

If this information is required in an accessible format, please contact 1-800-372-1102 ext. 2805



The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

To: Health and Social Services Committee
From: Commissioner of Social Services
Report: #2024-SS-9
Date: October 3, 2024

Subject:

Employment Services Transformation Service System Manager Update

Recommendation:

Receive for information.

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Employment Service System for Durham Region

2. Background

2.1 In February 2019, the Government of Ontario announced the Employment Services Transformation (EST) to improve the model of Employment Services to meet the needs of job seekers, employers, and communities more effectively. The goal was to streamline existing services into an Integrated Employment Service delivery model to be more responsive to local needs.

2.2 Employment Services offered by the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) Employment Supports, Ontario Employment Assistance Services (OEAS), Ontario Works Employment Assistance and Employment Ontario (EO) would be brought together under the new program and guided by a shared Service System Manager (SSM) as part of the transformation.

2.3 Beginning in fall of 2019, the competition to become a SSM was opened to any public, not-for-profit, private sector organization or current Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) and District Social Services Administrative Board service managers (DSSAB). The implementation followed a phased roll – out approach

beginning with three prototype areas (Peel Region, Hamilton-Niagara Peninsula, and Muskoka-Kawartha).

- 2.4 In June 2021, the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) continued with the Request for Qualification (RFQ) for nine catchment areas included in Phase 1 and Phase 2. The nine catchment areas involved in this phase included Durham, Halton, Kingston-Pembroke, Kitchener-Waterloo-Barrie, London, Ottawa Region, Stratford-Bruce Peninsula, Windsor-Sarnia, and York.
- 2.5 The Region of Durham Employment Services Consortium consisting of the Regional Municipality of Durham (Region), as the lead agency, Durham Workforce Authority (DWA), and Durham College (DC) was successful in the RFQ for the Phase 2 Call for Proposal (CFP) stage in the fall of 2021.
- 2.6 In April 2022, the Ministry released a CFP as the second stage of the competitive process for Phase 2 province-wide implementation. As a qualifying applicant, The Region of Durham Employment Services Consortium was invited to compete to be the SSM.
- 2.7 In February 2023, following the multistage competitive bidding process, the Durham Region Employment Services Consortium was awarded by MLITSD the Employment Service System Manager for Durham Region. Following a planning period between March to December 2023, the SSM officially launched in Phase 2 of EST on January 1, 2024.

3. Previous Reports and Decisions

- 3.1 [2020-INFO-116](#): Ontario Modernizing Application Process for Social Assistance
- 3.2 [2021-SS-4](#): Recovery and Renewal: Ontario's Vision for Social Assistance Transformation
- 3.3 [2022-COW-20](#): Employment Services Transformation Service System Manager Update
- 3.4 2022-COW-29: Confidential Report regarding an Employment Services Transformation Service System Manager Update

4. Program Design

- 4.1 The focus of the Employment SSM for Durham Region is to provide quality services that are locally responsive, person-centered and outcome driven. Program design is aimed at supporting individuals with unique employment needs, including People with Disabilities, ODSP, Indigenous Peoples, Black and Racialized People, Youth with Higher Support Needs, Newcomers, and Francophone peoples. The SSM is centered on an approach to service delivery that meets the needs of highly-barriered individuals and those who have been historically locked-out of the labour market due to systemic challenges.

- 4.2 Strategic direction for the SSM was co-created with community partners throughout all stages of the development process. In addition, the SSM consulted the existing service providers to gain valuable insight and feedback. Agencies consulted for their leading expertise in inclusionary community services included:
- a. Bawaajigewin Aboriginal Community Circle
 - b. Community Development Council Durham
 - c. Durham Family and Cultural Centre
 - d. Literacy Network of Durham Region (LiNDR)
 - e. pflag Durham Region
 - f. Abilities Centre
 - g. Women's Multicultural Resource and Counselling Centre
- 4.3 The SSM has created a vision, mission, and core values statement to guide the network in the delivery of Integrated Employment Services.
- a. Vision: Our vision is to foster a thriving, inclusive labour market, where job seekers are empowered to acquire new skills, secure, and maintain meaningful employment, and employers can access the necessary skills and resources to create job opportunities, driving economic prosperity.
 - b. Mission: To create and coordinate a community responsive employment service system through exemplary leadership and innovation that fosters a network of collaboration, partnerships, and service excellence.
 - c. Values: Collaboration and partnership, diversity, equity and inclusion, empowerment and individualized support, innovation and continuous improvement and accountability and transparency.
- 4.4 A Governance Model was developed to promote the system values of accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement through SSM, community partner and service provider facilitated sessions. This SSM Governance Model aims to have participants collaborating to identify local priorities, maximize opportunities, and share best practices. The committees included in the SSM's Governance Model are:
- a. Executive Steering Committee.
 - b. Durham Employment Services Advisory Network.
 - c. Employment Service Provider Committee.
 - d. Employer and Industry Collaborative Committee.
- 4.5 The SSM vision, mission and values and the Governance Model are detailed in the [Region of Durham Employment Services Program Guidelines](#), a document designed to lead service providers in their practice. The Program Guidelines outline program requirements with the person-centered focus core to the Regional SSM approach.
- 4.6 Evidence-based measures were utilized by the SSM to identify organizational targets for each service provider that was equitable in distribution and reflective of community needs. A network-wide system evaluation was completed using various

