



Ontario Works
Service Plan

2018

County of
Wellington

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Introduction

The County of Wellington is one of the 47 Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSM) in the Province of Ontario. The County manages and delivers the Ontario Works (OW) programme on behalf of the Province of Ontario to the residents of both the County of Wellington and the City of Guelph. The Ontario Works programme is joined by Children’s Early Years and Housing Services to form the County of Wellington Social Services Department.

Ontario Works (OW) service planning follows a two-year planning cycle and 2018 marks the final year of the cycle. While the last planning cycle focused on regaining stability and getting back to business as usual following the launch of the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS), this two-year period will be about moving forward in a number of key areas. Priorities central to our work over the next two-year period include a focus on outcome achievement, service modernization, client and staff engagement as well as programme integrity. This will require us to manage through significant change and transition and we will need to rely upon our core values of quality service to clients and providing a positive workplace for our team to guide our efforts.

The 2018 Service Plan includes important information about our current caseload, how we are structured to deliver services to residents and the strategies we use to achieve our annual outcome targets. The Service Plan also includes a number of important priority actions for 2018 and these have been organized below under four themes, in line with our two-year Strategic Pathway.

Priority Area	Key Actions
Strengthening Business Processes and Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a full review and update of local policies • Evaluate the impacts of changes to the Family Support program • Strengthen service continuity capacity through the County’s Emergency Management Framework
Improving Client Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the roll-out and implementation of provincial Social Assistance Modernization initiatives • Enhance client engagement opportunities to inform programmes and services • Support Social Services integration efforts in the area of client help, reception and intake services • Implement a client outcome pathway approach to assist clients in achieving their goals

Priority Area	Key Actions
Improving Client Service (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the SA customer service excellence online survey with clients and encourage clients to share their feedback through this medium
Supporting Our Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide important training and learning opportunities to staff in areas such as indigenous cultural competency, human trafficking, domestic violence and motivational interviewing Continue to provide staff with opportunities to provide input and contribute to ongoing improvement, such as through the Modernization staff working group Delivery of the new SAIL curriculum
Building Partnerships in the Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in partnership with key community collaborators to help address the broader needs of OW clients. Examples of these groups include the Poverty Elimination Task Force, Wellington Guelph Drug Strategy, the SEED and Toward Common Ground. Continue to work with local Employment Ontario partners to better integrate local employment services, including use of common assessment at a community level

The Ministry of Community and Social Services has also requested that the 2018 Service Plan address important provincial priorities and these are included in Section 1 the document.

Finally, I would like to commend the continued effort and high quality work of our team. They consistently provide excellent client service and this speaks to their commitment and competence. In 2018 we will be working hard together to complete the implementation of the priorities in our strategic plan, including the roll-out of important modernization initiatives from the Province. As always we undertake this work in partnership with the community, recognizing their importance in helping us fulfill our vision of inspiring and supporting every Ontario Works client in achieving their goals.



Stuart Beumer, Director of Ontario Works

April 2018

1 Ontario Works Vision and Mandate

County of Wellington

The County of Wellington Ontario Works division has a vision and a service mandate that builds upon the vision and mandate for the Ontario Works programme that has been established by the Province.

Vision

To inspire and support every client in achieving their goals.

Service Mandate

We strive to effectively serve people needing assistance by delivering high quality programmes and services in collaboration with our community partners, in accordance with the provincial Ontario Works programme.

Province of Ontario

Vision

To achieve improved employment outcomes for Ontario Works participants by increasing individual employability with the goal of sustainable employment and increased financial independence.

