TRANSITIONING 2-1-1 FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE
Dear Friends of 2-1-1,

For decades, there was a dream of easy access to information about health and human services at the local level. United Way of Atlanta started the first 2-1-1 in 1997. United Way of Connecticut followed in 1998 and the “2-1-1 movement” was born. A collective push for legislation and a petition to the Federal Communications Commission resulted in the FCC’s July 18, 2000 designation of abbreviated dialing 2-1-1 for “community information and referral” (I&R).

This achievement resulted from a much longer history in information and referral. We shared common goals to connect people with needs to services. We shared national standards for I&R. We spoke more or less the same language in describing the services we provided and how we provided them. We communicated with our peers using postal mail, telephone and conferences and then e-mail. We were inclined to take huge leaps of faith and calculated risks to expand our services. While our movement had decades of preparation, 2-1-1 emerged just 15 years ago, and already 90% of Americans have access. Contrast that with 9-1-1, which took 40 years to reach similar access.

We offer this document as a snapshot of the current state of 2-1-1, the challenges we see and the opportunities to transition to a sustainable future. We have experienced phenomenal successes in the 2-1-1 network: rapid expansion, quality service, disaster response and strong utilization despite low awareness. However, the reality is that 2-1-1 is not operating in an optimal environment. We are at risk from competitors and from our own lack of capacity. Challenging circumstances require us to work together to create a new future. Therefore, this document will provide a critical look at our field in order to focus on opportunities for the future.

We strongly believe in the potential for 2-1-1 to serve as an effective and efficient community response system in every community. 2-1-1: Excellent, Everywhere, Always.

We invite your feedback and to contact us. We invite you to join our efforts to transition 2-1-1 for a sustainable future.

Sincerely,
Members of the 211US Steering Committee
211US STEERING COMMITTEE

Elected through an annual nominating process since 2008, the 211US Steering Committee is comprised of individuals from State 2-1-1 organizations, 2-1-1 Centers, United Way state associations, affiliates of Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) and other organizations. The nominations committee is careful to ensure representation from all 10 FEMA regions and the diversity within the 2-1-1 field (small to large, United Way-operated and independent, comprehensive I&R and blended I&R and crisis).

The 211US Steering Committee has met continuously every month via conference call, with two face-to-face meetings per year since 2006. Focused task groups moving certain areas of work meet regularly or as needed.

From left: Tom Page, Frank Isaza, Doug Goodwin, Mary Ellen Mendl, Lucinda Nord, Dave Bartek, Laura Zink Marx, Amy Bosworth, Lori Linstead, Lilian Coral, Susan Gemmel, Steve Wertheim, December 2012
211US STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dave Bartek, 2-1-1 Director, United Way for Southeastern Michigan (MI)
Amy Bosworth, 2-1-1 Director, United Way of Salt Lake (UT)
Lilian Coral, Program Manager, 2-1-1 California (CA)
Susan Gemmel, 2-1-1 Director, Crisis Clinic (WA)
Doug Goodwin, Information Systems Director, United Way of Central Alabama (AL)
Frank Isaza, Program Director, 2-1-1 Broward (FL)
Troy Hammond, Chief Operating Officer, 211info (OR)
Lori Linstead, State Director, 2-1-1 Oklahoma (OK)
Laura Zink Marx, Executive Director, NJ 2-1-1 Partnership (NJ)
Mary Ellen Mendil, Director, Vermont 2-1-1 (VT)
Lucinda Nord, Vice President, Indiana Association of United Ways (IN)
Tom Page, Michigan 2-1-1 (MI)
Suzanne Puryear, President, The Planning Council (VA)
Steve Wertheim, 2-1-1 United Way of Northeast Ohio (OH)

And newly elected to the Steering Committee, December 2012

Terri Axelson, Executive Director, Centerpoint Community Services/Louisiana 2-1-1 (LA)
Tanya Barrett, Senior Vice President, United Way of Connecticut 2-1-1 (CT)
Lisa Clark, 2-1-1 Manager, Brown County United Way (WI)
Catherine Dunning, Chief Executive Officer, Community I&R Services/2-1-1 Arizona (AZ)
Kelsey Piechocki, Sr. Vice President, United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra (NV)
Jeff Vance, Senior Vice President, United Way of San Antonio & Bexar County (TX)

FORMER STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND LEADERS OF PRECEDING INFORMAL GROUP

Charlotte Anderson (SC) Scott Jones (MO) Joshua Pederson (UT)
Saundra Bond (MD) Lorna Koci (UT) Jeri Shumate (OR)
Sue Brogan (AK) Amy Latzer (CA) Richard Stahl (OH)
Nathan Cook (AR) Maribel Marin (CA) Bill Sullivan (MI)
Doug Fluegel (TN) Martina Martin (MD) Tim Sylvia (FL)
Doug Frank (NY) Sara Matta (CA) Liesl Wendt (OR)
Marianne Galleon (CA) Paul Mina (MA) Beth Wick (TX)
Troy Hammond (OR) Jamie Moore (NE) Carrie Wiggs (OK)
Janet Bard Hansen (FL) Randy Nicklaus (FL) Bridget Wolf (OH)
John Hayes (TN) Kathy O’Connor (MN)
Mary Hogan (CT) John Ohanian (CA)
Matt Hornyak (WA) Kay Parker (TX)

Staff colleagues and friends, to whom we owe much appreciation for their support:

Lisa Bullen-Austin, United Way Worldwide (UWW)
Linda Daily, formerly of United Way Worldwide
Clive Jones, Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS)
Tino Paz, formerly of United Way Worldwide
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MISSION

211US seeks to ensure that 2-1-1 is Excellent, Everywhere and Always. Since the first meetings, we have defined our work in these terms.

• Excellent means that each 2-1-1 state system and each individual service provider is both first-class and cost effective by national standards of I&R.
• Everywhere means that 2-1-1 will be available to all no matter where they live or how they prefer to access information. 2-1-1 will have capacity to serve true demand.
• Always means 2-1-1 will be available 24/7/365 and will remain a permanent part of the human services landscape and national consciousness.

CURRENT STATE OF 2-1-1 AND CHALLENGES

2-1-1 is the three-digit abbreviated dialing code for community information and referral, as designated by the FCC in 2000. As of 2012, 90% of the U.S. population can reach 2-1-1 through landlines. This includes all 50 states, plus D.C. and Puerto Rico. 2-1-1 is operated through a network of 243 independent centers operated primarily by United Ways, nonprofit and government organizations. In 2011, the 2-1-1 network responded to over 16 million requests for help with connections to human services.

The first years of 2-1-1 development and expansion illustrated wonderful successes. Yet rapid growth with limited or inconsistent resources and policies resulted in a sort of patchwork we consider in detail, including:

• Models and Providers of 2-1-1: The variety of models illustrates the “organic” development of 2-1-1 and complicates efforts to achieve the vision.
• Current Service Delivery or “Specialized Service Lines” within 2-1-1: Service lines and related funding vary widely by 2-1-1 Center or State System.
• Quality Assurance: While great progress has been made toward national standards, quality assurance reviews are inconsistent.
• Funding: While efforts to diversify funding streams for 2-1-1 have improved, the 2-1-1 network remains at risk without a plan for long-term sustainability.
• Unanswered Demand and Suppressed Demand: Insufficient resources to support 2-1-1 has resulted in the double-whammy of being pushed beyond our capacity without being able to inform consumers about the availability of 2-1-1.
• Telecommunications: 2-1-1 risks obsolescence if national telecommunications support is not prioritized.
• Technology: Resources must be leveraged so that 2-1-1 keeps pace with changes in technology.
• Politics and economics: The foreseeable political and economic climate demands a different approach than during the formative years of 2-1-1.
• Expectations: Consumers and funders expect multi-channel, 24-hour, high-quality service that provides cost-effective results.
• Human services: Changes in the human service delivery system demand a responsive 2-1-1 system with clear decision-making roles and authority at the national and state levels.
TRANSITIONING TO 2-1-1 FOR THE FUTURE AND OUR OPPORTUNITIES

In order to achieve a sustainable 2-1-1 system that meets the community information and referral service needs of the future, we must focus on the following:

- Development of strategic relationships with partners that have the ability to promote public awareness, effective use and sustainability of 2-1-1; including new revenue-sharing models;
- Adoption of new strategies in database, technology and telecommunications to improve access to and continuity of service, and interoperability within the 2-1-1 network as a national system;
- Regulatory or legislative actions at the national and state levels that result in policies and funding for universal access to 2-1-1 with recognition similar to 911;
- Continued improvements in quality and consistency with refinement of certain “specialized service lines” in order to support the 2-1-1 service effectively;
- Implementation of a comprehensive Strategic Communications Plan that includes internal and external communications and brand management that results in increased awareness, understanding and proper use of 2-1-1;
- Implementation of a national disaster infrastructure for information and referral which supports the 2-1-1 network in their preparedness, response and recovery activities;
- Transition to more effective models for effective and efficient 2-1-1 service where efforts are driven by mission, quality service and relationships for a sustainable future; and
- Formalization of 211US to provide a clear national voice for 2-1-1, maintain and enhance its existing committed partnerships and provide a structure for growth in realizing the vision for 2-1-1 to be excellent, everywhere and always.

To expedite this transition, we must fully realize and/or create opportunities on the horizon in order to support a new model for the envisioned 2-1-1 system.

SERVICE PROJECTIONS

By embracing the opportunities described in this document, the national 2-1-1 system will be able to achieve the following objectives by 2016:

- 100% of Americans will be able to reach 2-1-1 services through one or more channels of access, 24 hours a day.
- 20 million Americans will be connected with human services annually through 2-1-1 service.
- 75% of contacts will be answered by nationally accredited centers.
- 25% growth in service delivery through new channels such as e-mail, text and web chat.
- Improved quality assurance metrics that are consistently applied and measured.
- Optimized effectiveness and efficiencies.
- 100 million web visits.
- Integrated telecommunications system for mobilization in catastrophic disasters.
- 2-1-1 mobile application has 500,000 downloads.
- National Data Management System that extends the life cycle of life cycle of need, resource and trend data and creates a sustainable funding mechanism.
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CURRENT STATE OF 2-1-1 AND CHALLENGES

2-1-1 is the three-digit abbreviated dialing code to access community information and referral (I&R). The first 2-1-1 Center became operational in 1997 at United Way of Atlanta. Through a long-standing partnership between Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) and United Way Worldwide (UWW), 2-1-1 rapidly expanded as a primary access to comprehensive I&R.

