



Newfoundland and Labrador

CASE FOR SUPPORT



**United Way**  
Newfoundland  
and Labrador



## Executive Summary

211 Newfoundland and Labrador (211 NL) is an information and referral service that connects the people of Newfoundland and Labrador with community-based supports. These supports include government programs, non-profit community-focused services, and information sources. It is a free, confidential service available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Anyone in the province can dial 2-1-1 from where they are, from St. John's to Nain, to be connected to information quickly and easily. 211 NL connects people to the right service, at the right time.

## 211 Overview

211 NL launched on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020, thanks to funding support from the Government of Canada in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding was used to increase surge capacity in existing 211s across the country and to provide access to the service to all provinces and territories that did not yet have this access. This funding launched the 211 service in Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, and all three territories. The funding also enabled the launch of the 211 phone line in Manitoba (to complement the existing web service) and to expand 211 Quebec to include the entire province.

211 NL is part of this national 211 network (211.ca, 2021), which is coordinated by United Way Centraide Canada (UWCC). UWCC, in partnership with businesses and organizations across the country, is leading the development of a national 211 data repository and business intelligence platform.

The 211 NL service has been a critical support for people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moving forward 211 NL will continue to provide a pillar of community support for the province, regardless of which obstacle is thrown our way.

## 211 Database

211 starts with a database of community-based, social, health, and government resources, programs, and services. 211 websites are powered by this database, and Navigators who answer calls, online chats, and texts to 211 use the database to connect callers with the resources they need.

A wide range of organizations are listed in the 211 database, including non-profits, government departments providing direct services or information to the public, health facilities owned or operated by the local regional health authority, counselling agencies governed by a community board and offering services on a sliding scale, and professional associations offering direct services such as training to the public.

While private organizations can be included to the 211 database, this is done on a case-by-case basis, using the uniqueness of the service offered, degree of need, and negotiability of fees as the determining factors. Agencies or programs need to have existed for at least 6 months or be able to show that there is a high probability that their program will be available for at least one year.

## 211 Phone Line Operators

Calls to 211 are answered by Community Navigators who work in our province and across Canada to ensure that the line is available 24/7. All 211 Navigators must meet the quality assurance standards of the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS). These standards demand specialized training, quality assurance procedures, effective management practices, and program evaluation.

Community Navigators are highly trained staff certified by AIRS and must undergo ongoing professional development and training to maintain their certification (See Appendix A). Community Navigators are skilled in helping individuals, families, and other agencies, identify, understand, and effectively use the programs and services available.

## Types of Referrals Offered by 211 NL

<b>Basic Human Needs Resources</b>	Food and clothing banks, shelters, rent assistance
<b>Physical and Mental Health Resources</b>	Health insurance programs, maternal health resources, crisis intervention services, support groups, counselling, drug and alcohol intervention, and rehabilitation
<b>Work Support</b>	Financial assistance, job training, transportation assistance, and education programs
<b>Support for Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities</b>	Community meals, respite care, home health care, transportation, homemaker services, and warm lines to reduce feelings of isolation
<b>Children, Youth, and Family Support</b>	After-school programs, education programs for lower income families, family resource centres, summer camps and recreation programs, mentoring, tutoring, and protective services
<b>Suicide Prevention</b>	Referrals to suicide prevention organizations, and connections to training programs, such as ASIST
<b>Access to Services in Non-Official Languages</b>	Language translation and interpretation services to help non-English or French-speaking people find public resources.

## Objectives and Opportunities

More than ever the government, the private sector, and not-for-profit organizations need to come together for the betterment of our communities. Individual, families, and community members need access to government, health, and social supports - and to get the help they need before sinking into poverty, a mental health crisis, or starting down the path to criminal activity.

Previous research from Saskatchewan (Lisoway, A. 2014) has found that it may take up to seven phone calls for an individual to access the appropriate government or public services they need. This challenge is even more difficult for people facing challenges, such as older age, illiteracy (both traditional and/or digital), poverty, and homelessness. Increasing access to already existing vital community resources is a proactive approach to increase the possibility of individuals and families being self-sufficient and accessing services earlier, resulting in early intervention to solve a problem and possibly prevent a crisis.

