

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON March 28, 2017
FROM:	SANDRA DATARS BERE MANAGING DIRECTOR, HOUSING, SOCIAL SERVICES AND DEARNESS HOME
SUBJECT:	ONTARIO WORKS EMPLOYMENT INNOVATIONS BRIDGES OUT OF POVERTY & CIRCLE BASELINE EVALUATION

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Housing, Social Services and Dearness Home, the report on Bridges Out of Poverty and Circle Baseline Evaluation **BE RECEIVED** for information.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER

- Ontario Works Employment Innovations (CPSC, January 21, 2013)
- RFP 12-07 Request for Proposal Ontario Works Employment Assistance Services (June 19, 2012),
- Ontario Works Employment Assistance Framework 2013 – 2018 (CPSC, March 5, 2012),
- Amendment To Purchase Of Service Agreement - Ontario Works Employment Assistance Services (November 25, 2013) and;
- Amendment to Purchase of Service Agreement – Ontario Works Employment Assistance Services (June 21, 2016).

BACKGROUND

Through the City of London 2015-2019 Strategic Plan, Strengthening our Community, caring and compassionate services is a key area of focus which sets out to “eliminate barriers for individuals facing poverty, mental health and addiction and help them find pathways to be successful.” The purpose of this report is to provide information on the 2016 Baseline Evaluation results of Bridges Out of Poverty, Getting Ahead and Circles initiatives.

These initiatives received council approval in 2013 as a pilot program to launch the first “Circle”. Through a 2016 partnership with Goodwill Industries Ontario Great Lakes and the City of London, the Bridges Out of Poverty/Circles initiative has grown and continues to support long term Ontario Works participants transition themselves out of poverty through authentic relationships across class lines, creating public awareness about poverty, and working to address systemic barriers that often keep low income individuals living in poverty.

Highlights of the Baseline Evaluation include:

Bridges Out of Poverty Workshops

- 91.1% of participants agreed the session has equipped them to identify practices for improving outcomes with living in generational poverty
- 85.3% of participants agreed they would use the information presented in decision making

Getting Ahead

- At the pre-session of Getting Ahead, future Circles participants were on average ranked as vulnerable in each of the soft skills domains and in overall Life Satisfaction
- Overall, the 37 graduates of Getting Ahead experienced a strengthening in a range of five key “soft skills” of problem solving, coping, self-esteem, motivation, self-confidence and overall life satisfaction
- 34 of the 37 Getting Ahead graduates have went into Circles

Circles - Socio-Demographic Profile of Circle Leaders:

The impact of the initiatives was apparent for those that were leaders as 74% of Circle leaders were sole support parents and all parents accounted for 40 children between the two Circles. The Circle’s leaders on average spent up to 53 consecutive months on social assistance prior to becoming a Circles leader.

Impact:

- Of the total Circle Leaders 73% have engaged in education, training and employment
- 34 of the 37 Getting Ahead graduates have went into Circles
- Of the 21 individuals who have participated in Circles for 12 or more months
 - 15 individuals had paid employment while active in the program with a total earned income of \$49,410.
 - 7 exits from Ontario Works occurred between June 2014 and December 2015 resulting in a savings of \$21,478.

As of December 2015, 5 of these 7 participants (5 adults and 9 children) remain off Ontario Works assistance for an average monthly saving of \$4,116 or \$49,393 per year.

- Earned income as a result of the pilot totaled \$49,410 resulting in a savings to Ontario Works of \$27,254 through chargeable income deductions from participant’s monthly Ontario Works benefits.

Impact Statements:

When I joined Circles, I was shy and overwhelmed. I was a single, unemployed mom raising a young child. I have since enrolled in the Recreation and Leisure program at Fanshawe College and plan to work in a nursing home upon graduation.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Funding for this initiative is included in the 2016-2019 Council approved Multi Year Budget. Council approved a Strategic Investment Business Case #14 - Ontario Works Service Plan – Low Income Support Enhancement to continue the implementation of this initiative. In the 2016-2019 Multi Year Budget, Council approved a gross budget allocation of \$520,000 per year partially offset by Provincial subsidy and by contributions from the Social Services Reserve Fund.

CONCLUSION

With the additional investment through the Multi-year Budget process, Circles London launched a third Circle in January 2017 with 53 Circle Leaders (participants) to date entering one of the three Circle groups. Plans are currently underway to launch a targeted fourth Circle by the end of 2017 focusing on youth specifically.

This powerful and transformative initiative supports long term Ontario Works participant’s transition into employment as well as striving to break the cycle of persistent poverty while creating a deeper public awareness and understanding of poverty.

SUBMITTED BY:	RECOMMENDED BY:
KEVIN DICKINS MANAGER, EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME SUPPORT SERVICES, HOUSING, SOCIAL SERVICES AND DEARNESS HOME	SANDRA DATARS BERE MANAGING DIRECTOR, HOUSING, SOCIAL SERVICES AND DEARNESS HOME

Cc. Elaine Sauve, Program Supervisor, Ministry of Community and Social Services
Michelle Quintyn, Goodwill Industries, Ontario Great Lakes
Kyle Murray, Senior Financial Business Administrator