211Ontario.ca

Report on Community Consultations

March 2007

Requirements for the development of a bilingual online directory of over 60,000 community, social, health and related government programs and services in Ontario

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SUMMARY REPORT

A n online province-wide information resource such as 211Ontario.ca must have inherent relevancy and credibility. Geographically, it must meet the requirements of provincial, regional and local stakeholders and users, and it must also reflect the diversity and unique information needs of specific communities. The 211Ontario.ca project was launched April 2006, and all deliverables will be completed by March 2009. The project is focused on all of the primary areas of community information: a searchable directory for both public and professional users in both official languages; development and integration of a common classification system; establishing sustainable data partnerships that cover all geographic and specialized information gaps; and developing shared community resources for information and referral providers throughout Ontario.

The project vision draws on more than 35 years of information and referral partnerships in Ontario. In the past decade, technology has drawn independent centres together, making resource sharing and collaborative work a reality, and consultations with more than 100 community-based agencies and three levels of government[1] have drawn a clear and powerful vision – to create a human services information system to meet the information and communication needs of citizens in the 21st century. The project will bring together four critical foundations: an established, credible database; a robust, scalable Oracle®/Java® web application; a community based data management application; and the Canadian Taxonomy of Human Services.

The 211Ontario.ca project team recognized that as an information management/information technology project with a provincial focus, thorough and accurate requirements would be critical to the success of the resource and its broad utilization in the future. Intensive consultation was identified as the optimal way to compile requirements for a large, diverse population with potentially different information needs and information seeking behaviour. The project team dedicated themselves to developing and implementing a rigorous schedule of face-to-face meetings throughout Ontario, choosing to travel as facilitation teams in order to reduce the potential for participant travel barriers and increasing opportunities for community engagement.

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[1] *Building a Human Services Information Utility for Toronto*, Michael Miloff and Associates and Mendelson Associates Inc., March 31, 1999. *211 for All Ontario Bringing People and Services Together,* Final Report, July 2003 (Part 2, available at 211.ca).

The program of community consultation was developed to support the following project deliverables: business requirements; classification system considerations; classification system conversion scheduling; data partner identification and requirements; data standards; and system design. The community consultations discussed in this report took place throughout Ontario from July 2006 to January 2007. More Francophone consultations are scheduled in the course of spring 2007, and a distinct report will be produced to reflect the specific situation and needs of the Francophone communities. Consultations provided valuable feedback and requirements, and built a core of informed community stakeholders throughout the province. ***An overwhelming majority of participants indicated enthusiasm for the project's goals, and identified a need across the province for a resource such as 211Ontario.ca.***

Community consultation, effective communications and actively engaged partners have been the priority for the first phase of the 211Ontario.ca project. Following a comprehensive needs assessment with key stakeholders, the pre-consultation phase of the project was dedicated to connecting with information and referral providers, United Ways and representatives of the Ministry of Community and Social Services. As stakeholders that have a direct interest in information and referral services in their community, many accepted the role of community representative. Representatives provided an invaluable window into the community and acted as local hosts. Community representatives played an irreplaceable part in the success of consultations: ***There is no doubt that local hosts and community-based meetings helped to maximize credibility and encourage participation at the local level.***

The community consultations had two objectives: to ensure local, regional and specialized community engagement in the project; and support broad community utilization of 211Ontario. In all, sixteen day-and-a-half consultations were conducted in nine regions across Ontario[1]. ***In all groups, participants expressed enthusiasm and interest in the project. Client Referral Workshop participants commonly held that one reliable, consolidated resource would be of great help, and that if 211Ontario.ca can establish a reputation as a trusted, reliable source of information it will fill a need that is apparent and fits with the current and increasing trend to search for information online.***

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[1] The regions are consistent with Ministry of Community and Social Services jurisdictional boundaries; however, they are not meant to be representative of the 211Ontario.ca regional areas. These areas will be developed and confirmed through analysis and consultation with subject matter experts.

