

SCHEDULE 1



# London Ontario Works

## Employment Services Framework, 2019 to 2024

April 23, 2018



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## PREFACE

The London Ontario Works *Employment Services Framework 2019 to 2024* sets out the planned structure of employment service provision for Ontario Works participants in London over a five-year period. The Framework, first introduced in 1997, was revised in 2005 and again in 2012 with Municipal Council approval. This updated version provides a framework for service delivery based on community, participants, staff and employment sector key informant input, caseload demographics, and best practices research including the experience of a sample of Ontario jurisdictions.

This Framework is an important tool used in strategic planning and will assist employment service providers and London's Ontario Works office in developing service and business plans. It is consistent with the City of London's strategic priority of strengthening our community in that it identifies pathways to be successful, particularly for individuals facing poverty, mental health and addictions. This Framework helps improve the delivery and coordination of employment services through strategic and collaborative partnerships with community organizations, funders, and employers. This helps to strengthen and grow our economy and create diverse employment opportunities, fulfilling another strategic priority for the City. (City of London, 2015). The Framework supports the London's Community Economic Road Map Economic Priority 4 of "a top quality workforce" and ensuring local employers have access to the talent they need through the partnerships, relationships and programs outlined in the Framework.

A comprehensive and collaborative approach was taken to complete this Framework through a series of consultations, surveys and conversations. We greatly appreciate the contributions of our community partners including employment, education and business sectors, Ontario Works staff, as well as other Ontario Works offices and people in receipt of Ontario Works.

*Kevin Dickins*  
*Manager, Employment and Income Supports*  
*Housing, Social Services and Dearness Home*

# LONDON ONTARIO WORKS

## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FRAMEWORK

### Background

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 primarily an employment assistance and financial support program 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 was introduced in 1997 when the Ontario Works program commenced in London, and was revised in 2005 and in 2012 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 Advanced Education and Skills Development, and Service Canada), and contracts for specified employment assistance services with local service providers.

The Employment Assistance Framework builds on the community expertise and collaborative efforts such as the Employment Sector Council, Local Employment Planning Council, and the London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership, in responding to local labour market needs. The framework recognizes the importance of linkages to employers through multiple channels and through a diversity of service providers; community non-profits, education systems, and private sector for-profit businesses.

### The Value of Work

Employment has social, emotional and health benefits in addition to providing a source of income. Working can provide a sense of identity and purpose, as well as provide an opportunity for social contacts. It offers opportunities for personal growth, helps to structure day-to-day life, and contributes to self-esteem. Besides financial hardship, loss or lack of employment can cause mental and physical health problems at the individual level. The lack of these social determinants of health can have broader reaching negative impacts on the family and the community as a whole (Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010), (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2003).

*“Although poverty is not only about income, inadequate income is a key element of poverty. From an economic perspective, adequate income and employment are pathways out of poverty, and employment can be a particularly empowering route.”*

*(London For All -  
A Roadmap to End Poverty, March  
2016, p.17)*

### Ontario Works Employment Services

Employment services are mandated within the Ontario Works legislation. The Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) provides direction on employment service obligations and responsibilities of Ontario Works offices through the Ontario Works Policy Directives. The Directives recognize that a range of employment supports and services must be available to

participants in order to respond to their needs and to local labour market needs. Participants are required to undertake an active job search either independently or in a structured job-search program. Learning, Earning & Parenting (LEAP), Literacy Screening, assessment and training, and Addiction Services are specialized employment supports and services offered as part of employment services. Employment Placements and Self-Employment Development are also required activities of Ontario Works Employment Service providers.

### **The Need for an Employment Services Framework**

Municipalities have local discretion on how Ontario Works delivers employment services and are guided by the provincial Directives and guidelines.

Ontario Works Employment Services are part of the broader workforce development and employment and training services sectors, which include numerous partners in private, non-profit, and government sectors. The Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, through Employment Ontario, offers a range of employment supports and services that may be appropriate for many Ontario Works participants. Literacy and Basic Skills programs and services are funded through the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development with the services delivered by educational institutions and Employment Ontario centres. Community based employment agencies serve a diverse range of individuals including Ontario Works participants, Employment Insurance beneficiaries, Ontario Disability Support Program clients, as well as the general public. Within this context, it is acknowledged that the Ontario Works Employment Services Framework must be a part of a shared service model approach that partners with the employment, training and education sectors, and the business community.

A local employment services framework guides program direction, in order to ensure that the Ontario Works employment programs, which are funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, operate within the legislation and within the local context.

*“Programs and services offered by the government need to keep pace with the complex needs of our growing and diverse population. In addition, the current fiscal environment requires a disciplined focus on finding smarter, better ways to deliver the best possible value for every dollar spent. The Province is faced with demographic, economic, social and fiscal challenges.”*  
*(Community Hubs in Ontario – A Strategic Framework & Action Plan, 2015, p.8)*

### **The Current Local Context**

Since the 2005 Framework was developed, legislation has continued to evolve, the economy and labour market context have changed significantly, the employment and training sector has undergone a transformation, and we have a greater awareness of the emerging needs and makeup of the caseload. At this time, there is a fair amount of uncertainty as to the future economic state and the policy context in which Ontario Works employment programs will be operating. At the time of drafting of this framework, the current provincial government have announced significant investments in social services. It is uncertain how these recent changes will continue to be supported following the upcoming provincial election.

#### **Local Economic and Labour Market Changes**

Over the past 10 years, the London region has experienced significant economic changes and challenges including a recession which officially started in 2008 and the recent employment

recovery of the last several years. Over this period the Ontario Works caseload has reflected these challenges and has swelled by 58% since 2007 to over 11,500 households in 2018; levels not experienced since the recession in 1996. Recovery is expected to continue into 2018 and 2019. The Conference Board of Canada predicts economic stability for the London region over the next few years with the anticipation that London's economic growth will slightly increase by 1.8% in 2018 and 1.5% in 2019 (Arcand et al., 2018). Employment in London is expected to grow by 2.6% in 2018. The London economy is well diversified and; as a result, on average has demonstrated to be more stable with less drastic swings in its unemployment rates when compared to other cities in Ontario.

Much of the recent growth in the local economy can be attributed to the manufacturing sector, an attractive Canadian dollar, and recent local investments in London manufacturing such as Sodecia (auto parts), General Dynamic Land Systems Canada (armoured vehicles), and Dr. Oetker (agri-business). The manufacturing sector will be greatly impacted by the outcome of the re-negotiations of the NAFTA agreements currently underway. The real estate market in London has boomed given special interest from out of town buyers, mainly from Toronto. The construction industry, also, is poised to have a record year of growth; the growth rate expected to be 2.0% in 2018 (De Bono 2018). The digital creative industry has created significant growth in London and is also expected to grow (Mayor's 2017 State of City Address, 2018). Given London's geographic location, a significant area of growth for London is in the Agri-business sector, an industry the province says is worth \$37 billion, supporting more than 800,000 jobs provincially ("Mayor's 2017 State of the City Address", 2018).

Although there is a boom in manufacturing, agri-business, tech sector, and construction, there exists a skills gap primarily due to the increased use of technology. The Local Employment Planning Council (LEPC) consulted several employers in the region and the majority reported that they are either not getting enough applications to job postings, or the applicants do not have the necessary skills required for the jobs advertised. Employers specifically noted the lack of skilled trades persons with industry-specific training. The skill gap will have a negative impact on the economy, so more skill-training focus is necessary (Local Employment Planning Council, n.d).

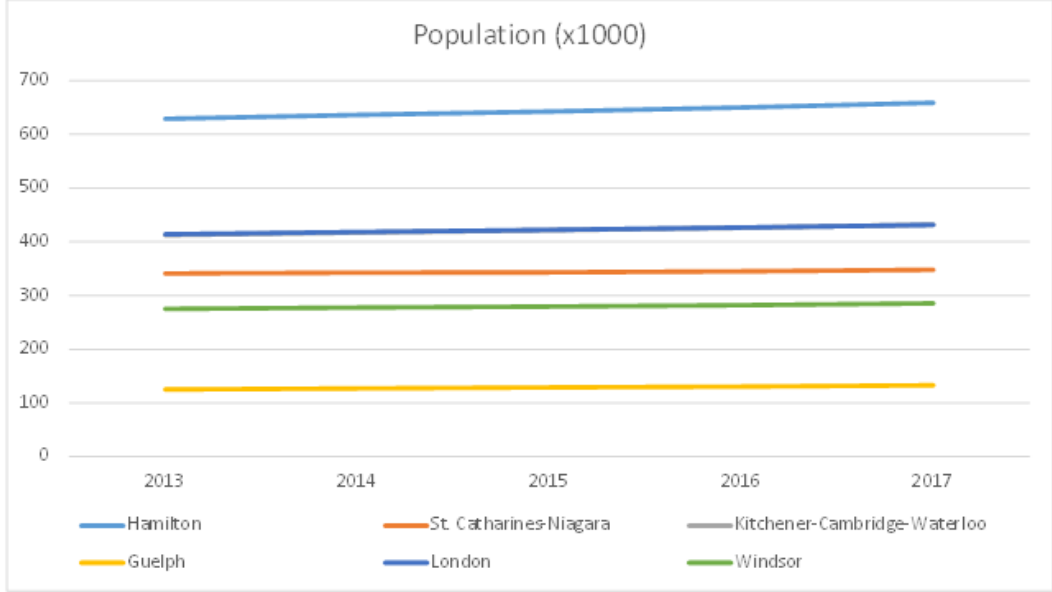
Transportation continues to be one of the barriers to attracting and retaining employees. In some cases, there is no public transportation to enable potential candidates from securing employment (Local Employment Planning Council, n.d.).