data collection methods to assess the viability of the existing service delivery footprint. Geographic Information System Mapping exercises were used to gain information on the service provider locations relative to priority demographic factors such as low-income prevalence, priority health neighbourhoods, and population density in Durham Region. With information gathered from the needs assessment, the SSM collaborated with the 12 services providers to assign their organizational targets.

- 4.7 The existing complement of 12 Employment Services Providers in Durham Region was fully retained during the transition process through successful Service Agreements contracted by the SSM. The updated funding model resulted in increased funding for 80 percent of service providers in the network, marking their first increase in over a decade. Funding for the network follows a Performance Based Framework and lends additional capacity to support individuals at high risk for long-term unemployment as well as Specialized Groups. The designated Specialized Groups under the new EST model include Francophone peoples, Indigenous peoples, Newcomers, ODSP, Youth with Higher Support Needs, People with Disabilities, and Black and Racialized People.

5. Durham Region Integrated Employment Services

- 5.1 Central to the Integrated Employment Services (IES) model is the Common Assessment, a digital questionnaire used by both Employment Services (ES) and Social Assistance (OW and ODSP) to assess client strengths, barriers to employment, support needs, facilitating appropriate service planning and referrals.
- 5.2 Following the Common Assessment, clients complete an Employment Action Plan (EAP) tailored to their goals, outlining activities, service sequences, progress tracking, and employment outcomes. Collaboration and coordination among all delivery partners is crucial under the IES model, ensuring shared accountability for achieving positive employment outcomes for Social Assistance clients.
- 5.3 The Durham Region Referral and Benefit Guidelines document was developed by the Employment SSM, incorporating feedback and insights gathered from Social Assistance and Employment Services through a consultation process. An updated version of this document was later released based on additional feedback received from staff utilizing the guidelines, ensuring relevance and effectiveness in supporting service delivery.
- 5.4 The SSM conducted training sessions for each delivery partner (OW, ODSP, ES) to familiarize them with the IES objectives and operational practices of each other's programs.
- 5.5 The SSM hosts meetings bringing together Social Assistance and Employment Services Provider staff gathering feedback, sharing best practices, and emphasizing the critical aspects of case conferencing to support strong client outcomes and strengthen collaboration.

5.6 While all delivery partners aim to achieve sustainable employment for clients in Durham Region, challenges arise from misaligned targets between the MLITSD and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) within the new model. Targets are measured by performance outcomes in MLITSD, while MCCSS focuses on client volume. The SSM advocates to both MLITSD and MCCSS to align on these issues, seeking system enhancements that benefit clients.

6. System Capacity Improvements

6.1 There are currently 12 unique Employment Services Providers in Durham Region. There are 19 Employment Services Provider locations broadly dispersed across Durham with the recent expansion of itinerate sites in Orono, Newcastle, and Cannington.

6.2 The SSM has connected with external consultants who are demonstrated experts in the field of Employment Services and Performance-Based Funding models. Their assessment and feedback continue to inform and guide system capacity improvements within Durham Region.

6.3 The SSM engages in regular meetings with other catchment area Employment SSM's across Ontario to foster connections, exchange best practices, and collaboratively address recurring challenges.