Mandate

To provide employment assistance and financial assistance to people in financial need. The Ontario Works programme:

- Recognizes individual responsibility and promotes self-reliance through employment;
- Provides financial assistance to those most in need while they meet obligations to become and stay employed;
- Effectively serves people needing assistance; and
- Is accountable to the taxpayers of Ontario

MCSS Priorities

In addition to delivering on the core expectations of the OW programme, the Province has identified four additional priorities that they require OW delivery partners to address. The specific activities and strategies to address these priorities are outlined below:

1. Improved service coordination and communication between Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) delivery offices

- The continuation of regularly scheduled meetings between our offices at both staff and management levels to discuss issues of common interest and improve business processes
- Planning of a joint all-staff networking and learning event between the two offices to occur in 2019 and build on the event held in 2016
- The OW office continues to ensure internally delivered employment programmes are open and accessible to all ODSP clients. On average in 2017, 56 ODSP clients were formally accessing employment case management services through our office, an improvement of 30% over 2016. ODSP clients accessing OW Employment Assistance are assigned a caseworker to develop an outcome plan and work towards finding employment
- Participation by an OW staff representative at the local ODSP client advisory group

2. Strengthened collaboration with local economic development organizations

- Continued collaborative work between our Employment Team as well as the Settlement Services Team and the Economic Development offices at the County and City of Guelph. This includes industry tours, job fairs, targeted job placements, sharing of data and participation on working groups, focus groups and employment service provider panel discussions throughout the County.
- The OW Employment Services team has worked closely with economic development offices in 2017 to build awareness of OW Employment Services for employers through regular meetings with economic development managers from across the County, including in Puslinch, Mapleton, Centre Wellington and Minto in support of the County-wide Live and Work Wellington initiative.
- The OW Employment Services team has developed an integrated online Job Board for OW clients seeking employment, which links to the Live and Work Wellington employment listings, along with the internal positions posted at the County.
- Continued partnership through involvement and collaboration with the local Workforce Planning Board (WFPBD). For example, we worked together with the WFPBD to retrieve and compile data surrounding wages in the manufacturing sector in the County, in light of the recent increase to minimum wage. We also continued our work with the WFPBD

to develop, promote and host a Manufacturing Day, which brings hundreds of job seekers to employers throughout the County and the region on an organized bus tour.

- Continued engagement on the workforce development committees of the City of Guelph and County of Wellington.
- We continue to be an active member of the Centre Wellington and Guelph Chambers of Commerce, with regular participation in their activities and events.
- Continued work by the OW Employment team will include working with other organizations in the City and County, including acting as chair of the Employment Coordinator Committee of Guelph Wellington, to nurture relationships with employers in the region. The initiatives will build on current successes such as the annual Employer Recognition Awards, which recognize employers for their leadership in providing opportunities for clients with barriers to employment.

3. Establishing local partnerships with community organizations in order to better support OW clients

- The OW office is heavily involved and is a leader in supporting community collaborations that support the needs of Ontario Works clients and other marginalized or disadvantaged groups. The local Poverty Elimination Task Force, 20,000 Homes Campaign and the Wellington Guelph Drug Strategy are examples of initiatives that the County supports and is involved with that address issues of income security, homelessness, health equity, and substance misuse that impact many OW clients.
- The County will continue to be involved in violence against women prevention through funding and close involvement with Women in Crisis, Victim Services and other partners through the Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence committee and new initiatives such as portable housing allowances and efforts to address issues of human trafficking.
- In 2017, the OW office became more involved with local health planning tables to help inform community-level responses to the health needs of our clients and those living in low income.
- OW is working closely with the community food project the SEED to address issues of food insecurity in the community as well as connecting our clients to social enterprise opportunities

4. Modernization activities

- The County submitted a modernization prototype proposal in 2017 and we were selected as a finalist. Although our proposal was not chosen to receive the funding, modernization remains a priority and we are working with clients and staff to support the changes being rolled out in 2018.

- We have recently established a Modernization lead and a staff working group that includes a representative from each of our teams to support the successful implementation of changes and works to identify areas for administrative improvement.
- The County of Wellington is a member of the provincial Service Delivery Modernization Working Group and is working to share ideas and best practices with other CMSMs and the Province.
- OW Accounting staff are active members of the core OW Reloadable Payment Card Working Group, and the DBD for Third Parties and e-Statements OW Field Working group at the provincial level. These groups meet bi-weekly and our staff are actively providing input and staying informed on the development of these initiatives in order to facilitate their implementation at the County.
- Staff are actively using the SLACK online discussion platform to share ideas and communicate with other CMSMs on modernization initiatives and changes planned for 2018.

