

Report to Community and Protective Services Committee

To: Chair and Members
Community and Protective Services Committee

From: Kevin Dickins Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development

Subject: SkillsAdvance Ontario (SAO) Employment Services for Manufacturing Sector update

Date: June 1st, 2021

Recommendation

That on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development, the following report on the SkillsAdvance Ontario (SAO) Employment Services for Manufacturing Sector **BE RECEIVED** for information purposes.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on Skills2Succeed (S2S), the SkillsAdvance Ontario (SAO) Employment Services pilot program delivered by the City of London (the City) and funded by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD).

With Council direction on March 24th, 2020, The City entered into a one-year contract with MLTSD for the period of March 30, 2020 to March 31, 2021 to deliver a SAO pilot program. The program started with the London area and its framework then introduced to the broader London Economic Region (LER).

Over the past year, S2S celebrated many milestones and successes including delivery of the program to 44 participants (3 cohorts of approximately 15 participants per cohort), of which there were 38 graduates. The S2S curriculum was designed by Fanshawe with direct input from employers in the food manufacturing industry. Other successes included the development of new working relationships with the MLSTD, Fanshawe College, adjoining municipalities, local employers, and community agencies across the broader London Economic Region.

The City is pleased to have had the opportunity to work with the MLTSD (funder) and Fanshawe College (service provider) to help develop and deliver a unique skill development and employment program; a program that provided opportunities for City of London residents experiencing difficulties finding and sustaining meaningful employment, and for employers in the manufacturing sector gain access to job ready, skilled workers that meet their workforce development needs.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan and Social Economic Recovery

Strengthening Our Community

- Londoners have access to the supports they need to be successful.
- Londoners have access to the services and supports that promote well-being, health, and safety in their neighbourhoods and across the city.

Growing Our Economy

- London creates a supportive environment where entrepreneurs, businesses, and talent can thrive.

Leading in Public Service

- The City of London is a leader in public service as an employer, a steward of public funds, and an innovator of service.

Links to Community Recovery

The City of London is committed to working in partnership with the community to identify solutions that will drive a strong, deep and inclusive community recovery for London as we move out of and beyond the global COVID-19 pandemic. This report, and the items within, are linked to the Employment and Talent Priority Action Table of the London Community Recover Network (LCRN). This initiative supports recovery efforts by bolstering recruitment, training, short-term skills development and employer / employee supports.

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

- Contract Award Recommendations for SkillsAdvance Ontario (SAO) – Employment Services for the Manufacturing Sector in London (CPSC – August 12, 2020)
- Ontario Transfer Payment Agreement SkillsAdvance Ontario (SAO) - Employment Services for the Manufacturing Sector in London-Middlesex (CPSC - February 19, 2020)
- Employment Ontario Transformation – Service System Manager Update (CPSC – January 21, 2020)
- Employment Ontario Transformation – Service System Manager Competition (CPSC-June 17, 2019)
- Purchase of Service Agreement – Ontario Works Employment Assistance Services (CPSC, December 10, 2018)

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

2.1 Background Information

In March 2020, the City of London entered into a one-year agreement with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD) to deliver 3 cohorts of the SkillsAdvance Ontario (SAO) pilot program in the City of London. The SAO pilot was derived to be flexible for future expansion with community partners into varying sub categories of the manufacturing sector and throughout the broader London Economic Region (LER) to allow for future service delivery in Oxford, Elgin and Middlesex counties.

The main goals of the SAO pilot included providing employers in the manufacturing sectors in London with access to job ready, skilled workers that meet their workforce development needs; and providing individuals with sector-focused employment and training services, including experiential development opportunities to support them to obtain, succeed, and advance in employment.

To deliver the pilot program, the City on June 12, 2020 issued a formal RFP - Employment in Manufacturing Supports for the LER seeking submissions from experienced and qualified proponents to provide the following:

- A) Employment Support Services – Employer and Client
- B) Curriculum Development Services

C) Curriculum Delivery Services

Fanshawe College was selected as the successful proponent and was awarded a service contract combining all 3 Services. With MLTSD SAO funding and Fanshawe College providing service delivery, the City's Skills2Succeed (S2S) pilot program was launched in September 2020.