As of 2012, 90% of the U.S. population is able to reach 2-1-1 through landlines. This includes all 50 states, plus D.C. and Puerto Rico. 2-1-1 is operated through a network of 243 independent centers operated by United Ways, nonprofit, for-profit and government organizations. In 2012, the 2-1-1 network responded to over 16 million requests for help for connections to human services.

90% of Americans have access; 16 Million Calls
People use 2-1-1 services to learn about or connect with the full range of health and human services. The majority of reported needs relate to basic needs, including Housing and Utilities (25%), Food and Meals (13%), Income Support and Assistance (8%) and Clothing (3%). People sought Information Services (11%), Legal, Consumer & Public Safety (11%), Individual, Family and Community Support (8%). 2-1-1 Centers have observed steady increases in calls related to Health Care (5%) and Mental Health Care (7%). Other needs include Other Government/Economic Services, Transportation, Employment, Education, Volunteer and Donations, Disaster Services and Arts, Culture and Recreation (each 1-2%). See the chart below for “The Big Count 2011,” an aggregated count of problem/needs reported to 2-1-1s by callers in 2011.

**Data Sources and Resources:**
- Map of 2-1-1 Coverage, 2012
- The Big Count, 2011
MODELS AND PROVIDERS OF 2-1-1

The variety of models illustrates the “organic” development of 2-1-1 and the complexity involved to achieve a more common vision.

2-1-1 is provided by a variety of models by state and/or within each state. 211US seeks to maintain information about each of the providers and models of 2-1-1 through annual and regular updates and special surveys. Surveys in recent years have observed changes in the number and composition of providers, as 2-1-1 has experienced consolidations and competitive forces related to cost and quality. Models for 2-1-1 service delivery within a state vary due to the originating authority, design and funding sources. Generally, states with higher level of centralized authority and administration have strong experiences with and fewer barriers to system development. The following models comprise the makeup across the 50 states, D.C. and Puerto Rico:

- Single call center within a state (24 states);
- Centralized authority, centralized administration with decentralized service delivery through multiple 2-1-1 Centers (13 states);
- Centralized authority, decentralized administration with decentralized service delivery through multiple 2-1-1 Centers (8 states); or
- Decentralized authority or mixed model with multiple 2-1-1 Centers (7 states).

Models of 2-1-1 in States

![Chart showing distribution of 2-1-1 models]

Of the state 2-1-1 entities, at least 38 states have formal legally recognized organizations responsible for some level of authority over 2-1-1 in the state. Authorized entities include AIRS affiliates, United Way state associations, United Way 2-1-1 centers (serving statewide), independent 2-1-1 entities, units of state government and unincorporated collaborations. Almost half of all state Public Utility/Service Commissions (24) provided some level of authorization for 2-1-1. In three states 2-1-1 was authorized by executive order, and state legislation provided the foundation in at least ten states.

Currently, there are 243 2-1-1 Centers in the United States. Forty-nine percent (49%) are operated by local or state United Ways; 48% are operated by independent nonprofit organizations and 3% are operated by units of government. Nonprofit providers include stand-alone I&R providers, blended I&R/crisis lines, area agencies on aging, disability agencies, community action organizations, among others.
Units of government include state government human services, cities, county and regional governments and offices of the mayor. Nonprofit providers of 2-1-1 service are most often the preferred provider because of their service quality, cost competitiveness and commitment to mission.

Three Centers are operated by for-profit companies. Stakeholders in those communities have reported satisfaction with service delivery, outcomes and price and an ongoing strong relationship with the United Way. The for-profit presence within the 2-1-1 movement has created tension and a level of competition, but also new opportunities for sharing of business practices. The underlying principle is that 2-1-1 service must maintain high standards and participate in an integrated national 2-1-1 system.

Who Operates 2-1-1 Centers?

Many early 2-1-1 Centers and systems started with a traditional model of launching 2-1-1 where all functions were provided by the same organization. The rapid pace of expansion and technological change has resulted in consolidation and changes in responsibility for certain I&R functions. For example, as 2-1-1 administrators or providers seek out ways to ensure 24/7/365 service, consistent database or consolidated contracting, they may assign or contract certain responsibilities to certain Centers. Many state models involve after-hours or disaster calls being served by other Centers. Another example involves an “authorized” 2-1-1 organization contracting out the database maintenance or call-taking function or both while retaining a sort of “ownership” or responsibility for 2-1-1 delivery and oversight. The division of responsibilities creates a challenge for accreditation and accountability for service quality. 211US defines a 2-1-1 provider as the host organization where the primary service lines are performed. 211US has not resolved this definition challenge when the database and call-handling are not within the same organization.

Data sources:
• 211US Survey of Legal Entity Status, 2010
• The Big Count, 2011

Resources:
• www.211.org for contact information for each 2-1-1
• “TIPI Reports” at http://www.utexas.edu/research/tipi/reports_f.htm
CURRENT SERVICE DELIVERY OR “SPECIALIZED SERVICES” WITHIN 2-1-1:

Services and related funding vary widely by 2-1-1 Center or State System.

All 2-1-1 Centers provide access via telephone through dialing 2-1-1 and a 10-digit number. Many 2-1-1 Centers maintain a toll-free 8XX line, though not all make their toll-free lines accessible for calls across the country. All 2-1-1 Centers maintain or access an electronic database that includes information about callers, clients, needs and referral organizations. Many 2-1-1 Centers provide web-based access for consumers and professionals to look up information about human service providers in the communities they serve. 2-1-1 Centers offer a variety of additional “service lines,” sometimes called “business lines,” to serve their communities.

211US observes great variance in the types and scale of funding support for each of the service lines. The chart below highlights the predominant service lines in 2-1-1 Centers throughout the country, and they offer one or more of the following as their menu of services:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core “Services”</th>
<th>Defined</th>
<th>Prevalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Information &amp; Referral</td>
<td>Comprehensive, community information and referral services provision</td>
<td>All, and funding varies widely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Database</td>
<td>Caller, client, need and/or referral database</td>
<td>All, though funding requirements are not often understood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructural Capacity/Public Awareness</td>
<td>Because 2-1-1 exists and has a level of awareness with a base of callers and service providers, 2-1-1 maintains a “state of readiness” and “public awareness” for the next emerging human service need in a community. This makes 2-1-1 response scalable for other projects and needs in the community.</td>
<td>Most, and some funders expect this as a condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaster State of Readiness</td>
<td>State of Readiness as it relates to disaster preparedness</td>
<td>Many, though not often separately funded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-1-1 as access point/portal</td>
<td>2-1-1 dialing code, text code or website is used as the access or portal to specific service line</td>
<td>Limited by authorization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
211US opposes efforts to utilize unit costs (i.e. cost/call) as a principle measure to evaluate 2-1-1. Such measurements are not valid across the system, as there are too many variables affecting the numbers. 2-1-1 Centers do not define, track or measure programs and costs consistently. However, cost-per-unit provides one measurement that, when combined with a number of other measures, may illustrate opportunities in the system. Any analysis must also factor in the cost saved within the human services delivery system by a 2-1-1 Center doing a thorough job at the initial point of contact through taking the time to properly identify an early and realistic resolution to a situation. As an example, the cost of an 8-minute call in contrast with a 4-minute call might save hours of work for more expensive interventions at other points in the system. This is one of the “value adds” of 2-1-1 in a community over other providers. Simply put, 2-1-1 can streamline access to services, eliminating frustration for people in need and providers who would otherwise spend time looking for services. While cost per call is not a principle measure, 2-1-1 leaders and funders are paying attention to it, seeking to lower the cost and length of calls, when appropriate.

211US observes instances where 2-1-1 is underutilized and other instances where 2-1-1 is stretched beyond capacity. 211US seeks an accurate understanding of costs by service lines in order to build a new business model that ensures a sustainable future.

Data Sources:
• 211US Surveys of State Directors, 2006, 2008 and 2010
QUALITY ASSURANCE

While great progress has been made toward national standards, quality assurance reviews are inconsistent.

One of the differentiating features of 2-1-1 is the attention to quality assurance. 2-1-1 excellence is one of the foundational aspirations since leaders first gathered. 2-1-1 Centers operate by Standards of Professional Information and Referral as promulgated by the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS). The Standards define and outline quality indicators for six areas:

• **Service Delivery**, or how the 2-1-1 services are provided, including required training, how calls are answered, how referrals are provided; inquiries are documented and more;
• **Resource Database**, which includes how the referral information is organized, the depth of information maintained about services, the frequency and process of updates, how it is categorized by a nationally accepted Taxonomy of Human Services;
• **Reports and Measures**, which includes how the organization tracks and reports data about needs, resources, unmet needs and trends in the communities served;
• **Cooperative Relationships**, which describes relationships and protocols with key referral partners, including how the relationships are formalized to ensure quality service and non-duplication of services;
• **Disaster Preparedness**, which involves assuring both a continuity of service and response for the communities served in times of disaster; and
• **Organizational Effectiveness**, which includes the aspects of good governance, human resources, funding and organizational stability.

Individuals who work or volunteer in 2-1-1 Centers may apply for and achieve individual Certification as Information & Referral Specialists (CIRS) or Resource Specialists (CRS) or Information & Referral Specialists Aging (CIRS-A). Organizations may apply for organizational Accreditation. Currently, approximately 2,100 individuals working in 2-1-1 Centers hold Certification. Of the 243 Centers, 123 Centers or 51% maintain active Accreditation. An additional 12 Centers, or 5%, are currently in process, and 108 Centers, or 44%, are not accredited or in the process.

Beginning in 2010, the 211US Quality Assurance Committee initiated a “mystery call” project, whereby calls were completed to Centers for the purposes of assessing quality. During the first year, a baseline of information was developed and refined. A standardized call type and format were made to 80% of centers in 2010, 90% in 2011 and 95% in 2012. 2-1-1 responses were assessed based on the fundamentals from the AIRS Standards. Mystery callers recorded items such as how the call was answered, hold time, I&R Specialist greeting and interaction, appropriateness of tone and referral, provision of empathy and overall rating.