All groups identified two major concerns: data inclusion/exclusion policy, and overall sustainability. This is consistent with the project scope, which includes activities related to sustainability and further development of the 211Ontario.ca Terms of Use[1]. The two issues are intrinsically tied together: the broader and deeper the inclusion policy, the greater the resources that will be needed to support the resulting database. The project has produced a sustainability discussion paper, which will document developments that impact the need for future resources. The project team will reconvene InformOntario's Information Resources Working Group, which last met at the close of the Phase 2 project, "Foundations for a Sustainable Future", in November, 2005.

The project team's commitment and professionalism were recognized, with evaluations ranking the sessions very positively. The Ottawa and Sault Ste. Marie consultations were the first two meetings and had the largest number of attendees. The feedback from both was positive, and provided valuable information for improving the remaining fourteen sessions. Extensive documentation from the sessions will drive requirements for all areas of 211Ontario.ca project development in the coming two years, and the extensiveness of contacts made will be invaluable in developing a sustainable service with broad utilization.

Consultation Quick Facts
Comments on the evaluations were very enthusiastic about the project in general.
The biggest concern stated was sustainability beyond the life of the project, stressing the importance of maintaining up-to-date information to a high standard.
Participants stressed the importance of locally created and maintained data, indicating that local ownership of information is a major factor in eliciting confidence in the resource.
The need to address accessibility issues as they relate to people with disabilities and Internet availability was also highlighted at some consultations.
There was wide recognition of the need for local collaboration in order to reduce duplication and produce one comprehensive database with 'one record, one manager'.
In the north, there are concerns about the difficulty of achieving the goal of filling all data gaps.

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[1] The inclusion/exclusion policy is part of 211Ontario.ca Terms of Use. The current Terms of Use can be viewed on 211Ontario.ca.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

Needs Assessment

The success of the 211Ontario.ca project depends on community engagement to enable development of a valuable tool to locate local services that will meet the needs of all Ontarians. In July 2006, the project team undertook an interest and needs assessment of key stakeholders.

Stakeholders commonly identified the following as critically important project outcomes:

- Reach all Ontarians, geographically, with specific attention paid to the north and rural areas.

- Ensure the resource meets the needs of Francophone and Aboriginal communities.

- Provide an easy-to-use and easily accessible service with a broad, public and professional appeal and credibility.

- Create standards that will be widely adopted among project partners and be maintained beyond the project timeframe.

- Promote province-wide collaboration and data exchange.

The criteria seen as crucial for evaluating the success of 211Ontario.ca were:

- Positive feedback received from data partners and users.

- Identified data gaps filled.

- Full and accurate representation of services for Francophones, and credibility and utilization within the Francophone community.

- Taxonomy adopted by partners, databases successfully converted, and resource specialists across Ontario fully trained in the application of the system.

- Public awareness and use of the website service.

The need to involve and gain the support of a wide range of stakeholders was consistently highlighted, and it was commonly held that a well implemented communication and consultation process was a vitally important project component.

Pre-Consultation Process

Pre-consultation activities were carried out between August and October 2006. During pre-consultation the project team focused on working closely with community representatives who could provide introductions to community stakeholders and highlight relevant local issues and/or sensitivities. Representatives influenced the specific planning and development of each consultation meeting.

Preparatory Activities	
Stakeholder analysis and mapping	Identified stakeholders, including those that could fill gaps in information, and assigned them to stakeholder groups.
Phone call with MCSS local representatives	Produced a table of MCSS regional stakeholders, with descriptions and level of consultation required.
Questionnaires to local United Way representatives	Received feedback on their ideas for the project, willingness to participate and concerns.

Engaging Community Representatives

Representatives from organizations that had a direct interest in information and referral services in general, or 211Ontario.ca in particular, were contacted and asked to be the community representative for consultations. These included regional 211 Implementation Planning Groups, local information and referral providers, United Ways, and representatives from the Ministry of Community and Social Services[1].

