

Frequently Asked Questions

Business Model Strategic Realignment

Updated June 2025



1. Who was involved in making the decision to shift from a regional call center network to a statewide system?

Starting in January 2023, the Board of Directors engaged in thoughtful strategic discussions to address long standing structural and sustainability issues that have limited access to the efficient use of the WA 211 system. These conversations included full participation by call centers as well as a strong community voice from diverse stakeholders. Committed to the belief that everyone should have easy access to the information and resources they need to manage life crises, we recognized the need to change our business model to ensure our communities continue to have access to critical 211 services.

A Strategy Taskforce, established by the Board of Directors, guided the process. In July 2024, the Board hired an interim executive director (the first executive director since 2010) and the FirstRule Group (FRG) to conduct a robust assessment of 211 operations and positioning in the environment. The goal was to provide recommendations based on their findings on how to best *implement a re-designed, sustainable business model to:*

- more inclusively and effectively serve our communities through a seamless, consistent customer experience, with quality referrals, reduced wait times, and standardized hours of operations.
- address key needs of the evolving public safety and health systems,
- and respond nimbly to both economic and community crises.

What is the change?

Key findings from the FRG and Board assessment reinforced the need for WA 211 to more inclusively and efficiently connect people to community services, build capacity to handle diverted calls from 988 and 911, and play an even stronger role in the state's emergency crisis response system.

FirstRule Group proposed two potential models. After much discussion, the Board of Directors voted on January 27, 2025, choosing to **consolidate contact center operations into a single contact center, develop a resource guide service, and centralize administrative, financial and leadership functions.** While both models shared some common benefits, the Board chose the consolidated model because it most effectively:

- Reduces duplication and gains efficiency through standardized processes and operations.

Board of Directors Strategy Taskforce s

- *Penni Belcher*, Transportation Specialist, United Way of Pierce County, and SS211 Director
- *Stacy Kellog*, Director of Social Services, People For People and GC211 Director
- *Deb Miller*, Executive Director, Action Health Partners, Board Chair
- *Michelle McDaniels*, CEO Crisis Connections, KC 211 Representative
- *Alison Poulsen*, CEO, Better Health Together, Board Treasurer
- *Anne Stone*, Early Childhood Innovation Director, Washington Fatherhood Council Director, DSHS, Board Secretary
- *Sandra Suarez*, Director of Fund Development, Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic, Board VP
- *Galina Volchkova*, Senior Director, Volunteers of America Western

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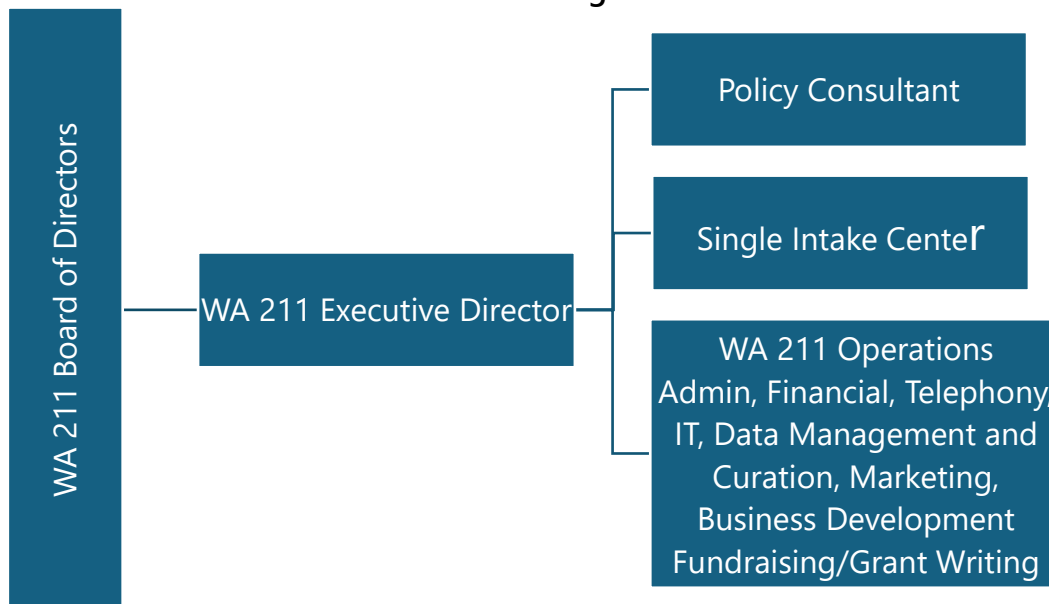
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- Maintains a locally curated, statewide database, and increases statewide integration of resources.
- Offers the best statewide contracting opportunities, with no services left out. All contracting flows through WA 211 without individual approaches from call centers.
- Aligns leadership with WA 211 goals, streamlines leadership approval processes and reduces 'multiple hats' conflicting priorities.
- Greater likelihood of financial sustainability.