**OBSERVATIONS ABOUT 2-1-1 QUALITY**

• While individual Certification demonstrates that an individual knows what is involved in giving good service and Agency Accreditation demonstrates that various functionalities and foundations were in place at time of the review, accredited 2-1-1 Centers are still responsible for supervising and monitoring their Specialists and for providing quality service day-to-day and year-to-year. While many state 2-1-1 entities are authorized to provide additional oversight related to quality assurance, few have the financial and human resources to ensure it.
• While achievement of AIRS Accreditation represents a level of quality, the range of quality demonstrated by Accredited Centers varies widely. There are concerns that the Accreditation process, despite how time and labor intensive it is during the process, does not include adequate provisions to ensure compliance during the application and renewal process or the five-year period between initial and re-Accreditation. There is a desire for AIRS Accreditation to have credibility and
meaning. 211US will provide support to AIRS in the difficult business of holding all agencies accountable to the same confidential process.

- The AIRS Accreditation process now includes mystery calls and database audit and review.
- 2-1-1 answering protocols vary widely with regard to live answer, auto-attendant response, greeting, identification of 2-1-1 and hold time.
- 2-1-1 responses vary widely with regard to data gathered, depth of interview or assessment, number and types of referrals provided and closure of the call.
- The Mystery Call Project found mixed results with inconsistent responses and ratings from poor to excellent against the Standards of Professional Information and Referral.
- 211US and AIRS observed voluntary changes and improvements by Centers and individual staff after the mystery call project findings were shared with the field.
- The Mystery Call Project, the telecommunications information update project and surveys illustrate stressors in the system (higher than acceptable abandonment rates; inadequate staffing; insufficient training; telecommunications, technology and software issues; inconsistent policies).
- While great strides have been made to improve information about referral resources and to maintain a schedule for updates, databases vary considerably in the depth and breadth of service information, consistency and use of AIRS Taxonomy of Human Services and resulting reports.
- Despite inconsistencies and uneven levels of quality across the network, 2-1-1 customer service ratings are high. Surveyed 2-1-1 consumers report high degrees of satisfaction with service.

Certain projects operated by specific 2-1-1 Centers or state systems provide additional lessons about quality. Certain funders, grantors or contractors require very specific process and outcome metrics related to quality (e.g., review lessons from the H1N1, SNAP benefits and Bank of America projects.). Finally, 2-1-1 providers are the subject of “test calls” by current and potential funders, contractors and referral organizations. Anecdotal information from test calls illustrate the uneven level of quality both within 2-1-1 Centers and the 2-1-1 Network as a whole.

Despite inconsistencies and areas for improvement, 2-1-1 is routinely praised for its high customer satisfaction, rapid expansion, responsiveness to changing needs, voluntary adoption of standards and continuous quality improvement measures.

Resources:
- Elements of an Integrated National 2-1-1 System
FUNDING

While efforts to diversify funding streams for 2-1-1 have accelerated, the 2-1-1 network remains at risk without a plan for long-term sustainability.

In the aggregate, 2-1-1 is supported by a variety of revenues. Approximately fifty-one percent (51%) of all support for 2-1-1 Centers originates from United Ways. Thirty-two percent (31.5%) comes from government and ten percent (10.4%) is generated through contracts. Four percent is derived from philanthropic or corporate grants (4.3%) and the remaining three percent is from other revenues (2.5%).

The composition of funding by Center often relates to the types of host organizations and size of the organizations. Here are findings from a 2012 representative survey of half the 2-1-1 field:

- Independent I&R organizations receive a greater percentage of their funding from government sources than do blended I&R/crisis organizations or United Way organizations.
- United Way continues as the largest private funder, with varying levels of funding going to 77% of 2-1-1 Centers. About twenty-three percent (23%) of Centers receive no United Way funding. Approximately half of the 2-1-1 Centers receiving United Way funds receive 50% to 100% of their total funding from United Way, while half receive less than 25% of their funding from United Way. This reflects a dichotomy that Centers receiving United Way funds either receive a quite substantial or quite insubstantial portion of their budget from United Way.
- Annual expense level depicts a bell curve reflective of the larger network with very small 2-1-1 organizations to very large 2-1-1 organizations, with varying geographic and population areas served. The average annual expenses for 2-1-1 are in the $500,000 range with smallest reporting expenses at $40,000 to largest annual expenses at over $10 million.
- Recent years have seen intentional efforts to diversify funding, with some Centers more successful than others. Entrepreneurial efforts of a few may push the limits of what is considered acceptable by leaders and stakeholders in the 2-1-1 network. For example, 2-1-1 Centers may be reimbursed to assess callers for certain services which have unclear benefits for the caller and where there is a direct financial benefit to the Center making the referral.
- The largest 2-1-1s rely heavily on government contracts. This government funding provides growth opportunities but also comes with challenges.

United Way Funding. United Ways have provided early and continued funding to support 2-1-1. Centers that receive United Way dollars are funded through a variety of methods: single year or multi-year contracts related to community impact or identified objectives; allocations after other agencies or services, or in competition with other agencies or services; separate “infrastructure” funding; and others.

Governmental Funding and Contracts. 2-1-1 Centers that receive government dollars are funded through a variety of methods and government revenue sources. Some states receive annual line-item appropriations for general support, though this is increasingly rare as state budgets constricted with the recession. Many state 2-1-1 systems seek grants or contracts to deliver specific services in partnership with government.

Government funding often depends upon how a state is organized and its jurisdictional authority. For example, states that administer funds centrally tend to contract through the state 2-1-1 entity. States such as Connecticut, New Jersey, Texas and Vermont provide outreach, pre-screening, enrollment and application assistance for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), LIHEAP (Low-Income Heating Energy Assistance Program), Medicaid, Summer Food and H1N1. In contrast, states such as California, Florida and Ohio allow many federal and state funds to be determined at the county level. Thus 2-1-1 Centers in those states contract directly with county government for county, TANF discretionary, mental health, benefit outreach and other funds. This difference in funding by state government correlates with the challenges of building the 2-1-1 networks in those states with services funded at the county level.
Government funding comes with its own challenges. As government funds constrict or are delayed, reimbursements for 2-1-1 services may be delayed, putting 2-1-1 Centers at grave risk. Most 2-1-1 Centers do not have reserves to continue operations under dramatic funding cuts nor to expand operations quickly in the event of disaster or new programs. Government contracts present challenges in how actual costs are reimbursable, usually after the expense has been expended. The number and types of contracts a 2-1-1 Center could acquire may be limited due to not having cash flow or cash match required. Financial controls, accounting principles, personnel management need to be addressed as 2-1-1 seeks a diversified funding portfolio that includes more restrictive government funds.

Additionally, public and private funders are demanding more for their funding, in many cases, for flat or reduced funding. The 2-1-1 field has continued to do more with less, achieving as many cost-efficiencies as possible in the current system design. Streamlining operations and leveraging the existing 2-1-1 structure provides an opportunity to showcase efficiencies in a light that is very attractive to funders. Some 2-1-1 Centers have been successful in incorporating specialized services and/or existing toll-free lines from state government.

Corporate and philanthropic grants. 2-1-1 was developed and launched with philanthropic grants from various private and corporate foundations. Philanthropic funding has supported capital and quality improvements, technological and programmatic innovations and specialized services, but has become increasingly less reliable for ongoing operational support.

Data sources:
• 211US Survey of State Directors, 2008 (n=38 states) and 2010 (n=42 states)
• 211US Funding Survey, 2010
• 211US Funding Survey of 2-1-1 Centers and Systems, 2011 (n=84 responses)

UNANSWERED DEMAND AND SUPPRESSED DEMAND

Insufficient resources to support 2-1-1 has resulted in the double-whammy of being pushed beyond capacity without being able to inform consumers about the availability of 2-1-1.

“Why don’t you advertise or market 2-1-1? Why do so few people know about 2-1-1 when there is so much poverty and need in our communities?”

2-1-1 is pushed beyond our capacity, and yet, 2-1-1 is not universally known. The founding vision was that as 2-1-1 would become as ubiquitous as 9-1-1, funding would follow to support the development and expansion of the service. This has not happened.

Unanswered demand: The call volume in many 2-1-1 centers is so high, creating increasingly untenable situations. During the height of the recession in 2009, 86% of Centers reported receiving more calls from callers who never used 2-1-1 before. These calls took longer (as reported by 62% of Centers) and call volume had increased (as reported by 90% of Centers). Consequently, 41% of Centers reported longer hold times and higher abandonment rates (January 2010 survey). The public waits longer, growing more frustrated, while 2-1-1 staff becomes more stressed and less likely to deliver quality. Internal resources naturally focus on handling immediate demand rather than on focused future planning.

Suppressed demand (also called “concealed need”): The reality is that awareness of 2-1-1 is low, leading to a suppressed demand for the services. A consequence of this is an unwillingness to market 2-1-1 and to increase public awareness about the merits of the service because of justifiable fears of creating further logjams to access. 2-1-1 in certain communities, such as Philadelphia, continue to operate one notch above “stealth” mode, for fear of overwhelming their system if they let the public
know that the 2-1-1 service is available. There simply are not enough resources to meet the demand in the current service delivery model. 2-1-1 Centers and Systems perpetuate suppressed demand by failing to market or consider other ways to provide service.

**Background:** Over the years, 211US and the State 2-1-1 Directors have refined the “Elements of an Integrated National 2-1-1 System,” a listing of 18 fundamental criteria. Element #7 involves the “ability to handle the demand created by that awareness of 2-1-1.” For example, a state could define capacity as “the resources to answer the projected volume of incoming calls equivalent to 8% of the state population annually at a service level of 80% of calls being answered within 60 seconds averaged over a year.” In order for a state 2-1-1 system to consider itself fully in compliance, the state 2-1-1 entity would create a statewide service level objective and would monitor results. As of 2011, only 32% of states reported fully meeting this criterion, with an additional 39% reporting a goal of this capacity by the end of 2013. The question of a defined penetration rate remains unresolved for 211US.

