

April 16, 2019

Received by Email May 14, 2019
at 1:18pm

MEMORANDUM TO: Ontario Works Administrators
• Municipalities and DSSABs

FROM: Patti Redmond
Director, Social Assistance Service Delivery Branch

SUBJECT: 2019 Ontario Works Service Delivery Priorities

Thank you for supporting client needs and your on-going commitment to exploring new and innovative ways to achieve employment outcomes for clients.

I am writing to provide information regarding the 2019 Ontario Works (OW) service delivery priorities. This year, the ministry will be updating the OW service delivery priorities, along with existing guidelines and business practices to strengthen program accountability, oversight and integrity.

As you know, last November the Government set out its vision for social assistance reform, with a key focus on improving employment outcomes and accountability. In December the Auditor General, through the release of her Value for Money audit of the Ontario Works program, further highlighted opportunities for improvement in these areas. Through the course of this year, the Ministry will be working closely with our municipal and DSSAB partners on the design of various aspects of the reform program. We recognize that there is much to do and the important role that both the Ministry and our partners must play in achieving success. As this work progresses, we also believe that there are significant opportunities for continuous improvement that will position us well for the future while delivering improved outcomes now.

The ministry has identified service delivery priorities grouped within the following **four** pillars:

1. Improving Employment Outcomes
2. Enhancing Accountability for Achieving Outcomes
3. Amending Service Contracts (in-year) related to Employment Targets
4. Strengthening Fiscal Accountability

Pillar #1 - Improving Employment Outcomes

The ministry will be establishing more ambitious employment outcomes targets with delivery partners to encourage continuous improvement within the program.

- 2018 actuals for the employment outcomes measured will be the forecasted baseline for 2019.
- Negotiated 2019 targets must be at minimum 3% higher than the 2019 baseline.
 - In exceptional circumstances, the ministry may consider demonstrated evidence with respect to shifts in local demographics (e.g. changes in population size), labour market (e.g. changes to the unemployment rate and/or local industry) and if the 2018 actuals/2019 forecasted baseline is significantly above the provincial median (Pillar # 2) when negotiating targets.
- The evidence-based rationale supporting employment outcomes targets will be documented in your 2019 OW service plan.
- In addition, delivery partners will develop strategies to increase the number of ODSP non-disabled adults actively participating in OW Employment Assistance (EA).
 - Descriptions of these strategies will be documented in your service plan, and participation in OW EA data will be monitored using the OW Datasheets.

Pillar #2 – Enhancing Accountability for Achieving Outcomes

The ministry will be enhancing performance management measures with delivery partners to support greater accountability for achieving outcomes.

- In addition to setting employment outcomes above the prior year's actuals (namely, Pillar # 1), further attention will be initiated by Program Supervisors with delivery partners who are below the provincial median or below similar communities with respect to labour market conditions. Similar communities may be defined as but is not limited to similar OW caseload size and similar population size.
 - Eligibility Verification Process (EVP) is the ministry's key oversight activity which uses a risk-based case audit process to ensure client eligibility for social assistance is determined based on accurate financial and personal information.
 - The Ministry will specifically report on delivery partners results related to:
 - 100% assignment of audit plans within 15 business days
 - 90% completion rate of audit plans prior to the following audit plan creation date and
 - Perform Quality Assurance reviews of random samples of completed audits. The focus will be on EVP mandatory steps.
- EVP data will be monitored using the EVP OW Performance Analysis Reports that are posted to the SA Extranet.

Pillar #3 - Amending service contracts (in-year) related to Employment Targets

- Historically, there has been flexibility to renegotiate forecasted baselines and improvement targets in-year to reflect major changes in environment.
- Moving forward, negotiated targets will not be amended from the initial contract which may result in financial recoveries. The maximum recovery, based on performance is 15% of the total upload funding.

Pillar # 4 – Strengthening Fiscal Accountability

The ministry will be introducing new financial controls and collecting program delivery information to better understand delivery costs and to ensure the provision of funding reflects program spending.

- Budget submissions for 2019 funding should not exceed the previous year's actuals unless there is a clear evidence-based rationale negotiated with the Program Supervisor and documented in your 2019 OW service plan.
- A detailed list of all OW (central and direct) full-time equivalent (FTE) positions (names of positions and total count) will be completed as part of the 2019 Ontario Works Budget Package.
- Service contracts must be fully executed (i.e., signed and returned to the ministry) on or before July 31, 2019.
 - A minimum of a 15% cash flow reduction from ongoing monthly payments will be applied starting with the August 1st payment, until the contract is fully executed.
- In addition, delivery partners will provide a list of all OW benefits that are managed outside of the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) and identify supporting documentation that will be provided with their subsidy claims to support expenditures in their 2019 OW Service Plan.

If you have questions on this material, please contact your Social Assistance Program Supervisor for further information.

Original signed by

Patti Redmond

cc. Anna Cain, Director of Social Assistance Program Policy Branch