Initial meetings varied depending on the degree of awareness about the project and the types of organizations and interests involved. In some regions, more than one meeting was required in order to include the broadest possible representation. E-mails and conference calls followed as the project team answered questions, set the consultation timetable, and logistics were planned.

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[1] The Ministry of Community and Social Services is the public sector partner for the project. The project is funded through *Strengthening Our Partnerships,* a Ministry of Finance program.

Pre-Consultation Materials

All presentations and handouts are available in French and English and are posted on the project weblog on 211Ontario.info.

PRE-CONSULTATION MATERIALS
211Ontario.ca FAQ
211Ontario.ca Press Release
Project website to download documents and find information

Stakeholder Identification

Stakeholders were identified as anyone that the service will impact, including the public and professionals. Stakeholders are also recognized as those who are critical in influencing the project outcomes, such as funders, Ontario information and referral data partners, and service providers that have information and referral as a component of their service.

Stakeholder Group A	Established Partners	
Consultation Goals	Address questions, identify areas for alignment, determine goals and actively provide support for those that assume a role of "champion".
Description	Established involvement with the project; includes, all levels of government, United Ways, Ontario information and referral data partners.
**Stakeholder Group B	Prospective Partners**	
Consultation Goals	Engage and build potential for utilization of resource; support participation in the development of the project where there is interest, shared goals and mutual benefit.
Description	Potential funding partners and data providers; communities, agencies or programs that might benefit from project outcomes (tools and resources).

Stakeholder Group C | Agencies and Public	
Consultation Goals	Address questions; build awareness and confidence in resource. Identify potential participants for future focus groups (accessibility and usability).
Description	Human services professionals, including management and front-line workers, and others who represent the needs of people utilizing the human services system. [1]
Stakeholder Group D | Related Service Providers	
Consultation Goals	Keep informed; provide adequate mechanisms for feedback and engagement throughout the project; strengthen ties where they provide mutual benefit.
Description	Information and referral has historically been closely tied to volunteerism and social planning; additionally, there are close local partnerships and alliances that are unique, but have intrinsic value.

Consultation Overview

The community consultation reviewed in this report was carried out over a three-month period, beginning November 2006 and completed at the end of January 2007. Although consultations have formally come to a close for the purpose of moving forward on deliverables for the coming period, the project team remains committed to continued outreach and consultations as opportunities arise: five more francophone consultations have been scheduled in the spring of 2007; the project's Coordinator, French Services, convenes the French Language Working Group quarterly; a project team member is a long-standing member of the Toronto Aboriginal Action Network; and the Manager, Information Resources will reconvene the InformOntario Information Resources Working Group in the first quarter of 2007.

Key messages presented were: the underlying success of the 211Ontario.ca project depends on partnership in data collection and producing a valuable resource for public and professional users; and to be successful, 211Ontario.ca must also be commonly identified as the reliable, top-of-mind source of accurate and current information about community, social, health and related government services throughout Ontario.

> **Consultation Objectives:**
> ☑ **Ensure local, regional and specialized community engagement in the project**
> ☑ **Understand requirements for broad community utilization of 211Ontario.ca**

Specific activities of the period included:

- Documentation of local and regional community information needs, and high-level requirements for an online directory of services.

- Outreach to local communities and documentation of questions and concerns.

- Documenting feedback from Aboriginal and Francophone communities.

- Identifying prospective information and referral data partners.

- Communicating the Ontario Taxonomy Conversion Request for Proposal objectives and process.

- Strengthening existing partnerships.

- Knowledge sharing specifically related to how communities currently identify, collect and maintain information, and where there is room for improvement.

- Facilitating new and existing local data consortiums.

Key aspects of the planning and process were:

- The project team set up consultations in local communities to eliminate any travel barriers, and support the representation of the community's perspective.