**For the future:** 2-1-1 intentionally suppresses awareness because it continues to view service “by an I&R Specialist” as the only way to serve consumers with needs. We face the paradox of viewing our results in our outputs (calls) rather than outcomes (people connected with services). Opportunities for consideration include:

- Immediate adoption of new methodology for “The Big Count” to include standardized ways of tracking, counting and reporting alternative two-way, I&R Specialist-to-consumer interactions of web chatting/instant messaging, texting, etc.
- Rapid adoption of standards for service delivery methods other than two-way I&R Specialist-to-consumer interaction (one-way messaging, web-site, artificial intelligence, etc.).
- Definition of a standard for appropriate ranges of penetration rate.
- Education of funders about the full range of services provided by 2-1-1 beyond “the call.”

**Data sources:**
- 211US Survey of Centers about Impact of Recession, January 2010 (n=117 centers)
- 211US Survey of State Directors about Elements of a State 2-1-1 System, 2011 (n=33 state systems)

**Resources:**
- Elements of an Integrated National 2-1-1 System
TELECOMMUNICATIONS

2-1-1 risks obsolescence if national telecommunications support is not prioritized.

One of the foundations of 2-1-1 service is access through the 2-1-1 dialing code. 2-1-1 is “translated” to a 10-digit or 1-8YY toll free number so that the telecommunications provider may route the abbreviated dialing to the appropriate Center. While most major telecommunications providers provide access to 2-1-1 for their customers, some do not. Here are a few examples of the changing landscape for telecommunications access and providers since 2-1-1 was started.

- More than 25% of American households maintain only a wireless line without a landline, and half of all twenty-somethings have no landline. While just under 75% of households maintain a landline, many report not using their landline for calls (National Center for Health Statistics, 2010).
- A growing number of households access bundled telecommunications packages, which may not have appropriate access or routing to 2-1-1.
- The period of 2-1-1 development and expansion coincided with a period of one of the highest rates of mergers and acquisitions in the telecommunications industry (The National Regulatory Research Institute).
- Next Generation 911 is being piloted in communities across the country. NextGen 911 envisions the full integration of 911 telecommunications such that consumers needing emergency assistance may dial, text or video relay 911 and the “call” is delivered appropriately with location-identifying information to the appropriate 911 center for immediate response. To illustrate, a driver comes upon an accident, takes a photo of the victim and sends a text and photo to the 911 center so they may dispatch the most appropriate personnel and equipment to the accident scene.

Through volunteers, 211US developed its first crude “national routing tables” to provide to certain providers of Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) and Competitive Local Exchange Carriers (CLECs) in 2006. Information about telecommunications and Centers was updated in 2011 with modest financial support from UWW, resulting in a report “2-1-1 Translations and Routing Information Update Project.” This project was completed by volunteers, with support from UWW and AIRS staff. 211US Telecommunications Task Group volunteers completed over 230 calls to verify access and routing in 2012. These projects illustrated challenges:

- 2-1-1 Centers and State Systems, with a few exceptions, do not have capacity in knowledge, skills or resources to maintain information about telecommunications providers that provide service in their geographic service area, and consequently, are not able to ensure proper access to and routing for 2-1-1. To illustrate, an alarming number of 2-1-1 Centers could not locate any records or information about original translations, contracts or persons responsible.
- The 2-1-1 system design and service delivery models within states or among 2-1-1 Centers complicates routing beyond which telecommunications providers are able to accommodate. To illustrate, certain state systems or centers manage their own after-hours or disaster routing, which is incompatible with wireless and VOIP providers requiring a single 10-digit number to direct calls 24/7.
- 211US Telecommunications Task Group volunteers observed variance between the reported information and actual experience (the 2-1-1 listed to serve a specific area was not necessarily the Center that answered the call, which could reflect inaccurate information, improper routing or a problem at the telecommunications provider).

Data Sources:
- 211US Telecommunications Translation and Routing Information Update Project, 2011 (n=50 of 52 state systems; 158 of 248 detailed routing plans)
TECHNOLOGY

Resources must be leveraged so that 2-1-1 keeps pace with changes in technology.

Because of limitations in resources and capacity, 2-1-1 Centers have not kept pace with the rapid changes in technology. While the 2-1-1 field includes some early innovators incorporating new technology, we are challenged by:

- **I&R Database Software** – Multiple information and referral (I&R) software products do not effectively share data despite a decade-long effort by AIRS to implement the XML (eXtensible Markup Language). From the first edition of the XML about 7 years ago, the predominant I&R software share the same “Agency-Site-Program” structure and maintain 95% of the resource data elements in terms of their field structure. This means that they can export/import databases, but it still requires some level of conversion or “cleanup” by the vendor or user. I&R Software are not integrated with other systems in the 2-1-1 Center environment, such as automatic call distribution, call recording, web chat or reporting software. Finally, I&R software do not adequately address the public’s desire for intuitive “Google-style” web-based searches.

- **Vendors** -- 2-1-1 Centers remain dependent on these small-market vendors who—because the I&R market is so small and revenue neutral—are not able to deliver consistent, up-to-date, quality products. That said, the vendor market has changed in that the predominant vendors today were not necessarily predominant ten, or even five, years ago. Some vendors have produced some innovations, including mobile applications.

- **Contact Center Equipment** – Types of equipment used in Centers vary widely. Most 2-1-1 Centers use or are trying to maintain outdated contact center equipment, including telephony, computers and related software. Most Centers do not utilize systems that interoperate with each other, risking a loss of efficiencies, redundancies and reporting capability. Because of the “business model,” or lack thereof, by most host organizations operating 2-1-1, little attention was given to planning, budgeting and scheduling contact center equipment and related software. Most 2-1-1 Centers considered equipment “capital expenses” and did not adequately plan or budget for upgrades, replacement or conversion to cloud-based technologies and related hardware.

- **Software** – Similar to equipment, Centers vary widely in their use of computer, scheduling, call-recording, reporting and other software. The 2-1-1 field has not adequately planned, budgeted or scheduled updates of software and related training. Equally short-sighted, some 2-1-1 Centers are investing in standalone software and phone systems instead of looking to share the investment in state or multi-state systems to achieve economies of scale.

Technology provides tremendous opportunity for increasing the number of service contacts, expanding the channels of access to 2-1-1 services, connecting people more directly into services, improving quality and consistency and increasing cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness of services. As the national organization, 211US is uniquely positioned to provide leadership and to leverage technology resources so that 2-1-1 Centers may focus their limited resources on quality service.

Resources:
POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

The foreseeable political and economic climate demands a different approach than our approach during the formative years of 2-1-1.

The short 2-1-1 history is rich with support from state and national policy makers. From the first federal legislation in 1999 and petition to the FCC, 2-1-1 enjoyed broad bi-partisan support. The “Calling for 2-1-1 Act,” a bill that would have provided $150 million in matching grants, was historic in its bi-partisan support over multiple sessions of Congress. The 2010 effort resulted in an historic 253 House and 61 Senate co-sponsors. At least ten states enacted legislation supporting 2-1-1, 24 state Public Service/Utility Commissions issued orders on 2-1-1, and three states authorized 2-1-1 through executive order. At least 19 states have received 2-1-1 funding through state government.

In 2010, the Calling for 2-1-1 Act was a victim of the political and economic environment that remains with us today. Congress, and many state legislatures, has no appetite to fund “new programs.” The mounting deficits at the federal level make new federal funding unrealistic for the foreseeable future. Although the support for 2-1-1 has consistently crossed party lines, a small number of social conservatives have linked 2-1-1 with specific services, effectively closing opportunities for general 2-1-1 support.

211US, UWW and AIRS leaders each have come to accept that a stand-alone legislative effort to provide federal funding for 2-1-1 is not tenable nor practical at this time. 211US and its advocacy partners support a pragmatic, focused approach to federal and state public policy. 211US seeks to increase awareness among federal and state policymakers.

During this time of austere budgets and/or severe cuts, 211US foresees viable, productive opportunities to leverage existing state and federal resources in more effective ways, such as using 2-1-1 in lieu of duplicative databases and 1-800 hotlines. 211US sees opportunities to expand underutilized service lines, such as 2-1-1 portal, resource database, pre-screening for services, intake and case assistance.

The economic climate perpetuates increased demand for 2-1-1 services with decreased funding. This occurs at the same time there is significant political ambivalence towards the very role of human services. 2-1-1 needs to transcend this pattern with creative approaches to meeting the information and referral needs of the future.

Data Sources:
• Calling for 2-1-1 Act, S.211 and H.R.211, 2010
• Funding and Legislation Summary, 2006, updated 2010
EXPECTATIONS

Consumers and funders expect multi-channel, 24-hour, high quality service that provides cost-effective results.

Consumers expect to be able to get information about help 24 hours a day through multi-channel access: landlines; cell phones; texting; e-mail; web chat; online resource databases geared to set searches that anticipate people’s most common needs. Once thought of as a luxury item, the wireless phone has become a universally available tool for low-income individuals, with texting or limited calling plans accessible to most low-income individuals. Fully 92% of low-income individuals now have access to telephone service (FCC, 2011). Leaders in information and referral are simply not keeping up with consumer expectations for access and types of services.

Funders expect levels of quality service, cost-efficiency, cost-effectiveness and measurable outcomes. In the last five years, 211US has observed at least 17 changes in 2-1-1 Center providers, as the primary funder or authorized entity sought a different 2-1-1 Center provider. Two state 2-1-1 systems (NJ and OK) transitioned to new models with fewer Centers in order to meet consumer and funder expectations. This shift is also occurring in other systems, such as the Child Care Resource and Referral System. We can learn from their successes and stumbles.

Similar to state and federal governments, traditional funders of 2-1-1 have shifted their focus and expect more than a “good idea” to secure their limited funding. Corporate funders align their marketing, corporate responsibility and foundation funding along their business objectives. Philanthropic funders align their dollars with strategic objectives. United Ways increasingly expect activities and outcomes aligned with their strategic objectives in Education, Income and Health.

In order to meet the needs of our current and future clients and to take full advantage of emerging funding opportunities, 2-1-1 must provide a multi-channel, 24 hour, high-quality service that provides cost-effective results with measurable outcomes.
HUMAN SERVICES

Changes in the human service delivery system demand a responsive 2-1-1 system with clear decision-making role and authority at the national and state levels.

The number of nonprofit organizations remains high, with an estimated 1.5 million nonprofits in the United States, down about 7% from the prior year (IRS, 2011 data book). Simultaneously, the eligibility criteria, types of services and depth of service provided is rapidly changing.

