



Report on Francophone Consultations

May 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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Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Summary Report | 1 |
| Goals of Francophone Consultation | 1 |
| Participant Comments | 3 |
| Summary of Recommendations | 4 |
| Consultation Overview | 6 |
| Sessions | 6 |
| Schedule | 7 |
| Participating Organizations | 8 |
| Current Situation | 12 |
| Survey Results | 12 |
| Information Sources | 13 |
| Information Being Sought | 14 |
| Issues & Gaps | 17 |
| Accessibility | 17 |
| Community Awareness | 17 |
| Limitations | 18 |
| Information Quality | 18 |
| Service Quality | 19 |
| Language Standards | 19 |
| Shortage of Services | 20 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| Requirements | 21 |
| Navigation | 21 |
| Quality of Language | 21 |
| Service Criteria | 22 |
| Personnel | 24 |
| Record Attributes..... | 24 |
| Record Format | 25 |
| Inclusion Policy..... | 26 |
| Service Provider Participation | 27 |
| Francophone Dimension | 27 |
| Community Involvement..... | 28 |
| | |
| Search Options | 29 |
| | |
| Questions & Comments | 32 |
| | |
| Acknowledgements | 41 |

Summary Report

Francophone consultations in Ontario resulted from the need to deepen and expand the general conclusions from initial 211Ontario.ca consultations that took place from November 2006 to January 2007¹. Meeting the needs of Francophone communities is a critical success factor for 211Ontario.ca, and proponents are committed to improving access to human services information for Francophones in Ontario in close consultation with Francophones, and in collaboration and partnership with French-language service providers.

Goals of Francophone Consultation

- Introduce the concept of a shared database of human services and online directory as represented by 211Ontario.ca
- Understand needs, gaps, resources, expectations and issues when looking for information on French-language services
- Identify information sharing and communications processes and methods used by the French-speaking community in their respective region
- Identify organizations with an interest in actively contributing to the 211Ontario.ca project, and potential Francophone partners

Overall, there is a great deal of community interest in the concept of a resource such as 211Ontario.ca, and it is acknowledged that the proposed resource will meet the needs of the largest possible number of people. Participants regularly raised maintenance and funding as key considerations, and were specifically concerned that the resources to support specialized Francophone editors to research, update and verify information about French-language services must be sustained beyond the project timeframe.

¹ The report augments the *211Ontario.ca Report on Community Consultations*, and represents eleven consultations conducted with representatives from over 100 organizations throughout Ontario from November 2006 to April 2007. The initial report can be downloaded at: http://211canada.typepad.com/211ontarioca/2007/03/report_on_commu.html [211Ontario.info]

Consultations highlighted the following critical factors

Information most sought after by the community:

- health services in the broad sense of the term;
- employment and education services; and
- early childhood services.

Information content must:

- provide a detailed and honest description of the French-language service offered, in clear and correct language; and
- meet specific criteria.

Difficulties encountered are:

- the lack of information on and visibility of French-language services;
- inaccurate or out-of-date information; and
- the unavailability of French-language services.

Credibility criteria are cited as:

- frequent updates,
- clear navigation and organization of content,
- ease of searching
- user-feedback response system

The sources of information most frequently used are:

- word-of-mouth in the community;
- telephone directories;
- the Internet.

Although web site promotion should be customized for different regions and groups, advertising should appear in both the Anglophone and Francophone media.

Participant Comments

It's a very important project for the community.

I love the idea that our record will be the same across the province.

One concern is time and money.

It'll be an asset if the information's accurate.

Good idea, but you'll have to make sure to properly serve the Franco-Ontarian community.

I'm interested in this project. It's a service I will use.

It should be set up as soon as possible.

I'm concerned about the quality of the French on the site.

The project would be very useful for community organizations and would make it possible to reassure people about the quality of the services offered by other organizations.

Good initiative; however, the sustainability and continuity of the service will have to be ensured.

This project should be encouraged and should not be forgotten.

I really like the idea of having to update the information once – annually – and that I can easily call up the information I'm looking for.

[Concern] about duplicating directories.

I like the idea of listing our services while targeting the Francophone aspect.

It's a good project. However, it has to be a project by Francophones for Francophones.

Tremendous potential if the main Francophone parties take part in it.

Great, as long as there is continuity.

It's an excellent project. More resources should be allocated to it in order to make sure that French-language services are included and translated into proper French, and that financial resources are allocated to ensure ongoing and accurate updating.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendations in **bolded typeface** are identified as priorities.

Information

- Bilingual records regardless of the language of service
- **Write the content of records in proper French, at an accessible language level, and without any grammatical or spelling errors**
- **Writing or proofreading of records by a Francophone**
- **Clearly indicate the language of service; in particular, specify if the service is not offered in French**
- Set standards in order to assess the level of French-language services
- **Indicate in the record the level of French-language services, as well as contact information for a French-speaking contact person**
- Make service providers accountable for the data-updating process

Inclusion Policy

- **Give priority to health, education and employment services**
- Include small, rural communities
- Include some private services like banking and real estate services

Portal Use/Search Functions

- Option of transferring to the English equivalent of a French page, and vice versa (e.g., government sites)
- Offer an advanced search function
- **Include a search function or specific category for French-language services**

Promotion

- **Effective and ongoing promotion that goes beyond French-language sources of communication but that informs the English-speaking population that French-language services are available**
- Promotion handled by a Francophone organization that will be able to make the most of all media of communication, without exception

- Take the Telehealth communication campaign as an example
- Set a partnership with organizations that are present among the community, including in rural and remote areas, such as the RDEE Ontario (Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité).

Francophone Representation

- **Invite members of the French-speaking community to take part in project governance**
- Strong commitment to bilingualism on the part of the organization managing the bilingual directory
- **Functional web site in French, with search functions, from the time of the launch**
- **List all of the French-language services before the launch**
- Equal data quality and research capabilities of the directory in French and English
- Post the information and data in English and French equally and at the same time
- **Partners' commitment to maintaining records on French-language services**
- **Demand that the personnel responsible for updating the data be equally diligent in French and in English**
- Hire qualified personnel to update the French-language data – preferably Francophones or individuals with superior language skills
- **French-language service for responding to feedback**
- Pay Francophones and Anglophones equally for their work

General

- **Frequent updating, at least once a year**
- **Sustained and long-term funding**
- Testing phase for several months before the launch
- In-person meetings and other strategies are important for developing and sustaining the level of partnerships a collaborative effort such as 211Ontario.ca requires. Information and referral organizations actively participate in the national and provincial associations, InformCanada and InformOntario, and come together at training conferences and other professional events; however, these opportunities are offered in English only. Engaging and convening French-speaking information and referral proponents is an important future consideration.