- Community representatives established lists of key community stakeholders, identified possible data partners, acted as hosts, and organized meeting logistics. In most cases, community representatives also extended the invitations and registered participants on behalf of the project.

- Ministry of Community and Social Services regional jurisdictions [2] were chosen as regional guidelines.

- A one-and-a-half-day consultation program was developed (see the Consultation Program below).

- Before the consultation, participants were asked to complete an online survey.

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[1] Public users will be specifically engaged throughout the project to ensure the public view of 211Ontario.ca is user-friendly and provides appropriate and adequate information to improve access to services.
[2] The regions were in part chosen to align with the Ministry of Community and Social Services' regional representatives, who were willing to help with community consultations in their region. MCSS is the public sector partner for the project. The project is funded through *Strengthening Our Partnerships,* a Ministry of Finance program.

- In addition to the meeting materials, participants were encouraged to review information on the project website on 211Ontario.info in advance.

- Each session had both a facilitator and a note-taker.

- Participants were asked to provide their names and contact information if they wanted to receive project updates and continue their participation.

- Participants were asked to complete an evaluation of the consultation to determine usefulness or indicate a need for follow up.

- Post-consultation meetings with community representatives provided an opportunity for reflection and documentation of observations.

Sessions

The consultation program was developed to support maximum participation and provide opportunities for engagement and ongoing feedback. To make the best use of participants' time and document specialized knowledge, five types of sessions were developed: General Information Sessions; Client Referral Workshops; Data Provider Workshops; Aboriginal Focus Groups; and Francophone Focus Groups.

Session	Who should attend
General Information Session – 1 hour Project Overview: • 211Ontario.ca will be a bilingual online province-wide directory of community, social, health and related government services, searchable by topic, geography and keyword.	✓ All interested
Client Referral Workshop – 2 hours Objectives for this workshop are: • To understand agency and community needs in a comprehensive searchable database of services. • To understand how to improve access to information and how to improve the quality of information provided.	✓ Information and Referral providers ✓ Agency professionals who provide referrals to clients

Session	Who should attend
Data Provider Workshop – 2 hours Objectives for this workshop are: • To identify local databases and gaps. • To facilitate local database partnerships, identify new partners and discuss criteria for being a 211Ontario.ca data partner. • To present the Taxonomy and Taxonomy conversion RFP process.	✓ Current and potential data partners, i.e. organizations that currently maintain a directory of services
Aboriginal Focus Group – 2 hours Objectives for this focus group are: • To identify the information needs of the Aboriginal community. • To determine current sources of information relevant to the Aboriginal community, and information gaps. • To engage the Aboriginal community in optimizing the development and use of 211Ontario.ca.	✓ Members of the Aboriginal community ✓ Members of the Aboriginal community who maintain data on community services
Francophone Focus Group – 2 hours Objectives for this focus group are: • To identify the information needs of the Francophone community. • To determine current sources of information relevant to the Francophone community, and information gaps. • To engage the Francophone community in optimizing the development and use of 211Ontario.ca.	✓ Members of the Francophone community ✓ Members of the Francophone community who maintain data on community services

Schedule

MCSS Region	Date	Location	General Info G	Client Referral CR	Data Partner DP	Franco-phone F	Aboriginal A
Central East	Aug 22	Collingwood	X		X		
	Jan 23	Penetanguishene				X	
Central West	Dec 1	Halton	X	X	X		
	Dec 13	Waterloo	X		X	X	X
Hamilton-Niagara	Dec 6	Hamilton					X
	Nov 28	Niagara Region	X		X		
	Dec 19	St Catharines				X	
Eastern	Nov 14-15	Ottawa	X	X	X	X	X
Northeast[1]	Dec 7	North Bay, Sudbury, Timmins	X		X		
Northwest	Dec 13	Thunder Bay	X		X		X
	Nov 22-23	Sault Ste. Marie	X	X	X	X	X
Southeast	Dec 11	Kingston	X	X	X		
Southwest	Dec 12	Chatham	X		X		
	Dec 15	London	X		X		
Toronto	Dec 5	Toronto	X		X		
	Jan 25	Toronto				X	X

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[1] As the region is vast, and transportation was an issue, the sessions were held by videoconference.

