



City of
Peterborough

ONTARIO WORKS SERVICE PLAN
2010-2011
Addendum
Employment Services

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Section 1: Executive Summary

This addendum provides additional detail regarding ongoing employment supports provided by the City of Peterborough to assist Ontario Works participants to increase employability and labour force attachment. The 2010-2011 service plan will focus on individual case planning to identify realistic employment goals and effective collaboration with community based employment and training organizations to improve job readiness and connections to available job opportunities. The following strategies and service changes will support Peterborough area participants to the best possible outcomes.

In early 2010, increased demand for all employment supports has been experienced due to increasing caseload while Employment Assistance funding has remained relatively unchanged in the past few years. Ministry approved annual allocations in the EA envelope have not kept pace with inflationary costs of administration, client supports or in light of rising caseloads. Time limited provincial funding to undertake Enhanced Employment Services for Vulnerable People (EES) has made possible a wider range of services for participants with limited employability and labour market attachment.

Section 2: Employment Support Activities

Range of Employment Supports

The CMSM continues to provide a comprehensive range of employment programs and services to eligible Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Plan recipients. Services include supports to job search, referral/monitoring of basic education activities, job-specific skills training, Employment Placement (EP), Community Placement (CP), Learning Earning and Parenting (LEAP), and Self-Employment business development. Participants work closely with their employment counsellor to identify the services they need to reach their employment goals. Employment services are delivered in-house as well as through purchase of service arrangements with community based organizations. Through coaching and applied Supportive Approaches through Innovative Learning (SAIL) concepts, individuals are encouraged to commence programs, activities, or training specific to these goals. Problems with childcare, transportation, budgeting, family/workplace relationships and housing must be overcome in order to become and remain successfully employed.

Some OW applicants are essentially job ready, having been recently employed and possessing marketable skills and abilities. Initial supports offered by OW staff include an employability assessment as a way to “triage” individuals towards immediate job openings, structured/independent job search supports or EP activities. Individuals who present with a number of significant employment barriers are referred to longer-term employment skills development activities or may be deferred from active participation due to medical limitations. Very hard to serve participants, those facing multiple

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complex barriers to employment are supported through ongoing case managers. These participants have access to a range of intensive services with outcome expectations of improved employability. The goal is to provide the right combination of short and longer-term supports to improve participant employability and labour force attachment. The Employment Readiness Scale (ERS) is a tool used by staff at the initial intake or within the first 30 days from application, to assist with this goal. The individual results help to identify personal challenges and strengths so that a meaningful return to work action plan can be established. A diagram contained on page 28 of the Peterborough Social Services – Ontario Works Service Plan 2010-2011(May 4, 2010), provides a summary of the Employment Service Pathway and the range of supports based on initial employability assessments.

Table 1.0 below is a summary of ERS data and lists the top five-employment challenges report by OW participants and their initial job readiness scores. Based on the ERS data the majority of OW participants are not likely to become successfully employed without suitable supports. Many of these supports have been built into Ontario Works program through a combination of financial assistance benefits, required employment support activities and local programs and partnerships. The table indicates that employment barriers are not confined to education or skill based gaps, lack of tools, or transportation, but include the interrelated issues of income, affordable housing and childcare. It is important to fully understand the barriers that participants face in order to plan effectively and address needs.

Table 1.0-ERS Summary **March 2008** **May 2010**

	March 2008	May 2010
Number of Assessments included in report:	1841	5380
Top Five Reported Challenges		
I never seem to have enough money to survive without assistance.	68%	63%
I don't have enough education.	67%	66%
I don't have proper clothes for work.	58%	56%
I can't find affordable housing near where I want to work.	47%	45%
I can't find affordable childcare near where I want to work.	45%	47%
Number of clients included in report:	1841	5380
Employment status: Not Ready ⁽¹⁾	67%	60%
Employment status: Minimally Ready ⁽²⁾	19%	23%
Employment status: Fully Ready ⁽³⁾	14%	17%
* Rounded to nearest %		
	Jan09-Jun 2010	Total since go live Oct 2006

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- (1) **"Not Ready"** - less than a 40% chance of becoming successfully employed, with a high likelihood of not retaining employment
 - (2) **"Minimally Ready"** - a 60% chance of becoming successfully employed in 12 weeks, but with a high likelihood of not retaining employment
 - (3) **"Fully Ready"** - a 80% chance of becoming successfully employed in 12 weeks, with a high likelihood of remaining employed
- Job Ready-** "Job Ready" is a status given by agency staff, not derived from the ERS. It refers to the date on which agency staff deem a client to no longer need assistance and to be capable of independent job search, and is the date from which the 12-week follow-up period is measured. Research shows that a client has the best chance of getting and keeping a suitable job if, at the time when the client is declared "Job Ready", the ERS also shows the client to be "Fully Ready."