**Life can be challenging,  
finding help doesn't  
have to be.**



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## 211 NL's 5 Key Objectives

### 1. **Provide low-barrier, personalized assistance to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, connecting them to the right services and resources at the right time.**

Many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians don't know where to go to find the help they need. 211 NL operates 24/7 to connect people with a trained Community Service Navigator, who will work to understand their needs and connect them with the appropriate resources and supports.

Many 211 Navigators have gone as far as advocating for their clients, getting them into essential programs and connecting them to additional resources to interrupt, for example, the cycle of poverty.

211 is much more than a referral service, it is follow-up support, advocacy, and safety planning. It is a low barrier access to all who may need it. The 211 NL phone line is the most accessible service navigation tool available for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It enables connections to community services for people who may, for example, have literacy issues, are computer illiterate, live in remote areas without reliable internet access, don't speak English and may need a translator, or require enhanced follow-ups to make sure the services are working.

Without 211 NL, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador would lack a single access-point for these community, government, and social services. Without 211 NL the front door to community supports is closed.

### 2. **Use and share 211 NL data and analytics to support decision making.**

211 call data is gathered from real people, in real time, on their needs for community services in their own words. Calls to 211 NL are logged on a call report, which allows for the collection of various usage statistics. These statistics demonstrate the needs experience by citizens in a particular community, the resources available to community members, and where gaps, barriers, or duplicated services exist.

For those working in government planning and others involved with decisions in the community sector, 211 provides an authoritative source of human services data that can be accessed and used to support community development and investment initiatives at all levels.

This work can provide the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador a proven model to help inform government decisions. 211 NL data can be used to support or defend a new program or service, to prove or disprove a theory or assumption, and/or to help explore an alternative option. All things that can help increase evidence-based decision making.

### **3. Lessen the burden on 311, 811, and 911 services and resources**

According to NL 911 (NL 911, 2020), 32.4% of all 911 calls in the province between 2018 and 2019 were “non-transferred calls.” This represents calls that were not, for one reason or another, sent to emergency services. While NL 911 has identified ways to reduce this volume through education campaigns, these calls are tying up highly-skilled staff now, even though the calls do not represent an imminent threat to life, limb, property, or personal security.

We see 211 NL complementing the existing services in the province, such as 311, 811, and 911, to improve system efficiency and effectiveness. By providing individuals with an easy to use phone number that is better suited to handle the non-emergent calls already heading to more critical services.

In other jurisdictions, full service 211 has reduced non-urgent 911 calls and timely referrals by front-line law enforcement. In St. John’s, 311 calls are now referred to 211 NL instead of individual agencies in the city, when necessary.

During the pandemic, police services in Ontario directed the public to phone 211 in non-emergency situations to lower the burden of 911 phone lines.

### **4. Engage in collaborative partnerships to develop innovative solutions**

Across Canada, there are examples of 211s working collaboratively with government, organizations, and communities in their province to enhance access to services that improve well-being, increase efficiencies by reducing redundancies in within the information and referral sector, and contribute to innovative solutions that address social determinants of health.

211 NL is currently collaborating and/or in conversations with the following community sectors:

- Food security
- Senior services
- Children and family services
- Mental health services
- Veteran services
- Housing and homelessness services

As an example of other regions with 211 access, 211 Central East Ontario receives faxed referrals from the paramedic services in Simcoe County (Simcoe County Community Paramedicine) when paramedics identify a patient's health/well-being is impacted by social determinants of health. This referral occurs with consent during a live 911 call. 211 East Central Ontario triages the referrals for priority, and Community Navigators conduct the outbound referrals. Approximately 30-50 referrals are generated each week for a population of roughly 450,000 people.