Note: *Five more Francophone consultations are scheduled in the spring of 2007for the following regions: Eastern (Cornwall), Northeast (Sudbury, Timmins, Hearst, North Bay and New Liskeard), Northwest (Thunder Bay) and Southwest (London).*

Meeting Materials

The project consultation team consisted of individuals who brought a deep understanding of the project and history of the work, subject matter expertise, and/or a connection to the specific community. Consultation teams were provided with standard materials and reporting templates so results could be compared between groups.

All presentations and handouts are available in French and English and are posted on the project weblog on 211Ontario.info.

MEETING MATERIALS
General Information Session PowerPoint presentation
Data Provider PowerPoint Presentation
Taxonomy and RFP PowerPoint Presentation
Francophone PowerPoint Presentation
Handout: Program agenda and slides
Handout: Project Summary and Contact Information
Handout: Evaluation form
Handout: Taxonomy RFP background and application template

General Information Sessions

A PowerPoint presentation outlined key aspects of the project. An important point to clarify was that 211Ontario.ca is an Internet project that stands on its own merits. While providing critical information resource infrastructure for the 211 telephone service, 211Ontario.ca is independent of telephone service roll out. The presentation also gave background on the 211 initiative to establish context, provided project timelines and introduced the program to follow. There was time at the end of the session for questions and comments.

> **There is no doubt that local hosts and community-based meetings helped to maximize credibility and encourage participation at the local level.**

Commonly Asked Questions

> *How will the project work in terms of data gathering and dissemination, and what it will mean locally?*
> *How will it be integrated with 211 telephone service?*
> *Will there be local directories/sites?*
> *How does the project fit with Service Ontario?*

There were also requests to share experience of current data partnerships and data standards.

Advantages Identified

- ✓ Consistency in style and format
- ✓ Province-wide data available to partners
- ✓ Good for users who need to find information in other regions (e.g. relocation, helping a relative, friend or client in another area)
- ✓ Elimination of duplicate and of out-of-date records

Concerns and Ideas

- The concept of a central "data warehouse" was not consistently understood by participants, leading to concerns about how the partnership could work and still maintain local data integrity
- Sustainability and new costs
- Collaboration at the local level is critical for credibility and accuracy
- Internet availability and accessibility
- Gaps in data, especially in the northeast.

Client Referral Workshops

This workshop was aimed at Information and Referral providers and agency professionals who provide referrals to clients. Online survey results indicate that, next to in-house directories, Internet search engines are primary sources of information. All participants have Internet access, and 97% have high-speed service.

It was commonly held by Client Referral Workshop participants that having one reliable, consolidated resource would be of great help, and that if 211Ontario.ca can establish a reputation as a trusted, reliable source of information it will fill a need that is apparent and fits with the current and increasing trend to search for information online.

Feedback was solicited in four main areas:

1. The information needs of the communities in the region
2. Resources currently used to find information
3. How to improve the quality of the information available
4. Tools that could help improve access to information

Where it was appropriate to the question, survey results were presented for comment and to initiate discussion.

Internet is the most frequently used source of information. Francophone participants also cited word-of-mouth and directories as a primary source of information. Many participants recognized the directories and websites provided by the local Community Information Centre as important sources of information.

Client Referral Survey | Quick Facts
Most Popular Topics: general community services, child and family services and health.
Challenges: 53% feel that it takes too long to find information; 48% find information to be inaccurate or out of date; 38% find that information is not organized in the way that they need it.
Resources: In-house directories are a primary resource, followed by Internet search engines.
Internet: 97% have high-speed access and 3% have dial-up (100%).
Print Resources: 73% rank having a print directory as important or very important to their work.
Usefulness of an online directory: Over 90% felt that the availability of having an online directory would make their work easier or much easier.