6.4 Training for the Employment Services Network

- a. The SSM completed a full assessment of appropriate training options for the network within the catchment area. The SSM aimed to build the relevant skills, competencies, and supports of Employment Services Providers to enhance their effectiveness, offering training in Change Management, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Indigenous Cultural Competency, Bridges Out of Poverty, Trauma-Informed Care, Motivational Interviewing, Job Development, and Optimizing Employer Engagement.
- b. The SSM has planned for a staff survey among Employment Services Provider staff to determine if additional trainings would be helpful.
- c. The SSM will continue to monitor and evaluate where additional trainings can be offered to help enhance the network.

6.5 Mental Health Employment Support Consultants

- a. In partnership with Canadian Mental Health Association – Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge's, the SSM has funded two Mental Health Employment Support Consultants to provide comprehensive support and guidance to both clients and staff, focusing on mental health and addictions accommodations, job coaching, crisis intervention planning, and advocacy within the employment sector.
- b. The consultants will deliver training, best practices, and ongoing support to staff across Durham, enhancing service provider capacity to effectively support clients in achieving employment goals.

- c. Supports offered can include but are not limited to one-time meetings with employment staff over the phone or in-person; meetings with clients and employment staff to provide ongoing in-depth supports; on-the-job coaching supports.

6.6 Digital Enhancements

a. Employment Services Microsite

- The SSM, along with GHD Group, designed and developed the Employment Services microsite. The microsite is a user-focused and accessible website to all job seekers and employers within Durham Region.
- The microsite allows job seekers and employers to locate and connect directly with local Employment Services Providers, access job search websites, as well as additional resources related to career exploration, starting a business, education and training, and apprenticeships and trades.
- Through the microsite, individuals have access to myBlueprint, an online career planning tool designed to assist individuals in exploring career options, setting goals, and planning their future paths. The SSM has funded this service subscription which also allows individuals to create cover letters and resumes and aids with interview preparation and practice.

b. Employment Services SharePoint

- The SSM established an internal Employment Services SharePoint for Employment Services Providers as a secure platform for storing, organizing, sharing, and accessing policies, guidelines, forms, templates, and user guides. Additionally, the portal hosts recorded training materials, reports, and a calendar of upcoming meetings and events for the network.

c. Case Management System (ESCases)

- The SSM has acquired a case management software through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process for network use, integrating fully with the province's existing IT system known as EOIS-CaMS (or CaMS), and offering a comprehensive suite of services to streamline workflow and enhance data collection capabilities.

7. Current Network Data Overview

- 7.1 The SSM monitors IES data to evaluate the performance of Employment Services Providers and the entire network. Data collection began with the launch of IES delivery in Durham Region on January 1, 2024.

a. Client Volume/Intake

- Between January and June 2024, a total of 4,792 EAPs were created for case-managed clients.
- For the period April 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024, the SSM achieved 101% of our client volume target. The period of April 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024 reflects the first quarter in the 2024-2025 fiscal year. This highlights the capacity for the network to deliver Integrated Employment Services once full implementation has been achieved.

b. Social Assistance Referrals

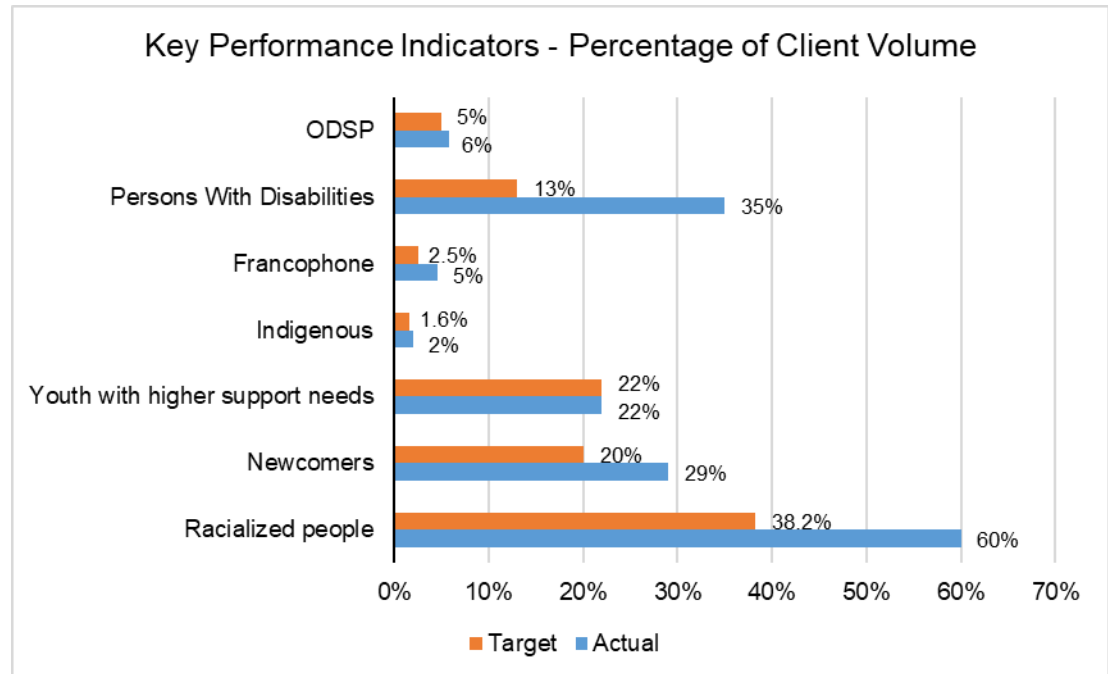
- Between January and June 2024, a total of 3,801 Social Assistance clients were referred to Employment Services through the Common Assessment.