Other labour market trends include a shift in employment from goods to service sector, an increased requirement for higher education or training, and an increase in non-traditional work arrangements. According to staffing company Randstand Canada, short-term contracts and part time jobs has been on the rise. About 85% of companies surveyed responded that they are moving towards a more "agile workforce". The switch to a gig economy has led companies to go from providing stable full time employment with full benefits to what has been referred to as precarious employment - insecure, entry level, part-time, low pay with little or no benefits. In some cases, as a result of technological advancements, new employees are being hired and intensively trained on the job just to

*"Gig economy" - where people move from contract to contract, from job to job, without a clear sense of precisely what tomorrow might bring. .. Uber or DoorDash are perhaps the most prominent examples of a gig-based employment model, but even traditional businesses are outsourcing tasks like editing, paralegal services, or IT— to jobbers both local and in places such as Bosnia, Bangladesh and Brazil. (CPA Canada, August 2017)*

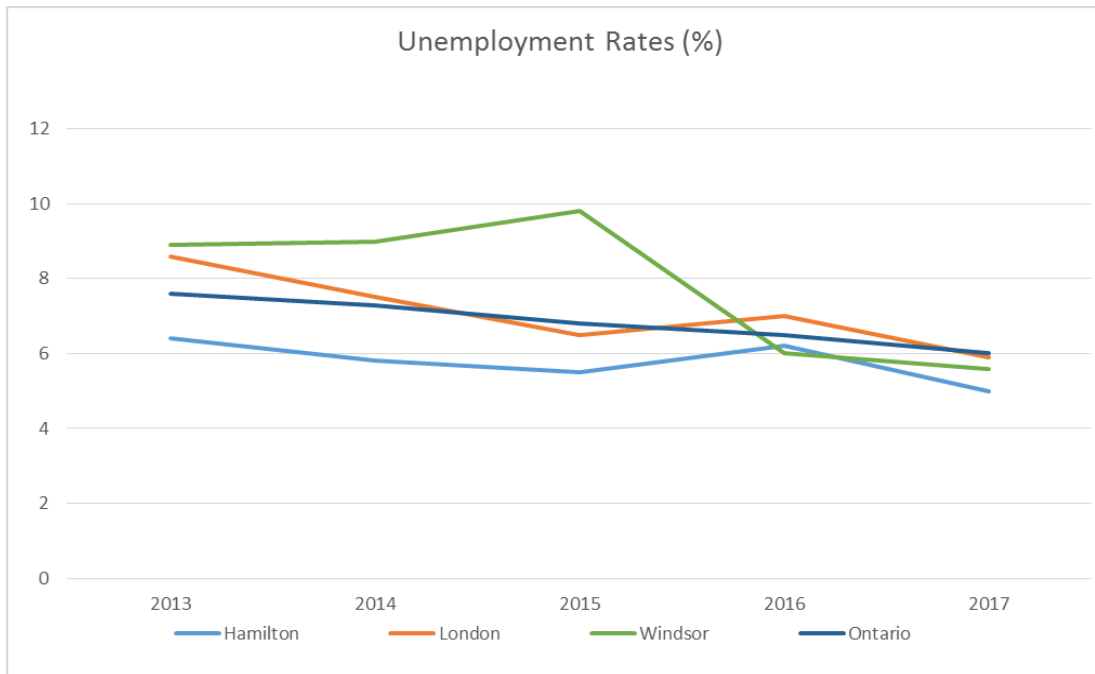
take on certain projects and then let go after project completion (Nazareth 2017). Millennials, in many ways, have adopted the gig economy and become used to switching jobs, taking on temporary contract work, and working multiple jobs. These changes will affect how people will look for and secure employment and therefore impact the types of employment services provided.

The population of London is slightly increasing and its growth is similar to other municipalities in Ontario. Although the region is experiencing a declining birth rate, the growth of London’s population can be mainly attributed to an influx of new Canadians and immigrants to the region. The City of London is currently developing an immigration strategy to successfully attract, retain and integrate new immigrants in London. Employment opportunities will need to be key components for this strategy to be successful. There is a growing Indigenous population as birthrates in this segment of the population have increased significantly across Canada, including the London region. As a result, there will be a growing segment of Indigenous youth requiring appropriate employment and training services.



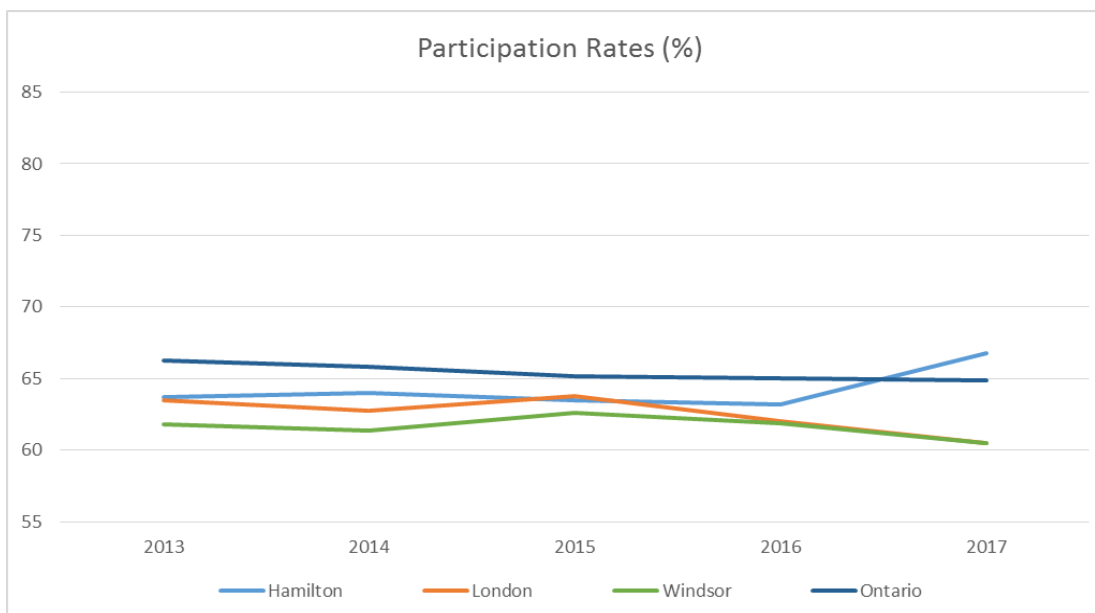
**Source:** Statistics Canada. Table 282-0135 - Labour Force Survey estimates (LFS), by census metropolitan area based on 2011 Census boundaries, three-month moving average, seasonally adjusted and unadjusted, annual (persons unless otherwise noted), CANSIM (database). (Accessed: April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018)

The employment rate for Ontario is the second highest amongst all the provinces in 2018; however, London lags behind other cities. In February 2018, London’s unemployment rate of 6.7% was the second highest in Ontario (of the 15 Census Metropolitan Areas CMAs reported) and higher than the Ontario provincial unemployment rate of 5.5%. In March 2018, London’s unemployment rate dropped to 6.3% and was the fourth highest in Ontario.



**Source:** Statistics Canada. Table 282-0135 - Labour Force Survey estimates (LFS), by census metropolitan area based on 2011 Census boundaries, three-month moving average, seasonally adjusted and unadjusted, annual (persons unless otherwise noted), CANSIM (database). (Accessed: April 10th, 2018)

When compared to the provincial economy, London lags behind most municipalities in employment rate as well as labour market participation. The labour market participation rate for London is 60.6% when compared to the national average of 65.5%.



**Source:** Statistics Canada. Table 282-0135 - Labour Force Survey estimates (LFS), by census metropolitan area based on 2011 Census boundaries, three-month moving average, seasonally adjusted and unadjusted, annual (persons unless otherwise noted), CANSIM (database). (Accessed: April 10th, 2018)



The employment services and supports need to be adapted to respond to these changes. The challenge for the Ontario Works employment services program is to encourage labour market participation by supporting people in gaining employment that leads to long-term financial and personal gain.

While there is optimism about an improving economy and a lowering of the unemployment rate, the updated Employment Services Framework highlights the importance of collaboration with employers and community partners as vital in order to link potential labour supply with the current and future demands.

### **Legislative Changes and Policy Initiatives**

Many Federal and Provincial legislative and benefit changes introduced recently have been focused on reducing or eliminating poverty. Over the past several years, many communities across Canada, with assistance from the Federal government, have adopted a Housing First philosophy, including the City of London Social Services. A Housing First approach is an effective way to reduce homelessness and address chronic and episodic homelessness. Employment services complement the wrap around supports needed to assist clients in sustaining their housing and in their work towards recovery and reintegration into the community.

In 2016, the Federal government introduced a new Canada Child Benefit helping put more money into the pockets of low income parents. A number of provincial initiatives creating an impact as well as providing additional assistance for low income Ontarians include:

- Free tuition to low income Ontario families and increased access to OSAP
- Free prescription drugs for Ontarians under the age of 25
- Increased access to subsidized and licensed childcare
- Increases in minimum wage
- Introduction of Bill 148 – Fair Workplaces Act

The Province has initiated a “Social Assistance Service Modernization Strategy” that is aimed at improving customer service as well as outcomes for social assistance recipients. The change reflects a shift from enforcement focus to risk-based approach and encourages cross-ministerial programming and initiatives. New technology will also be introduced which modernizes the tools used in Social Services. A number of pilot programs have been initiated in several communities across Ontario. An evaluation of each pilot project is to follow in 2018 or 2019, which will inform further implementation. Some of these strategies include Basic Income Guarantee, Social Assistance mobile application, electronic file storage, and reduced verification and administrative work. These initiatives and projects under development may be impacted by the results of the upcoming provincial election expected on or before June 7, 2018.

On a municipal level, the Mayor’s Advisory Panel on Poverty drafted “London For All – A Roadmap to End Poverty” in 2016. In May 2017, United Way Elgin Middlesex was named Lead Agency to implement London for All and will bring partners together to develop and oversee implementation plans, ensure ongoing evaluation and accountability, report back to stakeholders, including the community, and ensure individuals with lived experience of poverty have meaningful involvement in all aspects of the work, including leadership roles.

# Consultations and Research

The Framework was reviewed through a process of community consultations, surveys, and further research. The updated Framework will be utilized to formulate a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Purchase of Service (POS) of Employment Services. The timeline below outlines the Framework review, development, and implementation:



The 2019 to 2024 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 welfare 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.

Overall, we have heard that fundamentally the Framework is working well with partnerships and contracted services. Our system had good outcomes with the achievement of most targets and employment outcomes that continue to be strong. The development of the 2019 to 2024 Framework is an opportunity to learn from what we have been doing so that we can build on its strengths and enhance what we already have. This section of the report highlights the information gathering, key findings, and recommendations which support the recommended new Framework. The findings of the community consultations with Ontario Works participants, staff and employment service providers has also been shared with LEPC as part of the City of London’s contribution to the community consultations that form part of LEPC’s recent report “20/20: – Bringing Clarity to the Local Labour Market” (draft report February 2018).

## Employment Service Providers Findings

The feedback provided through two community consultations with employment service providers mirror similar concerns expressed by Ontario Works. Highlights include:

- Strong emphasis on individualized services.
- Need for common assessment and understanding of client's needs.
- Need for flexibility in clients accessing service from more than one agency
- Increased resources for pre-employment supports – life skills and mental health in particular.