Data Provider Workshops

Ontario information and referral data partners are either individual organizations or a consortium of local organizations. Local consortia are made up of organizations that collect data for a wide spectrum of services and/or those who collect specialist information, such as mental health services.

Reaching both current and prospective data providers is an important project priority. Data providers need in-depth information about the editorial aspects of the project and also have a unique window into who is collecting local data and where the gaps are. The workshop also created a forum for exchange of information between local data providers, and provided an opportunity for exploring new local and regional partnerships.

The project is grounded in a commitment to locally collected and maintained data. Experience has shown that there are significant benefits derived from coordination of local data (rather than centralizing collection and maintenance), including: accuracy and relevance, community capacity building, and an enhanced local communications network.

Consultations had the following benefits:

Data Providers agreed on three critical success factors:
☑ **Collaboration consolidation**
☑ **Reduction of duplication**
☑ **Linking resources in all regions**

- ✓ Conveyed the basic vision of the 211Ontario.ca data collaborative network
- ✓ Outlined the responsibilities and benefits of becoming an information and referral data partner
- ✓ Provided opportunity for groups to network
- ✓ Facilitated regional consortium development

Taxonomy

The Classification System Project was established based on the recommendations of the Classification Task Force struck by InformCanada to "investigate how to create a Canadian Classification System". Information and referral providers collectively chose the AIRS[1]/INFOLINE Taxonomy of Human Services as the basis to work from and InformCanada endorsed the project in 2004.[2]

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[1] AIRS is the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, the international accreditation and certification body. www.airs.org.

[2] InformCanada Task Force on a Canadian Classification System, Deborah Woods and Margaret Williams, March 2004. http://www.findhelp.ca/informcanada/pdf/cdnclassification.pdf

Under the current project, editorial work will be carried out on the Canadian version of the English Taxonomy, and a French version of the Taxonomy will be established. The project team presented an overview of the Taxonomy, and the Canadian terms that were developed during 211Ontario Phase 2: Advancing the Provincial Consolidated System.

The project includes an ambitious Ontario-wide conversion process. Participating data providers will have access to training and support that will enable a coordinated conversion of databases from existing classifications systems to the Canadian version of the AIRS Taxonomy. An overview of the conversion program was introduced and data providers discussed challenges and benefits.

Data Provider Workshops also included an overview of the Taxonomy Conversion Project Request for Proposals, which is being overseen by the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Data Gaps Identified

- Northeast (Community Connection and Findhelp maintain some specialized records to meet specific service commitments)
- Northwest (especially Kenora and Rainy River districts)
- Eastern Ontario (especially Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry and Prescott-Russell)
- Chatham-Kent area for seniors, newcomers and early years.

Prospective Data Partners

The project team conducted an analysis of the Ontario information and referral database to identify and qualify gaps. The team also researched organizations with information and referral mandates or information needs that might be interested in contributing to the provincial database, and contacted them with information on the project and an invitation to participate in consultations. The consultation meetings were an effective way to make contact with potential partners and connect with those that had not been identified.

	Benefits	Caveats
Classification and standards	General recognition that adopting a common classification system and consistent data standards across the province would support data sharing and maintenance.	Classification implementation needs to be supported by good guidelines, including templates as well as training and funding to manage the changes.
Data Partnership	Data partners were very open to a two-way sharing of data, and saw benefits in access to province-wide information.	Local communities should collect local data, and records should be stewarded (i.e. owned and maintained) by local information and referral providers.

	Benefits	Caveats
Duplication of data	Reduced duplication of data collection will increase efficiency and direct more time to direct services.	CCAC/LHIN organizations were identified as a source of data duplication and the projects need to be aligned to achieve maximum results.
Funding	Increased use of the Internet for simple information requests will allow more time to assist people with complex needs.	Making data available on a public website cannot result in reduction of current revenue. The resource must allow more time to be directed toward front-line services and/or local needs.
New partnerships	New partnerships will fill data gaps and are consistent with the shared principle of local data collection.	Consistent and high data standards need to be maintained.