Consultation Overview

Sessions

The consultation agenda was forwarded along with the invitations. During the consultations, the participants received documentation about the project and the contributors.

| Session | Who should attend? |
|---|---|
| Introduction 45 min 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. | <i>All interested</i> |
| Information on French services 1 h 30 Objectives of this workshop are : <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ To understand professional and individual needs in a comprehensive searchable database of services.▪ To determine current sources of information relevant to the Francophone community, and information gaps.▪ To understand how to improve access to information and how to improve the quality of information provided.▪ To engage the Francophone community in optimizing the development and use of 211Ontario.ca. | <i>Information and referral providers</i> <i>Professionals who provide referrals to clients</i> <i>Members of the Francophone community</i> |
| Data Provider Workshop 45 min. Objectives of this workshop are : <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ To identify local databases and gaps.▪ To facilitate local database partnerships, identify new partners and discuss criteria for being a 211Ontario.ca data partner. | <i>Current and potential data partners, i.e. organizations that currently maintain a directory of services</i> |

Schedule

Eleven consultations were conducted with representatives from French-speaking communities throughout Ontario from November 2006 to April 2007. All consultations were conducted in French. Where possible, a Francophone consultation was scheduled along with a larger bilingual consultation with the broader community.

| Region | Date | Place | Bilingual consultation | Francophone consultation |
|------------------|------------|---|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Central East | Jan. 23 | Penetanguishene | | X |
| Central West | Dec. 13 | Waterloo | X | |
| Hamilton-Niagara | Dec. 19 | St Catharines | | X |
| Eastern | Nov. 14-15 | Ottawa | X | |
| | March 28 | Cornwall | | X |
| Northeast | April 11 | North Bay, Sudbury, Timmins, Hearst, New Liskeard | | X |
| Northwest | March 31 | Thunder Bay | | X |
| | Nov. 22-23 | Sault Ste Marie | X | |
| Southeast | March 29 | Kingston | | X |
| Southwest | April 12 | London | | X |
| Toronto | Jan. 25 | Toronto | | X |

As in the first phase of consultations, areas in Northern Ontario presented a distinct challenge. A videoconference was organized for the Northeast with the help of the *Réseau de santé francophone du Nord de l'Ontario*. The format has limitations, but did enable consultation in the North, where it was not feasible to convene groups for consultation within the constraints of the 211Ontario.ca project. The most significant problem was that although originally identified as “the North”, the broad spectrum of participants represented a large and disparate region, making findings from the region somewhat inconclusive. As partnership development is also critical to the sustainability of 211Ontario.ca, the videoconferencing option is less conducive to establishing enduring relationships.

Participating Organizations

ABC Communautaire – Niagara Peninsula

Association-canadienne française de l'Ontario - Kirkland Lake

Association-canadienne française de l'Ontario - Mille-Îles, French Employment Resource Centre

Association-canadienne française de l'Ontario - Niagara

Association-canadienne française de l'Ontario - Nipissing

Association-canadienne française de l'Ontario - London-Sarnia

Association-canadienne française de l'Ontario - Ottawa

Association-canadienne française de l'Ontario - Régionale Hamilton, French Employment Resource Centre

Association-canadienne française de l'Ontario - Sudbury

Association-canadienne française de l'Ontario - Témiskaming

Algoma Community Care Access Centre

Alliance de la francophonie de Timmins

Alpha-Huronie

Alpha-Toronto

Andrew Fleck Child Care Services, Child Care Information

Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario

Association des francophones du Nord-Ouest de l'Ontario

Auberge francophone

Barrie Public Library

Better Beginnings, Better Futures in Cornwall

Caisse populaire de Cornwall

Carrefour Options+

Catholic Family Service Ottawa-Carlton

Centre alpha-culturel de Sudbury

Centre culturel de Cornwall

Centre culturel de Géraaldton

Centre culturel Frontenac

Centre culturel La Ronde

Centre de santé communautaire de l'Estrie

Centre de services Guigues

Centre des femmes francophones du nord-ouest de l'Ontario
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
Centre francophone de Sault-Ste-Marie
Centre francophone de Toronto
Centre Passerelle
Centre psychosocial pour enfants et familles d'Ottawa
Centre Victoria pour femmes
Champlain Local Health Integration Network
Child and Family Services of Timmins and District
City of Kingston
City of Ottawa, French-language Services Division
City of Sault-Ste-Marie, Social Services Department
Clé à Mots-Lettres (La)
Clé d'la Baie (La)
Club 2000 Niagara
Club Alouette de London
Club Canadien Français de G eralton
Club de l' ge d'or de Napanee
Coin des petits (Le), Centre de la petite enfance
Coll ge Bor al (Niagara, Simcoe, North East regions)
Community Information Centre of Ottawa
Conseil de coop ration de l'Ontario
Conseil du nouvel Ontario
Conseil  conomique et social d'Ottawa-Carlton, R gion de l'Est
Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud
Conseil scolaire de district des  coles catholiques du Sud-Ouest
Contact Niagara
Developmental Services coordination
Eastern Ontario Education and Training Centre
Fednor - Industry Canada
Friendship House
Frontenac Community Mental Health Services

Greater Niagara Information Centre
Guichet pour francophones (Le)
Horizons Renaissance Inc.
Information Windsor
Institut franco-ontarien, Laurentian University
Joie de Vivre à Geraldton (La)
Keys Employment Services
Kingston MCF Practice Firm
Kingston Military Family Resource Centre
Lakeshore Community Services
Lowertown Community Resource Centre
Madame Vanier Children's Service
Maison Interlude House
Ministry of Community and Social Services / Ministry of Children and Youth Services
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, French-language Health Services
Mouvement d'implication francophone d'Orléans
Niagara Region Public Health Department
North East Community Care Access Centre
North Simcoe Community Futures Development Corporation
Oasis centre des femmes
Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages
Ontario Office Works Inc.
Orléans-Cumberland Community Resource Centre
Ottawa Community Care Access Centre
Ottawa Distress Centre
Ottawa Public Health
Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health at CHEO
Regroupement des intervenantes et intervenants francophones en santé et en services sociaux de l'Ontario (RIFSSSO)
Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité (RDÉE) Ontario (Northern, Central and Southwestern regions)
Réseau francophone de santé du Nord de l'Ontario
Ribambelle (La), Centre préscolaire francophone de London

Services à l'enfance Grandir ensemble

Social Planning Council of Sudbury

Société franco-ontarienne d'histoire et de généalogie, Régionale St-Laurent Inc.

Thehealthline.ca

Timmins Public Library

Trenton Military Family Resource Centre

Trillys Communications

Venture Niagara

Volunteer & Information Kingston

Volunteer & Information Quinte

Windsor Employment Resource Centre

Current Situation

Survey Results

In preparation for the workshops, participants were encouraged to complete a quick survey online on their needs and practice in searching for human services information. More than 50 people completed the survey.

| INFORMATION COMMONLY SOUGHT | |
|---|-----|
| General community services | 59% |
| Health | 39% |
| Employment, education and training | 37% |
| CHALLENGES | |
| Not finding information fast enough | 55% |
| Information available is out of date | 45% |
| Information or service does not exist | 42% |
| INFORMATION SOURCES | |
| Internet Search Engines | 68% |
| Telephone books and web sites | 63% |
| INTERNET ACCESS | |
| High speed internet | 83% |
| Workplace access to Internet | 92% |
| OPINION | |
| Agree that: Access to a hardcopy of a directory is important or very important to my work. | 62% |
| Agree that: An online directory would make my job easier or much easier. | 93% |

Information Sources

The preferred sources of information differ by region, but some channels are widely used throughout the province.