Employer Engagement

The Ontario Works program partners with a number of community agencies to deliver sector based pre-employment skills training designed to link clients to entry level jobs in health care/ home support, food service, hospitality/tourism, office administration and customer service sectors. These programs have been successful in increasing employability and assisting participants to move directly to paid employment.

The Social Services Division has successfully collaborated with the Greater Peterborough Area Economic Development Corporation (GPAEDC) to provide pre-employment training and screening support for existing and newly established businesses in the City and County of Peterborough. OW Employment Placement (EP) marketing material is included in the GPAEDC employer information packages distributed to contacts developed through this agency. Most recently, the Division has provided screening and recruitment support for one of the areas' largest employers, Pepsi-QTG (Quaker), to expand its production staff.

Operation of the Peterborough Employment Resource Centre (PERC) through Employment Ontario funding provides an opportunity to collaborate with the EP program initiatives to support a broader cross section of unemployed and under employed area residents, while responding to various employer inquiries and referrals. The PERC offers space to employers to interview on-site and job vacancies can be posted on the local Community Employment Resource Partnership website. OW Employment Placement and PERC staff also assist new or expanding businesses in planning job fairs and Career Week activities.

Sector Based Training Initiatives

Health & Social Services

The Peterborough area has become an attractive retirement community outside the GTA. There are a growing number of businesses providing services for seniors. The aging demographic has affected the demand for health care and social services. The need for home care/ home support workers has increased considerably since 2001. Personal Support Worker and Registered Practical Nursing positions continue to be some of the most highly advertised job opportunities in the Peterborough area.

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The Social Services Division continues to collaborate with the Community Training and Development Corporation (CTDC) in order to offer a Personal Support Worker (PSW) training program. This successful program is based on the development of an orientation, screening and pre-testing process that identifies suitable participants. CTDC has demonstrated an ability to respond in a supportive way to meet the needs of OW participants. In 2008/2009, 57 participants enrolled in the PSW training with 75% of graduates finding employment in the field. Graduates meet with Employment Counsellors (EC) before completion of the program, participate in on-site tours of potential employers, and in job specific interview preparation workshops. Several healthcare companies regularly attend career fairs and actively recruit PSW students.

Hospitality / Food Services / Retail

The hospitality and tourism sectors are significant contributors to the Peterborough economy. A number of new food service establishments have recently opened in the area including cafes, fast food and fine dining. As part of the City's economic development strategy and downtown business improvement plan, Hunter Street has been redesigned as a dining hub, with wider sidewalks and designated outdoor patio areas.

Employment in sales and service has also increased in recent years with an influx of "big box" chain stores and the expansion of the Lansdowne Square shopping mall. Most new jobs are in retail sales, sales merchandizing and cashiers. The skill set for jobs in this sector are a combination of hard skills, such as operating a cash register, safe food handling and literacy skills, as well as soft skills such as customer service, communication and team work.

To prepare participants for these opportunities, partnerships were established with Trent Valley Literacy Association (TVLA) and the Community Opportunity & Innovation Network (COIN) to deliver Food Service and Customer Service training programs for adult literacy students and those with limited employability. The TVLA program includes a 2-week training placement in a local restaurant and has recently added a private sector partner, the Electric City Garden, a fine dining restaurant. Through the connection with the Electric City Garden, participants receive on site safe food handling, ordering and meal preparation training in a working kitchen, before commencing their training placement. The TVLA food service program assists 20-30 participants per year, with approximately 50-60% of graduates finding employment in the food service sector.

The COIN program supports a smaller number of participants who would benefit from one on one job coaching in a workplace setting. In groups of 2-3, job-coaching support is provided through COIN's social enterprise businesses with a focus on customer service, cash handling and workplace essential skills. Participants build skills and confidence in a supported employment environment through the Natural Blends Café (food service), Tekdesk (customer call centre), or ReBoot (computer refurbishing/

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recycling). In 2009, 6 participants enrolled and successfully completed the program, which lead to employment. COIN continues to provide on the job support for a period following employment as participants adjust to paid positions.

The Kawarthafest (Festivals Events Sports and Tourism) Ambassador training program assists participants to increase employability through a combination of classroom training and hands on event planning and marketing, preparing graduates for opportunities in the hospitality service sector. Kawarthafest Ambassadors assist with a number of annual events including Ribfest, Little Lake Music Festival, Lang Pioneer Village Annual BBQ and various sports tournaments. The Kawarthafest program collaborates with GPAEDC, Downtown Business Improvement Association and the Peterborough and Kawartha Tourism Board to promote the local area as a tourism destination. Participants earn certificates in training areas such as Smart Serve, food handling, CPR, first aid, Service Excellence and boat safety. The program offers a chance to build confidence and network with event organizers, local business sponsors, elected officials and area visitors. Participants have recently developed an all-inclusive VIP ticket package for the Little Lake Music Festival that includes round trip transportation, restaurant meal and preferred seating at the various shows. Sales have been very good and packages will be expanded to include a similar offering in partnership with Showplace Peterborough in the fall 2010. A number of positive outcomes have been identified for those completing the training program over the past few years, including moving directly to paid employment, additional training, post secondary education, upgrading and in some cases referrals for assessment and ODSP applications.