A full summary of the community consultations is located in Appendix A.

## Ontario Works Staff Consultation Findings

Staff surveys and focus groups held across Ontario Works generated a considerable amount of feedback. Staff feedback was consistent with the feedback obtained through the community consultations and identified that Ontario Works participant needs are often complex with increasing concerns for mental health and wellness with stress, anxiety, and depression most commonly mentioned. Complex trauma was identified, especially when dealing with new immigrants to Canada. Staff also identified that Ontario Works participants often struggle with life skills – motivation, resilience, financial literacy, time management, and computer literacy; the basic building blocks for success in training, in school, and in the workplace.

Staff were consistent in their identification of the need for a range of employment services focusing on career management, foundational skills, work experience, and skills training and development. Caseworkers require spending adequate time with their participants to fully understand their needs, to make quality referrals, and timely follow-ups for problem solving.

In the consultations, staff provided positive feedback around existing community services and what is working. Staff also provided numerous ideas and suggestions for improvements including increased accountability of agencies, reduction of repetition of essential job search skills workshops, increased skills training options, and additional mental health supports.

## Participant Consultation Findings

Three focus groups of Ontario Works participants were engaged to learn more about what is working well in the current employment services offered and what could be improved. Of great importance and significance is the ability to form a trusting relationship with their caseworkers. Ontario Works participants rely heavily on others to navigate the various systems and to assist them with information, guidance, and expertise. They count on their allies to have up to date information and to understand what would work best for their unique circumstance.

Participants appreciated service providers that seemed to specialize in areas that related to them such as age, identity, or particular interests and abilities. Participants also provided very positive feedback on skills training programs that directly linked to employment. This clarity assisted them to see the eventual outcome and helped them to be more engaged in the process. As well, participants expressed a desire for an expanded choice of such programs.

Participants spoke of frustration at having to repeat similar Essential Employment Services whenever they changed service providers and expressed frustration in having to repeat similar programs without an option to fast track. The value and purpose of repeating workshops such as resume writing and interviewing wasn't clear to them. The focus groups participants reported showing up at agencies without a clear understanding of why they were there, what they were asked to do, and how it contributed to finding a job.

The employment service needs identified by Ontario Works participants fell into the career management and work experience categories as well as noting the importance of an employment service system that includes a psycho-social component to provide encouragement and motivation.

Participants expressed the importance of a more individualized approach to employment service planning including an early assessment of each person's employment service needs. Ontario Works participants identified the decision to find employment as an emotional and psychological risk; a decision which increased their anxiety in leaving a sense of stability and certainty to try something new. Other contributing factors included food security, housing stability, and childcare as key elements to address prior to being able to find work. Time spent with the Caseworker was important to explore, plan and problem-solve. Social network supports like Circles were very helpful in learning about, understanding and advocating for the scope of services and supports that are available to them.

Overall, participants said they would like more information about the employment services that were available. They would like to be connected to an employment service provider more quickly than is currently their experience, and they would like to be able to provide feedback on the usefulness of specific programs and have input on their employment plan.

### **Key Informant Interview Findings**

A solid work ethic and dependability were identified by various employer groups as two key attributes which they strongly desired but often found missing in job applicants and potential hires. Key informants noted the importance of life skills including communications skills, the ability to work well with others, resolve conflict, and deal with personal issues as essential to job success.

Local employers have expressed a difficulty in finding suitably trained employees, notably in skilled trades in construction and manufacturing. Although the results and impact will not be felt until many years later, increased efforts in promoting the trades in elementary and high schools have been undertaken. Additional strategies need to be undertaken to address the skills shortage. Additional funding for vocational and skills training will need to be undertaken to address the current and growing future gaps.

According to the key informants, the recent increase in Ontario's minimum wage has not only raised employer's expectations of their workforce but has also negatively impacted (perhaps temporarily) their ability as employers to hire new staff. Added to this challenge has been uncertainty in the marketplace relating to trade agreements, interest and exchange rates, and a resulting drop in employer confidence.

Financial incentives of sufficient amount and duration, as well as the assurance of the provision of job coaching by Ontario Works, may help connect Ontario Works participants to employers, particularly for small and medium sized businesses and new businesses who may not have the

capacity to hire someone who is receiving social assistance or who may not know about this labour pool.

Marketing tools and a database of potential employees could further help in connecting employers to Ontario Works participants. An inventory of the available skillsets in the London community would allow organizations, such as London Economic Development Corporation (LEDC), effective promotion of London and its workforce. This information would also assist LEPC and Employment Sector Council (ESC) to identify workforce development opportunities. In addition to agencies developing relationships with employers, the LEDC and the London Chamber of Commerce are important partners.

## Best Practices

While robust evidence about “what works” in employment service delivery is difficult to come by, individualized assessment, a range of employment services from pre-employment or foundational work experience, and job retention support were consistent themes in the literature. Additionally, the importance of strong linkages to employers in order to incorporate a demand-side focus in employment programs appeared repeatedly as was the need to adopt a longer-term focus on employment programs as part of career development rather than simply helping people get “any job”.

The use of psycho-social interventions such as “Getting Ahead” and “Circles™”<sup>1</sup> has been increasing significantly in Ontario. “Circles” is seen as a proven and effective poverty reduction model, which encourages community engagement to develop genuine and lasting relationships across the socioeconomic classes in order to help facilitate low-income persons to move permanently out of poverty. The “Getting Ahead” curriculum is being readily adopted and being adapted by many Ontario municipalities to help individuals who are living in poverty think of a sustainable and self-sufficient future for themselves, create an action plan, and start to put that plan into place. An evaluation of London’s “Getting Ahead” program is currently being completed. The use of motivational interviewing is being widely adopted by numerous agencies including the Employment and Social Services Division of Chatham-Kent and has been showing promising results. Similarly a pilot of the “NOW” (New Outlook on Working) program, which includes motivational interviewing, was completed in St. Thomas and London in early 2017 with positive outcomes, in particular for those who have been on social assistance for an extended period of time. These programs demonstrate an increase in participant’s motivation, confidence and self-efficacy as well as positive employment outcomes.

Most of the municipalities scanned, with the exception of Toronto, have limited or targeted contracts with outside agencies to deliver employment services. These contracts may be time limited, tied to Provincial or Federal funding initiatives, skills training or employment placement focused, or specific to particular population groups such as youth or participants with addictions. Additional research and on-going investigations will be conducted to identify additional best practices.

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<sup>1</sup> Circles is an initiative of the Move the Mountain Leadership Center in Ames, Iowa. Getting Ahead is a readiness program that seeks to motivate individuals and families to take the necessary steps to transition out of poverty; which upon completion, can serve as the pre-requisite for those program graduates who wish to become involved in Circles.

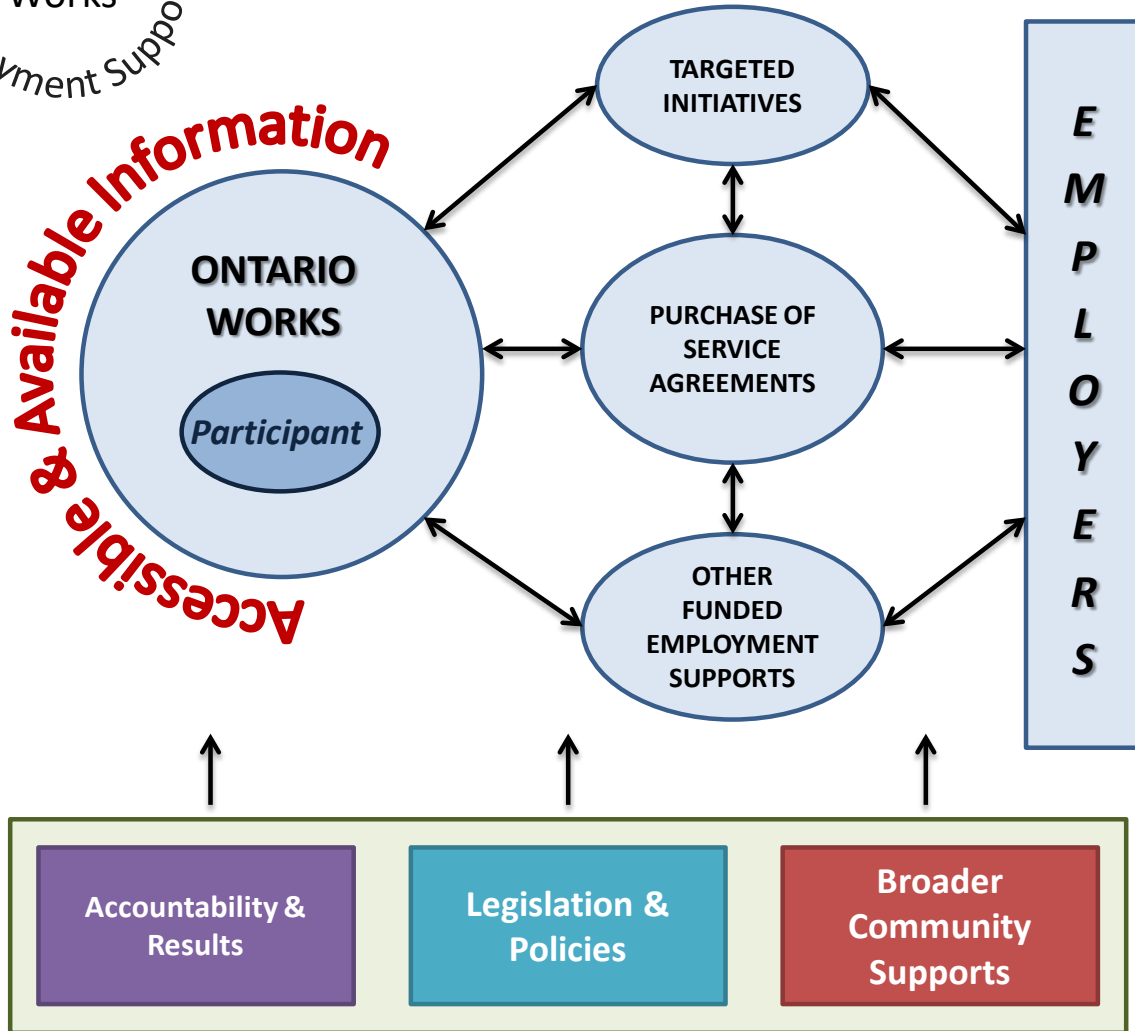
## Service Delivery Framework for Employment Services

The Employment Assistance Framework is designed with the participant at the centre of the Ontario Works employment supports program. This program is comprised of separate and distinct components including in-house supports and services, services purchased from employment agencies in the community, and employment services that are available from agencies and organizations funded by other departments and ministries. Information and communication connects these components to each other and to the participant. Community-based employment agencies have the closest connections with employers. Supporting this program are research, legislation, funding, accountability & results, and broader community supports. The intention is that the Framework provides strong supports and outcomes for participants.