Networking: Word-of-mouth is noted as the primary source of information in the community. This is how both professionals and individuals find out about French-language services and especially how information about the quality of those services is conveyed. French-language schools in particular are one of the places where networking and casual information-sharing are most prevalent.

Directories: The existing directories are the second source of information, especially the in-house directories, i.e., those developed by the users themselves, along with the telephone book. External directories are usually in English because Francophone organizations do not have the human and financial resources required to maintain their own tool. As a result, their information is often out-of-date and does not properly meet the needs of the community.

Internet: It is becoming increasingly common for organizations to have a web site through which users search for information. The search engine *Google* is also widely cited as an online search tool.

The following are noted as other sources of information:

- Francophone (associations canadiennes-françaises de l'Ontario, cultural centres, francophone alliances) and Anglophone (community health centres, mental health centres) community organizations.
- Telephone information and/or referral services (211 where that service exists and 411)
- French-language health networks²
- Community information centres that are members of InformOntario³ and partners of 211Ontario.ca
- Other Francophone institutions (Collège Boréal, school boards, parishes)
- Francophone media (local newspapers, community radio stations)
- Government agencies
- Other types of organizations (libraries, chambers of commerce)

2 There are four networks in Ontario. Further information is available at <http://www.forumsante.ca>

3 Association of Community Information Centres in Ontario: <http://www.informontario.on.ca>

Information Being Sought

The breakdown provided below lists the types of information that is commonly sought.

| FIRST PRIORITY | SECOND PRIORITY |
|---|--|
| BUSINESS SERVICES | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Financial services | Real estate agencies |
| CHILD AND YOUTH SERVICES | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ French-language daycare centres | Services for English-speaking families who want to educate their children in French |
| | Daycare services |
| EDUCATION SERVICES | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ French-language schools | Literacy services, language courses and back-to-school programs (continuing education) |
| EMPLOYMENT SERVICES | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Job search services | Lists of employers looking for French-speaking personnel |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learning services | Job market-related information |
| HEALTH SERVICES | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ General health services (unanimously requested by all the participants) | Disability-related services and patient associations |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Francophone mental health services and French-speaking health professionals | |
| JUSTICE | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Legal aid services | Correctional services, Courts of Justice |
| NEWCOMERS TO ONTARIO | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Immigrants to Canada | French-Canadians |
| | Military families |

| FIRST PRIORITY | SECOND PRIORITY |
|--|--|
| | Refugees |
| PRIMARY NEEDS | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing and shelters | Bill payment assistance |
| | Financial assistance/social assistance for low-income families |
| | Food |
| | Transportation |
| RECREATION | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social clubs | Recreational services |
| | Sports services |
| SOCIAL SERVICES | |
| | Family services |
| | Violence prevention |
| TEMPORARY SERVICES | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Waiting list for doctors | Cultural programs and events |
| | Road closures |
| OTHER | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government services | Francophone media |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Services for the elderly | Interpretation services |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women's services | Tourist information |

Note: Often there is no clear boundary between the need for information about French-language services and the need for French-language services themselves. The initial reaction was often "There are no French-language services, but we need services in these fields."

Information needs vary according to the regions consulted.

- Ottawa and area participants were most concerned about services to meet primary needs such as housing, financial assistance
- Toronto, Cornwall and Kingston and area cited primary needs, but also highlight settlement services for newcomers to Canada
- Thunder Bay and area participants reported needs in the fields of violence prevention, child and family counselling services and legal services

Health services, social services and financial services were identified as high priority for French-language service. It is essential to be able to speak French in order to be understood in the event of a crisis or emergency, and in order to be able to make informed choices.

There is a significant need for French schools and early childhood services, because they play two particularly vital roles:

- Learning and confirmation of French as one's mother tongue
- Creating a social bond for French-speaking families that allows them to develop contacts and learn about other French-language services available in their community

Issues & Gaps

Accessibility

The language barrier most acutely affects the most vulnerable people, who often don't know what services are available and are less inclined to advocate.

Overall, it is difficult to find information on employment, education and training services, legal services, youth services, services in rural areas and services for newcomers. Despite the existence of Community Care Access Centres and other local or regional service providers with human services databases, health services and community centres are extremely hard to find, as is information about French-speaking health professionals. Specific, time-limited information such as doctors' waiting lists and registries, are unavailable. When accessible, the information is often out-of-date and it may take several days to post information so that by the time people receive the information it is too late.

There is a lack of information in the category of French-language business services, financial and real estate services. A clear understanding of these services is vital to consumers, and it is an area of unique and immediate concern.

Service shortfalls notwithstanding, organizations often fail to promote services, and language barriers prohibit outreach activities between Francophone and Anglophone service providers. Many of the largest and dominant organizations are Anglophone, so when these organizations are ignorant of services available to Francophones, their limited knowledge directly impacts clients who would benefit from French-language services.

When French-speaking newcomers, whether they are regional, from another province, or from another country, inquire about community services, they are often not advised of French-language service options or Francophone organizations that can help them, since those resources are so hidden amongst the multitude of English-language services. Newcomers often access French-language services through word-of-mouth, rather than a professional referral.

Community Awareness

Except for professionals, French speakers are often quite unaware that services are being offered in French in their community. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to search for information on services people do not even know about. Whether organizations are Francophone or bilingual, French-language services are sorely lacking in visibility.

Francophone organizations: A lack of funding was identified as a determining factor in the failure to promote the services offered by Francophone organizations. Organizations are responsible for promoting their service, which requires dedicating resources that are sorely needed for service provision. When faced with this difficult choice, it is often promotional and outreach efforts that fail.

Bilingual organizations: The same factors prevail at bilingual organizations, with unfortunate consequences: if French-language services are not used, bilingual programming and French-speaking personnel may not be renewed.

Anglophone organizations: Failure to communicate the availability of bilingual professionals working in Anglophone organizations also limits utilization of an existing resource. Not only is the bilingual capability of the person under-utilized, it often happens that a French speaker who, because he does not expect to be served in French, ends up communicating in English with a bilingual person.

High quality, French-language services are available; however, information providers are not spreading the word. Participants consistently emphasized that the English-speaking community is not aware of services offered in French⁴. The community experiences this as a real lack of recognition, which acts as a barrier to broader partnerships and inter-operability of systems.

Limitations

Many provincial web sites only offer documentation in English or incomplete documentation in French. Participants identified the need for information about the extent of services offered in French. Clarity and accuracy about the availability and depth of French-language service provided by an organization are the goal.

