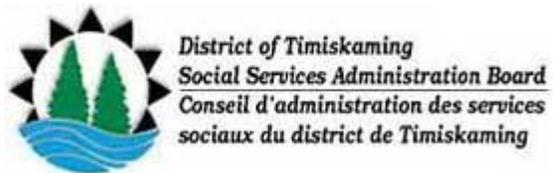

A Proposal to be the Service System Managers of the Employment Programs in Northern and Northwestern Ontario District Service Areas

SUBMITTED TO:

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

SUBMITTED BY:

Algoma District Services Administration Board
Cochrane District Social Services Administration Board
Kenora District Services Board
Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board
District of Nipissing Social Services Administration Board
District of Parry Sound Social Services Administration Board
Rainy River District Social Services Administration Board
District of Timiskaming Social Services Administration Board
Sault Ste. Marie Social Services Administration Board
City of Greater Sudbury



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The intention of this proposal is to present this Government with a plan that will result in improved and long-lasting outcomes for Ontarians living in Northern Ontario requiring support in order to attain employment.

The proposal presents a fundamental shift to how Ontario currently administers the Employment Ontario program and will address a significant barrier that current households on social assistance face when trying to participate in the labour market.

The proposal presents a holistic, modern and client-centred approach to how Ontarians will be supported on their journey to meaningful employment.

Based on the experience of the Proponents, the current system must improve in its planning capacity and approach to coordinating supports, programs and services as part of the Employment Ontario Program. The current fragmented and siloed approach to program delivery by the almost 1,000 different delivery agencies in Ontario results in delayed decision making, inconsistent oversight, increased cost of administration and the erroneous measuring of outputs instead of meaningful outcomes.

The proposal promises a holistic system management to Employment Ontario that will provide a better framework to evidence-based decision making; create a modern employment program designed to support individuals of all skill level and ability to attain employment; and ensure that all communities in Northern Ontario have equitable access to programs and services.

The economy in Ontario continues to change at a significant rate and without a coordinated employment program system Ontario will continue to see the gap between skilled labour and labour market increase in Northern Ontario.

Summary of proposed implementation plan:

Project	Timeframe: Start	Timeframe: Completion	Province	Service Manager
Contract Establishment with Province	Oct 1, 2018	Dec 31, 2018	X	
Community Consultations/Planning	Jan 1, 2019	Mar 15, 2019		X
Final Transition Plan		Mar 31, 2019		X
Implement Plan		April 1, 2019	X	

INTRODUCTION

In Northern Ontario a group of 10 organizations being nine District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSAB's) and the one Consolidated Municipal Services Managers (CMSM) have joined together to provide this proposal to manage employment programs in Northern and Northwestern Ontario. Through careful strategic thought and analysis, it is our joint contention that we can ensure employment programming is managed and delivered in a manner that better helps the Province of Ontario meet its objectives, improves relationships between employment demands and employment preparedness, and helps more people in the North move from unemployment and on social assistance to full employment in a more efficient and effective manner.

BUILDING ON SUCCESS

Like other DSSAB/CMSM's across Ontario, the members of this Northern group have a proven track record of system managing when it comes to an array of services – from housing to Early Years programming. Other ministries - Education and Municipal Affairs and Housing - rely upon us to be service system managers. That is to say we know how to manage funding and programs to meet local needs. In the case of employment programming, we are submitting this proposal to be the Service System Manager of all employment programming within our respective service areas. We believe that the current employment programs and services need to be coordinated and planned to ensure they work together strategically. We want to better leverage local assets to be instruments of a better integrated local response network.

The group of 10 DSSABs/CMSM from Northern Ontario hereby propose to act as Service System Managers for the full suite of Employment Ontario (EO) programs within each of our respective jurisdictions. This bundling of EO services within the DSSAB's/CMSM's service mix will create a more efficient, comprehensive, and integrated basket of services that will be easier for individuals and families to access, reducing provincial administration and would be particularly attractive in the rural and remote parts of Northern and Northwestern Ontario.

We acknowledge that the current human services and employment programs are somewhat effective at supporting and addressing needs of high-functioning individuals and families; however, they have difficulty in providing assistance or continuity to families and individuals that are facing more complex needs and challenges. The system is not organized effectively at the local level and as a result, is inefficient and not as effective as needed. Training for, and getting work, is key to establishing a 'roadmap to success' for these clients.

Our DSSABs/CMSM are uniquely positioned in that we understand and are perfectly positioned to meet local communities' programmatic needs in terms of Paramedic Services, Child Care, Early Years Child and Family Centres, Affordable and Supportive Housing, Homelessness, Income Support and Employment Services. Further, this understanding is supported by a regional approach to services management and delivery. DSSABs/CMSMs know that the needs of communities, families and employers are dependent on regional planning and strategies.

Establishing this Northern group as the Employment System Service Managers, enables communities to have employment support systems that function cross-Ministry and cross-program mandates. It will allow us to properly organize the system based on sector and partner expertise and local needs. Having the flexibility would greatly improve local employment services by supporting families with the unique supports they need in order to participate in and progress through Social Assistance and Employment Ontario programs and services.

