Information Report CS09047 is to inform Council of the Ontario Works (OW) Employment Services Transition Delivery Model.

Ontario Works participants are required to participate in employment activities that support progress toward sustainable employment. The Employment Services Transition (EST) Project was initiated in March 2008 to enhance the employment services provided by the OW program.

The goals of the EST project were to:

- Improve the depth and quality of service in both the Case Management and Employment Services components of the OW program; and,

- Ensure that OW Employment Outcome targets, as contracted with the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS), are achieved in order to earn all available revenue.

Key features of the new service delivery model include:

- Increased opportunity for relationship building between the OW participant and their Employment and Income Support Case Managers;
Greater opportunity for one-to-one employment counseling, including assessment and follow-up services;

Staff development of a specialized knowledge base for resources in the community;

Improved communication materials and resources;

New in-house employment programs and workshops that meet the needs of the caseload and the labour market; and,

Improved and relevant performance measures for the program.

It is anticipated that the changes in the way the City of Hamilton delivers OW Employment Services will translate into improved customer service, increased employment outcomes and maximized provincial funding.

Estimates are pending for the cost of reconfiguring the workstations and costs associated with electrical, cabling, etc., to support the new service delivery model. All OW Employment staff will be centralized at the Career Development Centre and will require workstations with the capacity for desk-side interviewing. The funds are available in the OW Employment Assistance budget because in past years, revenues earned through employment outcomes were higher than the expenditures necessary to operate the programs. There will be no impact on the net levy due to this expenditure.

OW participants are required to participate in employment activities that support progress toward sustainable employment. Participation in employment assistance activities may be deferred or restricted in certain circumstances, for example, if the participant has health issues and is applying for Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) or if their child is not yet of school age to name a few.

The EST Project was initiated in March 2008 to enhance the employment services provided by the OW program.

Prior to the EST project, the OW employment service delivery model required OW Case Managers to be knowledgeable not only in all areas of the OW program, but also have a familiarity with the city’s many community resources and employment programs. Gaining and maintaining information on the numerous community-based resources with such diversity is a formidable undertaking. As a result, participants were not consistently receiving a full range of information or the most appropriate referrals in order to address their issues, increase their employability and obtain sustainable employment.

In March 2008, the EST Steering Committee was formed and two Project Managers were assigned to the project. Background research was conducted from March to August 2008. Between September 2008 and March 2009, internal work groups composed of management and front-line staff developed the model details.
Implementation of the new service delivery was completed in March and April 2009. Monitoring and model enhancements are taking place through continuous improvement processes.

The New OW Service Delivery Model:

The new employment service delivery model separates responsibility for employment case planning for participants who are determined to be employment-ready from participants who have significant personal, social or health challenges to overcome prior to engaging in employment activities. Presence of these types of challenges restricts a participant’s ability to successfully pursue and obtain employment. These barriers may include lack of stable housing, mental and physical health concerns and addiction issues.

In the new model, OW Case Managers are responsible for assisting participants who are not employment-ready to overcome barriers with the goal of becoming employment-ready. Participants are considered to be employment ready once any significant health and social barriers or challenges have been resolved. Employment Counselors specialize in employment case management with participants who are employment-ready. This separation of responsibilities allows staff to develop a knowledge base and expertise of resources and services best suited for their target client population. As a result, more effective referrals are made.

One-to-one employment counseling is a feature of the new model. Individualized case management allows for better consideration of local labour market conditions. Research shows that individualized service and establishment of an ongoing relationship with an employment counselor reduces the duration of unemployment. Relationship building between participant and their Employment Counselor is a key component of the new model.

Easy access to information is essential for both participants and staff. New communication documents are being created for participants and existing brochures updated. Existing staff tools and resources were reviewed and are being enhanced to better meet staff needs. Collaboration with Inform Hamilton is underway to improve the user-friendliness and ease of access to information on their website.