Literacy / Basic Education / Limited Employability

Table 1.0 ERS- Summary indicates that based on the initial employability assessments of over 5,000 participants to May 2010, 60 percent were “Not Ready” for employment, which is defined as less than a 40% chance of becoming successfully employed, with a high likelihood of not retaining employment. Literacy screening and initial employment planning shows that a large percentage of OW participants lack the necessary documented basic educational qualifications to compete in the current job market. This negatively affects longer-term labour market attachment and limits opportunities for career and wage advancement. To address these issues, the Social Services Division provides dedicated staff resources and financial supports for basic educational and literacy activities. In 2009, program and administrative staff assisted approximately 300 participants per month in basic education and up to 30 per month in literacy programs.

Student Earn and Learn

Based in part on the Learning Earning and Parenting (LEAP) model, the Student Earn and Learn program provides similar supports to (childless) adult recipients under the age of 24 through a dedicated 1.0 FTE Caseworker and 0.5 FTE Program Payment Clerk administrative support. Participants in this program benefit from increased

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educational and employment supports, modest financial incentives for completion of milestones, coaching and mentoring initiatives that encourage continuation in educational activities and summer/part-time job search supports. Through this program, with the support of the local school board, the Ontario Works Division seeks to create a climate for youth in receipt of social assistance that enhances their learning experience, educational outcomes, skills and abilities to find and retain future employment.

LEAP

The LEAP program is currently staffed by 1.0 FTE Caseworker and 0.5 FTE Program Payment Clerk who provides administrative support. LEAP eligible applicants are identified at the point of intake and scheduled with the LEAP Caseworker for the verification interview. Since the age limit was increased to 24 years, the caseload has been increasing from an average of approximately 36 participants in 2008 to 57 in 2009. The number of LEAP Incentives paid also increased substantially to 12 in 2009, up from 4 in the prior year. LEAP has developed strong partnerships with the area health unit, Early Years Centre, School for Young Moms and the Salvation Army, which acts as the trustee for all mandatory participants.

Self-Employment

In spite of the challenging economic environment, interest in pursuing self-employment remains relatively high among participants. Peterborough's Assisted Self-Employment program is delivered through a service agreement with the Northumberland Community Futures Development Corporation (NCFDC). NCFDC is also an Employment Ontario-Self Employment Benefit service provider with considerable experience and expertise in supporting the growth of start up businesses. The Assisted Self-employment program content includes a rigorous business plan development phase, financial/strategic planning and income milestone monitoring. As a social assistance exit strategy, very few participants have been able to generate the necessary income growth to become self-sufficient. Service sector businesses are most likely to succeed, such as housekeeping/cleaning, lawn care/ home maintenance and in-home daycare. They are both economically viable within the program format and usually require less startup resources. In 2009, an average of approximately 57 participants were in Assisted or Independent Self-employment activities, of which fewer than 15 met the criteria for the Assisted program. These activities require significant administrative resource commitment, while producing relatively few employment outcomes for participants in terms of generating income and exiting social assistance, relative to other possible supports. Recent changes to the Self-employment guidelines have added to the administration costs of providing these services.

Employment Placement

Despite the challenging local labour market conditions in 2009, the Employment Placement Program assisted approximately 21 participants per month in combined "with

incentive” and “without incentive” placements. It is increasingly important to maintain strong employer ties in order to identify and fill job opportunities that arise. EP activities are focussed on those employment sectors most likely to be hiring such as tourism, sales and service. Increased marketing has generated a strong employer base. Employers have been eager to access the employment placement program when expanding their workforce and have recommended the program to other employers. A strong working partnership with the Economic Development Corporation in both their New Business Development program and their Business Retention and Expansion program will lead to additional placement opportunities as the economy improves. It is anticipated that, with appropriate participant pre-screening, program content and employer connections, increased employment outcomes will be realized.

Community Placement

An increase in job ready applicants and participants has been observed in the proportion of the total number of new applications from 2008 to the end of 2009. With fewer job prospects, applicants have been out of work for extended periods of time. The majority of these new applicants/participants will require some degree of skills enhancement or retraining in order to access existing job opportunities. Community Placement (CP) opportunities with area non-profit organizations could be an option to meet this need. By expanding the range of placement options, participants will learn new skills, keep resumes current and restore confidence after a recent job loss. Despite all the many benefits of volunteering participants are still somewhat reluctant to become involved in volunteer placements, preferring skills training, educational upgrading and traditional job search activities. Over the past couple of years, additional CP relationships have been established with local non-profit organizations but the number of placements has remained relatively unchanged. In 2009, approximately 20 participants per month took part in volunteer placements. An increase in the number of placements is expected with continued marketing of CP options and benefits.