This would help ensure a progression from an often-haphazard patchwork of service offerings to an integrated service systems management model. This will transform what has been a system focused on outputs to being a support system focused on outcomes for individuals and families.

Consequently, we will have a multi-layered and fully integrated system that will ensure all communities and people have equitable access to literacy, training and employment programs. This will improve employment outcomes by ensuring the right service is provided at the right time through a targeted approach.

As the Service System Managers for Employment Ontario, we propose to:

- Meet with community partners to review Labour Market information within our respective jurisdictions to develop a community plan for the roll-out of Service System Management of Employment Services
- Assess the economic viability of the employment programs and services in the respective jurisdictions
- Organize the system based on service delivery partner expertise, demographic and geographic needs
- Develop an integrated service system plan for employment programs
- Develop local policies respecting the provision of employment services
- Coordinate the planning and provision of other human services within the Service System Manager respective jurisdictions
- Where appropriate, make or facilitate changes to ensure programs meet local employer and employees' needs and employment services are economically viable and achieving targeted outcomes
- Monitor and evaluate employment programs to ensure they meet provincial policy goals, while at the same time meeting the need of local employer and employees
- Where opportunity in the community is present, propose a strategy to create or enhance the labour market

The proponents to this proposal strongly believe that significant system costs savings will be realized for the Province of Ontario and municipalities in Northern Ontario. Further, that the actions under this proposal, will help ensure outcomes and not merely outputs, to meet the complex and often confusing and confounding issues that our clients currently face in getting the help they need to get a job. In fact, we believe we can generate efficiencies for the province through our envisioned approach.

NORTHERN AND NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO CONTEXT

Every part of the province has different needs when it comes to operating programming that assists people whether it be housing, child care, assistance to seniors, homelessness, employment, or the like. Local planning and coordinating of service delivery allows for the most flexible and most efficient use of provincial resources. We jointly believe that the context of Northern and Northwestern Ontario is such that the DSSABs/CMSM can system manage and coordinate employment programs better than the current design and implementation.

We believe that we can system manage and coordinate employment programming in a manner that is culturally competent for Northern and Northwestern Ontario – a manner that is lacking with the current milieu of employment programming offered in the north. One must appreciate through immersion that in the north we experience high rates of economic poverty, death due to trauma, suicides, homelessness, problematic substance use and addiction, and high rates of mental illness. Elements of this are directly attributable to the manner with which our economies in the north work, and how people find access to meaningful work and labour force participation. We tend to have less programming to deal with these complex issues than other parts of the province, especially in more rural and remote areas of the north. We deal with inter-generational separation from mainstream employment, and subsequent reliance upon the social safety net. We are impacted by in and out migration in ways that look and feel differently than in the south, west and eastern parts of the province, as well as the rural and remote parts of the geographical areas of our DSSABs/CMSMs.

THE BENEFITS

Benefits of a Service System Management Approach:

<p>Service User</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One door to employment system • Streamlined services leading to fewer referrals • Greater access to “wrap-around” services • Flexible and responsive services • Simplification of “who does what?” • Customized pathway to employment 	<p>Employers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease of access to system • Direct links through economic development • Simplification of “who does what?” • Better recruitment support in shifting economies
<p>Province</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplification of administration • Ability to respond more broadly to Outcomes based policy • Consistency in service provision • Accountability framework 	<p>DSSABs/CMSMs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsiveness to local need • Broader based planning • Reduced red tape • Differentiated case management to support distance from the labour market

The unique relationships that DSSABs/CMSMs have with their municipalities and communities also means that the DSSABs/CMSMs have an intimate and fulsome understanding of current and future needs of employers, the communities and the families that require support in order to achieve meaningful employment.

OUR CAPACITY TO DELIVER

Our Northern group is uniquely positioned to understand and meet their local communities' needs in terms of Paramedic Services, Child Care, Early Years Child and Family Centres, Affordable and Supportive Housing, Homelessness, Income Support, Employment Services and Economic Development.

DSSABs/CMSMs are very familiar and competent in managing third party Service System Management agreements. We are the current Service System Manager for both Early Years and Social Housing.

The Ministry of Education recognizes DSSABs/CMSMs as expert Service System Managers in applicable legislation. We developed the Early Years System by carefully and systematically working with communities in developing Best Start Networks, and now these same Best Start Networks are assisting the DSSABs/CMSMs with the devolution of the Ontario Early Years Centres (now called EarlyON) from the province to the DSSABs/CMSMs as the Service System Manager for Early Learning and Child Care. We regularly monitor, track and hold organizations accountable for the funds they are provided under the Early Learning and Children Services programs

DSSABs/CMSMs have service delivery contracts with local colleges and school boards for the delivery of Early Learning and Children Services as well as managing and providing child care fee subsidies for parents and children who qualify. We are involved in negotiations between school boards, profit and non-profit child care providers in the allocation of space, renovations and rental agreements in schools.

In the area of Social Housing, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing also recognizes DSSABs/CMSMs as the Service System Manager for Housing DSSABs/CMSMs have a mix of direct delivered housing properties, non-profit providers, co-operatives and agreements with private landlords under the rent supplement program. As DSSABs/CMSMs, we are accountable for the non-profits organizations' infrastructure reserves and regularly perform operational reviews with non-profits housing providers.

