



Legislation Text

File #: O-512-23, **Version:** 2

Council Members Morris, McPherson and Komives

Amending the framework for the Toledo Recovery Plan by authorizing the appropriation of an amount not to exceed \$300,000 from the Local Fiscal Recovery Fund for United Way of Greater Toledo 211 Services; authorizing the expenditure of \$100,000 for 211 Services in 2024; authorizing the Mayor to enter into an agreement with United Way of Greater Toledo; and declaring an emergency.

SUMMARY & BACKGROUND:

United Way of Greater Toledo (UWGT) is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that funds and operates the local 211 call service that connects the public with assistance programs for needs, including those not covered by other government programs.

UWGT's 211 program is an essential component of public infrastructure in Northwest Ohio. In 2022, the program received more than 85,000 connections for help, through call, text, and chat, and ensured nearly 70,000 residents had access to the vital health and human services they need to lead more fulfilling lives.

Prior to 2020, annual contacts ranged from 62,000 to 68,000 annually. In 2021, that number increased to more than 104,000 as residents sought access to COVID-19 vaccines and other pandemic relief.

As pandemic emergency needs waned (an anticipated lowering of contact volume is noted in data), a significant increase in needs from City of Toledo residents is apparent. In 2021, more than half of NW Ohio's total contact volume came from City of Toledo residents (53%). However, as handled contacts dropped in 2022 by just under 3,000 individuals, City of Toledo resident needs increased by 13% to account for nearly two-thirds (66%) of the total annual contact volume.

211 connects residents to vital health and human support services, including disaster relief, as well as eviction prevention, legal services, tax filing, employment opportunities, and access to food, clothing, and shelter.

UWGT's 211 is an unparalleled service, offering empathy-informed, human-centric approaches as individuals and families navigate difficult times in their lives. 211 is a free and anonymous information and referral service available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to anyone in Lucas, Ottawa or Wood County with a health or human service need.

The program's skilled staff, Community Resource Advisers (CRAs), are the key to the service, trained to "ask the second question" to identify root issues. The 211 database offers translation services and includes access to more than 800 organizations and 2,300 programs.

211 data is made available publicly in real time so that UWGT, funders, legislators, and others have a constant pulse on community needs, including data supporting that more than half of annual contact volume

continually relates to food, housing and shelter, and utility assistance, especially as inflation and housing costs soared throughout 2022.

As inflation, rental, utility, and housing prices, overall cost of living, and the job market, as well as Public Health Emergency Benefits ending, continue to present financial barriers to individuals throughout NW Ohio and the City of Toledo, United Way does not anticipate a downturn in these numbers through 2023 or in future years.

In this regard, 211's service as a direct helpline increases efficiencies of government, nonprofit, and other public services by reducing call volume and streamlining contacts to resources they need and for which they are qualified. Through direct person-to-person interaction, residents find creative, compassionate solutions to complex problems arising from disaster, unexpected unemployment and financial burden, illness, and much more.

211 provides an essential service as a key piece of health and human services public infrastructure in NW Ohio, however, it does not currently benefit from sustainable public investment in the same manner as 911 and 988. Below is the projected 2022-2023 Program Budget. FY 2021-2022 actual expenses were \$637,269.

City: Currently, 211 receives \$85,500 in funding from City of Toledo Department of Neighborhoods specifically for Coordinated Entry services for eviction prevention and emergency shelter services in partnership with Toledo Lucas County Homelessness Board. 211 also received \$79,229 from the Toledo Lucas County Homelessness Board for the same purpose.

County: Lucas County Job and Family Services provides \$100,000 annually in funding (in 2023, JFS contributed an additional \$75,000 as 211 was critical in activating its infrastructure to steward \$1.3 million dollars to Lucas County households through the Federal Prevention, Retention, and Contingency (PRC) Program, ensuring federal relief dollars reached their maximum local impact which is not reflected in the FY23 budget).

