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| <b>TO:</b>      | <b>CHAIR AND MEMBERS<br/>COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE<br/>MEETING ON MARCH 5, 2012</b> |
| <b>FROM:</b>    | <b>CINDY HOWARD<br/>DIRECTOR, SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES</b>                |
| <b>SUBJECT:</b> | <b>ONTARIO WORKS EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE FRAMEWORK<br/>2013 - 2018</b>                   |

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| <b>RECOMMENDATION</b> |
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That, on the recommendation of the Director of Social and Community Support Services with the concurrence of the Executive Director of Community Services, the following actions **BE TAKEN**:

- a) The Ontario Works Employment Assistance Services Framework 2013 – 2018 proposed in this report **BE ENDORSED**; it being noted these changes will support the increased employment, employability and job retention of Ontario Works participants; and
- b) The General Manager of Community Services **BE AUTHORIZED** to enter into one time pilot initiatives at a maximum value of \$100,000 to target identified employment and placement needs of a specific client group/community/employer

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| <b>PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER</b> |
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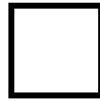
- Ontario Works Employment Assistance Framework (CPSC October 17, 2005)
- RFP 05-35 Ontario Works Employment Assistance Services (Board of Control, March 1, 2006)
- Purchase of Service Agreements – Ontario Works Employment Assistance Services (Board of Control, June 21, 2006)

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| <b>BACKGROUND</b> |
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Under the Ontario Works Act, the City of London has the responsibility to effectively deliver services and supports that respond to the needs of Ontario Works participants. Ontario Works is an employment assistance and financial support program. Employment supports for Ontario Works participants are focused on helping people gain and maintain sustainable employment by supporting training and education, developing “hard” and “soft” employment skills, linking participants to opportunities, and providing individualized supports as needed.

An Employment Assistance Framework for delivering employment services and supports for Ontario Works participants was introduced in 1997 when the Ontario Works program commenced in London, and was revised in 2005 in response to funding changes and the evolution of legislation. The City is committed to an Employment Assistance model that is a combination of individualized services and supports, leveraged with services funded by other Ministries and Departments (including the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and Human Resources & Skills Development Canada) and contracts for specified employment assistance services with local service providers.

Since the 2005 Framework was developed, modification of legislation has continued, the economy and labour market context have changed, the employment and training sector has undergone a transformation, and we have a greater awareness of emerging needs and makeup of our caseload. At this time, there is a fair amount of uncertainty as to our future economic state and the policy context in which Ontario Works employment programs will be operating. The recently released Commission on the Reform of Ontario’s Public Services Commission (Drummond Report) and the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario “Discussion Paper 2 - Approaches to Reform” both include recommendations related to the delivery of Ontario Works. In order to respond to these changes and continue to ensure that employment supports to



Ontario Works participants are responsive, focus on individual needs and are cost-effective, a review of the current Employment Assistance Services Framework was initiated in 2011.

## **EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE FRAMEWORK**

### **Development of the Revised Framework**

The 2013 to 2018 Framework was developed through an extensive consultation process that maintained a focus on planning, research and consultation, drawing from the following:

- A review of American and Canadian literature evaluating “what works” in employment service delivery for social assistance recipients;
- A review of purchased Ontario Works employment service delivery approaches used by other Ontario jurisdictions;
- Analysis of London’s Ontario Works caseload demographics;
- Analysis of London’s labour market and economic needs and trends;
- Consultations with employment and education service providers, Ontario Works participants, Ontario Works staff, and key informants representing London employers and businesses; and
- Program reviews.