## **5. Provide enhanced community crisis and disaster response**

211 is a critical information system, which is necessary prior to, during, and after a community crisis such as a flood, pandemic, or other local or national events. 211s in Canada and many in the United States have successfully used the 211 infrastructure to provide mass coordination to combat system overload during these kinds of community crises. This process frees up first responders for the most urgent of calls.

211 has proven to be a vital service during times of emergency or disaster by disseminating information to the public, referring people to the necessary services, and directing surges of donated items and volunteers to where they are needed most.

Once 211 is implemented, and funded, it maintains a permanent presence in the community. As a result, people can find the help they need whether their needs arise a week, or several years, after the crisis event. 211 can provide reassurance and continuous, reliable information about services through a long-term recovery period.

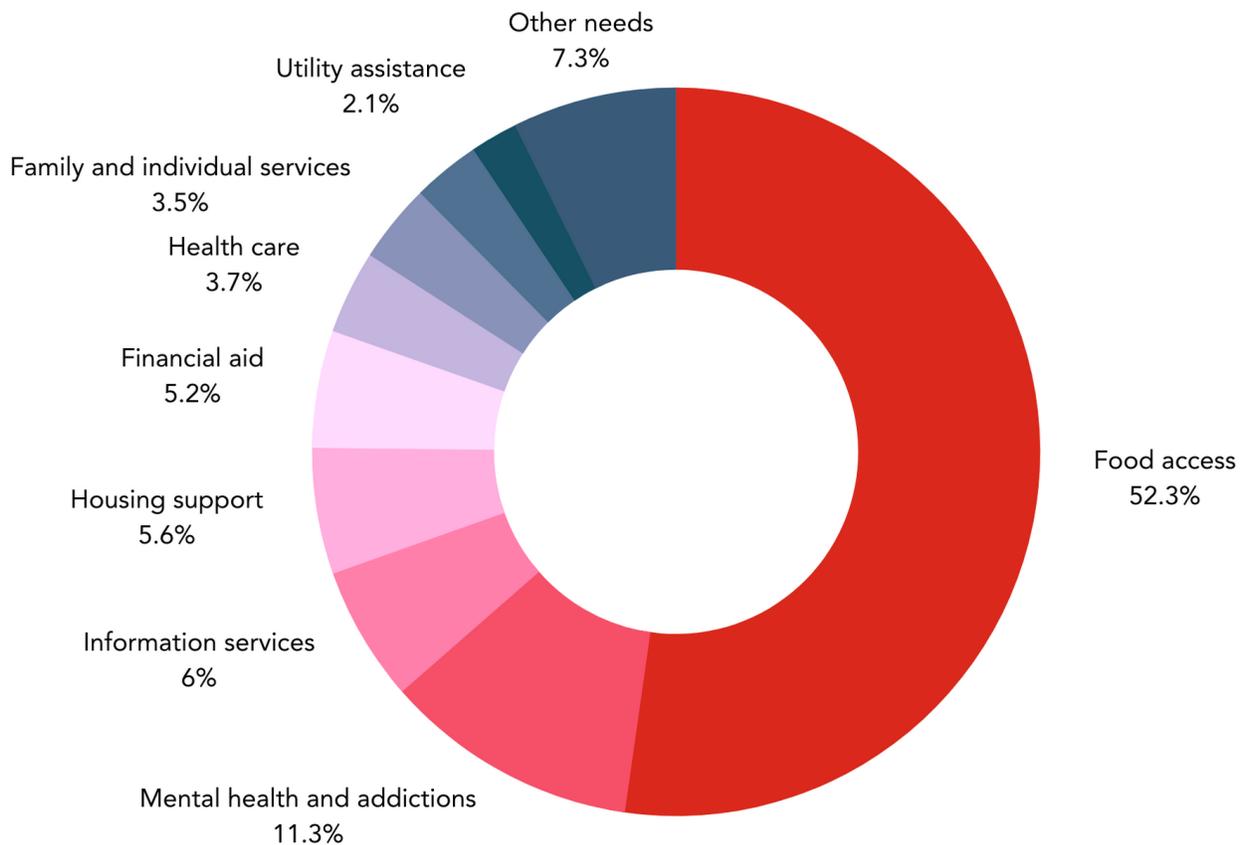
## Outcomes and Impacts

In only the first six months of operations 211 NL received over 2,200 calls from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians looking for help. Callers' needs have been diverse and unique, with a primary focus on basic needs (food, shelter, etc), mental health and addictions support.