Some professionals stated that not all the people who use their services have Internet access. Greater access to Internet kiosks in public places (shopping and recreation centres) was suggested as a positive way to address the issue.

Information Quality

Many directories of French-language and bilingual services have been developed in the past. The Associations canadiennes-françaises de l'Ontario (ACFO) and Francophone cultural centres all keep lists and directories of French-language services available in their region. The Francophone community also uses other directories published by bilingual organizations. Despite the availability of existing resources for Francophones, consultations revealed that there is a lack of useful, high-quality information. The deficiencies commonly noted are: out-of-date, incomplete and inaccurate information whose level of French does not always meet expectations.

⁴ In some of the initial consultations, there was a sense that there were no Francophones in a region, although the region was designated as bilingual and the French-speaking community was represented by a sizable number of participants at the bilingual and French consultations covered in this report.

A credible, up-to-date resource directory that meets the needs of Franco-Ontarians has not been established. Maintaining and updating resources requires a great deal of effort, time and commitment – and especially ongoing financial resources. The high costs of developing, maintaining and publishing a resource database have outstripped the best efforts to date; especially as Francophone service providers recount continual resource challenges that often lead to discontinued services.

The most challenging aspect of creating and maintaining a resource directory relates to the classification of bilingual organizations and services. The most basic information is the most difficult information to determine:

- the real nature of the French-language service
- the quality of the service offered
- whether professional service, offered consistently and continuously, is geared toward French-speaking people and fully provided in French

Service Quality

The consultations consistently raised the issue of needing to clarify what is a French service. Many organizations advertise that they offer French-language services in order to attract the French-speaking community and embellish their brand image, but the reality is quite different. For example, the service in question ends up being a web site or brochures in French, or at best a French-speaking contact person who can provide basic information (although there may not be a replacement when that person is sick, on vacation or on a break). When the quality of the French is substandard, clients give up and a lack of confidence sets in. As a result, they may opt for English-language services.

Language Standards

A level of French that is much too complex for the average user is often reported, especially with respect to government web sites. Conversely, in the case of non-government and business services, people come up against low-quality, approximate translations that clearly lack a French editor with the language skills to develop appropriate content.

Shortage of Services

Although the purpose of the consultations was to collect requirements for an information resource, every consultation highlighted the opinion that there is a lack of authentic, high-quality French-language services.

When participants were asked:

What are the main services for which more information is needed? [and]

What difficulties are encountered when searching for information about the service?

The answer was often:

There are very few French-language services. [or]

There are no French-language services

Requirements

Navigation

Recommendation: Users should be able to switch from French web page to equivalent English web page directly (e.g. Federal government web sites).

Clearly identified and well-organized site areas, and easy-to-understand information are the major elements of an intuitive site.

Quality of Language

Recommendation: A good directory of French-language services must be grounded in correct grammar and clear writing.

Writing and Editorial Practices

Established writing and editorial practices must be employed to French-language information in the same way that they are assumed for English-language information.

Optimal

- The person who develops and maintains the content or record is a native French speaker with advanced writing skills (which is the same requirement that exists for English language editors)
- The French editor manages the French record in its entirety

Acceptable

- French-language editors research, review, proofread and update the record

Translation

Translation software and translation in general must be utilized with caution. French records must reflect Franco-Ontarian culture, describe the service as it is offered, and not be a pale, poorly translated copy of the equivalent English records.

Clear Language

Generally, people stress the need to use clear language for the web site's general pages, and to describe the records and category names used. Users with a low education level should be able to understand the level of French used. The use of literacy level 3 is recommended⁵.

Service Criteria

Identifying organizations that offer French-language services in a system of bilingual records does not necessarily guarantee the quality and scope of the services offered in French. When a service presents itself as providing service in French, and the reality is different, it creates frustration for the user, and can lead to mistrust of organizations that are not active in the French-speaking community.

Participants recounted a common scenario: an organization that does not have a mandate to offer services in both official languages hires a bilingual employee; the bilingual employee provides French-language support, but when the person leaves the organization, French-language service is no longer provided.

It is important that editors do not allow criteria such as a bilingual receptionist, brochures and a web site in French, or on-call interpretation services to constitute French-language service. For example, a person looking for a psychologist will be frustrated to see this service categorized as Francophone simply because a person in the organization speaks French. The situation does add value and is worthy of notation; however, the extent of the service should be accurately reflected in the information.

Recommendation: Participants strongly advised that criteria for a bilingual organization and bilingual service should be clearly established from the outset, and that information should clearly distinguish between the two.

⁵ What are the literacy levels? Fact sheets produced by the Coalition francophone pour l'alphabétisation et la formation de base en Ontario – <http://www.coalition.on.ca>

| BILINGUAL ORGANIZATION | BILINGUAL SERVICE |
|--|---|
| The organization has a mandate to offer services in both official languages. | The service is mandated in French or both official languages. |
| There is continuity of service in French throughout the organization. | There is continuity of service in French within the program area, including documentation and administration functions. |
| Bilingualism runs throughout the organization, including all levels of services provided by the organization. | Bilingualism runs throughout the program area. |
| Bilingual service is offered throughout the organization and available throughout the organization's business hours. | The service is offered on a regular basis. |

Factors should be weighed in relation to the size of the organization, and the number, availability and role of French-speaking personnel. Any French-language element available within an organization is acknowledged as an asset for users who want to know about it and use it.

The notion of assessing services was brought up repeatedly during the consultations.

Suggestions

- Assign a grade
- Establish a star system (one star representing mediocre or minimal service and five stars representing service entirely in French)
- Indicate percentage of French-language service
- Provide a description of the level of service (reception, brochure, interpretation, etc.).

The Réseau francophone de santé du Nord de l'Ontario⁶ (RFSNO) has set up an assessment system for the health services listed in its directory. Four levels of service, from Low to Suitable, enable users to make an informed decision. However, they warn that this type of detailed information requires almost constant updating, at least every 3-4 months, precisely because most organizations do not have a mandate to offer French-language services and depend on employees who happen to speak French.

⁶ <http://santenordontario.ca>

However, caution has to be exercised in using this type of classification. The use of an assessment system implies a subjective rating. This practice has met with controversy in the past. The mission of an I&R directory is to provide information about the French services available, not to pass judgment on the organization's commitment and overall ability to function as a bilingual entity.

Personnel

Recommendation: When services are billed as bilingual, most people agree that the name of the French-speaking contact person or the person holding the position designated as Francophone, as well as his or her contact information, should be indicated.

It is important to avoid the situation where a French-speaking person contacts a representative who speaks English, and is then transferred (sometimes several times) before being put in touch with someone who speaks French, or is simply transferred to voicemail with a message in French. Information might also include details such as when the Francophone representative is available or the business hours for French-language services.

Record Attributes

During the consultations, we gave the participants examples of records in the provincial I&R database, which provided the current as is state of the record content: contact information, names of contacts and managers, detailed description, location, schedules, accessibility, eligibility, etc.