### **New Framework Principles**

The 2013 – 2018 Framework is guided by the following principles:

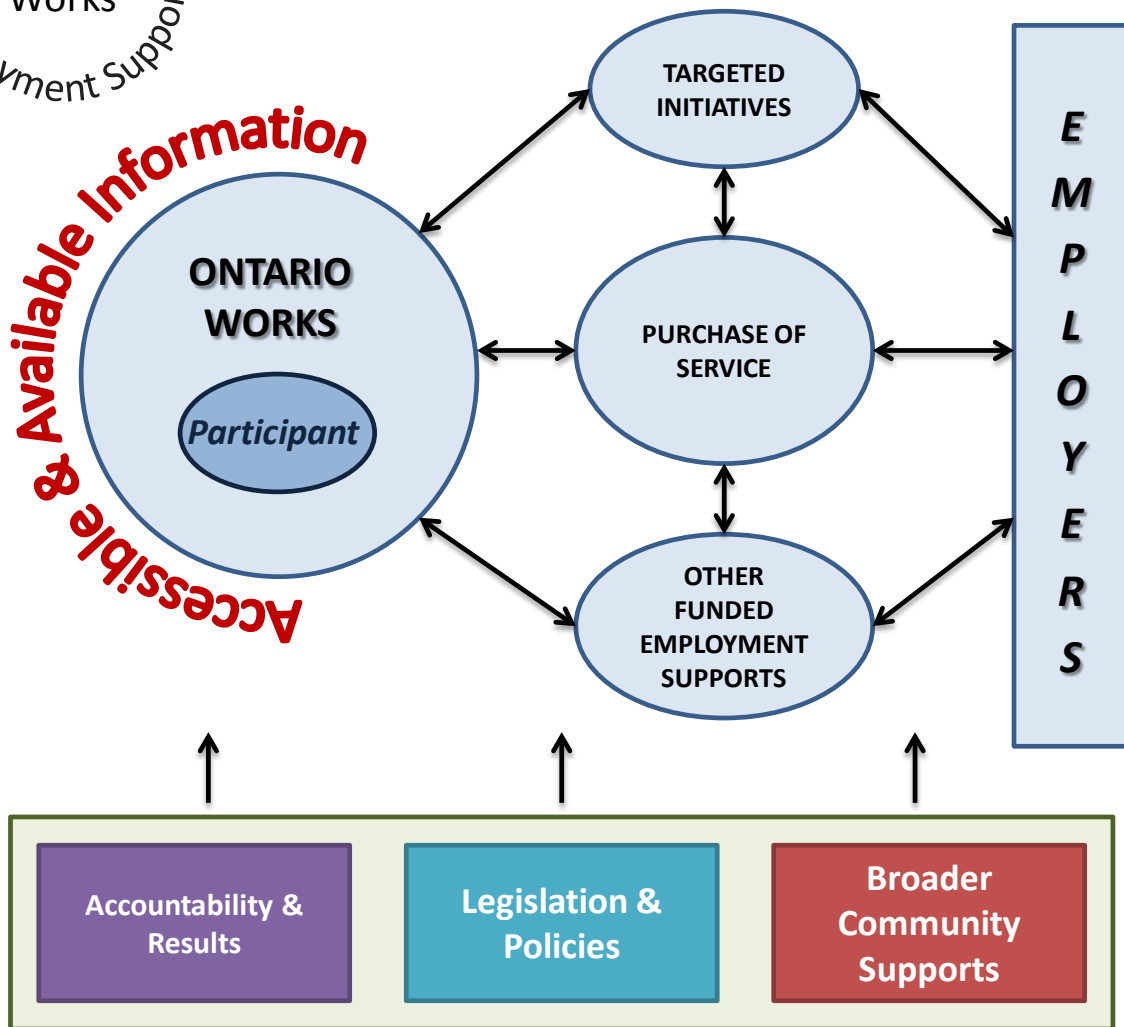
- Participant-centred delivery
- Range of quality services
- Reflective and responsive to the changing needs of participants, employers and the labour market
- Strong connections with employers and workforce development
- Use of evidence-based practices
- Maximizing and leveraging other related resources
- Flexibility
- Stakeholder accountability