Over the course of the one-year contract, the City successfully developed and delivered a unique approach to preparing individuals for the workplace. Much of the pilot program success can be attributed to the significant and intensive supports provided to participants by dedicated employment coaches. The coaches were essential in helping participants remain engaged in the program, and in problem-solving around issues such as childcare, transportation, motivation, life skills and communication skills. Also, where appropriate the coaches referred S2S participants to local community experts to address specific issues and concerns outside of the S2S pilot program scope of work to help ensure participant success.

In addition to participant supports, the City S2S pilot program also helped to address local employer labour demands (numerous unfilled positions) by introducing employers to a labour pool not typically accessed, such as people in receipt of Ontario Works, and by providing workplace supports. Working collaboratively, the S2S pilot program developed and nurtured employer relationships to facilitate the co-design and delivery of employer and industry specific curriculum and experiential learning opportunities (placements and direct hires). Together the intensive supports, curriculum and learning opportunities addressed soft skill and hard skill gaps of the participants and helped ensure increased success in employment retention.

Despite many unforeseen challenges due to COVID 19 and local and provincial emergency orders, the S2S pilot program celebrated many milestones and successes such as:

- Training provided to 3 cohorts / groups in London for the food manufacturing and food processing sector (approximately 15 persons per cohort);
- 44 individuals commenced training with 38 graduating with industry specific knowledge and skills;
- Base curriculum and program framework were developed with direct input from employers and can be easily adapted for future cohorts; key modules include essential skills, employment readiness, soft & hard skills, and technical skills.
- Delivery of curriculum successfully pivoted from in-person to virtual delivery due to local and provincial COVID 19 precautionary measures;
- Established the Skills2Succeed branding and logo along with reporting processes and procedures;
- Built positive relationships with local and regional employers;
- Strengthened relationships with adjacent municipalities confirming a strong interest in working regionally;
- Established Regional Advisory Committee providing governance of the SAO program in addition to local working groups.

Regardless of the challenges related to COVID, the City successfully completed all the activities outlined in the MLTSD contract. One of the objectives of the SAO pilot project included relationship development in the Oxford, Elgin, and Middlesex Counties so that the project could expand across the LER. To strengthen the SAO relationships in those areas, the City built on existing regional relationships and, in particular, leveraged the Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Planning & Development Board's (WPDB) community presence and employer engagement to help establish a regional advisory table of experts

linked to local employers and economic development tables. These efforts supported the project being successful in building awareness, excitement, collaboration and employer engagement across the LER.

With the City's contract ending March 31, 2021 and the program being well positioned to expand service delivery across the Oxford, Elgin, and Middlesex Counties, the service delivery was successfully transitioned through the Ministry of Labour, Training, and Skill Development to a one-year agreement with the WPDB to accomplish regional service delivery of this SAO program through 2021-2022.

To support the WPDB's regional SAO service delivery efforts, the City's contract with the MLTSD was extended by 2 months to May 28, 2021 to allow for continuity of employment supports to the current S2S program participants. The WPDB, through their contract with the MLTSD, will continue to provide follow-up services to S2S program participants. Moving forward, the City will continue to support the WPDB SAO program through active promotion to London area residents and meaningful participant referrals from its Ontario Works program.

3.0 Financial Impact / Considerations

3.1 Funding

The City's agreement with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, Ontario Transfer Payment Agreement SkillsAdvance Ontario, effective March 30, 2020 to March 31, 2021, was amended to extend the delivery period to May 28, 2021. The total funding provided by the MLTSD for this program remained the same at \$669,478 and no additional funding was required to extend the agreement to May 28, 2021. The SkillsAdvance Ontario program is 100% funded by the MLTSD and there is no allocation of City funds in the Multi-year Budget for this particular program.

Conclusion

The City of London is pleased to have had the opportunity to work with the MLTSD and Fanshawe College to develop and deliver a unique skill development and employment program that provided important opportunities to City of London residents experiencing difficulties finding and sustaining employment.

A solid foundation was established for the SAO pilot program which will be expanded regionally under the leadership of the WPDB. City staff will continue to participate on the Regional Advisory for this SAO project in a non-voting role.

The City will also continue to support the WPDB's SAO program through active promotion to London area residents and meaningful participant referrals from the Ontario Works program and providing ongoing consultation and advisory support where needed.

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