and integrated service delivery systems, we have identified the following strategic goals:

Increasing awareness and access to services through 211

- **Generate more opportunities to expand** visibility and awareness of 211 Ontario's offerings and unique value proposition to Ontarians.
- **Educate the people of Ontario** about the social and community services available to them, how to access those services, and follow-up to ensure they received quality care.
- **Build 211's profile** as a reliable and important data source for system planning.

Enabling the right mix of service delivery infrastructure

- **Augment standards-based information sharing;** access to support through digital and phone channels so all Ontarians no matter where they live can find the help they need.
- **Foster partnerships** to strengthen access to 211 Ontario services.
- **Standardize the quality** of 211s core and enhanced offerings and the use of digital tools.
- **Ensure all stakeholders** across Ontario access a consistent service offering and brand identity.

Enhancing a strong governance foundation

- **Provide direction, stewardship, and effective** oversight of the 211 Ontario system by ensuring performance is continuously strengthened and optimized.
- **Improve the resilience of the 211 Ontario system** by optimizing the Business Model.
- **Secure financial resources and manage risk** to ensure the fulfillment of the mission.
- **Strengthen Ontario 211 Services' Board governance, recruitment and evaluation** practices required to steward the provincial system and resources effectively.

Desired Stakeholder Outcomes

Stakeholder engagement is key to our work. We strive to connect, inform, and empower individuals, communities, and governments to improve people's overall quality of life in Ontario. To achieve this goal we are working towards the following stakeholder outcomes:



For Ontarians

- Seamlessly connect individuals to services in an inclusive, human-centred manner across phone and internet-based channels
- Empower individuals by anticipating needs and sharing information proactively to improve their quality of life.



For Communities and Partners

- Provide an easy front door channel for community partners that connects them to those who need their services.
- Report back to communities on needs and service gaps to inform their program planning.
- Empower communities with evidence that helps them respond to emerging needs.



For Governments

- Provide an easy entry point for governments that connects them to a network of service providers and to those who need services.
- Monitor and report on needs and service gaps to inform their investments.
- Empower government with real-time data around emerging needs and barriers to service.

2020-2021 Strategic Priorities

211 Ontario has identified the following core strategic priorities for year one, the 2020 - 2021 planning period to advance its mandate and value to stakeholder groups:

Enhance and expand digital channels to increase reach and the number of people served.

Improve quality and interoperability of resource data.

Boost knowledge sharing for individual impact and system planning.

Deliver consistent 211 brand experience for all stakeholders.

Optimize operating model for 211 Ontario system.

Thanks to all our funders and partners
for their ongoing commitment to serving
the wellbeing of the people of Ontario.



For more information:



Call 2-1-1



Visit: www.211ontario.ca



Contact Karen Milligan
Executive Director, Ontario 211 Services
kmilligan@211ontario.ca