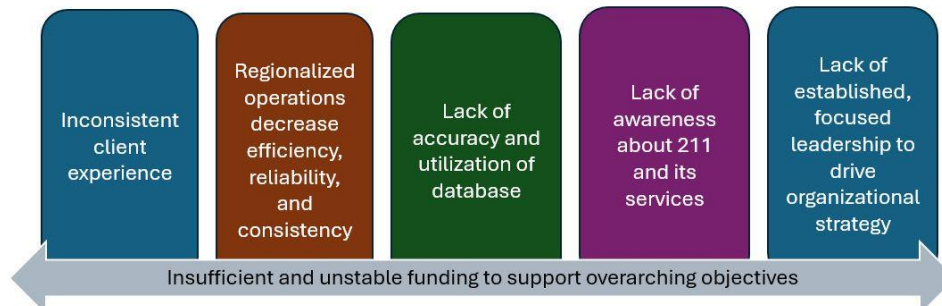
FRG Recommended Organizational Structure



2. What are the benefits of shifting from a regional network to a statewide system?

We acknowledge the incredible ingenuity, creativity, tenacity and support of the seven regional call centers that have helped build the regional network that exists today. At the same time, we cannot ignore current realities. Over the last ten years, the regional network has grappled with inefficiencies, duplicative efforts, and a lack of strategic focus that have challenged WA 211 to meet service levels and partner needs within the 211-911-988 partnership.

FRG Summary of Inefficiencies in the Regional Network



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4. How is the transition going to happen and what is the role of the legacy call centers?

On July 1, 2025, five regional call centers will continue to provide services.

These regional call centers are People for People (GC211), Crisis Connections (KC211), United Way of Pierce County (SW211), Volunteers of America Western WA (NS211), Frontier Behavioral Health (EW211) and 211info (SW211). These call centers will help transition to the new business model for at least three months.

The new centralized call center will prioritize and incorporate local knowledge through strategies proposed by the winning bidder. These might include hiring current local call center staff and an intentional sorting of complex calls to those local experts. This has yet to be determined but is a focus of the RFP.

5. How are you going to choose a single contact center?

WA 211 has [launched an RFP](#) for a single call center, with responses due by July 10, 2025. Any current qualified organization providing 211 services is encouraged to apply, as well as any other organization providing call center services within the state of Washington.

The Board of Directors has established an RFP Review Committee of non-conflicted board members and external representatives who will review and score the RFPs and interview the top scoring call centers. We anticipate the single call center will be selected by September 1, 2025 and a three-month transition will begin. Our goal is to have the single contact center operational no later than January 1, 2026.

6. How is WA 211 going to increase equity and access while maintaining a regional focus with a single call center in a statewide system?

211 provides free, confidential and multi-lingual access for all Washingtonians who need help finding local and state human, social and health services. Since 2006, over 5 million Washingtonians have reached out to WA 211. We average 1,200 calls daily and provide more than 700,000 referrals annually. WA 211 also operates and maintains the state's only comprehensive database of current health and human resources, with nearly 16,000 services.

Through this process we have become more intentional in our analysis of existing call data to better understand strategic development and partnership building, culturally accountable communication and investment practices in underserved communities. Having a statewide system allows us to better analyze gaps and advocate for service needs by tracking inequities in local communities.

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Chart A shows the disparities, by population, demonstrated by percentage of callers served in urban versus rural counties. This suggests a potential equity gap in access or utilization of 211 services between urban and rural areas.

Chart B shows that Puget Sound and Northwest regions have the highest average service rates, likely due to higher population density and better infrastructure. Southwest and Eastern regions have lower average service rates, indicating potential gaps in outreach, accessibility, or awareness. Southeast and Central regions fall in the middle, with moderate service levels.