We are implementing the use of mobile technology through web-enabled tablets to engage with clients to collect feedback, complete assessments and to use in workshops. The OW office also continues to play a lead role in bringing together local Employment Ontario agencies to better integrate employment services and ensure that services are in place to meet the needs of those facing multiple barriers to employment and education. This is detailed further in Section 4: Action Steps and Resources.

2 Environmental Scan

Analysis

This section of the OW Service Plan provides an analysis of 2017 outcomes, the current political climate, a description of the 2017 OW caseload, a summary of the local labour market, and information regarding community engagement activities.

The priority at the beginning of this planning cycle had been placed on employment-related outcomes as staff became more comfortable with a stabilized technology platform, SAMS. The province also placed a high priority on validating the integrity of the SAMS data and the associated reports, and this has been helpful in managing programme outcomes. There are still some issues and questions related to the timing of the data capture of certain measures as well as whether subsequent modifications to the data after the report run date are credited towards outcome achievement.

With the stabilization of SAMS, there have been increased efforts in the area of file auditing and review to ensure the integrity of benefits delivery. Increased focus on employment and outcomes, as well as accuracy and quality are positioning us well to have a strong focus on supporting staff in case management in 2018.

In 2017, we established outcome targets through our Service Contract with MCSS. We were successful in exceeding the target related to the percentage of the caseload with employment income, achieving 14.64%. In the category of average amount of employment earnings reported by clients on a monthly basis, we exceeded our target, achieving \$784. In the percent of terminations exiting to employment, we came in under our target, achieving 22.5%.

2017 Outcomes and 2018 Baseline Forecasts

Measure	2017 Target	2017 Average	2018 Baseline	2018 Target
1 - Average Employment Earnings	\$730	\$784	\$784	\$808
2 - Percent of Caseload with Employment Income	13.73%	14.64%	14.64%	14.86%
3 – Percent of Terminations exiting to employment	25.38%	22.50%	22.50%	22.83%

Narrative

1: Average Amount of Employment Earnings for Participants with Earnings

The County of Wellington exceeded last year's target of \$730. The 2017 average will be used as the baseline for 2018, and a 3% improvement is forecast. This target was selected in consideration of the recent increase to the minimum wage and strong performance in the first two months of 2018 that we anticipate will continue over the course of the year.

2: % of Caseload with Employment Income

The County of Wellington surpassed last year's target of 13.73%. The average percentage of cases reporting employment income in 2017 was 14.64%. The 2017 average will be used to establish a baseline for 2018 with a 1.5% improvement forecast. Our performance in this outcome area continues to be strong, exceeding the 2017 provincial average of 12.96%.

3: % of Terminations Exiting to Employment

The baseline has been set based on our 2017 average in this area at 22.5% with a forecasted improvement of 1.5% moving forward. While the County of Wellington did not meet the 2017 target of 25.38%, this is an area where Wellington has consistently out-performed the provincial average, which in 2017 was 14.87%. We also out-performed our neighbouring

CMSMs whose collective quarterly average in this area was 16.86% in 2017. Reasons for our success in this area include diligent work by our Employment team to link clients to jobs, attention to follow-up by caseworkers with clients at the time of file closure and a strong local labour market.

External Influences

The Ontario government's commitment to increase the minimum wage culminated in a rate increase from \$11.60 in October 2017 to \$14.00 in January 2018. We will continue to monitor the impact of the minimum wage increase and changes to Ontario's employment and labour laws over the course of 2018. We anticipate that these recent and continued increases will positively impact those on our caseload who are employed in positions paying minimum wage and will strengthen performance in the outcome measures associated with employment earnings.

The Liberal Government's 2018 budget announced significant social assistance reforms intended to be implemented over the next three years that would significantly change the delivery of social assistance. However, with the upcoming election, the implementation of those measures hinges on its outcome. Through our work with the Ministry, we do anticipate that a number of modernization initiatives will continue regardless, and these include DBDs and electronic statements for vendors, the SA Verification Portal, changes to the OW Statement of Assistance and work to implement the MyBenefits mobile application.