Human service delivery is evolving to reflect the national debate about the role of government in providing human services. Funding is constricted or limited to certain populations who are deemed “deserving” of services. For example, many states enacted legislative or administrative changes that limit access to eligibility benefits such as unemployment insurance (10 states in 2011). A variety of eligibility programs now exclude undocumented immigrants (22 states). These changes place strains on the 2-1-1 system in three important ways: 1) 2-1-1s must update their databases to reflect frequent changes in eligibility; 2) calls may take longer in explaining to callers new eligibility criteria or processes; and 3) these calls may result in increased “unmet needs” as no resource is found in the community to meet the need. Growing “unmet needs” creates additional strain on the 2-1-1 system and in local communities.

211US anticipates similar effects in the many unknowns related to implementation of the Affordability Care Act, federal sequestration and cuts related to uncertain budgets at the state and local levels.

There is an increasing demand for 2-1-1 to play a role beyond “providing information and referrals.” A growing number of funders, human service coalitions and communities are turning to 2-1-1 to play a role in pre-screening, intake, case assistance and follow-up. The 2-1-1 network was among the first observers of the economic crisis beginning in 2007. 2-1-1 Centers began recording increasing numbers of calls related to foreclosures. As the recession deepened, 2-1-1s observed skyrocketing calls, increased needs, calls from people who had never asked for help before and a constriction in services. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), or “stimulus” funding, provided additional resources in communities such as the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing, expanded Low Income Heat and Energy Assistance Program and Weatherization programs. The rapid expansion of these programs placed burdens on the state agencies administering these programs, and consequently, some state agencies turned to 2-1-1 to help deliver these programs. These experiences demonstrated the unique role for 2-1-1 in promotion, pre-screening and providing case assistance.

These experiences underscored the lack of capacity for 2-1-1 to respond at a national or state level without some changes in the model, quality and governance structure. As government devolution drives certain programmatic decisions from the federal government to states or local communities, 2-1-1 may be required to be more flexible to respond to state and local changes in human service delivery. Concurrently, globalization requires a level of consistency and national voice that is best served by a clear national authority and role.

211US is challenged by the question of “who is authorized to speak for or make decisions for 2-1-1 at the national level.” It is for these reasons that 211US envisions a strong funded national voice for 2-1-1 in order to advance the opportunities discussed in the pages that follow.
211US IMPORTANCE AND IMPACT ON THE NATIONAL SYSTEM

Throughout the brief history of the 2-1-1 movement, there has always been a collaborative voice to represent 2-1-1 in a national context. Since 2003, there have been iterations of a sort of “2-1-1 leadership council” that had met independently of United Way Worldwide (UWW) and the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS). Nonetheless, there is an expressed, identified need to further shepherd and accelerate the work of 2-1-1 across the country through an independent body that can focus on the resource development and coordination required to do that work.

Resulting from a series of formal discussions in 2006, 211US (www.211US.org) was created as a single national body, and formalized through Memoranda of Understanding between AIRS and UWW (the primary founding and legacy partners), with support from the State 2-1-1 Directors group and the individual 2-1-1 services. The 211US Steering Committee was selected through a formal nominations and election process beginning in 2006.

The mission for 211US as originally established is to ensure that 2-1-1 is Excellent, Everywhere and Always. Since the first meetings, we have defined our work in these terms.

**Excellent** means that each 2-1-1 state system and each individual service provider is both first-class and cost effective in everything they do in accordance with national standards of I&R. It means that although individual 2-1-1 services reflect different communities and are not homogenous in their nature, everyone contacting a 2-1-1 should receive the same consistent and caring service.

**Everywhere** means that 2-1-1 will be available to 100% of the population no matter where they live or which telecommunication device they prefer to access information. Everywhere assumes the capacity to respond effectively to the true potential demand within each community.

**Always** means 2-1-1 will be available 24/7/365 whenever people need to access services, and the 2-1-1 service is a permanent part of the human services landscape and national consciousness.

The overarching role of the committee has always been to assist in the continuation and/or creation of strong state 2-1-1 systems and link them together into a unified and integrated national system. 211US recognizes that the ability to transform 2-1-1 into a powerful, cohesive social force rests primarily with these state level providers. It is further recognized that, while many state systems operate at or near efficient, competent levels, there remains much work to be done.

211US now faces a critical point in time with regard to asserting a certain level of authority and coordination for the general direction and efficacy of the national 2-1-1 system, to ensure its sustainability and effectiveness for the foreseeable future. For example, the practical support via a formalized national level technology architecture would continue to bolster the system where it is now effective and to assist in the building and transformation of those states and 2-1-1 entities which are struggling to reach a proficient and sustainable level of service to their communities.
CORE OPERATIONS

211US limits its work to those functions that are most effectively, or by sheer necessity, managed or performed at the national level. Functions that are, by necessity, managed at the national level include: public policy advocacy on federal legislation; administrative actions and telecommunications that are regulated by the FCC such as wireless, Voice over Internet Protocol and emerging technologies; nationwide service line opportunities such as Bank of America, the Nurse Triage project of the Centers for Disease Control or implementation of navigators by Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services. Functions that 211US agrees are managed most cost effectively at the national level include: 2-1-1 branding and marketing; certain shared services; disaster planning and coordination for catastrophic disasters; and general level quality standards and protocols. 211US also feels strongly that national-level focus and collaboration are critical components to developing a broad scope and substantial depth of revenue opportunities, which would contribute to a more sustainable path for the system as a whole.

CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK AND COLLABORATION

The current charge of the 211US Steering Committee is to oversee the development and coordination of the national 2-1-1 system and those responsibilities that are best accomplished within a national framework. The group consists of volunteers drawn from across the 2-1-1 movement, together with staff support from UWW and AIRS. It engages in committee work on a number of projects that involves the participation of a still broader group of 2-1-1 volunteers. 211US strives to be inclusive of all the elements impacting the 2-1-1 movement, including the state entities, the State 211 Directors group, non-2-1-1 information and referral agencies, in addition to enlisting participation across all ten FEMA regions throughout the country.

One of the primary partners for 211US in the ongoing formation of the national system is the State 211 Directors group. This group is comprised of the network of individuals who are employed or designated to be the primary point of contact for the 2-1-1 network in a given state. Of the 50 states, 36 employ at least one staff member or consultant whose responsibility involves coordinating or overseeing 2-1-1 in the state. An additional 8 states have a formal entity and process for selecting their “state 211 director designee,” typically a volunteer from the authorized 2-1-1 entity (i.e. AIRS affiliate or State UW association).

Since 2006, 211US and the State 211 Directors have met face-to-face through an additional day at the AIRS Conference each year, and monthly via conference calls and online meetings. 211US organizes its work through Task Groups, which include scores of individuals from within the field and outside experts. Each year, an annual work plan is developed, and progress along the plan is reviewed regularly. Information is shared through the various 2-1-1 lists and State 211 Directors group, providing a level of accountability and transparency for the field.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF CURRENT 211US STRUCTURE

211US has achieved much despite the fact that there are only a group of approximately 100 volunteers and no paid staff dedicated to represent the national 2-1-1 system.

Public Policy
• A record number of co-sponsors on the Calling for 2-1-1 Act in 2010, working with key partners in UWW, AIRS and State 211 Directors;
• Key filings on public policy matters before the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Communications Commission, Department of Housing and Urban Development, etc.; and
• Relationship development with key federal agencies.
Quality
• Three years of mystery shopper calls to over 91% of all active 2-1-1 Centers in the U.S. and outcome reports and webinars, resulting in voluntary improvements in training, call-handling and processes;
• Annual “Big Count” of calls and inquirer needs; and
• Identification and sharing of best practices.

Technology
• A telecommunications routing table for Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and certain Competitive Local Exchange Carriers (CLEC) providers;
• Web site and information update for the national system; and
• Concept of Operations for Disaster Data Management System.

Leadership and Collaboration
• Sponsoring the “2-1-1 track” at the annual AIRS Conference;
• Regular monthly meetings with State 211 Directors group since 2005;
• Established Memorandum of Understanding between 211US and 40 states affirming a commitment to national standards;
• Formal nomination and election process for 211US Steering Committee, with two face-to-face meetings yearly, and monthly meetings to advance an annual work plan;
• 2-1-1 key contacts registry and multiple surveys;
• 211US and 211.org website maintenance;
• Coordination of system-wide disaster response for catastrophic disaster;
• Annual work plans with reports to the field on progress;
• Regular communications with internal and external audiences; and
• Relationship building – with Federal and national nonprofit agencies.

RESOURCES

The work of 211US has been supported by legacy partners AIRS and United Way Worldwide primarily through internal staff support (Clive Jones at AIRS and staff at United Way Worldwide). The 211US Steering Committee members have contributed through their organizations, and as individual cash contributors, to the financial resources needed to support the program work. This is in addition to the direct financial costs of hosting conference calls, webinars, as well as travel, hotel and other meeting costs.

Since the first formal election of 211US Steering Committee, the official “office” for 211US was located at United Way Worldwide, 701N. Fairfax, Alexandria, VA 22314. Individual organizations of the Steering Committee members have managed limited cash resources for meeting expenses, legal fees and administration.

MOVING FORWARD

With the context of this section in mind, the remainder of this document begins to lay out the primary and critical opportunities that the 211US Steering Committee strongly agrees are necessary to move the work of the 2-1-1 system forward and lay the foundation for a sustainable, productive future. Since 2006, 211US has studied and evaluated many iterations of what a formal 211US structure may look like and how it might work with partners and evolve over time.

During 2013, we intend communications with internal and external audiences to move forward in transitioning 2-1-1 for a sustainable future. The opportunities in the next section outline the areas of work for our immediate future. We invite comments on the plan, and we welcome new volunteers to our 211US Task Groups.