The 2019 to 2024 Framework is guided by the principles of:

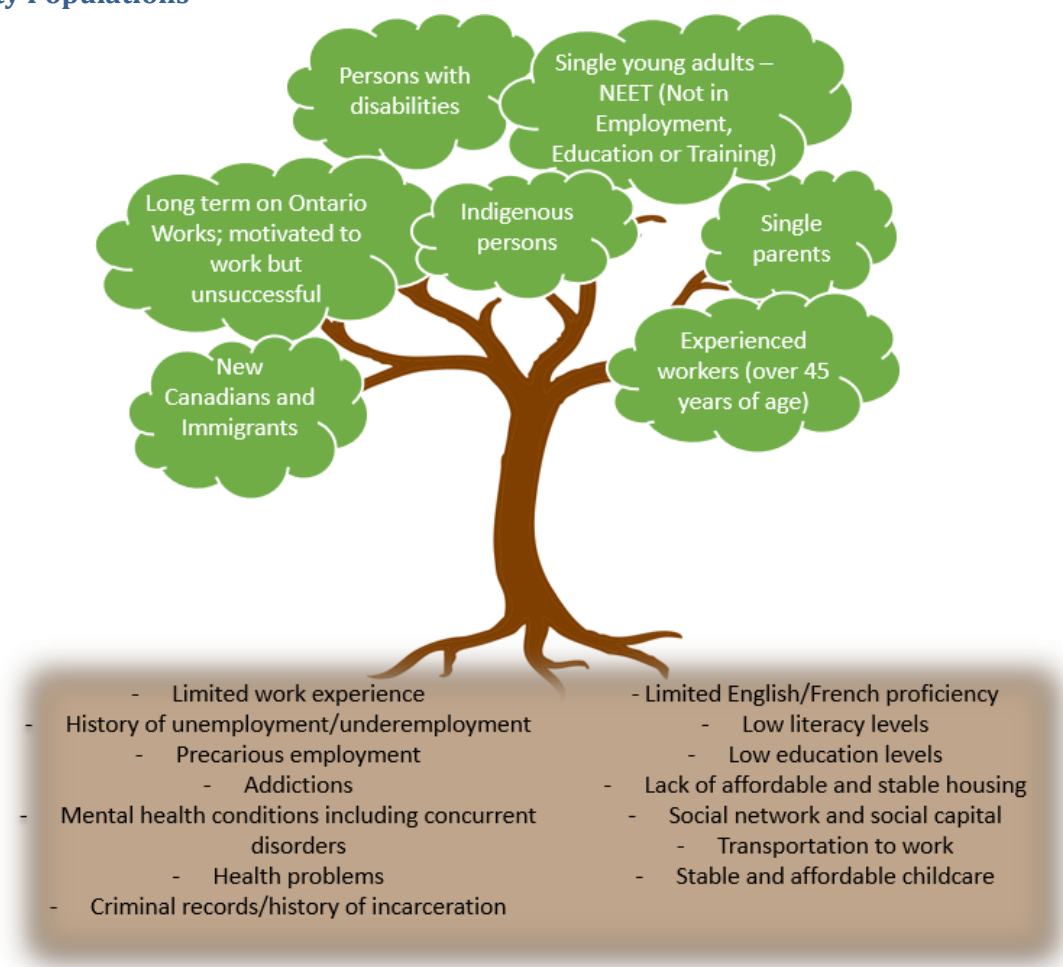
- *Participant-centred Delivery:*  
Emphasis is placed on tailoring an employment service plan that meet the specific needs and goals of participants; utilizing the common assessment process, information sharing and cross-referrals.
- *Participant Engagement and Empowerment:*  
Participants play an active role by providing input into decisions made regarding their service priorities and planning. Engagement of participants in programs and services will be encouraged using a variety of techniques and strategies such as a strengths based approach and motivational interviewing.
- *Range of Quality Services:*  
Flexible program design that provides a range of employment services adaptable to the needs of participants, ranging from supports provided for a quick, re-entry into the workforce to more intensive individualized supports required for first-time entry into the workforce.
- *Responsiveness to Emerging Needs:*  
Engaging with local service providers allows for supports based on the changing needs of participants, labour market, and employer. Engaging with local employers will also allow a greater understanding of employer needs and how to support participants be successful in obtaining and retaining employment. The framework offers the necessary basis for piloting new and innovative initiatives.
- *Community Collaboration:*  
This framework relied on strong connections with employers, workforce development and education along with collaboration amongst employment service providers. The framework also relies on maximizing and leveraging other related resources available in the community.
- *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.

# Employment Assistance Framework



LEGEND				
<p><b>ONTARIO WORKS:</b> Stabilization &amp; Income Supports Individualized Services, Supports &amp; Referrals Employment Supports Participation Agreement &amp; Employment Planning Crisis Intervention Team Structure Intensive Case Management Guidelines</p>	<p><b>OTHER FUNDED EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS:</b> Literacy Basic Education &amp; Training Employment Ontario Immigrant Employment Services Community programs</p>	<p><b>ACCOUNTABILITY &amp; RESULTS:</b> Quality Assurance Communication Regular Reporting Customer Satisfaction Outcomes in Education and Employment</p>	<p><b>TARGETED INITIATIVES</b> Employer facing One time Employment outcome focused Based on local Labour Market Needs</p>	<p><b>Purchase of Service (POS):</b> Fundamental Employment Services • Foundational Skills • Workplace Skills Skills Training Directly Linked to Employment Employment Search, Placement &amp; Retention Specialized Individual Supports Self-Employment Development</p>

## Priority Populations



While all people currently receiving and potentially receiving Ontario Works assistance need to receive employment services that meet their individual needs, our caseload data and consultation process identified a number of groups as populations that often have complex needs and require specialized attention. Priority participant populations include:

- Single parents
- Single young adults – NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training)
- Immigrants & New Canadians
- Indigenous persons
- Persons with disabilities
- Experienced workers (over 45 years of age), and
- Long term on Ontario Works; motivated to work but unsuccessful.

Ontario Works participants often experience barriers that limit or prevent them from participating in employment and/or employment related activities. These may include:

- Limited work experience
- History of unemployment / underemployment
- Precarious employment
- Addictions
- Mental health conditions including concurrent disorders



- Long-term physical conditions or health problems
- Criminal records/history of incarceration
- Limited English/French proficiency
- Low literacy levels
- Low education levels
- Lack of affordable and stable housing
- Social network and social capital
- Transportation to work
- Stable and affordable childcare

The Employment Services Framework will incorporate appropriate elements to help reduce, eliminate and address these barriers and assist Ontario Works participants in moving forward on their employment path.

## Key Service Elements of an Employment Assistance Framework

To achieve a full range of participant and employer-focused employment services, the following key service elements are needed and form the basis for the Employment Services Framework for 2019 to 2024. A participant may receive services that comprise more than one key element. These elements include:

1. Individualized Services and Supports
2. Assessments and Employment Planning
3. Career Management Services
4. Foundational Skills
5. Education
6. Workplace Experience
7. Employment Placement
8. Intensive Employment Supports
9. Skills Training Directly Linked to Employment
10. Self-Employment Development
11. Targeted Training Initiatives
12. Evaluation and Measurement

### 1. Individualized Services and Supports

The goal of Individualized Services and Supports is to customize employment programs and services to the needs of the individual participant. One of the key values of the Ontario Works programs and supports is to be participant focused. The initial screening helps to identify any challenges and barriers needing to be addressed when considering employability and social inclusion. The supports provided, the types of referrals, and appropriate follow up will reflect the uniqueness of the participants. Through the initial screening, Ontario Works staff are able to make appropriate referrals to available community resources and programming. Cross referrals between agencies is encouraged so that individual needs can be addressed and supported using the strengths and expertise of the various agencies.

A key component of the success of this approach will be the engagement of participants in the process. The participant, with support from Ontario Works and community partners, will determine the direction they would like to take. Ontario Works staff as well as community

partners, will develop strategies and approaches that encourage participant engagement and full participation.

Individualized Services and Supports includes Stabilization Services. The goal of Stabilization Services is to support participants to obtain those ancillary supports that support employment. Examples include: obtaining pardons, child care, transportation, housing, et cetera.

- Support for identifying and obtaining the stabilization type supports needed for employment is the responsibility of Ontario Works case management staff.
- It is expected that as a result of Stabilization Services, ancillary barriers to employment will be removed.

Funding from Ontario Works can also cover employment related expenses and can be obtained to help cover the cost of clothing, transportation and other supports needed to obtain and retain employment. The costs of stand-alone job specific skill training, or other employment programming to increase the participant's employability can also be considered.

Engagement of Ontario Works participants is key to successful outcomes and is a joint responsibility between Ontario Works, community agencies and Ontario Works participants. It is important that participants are motivated and engaged and that the services and supports reflect the goals of the individual Ontario Works participants.

## **2. Assessments and Employment Planning**

Individualized assessment:

The goal of individualized assessment is to identify the specific employment service needs and interests of the individual taking into account their longer term employment goal for the purposes of developing a tailored Employment Action Plan that fits within the scope of Ontario Works but allows for moving beyond Ontario Works towards higher education and skill development.

- Ontario Works staff utilize a variety of assessment tools to help determine employment related service needs and proper referrals. These assessment tools have been tested, evaluated and demonstrated validity and include (but not limited to): VI-SPDAT, URICA, Employability Readiness Scale, and GAIN-SS assessments.
- Individualized assessment will make use of the Common Assessment Process tool so that information can be shared consistently across agencies. A diversity of assessments for skills, abilities, interests, values, competencies and strengths are available at community agencies. A literacy assessment may also be utilized. Intensive diagnostics such as the Work Readiness Assessment and Motivational Assessments are also made available where appropriate.
- Each Ontario Works participant should be assessed within the first month of entering Ontario Works for their current capacities, their interests, and their longer term ambitions. The assessment would also identify areas to be strengthened or addressed. The results can be used to create a "roadmap" that will be used by the participant and service providers to guide the participant's path to employment.