Call volumes to the 211 NL line surged in response to the second province-wide lockdown in February of 2021 and have remained steady since.

Calls come into 211 NL from across the province, from the Avalon Peninsula to the shores of Labrador, with higher population areas providing a majority of call volume. Outreach is ongoing to ensure that the entire province is aware of the critical service, and to expand agency access in more rural areas.

The chart below illustrates shows the current volumes of expressed needs to 211 NL, as of April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021.



## Caller Stories

### Story #1

*A woman called 211 looking for a solution. The caller's daughter has "aged out" of the mental health treatment program at the local hospital. The caller said that her daughter has not had her mental health medications refilled for two weeks. They had tried to reach her former doctor at the hospital, but with no success. The daughter does not have a family doctor. They had called 811 and walk-in clinics with no resolution to the problem. The daughter is going to college and is falling behind because of the lack of medications.*

*The Service Navigator showed empathy for the caller's frustration. She provided several referrals including a community mental health agency for guidance, and the nearest hospital to the college for possible connections to fill the prescription. The caller said that she would try these ideas right away. The Service Navigator let her know that 211 was available 24 hours in case she or her daughter needed more help.*

### Story #2

*When people are in crisis or ill, they need extra support to be able to stay in their homes. 211 Service Navigators can advocate for people and connect them directly with the services they need.*

*The caller was referred by 811 and was looking to connect with a food bank. The caller had recently come back from the hospital and it was important for their recovery that they were able to maintain their strength. This was an emergency situation, as the caller also had two young children.*

*With the client's permission, the 211 Service Navigator called several food banks on behalf of the caller. She then conferenced the caller with an organization that would make an emergency food delivery to their home with their specific medical requirements noted and addressed. At the end of the call, the client said: "I had no idea where I could turn or what to do. Thank you!"*

## National Impact of 211 in Canada

Between March and December of 2020, a total of 561,607 calls were received by 211 providers across Canada. This represents a 30% increase of calls answered during the same period in 2019 (430,585 calls).

Over the last few months, UWCC has begun to aggregate data at a national level and to identify challenges with data standardization (for example, age categories). This work will be ongoing as will their focus on developing the business intelligence tools for various stakeholders, including 211 providers, United Ways and Centraides, and our partners in the Government of Canada.

## 211 NL Funding and Budget

United Way Newfoundland and Labrador (UWNL) is proud to have committed a portion of their annual funds raised to help ensure ongoing support of 211 NL in the future.

With the benefits realized from 211 NL service to community members, decision makers, and service providers, we see an important funding role for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador to play in ensuring sustained 211 NL service beyond March 31st, 2022.

The budget for a fully realized and supported 211 service in Newfoundland and Labrador is \$381,100 per year. This includes 24/7 phone service in over 150 languages, a searchable website, robust data maintenance, outreach to service providers, and marketing. The budget includes opportunity to enhance the system even further with online chat and text-based supports.

### 211 NL Proposed Annual Expenses (2021–2024)

<b>211 NL Budget</b>	
211 Service Navigation - NL Resident	\$66,000
Navigation - Findhelp/211 Central	\$60,000
211 Database - Approximately 1,000 English / 200 French Records	\$77,000
Technology & Business Intelligence	\$25,000
Project & Staff Management	\$42,000
Administration	\$36,000
211 Outreach Coordinator (50%)	\$27,000
211 Website hosting and maintenance	\$15,500
Marketing	\$5,000
<b>Annual Grand Total</b>	<b>\$354,100</b>

## Anticipated and Proposed Sources of Funding

We envision 211 NL as a collaborative and multi-sectoral partner. United Way Newfoundland and Labrador is proud to contribute a portion of its annual Community Fund as an ongoing commitment, and hopes to secure additional funding to ensure the service is able to provide support now, and grow to support more in the future.