Data Sources:
• Minutes from 211US in-person meetings and conference calls, 2006-2012
• Survey of the 2-1-1 field about creation of 211US, 2009
TRANSITIONING 2-1-1 FOR THE FUTURE AND OUR OPPORTUNITIES

The transition from the current state to the envisioned state will require multiple simultaneous approaches by 211US and its partners, in order to achieve a sustainable system:

- Development of strategic relationships with partners that have the ability to promote public awareness, effective use and sustainability of 2-1-1; including new revenue-sharing models;
- Adoption of new strategies in database, technology and telecommunications to improve access to and continuity of service, and interoperability within the 2-1-1 network as a national system;
- Regulatory or legislative actions at the national and state levels that result in policies and funding for universal access to 2-1-1 with recognition similar to 911;
- Continued improvements in quality and consistency with refinement of certain “specialized service lines” in order to support the 2-1-1 service effectively;
- Implementation of a comprehensive Strategic Communications Plan that includes internal and external communications and brand management that results in increased awareness, understanding and proper use of 2-1-1;
- Implementation of a national disaster infrastructure for information and referral which supports the 2-1-1 network in their preparedness, response and recovery activities;
- Transition to more effective models for effective and efficient 2-1-1 service where efforts are driven by mission, quality service and relationships for a sustainable future; and
- Formalization of 211US to provide a clear national voice for 2-1-1, maintain, enhance its existing committed partnerships and provide a structure for growth in realizing the vision for 2-1-1 to be excellent, everywhere and always.

To expedite this transition, we must fully realize and/or create opportunities on the horizon. The opportunities outlined on the following pages will support a new model for the envisioned 2-1-1 system.
PARTNERSHIPS

Goal: 2-1-1 envisions strategic relationships with partners that have the ability to promote public awareness, effective use and sustainability of 2-1-1.

211US will engage in partnerships that result in the following outcomes:

• Improved service for consumers, with less “runaround” with duplicative 1-800 numbers, databases and outreach efforts;
• Government contracts to maximize public resources;
• Fee-for-service business development opportunities;
• New philanthropic and corporate funding to launch and evaluate innovations;
• Increased and appropriate media exposure and public awareness; and
• Peer-reviewed, academic research that explores all aspects of 2-1-1 role in community information and referral and human service needs.

211US envisions a range of partnerships at the national level, expanding on the relationships with its founding organizations of Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) and United Way Worldwide (UWW). 211US envisions strengthened or new relationships with government, national nonprofit organizations, corporations and research institutions.

First and foremost, 211US seeks to retain the deepest level of relationships with its founding and legacy partners of AIRS and UWW. 211US recognizes that AIRS and UWW are critical to success of 2-1-1 in whatever way it may grow or evolve in the future. AIRS provides the foundation for quality and professional membership affiliation for individual 2-1-1 Centers. UWW provides leadership, national credibility and the strength of the United Way brand. Both partners have provided invaluable staff support for 211US.

United Way Council of States (COS) is the association of statewide United Way associations. While many have only small staffs, most members of COS have consistently provided substantial support to 2-1-1. This includes organizational, governance, financial and public policy support. Where 2-1-1 has been supported by state funding or contracts, most often the state UW organization has been involved.

National nonprofit organizations, whether membership associations, service providers or funders, are uniquely positioned to advance quality and consistency in 2-1-1 services across the country. 211US seeks to strengthen existing and build new relationships. 211US seeks opportunities to partner with nonprofit organizations in new, mutually beneficial ways. 211US seeks new regional and national funders to support critical innovations in the field.

Corporations look to partner with 2-1-1 when activities or outcomes align with business opportunities or objectives. For example, Wal-Mart supports 2-1-1 in many communities in its work to link low-wage workers to eligibility benefits or Earned Income Tax Assistance (EITC) through Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) programs. Bank of America contracted to utilize the 2-1-1 infrastructure to connect distressed homeowners in the foreclosure process with access to community resources.
Federal government agencies such as FEMA, HUD, IRS and the CDC already have relationships with 2-1-1, promoting 2-1-1 service during times of disaster or pandemics like H1N1 and to access homeless services, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and the Earned Income Tax Credit. 211US seeks to formalize and expand these relationships so that the 2-1-1 role is clearly defined and compensated commensurately.

A growing number of research institutions are interested in partnering with 2-1-1 for a range of opportunities. Washington University researchers partnered with the 2-1-1 in St. Louis for a multi-year cancer research study to test a concept of “health coaches.” This followed a prior prevalence study by Washington University. Texas A&M has published numerous studies about disaster resources, needs and trends using 2-1-1 data. Several universities have explored cost-benefit studies related to human services access, including University of Washington at Seattle and University of Nebraska. Indiana University proposed a study to the National Science Foundation to test artificial intelligence in gathering community information for use in 2-1-1. Most recently, researchers collaborated on an entire issue of the American Journal of Preventative Medicine with twenty-one (21) articles using 2-1-1 data (Vol. 43, No. 6, December 2012).

WORKING WITH PARTNERS DIFFERENTLY

211US envisions an approach that is both strategic and opportunistic in its work with partners. While many organizations seek to partner with 2-1-1 because of the benefits that 2-1-1 offers their organizations, 211US recognizes the need to pursue opportunities that are mutually beneficial. Additionally, 211US recognizes the tensions between being entrepreneurial and pushing the boundaries of what most in the field consider to be “in scope” for 2-1-1. 211US recognizes the various ethical and sustainability questions to be addressed before engaging in partnership opportunities and has developed principles and a structure to evaluate such opportunities.

Resources:
- 211US Partnership Opportunity Template
- 211US Principles for Contracting and Opportunities
DATABASE, TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND OTHER TECHNOLOGIES

Goal: All Americans are able to be connected to help through any device, everywhere. 2-1-1 has the capacity to respond effectively and efficiently to the true demand within each community using appropriate tools. 2-1-1 will be an integrated national system.

2-1-1 should be able to achieve the following outcomes:
• adapt new strategies in database, telecommunications and other technologies and
• improve access to and continuity of service, interoperability within the 2-1-1 network.

Database, telecommunications and technology offer perhaps the greatest opportunities for moving the nationwide 2-1-1 system forward. The key barrier is that of limited or non-existent resources. Barriers related to system design, regulatory framework and leadership authority, could be overcome with substantial infusion of resources, which could in turn have the effect of incentivizing desired changes, if designed properly within a credible leadership structure to facilitate and support them.

211US has considered emerging telecommunications services such as texting, web chat, click to talk and more. Texting provides opportunities for 2-1-1 follow-up and disaster response. While there are limited examples of early innovators, Centers and Systems are limited in their ability to respond to these opportunities effectively.

211US has prioritized telecommunications access and routing as a core function best coordinated at the national level. Surveys of the 2-1-1 field demonstrate a strong desire for 211US assistance with 2-1-1 telecommunications, with field recommendations for transparency and accountability in activities and inclusion in the process.

Telecommunications access, routing and integration are multi-dimensional in their applications and in the inherent barriers to achieving the vision of universal access by any device, routed properly to the correct center and integrated among systems. Later in the document, we discuss the regulatory environment and the opportunities for policy action.

The next page offers a chart of project opportunities which, if funded and properly executed on behalf of the national system, could drive the system toward the desired outcomes of excellence, universal access, higher quality and sustainability. 211US has prioritized these specific projects because they have the power to shape the future of 2-1-1 by increasing access to the community via proper routing of connections, quality and consistency of 2-1-1 service delivery, cost-efficiency, cost-effectiveness and capacity for reporting in or near real-time.
### Area | Projects and Strategies | Outcomes
--- | --- | ---
**Database** | DDMS - Complete the Disaster Data Management Information Systems project initiated with DHS/FEMA Funding. | Preparedness for next large disaster, including database and expanded call-taking capacity.  
I&R Software assessment and review to establish minimum requirements, standards for enhancement and development to meet national needs. | Minimum requirements for vendors.  
National Web Portal for linkages to individual 2-1-1 resource databases. | Consumers and professionals have universal access to web-based quality information about human services.  
National Data Aggregation Tool (included is DDMS) for automating "big count" data about needs in a or near real-time basis. Ideally, this tool will allow 2-1-1 Centers to report with greatest specificity (drill down to the lowest level) and to be able to aggregate (roll-up in terms of various sectors) in order to be able to analyze demand for human services at the level of most specificity. | Real-time nationwide data reports.

**Telecommunications** | National telephony routing system for use in disasters  
National telephony routing system for use in day-to-day service. | Efficient and effective use of human resources and consistent quality performance metrics.  
Centrally managed 2-1-1 translations and routing for all FCC-regulated telecommunications, and possibly state-regulated carriers, in order to achieve greater cost-efficiencies, cost-effectiveness and uninterrupted services in rapidly changing environment. Enable smaller 2-1-1s affordable access to the same technology and features available to larger centers on more advanced call management platforms. | Calls are properly routed, tracked, reported and assessed for quality.  
Centrally managed 2-1-1 Text short messaging code for uniform access code and experience nationwide. | Brand consistency.  
Formalized relationship with Relay, including video relay, to improve access for persons who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired. | Improved accessibility.  
Formalized relationships with N11s and telecommunications providers to leverage the telecommunications infrastructure developed for Next Generation 911 to increase access, proper routing and interoperability among N11s. | Leverage work of partners to increase interoperability and access.

**Other Technologies** | Standards, protocols and user guides for a mobile 2-1-1 application, chat, social media and video conferencing. | New consumers are reached through existing and/or emerging technologies other than telephony.  
First level evaluation of the pilot projects above. | Evidence-based research to guide future policies and funding.

211US encourages local 2-1-1 Centers to pursue innovative use of technology. In addition to those listed above, future opportunities abound in the areas of database, telecommunications and technology, such as a “2-1-1 application” on smart phones, 2-1-1 text for other I&R-related purposes, micro-payments related to searches, translating the sophisticated structure of the AIRS Taxonomy into simple, public searches directly relevant to the expressed needs of individuals and other emerging technologies. Each opportunity should be evaluated by its potential impact on advancing the national system goals, as well as the 211US guiding principles.

**Resources:**  
• 211US Principles for Technology and Vendor Relationships, 2010  
• 211US Telecommunications Translations and Routing Information Update Project, 2011  
• Concept of Operations, Disaster Data Management Information Systems, 2011
PUBLIC POLICY AT THE NATIONAL AND STATE LEVELS

Goal: Federal and state policies and funding will support 2-1-1 as the central access point to information and referral for health and human services. Public policy will reflect shared goal of universal access to and support for 2-1-1 similar to 911.