- It is expected that as a result of this assessment, a participant's strengths, abilities and education will be identified along with any barriers to employment (social, economic, personal, workplace, labour market etc), and an Employment Action Plan will be developed.

Employment Action Plan:

The goal of the Employment Action Plan is to guide participants and service providers in the steps taken to reach employment.

- The Employment Action Plan may be a visualized model that can be modified as needed. It should contain specific information about career management, foundational and stability strengths, challenges, barriers, or specific needs as they relate to employment, as well as contain clear action steps.
- The Employment Action Plan will be developed in partnership with the participant, and will be revisited and reassessed at regular intervals.
- It is expected that participants are engaged and participating throughout this process resulting in the development of an employment plan that participants are satisfied with and referral show rates will improve.
- The Employment Action Plan is the participant's own and should be transferrable to any other agency, particularly when using the Common Assessment Process (CAP).

### **3. Career Management Services**

The goal of Career Management Services is to provide Ontario Works participants with the supports and services needed to develop and enhance their employment portfolio.

Services include:

- Resume development and interview skills
- Tailored job search tools to specific employment objectives / job posting
- Employability planning
- Job Search Planning and Job Search Strategy development
- Career or vocational counselling
- Structured Job Search supports
- Employer networking
- Experiential learning
- Services are provided individually or in group settings and/or using Information and Communication technology in order to meet the needs of adult learners.
- Programs could be offered in modules in order that participants may participate only in those activities that meet their needs at that time. This offers flexibility to those clients who may not need extended service or who have already participated in services. This aligns with the rapid re-entry, re-entry, and entry paths of employment services.
- It is expected that Career Management Services will provide participants with the tools needed to gain employment. It is noteworthy that some participants will move to post-secondary education because of career or vocational counselling.

### **4. Foundational Skills**

The goal of Foundational Skills is to provide participants with the training and support they need to acquire the essential skills needed for employment.

Services include training and supports in key skill areas such as:

- Life skills
  - Literacy and numeracy
  - Computer literacy
  - Basic skills such as English as a Second Language (ESL) / French as a Second Language (FSL)
  - Workplace expectations
  - Working with people, dealing with conflict, anger management
  - Confidence, self advocacy
  - Communication skills
  - Resiliency and Motivation
- Services may be provided individually or in group settings, and/or using Information and Communication technology in order to meet the needs of adult learners.
  - Programs could be offered in modules in order that participants may participate only in those activities that meet their needs at that time. This offers flexibility to those clients who may not need extended service or who have already participated in services. This aligns with the rapid re-entry, re-entry, and entry paths of employment services.
  - It is expected that Foundational Skills services will reduce personal barriers to employment and increase confidence.

## **5. Education**

The goal of Education is to support participants who have not completed their high school education to obtain their high school diploma or General Education Diploma (GED).

- Services may include GED training supports and opportunities for clients to obtain GED or referrals to community resources where this training is available.
- Services may work closely with local school boards, colleges, or universities to offer opportunities to earn school credit(s) towards a diploma, certificate, or degree.
- Some employment plans will involve engagement of post secondary school or training.
- Participants may require additional intensive supports such as an educational assessment or literacy testing in determining their best path forward with respect to employment and educational goals.

## **6. Workplace Experience**

The goal of Work Experience is to provide participants with hands-on job experience or experiential learning opportunities that allow participants the opportunity to practice learned skills in a work environment or develop new skills that will lead to improved employment opportunities. Some examples of experiential workplace experience include, but not limited to, are:

- Volunteering directly linked to the participant's employment goals or interests
- Internships
- Job Trials / job shadowing
- Job simulations

It is expected that workplace experience will result in workplace skill development, increased participant confidence, and employment. Agencies providing workplace experiences should be able to provide job coaching, mentoring, appropriate training, and proper supervision in addition to a safe work environment.

## **7. Employment Placement**

The goal of Employment Placement is to assist job ready participants to find and maintain suitable employment. Close linkages and relationships with employers are needed to make these placements meaningful.

- Job coaching and post hiring supports to the participant may be required to sustain and retain employment. Services could include a broad spectrum including career management services and foundational skills development as needed by the individual.
- Employment Placements are often sought based on the individual looking for work. The placements can also be employer focused and integrate recruitment strategies to fill these positions particularly with Ontario Works participants.
- Additional supports, coaching and post hiring supports may be required by the employer or managers to equip them in supporting individuals in the workplace.
- Incentives in the form of training allowances may be offered to employers for the purposes of off-setting the costs of training and education.
- It is expected that Employment Placement will result in people gaining and maintaining sustainable employment.

## **8. Intensive Employment Supports**

The goal of Intensive Employment Supports is to provide participants with significant barriers to employment such as mental health issues, disabilities, addictions or other undiagnosed and undetermined challenges to participate in education, training, or employment while receiving wraparound support.

Intensive Employment Supports may require specialized individual supports such as:

- Access to psycho-social supports and professional services
- Access to mental health supports
- Supports to apply to ODSP
- Professional financial advice and credit counselling
- Specialized assessments such as functional ability testing or Workplace Readiness Assessments
- Specialized learning supports, personal management, and life skills training
- It is expected that Intensive Employment Supports will help participants with more significant barriers complete their training or gain and maintain employment, as well as increase confidence, self-advocacy, and resilience.

## **9. Skills Training Directly Linked to Employment**

The goal of Skills Training Directly Linked to Employment is to assist participants to find and maintain employment by improving their marketable skills through training and practical work experience.

- Curriculum-based training – Employer involvement is important in developing and delivering the skill training curriculum.
- Services include the broad spectrum offered based on the needs of the employer and the target population. Employment Placement services and supports are mandatory for this service area.
- It is expected that Skills Training Directly Linked to Employment will result in workplace skill development, increased participant confidence, and sustainable employment.

## **10. Self-Employment Development**

The goal of Self-Employment Development (SED) is to assist participants in developing their own business to become self-employed. It is expected that through SED some participants will become self-employed, others will gain employment and others will identify post-secondary education and training as a next step. SED services will help individuals assess business viability of an idea, provide the opportunity for participants to increase their business acumen, and further develop business related skills such as marketing, sales and promotion, basic record and bookkeeping, financial literacy, budgeting, and costing. The services will help individuals increase the sustainable sales of a business so as to allow the participant to exit from Ontario Works.

## **11. Targeted Training Initiatives**

The goal of Targeted Training Initiatives is to provide employers, employment service providers, and neighbourhoods with the opportunity to develop and implement a targeted employment program for a targeted population.

- Targeted Training Initiatives provides funding for skills training and workforce development programs that meet the identified labour needs of employers, particularly new employers and small or medium-sized businesses and/or the target population.
- Employment service providers develop and deliver partnership programs with the direct involvement of employers.
- Services provided include the broad spectrum of employment supports and are offered based on the needs of the employer and the target population.
- It is expected that Targeted Training Initiatives will result in workplace skill development, increased participant confidence, and employment.

## **12. Evaluation and Measurement**

The goal of Evaluation and Measurement is to identify the value added that a service or support has provided. Evaluation often includes a measurement of the change or outcome(s) anticipated from the services and supports provided. The overall arching goal of the Employment Assistance Framework is to assist Ontario Works participants take steps to obtain employment. Evaluation is a process that provides information, measurements, and indicators of intended impact or achieved outcome(s). For example: After receiving supports and services, it is expected that Ontario Works participants will have increased their employability and obtained employment or transitioned to education, training, skills development, and/or ODSP.

Each key service will have a component of evaluation and measuring. Some examples will include:

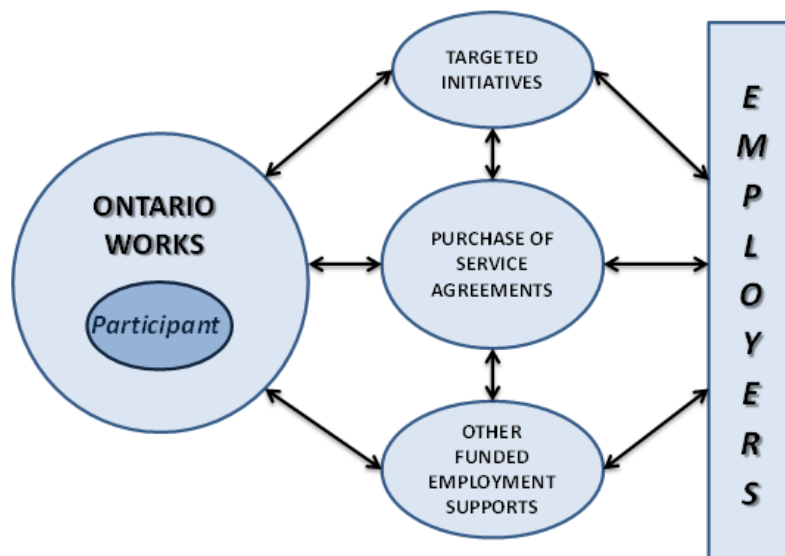
- Participant attendance records and rates
- Completion of service
- Number of withdrawals, no shows, terminations
- Reporting of outcomes: transition to employment, training, education, ODSP or other community services
- Satisfaction rates
- Decrease in anger, frustration
- Increase in confidence, self-advocacy, resilience

Evaluation will provide information regarding the appropriateness, validity, and overall effectiveness of the services and supports provided through the Employment Assistance Framework – both internal and external to Ontario Works and will help to identify any needed changes.

## Employment Framework Components

The 2019 Framework is comprised of four major components. Each component will contain several key employment service elements as described in the previous section. Many of the key service elements will be common across components and not mutually exclusive.