211 NL is a service that benefits all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and provides support related to a diverse range of issues, including children and parenting, food security, housing and homelessness, mental health and addictions, support to Indigenous populations, legal and justice, and health.

United Way Newfoundland and Labrador has committed to the long-term success of 211 NL. For the year 2021 to 2022, United Way NL has committed \$41,600 to cover the cost associated with outreach, marketing, and some of the administration. Further, UWNL donors have committed 2% of each year's Community Fund proceeds to funding 211 NL for the long term.

In addition to United Way Newfoundland and Labrador, other potential funders include:

**The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador:** With the benefits realized from 211 NL as a service for community members, decision makers, and service providers, we see an important funding role for the government of Newfoundland and Labrador to play in ensuring sustained 211 NL service beyond June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021. In 7 other provinces, 211 service providers receive funding from their provincial government.

**The Government of Canada:** We are encouraged by the temporary funding provided by the Government of Canada to support the national 211 network in its response to COVID-19. We do not know what any potential future federal funding might look like at this time. Any federal dollars would primarily be used or allocated to support the national 211 network (e.g., national database, and business intelligence platform).



## Conclusion

During the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, 211 Ontario shared the story of a woman who was fleeing domestic violence who called 211. She found herself experiencing homelessness and food insecurity. The 211 Community Navigator was able to connect her to immediate food and shelter while the pandemic raged.

This is just one example of thousands of stories every year, that demonstrates the value 211 provides to communities.

211 NL is proud to have joined the national network of 211 phone lines, and we hope to continue to deliver this essential service for years into the future.

## Appendix A

### 211 Call Centres and AIRS Accreditation Standards

The following information is from the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) website:  
[www.airs.org](http://www.airs.org)

AIRS is the professional membership association for community Information and Referral (I&R). AIRS is the driving force behind the delivery of quality I&R services and the sole source for standards, program accreditation, and practitioner certification for the I&R sector.

#### **ACCREDITATION**

The AIRS Accreditation Program is the only credential specifically geared for programs engaged in the specialized field of I&R. It measures a program's organizational compliance with expected practices within the field as defined by the AIRS Standards and Quality Indicators for Professional Information and Referral.

The AIRS Standards and Quality Indicators for Professional Information and Referral was first published in 1973 and is now in its 9th edition (9.0 was officially released in September 2020). The AIRS Standards underpin and bind together every aspect of I&R and define the direction of all the products and services provided by AIRS. The Standards are the foundation of I&R service delivery and the prime benchmark of quality I&R.

There are 27 Standards, covering every facet of an I&R operation from Client Advocacy and Crisis Intervention to Disaster Preparedness and Organizational Effectiveness. A full copy of the AIRS Standards can be found on the AIRS website.

#### **CERTIFICATION**

The AIRS Certification Program is a professional credentialing program for individuals working within the I&R sector of human services.

The mission of the AIRS Certification Program is, in accordance with international credentialing practices, to improve the quality of the I&R service received by the public, recognize the professionalism of individual I&R practitioners, and provide an enhanced quality assurance measurement to organizations that provide I&R.

The Certification for Community Resource Specialist (CRS) is designed for practitioners who work directly with clients whether on the phone or in-person and provide mediated I&R -- that is, establishing rapport, conducting an assessment, providing an informed choice of referrals, engaging in follow-up and being capable of providing advocacy or crisis intervention, if required. Candidates must follow AIRS Ethical Principles.

InformCanada is the Canadian affiliate of the Alliance of Information & Referral System (AIRS). Inform Canada represents AIRS in Canada and is responsible for ensuring Canadian content in standards materials. In this capacity, Inform Canada also provides: bilingual editorial support (French-English), training, promotion, administration and outreach. The taxonomy is free for all organization members.

