

## Employment and Services Transformation – Request for Qualification **GENERAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

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### Questions & Answers

#### 1. What is happening to employment services in Ontario?

The government is improving the delivery of employment services for Ontarians by focusing on the local needs of communities and workers so people can get good, quality jobs.

The government is creating a stronger system that's easy to use and localized to help all workers, businesses and communities.

Service system managers will plan and deliver services that meet the needs of their local economy and make Ontario open for business. These managers will be selected through a new, competitive process that is open to any public, not-for-profit and private sector organization.

Beginning fall 2019, the new system will be implemented in three regions in Ontario so lessons learned may be applied and rolled-out across the province gradually.

Those three regions are Hamilton-Niagara Peninsula, Muskoka-Kawarthas, Peel.

As the new system is implemented in the prototype regions, the government will continue to work with service delivery partners across the province to plan and deliver stronger, locally-focused employment and social assistance services that help more people find and keep jobs.

#### 2. Why are these changes being made? (How does this align with government priorities?)

Ontario's employment and training programs are critical to building the skilled workforce that keeps [Ontario open for business](#). However, current employment services are not delivering results and often don't provide people looking for a job with a clear path to employment.

We need to ensure Ontario's employment services are responsive to local labour market needs, so job seekers can find jobs and employers can find skilled workers.

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**3. What happens to the existing employment service providers? Will locations close? Will people lose their jobs at service provider locations?**

With large-scale transformation, we know there will be disruption within the system. These changes will be difficult, but are necessary to support improvement and drive innovation, and ultimately, to provide better services to the people of Ontario.

We will gradually implement the changes to Ontario's employment services, starting with three prototypes in fall 2019 and learn from this implementation along the way. Full implementation will be phased-in over the next several years, with regular communications to help people understand and prepare for any changes.

**4. Will there be impacts to current Employment Ontario programming because of these changes?**

Yes, there could be impacts to current Employment Ontario programming. A new outcomes-based, local service system management model will be introduced to ensure we have more effective and responsive employment services that achieve better results for job seekers and employers.

Service system managers will be selected through a new, competitive process and open to any public, not-for-profit and private sector organization.

**5. How will these changes impact Literacy and Basic Skills program delivery?**

Literacy and Basic Skills service delivery is not in scope for the service system manager in the prototype phase. Service system managers in prototype communities will refer jobseekers to literacy and essential skills training services.

**6. Will service system managers take over some of the responsibilities currently held by Local Employment Planning Councils and Local Planning Boards?**

Service system managers will be accountable for service planning and manage the delivery of employment services in a way that is integrated, people-focused and outcomes-driven. Service system managers will undertake activities, such as

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engaging employers, to match services and programs to local job seeker and employer needs and help them achieve employment outcomes. Community partnerships are critical to providing jobseeker supports and moving people to employment.

Service system managers will be required to engage with a number of partners, including local employment planning councils and local planning boards, colleges, municipalities and other social service entities to better meet the needs of jobseekers and employers.

While local employment planning councils and local planning boards may be performing some of these functions, the service system manager will be accountable to the government for using these partnerships to develop service plans.

### **7. When will clients see changes through this new service system? Will they have to change service providers to get help?**

We will gradually implement the changes to Ontario's employment services, starting with three prototypes in fall 2019. The prototype regions will be operational and ready to take clients by April 2020. Regular communication will help people understand and prepare for any changes.

Full implementation across the province will be phased-in over the next several years.

### **8. Did the government consult with stakeholders prior to this announcement?**

Yes. Since announcing the plan for modernizing employment services in February 2019, the government has executed targeted engagement with key stakeholders, clients and local organizations to better-inform the next steps of the modernization and ensure the new employment services model is viable.

This included an engagement exercise in April and May 2019 with over 200 organizations interested in learning about the role of service system managers within the new employment system. Participants included private and not-for-profit sector

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organizations, municipalities, Indigenous organizations, colleges and service providers. It consisted of webinars, open information session, an extended Q&A session, a networking opportunity/presentation session and approximately 120 one-to-one meetings with organizations to get their advice on the new employment system and execution.

**9. Will these changes result in fewer employment services for communities?**

The new local service delivery model will ensure employment services are more responsive and effective in meeting the needs of job seekers, employers and communities.

**10. How will these changes help to ensure job seekers are given the skills needed to succeed in the jobs available?**

The government wants all Ontarians to have the skills they need to get a good job. Ontario's employment and training programs are critical to building the skilled workforce that keeps Ontario open for business. Improving the delivery of employment services for Ontarians by focusing on the local needs of communities and workers will help people get good, quality jobs.

**11. How will these changes impact First Nations communities?**

We have started a direct dialogue with First Nation representatives along with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to discuss their perspective on the changes the government is considering. No decisions have been made and will reflect the outcome of these discussions.

**12. How will these changes impact First Nations and other Indigenous communities?**

We have started a direct dialogue with other indigenous community representatives along with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and we want to get their advice on how best to support indigenous clients in the new model.