Recommendation: The existing content should be augmented by the following:

- An assessment of the level of French-language service (see Service Criteria above)
- The organization's logo to facilitate immediate identification
- A link to a map (something like Google map)
- An alternative French-speaking contact as an alternate to the main French-speaking contact
- The waiting list (or link) for health services
- A list of specific topics describing the service, hyperlinked to similar topics

Reliability of information

Among the record attributes, the date of the last modification and the source of information were cited by most people as the top criteria to determine the reliability of a record. These constitute legitimacy and validate whether the information is reliable or should be used with caution⁷.

Suggestion

Considering the difficulties that may be involved in assessing the level of French-language service, it was suggested to score the degree of reliability of the information.

Unilingual or Bilingual? We asked the participants whether they prefer French records for French-language services and English records for English-language services, or bilingual records for all services.

Record Format

There are mixed opinions on the topic of unilingual and bilingual records. Proponents of unilingual records feel that bilingual descriptions may be misleading. For example, the option of reading in French the record of an organization that does not offer its services in French may lead someone to believe the opposite. By clearly identifying the language of the service by the language of the record, the user will be better able to identify the French-language services he or she is looking for.

Recommendation: The majority of participants favour bilingual records; however, all agreed that if records are bilingual the language of service must be indicated very clearly. For example, a French record for an English service should state “This service is not offered in French”. The notation should predominate in order to prevent needless reading.

The idea of marking the language of service with a meaningful icon, in the case of French-service records, the Franco-Ontarian flag, was raised quite frequently.

Benefits of Bilingual Records

- French speakers in communities where there are no French-language services can search for and consult, in their first language, descriptions of services offered in other languages
- Non-French-speaking professionals can inform French-speaking clients about French-language services that are available to them
- English-speaking individuals can search for services offered in French for French-speaking family members, friends or colleagues

⁷ Conversely, one participant noted that the current date appearing on the record is suspect, as it could be programming that makes the current date appear on the records automatically.

- French or bilingual information and referral specialists can provide accurate and consistent information in French about English-language Services

Inclusion Policy

Recommendation: The inclusion policy should be clearly available on the web site.

The current inclusion policy meets the standards of the Alliance of Information & Referral Systems⁸ and is available on the 211Ontario.ca site⁹.

Suggestions:

Validation – participants stressed the importance of validation and editorial judgement based on research into: corporate statements (mandate, mission, and vision), letters patent, annual report and financial statements.

Federal funding – Some participants identified funding by the federal government as exclusive criteria for inclusion as a French-language service provider; however, this was countered by the argument that small Francophone organizations that provide valuable services do not receive federal funding. It is noted that federal government funding should be identified as a criterion, although other research may legitimize organizations as bona fide bilingual or French-language service providers.

Review Committee(s) – To augment or provide French-language editorial support, subject matter experts from the French-speaking community could participate in a review committee structure with authority for reviewing registrations, validating inclusion and cross-validating a year later.

Recommendation: The validation process is a determining factor for ensuring the quality of the information contained in the directory. Service providers should be contacted directly and a cross-checking should be conducted. The minimum expectation is that a formal interview would be conducted by telephone.

Suggestion

Anonymous or formal on-site visits or telephone calls would be the most thorough way to ensure that French-speaking personnel are available and to identify the services those personnel are providing.

8 <http://www.airs.org>

9 http://www.211ontario.ca/terms_of_use.htm#Sitelistingsservices

Service Provider Participation

Recommendation: The organizations listed should be responsible for their own information and have a duty to check and validate the information in the record¹⁰.

The organizations whose services are posted in the directory must be an integral part of the process at various levels, and should be notified that their service is listed in the directory.

To maintain their listing, organizations should:

- guarantee the accuracy of the information they provide;
- check their information online; and
- contact the Ontario database coordinator when changes need to be made (address, telephone number, program or service updating).

Updating Process

Recommendation: That the existing provincial I&R database policy of complete record updates, validated with an authorized representative of the organization at least once per year be upheld¹¹.

Francophone Dimension

Recommendation: Participants expect English and French portals to be treated equally, although the French web site must not be a translation of the English site but a distinct resource that reflects the Francophone human services community.

The two sites must exist as complementary. The site change process requires alignment and French-language editorial commitment. 211Ontario.ca must launch both the French and English versions simultaneously – a mention “French coming soon” would undermine the most honourable intentions.

¹⁰ It is recommended that a clause be posted stating that 211Ontario.ca is not responsible for the accuracy of the information.

¹¹ Some participants felt that, depending on the type of information and an organization’s specific situation, the records may require updates twice per year, or even every three to four months.

Factors

Recommendation: A directory of French-language services (or even a French-language directory of services) should be *managed by French-language editors*.

A province-wide directory is very ambitious and success will depend on credibility. Factors that support credibility are:

- the information is managed at a local level, by organizations and people familiar with the community sector of their region because regional dynamics are a vital factor; and
- French-language or bilingual service are accurately reflected in the database record.

Community Involvement

Recommendation: Frequent and direct contact with people and organizations were cited as a determining factor in the success of the directory. Users should be given the means of developing this relationship.

Credibility is acquired by getting users involved, whether or not they are professionals. Community consultations are a good first step, and the consultations that support this report provided a degree of credibility for some participants together with the fact that they were held by French speakers, which greatly contributed to establishing new relationships and developing rapport and trust.

Suggestion

It is also important to give the public the opportunity to share their suggestions, criticisms and other comments. In the first few months after the site is launched, it is recommended that a survey system be set up in order to determine user satisfaction and identify points to be corrected, and resulting in corrections. Participants also supported an extension test phase (soft launch). Many of them expressed an interest in helping with this phase.

Follow-up activities

Recommendation: An active follow-up system is crucial for reinforcing user confidence.

Whether it deals with record updates, the web site's general layout or any other point, follow-up is expected to be:

- customized (not an automatic message);
- active and quick (no message should be left unanswered or returned belatedly); and
- provided in the same language that it was received.

The ability of 211Ontario.ca to anticipate and meet the needs and expectations of users will be important for gaining user acceptance.

Search Options

| <i>Recommended Search Options</i> |
|--|
| SERVICE CATEGORIES |
| Category searches allow for selection of increasingly specific sub-categories |
| Related categories displayed in order to indicate similar services |
| TARGET GROUPS |
| GEOGRAPHY |
| Mini regional portals with access to partner sites – accessed by clicking on a map of Ontario |
| Electoral district maps or the divisions used by existing programs, like those used by early childhood centres. |
| Ministry or program regional maps (Training Boards, Community Care Access Centres, Local Health Integration Networks) |
| Postal code (Note: May require combined search in order to broaden the area) |
| KEY WORDS |
| Organization name |
| Acronyms and alternative forms of the name (e.g. ACFO, association francophone, association canadienne, association Ontario for Association-canadienne française de l'Ontario) |
| Professions |
| Topics and regions |
| FRENCH-LANGUAGE SPECIFIC |
| French-language services category |
| Portal devoted to French-language services |
| Option to prioritize or order results by French-language services (for bilingual record recommendation) |

Suggestion

In addition to the search functions identified by participants, alternative search options should be offered in the event that the search produces no results (related key words, for example), or a selection of related or geographically close service options.