State: Ohio is the only state in our region, and one of only two in the nation, without a state funding model for 211. UWGT was part of a statewide coalition of Ohio 211 providers seeking to include the program in the State Operating Budget. This budget amendment was unsuccessful during the recent State Budgeting process.

Federal: United Way Worldwide is leading an effort to fund 211 infrastructures nationally through the bi-partisan supported HELP Act. Should this legislation pass, local impact has not yet been defined

UWGT's total annual budget for operating the 211 program across NW Ohio (Lucas, Ottawa, and Wood counties) for FY23 is \$764,309. Of this, \$303,980 is funded through UWGT's philanthropic dollars.

Offsetting these costs with public funding allows UWGT to invest in direct grants and services to other nonprofit agencies and service providers in our community.

An annual \$100,000 investment in 211 would ensure sustainability of the program beyond shelter services, of which up to two-thirds of information and referral services are dedicated to City of Toledo residents, and will encourage more direct communication and partnership with emergency services, Engage Toledo, and other City of Toledo departments.

The City of Toledo is the recipient of \$180.9 million through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to be used to address the public health and negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The proposed expenditure of local fiscal recovery funds would be eligible under the category of replacing lost public sector revenue/revenue replacement category or responding to negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the SLFRF, costs must be obligated by December 31, 2024, and expended by December 31, 2026.

This Ordinance amends the Toledo Recovery Plan framework (authorized by Ordinance 530-21) should be amended to include an allocation of \$300,000 to support United Way of Greater Toledo 211 Services for Toledo residents. The Ordinance appropriates \$300,000 for this purpose and authorizes the expenditure of \$100,000 for calendar year 2024. NOW, THEREFORE,

Be it ordained by the Council of the City of Toledo:

SECTION 1. That the framework for the Toledo Recovery Plan, Ordinance 530-21, is amended to include an allocation of \$300,000 for United Way of Greater Toledo (UWGT) 211 Services covering the period of City of Toledo fiscal years 2024-2026.

SECTION 2. That the appropriation of \$300,000 is authorized from the unappropriated balance of the Local Fiscal Recovery Fund to Account Code 2021-10100-1211UNITWYRRP to provide grant proceeds to support the provision of 211 Services by United Way of Greater Toledo in 2024 through 2026; and further authorizing the expenditure of \$100,000 from the appropriated amount to support the delivery of 211 Services in calendar year 2024.

SECTION 3. That the Mayor is authorized to enter into a grant agreement with United Way of Greater Toledo for the above authorized purposes, upon terms and conditions consistent with American Rescue Plan Act regulations and acceptable to the Director of Law.

SECTION 4. That the Director of Finance is authorized to draw warrant or warrants against Account Code Account Code 2021-10100-1211UNITWYRRP in an amount not to exceed \$100,000 in payment of the above-authorized obligation upon presentation of the proper voucher or vouchers.

SECTION 5. That as a condition of this funding UWGT shall provide a comprehensive report by October 31st of each funding year to the Mayor and Council, detailing the current year use of funding and how the 211 service has benefited the Toledo community. The report, at a minimum, should include volume of calls per month, by zip code (grouped to the extent available by Council District), the type of assistance requested by callers, and a statement justifying continued funding.

SECTION 6. That any UWGT revenue from other sources currently used to fund 211 Services that is offset by funding provided under this Ordinance shall be used for programs or activities that directly benefit the residents of the City of Toledo. The report required under Section 5 shall include a detailed explanation of the programs and activities funded each report year with such offset funds.

SECTION 7. That this Ordinance is declared to be an emergency measure and shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage. The reason for the emergency lies in the fact that this ordinance is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, safety and property, and for the further reason that this ordinance must be immediately effective in order to provide timely sponsorship support to ensure the

continued delivery of the current level of 211 Services to Toledo citizens.

Vote on emergency clause: yeas 12, nays 0.

Passed: October 10, 2023, as an emergency measure: yeas 12, nays 0.

Attest:

Gerald E. Dendinger
Clerk of Council

Matt Cherry
President of Council

Approved:

October 10, 2023
Wade Kapszukiewicz
Mayor