Aboriginal and Francophone Focus Groups

Representatives from Ontario's Aboriginal and Francophone communities are recognized as important participants in the development process and users of the site. The regional consultation program included Aboriginal and Francophone focus group sessions, however it was found that alternative arrangements were also needed to widen the consultation. The project team identified leads in the community and arranged separate meetings, or attended scheduled community meetings. The project team will continue consultations with Aboriginal and Francophone communities throughout 2007/08.

Focus Group Questions asked

1. Are the advantages of 211Ontario.ca relevant to the community?

2. What are the information needs of the community?

3. Where do members of the community currently go for information, and what are the gaps they would like to see addressed?

4. How can the project team effectively engage the community and promote utilization of 211Ontario.ca?

5. What project-specific concerns need to be addressed?

Advantages Presented

- Access to community-specific services offered across the province on a single website can help with the information deficit felt by many community groups and organizations.

- Service providers will be aware of the specific services offered in their region and throughout the province because information about specialized groups and organizations offering services throughout the province of Ontario will be listed.

- The project will not replace the existing networks or duplicate the work being done by organizations and community groups.

- The primary intention of this project is to amalgamate existing records into one complete database and make it available to everyone in an effort to improve information access.

- Collaborative partnerships will reduce duplication of records and increase quality, making current information available regardless of where you are in Ontario.

Aboriginal Focus Groups − Key Findings

- Feedback indicated that having an Ontario-wide directory of services had added importance, as many Aboriginal people travel around the province on a regular basis.

- People often seek information on services in a region outside where they live.

- The term Aboriginal is too broad and the most useful designations in terms of service offerings are First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

- Services are often one-time and short-term. For example, a group may bring an Elder to a region for a limited, scheduled time. Alternative ways of capturing this information, such as the Virtual Library or Community Calendar would be very effective.

Throughout the project, the project team will stay in touch with meetings in the Aboriginal community. A project team representative is a long-standing member of the Toronto Aboriginal Action Network (TAAN).

Francophone Focus Groups − Key Findings[1]

- A good source of complete, reliable and up-to-date information is lacking in the Francophone community, and there was a lot of enthusiasm for the 211Ontario.ca project if it could address the needs of the community.

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[1] The findings in this report are only general conclusions from the Francophone consultations held in Ottawa, Sault Ste Marie, Waterloo, Penetanguishene and Toronto. It does not reflect the specific issues raised in each of them. A complete report on the Francophone consultations will be issued once they have all been completed, in spring 2007.

- Primary concerns relate to developing a sustainable program for ongoing data collection and maintenance, as this is not something that is currently funded specifically for French language services.

- Definitions and verification of French services and appropriateness of translation is a shared concern.

- People are divided as to whether all records should be offered in both French and English, or only those services that are actually provided in French. There is unanimous agreement that in the case of bilingual records that describe English-only services, the French side must make it clear that the service is available in English only. There were two alternative viewpoints:[1]

    A. Records should be written only in the language the service is offered. *Rationale:* If a service were offered only in English, a French description would mislead the user into thinking that the service is available in French.

    B. All records should be bilingual. *Rationale:* Francophone people want to be able to read in their own language, even if services are available only in English; and Anglophones who don't read French would know about French services and can refer their bilingual clients. Users, especially newcomers, will get better results if they can search the data in their first language.

Throughout the project, French language decisions will be reviewed and advised by the French Language Working Group. The Coordinator, French Services, convenes the group on a quarterly basis.

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[1] Project note: Option A is more sustainable for French language services, as it does not involve the entire database. The project team will continue to explore options and conduct consultations. The French Language Working Group, informed by results of the Francophone community consultations, will make a final recommendation in 2007.

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