- Ontario Works Internal Resources & Supports
- Other Funded Employment Supports
- Purchase of Service (POS) Agreements
- Targeted Initiatives



### New Features

The 2019 to 2024 Framework builds on the successes and strengths of the previous frameworks. New features of the 2019 to 2024 Framework include:

- Increased community engagement through decentralization, utilization of hoteling spaces, community participation, and continued promotion of employment, education and training opportunities through Employment Support Specialists
- Increased flexibility in time taken to tailor the employment service plan (Participation Agreement) to meet the specific needs and goals of participants on a timely basis, so that referrals can be made more quickly to agencies, combined with enhanced internal employment reviews held at regular intervals
- The use of fee for service model for core employment services enabling agencies to have flexibility in the use of existing resources when providing individualized services and supports, as well as to encourage increased agency co-operation and cross referrals
- A greater attention to the engagement and retention of Ontario Works participants
- A change in Ontario Works participant's perception of Employment Placement to also include active job search as well as retention supports



- An increased emphasis on coaching and mentoring supports after client obtains job
- Strengthened accountability, evaluation and quality assurance approach
- Strengthened focus on providing supports and referrals for all Ontario Works participants

### *Funding*

Funding for Ontario Works Employment Assistance is provided through the Ontario Works Program Delivery funding envelope and is cost shared with the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) and the City. Following this same approach, POS Employment Service agencies will receive a combination of service level or administrative funding and outcome based funding.

The overall objective in the Purchase of Service agreements is to be able to provide a diverse menu of services for a diverse client demographic with varying needs while leveraging and augmenting existing resources. Negotiation of the contracts will establish a fee schedule combining fixed cost and pay-for-performance amount for actual services delivered.

## Component: Ontario Works Internal Resources & Supports

**Rationale:** The Ontario Works offices are the main point of contact for Ontario Works participants and have the ultimate responsibility for supporting Ontario Works participants and for delivering the Ontario Works program in compliance with Provincial legislation. Each municipality structures its supports and services differently to respond with supports appropriate to the community.

**Description:** The Ontario Works office is responsible for assessing, monitoring, and supporting the individual employment needs of participants on an ongoing basis.

### Employment Services Provided by Ontario Works:

<b>Employment Review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• completed by Ontario Works staff identifies interests and experience</li><li>• Results of employment review drive service planning</li><li>• Participation Agreement is completed within one month after an individual is granted eligibility for Ontario Works with reassessments and evaluations occurring at regular intervals</li></ul>
<b>Service Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The creation of a detailed Participation Agreement and Outcome Plan identifies referrals to agencies and community supports</li><li>• Includes staff encouraging social inclusion by actively working with participant to pursue volunteer opportunities that match interests and skills</li></ul>
<b>Referrals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To most appropriate employment service providers</li><li>• To specialized individualized services such as counselling, literacy and numeracy, and diagnostics</li><li>• To specialized Ontario Works case management teams</li><li>• To other community services that support stabilization such as child care, housing, obtaining pardons, basic needs, et cetera</li></ul>
<b>Financial Aid</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To cover the cost of employment related expenses</li><li>• To cover stand-alone job specific skill training or other employment programming that increases participant's employability. For example, computer training, translation, credentialing, appropriate clothing</li></ul>
<b>Specialized Supports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP)</li><li>• Addictions Services Initiative (ASI)</li><li>• Self Employment Development (SED)</li><li>• Intensive Case Management (ICM)</li><li>• OW Homelessness Team</li></ul>

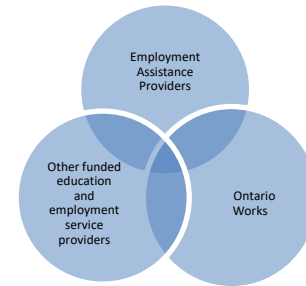
### Accountability and Results Key Outcomes and Indicators:

- Participant satisfaction
- Participant engagement
- Referrals and Referral show rate
- Successful graduation from specialty program: LEAP, Fresh Start
- Employment gained: exits from Ontario Works to employment
- Employment Earnings

## Component: Other Funded Employment Supports

*Rationale:* Consistent with 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. Working within the broader workforce development system helps Ontario Works to leverage opportunity and link people to a broader range of services.

Figure 1: Community Based Employment Services



*Description:* Where appropriate, the Ontario Works office will refer participants to community-based employment services that are funded by other Ministries and Departments. A key referral point is to Employment Ontario. Employment Ontario serves Ontario Works participants who:

- are prepared to engage in developing plans for employment preparation and planning steps;
- are prepared to participate with employment assessment, employment counselling, and developing an individualized employment plan;
- have already completed programs through Purchase of Service partners and remain in receipt of assistance;
- do not wish to be referred to a Purchase of Service partner for employment assistance; and,
- are already involved with an “Employment Ontario” site

*Services to be provided include:*

- Education
- Literacy and Basic Skills
- Employment services such as assessment of skills and experience, job search strategies and resumé preparation, information about different careers and occupations, local labour market, employment and training opportunities, information about all Employment Ontario programs and services, as well as advice about and referral information to other community services and supports.

*Accountability and Key Indicators:*

- Referrals
- Referral show rate
- Successful completion
- Transition to Training or Education
- Employment gained

## Component: Purchase of Service Agreements

*Rationale:* Overall, our system has had good outcomes with the achievement of most targets and strong employment outcomes. These services provide more targeted and intensive supports to assist employment outcomes for participants with barriers.

*Description:* Purchased Services will be identified through a Request for Proposal process to establish multi-year legally executed contracts in accordance with the City's Purchasing by-laws.

Employment Services to be purchased include:

- **Fundamental Employment Services**

Agencies offering this service must be able to provide assessment and planning, career management, foundational skills services and Employment Search, Placement and Retention services. In addition, an agency may provide wraparound supports and services for more intensive employment support needs. Fundamental Employment Services (FES) can be broken down into two areas:

- Workplace & Employment focused Skills - being ready to job search
- Foundational Skills – personal and life skills to succeed in employment, education, and training

- **Skills Training Directly Linked to Employment**

Agencies providing a Skills Training (ST) program will:

- a. Be relevant for the existing and short term future labour market
- b. Involve employers in the development or delivery of the skills training curriculum
- c. Provide the successful graduate with a certificate
- d. Link participants to successful and sustainable employment

Agencies providing Skills Training are also required to provide Employment Search, Placement and Retention services. This combination of services will assist participants acquire the required, relevant skills for the workplace and to secure sustainable employment. Agencies will utilize their in-depth industry knowledge, business relationships and community partnerships in delivering these services.

- **Employment Search, Placement and Retention**

In addition to providing Fundamental Employment Services, agencies providing Employment Search, Placement and Retention (ESPR) services assist participants to find suitable employment by providing structured job search supports, coaching assistance with job search techniques, and providing job search resources. Agencies engage directly with employers and actively look for employment opportunities and assist local employers with recruitment by matching and placing participants into subsidized or unsubsidized employment opportunities. Agencies work directly with employers to identify employment placement opportunities, match participants to jobs and provide post-employment support to assist participants in maintaining employment. Agencies also provide post-hiring, problem solving, and coaching supports to the employers; thereby enhancing employee retention.

- **Self-Employment Development**

An agency approved to deliver a Self-Employment Development (SED) program will assess participant suitability for Self Employment Development, and will provide an orientation to the program and self-employment to help individuals self-assess their suitability. The agency will support individuals in the development of their business acumen and related skills such as marketing, sales and promotion, basic bookkeeping and good record keeping skills in addition to business planning so that they are able to earn a sustainable income and exit from Ontario Works. The agency will help individuals write a business plan and will continue to provide support up to 2 years. The SED program may offer networking opportunities as part of their services.

- **Specialized Individual Support**

An agency approved to deliver Specialized Individual Support (SIS) provide intensive services that help participants address significant barriers to employment. These agencies must describe the link between the specialized support and employment barriers. The agency must also be credentialed or licensed to provide the specific specialized service, as well as linked to community resources.

*Accountability and Key Outcomes:*

- Participant engagement
- Participant satisfaction
- Increased employability
- Program graduations / completions
- Transitions to employment, skills training, education and/or other community supports
- Successful work experience and sustainable employment

## Purchase of Service Program Description

Fundamental Employment Services	Skills Training Directly Linked to Employment	Specialized Individual Support	Self-Employment Development
<p>Supports individualized path to employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Rapid re-entry</li> <li>b) Re-entry</li> <li>c) Entry</li> </ul> <p>Agencies may provide intensive supports that include wraparound services to enhance life skills.</p> <p>Employment Services include:</p> <p>Workplace &amp; Employment focused Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common Assessment Process</li> <li>• Employability Planning and Supports</li> <li>• Assessments – Strengths, Values, Interests</li> <li>• Vocational counselling</li> <li>• Resume, cover letter and interview support</li> <li>• Networking skills</li> <li>• Workplace expectations</li> <li>• Job Shadowing, job trials, community placement</li> </ul> <p>Foundational Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal / Life skills – self esteem, goal setting, financial literacy, organization skills</li> <li>• Activities of Daily Living (ADL)</li> <li>• Motivation</li> <li>• Resiliency</li> <li>• Working with people, communication skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides specific skills training which leads to specific occupations</li> <li>• Training is based on labour market and employer needs</li> <li>• Includes Workplace Essential Skills Training which incorporates life &amp; work skills</li> <li>• Is curriculum based with employer involvement in curriculum development and delivery</li> <li>• Provides a certificate to graduates</li> <li>• Training resulting in high job placement outcomes</li> </ul>	<p>Intensive supports that support employment and address specific barriers clients may face.</p> <p>Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psycho-social services e.g. Personal Counselling and short-term brief therapy, group sessions</li> <li>• Literacy / Educational Assessments</li> <li>• Functional Capabilities Assessments</li> <li>• Work Readiness Assessment (WRA)</li> <li>• Motivation Assessments</li> <li>• Credit Counselling &amp; Financial Literacy supports</li> </ul>	<p>Business Viability and Local Marketplace Information</p> <p>Business Skills Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing</li> <li>• Networking</li> <li>• Budgetting</li> <li>• Basic Bookkeeping</li> <li>• Record Keeping</li> <li>• Sales and Promotion</li> </ul> <p>Financial Literacy</p> <p>Marketing and Promotional Plan Development</p> <p>Business Plan Development</p> <p>Supports to Business Development</p>
<b>Employment Search, Placement &amp; Retention</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured job search supports and job matching</li> <li>• Connections to employers and employment opportunities</li> <li>• Access to job developer and related services</li> <li>• Post hiring coaching and follow up support</li> <li>• Incentives to employer in order to hire</li> </ul>			<p>Access to business financing and community business resources</p>

## Component: Targeted Initiatives

*Rationale:* Targeted Initiatives provides the opportunity to meet specific emerging employer hiring needs on a “just in time” basis. It is the opportunity for organizations to work in collaboration and partnership with employers and to make a direct link to employment. For Social Services, it is also the opportunity to address very specific needs of Ontario Works participants. Targeted Initiatives will have a direct connection to the labour market and will often be supported in partnership with employer facing organizations.