By the nature of the three-digit abbreviated dialing code, 2-1-1 is authorized and regulated by multiple levels of state and federal agencies. Telecommunications technology, the telecommunications regulatory environment and political support for human services have changed dramatically since the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Order in 2000. The N11 regulatory environment, upon which 2-1-1 was initially designed, simply has not kept pace with technology or with the deregulatory changes that have occurred at the federal and state levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N11</th>
<th>Public-benefit N11s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>211</td>
<td>Noncommercial community information and referral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>311</td>
<td>Non-emergency city services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>511</td>
<td>Traffic / transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>711</td>
<td>Access for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Speech-impaired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>811</td>
<td>Underground utility location</td>
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<tr>
<td>911</td>
<td>Emergency</td>
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There is a clear public interest role in ensuring access, routing and interoperability for 2-1-1. The current regulatory environment may unintentionally limit access to 2-1-1 by not requiring telecommunications providers to enable 2-1-1 on wireless, Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and emerging telecommunications. The current patchwork of regulations among states limits the ability to provide cost-efficiencies by sharing of the same N11 technology backbone or information about calls or callers. Telecommunications deregulation, in the interest of spurring technological investments and innovations, may have unintentionally weakened the appetite and capacity for state and federal regulators to ensure 2-1-1 (and other N11s) is enabled and achieving its purpose.

As Next Generation 911 is implemented around the country, local, state and federal policymakers will evaluate the technology and funding mechanisms for 911 in its critical role in emergency response. These initiatives must include 2-1-1, as it is most similar to 911 in functionality and coverage in contrast with other public-benefit N11s (311, 511, 711 and 811). As has been discussed within the N11/8XX Essential Services Interoperability Council (NESIC) since 2008, the underlying technology backbone and innovations provide opportunities for increased cost-efficiencies and increased interoperability of transferring calls and information between N11s. As states face funding crises in 911, they are re-evaluating the types and allowable expenses of 911 surcharges. In many states, legislative efforts are underway to rebalance surcharges associated with landline, wireless, pre-paid and others to reflect the changing makeup of access lines. Finally, federal and state Universal Service Funds will be re-evaluated and reconstituted in the coming years to reflect the changes in technology, access and needs for subsidy. 2-1-1 should be a part of these conversations and initiatives.
In this time of budget austerity, there is a clear public interest role in maximizing limited government resources dedicated to human services and information and referral. In spite of fiscal constraints, local, state and federal governments continue to duplicate efforts with too many 1-800 numbers, referral databases, services and ineffective outreach programs. 2-1-1 can increase government efficiency with its proven track record of success. Now is the time that federal and state agencies can shift existing funds to 2-1-1 for increased effectiveness and streamlined access to services.

Following is a listing of project ideas and outcomes that fall into two categories, which are detailed in the chart on the following page:

- Telecommunications - ideas to achieve the objectives of universal access, routing to the correct centers, interoperability with 911 and other critical N11s, as well as cost-effective and cost-efficient implementation of technologies that will enable them, and
- Human Services - ideas to achieve the objectives of a sustainable partnership between 2-1-1 and state and federal governments so that all private and public resources are maximized.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Convene a “2-1-1 telecommunications summit” with landline, wireless,</td>
<td>Universal 2-1-1 access and routing to appropriate Centers.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>VoIP and other telecommunications carriers and vendors to share</td>
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<td></td>
<td>information, encourage voluntary compliance with FCC and state Public</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Utility Commission (PUC) orders and explore opportunities to increase</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>access, proper routing and interoperability. If voluntary compliance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>does not yield improved access and routing, explore new petition with</td>
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<td></td>
<td>FCC and model petitions for state PUCs/Public Service Commissions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(PSCs).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Analyze laws and regulations both at the federal level and on a state-</td>
<td>Development of a policy agenda.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>by-state basis that impact 2-1-1. Identify elements of draft legislation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>that would advance 2-1-1 at the state and federal levels.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Re-energize efforts with NESIC and/or related partners to explore</td>
<td>N11 interoperability.</td>
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<td>opportunities for interoperability among N11s and increased cost</td>
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<td></td>
<td>efficiencies from using a shared technology backbone.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Convene researchers to analyze patchwork of regulations affecting</td>
<td>Externally validated understanding of legal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2-1-1 and the ability to respond to national contractual opportunities.</td>
<td>constraints and opportunities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Prioritize efforts to educate and lobby state and federal policymakers</td>
<td>Universal access: any device, everywhere.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>about opportunities to ensure universal access to 2-1-1.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seek administrative or legislative action to authorize 2-1-1 as an</td>
<td>Increased funding and strengthened relationships.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>allowable use of existing public funds for leveraging a public-private</td>
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<td></td>
<td>partnership.</td>
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<td>For all publicly and philanthropically funded initiatives, utilize</td>
<td>More effective information and referral (I&amp;R).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2-1-1 as the central source of information and referral for human</td>
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<td>services and in lieu of duplicative resource databases and toll-free</td>
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<td>hotlines, such as U.S. Dept. of Agriculture (USDA) summer food, disaster</td>
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<td>response and recovery, maternal and child health I&amp;R.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>As appropriate, utilize 2-1-1 as the portal, pre-screening and intake</td>
<td>More effective and efficient entry into service.</td>
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<td>for publicly funded services, such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Program (SNAP), Low Income Heating Assistance Program (LIHEAP),</td>
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<td>healthcare exchange navigation. Standardize program and funding model</td>
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<td></td>
<td>across system.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Convene researchers to analyze service models and cost-benefit of 2-1-1</td>
<td>Demonstrated cost-benefit and identification of new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>serving as the central access point to health and human services.</td>
<td>models to provide I&amp;R.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engage researchers with every new opportunity where 2-1-1 plays a role</td>
<td>Discovery of new models of human service delivery.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in human service delivery.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resources:
- 211US Public Policy Primer, 2010
- Funding and Legislation Summary, 2006, 2010
QUALITY ASSURANCE AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Goal: Consumers and stakeholders will have a quality experience with 2-1-1 information and referral through multiple channels of access. Personal interaction, detailed human services data and service quality of the interaction with the 2-1-1 service are what set 2-1-1 apart from other services.

211US will continue to improve quality and to solidify the 2-1-1 network’s position as the premier community information and referral service. 211US projects will result in higher quality and improved service delivery and fall into four categories, which are detailed in the chart on the following page:

- **Realization of 2-1-1 Service Lines** – projects designed to achieve the objectives of increased consistency and financial support for core 2-1-1 service and emerging service lines;
- **Internal quality assurance measures** – continuation and expansion of mystery caller projects and consistent performance indicators for emerging channels of access;
- **Working with AIRS** - ideas to formalize the 211US role and influence in the AIRS structure and ideas to ensure that AIRS Standards and Accreditation processes are responsive and reliable indicators of quality for 2-1-1; and
- **Working with Funders** – ideas to ensure compliance with Standards and participation in system resource database, referrals and reporting are conditions for public and private funds.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Realization of 2-1-1 service lines</td>
<td>Refine and standardize the definitions, quality performance indicators and cost models for service lines within 2-1-1 service delivery. Ensure 2-1-1 Centers understand and adopt these definitions, indicators and models. Identify and pursue funding sources that align with specialized service lines to effectively support the service line and to help subsidize the 2-1-1 service, as defined in the FCC designation.</td>
<td>Increased consistency in service and reporting. Increased funding support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal quality assurance measures</td>
<td>Continue and expand mystery caller projects, with individual and aggregated reports and recommendations for improvements to Centers and key stakeholders. Explore opportunities to fund this as a single, national project. Though the national mystery calling project is only one of the quality assurance vital signs, every 2-1-1 should have board members and stakeholders making significant numbers of mystery calls a year to rate their service. Develop performance indicators and reporting mechanisms around emerging channels of access, including web search, web chat, e-mail, text and auto-attendant interaction.</td>
<td>Increased understanding and demonstration of quality. Increased consistency and adoption of new channels of access.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with AIRS</td>
<td>Formalize role and position with AIRS to ensure that training, conferences, Standards, Certifications and Accreditation keep up with the needs of 2-1-1. A formal role and position might be similar to those enjoyed by the aging I&amp;R and military I&amp;R fields (seats on the board, track at AIRS conference). Expand 211US leadership such that adequate numbers of leaders within 2-1-1 are available to serve in leadership roles in 211US Steering Committee and on the AIRS Board. Work with AIRS to strengthen the Accreditation application and renewal process so that Accreditation is the most reliable validation of quality. Work with AIRS to review and revise Accreditation processes to enable “system” design. Currently, most 2-1-1 Centers are reviewed and accredited as single, stand-alone Centers. The AIRS Accreditation does not easily or intuitively accommodate the multi-agency delivery system that a new 2-1-1 system might require. The new model may require changes for multi-agency collaborations with shared or divided I&amp;R functions (such as call-handling, text handling and database maintenance) to be accredited through a single accreditation.</td>
<td>Formal role within AIRS structure. Increased influence in AIRS structure. Accreditation will be the most reliable seal of quality. Accreditation process that recognizes new models for 2-1-1 delivery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with funders</td>
<td>Require AIRS accreditation as a condition for receipt of public and private funds. Where not required, clearly demonstrate that commensurate standards and quality assurance measures are in place. Incentivize participation in projects that share resource database, referrals and outcome data and reporting.</td>
<td>Increased numbers of Accredited Centers. 2-1-1 system development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resources:
- www.airs.org
- Mystery Caller Project materials
COMMUNICATIONS

Goal: Partners and the public recognize and understand the value of 2-1-1 and use it appropriately to access community resources. 2-1-1 becomes as universal and ubiquitous as 911. 211US is a trusted leader and recognized as the voice for 2-1-1 nationally with key funders and partners. 211US will work to develop a comprehensive National Strategic 2-1-1 Communications Plan to focus in three areas:

- **Communications with Internal Audiences** – efforts to increase awareness of 211US activities and confidence in 211US, as well as to communicate ways for the 2-1-1 field and key internal stakeholders to engage in the work plan and opportunities;
- **Communications with External Audiences** – efforts to increase public awareness and appropriate use of 2-1-1, that result in appropriate penetration rates to ensure consumers’ needs are being met; and
- **Brand management** – efforts to increase consistency of 2-1-1 brand identity and protection of the “2-1-1 brand” as a quality service differentiated from others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Communications</strong></td>
<td>Develop a comprehensive approach to internal communications within the 2-1-1 field and key stakeholders, including regular messages on listservs and regular updates on 211.org and 211US.org websites.</td>
<td>Increased awareness, confidence and engagement in 211US.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communicate availability of opportunities for funding, service partnerships, etc. with 2-1-1 providers.</td>
<td>Increased funding and in-kind support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External Communications</strong></td>
<td>Develop comprehensive National Strategic 2-1-1 Communications Plan, including a communications toolkit with a community impact template and ready-to-use content for local Centers. Increase public awareness of 2-1-1 services through various strategies, with a focus on strategies that result in increased awareness and appropriate penetration rates, with minimal call spikes. Partner with United Way Worldwide (UWW) and/or the Ad Council on Public Service Announcement (PSA) campaign. Address the issue of suppressed and unanswered demand.</td>
<td>Increased public awareness and appropriate utilization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promote understanding of the impact of 2-1-1 on communities, including distribution of research, reports about resources, needs and gaps in services and outcome data. Develop and distribute newsletter.</td>
<td>Increased understanding of 2-1-1 value.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brand Management</strong></td>
<td>Renew the logo agreements for the 2-1-1 logo and work with 2-1-1 Centers that are not currently using it to at least co-brand with it.</td>
<td>Increased brand consistency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explore intellectual property and brand protections to limit use of 2-1-1 by those who meet certain standards and principles of 211US.</td>
<td>Brand protection.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NATIONAL DISASTER RESPONSE INFRASTRUCTURE

Goal: 2-1-1s will be engaged effectively and supported in their preparedness, response and recovery activities. The 2-1-1 network will support individual 2-1-1s affected by catastrophic disasters.