Caseload Description

The following table provides a description of the County of Wellington's OW caseload over the past three years and forecasts for 2018. The 1% increase in the overall caseload predicted for 2018 is smaller than in previous years as a result of recent increases to the minimum wage and consideration of the overall provincial Ontario Works caseload forecast. Small caseload growth is anticipated to continue due to the continued structural changes in the labour market and the mismatch between employer expectations of prospective employees and the skill level of many of our clients, as well as provincial changes related to child support, earnings exemptions and asset level changes may also serve to place slight upward pressure on caseload growth as more households will meet and retain programme eligibility criteria.

Caseload	2015 Actual	2016 Actual	2017 Actual	2018 Forecast
Average monthly total caseload	2,082 ¹	2,106 ²	2,093 ³	2,114
Average monthly number of ODSP participants (voluntary)	14	43 ⁴	56 ⁵	57
Demographic Variable	Dec 2015	Dec 2016	Dec 2017	% Change
Number of Cases	2,044	2,056 ⁶	2,068 ⁷	0.60%
Total # of People	3,459	3,463 ⁸	3,631 ⁹	4.9%
# of Dependents Aged 0-6	719 ¹⁰	635 ¹¹	665 ¹²	4.7%
Singles ¹³	64%	65%	62%	-3.0%
Sole Support Parents	29%	28%	31%	3.0%
Couples with Dependents	5%	6%	6%	0%
Demographic Variable	Dec 2015	Dec 2016	Dec 2017	% Change
Couples without Dependents	2%	2%	2%	0%
Active LEAP participants – Average Monthly Caseload	11 ¹⁴	34 ¹⁵	31 ¹⁶	-8.8%
Months on Assistance – City of Guelph ¹⁷	23.3	23.3	24.1	3.4%
Months on Assistance - County of Wellington ¹⁸	24.3	23.96	24	0.2%

¹ OW SAMS Transition Performance Report (Preliminary Caseload) – March 2016

² OW SAMS Performance Report (Preliminary Caseload) – Average Total Caseload December 2016

³ OW SAMS Performance Report (Preliminary Caseload) – Average Total Caseload December 2017

⁴ December 2016 OW Social Assistance Operations Performance Report

⁵ December 2017 OW Social Assistance Operations Performance Report

⁶ OW SAMS Performance Report (Preliminary Caseload) – Total Caseload December 2016

⁷ OW SAMS Performance Report (Preliminary Caseload) – Total Caseload December 2017

⁸ December 2016 OW Social Assistance Operations Performance Report

⁹ December 2017 OW Social Assistance Operations Performance Report

¹⁰ SAMS Integrated Case Summary Report December 2015

¹¹ 255 and 788 CRS 100M Integrated Case Summary Reports December 2016

¹² 255 CRS 100M Integrated Case Summary Report December 2017 and 788 CRS 100M Integrated Case Summary Report November 2017

¹³ Figures for 2016 and 2017 for Singles, Sole Support Parents, Couples with and without Dependents - February 2018 Caseload at a Glance Report

¹⁴ This number accounts only for September 2015. Data for the LEAP programme through SAMS was not available or unreliable for other months.