Promotion & Outreach

It was noted that some channels of communication are used to a greater or lesser extent depending on the region. For example, e-mail seems to be circulated in the networks a great deal in the southeast, whereas Francophone organizations and parishes are cited more readily in the north of the province. The three major aspects to consider with respect to promotion will be use of the media, the Internet, and communication through the organizations. The information media that work, and strategies specifically geared towards the audience concerned, were also raised.

Media: Throughout Ontario, participants cited the media as an important way to advertising the directory, i.e., the local and regional press (including free newspapers), radio and television. French-language community newspapers and radio stations are popular; however, many participants stressed that promotion geared towards French speakers should also be distributed to English-language media. Two reasons were given for this: it will help reach people who are not consumers of French-language media or who do not have access to it; and the purpose of promotion is also to increase awareness in the English-speaking community about the existence of French-language services. The message must be bilingual in order to effectively reach both communities.

Individual contact is very effective: Outreach activities such as community meetings and information fairs are good ways to publicize the portal. Partners could be engaged in outreach activities.

Word-of-mouth: All of the organizations that have records in the database should be contacted with information about the directory and to encourage them to provide information about the site

Primary distribution networks: French-language schools are frequently cited for promotion purposes (including colleges and universities, such as Collège Boréal); Francophone organizations (especially ACFO); employment resource centres (e.g. Job Connect programs); libraries; community health centres, community care access centres and hospitals; daycare and early childhood centres.

Secondary distribution networks: Many other potential distribution points were cited, including municipalities, parishes, government offices, chambers of commerce, tourist offices, airports, immigration offices abroad, financial institutions, shopping centres. Although most of these places do not offer French-language services, they are frequented by French speakers. Bilingual documentation is optimal.

Online: The Internet offers different ways of publicizing the 211Ontario.ca portal. As search engines like Google are widely used, it is recommended that a search done using the key words *French-language services*, *Ontario* and/or *directory* results in 211Ontario.ca appearing in one of the top three positions. It would also be wise to ask the organizations to place links to the portal on their web sites. In particular, this means: the web sites of Francophone organizations; regional portals; municipal web sites; 411; the sites of the organizations listed and government web sites. Finally, communication via electronic networking is cited as a very common way of spreading information. Specialized distribution lists are effective, along with e-mail with the heading "To be distributed in your networks".

Other media may be used in addition to brochures: billboards; buses; magnets and stickers; community information directories.

General Advice

- Promotion activities and the accompanying information products will be more effective if they are customized for different audiences. For example, brochures intended for professionals may convey a different message than those intended for the rest of the community. In any case, the importance of a simple message in both official languages was emphasized.
- The Telehealth communication campaign was cited as a success story in French-language communities. Large-scale promotional activities including the distribution of stickers and magnets with contact information were successful; however, participants were sensitive to the one-time nature of the campaign, and felt that promotion should be continuous or sustained so that everyone can benefit from it and to maintain the level of interest.
- In order to ensure that French speakers do not fall by the wayside during promotional activities, it would be wise to include Francophone communications specialists. There is some concern that English-speaking marketing consultants who are unfamiliar with the French-speaking community will focus solely on English-language media.

Questions & Comments

The participants' concerns are consistent with initial consultations, albeit with an added Francophone dimension. The questions relate especially to the project's sustainability, funding and partners, Francophone capabilities and governance.

| QUESTION / COMMENT | CURRENT SITUATION / CHANGES |
|---|--|
| PROVINCE-WIDE SCALE | |
| <i>There is concern that it will be a Toronto initiative without community involvement.</i> | <p>Project management is provincial.</p> <p>The Francophone representative on the Project Management Office is from Sudbury.</p> <p>Over 50 community partners are involved across Ontario.</p> |
| <i>The data must be gathered locally by parties who are familiar with the area.</i> | <p>Data is stewarded by local Information & Referral organizations grounded in their communities. These organizations are part of the provincial I&R data collaborative, committed to providing their local data to the provincial system.</p> |
| <i>It will cause a loss of contact with local contributors.</i> | |
| <i>Provincial directories have been set up in the past, but they resulted in either poor-quality products that were completely disconnected from reality, or extremely high quality products that received no sustained effort.</i> | <p>211Ontario.ca is based on the notion that local providers are sustained by their local communities. The project is committed to developing a plan for sustainability.</p> |
| PARTNERSHIPS | |
| <i>What are the benefits of participating in the partnership?</i> | <p>Communities have multiple point of access available to them for finding information on programs and services.</p> <p>In an increasingly mobile society, Ontarians can find programs and services for themselves, families and friends outside of their local communities.</p> |
| <i>The partners who share their data want to be sure that they will receive high-quality data in return, in order to provide a quality service and ensure that they are promoting a quality product.</i> | <p>InformCanada and InformOntario will determine and manage standards. Members of the provincial data collaborative have committed to adhere to these common standards when creating and sharing information.</p> |
| <i>What is the partnership model? Is there a contractual agreement?</i> | <p>At present, there is a contractual agreement in place. In future, the terms of the data partnership will be reflected in the 211Ontario.ca Charter.</p> |

| QUESTION / COMMENT | CURRENT SITUATION / CHANGES |
|---|---|
| <i>There is concern that the sharing of data will not be fair, if a partner provides its entire database when it can only get a small percentage of relevant data for its own activity.</i> | Partners share a mandate related to equitable access to information – mission fulfilment is the prerequisite. |
| <i>What are the costs associated with the partnership?</i> | Findhelp, as the provincial administrator, assumes the cost of ownership for technology. There are no new or uncontrolled costs for data partners. |
| <i>The digitization of the information, which the public will be able to consult, will result in a loss of income generated by the publication and sale of directories.</i> | Income generated by publications and sales remain within the sector, and the objective is to reduce costs and direct more resources to collecting information on local community services. This in turn can open up new opportunities to generate revenue. |
| <i>The partnership entails a full reorganization of the database and work on adopting new standards and new key words.</i> | The need for a standardized classification system and database conversion was identified in 2003. The project funding includes development of a bilingual classification system (Taxonomy) in partnership with InformCanada. |
| <i>Do you have to have a web site to be a partner?</i> | No. |
| <i>How will responsibility for the records be shared when organizations have subsidiaries that cover the entire area? (e.g., school boards and schools)</i> | The project is developing a collaborative model where each participant has an assigned geographic area, a subject area within a geographic area and/ or responsibility for collecting records in one of the official languages. The objective is to partner with organizations located in a community that have the likelihood of a sustained mandate to provide information. |
| <i>Will partners that are located in a large centre and that cover a large area correctly list the services offered in small isolated communities?</i> | The objective of the project is to identify local partners that cover all of Ontario. In some cases, partners located in large centres have, in turn, identified a next level of partners located in smaller communities. The larger partner takes overall responsibility for the quality of data while the smaller partner is responsible for accurately representing services in their community. |
| <i>If a partner loses its funding and mandate, the data may be lost.</i> | The I&R database has built in redundancy – the administrator has the responsibility of seeking appropriate new partnerships in a worst case scenario. |
| <i>If a partner loses its staff members who are able to process data in French, are the French records abandoned?</i> | |