c. Employment Outcomes

- 579 clients completed pre-employment services with an outcome of employed 20+ hours/week.
- 35 clients completed long-term skills training or education.
- 95% of clients were satisfied at the completion of pre-employment services.

d. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- The SSM is currently meeting or exceeding our commitments to serving clients with complex needs, including those belonging to inclusion groups.



8. Community Engagement

8.1 The SSM has offered several types of Employment Services support to help laid-off workers in Durham Region obtain prompt re-employment.

a. Information session in partnership with Service Canada

- The SSM presented employment services available in Durham Region to laid-off workers from Premier Implementation Services Canada (a supplier of Del Monte) alongside Service Canada representatives who discussed the Employment Insurance application process.

b. Action Centre for Unifor Local 222

- The SSM organized and coordinated employment and skills upgrading workshops for the Unifor Local 222 workers at their Oshawa location. Workers were provided information on Employment Services Providers in Durham Region.
- Employment Services Providers attend each workshop to present on a topic related to employment, along with one-on-one support delivered after the presentations.
- Workshops completed to date include Resume Writing with one-on-one resume assistance, Better Jobs Ontario information session, Financial Empowerment, Job Search Best Practices, and Interview Best Practices with one-on-one mock interviews.

- Upcoming workshops that are scheduled include LinkedIn, Online Job Searching and Digital Literacy, and a second Resume Workshop with one-on-one support.
- 8.2 To remain knowledgeable, build capacity and leverage new programs and relationships with community agencies, the SSM has attended conferences and participated in conference discussions related to the Employment Services Transformation.
- a. Opportunities to showcase Durham Region SSM model.
 - The SSM Program Manager participated in discussions and presented The Region of Durham's Employment Services model with other SSM's at the Amplify Conference, OMSSA Conference and College Sector for Employment Services Conference.
 - b. Continuous participation at Employment Services conferences and building relationships with community organizations.
 - The SSM was a vendor at the Accessibility Conference held at the Abilities Centre in Whitby and had a Durham Region Employment Services table set up to engage with local employers.
 - The SSM attended Amplify Conference and First Work conference to build upon local system capacity and share best practices with community organizations and other SSMs.

9. Key Priorities and Next Steps

- 9.1 The Employment SSM has been collaborating with Bawaajigewin Aboriginal Community Circle and is prioritizing hiring an Indigenous Support Worker for the network to connect with and seek specialized support for Indigenous peoples engaged with employment services and providing professional development training to Employment Services staff.
- 9.2 Employment Services Providers have submitted proposals to the SSM for one-time funding approved as part of the 2024 Regional Budget process to provide Specialized Services within their organization to designated inclusion groups. Proposals for Specialized Services will be selected by the SSM based on community need and the ability of the services provider to support equity-deserving groups and individuals with barriers to employment.
- 9.3 The SSM aims to establish a partnership and collaborate with continuing education schools within Durham Region including E.A. Lovell Public School and Archbishop Anthony Meagher Catholic Continuing Education Centre to have Employment Services Providers present on-site. This will help assist mature students who have questions related to employment, would like support with preparing for their next

steps in the workforce, and help with applications to Better Jobs Ontario for additional training.