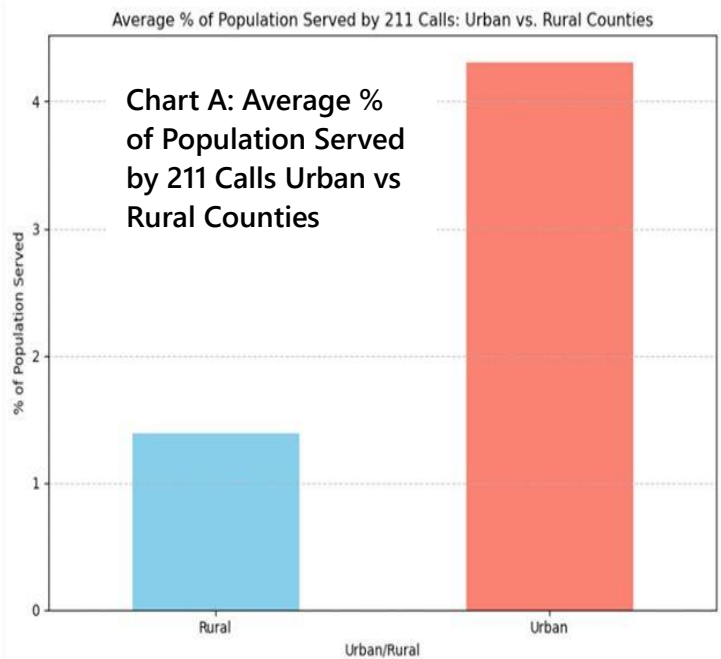
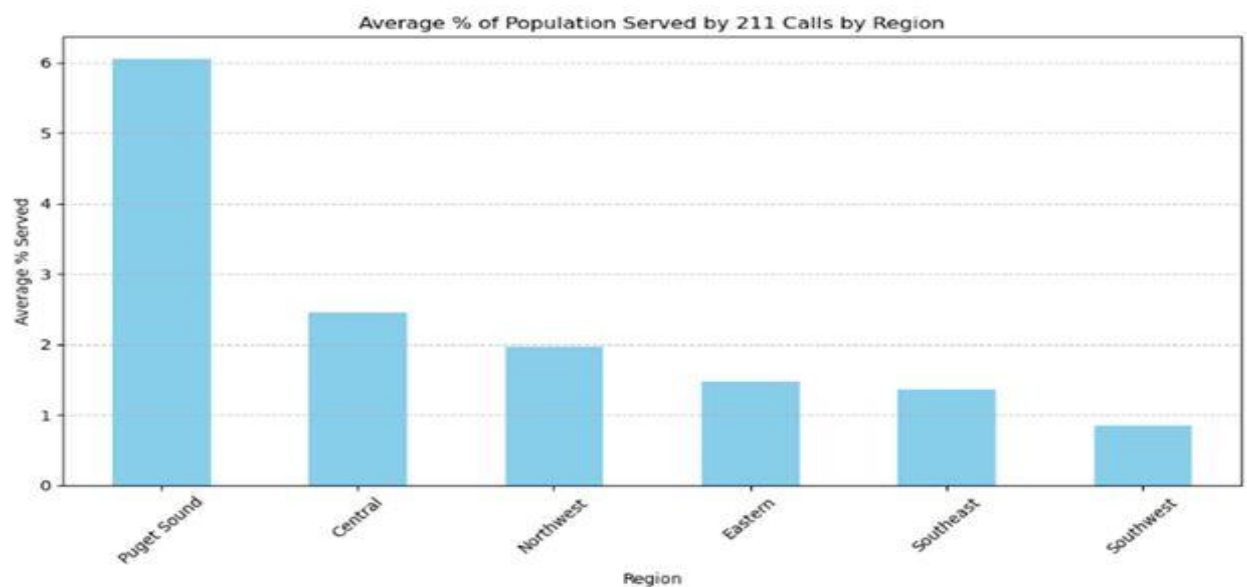


Chart B: Average Percentage of Population Served by 211 Calls by Region



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7. How will the resource directory be managed?

WA 211 will staff a database manager and database curators centrally to maintain a regionally curated database, implement regional curation strategies, improve data accuracy, and customize data solutions for WA 211 partners and community organizations. Community Resource Specialists will continue to assist with updating the database as well.

We will continue to leverage partnerships with community-based organizations throughout the state. For example, we are involved in a pilot with Thrive Together NCW, to operate and curate the most current, accurate, and comprehensive resource database in the state by leveraging local knowledge and expertise, while making that data more easily accessible to the organizations and individuals that need the information most and improving care coordinated services across the region.

8. How expensive will this change be?

Based upon the FRG modeling and knowledge of the current system a single, statewide contact center is more cost effective and fiscally responsible: 2023 – 24 estimates for fully funding the regional call center system range between \$8.8 and \$10 million. Estimates for the consolidated model are almost half that, approximately \$6 million. Even as we continue to rebuild and grow strategically, the cost of that growth will be less than it would be with seven regional centers.

9. Why is change happening now?

The sustainability of WA 211 is at stake. We received a 66% cut in funding from the Legislature for the 25-27 biennium, and like many other nonprofits if we are to thrive in the face of funding vulnerabilities we must work more efficiently.