### **Key Benefits of the New Framework**

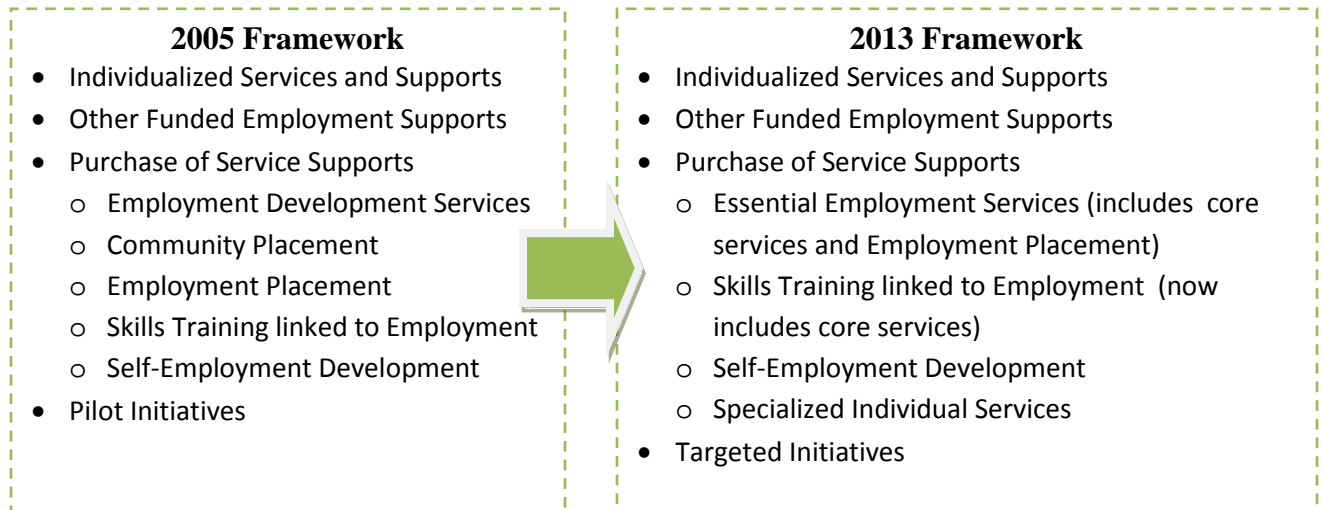
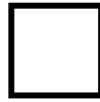
- *Enhanced Participant-centred delivery:*  
Greater emphasis will be given to providing customized services and greater attention will be given to tailoring the employment service plan to meet the specific needs and goals of participants through an enhanced assessment process.
- *Strengthened focus on providing supports and referrals for all Ontario Works participants:*  
Participants will also play a more active role with increased input into decisions made regarding their service priorities.
- *Broader range of quality services:*  
Improved and more flexible program design which includes an expectation that all employment service agencies (excluding Self Employment Development and Specialized Individual Services) provide essential employment services e.g. resume, structured job search, workplace expectations.
- *Responding to emerging needs:*  
Ontario Works will have greater flexibility to engage local service providers based on the needs of participants, labour market, and employer. The framework offers the necessary basis for piloting new and innovative initiatives.
- *Stakeholder accountability:*  
Open, fair and transparent competitive processes with a strengthened accountability and quality assurance approach. Program criteria are clearly defined and expected outcomes clearly communicated.

Income Support  
Ontario  
Works  
Employment Support

## Employment Assistance Framework

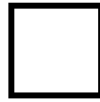


| LEGEND  |   |   |  |   |
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| <p><b>ONTARIO WORKS:</b><br/>Team Structure; Pilot Initiatives; Employer Incentives; Individual Services &amp; Supports; Assessment; Employment Planning; Participation Agreements; Stabilization &amp; Income Support; Crisis Intervention; Intensive Case Management; Referrals</p> | <p><b>OTHER FUNDED EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS:</b><br/>Literacy; Basic Education &amp; Training; Employment Ontario; Immigrant Employment Services; Pillar</p> | <p><b>ACCOUNTABILITY &amp; RESULTS:</b><br/>Quality Assurance; Communication; Commitment to Reporting; Customer Satisfaction; Education and Employment Outcomes</p> | <p><b>TARGETED INITIATIVES</b><br/>Employer facing; One time; Employment outcome</p> | <p><b>Purchase of Service (POS):</b><br/>Employment Placement; Essential Employment Services (Foundational Skills, Career Management, Workplace Experience, Individualized Program Delivery); Skills Training Linked to Employment; Pilot Initiatives; Specialized Individual Supports; Self-Employment Development</p> |



New features of the 2013 to 2018 Framework include:

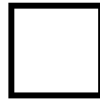
- Evolve Purchase of Service Strategic Group into Ontario Works Employment Advisory Group with enhanced membership to situate Ontario Works employment programs within the community's broader workforce development network
- A greater attention to tailoring the employment service plan to meet the specific needs and goals of participants through an enhanced assessment process with the introduction of an enhanced internal employment review meeting occurring one month following entry into Ontario Works and at regular intervals thereafter
- An expectation that all employment service agencies (excluding Self Employment Development and Specialized Individual Services) provide core essential employment services
- Community Placement will not be a separate contracted service but will be an essential employment service provided by Purchase of Service agencies and will also be a direct service provided by Ontario Works
- Strengthened accountability and quality assurance approach
- Strengthened focus on providing supports and referrals for all Ontario Works participants



The 2013 to 2018 Framework builds on the successes and strengths of the 2005 Framework. The proposed framework will build on and improve existing Employment Assistance services. The four components of services and supports will address participant need and allow for a more flexible and timely response to labour market changes. The key components of the framework include:

| Component                            | Description  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Individualized Services and Supports | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivered by Ontario Works;</li> <li>• Employment programs and services customized to the needs of an individual client;</li> <li>• Employment review and service planning;</li> <li>• An in depth employment review completed by Ontario Works staff to identify interests and experience;</li> <li>• Community Placement;</li> <li>• Learning Earning and Parenting (LEAP);</li> <li>• Referrals to employment service providers, specialized individualized services, specialized Ontario Works case management teams and other community services that support stabilization such as child care, housing, obtaining pardons, et cetera;</li> <li>• Financial aid to cover employment and post employment expenses and costs of stand-alone job specific skill training, or other employment programming to increase the participant's employability;</li> <li>• Approval is on a case by case basis.</li> </ul>   |
| Other Funded Employment Supports     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent with the Ontario Works principles, service delivery is based on a collaborative model that maximizes the use of cost effective and expert resources within the community to streamline and rationalize services;</li> <li>• Referrals to community-based employment services that are funded by other Ministries and Departments. A key referral point is to Employment Ontario services.</li> </ul>   |
| Purchase of Service (POS) Supports   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core services to address diverse and evolving needs of the individuals on the Ontario Works caseload;</li> <li>• Distinct components include: Essential Employment Services and Skills Training Linked to Employment both of which have a strong Employment Placement component. Approved organizations will have opportunity to propose and participate in pilot initiatives. Self-Employment Development and Specialized Individual Support are the other components included in the POS process;</li> <li>• Services to be purchased from local organizations;</li> <li>• Employment focused programs are the priority;</li> <li>• A Request for Proposal (RFP) process will select organizations to deliver specified services for a contracted period not to exceed 3 years with an option of two, one year renewals;</li> <li>• Negotiation of contracts will establish a fee schedule combining fixed cost and pay-for-performance amounts for actual services delivered;</li> <li>• Expenditures under these agreements will not exceed \$600,000 per service;</li> <li>• Annual renewals of these service agreements will be based on the provider's performance with respect to Ontario Works performance criteria, as well as budgetary considerations, provincial program changes, or fundamental changes to the labour market or Ontario Works participants' needs.</li> </ul> |
| Pilot Initiatives                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide targeted employment services that respond to the needs of a specific client group and/or local labour market needs supporting responsive community and economic development programs and services;</li> <li>• One-time projects intended to serve individuals or a group of participants who share common employment issues or employers who may be seeking workers who have completed specific job skill training, e.g. a service targeted to immigrants who have professional qualifications;</li> <li>• Total value of each approved project not to exceed \$100,000.</li> </ul>  |

See Appendix "A" for the entire framework.



## **PILOT INITIATIVES**

Pilot Initiatives are targeted employment projects that provide the Community Services Department with the flexibility and ability to quickly meet emerging employer hiring needs on a “just in time” basis. They will respond to the needs of a specific client group and/or labour market needs and can also be used to leverage other funding. Projects can include a range of service elements including job placement, post-hiring supports, life skills, skill training and work placements. Examples of such initiatives include:

- A skill training organization in partnership with an employer or employers, providing the Skill Training curriculum to meet the job requirements of the employer with the employer hiring the Ontario Works participant upon successful completion of the training period.
- Involvement with LEDC, Chamber of Commerce, and other employers facing organizations in supporting employer attraction and retention through supports for Ontario Works participants.