9.4 Stakeholder engagement is a key priority as working with community organizations and employers within Durham Region is central to the SSM's program vision, mission, and values.

a. Region of Durham Economic Development Division

- Through the Employer and Industry Collaborative Committee, the SSM will work with Region of Durham's Economic Development Division to build a partnership and strategize how to better connect employers with job-seeking clients in the community.
- This committee will work together to understand the local labour market and uncover opportunities where the SSM can connect with local businesses and reach employers who want to be part of the solution for barriered clients who are furthest away from the labour market.
- The intent of this committee is to strengthen strategies that attract, hire, and retain a workforce by sharing best practices that maximize opportunity for business, job development and help drive economic growth.
- Plans to work with consortium partner, DWA, to collect data on Durham Region's labour market and find where gaps exist to help bridge those gaps for jobseekers and employers are underway.

b. Durham Employment Services Advisory Network (DESAN)

- The DESAN will support innovative program creation and implementation, and enhance the development, design, and delivery of an integrated employment system in Durham Region.
- The SSM is working with Durham Region's Strategic Initiatives Department to further develop this committee.
- Meeting invites are planned to be sent out by end of Summer 2024. The first in-person meeting for this committee will occur in Fall 2024 and will involve discussion of priorities and next steps for the network.

c. Literacy Network of Durham Region (LiNDR)

- The Employment Service System Manager attends regularly scheduled meetings with LiNDR to provide updates and feedback on Employment Services in Durham Region as it relates to literacy and basic skills services within Durham Region.

9.5 Building a stronger relationship between Social Assistance (SA) and Employment Services (ES) and encouraging more collaboration between the two parties is a key focus for the SSM. To help this, the SSM aims to connect the Supervisors from both

Social Assistance and Employment Services to discuss how the current Integrated Employment Services model works, and where there is opportunity for improvement. The first meeting was in June 2024. This working group will discuss ideas to better streamline clients from SA to ES to receive the support and employment assistance needed to find and retain employment and exit SA due to self-sufficiency. The aim will be to have this working group meeting quarterly. Along with bringing together supervisors from both groups, the SSM is bringing front-line staff from SA and ES together to discuss strengths and areas for improvement within Integrated Employment Services.

9.6 The SSM plans to expand marketing outreach and increase exposure for local Employment Services through various promotional strategies.

a. Social Media

- There will be bi-weekly ads on the Region of Durham's social media accounts (Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn) to market workshops happening in the community, programs being run by Employment Services Providers, and Employment Services updates.

b. Employment Services Microsite

- A workshop calendar available on the Employment Services microsite will share special workshops and training being run by Employment Services Providers for the community, such as guest speakers, certificate courses and training, and job fairs.

9.7 The SSM values ongoing training for the network to build service provider capacity and confidence when working with barriered clients. There will be opportunities for refresher training for staff, and an opportunity for staff to share what training they feel is needed for the network that the SSM can deliver.

- a. The SSM is organizing additional Indigenous Cultural Safety training sessions for the network in Fall 2024.
- b. Continuous training is delivered related to providing Trauma-Informed Care in Employment Services.
- c. A survey will be sent in Fall 2024 to front-line workers in the network to determine where there is additional need for training, and what workers need to build on their existing skills and learning when interacting with clients.

10. Relationship to Strategic Plan

10.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:

- a. Goal 2: Community Vitality – To foster an exceptional quality of life with services that contribute to strong neighbourhoods, vibrant and diverse communities, and influence our safety and well-being.
- b. Goal 3: Economic Prosperity – To build a strong and resilient economy that maximizes opportunities for business and employment growth, innovation and partnership.
- c. Goal 4: Social Investment – To ensure a range of programs, services and supports are available and accessible to those in need, so that no individual is left behind.
- d. Goal 5: Service Excellence – To provide exceptional value to Durham taxpayers through responsive, effective, and fiscally sustainable service delivery.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1 Under the Government of Ontario's EST plan, the Durham Employment SSM is committed to providing locally responsive, person-centered and outcome driven Employment Services. Community and stakeholder feedback is crucial to the SSM's service delivery model in ensuring programming is meaningful for those who live and work in Durham Region.
- 11.2 A specific focus for the Employment SSM is individuals with unique employment needs, Specialized Groups designated by MLITSD and individuals who are furthest away from the labour market. Improvements to system integration led by the SSM will assist SA clients with streamlined and coordinated access to ES supports.
- 11.3 The SSM has developed several strategies aimed at improving the effectiveness of Employment Services in Durham Region. These initiatives will incorporate diverse approaches and best practices to further strengthen the network.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Stella Danos-Papaconstantinou
Commissioner of Social Services

Original signed by

Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair
Chief Administrative Officer