| QUESTION / COMMENT | CURRENT SITUATION / CHANGES |
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| <i>If a partner from a region goes out of business and the data is handled by a new partner that does not have a bilingual mandate or bilingual capabilities, who takes care of the French records?</i> | |
| OTHER | |
| <i>Who takes care of updating the data? Findhelp or the partners?</i> | The steward (Findhelp or data provider). Anyone with access to the website can suggest a new record or an update to an existing record. These suggestions will be reviewed and processed by a qualified local editor before being entered into the database. |
| <i>Will the virtual library be accessible to rural and isolated communities?</i> | The virtual library can be accessed by partner organizations, and information partnerships are important and encouraged. |
| <i>What accessibility-related measures are being taken?</i> | The project will seek accessibility compliance and is working with experts to ensure this. |
| <i>Will the site be accessible to users who do not have high-speed Internet access?</i> | The site is available to anyone with Internet connectivity of any kind and is optimized to support efficient transfer of information. The project administrator can also provide the database in many formats. |
| <i>What is the privacy policy?</i> | 211Ontario.ca has a posted privacy policy, which is PIPEDA compliant. |
| BILINGUALISM | |
| <i>The point was made that the 211Ontario.ca site has already been up and running for a few years, but the needs of the French-speaking community are only being addressed now. Many are convinced that the bilingual aspect was only considered in order to receive government funding.</i> | Government funding was necessary in order to address equity for Francophone Ontarians. Findhelp has worked consistently to resource this mandate. |
| <i>The Board of Directors of Findhelp has no Francophone representation and the partners are typically Anglophones. How can people believe that the French-speaking community's interests and needs will be considered?</i> | The Board of Directors of Findhelp have consistently worked on the organization's bilingual capacity and in 2007, will establish a Francophone position on the Board and will actively seek additional bilingual representative(s) for the Board of Directors. |
| <i>Francophone representation at governance level is vital if the project is meant to meet the needs of the community, and if its interests are to be protected after the funding ends in 3 years.</i> | Findhelp has a demonstrated commitment to partnerships and to ensuring that all investments are used to further the goal of equal access to information for all Ontarians. |

| QUESTION / COMMENT | CURRENT SITUATION / CHANGES |
|--|---|
| <i>The French-language portal will fail if there is no specific strategic plan for the Franco-Ontarian community and if Francophone researchers are not hired to work on the data. The community needs a fully Francophone portal managed by Francophones.</i> | Findhelp is actively developing a business case for equitable access to information and I&R services for Franco-Ontarians, and will actively undertake resource development to support the vision. |
| <i>There is a risk that less consideration will be given to the French-language site, and that the site will not be respectful of the Francophone identity, especially if it is based on a model not developed by Francophones.</i> | Findhelp has resourced a Francophone unit, consisting of three Francophone editors working on the French-language site until March 2008, and is dedicated to developing the site with input from the community. Additional effort is underway to add Francophone resources at Findhelp and among the partners. |
| <i>The French-language work is an additional burden on the partners, who are already short of resources. How will they be able to provide the French-language part?</i> | Findhelp, as a Toronto representative, provides approximately 40% of the records in the provincial database (as many province-wide offices are located in Toronto), and Findhelp is committed to providing bilingual records. Francophone partners are being engaged in regions where the current data partner cannot confidently assume responsibility for French-language records. In essence, the value proposition is that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts – participating organizations receive more than they give. |
| <i>It is vital to recruit Francophone editors.</i> | All French language information in the database is generated and edited by French speaking editors. The project is interested in identifying additional resources. |
| <i>What guarantee is there that the partners will maintain the mandate to provide French-language data? What will happen if the Francophone editor is not reappointed?</i> | The 211Ontario.ca project charter provides the basis for organizational commitment. |
| <i>How is it possible to guarantee that the Anglophone partners will take the necessary steps to promote the project among Francophones (e.g., in French-language schools)?</i> | Francophone partners are the appropriate representatives for outreach. If 211Ontario.ca has merit, it is expected that Francophone organizations will include the resource in their outreach activities. |
| <i>It was felt that current Anglophone partners have the mandate and therefore the funding needed to fully take part in the project, while Francophones will have to take part voluntarily at the expense of other projects.</i> | The project is eager to collaborate with Francophone partners who also share a mandate to gather information about services available in their community. Taking part in the project not only increases the visibility of the partners in the community and across the province; it can also provide access to tools and processes that will improve the scope and quality of the information available to Francophone clients. |

| QUESTION / COMMENT | CURRENT SITUATION / CHANGES |
|---|---|
| <i>Rural and isolated communities have not been consulted, although their reality in the field is much different from urban centres and should be taken into account.</i> | Extensive consultations have taken place throughout Ontario, and the project team have expressed the need for more. |
| DATA QUALITY | |
| <i>There is a critical need for this type of product; however, it is vital that the public be able to count on the quality of the data.</i> | <p>The I&R provincial database is a recognized authoritative source of human services information, and adheres to standards established by the Alliance of Information & Referral Services (AIRS).</p> <p>Findhelp, the provincial administrator and database coordinator, is an AIRS accredited organization.</p> |
| <i>There are too many so-called bilingual services that are unable to meet the expectations of the French-speaking community, and it is extremely difficult to check this type of information. There may be concern that the portal will not live up to the public's expectations, and that it will be just another unusable directory.</i> | <p>AIRS standards are being applied to all aspects of French-language records, including validation, updating, comprehensiveness, search criteria and accessibility.</p> <p>In addition, anyone with access to the web site can suggest a new record or an update to an existing record. These suggestions will be reviewed and processed by a qualified local editor before being entered into the database.</p> |
| <i>What guarantee is there that missing information will be added and that the searches done will produce exhaustive results?</i> | |
| DATA CHECKING AND UPDATING | |
| <i>What will the data-checking process be? Who will validate the data and how?</i> | <p>Editors are assigned to verifying data. Editors are AIRS certified Information Resource Specialists and are accountable for the authenticity, classification and reliability of the data they manage.</p> <p>The standards extend to multilingual service classification.</p> |
| <i>How will it be ensured that French-language services are actually offered in French?</i> | |
| <i>It is vital to make the service providers accountable for the reliability of the data they provide.</i> | <p>If accountability for listing is not funder mandated, organizations generally find it difficult to establish the administrative or editorial processes necessary to ensure accountability.</p> <p>After over 30 years of database maintenance and five years of online database provision, I&R data providers have recognized that standards are more tangible than the notion of accountability.</p> |

