

# Reinforcing Key Stakeholder Relationships

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## Our Client:

2-1-1 is an award-winning helpline and online database of Ontario's community and social services. It is governed by Ontario 211 Services, a non-profit agency that is currently funded and supported by two levels of government, United Way, Ministry of Community and Social Services, and the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

## The Challenge:

The challenge faced by Ontario 211 involves complex stakeholder relationships with: Municipalities, United Way, Data partners, 211 Board of Directors, Regional Service Providers and Community Service Agencies. Ontario 211 sought external consultation in helping them identify gaps and opportunities in existing relationships with stakeholder groups and in doing so, outline actionable recommendations that aid the continued developments of Ontario 211 services. The objective of this project was to align key stakeholders within an integrated 211 provincial system that values community expertise and promotes partnerships; thus, making 2-1-1 helpline the primary source of information and gateway to human services for local residents. The engagement between Collaboration Partners (CP) and Ontario 211 had the goal of developing a stakeholder engagement strategy, which was accomplished in three major stages:

- Identifying key stakeholders
- Conducting stakeholder assessment
- Establishing stakeholder engagement plans.

## Process:

The CP team first conducted a due diligence of Ontario 211's role and coverage of services offered. By arranging a meeting with its Board of Directors, it facilitated the CP team in understanding the internal pain issues and priority areas asserted by the client at the top level. The team supplemented this with touch-point meetings with the Executive team of Ontario 211 at the beginning and throughout our consultation. These meetings aligned project scope, exchanged insights, and facilitated the team's delivery in project milestones and client's expectations. To accurately evaluate Ontario 211's relationship with its stakeholder groups, the CP team designed a standardized questionnaire as a 360-degree evaluation focusing on the Ontario 211 brand, its service value and quality of partnership with individual stakeholders. Collaborating with PLUM Solutions, the CP team conducted and analyzed dozens of recorded interviews and identified key strengths and notable areas of improvement in the organization and continuum of services orchestrated by Ontario 211. We identified four major areas of improvement commented by all stakeholder groups as they view Ontario 211 both on an organizational and service level. They were – partnership, promotion/awareness, vision, and data standards.



## **Solution:**

For each thematic area, CP team provided four to eight actionable solutions and ranked their relevancy per stakeholder group. These suggestions are directly supported from quotations or paraphrases that the CP team collected and extracted verbatim during interviews with a stakeholder. In summary, CP provided five evidence-based recommendations to Ontario 211:

1. Establish robust and updated data standards
2. Provide more clarity on roles & responsibilities, including Ontario 211.
3. Advocate joint promotions to increase local awareness
4. Create and follow strategic communication protocol
5. Create and share social marketing guidelines

As a project deliverable, the CP team also created a high-level, quickly-implementable communication plan that ensures Ontario 211 can effectively engage with its stakeholders for better alignment leading to inclusive growth. It leverages mediums such as face-to-face meetings, conference calls, connection touch-points, and others. Results: What are some of the results from the above solution? What are the long-term benefits? Real numbers are better to report than nebulous differences. The value of CP's recommendations ensures Ontario 211 will achieve maximum and lasting impact at strengthening its partnership, awareness, shared vision, and data assurance across its six stakeholders. CP's recommendations for Ontario 211 will also help the client achieve a higher rating across the above opportunity areas. In conclusion, Ontario 211 has endorsed the contributions made by the CP team with the following remark:

***“We want to acknowledge the extent of your efforts and the quality of the deliverables and presentation format, well done!”***