*Description:* Local employers and community agencies submit an application to Social Services for a customized training program that meets the hiring needs of the employer or community agency or leverages other employment focused funding opportunities. Projects can include a range of service elements including job placement, post-hiring supports, life skills, skills training and work placements.

At the individual level, this could be an Enhanced Job Placement opportunity resulting in the hiring of the participant.

At the group level, this could be a short-term employment program that provides focused, specialized training that is specific to the immediate hiring needs of an employer or community agency.

Examples of such initiatives include:

- A skills training organization in partnership with an employer or employers, providing the Skills 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. This could be in response to a local need, such as a large employer moving to London or expanding operations, and as a result is hiring and requires specific skills.
- A project that supports employer attraction and retention through support for Ontario Works participants. This type of program would include involvement with employer facing organizations such as London Economic Development Corporation, Local Employment Planning Council, London Chamber of Commerce, and other employer facing organizations which support employer attraction and retention as well as workforce development.

The targeted initiative will result in:

- the employer hiring Ontario Works participants who successfully complete the training or,
- the employer mentoring participants until such time that they obtain employment.

## Implementation

The updated Framework is being utilized to formulate the pending Request for Proposals (RFP) for POS Employment Services. The timelines of the Framework development and implementation are outlined in the chart on page 10.

The Employment Assistance Framework is an integral component of the comprehensive Ontario Works delivery structure. In order to achieve maximum results for strong outcomes and effective delivery, work will be undertaken related to the following:

- The inventory of employment services and service providers needs to be enhanced to help participants and staff have information about the range of services available. This inventory will need to be managed regularly and may need to be in multiple formats including regular updates provided at POS and Community Partner meetings.
- An agency event will be held in early 2019 to showcase the various employment resources available in the community.
- A strong marketing approach to educate and inform employers about the profile of people receiving assistance and to provide success stories, particularly to small and medium sized business owners where most hiring is occurring and who may be concerned about hiring an Ontario Works participant.
- Strong promotional efforts to educate and inform participants about the jobs and opportunities available in the current labour market will be undertaken both internal and external to Ontario Works. These promotional efforts will be done in conjunction and partnership with service agencies, LEDC, ESC, LEPC and other community groups.
- Opportunities for developing and using on-line interactive technology to support service selection should be identified and investigated on an ongoing basis.

### *Ontario Works Employment Advisory Supports*

Advisory support for Ontario Works Employment Services has come from the broader workforce development sector, including Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board, Employment Sector Council, the London Economic Development Corporation, and the London Chamber of Commerce in addition to local employment services agencies. Active committee participation and continual engagement with leaders of these organizations has helped to shape and adapt the framework. On-going meetings with POS agencies both at the operational and strategic levels will continue to be held in order to implement the framework and to continue the evolution of existing services.



## Appendix A: Summary of Consultations and Research

### POS AGENCIES FOCUS GROUP ANALYSIS COMMUNIQUÉ

On Nov. 1, 2017 several community agencies attended a focus group to answer questions related to employment needs (what is working, not working, and gaps), Employment Assistance Framework, and feedback around current programs and potential future services to help OW clients.

#### EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE NEEDS

- **Transportation:** Some areas lack in transportation and clients want to work close to home
- **Support System from Agencies:** Follow up with clients, staff investment, and contract need to meet the needs of employee and employer
- **Specialized Employment Services:** Age increase, immigrants barriers to work, cultural differences, and caregiver supports
- **Special Needs – Complex Needs:** Mental health and addiction with unpredictable attendance, motivation with a need for extra support, counselling. Long wait lists to receive services, need one on one support. Homelessness and criminal records act as barriers
- **Self – Employment Barriers:** Self-Employment (SE) unapproved – need more support
- **Needed Tools:** Easier navigation tools for services. Cross referrals are complicated and inappropriate based on funding – need easier system and screening tools
- **Motivation:** Disengagement, confidence building, and attendance are challenging. OW should have a consequence and measure for no show appointments
- **More Wraparound Support Once Client at Employers:** (adequate and customized)
- **Literacy:** Digital literacy, ESL literacy, financial literacy, and education
- **Education and Training:** Life Skills – re-integration into the workforce and the work day. There is a need for a Functional Capacity Assessment (Work Readiness) with an understanding of the changing labour market. On the job support is needed
- **Childcare:** Lack of subsidized childcare availability, and improve system responsiveness
- **Access to Financial Services, resources and mentorship:** Small Business Centre

#### EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE FRAMEWORK

##### What is working?

- Positive relationship with OW - ability to contact one person (ESS) – ESS structure works well
- Hoteling at Social Services sites
- Open communication process – collaborative planning
- Huddle visits – agencies visit OW huddles
- Decentralization and change in Service Delivery Model
- More openness with leadership and flexibility within framework to meet client need
- Common Assessment

##### What is not Working and Must Change or Add?

**Determining** what are the outcomes we are working towards

- **The System:** Lack of system connections, increase capacity of intensive case management, increase movement of client within services, revisit EJP process, multiple caseworkers on OW side, and referrals to more agencies. Further, reporting/lack of communication between caseworker and agencies, front-line requires training on what agencies offer, cross referrals. Revisit the 30 day process as agencies are losing referrals – need immediate engagement.
- **Feedback** to caseworkers on impact they are having in clients' lives
- **Clients and students** need more exposure to opportunities
- **Small measures of success**
- **Less restrictive process for counselling:** Consider redesign of 12 session model; the ongoing need for mental support including the need for counselling beyond 12 sessions
- **Retention follow-up** – monthly phone check-in is not enough, job coaching is beneficial
- **Targeted initiatives** and POS need to be involved
- **Leveraging** existing resources and ability to access more than one agency at the same time
- City to create agency program **inventory tool** for referrals

### What are the Gaps?

- **Caseworkers:** Need more upfront work with client before referrals– get to know client better (make appropriate referrals)- getting POS connection quickly
- **Lack of referrals/no ability** to fill jobs that do exist– right referral and right time for participant
- **Multiple referrals** – how to serve/support those who don't engage “show up”
- **Employer attitude** : non-profit vs. employment placement
- **Lack of access for training** i.e. forklift/first aid/working at heights
- **Inability** to access other partners
- **Flexibility-** Communication with clients (phone, text, access, etc.)
- **Employment Info Sessions** (offered by agencies?)
- **Common Assessment**

## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- **Targeted Initiative:** Inventory of POS, Service Provider and services and a refresher for Service Providers about Targeted Initiatives and alternative career options as an opportunity to link employers and job seekers.
- **Specialized Individual Supports:** Need an inventory of POS, Service Provider, and services that target OW clients achieving a grade 12 or its equivalent. There is a need for Work Readiness Assessments and Functional Capacities Evaluations, systematic referrals to educational interviews, and additional mental health support
- **Skills Training (Enhanced Job Placement):** Inventory of POS, Service Provider, and services, more experiential learning, retain Skills Training throughout the life cycle of employment within the OW timeframe – 3 month/6 month , and opportunity to build in job coaching/wraparound supports to assist with successful transition to EP and into the workplace. Combine curriculum based with employer involvement with literacy upgrading – more intensive case management
- **Self-Employment Development Services:** Inventory of POS, Service Provider, and services. Need to recognize free agents approach to entrepreneurship, more communication options – text, Skype, webinar, SEDS to be reflected in EP to track outcomes

- **OW Team Structure:** Attendance, time, and billing flexibility so clients can access wraparound client-centred services without having to drop out and be costly to programs whom their time and effort should be recognized and compensated. More feedback on services from Caseworker's perspectives. Inventory of POS, Service Providers, and services (online) that offers better referrals with clear process and tools. OW Caseworkers to have their own employment targets
- **Essential Employment Services:**
  - **Inventory of POS/SP** and services
  - **More intense supports** in programs: Pre-assessment phase to know the individual and more assessments addressing client as a whole; including coaching
    - Wraparound one on one supports available for clients and outside of employment and moving in to retention.
    - Timelines- revisit 4 month post program support timeline (increase to 6 months due to increased complex barriers)
    - Specialized supports – EES, ST, immigrants, and youth need supports - counselling
  - **More partnerships/collaboration** between agencies
  - **Payment structure:** Invoice based on intervention and hours worked with participant
  - **Education**
    - Identify education goal to employment and targets to support individuals' education
    - Employment Ontario's suite of services is not able to meet all the community needs
    - Skills training directly linked to employment – understanding of future/labour market
  - **Engagement**
    - Now Program/Motivation program
  - **EES** – initial engagement to move towards employment. Engagement with employers working with multi barriers – including mental health/addictions. Links to specialized services.
- **Employment Placement (Enhanced Job Placement)**
  - Inventory of POS, Service Provider, and services
  - Need to have the same wraparound supports/flexibility as EES
  - Employer supports and engagement; as well as, support for social enterprise
  - EJP to be less cumbersome
    - Adopt the EO model for service provider writing up and signing off on the contract, then report on the monthly report
    - Service Provider expected to adhere to the guidelines
  - Recognize POS work for individuals working less than 15 hrs. per week. That may be where a person "needs" to start; for many, this is realistic and could eventually lead them to more hours but not in the short term. Service Provider should get a fee for this. Also, reimburse per week vs 4 weeks in a job.
  - Realistic timeframes for placement and retention (3 months at 75%; 6 months at 65%) seem realistic and achievable. 6 month expiry on referral
  - Redefine 'employment' so accurately capture the type of work. EP currently captures only traditional type jobs

- 50% achieve employment within 6 months (the province has shared stats that people who need more intensive/wraparound supports (job coaching) likely will not achieve employment within 6 months. Some will, but many will need to be in service longer.

## OPERATIONS

**What Needs to be Removed?** Hard copy billing

**What Should be Kept the same?**

- Communication – ESS structure
- Communication – maintain level with caseworker and agencies

**What Needs to be Improved?**

- Billing
  - Due date – later in month, i.e. 10th of the month
  - Structure/template of billing and Electronic invoicing
- More quality assurance
- Amount of data required/requested
- Expectations don't match budget
- EJP process – faster, not waiting for City to sign off on contract
- Initial Intake Screening process
  - Identify collaborate needs of client to share
  - Info on client's history as part of the referral (background info)
  - Update referral form
  - Best point of contact on referrals (email best)
- Communication
  - POS meetings
  - Platform for shared info (on-line portal for agencies) for in-between POS meetings
- There is a delay in caseworker receiving info
- Need communication tool to share success stories from agencies to caseworkers
- Regular resource fair by City for caseworkers to showcase agencies
- Centralized follow-up
- More coordinated, less duplication of data gathering
- Base funding

## COMMUNITY AGENCIES FOCUS GROUP ANALYSIS COMMUNIQUÉ

On Nov. 8, 2017 community agencies attended a focus group to answer questions related to employment needs, complexity, barriers, Employment Assistance Framework, Collaboration and Coordination, and how to help OW clients.