| QUESTION / COMMENT | CURRENT SITUATION / CHANGES |
|--|---|
| FUNDING | |
| <p><i>That money has been invested in a web site instead of being given to service providers who sorely need it to deliver direct services sparks some incomprehension and dissatisfaction.</i></p> | <p>The 211Ontario.ca business case outlines a very compelling business case related to cost benefit. If the project can impact Ontario in the same way that 211Toronto.ca impacted Toronto service provision (reducing the amount of time needed to find information), the sector will redirect a significant amount of time to frontline service with the introduction of a trusted, reliable source of information about community, social, health and related government services.</p> |
| <p><i>Has there been a feasibility study on the cost of maintaining the directory? What are the costs associated with the project?</i></p> | <p>When Findhelp launched 211Toronto.ca, a study related to Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) was conducted.</p> <p>With significant infrastructure commitments in place, and a focus on reducing the cost across the I&R system in Ontario, participating organizations should be able to redirect more resources toward front-line services.</p> |
| <p><i>Are the allotted resources enough to meet the minimum required quality level?</i></p> | <p>Sustainability is a major project activity area.</p> |
| <p><i>Francophone organizations will not be able to take part in the project, fully or at all, if no funding is available. Human and financial resources are too few, and they need their volunteers for their core programs.</i></p> | <p>Findhelp is actively collaborating with existing organizations and working to develop a broader group of French-language proponents to provide input and support for the development of goals, identify requirements and prepare a business case for resource partners.</p> |
| <p><i>It has not been possible to maintain all of the French-language service directories produced in the past due to a lack of funding (e.g., the directory of the Office of Francophone Affairs).</i></p> <p><i>How will the situation differ for 211Ontario.ca? What guarantee is there that this will not be just another abandoned project?</i></p> | |
| <p><i>Will 211Ontario.ca lose its funding if the French-speaking community does not join in the project?</i></p> | |
| <p><i>The three-year term is much too short to ensure the project's stability and longevity.</i></p> | |
| <p><i>More funding needs to be sought, e.g., from Service Canada and the municipalities.</i></p> | |

| QUESTION / COMMENT | CURRENT SITUATION / CHANGES |
|--|--|
| PROMOTION & OUTREACH | |
| <i>The project's success depends on an effective communication strategy in order to ensure that the project survives after the funding ends.</i> | An effective strategy of outreach, training and promotion means that 211 web sites are heavily used – the number of web site visitors in 2007 is expected to exceed 1,000,000. Online directories will handle 10 million inquiries. |
| <i>If there is not enough public education, the portal will be underused and disappear.</i> | |
| DIRECTORY | |
| <i>This directory will only duplicate already existing information.</i> | The information carried on the 211Ontario directory is unique and goes far beyond the basic information found in directories. The records show comprehensive information on programs and services, that can be used by I&R professionals. If an organization already produces a directory with information meeting the same quality and comprehensiveness, it is our interest to establish a partnership. The purpose of the data collaborative is to share resources and reduce duplication. The goal is to create information once and reuse it many times providing multiple channels for access. |
| <i>There is a risk of competition. This project should respect the existing directories.</i> | On the contrary, the aim of the 211Ontario.ca project is to give more visibility to existing directories, whether they are listed as complementary sources of information or included in our pool of data as a result of partnership. |
| <i>Is it a regional portal? A Francophone portal?</i> | <p>The provincial information and referral database underlying 211Ontario.ca can be configured as a regional or specialized (French-language) portal, and can be adapted to meet the needs of human services partners.</p> <p>The requirements gathered from consultation will inform the way information on 211Ontario.ca is presented.</p> |
| <i>Is it a true directory or links to web sites? Why not simply list the web sites, and then the information can be found on the other site?</i> | Searching web sites can be time-consuming, especially if the user is simply searching for a telephone number on a web site. When information is found, it may be more reflective of the organization, rather than the program or service being sought. Web sites are often out-of-date for the same reasons that directories are not maintained. And let's not forget that the directory is aimed to be used by I&R professionals, who need fast access to specific information – that might not be easily located on the web site – in order to address the needs of their clients. |

| QUESTION / COMMENT | CURRENT SITUATION / CHANGES |
|---|---|
| <i>Will hard copies of the directory be available?</i> | <p>All of the information on the web site can be printed. 211Toronto.ca has piloted a feature for professional users, that allows them to create and print mini-directories of services, and the provincial project may also identify this as a key requirement.</p> <p>Organizations contact Findhelp or local partners to inquire about receiving a database that is customized to meet their needs.</p> |
| ORGANIZATIONS LISTED | |
| <i>Service providers must be advised that their service or program is listed on the portal, or when a new directory is created (like the Directory of Justice Services and Resources in Ontario).</i> | Typically, when a new portal is launched, an announcement goes out to all organizations in the database in the form of an e-mail blast. |
| <i>Is it possible to check how often a record has been consulted?</i> | At the present time, this is not possible. In future, the professional version of the software will capture this information as part of contact tracking. |
| <i>How can the accuracy of the information be checked?</i> | Accuracy and validation is a top priority. The update policy is posted on 211Ontario.ca and the date of last update is posted on each record. |
| TAXONOMY | |
| <i>People find it hard to accept a French-language taxonomy developed on an American model (as good as it may be) when there is already the taxonomy of the Ministry of Health.</i> | <p>The taxonomy used by many Community Care Access Centres and provided to them through the Ministry of Health, is the American version of the AIRS taxonomy of human services. Classification of French-language records is done through translation rather than a full trans-creation.</p> <p>Editorial committees have been set up to create the English and the French Canadian version of the taxonomy. The committees are composed of I&R specialists, experts in the terminology used in their fields, who will be future users of the taxonomy.</p> |

| QUESTION / COMMENT | CURRENT SITUATION / CHANGES |
|---|--|
| <p><i>Service providers should have access to the taxonomy and be able to check whether their information is indexed correctly.</i></p> | <p>The taxonomy will be available online for review.</p> <p>As part of the annual update process, organizations are provided with the information on their program or service along with the subjects used to index it. At this time, organizations are asked to provide updates.</p> <p>At any time, organizations can request a complete listing of their organization including the subject terms used to index it.</p> |
| <p>211 TELEPHONE SERVICE</p> | |
| <p><i>There is not enough information on the 211 services being developed in Ottawa, Windsor and Thunder Bay.</i></p> | <p>More information on these projects can be found at www.211ontario.info.</p> |
| <p><i>Will those services have French-language capabilities?</i></p> | <p>211 Toronto currently has French-speaking information and referral specialists available from 8 am to 8 pm every day, and is working to expand the service hours as the scale of the service builds.</p> <p>New 211 services are working to develop the capacity to provide bilingual telephone service.</p> |
| <p><i>What is the connection between 211 and 211Ontario.ca?</i></p> | <p>211Ontario.ca represents the Internet channel for 211 service delivery. The database is also a resource available to 211 telephone service providers</p> |

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