Based upon an inventory of community-based employment programs, participant surveys and staff feedback, in-house employment workshops have been redesigned. The new workshops are targeted to address specific competencies and knowledge requirements for the job search process, geared specifically to the needs of OW participants. These workshops are generally short-term in nature (i.e. three to five days in length). One longer term program has been developed for participants requiring more intensive support to develop job search skills.

A new approach to measuring progress of the OW program, at both the program and individual levels, is under development. The new measures will directly support the key objectives and link performance to outcomes.
It is anticipated that the changes in the way the City of Hamilton delivers OW Employment Services will translate into improved participant service, greater outcomes and maximized outcome funding.

**Key Activities:**

Prior to the development of the details of the new model, the following background research was conducted.

Reviewed and assessed:

- all existing OW business practices relevant to the Employment Services Transition Delivery Model to ensure benefits, services, and supports are effective and efficient;
- existing OW employment services, outcomes and tools in order to establish the baseline model, including a high-level overview of current services;
- local employment services in the community;
- service delivery models and programs of other OW offices;
- articles of relevant interest for similar client groups;
- outcomes of a local model of employment counselling;
- evidence based studies (Canada, US, Australia, UK);
- interview results conducted with eight municipalities using a structured framework; and,
- establish a profile of the present OW caseload.

Business processes of the previous service model were analyzed and operational efficiencies and service level gaps were identified. These efficiencies and gaps formed the basis of service improvement and were incorporated into the new model.

An initial service delivery model was developed and presented to staff for input. Based upon staff feedback, two additional service delivery models were developed and considered by the EST Steering Committee.
The following details for all three proposed models were developed:

- Total staffing requirements;
- Number of staff impacted by proposed model;
- Job classification concerns;
- Training requirements;
- Process efficiency;
- Capacity for workload increase;
- Staffing costs;
- Accommodation requirements;
- Relationship to outcomes; and,
- Engaged clients through focus groups.

Each model was evaluated against the following criteria to select the final model:

- Service;
- Staffing;
- Efficiency;
- Cost; and,
- Relationship to outcomes.

Impact of Economic Conditions & Caseload Increase to the New Service Delivery Model:

Details of the new service delivery model were designed and developed prior to the downturn in the economy. Since December 2008, the OW caseload has increased by 12.6%. The total OW caseload for April 2009 is now 11,948 cases.

Staffing numbers and workload analyses for the new service delivery model were based on 30% of the participating caseload (approximately 2800 participants) being considered employment ready. The percentage of employment ready participants has increased since the time of model development. Many of the new applicants to the OW program have a recent attachment to the labour force. These participants are skilled, experienced and motivated to work. As such, more participants are ready for employment counseling. With more participants seeking employment counseling, the division is reviewing several alternatives to handle capacity, i.e. the tightening of the definition of employment ready, capacity for continuous intake and conducting group counseling.

Another factor impacting the model is the rate of deferred participants. In 2008, 23.5% of participants had their employment participation requirements deferred. According to April 2009 data, only 15.8% of participants have been deferred from participating in employment activities, which demonstrates the changing caseload profile and the impact of the economic downturn.
The second year of a two-year funding cycle for Employment Outcome Funding is 2009. Fortunately, employment outcomes were exceeded in 2008 and will be used to off-set reduced outcomes during this year’s economic downturn. As a result, the City will earn all available employment outcome revenue this year.

Not unexpectedly, Hamilton’s employment outcomes for the first quarter of 2009 have shown a decrease. When competition in the labour market increases, OW participants are often unable to secure the level of positions they could in a positive labour market. In general terms, terminations have been decreasing from 2007-2009 (see Appendix A attached to Report CS09047).

Joe-Anne Priel
General Manager,
Community Services Department
TERMINATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>623</td>
<td>587</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb</td>
<td>835</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>822</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>829</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>715</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr</td>
<td>848</td>
<td>695</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>887</td>
<td>803</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun</td>
<td>883</td>
<td>916</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul</td>
<td>907</td>
<td>882</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug</td>
<td>862</td>
<td>794</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>852</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>854</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>763</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>688</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1864</td>
<td>9968</td>
<td>9426</td>
<td>2124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No Data - Prior to Termination Tracking