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**13. How will these changes impact Francophone communities?**

The government is committed to providing quality employment services to all job seekers and employers, and that includes delivering services in French. The government consulted with Francophone service providers and included Francophone sessions in the vendor market day.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities will work closely with other provincial ministries and service system managers to ensure that services provided to the Francophone community are available in the new employment system, both in the prototype phase and province-wide implementation.

Service system managers will be required to engage with the Francophone community to ensure appropriate services are available that reflect community need.

**14. How will these changes impact people with disabilities?**

The government is committed to providing effective employment services to all job seekers and employers, and that includes delivering services to people with disabilities. The Ontario Disability Support Program Employment Supports program will be integrated into this newly transformed employment system.

Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities will work closely with other provincial ministries and service system managers to ensure that services that meet the varied needs of people with disabilities are available in the new employment system, both in the prototype phase and as part of province-wide implementation, and that people with disabilities currently receiving service are a priority for the government.

**15. How will these changes impact municipalities?**

The ministry recognizes that delivery partners are interested in obtaining details of how social assistance employment services will be integrated into newly transformed employment services.

The service delivery network that is not part of the prototype regions will continue to operate as in the past until full implementation. The government will continue to work

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with service delivery partners across the province to plan and deliver stronger, locally focused employment and social assistance services that help more people find and keep jobs.

In the new system, starting with the three prototype regions in fall 2019, the relationship between current delivery partners and the ministry will change. The ministry will hold service system managers accountable for achieving specific outcomes. Service system managers will oversee Employment Ontario service providers and direct deliver service in their catchment area. Following a transition period, service system managers will have the flexibility and discretion to identify the local service delivery network in their catchment area. Service system managers will be responsible for providing employment services to Ontario Works clients who are currently served by municipalities.

Service system managers will be chosen through a competitive process and any municipality may apply to be part of the process if they choose.

The ministry recognizes and supports service planning as a key priority and that we need to work together to improve employment and training services and better coordination with social assistance.

**16. How will these changes impact service providers?**

In the new system, starting with the three prototype regions in fall 2019, the relationship between current Employment Ontario service providers and the ministry will change. The ministry will hold service system managers accountable for achieving specific outcomes. Service system managers will oversee Employment Ontario service providers and directly deliver service in their catchment area. Responsibility for employment services delivered through Ontario Disability Support Program and Ontario Works will transition into the service system manager function

Outside of the prototype regions, the government will continue to work with service delivery partners across the province to plan and deliver stronger, locally-focused employment and social assistance services that help more people find and keep jobs.

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**17. What is the Supported Employment program? Will implementation of the program continue in Belleville, Cornwall, and Timmins? Is the program getting cancelled?**

The Supported Employment program was launched April 2018 in Belleville, Cornwall, and Timmins. The goal of the program is to help people with disabilities secure competitive, long-term jobs. It integrates the Ontario Employment Assistance Services, the Ontario Disability Support Program Employment Supports program (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services), and the Vocational Rehabilitation Services (Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care).

The Supported Employment program offers clients with complex barriers, as a result of a disability, a comprehensive range of employment services to help them achieve their career goals. The program also provides a wide range of services and opportunities for employers to address their staffing and skills needs.

The Supported Employment program continues to be available in Belleville, Cornwall, and Timmins. We are currently conducting a third-party implementation evaluation of the program which will help inform how best to move forward in the future. This important project will help inform the development of the new service delivery model.

In the prototype communities, service system managers will be expected to deliver specialized services to people with disabilities in their catchment area. Service system managers will have the flexibility to design these supports and will be accountable to the government for achieving outcomes for these clients.

**18. What is a prototype?**

A prototype is a preliminary service system model that will be tested and learned from prior to full implementation of the new employment and training system.

For the employment services modernization, Ontario has been divided into 15 regions that align with Statistics Canada Economic Region boundaries, splitting the Toronto Economic Region into five catchment areas.

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Beginning fall 2019, the new employment system will be implemented in three of the regions. Lessons learned from these prototypes may be applied and rolled-out across the province gradually.

### **19. What are the catchment areas for the prototypes?**

The three prototype regions that will first implement the new employment services system are Hamilton-Niagara Peninsula, Muskoka-Kawarthas, Peel.

The three prototype regions reflect Ontario's geographic and community diversity to ensure the new employment services system works for all Ontario job seekers and employers.

To choose prototype regions, we used an evidence-based framework to support the selection.

From there, we organized the regions into three clusters representing urban, mixed urban/rural, and rural communities and then assessed against criteria to determine the strongest options. The criteria included contestability, integration and transition. These criteria were assessed to ensure the prototype regions would be representative of the system.

### **20. What is the purpose of the Request for Qualifications (RFQ)?**

The Request for Qualifications is an opportunity for organizations to submit specific information related to their qualifications to be a service system manager for one of the three prototype regions.