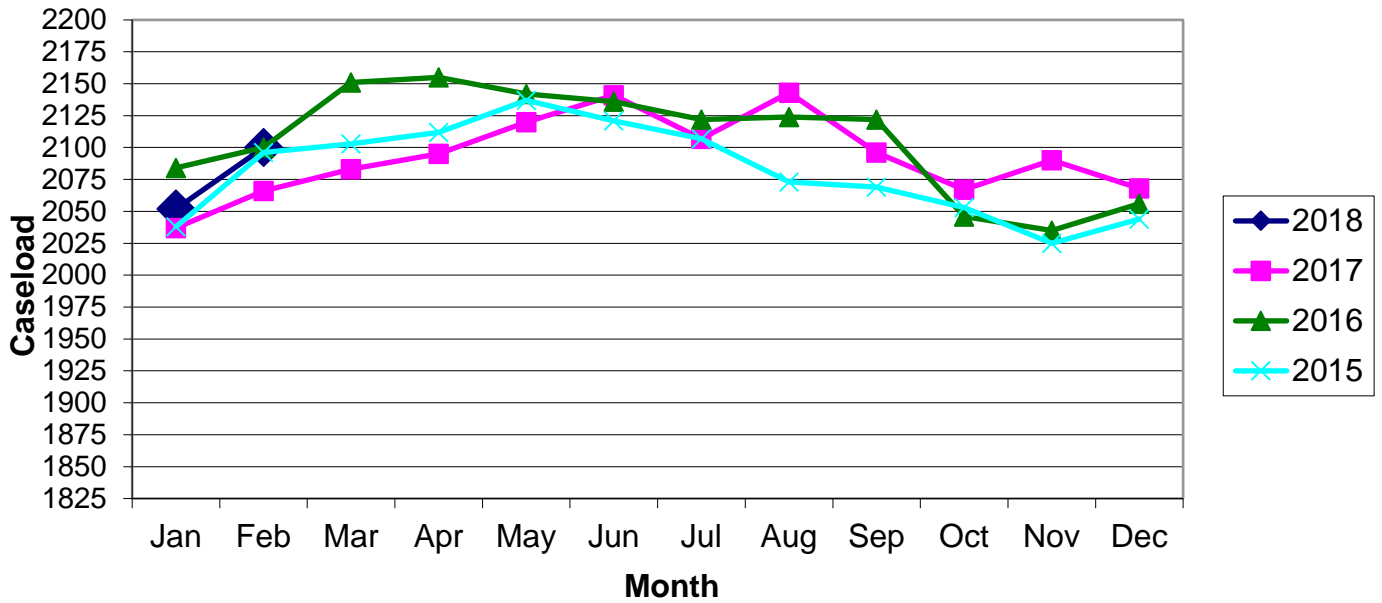
¹⁵ January 2017 CRS 310M Employment Assistance Participant Progress Report

¹⁶ January 2018 CRS 310M Employment Assistance Participant Progress Report

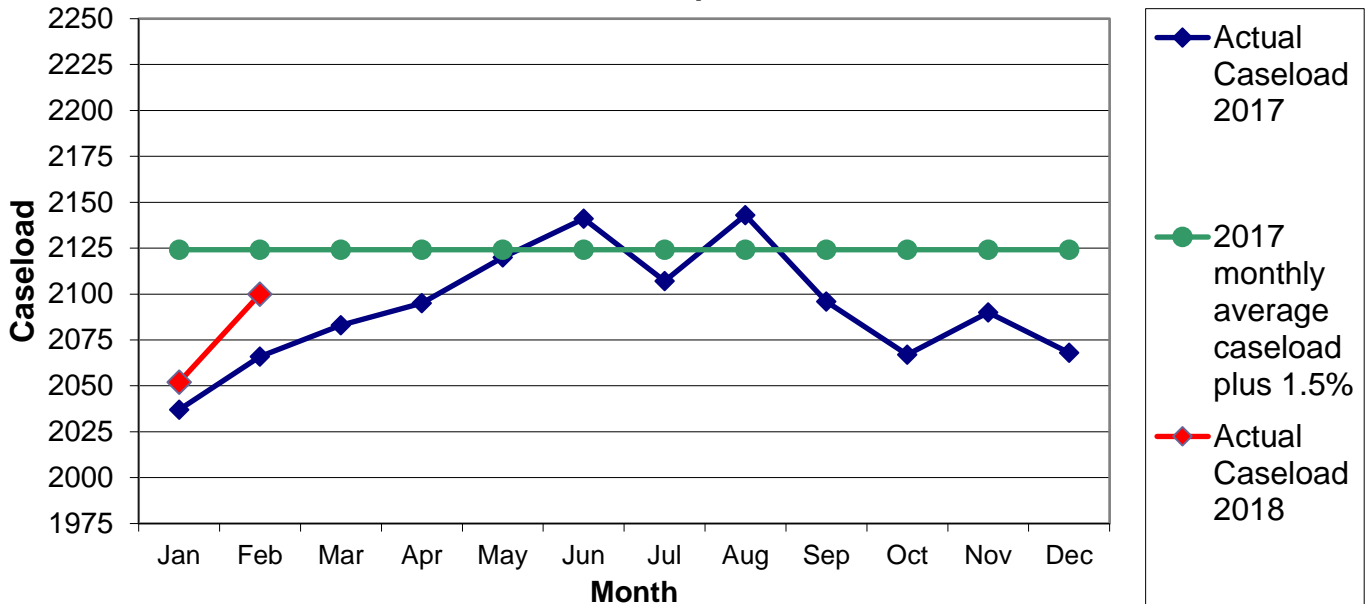
¹⁷ Figures are from 255 CRS 100M Integrated Case Summary Reports from December of each year