Pilot initiatives will support economic development as well as resulting in employment results for Ontario Works participants.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The new framework provides many benefits to assist with the achievement of strong employment outcomes for Ontario Works participants as well as supporting the broader employment, workforce and economic development needs of our community. The transformation will be complex. There are internal and external impacts as we are undertaking a coordinated approach with changes to occur for community organizations as well as to business practices, technology and supports in the delivery of Ontario Works. Throughout 2012, activity will focus on ensuring a smooth transition. Key activities to be undertaken include:

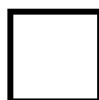
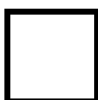
- A Request for Proposal for the delivery of Ontario Works Employment Assistance Services will be issued March 28, 2012. The selection of successful proponents will be complete by June 30, 2012. New services will commence January 1, 2013;
- Transitioning of services from old to new contracts will occur from July to December 2012;
- At the same time, business practices will be revamped to support the changes and staff training will occur internally and with contracted agencies.

In addition to the work currently being undertaken related to the Employment Assistance Framework and the pilot initiatives, staff are also developing an approach to address broader workforce and economic development needs. A report will be provided to Council related to this.

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| <b>FINANCIAL IMPACT</b> |
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The 2012 draft budget includes funding for employment services and financial assistance for employment related expenses at \$8,622,234 (gross) or \$1,570,656 (net).

Funding for Employment Assistance is cost shared with the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) and includes a portion that will be uploaded with Ontario Works and funded 82.8% in 2012 and a portion that will be cost shared at 50%.



**CONCLUSIONS**

This new Employment Assistance Service Delivery Framework is integral to effective Employment Assistance service delivery and to the achievement of Employment Assistance outcomes.

The Employment Assistance activities noted in this report provide crucial skills and supports for Ontario Works participants to assist them in their movement toward self-sufficiency. Through the framework, we will be better able to provide employment services that are more responsive to changing Ontario Works participants, community and labour market needs.

Since it commenced in July 1997, the Ontario Works program has undergone many changes. This new framework addresses the focus on employment, job retention and increase in employability skills.

The new Framework and the pilot initiatives are part of our community's approach to support broader workforce and economic development strategies. Work is continuing on the broader strategies.

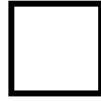
We will report back to the Committee with the results of the Request for Proposal and on the broader workforce and economic development strategies.

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| <b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>   |  |
| <p><b>ELISABETH WHITE</b><br/> <b>MANAGER, EMPLOYMENT &amp; STRATEGIC INITIATIVES</b><br/> <b>SOCIAL &amp; COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES</b><br/> <b>DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES</b></p> |  |
| <b>RECOMMENDED BY:</b>   | <b>CONCURRED BY:</b>   |
| <p><b>CINDY HOWARD</b><br/> <b>DIRECTOR</b><br/> <b>SOCIAL &amp; COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES</b><br/> <b>DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES</b></p>   | <p><b>ROSS L. FAIR</b><br/> <b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b><br/> <b>DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES</b></p> |

- c. Elaine Sauve, Program Supervisor, Ministry of Community and Social Services
- Mark Harrison, Service Delivery Manager, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
- Jim Martin, London District Catholic School Board (Centre for Lifelong Learning)
- Michelle Quintyn, Goodwill Industries, Ontario Great Lakes
- Wendy Lau, LEADS Employment Services
- Bonnie Williams, Daya Counselling Centre
- Elisabete Rodrigues, London Urban Services Organization (LUSO) Centre
- Gloryann Sollner, Rehabilitation Foundation for the Disabled (Ontario March of Dimes)
- Deb Armstrong, Nokee Kwe
- Paul Hubert, Pathways Skill Development & Placement Centre
- Anne Langille, WIL Counselling and Training for Employment
- Steve Cordes, Youth Opportunities Unlimited
- Steve Pellarin, The London Community Small Business Centre

Agenda Item #

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Appendix "A"