The Request for Qualifications includes details about the scope of delivery functions, roles and responsibilities of service system managers, application and evaluation processes and project timelines. The Request for Qualifications document is available now on the Ontario Tenders Portal. The deadline for submission is July 23, 2019.

Organizations that meet the qualifications to be a service system manager will be invited to participate in the Call for Proposals phase launching later this summer.

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**21. Who can apply to be a service system manager for the three prototype regions beginning fall of 2019?**

The Request for Qualifications is an opportunity for organizations to submit specific information related to their qualifications to be a service system manager for one of the three prototype regions.

The Request for Qualifications includes details about the scope of delivery functions, roles and responsibilities of service system managers, application and evaluation processes and project timelines. The Request for Qualifications document is available now on the Ontario Tenders Portal. The deadline for submission is July 23, 2019.

Organizations that meet the qualifications to be a service system manager will be invited to participate in the Call for Proposals phase launching later this summer.

**22. When can qualified organizations submit their proposal to be a service system manager for one of the prototype regions?**

The service system manager will be selected through a two-stage competitive selection process. The first stage of the selection process is the Request for Qualifications. To participate in the Call for Proposals during the prototype phase, organizations must meet the criteria established in the Request for Qualifications. Participation in the selection process for the prototype phase does not exclude an organization from submitting their interest during the full implementation. The deadline for the Request for Qualifications submission is July 23, 2019.

**23. What criteria will be considered when selecting service system managers for the three prototype regions?**

Service system managers will be selected based on those best positioned to manage the employment system and deliver results. The competitive process will be open to any public, not-for-profit and private sector organization, provided they meet the qualification criteria.

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**24. How many service system managers will be selected for the three prototype regions?**

One service system manager will be selected for each of the three prototype regions – so a total of three. One service system manager cannot manage all three regions during the prototypes.

**25. When can organizations apply to be a service system manager for the non-prototype regions?**

Over the next few years, the ministry will introduce a competitive process for selecting service system managers in catchment areas across the province. As more information becomes known and decisions are made, updates will be shared.

**26. What is the role of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities in this new service delivery model?**

The ministry will be a system steward in the new service delivery model. As system steward, the government will set standards and establish performance outcomes, set the policies and priorities for the integrated employment system.

The ministry will also retain responsibility for sector-based initiatives, grants, and rapid response to address labour market crises.

**27. What is the role of the Ministry of Children Community and Social Services in this new service delivery model?**

Social assistance programs, specifically Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program, will be a key input into the Employment Ontario system with respect to client referrals, integrated case management and ongoing service coordination. These programs will work collaboratively to address mutual clients' needs in achieving their employment goals.

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services will maintain responsibility for social assistance and for providing life stabilization supports to those clients.

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We will gradually implement the changes to Ontario's employment services, starting with the three prototypes in fall 2019. As more information becomes known and decisions are made, we will ensure that all employees are updated.

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**28. How many people have submitted their proposal to be a service system manager in the prototype communities? Who are they?**

The competitive process is currently underway, for more information on the competitive process, please visit the Ontario Tenders Portal.

**29. How is the Ministry of Training, College and Universities supporting people on social assistance?**

The ministry is supporting people on social assistance by integrating Ontario Works – Employment Assistance and Ontario Disability Support Program – Employment Supports into Employment Ontario. This will create one efficient, cost-effective system that’s easy to use and helps all job seekers, including people with disabilities and those on social assistance.

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services maintains responsibility for social assistance and for providing life stabilization supports to those clients.

**30. What is the Ontario Disability Support Program – Employment Supports?**

Ontario Disability Support Program - Employment Supports help people with disabilities find and keep competitive employment by offering a range of services, including:

- job preparation activities;
- job placement ongoing and retention supports;
- workplace training;
- job accommodations support and advice; and,
- funding for work related aids such as assistive devices.

Support is also provided to clients whose goal is self-employment.

Ontario Disability Support Program – Employment Supports are open to eligible job seekers with disabilities, whether or not they receive Ontario Disability Support income support.

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**31. What is the Ontario Works – Employment Assistance?**

Ontario Works – Employment Assistance provides a range of employment assistance supports and activities that help participants prepare for, find and maintain employment.

Ontario Works – Employment Assistance was developed as a labour market approach that emphasizes the client’s responsibility to participate in available employment assistance activities to re-enter the labour market and work towards self-sufficiency.

**32. What did the Auditor General’s 2018 report say about improvements needed to Ontario Works?**

The 2018 Auditor General’s report noted the following improvements to Ontario Works:

- Make programs simpler while improving accountability,
- Improve supports for those with significant employment barriers,
- Improve employment services for people on social assistance by creating better, more streamlined supports, and placing a greater focus on outcomes,
- Modernize, such as digital services, to reduce the overall administrative burden and improve service experience, and,
- Develop, test, and implement better approaches to service delivery.