2-1-1 often operates in the shadows for its routine day-to-day work and is thrust into the spotlight during disasters. 2-1-1 plays many roles in addition to traditional information and referral during all phases of disasters. These include rumor control, resource coordination, emergency evacuation and disability registrations, recording of damage assessments, crisis counseling, volunteer registry or placement, donations management and more. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and state emergency management agencies recognize the role and value of 2-1-1 in disasters. There are formal roles for 2-1-1 in about one third of the states, as evidenced by Memorandum of Understanding, while at least half of the states have informal relationships (Disaster Response Survey, Oct. 2010).

The following actions should be completed in order to ensure that 2-1-1 remains a viable and reliable component of the disaster preparedness, response and recovery cycle:

• Complete the Disaster Data Management System and Warm Center structure, as was initiated with a Department of Homeland Security grant and referenced on page 30.
• Work with United Way Worldwide to ensure that a full-time disaster services position is maintained to help coordinate support for 2-1-1 Centers during disasters.
• Work with UWW Council of States and UWW Public Policy Team to help embed 2-1-1 in state emergency management plans in a way that will ensure eligibility for FEMA reimbursement during times of disasters. Develop model templates for 2-1-1 role in state Emergency Operations Center (EOC) plan and activation levels.
• Strengthen relationships with National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), FEMA and national partners, increasing 2-1-1 presence and understanding.
• Build relationships among 2-1-1 Centers and Systems within FEMA regions. Conduct annual exercises in areas most susceptible to disasters.
• Advocate for a dedicated federal funding mechanism that ensures 2-1-1 readiness, capacity and interoperability for all phases of disaster.
TRANSITION TO MORE EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS

Goal: 2-1-1 will be a model for effective and efficient service in connecting people to services. Transition efforts will be driven by mission, quality service and relationships for a sustainable future.

211US recognizes that important and difficult changes are necessary to achieve the vision. The reality is that we would not have designed our current system with 243 independent, disconnected 2-1-1 centers if we were to design it today. Even within state systems where it works well within a state, there are issues of service delivery along state lines. As discussed in prior sections, new models will include adoption of new strategies in database, technology and telecommunications to improve access to and continuity of service, interoperability within the 2-1-1 network and with key partners, quality and speed of reporting.

By focusing on the end goals, new models will emerge that include:

• Shared services such as centrally managed telecommunications access and routing, telephony and software, technology management, quality assurance evaluation;
• Shifts in service delivery models which may include fewer answering hubs and yet more answering and data points, with possible consolidations along functions;
• Full realization of the potential within certain “service lines” in order to effectively support each line of business and to help subsidize the 2-1-1 service, as defined in the FCC designation; and
• Revenue-sharing models when working with partners such as United Way Worldwide, Alliance of Information and Referral Systems or United Way Council of States.

Before moving forward with transition, we must incorporate lessons learned within recent 2-1-1 and Child Care Resource and Referral systems. Key lessons from the transitions in Oklahoma, New Jersey and Indiana include:

• Cost-efficiencies should not be the exclusive driver of transition to consolidated functions. Rather, transitions should be guided by fundamental missions—in the case of 2-1-1, to be “excellent, everywhere and always.”
• Quality improvements and consistency of service may be achieved faster with contractual relationships and strategic consolidations than through voluntary compliance with standards.
• Investment in local and state relationships is key to transition and long-term sustainability.
211US AS THE PRINCIPAL FOR THE NATIONAL 2-1-1 SYSTEM

Goal: 211US will be the voice and driving force for 2-1-1 development, refinement and sustainability.

As illustrated in this document, it becomes evident that a formal organization is a desirable and necessary course of action to ensure the longevity and viability of the 2-1-1 system. The focus would be on developing a formalized organization to offer direction, support and assistance to state entities, local systems and primary partners, as well as developing a course of sustainability that can benefit the system at the national, state and local levels.

With this in mind, the 211US Steering Committee will work with its partners to pursue opportunities outlined in this document. Coupled with resource development and targeted staffing, 211US will work to achieve established milestones. 211US will continue with the investment of time, energy and financial resources provided by participating partners, organizations and individuals.

The “new” organization will define a formal governance structure and legal status that best enables the vision to be achieved. 211US will work to secure resources with its partners to recruit and hire identified staff and consultants, with whom they would work. This work plan would then drive the identification and enlistment of additional staffed resources to accomplish the following:

• Develop revenue generation opportunities for the system.
• Move critical components of the work plan forward.

Ten years of tireless efforts, thousands of hours of volunteer contributions and leadership will culminate in the incorporation of 211US as an official organization, representative of the authority and commitment to the best interests of the national 2-1-1 system and its partners.

The 211US Steering Committee thanks its many supporters and volunteers, past and present for bringing us to this juncture. We invite everyone in the 2-1-1 field, new volunteers and partners to help us Transition 2-1-1 for a Sustainable Future.
LIST OF RESOURCES AND DATA SOURCES

Documents available at www.211US.org/Resources/ or upon request

RESOURCES

• Concept of Operations for Disaster Data Management Information System, developed with FEMA, 2011
• Map of 2-1-1 Coverage, produced by United Way Worldwide, 2012
• Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between 2-1-1 and State 211 Directors, 2006
• 211US Case Statement, developed 2008, revised 2008
• 211US Elements of an Integrated National 2-1-1 System
• 211US Mystery Caller Project materials, including summary reports, methodology and webinar training, 2010, 2011, 2012
• 211US Partnership Opportunity Template, 2011
• 211US Principles for Technology and Vendor Relationships, 2010
• 211US Public Policy Primer, 2010
• Sample of Special Projects and Contracts managed by 2-1-1 Centers, developed 2006, updated 2010

DATA SOURCES

• 211US Funding Survey of Centers and Systems, 2011 (n=84 responses)
• 211US Lead Entity Survey, conducted summer 2010, 8/23/10, as a part of the campaign for the Calling for 2-1-1 Act (n=44 states)
• 211US State Details from 2-1-1 Contact Registry, 2012
• 211US Survey of Impact of Recession, January 28, 2010 (n=117 centers)
• 211US Survey of State Directors, 2008 (n=38 states) and 2010 (n=42 states)
• 211US Telecommunications Translations and Routing Information Update Project, complete raw data set and summary report, 2011 (n=50 of 52 state systems; 158 of 248 detailed routing plans)
• Funding and Legislation Summary for 2-1-1, developed 2006, updated 2010
• Minutes from 211US in-person meetings and conference calls, monthly, 2006-2012
• Survey of 2-1-1 Field about Establishment of 211US, 2009 (n=253 responses)

WEBSITE LINKS

www.211.org
www.211US.org
www.airs.org
www.unitedway.org
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work of 211US is accomplished through contributions of hundreds of volunteers who work in or support 2-1-1. We thank all the staff and volunteers, past and present, who have helped to shape 2-1-1 over the last 15 years.

This document was not possible without the “extra special” contributions of key staff, volunteers and organizations. Thanks to:

• 211US Steering Committee members, past and present, with a special thanks to past members Amy Latzer, Marianne Galleon, Mary Hogan, Maribel Marin, Jeri Shumate and Beth Wick, who each led pieces of the work at critical points in 211US development.
• Dave Bartek, who assumed chair of 211US for the transition in 2012.
• Linda Daily, who led efforts within the United Way network for more years than any other staff member, developing important relationships on behalf of the field.
• Frank Isaza, who led the Quality Assurance Task Group.
• Individual contributors (you know who you are), who financed our meetings, legal fees and administration.
• Clive Jones, who tirelessly staffed the Quality Assurance Task Group, monthly State Directors calls, The Big Count and multiple surveys in the document.
• Laura Marx, who chaired 211US during a critical time in its development.
• Mary Ellen Mendl, who took notes for many months of meetings.
• Lucinda Nord, who drafted and organized this document and staffed multiple surveys and campaigns throughout the history of 2-1-1.
• State 211 Directors leaders who facilitated and documented monthly meetings since 2005, including Lilian Coral, Susan Gemmel, Lori Linstead, Lucinda Nord, Tom Page and Beth Wick.
• Tom Page, who took notes for meetings and staffed multiple surveys referenced in the document.
• Tino Paz, who tirelessly maintained the 2-1-1 Contact registry and staffed monthly calls of State Directors and the Steering Committee, as well as multiple surveys referenced in the document.
• Bruce Unwin, Director of Creative & Brand Experience Strategy at United Way for Southeastern Michigan, who assembled this document into its final form.

And a special thanks to organizations that hosted or financially subsidized our meetings over the years, including:

• 211LA, California
• AIRS
• Indiana 211 Partnership and Indiana Association of United Ways
• Info211, Oregon
• NJ211 Partnership
• Oklahoma 211
• Texas 211
• United Way of Central Maryland and Maryland 211
• United Way Worldwide
• Utah 211 (Food Bank)

And none of this would have been possible if it were not for our founding and continuing partners:
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