In relation to the employment assistance needs, five themes emerged and were related to Tools needed, greater support needed, complexity of needs, how to address these needs, and barriers to employment.

### TOOLS NEEDED

- Customized and consistent assessment tools for individuals based on their needs/diverse
- OW should complete mental health stability assessment prior to referrals (Triage process)
- More efficiency to prevent clients from regressing throughout the employment journey
- Feasible transition steps that are client - focused and help remove fear from clients
- Accessible language/translation - so all motivators are recognized and barriers removed
- Directory to access help/services
- Review how we measure success of clients as a community
- Tools to remove duplication of services

### GREATER SUPPORT NEEDED

- Need for Job coaching, education and Literacy; as well as , employability skills/soft skills/life skills training offered to clients (more one on one support)
- Need for more Service Providers' training to be able to support clients' needs and increase motivation and engagement; especially for those unwilling to obtain help
- More funding and time is needed when dealing with complex needs (mental health, poverty, addiction, trauma, longer path to employment/employability)- flexibility
- Need for Specialized Employment Services for certain demographics (Immigrants, youth, etc.)

### ADDRESSING EMPLOYMENT NEEDS

- Understanding the full problem and get to the root
- Collaborative conversation with OW caseworker and sharing of knowledge
- Provide more one on one services
- Educating agencies how to approach, communicate, and address mental health issues
- Connections to other folks in their community – reduce isolation

### ACKNOWLEDGING BARRIERS

- Need longer timeframes to prepare clients for work (funder realistic expectations)
- Need longer term mental health supports ( dealing with 18-35 yrs. Old, engaging clients, lack of family doctors, stigma to accessing services)
- Intake process (long waiting periods to access services, incorrect referrals, lack of education about resources)

Client's challenges (transportation, child care issues, etc.)

- Lack of client employment readiness – not just job skills but life skills (foundational)
- Youth (Low graduation rates, GED not sufficient for employment, precarious employment)
- Systemic Issues (Eligibility/suitability for programs, time for credential recognition, basic needs)

## NINE KEY PILLARS- INNOVATIVE APPROACHES - EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE FRAMEWORK

There is a need for innovation in the Employment Assistance Framework to help serve clients efficiently:

### Getting Ready for Employment (Essential Employment Skills – EES)

- Making Sure Basic Need Support is in Place (child care, stable housing, diet, etc.)
- Need for Service Providers to understand the labour market changes and its needs
- Motivation through goal setting, training, and understanding client's needs
- Literacy, life, and soft skills training and effective referrals (workshops, mentoring, networking, and creation of comprehensive menu of services for all partners to use)
- Whole Person (awareness of needs and mental health support before, during and after)
- ODSP- pre-employment readiness program based solely on the needs of the client
- Success Redefined- often employment is used as the lens (there are barriers and expectations)

### Education/Literacy

- Identifying literacy needs and referring effectively by exploring skills and creating a comprehensive menu of services for effective referrals that meet clients' needs
- Financial literacy/education (motivation, support, retention, communication)
- Methods of Delivery (Multi-faceted training, online, and additional funding)
- Clients access services the way they need it( interpreters, expectations based on situations)

### Skills Training leading directly to Employment

- A comprehensive menu of services for all partners to be aware of and use
- Achievable expectations of the commitment to services based on individual client needs
- Short-term programming for more immediate success (build confidence)
- Literacy skills/soft skills/life skill/employability skills training
- Funding for interpreters/interveners with the programs where being referred

### Job Search/Job Placement

- Short term programming to build the feeling of success – offer certificates, etc.
- Less than 15 hours a week for higher need individuals
- Work experience (barrier) - solve it by increasing job placements and incentives such as childcare, transportation, empowerment, and tackling the needs for high skilled immigrants

### Job Maintenance

- Literacy skills acquisition and problem solving skills
- Mental health supports as new experiences created (potentially) new challenges
- Many need job coaching or mentoring

### Employer Supports

- Incentives and on the job support from support workers
- Increase job retention dollar supports for agencies
- Education - have a City Employment Support Specialist on ESC Job Developers Network

### Self-Employment

- Flexible informal child support and focus on outcomes

### Needs of Specific Demographics

- Funding and Services tailored to individuals – as they need them, i.e., range of hours, lots of languages or access to translators, credential recognition, skills training, Trauma, ODSP clients
- Flexible funding and basic needs met to allow for real engagement, i.e. bus tickets; childcare; no threat of ‘lost cheque’ for the month when unable to engage; housing; phone; food; clothing
- Learning disabilities supports – greater assessments & accommodations
- In depth assessments by OW or service provider to have integrated service model of referrals and support

### Ontario Works Structure

- CAP training for OW Caseworkers and appropriate referrals
- Materials (documents application and all communication) needs to be in plain language, helps: low literacy, busy parents, newcomers
- Barriers – OW policies, self-employment
- Triage model (assessment, engagement, and case management with plans for clients)
- Measuring and celebrating success of clients in a variety of ways

## COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION

There is a need for collaboration and coordination to help serve clients efficiently including:

### Tools

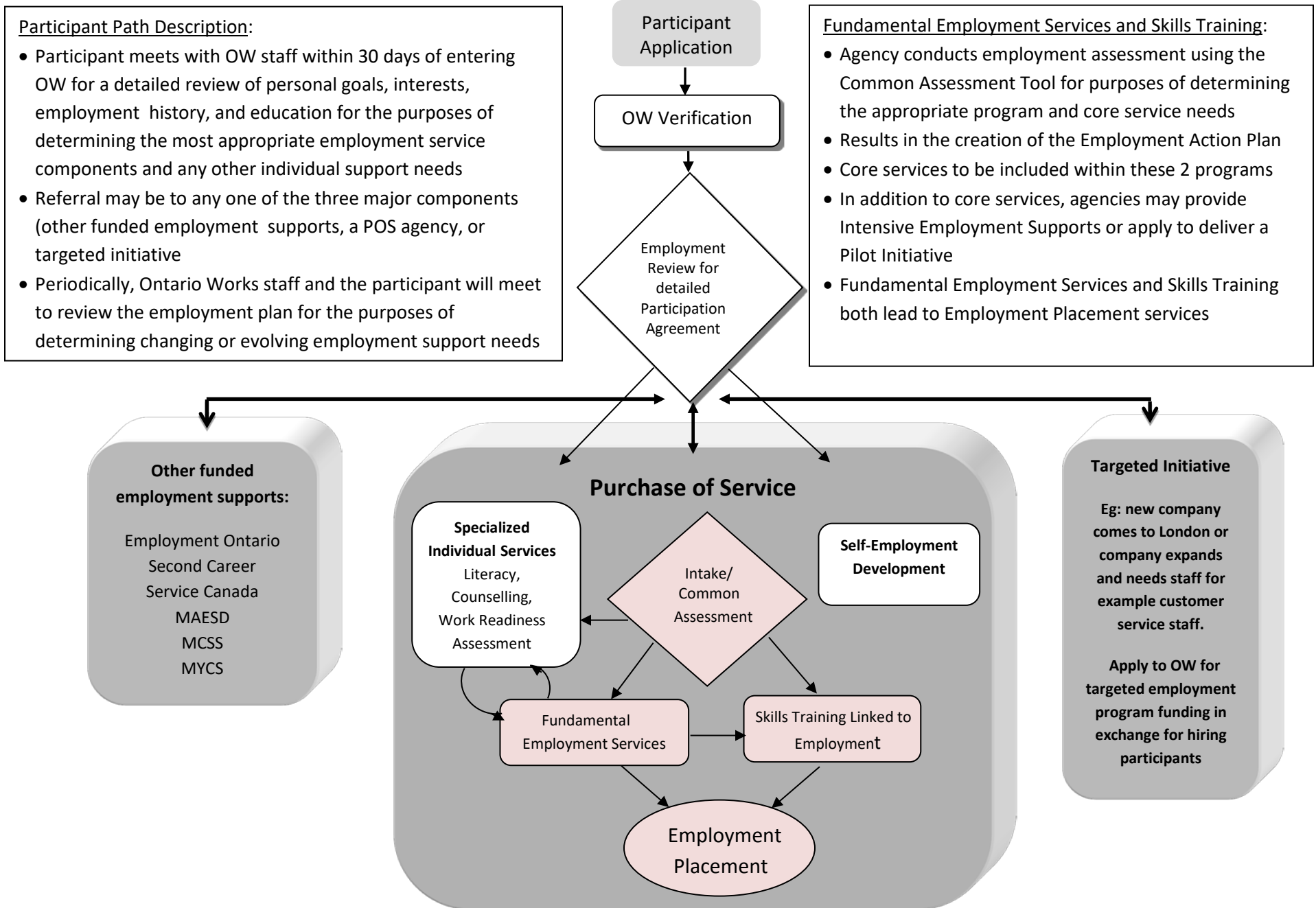
- Create tools for enhanced and timely communication with a structure to facilitate it
- On-line tool – Create common assessment that is consistent between agencies
- Directory of services with descriptions of services provided (Electronic)
- Tool to avoid overlapping of services and competition
- Respect specialized programming, avoid duplication, create new ways to coordinate/partner
- Create client “champion” or “ambassadors” to share information

### Challenges

- Need to share info to help client vs. privacy
- MAESD – funding model is agency specific – limits collaboration- proposal timeline too short to coordinate/communicate
- Program rules vs. individual approach across the board
- Improve conversations between agencies
  - o Funding Model! (no shared clients, competition for funding)- Discourages cross-referrals
  - o Agency can't hire clients (not a success outcome)
  - o Paid for ‘bums in seats’ and difficult to provide ‘specialized’ programs under certain funding models
- Hard to know full range of current services available for clients and service providers
- Sizing – capacity of all agencies – look at inequity (Funding requirements)
- Referral between agencies without OW intervention in between
- Competitive environment amongst agencies -Competition for funding
- Technology – no centralized way to communicate
- Recognition for collaboration between agencies by funders

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## Appendix B: Participant Path to Employment Service





## Appendix C: Reference Materials

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