To ensure our future, it is imperative to strengthen WA 211 through operational efficiencies. By investing in staff and technology, expanding outreach, and improving how we do business, WA 211 can ensure that it continues to provide essential support and safeguard the well-being of countless Washingtonians.

10. How long is this going to take?

We recognize that this is a complex re-structure, and it will take time to thoughtfully implement. We will move with expediency when and where we can and not rush what should not be rushed. Please see the next page for a more comprehensive timeline.

July – September 2025

- Current call centers continue to provide services
- Single contact center is selected and announced

September – December 2025

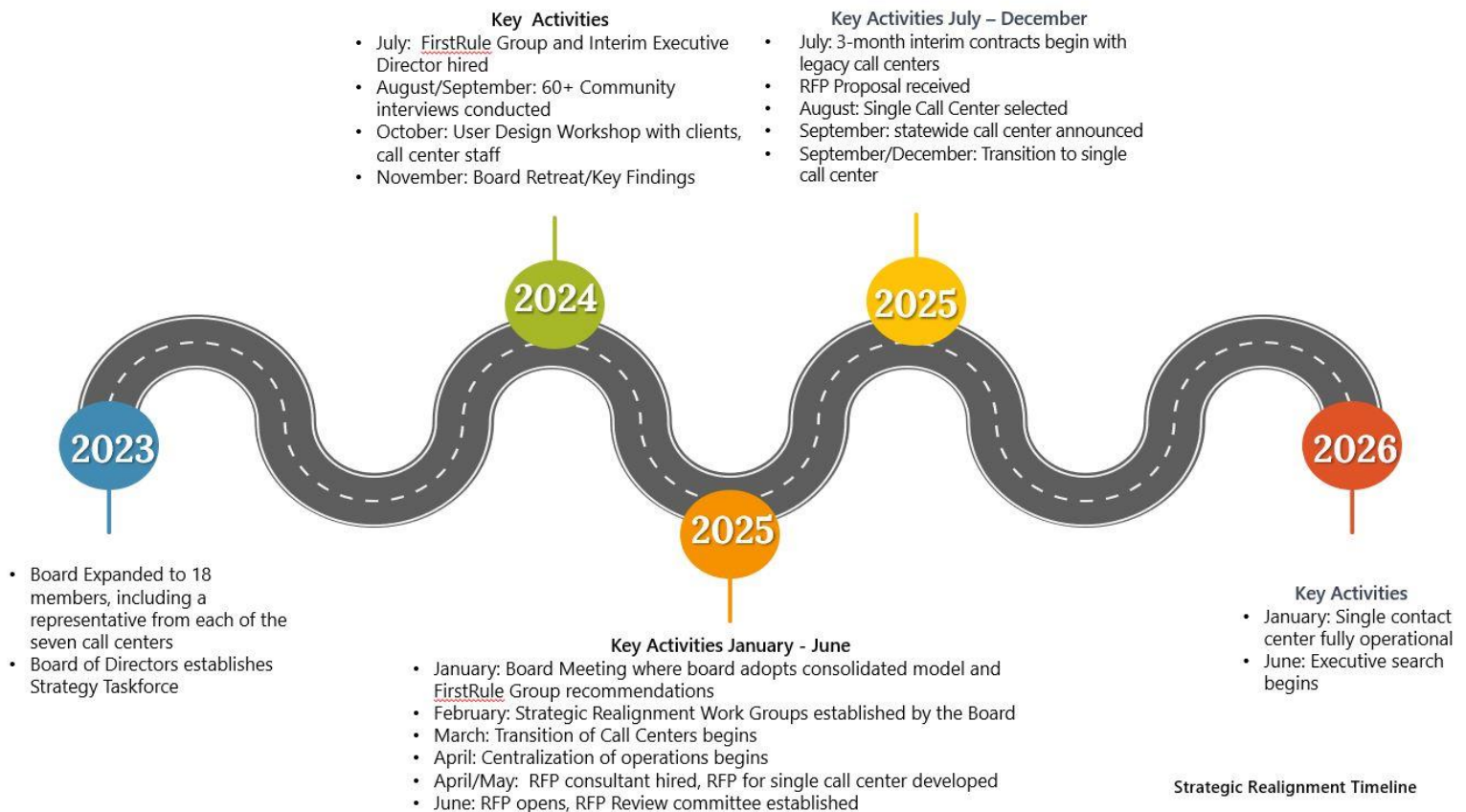
- Transition from seven regional call centers to a single contact center

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Strategic Realignment Timeline



11. Where do I find more information?

As more information becomes available, the Board of Directors will share it as quickly, broadly, and as transparently as possible. Please feel free to contact Amanda Madorno, Interim Executive at amadorno@wa211.org with any questions you may have.