We are tasked with developing and implementing a 10-year Housing & Homelessness Plan which requires us to plan and coordinate service delivery with all residents in our communities,

First Nations, municipal councils, building control officials, economic development officers, businesses and non-profit organizations and numerous service and government agencies within the communities we represent.

Income Support is one area where all DSSABs/CMSMs directly deliver Ontario Works Financial and Employment Assistance. This involves planning with multiple community agencies, government departments, police and health care sector. DSSABs/CMSMs also provide discretionary benefits to Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) recipients and Employment Services to non-disabled spouses and adults on ODSP.

Ontario Works Employment Services are generally delivered through a mix of self-delivered programs and third-party agreements with local colleges, school boards and the non-profit community agencies. We are in regular contact with local employers and businesses as we offer employers job matching services, on the job coaching, employer wage subsidies and training opportunities for families.

DSSABs/CMSMs often work closely with colleges to develop appropriate programming for the individuals they serve within a particular community. In some instances, it may be developing specific programming to meet the needs of families in a community such as life skills training, carpentry and building maintenance programming, handling transactions for cashiers or computer classes required for a specific job.

We work closely with community literacy agencies that are in the best position to deliver basic literacy and upgrading to individuals to achieve a grade 12 equivalency. Further we work with Colleges and Universities to assist clients in choosing the most appropriate career path based on their individual skills.

In the North, there are currently 2 DSSABs that directly deliver the full suite of Employment Ontario programs: Cochrane and Manitoulin-Sudbury. Through the delivery of the Employment Ontario Programs, DSSABs/CMSMs have demonstrated their ability to deliver provincially funded employment programs to all residents of our communities, not only social assistance recipients, effectively and in a fiscally prudent manner. They have developed strong relationships with local employers, economic development officers and the business community to ensure that potential employees have the skills and ability they need to be successful in the workplace.

UNIQUE ASPECTS OF OUR APPROACH

There are a number of unique aspects of our proposed approach that we would like you to consider:

1. ***A move from outputs to outcomes*** – we are less concerned with the volume of people that engage with EO programs and more concerned with what happens as a result of that engagement. We propose an approach that tracks every step of progression and vigorous application of the Deming Cycle (Plan, Do, Check, Act) to make continuous improvement in the process to maximize the results of participation in EO program offerings.
2. ***A move from dabbling in employment services for people on Ontario Works to system managing the full suite of employment programs*** - we acknowledge that we have sometimes failed to succeed in the past because we have not been given the right tools and due to cumbersome administrative processes; which has been exacerbated due to the inability to coordinate and plan for the required employment programs and supports locally.
3. ***Orchestrate the best connections*** between prospective employers and the training occurring. Furthermore, the Ontario Government has committed to reducing red tape, which will ultimately impact Ontario Works clients, staff and outcomes in a positive manner.
4. ***A move from a cookie cutter approach to a customized local response*** – we envision a hyper-customized Northern approach that is culturally sensitive to the needs of Northern Ontario. We envision local flexibility that allows us to maximize employment connections in not only the cities of the north, but also in the rural and remote areas of the north. The customized approach will enable this system to keep up and remain relevant in the fact and ever changing economy in Northern Ontario.
5. ***Creation and testing of an assessment tool*** – while we acknowledge that the province has been working on an assessment tool, we believe we can create, validate and implement an assessment tool quickly given our work on assessment tools in other aspects of our system management work, and our existing connections to consultants that have experience in the design and delivery of assessment tools. We cannot, nor should we, wait for a tool that tries to meet the needs of every corner of the province when it is possible to design and implement a valid tool for the North quicker.

NEXT STEPS

The Northern group proposes to take on the Service System Management of Employment Ontario services currently being offered autonomously in order to provide a highly organized, seamless and integrated system of services in their respective jurisdictions. We propose to work with Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to develop a plan for this service integration and the related Service System Management of these services by October 1, 2018 and move forward with this new Service System Management approach effective April 1, 2019. This will address the current lack of strategic planning for the delivery of a comprehensive basket of employment services. DSSABs/CMSMs can assess gaps between where applicants are at versus what jobs are available as well as the training required to achieve results that would be advantageous for clients.

These DSSABs/CMSMs propose to do this at no additional cost to the Province. We believe Employment Ontario is adequately funded and that we can actually generate efficiencies for government through a more comprehensive, Service Systems Management approach. Service integration will help move from focusing on outputs to achieving outcomes in these respective local areas and actually reduce poverty and income supports dependency. Further, once promising results are produced through such a pilot, the Province will be able to reduce their contract management oversight from hundreds of Employment Ontario service agreements to other DSSABs/CMSMs of Employment Ontario – reducing complexity for both clients and the Province, improving outcomes and ideally improving efficiency and economy within what is currently a top-heavy administratively cumbersome system.

The proposed implementation plan is as follows:

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Contract Establishment with Province	Oct 1, 2018	Dec 31, 2018	X	
Community Consultations/Planning	Jan 1, 2019	Mar 15, 2019		X
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