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## Appendix B

### Canadian 211 Funding Sources and Operational Models

All provinces and territories have received temporary funding from the Government of Canada to support COVID-19 related enhancement and expansion. 211 service was newly launched on October 15, 2020, in Yukon, Nunavut, Northwest Territories, New Brunswick, and here in Newfoundland and Labrador using this federal support. As such these areas are excluded from the table below. All effort was made to ensure the below data is correct and up to date, however, this information is subject to change at any time.

211	Funding Sources	Organizational Model
<b>British Columbia</b>	BC 211 is funded by a combination of United Way donors, the Provincial Government of British Columbia, and the City of Vancouver. Annual expenses are in excess of 2.2 million.	BC 211 is a nonprofit entity governed by a board of directors. BC 211 operates its own call centre.
<b>Alberta</b>	211 Alberta was initially funded by individual municipalities across Alberta. Recently, it received provincial funding to expand 211 Alberta across the entire province. Other major funders include United Way Alberta Capital Region and the City of Edmonton. In Edmonton alone, annual expenses are just under 1.5 million.	211 AB is an initiative of United Way. Call centre operators for 211 AB are co-located within two call centres that existed prior to the creation of 211. One centre is in Edmonton (operated by the Canada Mental Health Association) and the other is in Calgary (operated by the Distress Centre of Calgary).
<b>Saskatchewan</b>	211 SK receives core funding from United Way Saskatoon and United Way Regina donors. Other funders that have sponsored expansion activities included: Community Initiatives Fund and CanPacific Potash, and project funding from the Provincial Government (Ministry of Education, Early Years Branch). Annual expenses are approximately \$750,000.	211 SK is an initiative of United Way. 211 SK contracts out its 211 phone service to BC 211.

211		
<b>Manitoba</b>	211 Manitoba is funded by United Way Winnipeg donors.	211 MB is an initiative of United Way Winnipeg. 211 MB contracts out its 211 phone service to Findhelp
<b>Quebec</b>	211 Quebec is primarily funded by United Ways and municipalities across the province. For example, in Montreal, 45% of 211 funding comes from the City of Montreal, with another 31% coming from United Way Montreal and 16% from the Province of Quebec. Annual expenses for 211 in Montreal alone are just under \$1.2 million.	211 QC currently operates two call centres in the province.
<b>Ontario</b>	211 Ontario receives over 80% of its funding from the Province of Ontario (Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services). Other funding comes from local United Ways and various partnerships (e.g., Canadian Union of Postal Workers). Annual expenses are just over \$5 million.	211 ON has a group of licensed 211 Regional Service Partners (all are independent nonprofit organizations) that deliver 211 services for their respective catchment areas. The majority of 211 ON calls are answered by Findhelp Information Services.
<b>Nova Scotia</b>	United Way Nova Scotia contributes 1% of its annual net campaign revenue to 211 NS. The Province of Nova Scotia (Ministry of Social Development and Housing) provides the remainder of the funding (approximately 95% of the total funding annually). Annual expenses are in excess of \$1 million.	211 NS operators answer calls received during regular business hours (M-F) out of Halifax's newly constructed 311 call centre. Evening and weekend calls are contracted out to Findhelp Information Services in Ontario.
<b>PEI</b>	211 PEI received 95% of its funding from the Province of PEI. The remaining 5% is funded by United Way PEI. Annual expenses are approximately \$300,000.	211 PEI is an initiative of United Way PEI. 211 PEI contracts out its call service to 211 NS. Calls will be answered by operators at 211 NS's call centre during office hours from Monday to Friday. Evenings and weekend calls are answered by operators at Findhelp in Ontario.

## References

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3. NL911. (2020). *2019-2020 Annual Report*. <https://nl911.ca/assets/articles/NL911-2019-2020-Annual-Report.pdf>



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