¹⁸ Figures are from 788 CRS 100M Integrated Case Summary Reports from December 2015 and 2016 and November 2017 (December 2017 data was not available)

Total County and City Ontario Works Caseload - January 2015 to February 2018



Total County and City Ontario Works Caseload Budget/Actual Comparison



The graphs above indicate caseload trends for the County of Wellington and the City of Guelph (combined) since 2015 (Source: OW SAMS Performance Report, February 2018). Although the caseload has been slowly increasing year over year, it tends to follow a typical pattern of increasing over the winter to a high point in the spring and summer and then declining to a low point in the fall. This is most likely attributable to seasonal changes in the employment market.

Months Receiving Assistance as a Percentage of the Caseload¹⁹

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2016	2017
0-5 months	40%	39%	41%	36%	30%	26%
6-12 months	20%	20%	19%	20%	17%	21%
13-24 months	20%	17%	16%	18%	20%	19%
25-59 months	16%	19%	19%	19%	22%	23%
60+ months	4%	5%	5%	7%	11%	12%

Months Receiving Assistance- Total Counts

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2016	2017
0-5 months	739	719	792	694	637	525
6-12 months	362	360	363	398	366	430
13-24 months	357	323	312	360	410	380
25-59 months	299	352	362	369	461	464
60+ months	76	90	112	136	224	254

Historically, the OW caseload has seen shifts in this measurement, with an increasing proportion of OW participants relying on OW assistance for a longer length of time. The proportion of cases that have been receiving assistance for longer than 2 years has continued to rise, increasing from 33% to 35%. For an increasing number of clients, the OW programme has shifted from a short-term emergency service to a longer-term financial support programme.

Our intentions in 2018 include preparing an in-depth caseload summary to examine our client demographics to help us prepare for the next planning cycle. To this end, we have undertaken an analysis of client barriers and challenges through analyzing a sample of client scores from the Full Single Adult SPDAT assessment to better inform service delivery and staff training.

¹⁹ December 2017 255 and November 2017 788 Integrated Case Summary Reports

The Service Prioritization Decision-making Assessment Tool is a survey that assesses a client's well-being across 15 different areas, including housing, mental health and physical health.

Local Labour Market

The average unemployment rate for the Guelph CMA was 5.4% in 2017, up from 4.9% in 2016. Despite this 0.5% increase, the unemployment rate for the County of Wellington, including the City of Guelph, remained lower than the provincial and federal average unemployment rates in 2017.

A significant skills mismatch continues to take place locally whereby unemployed workers with low skill sets cannot find work or are caught in the 'find employment only to lose employment cycle,' while at the same time there exists a remarkable and unanswered demand for highly skilled workers. This is particularly evident within the County of Wellington where employers have continued to note the difficulty they experience in attracting qualified workers from beyond the County. To complicate the skills mismatch, the lack of public transportation and affordable housing continue to present challenges for both employers and workers in the County. The City of Guelph continues to see industrial areas not fully serviced by public transit to match afternoon or night shifts, but this is changing as some manufacturers have begun to adjust work shifts around transit schedules.

According to the January 2018 EmployerOne survey conducted by the Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin, sectors leading job growth in 2017, by number of hires in Waterloo, Wellington, and Dufferin include: Manufacturing (1,966), Healthcare and social assistance (1,864), and Public administration (886). Local labour market growth is expected in the year ahead based on the following 2017 highlights:

- Xinyi Glass Limited of China announced in April of 2018 a plan to build a \$450 million manufacturing facility in Guelph-Eramosa township. They plan to begin production by 2020 and are expecting to hire 400 new employees, most of a technical nature.
- Mirexus Biotechnologies has begun the construction of a new manufacturing and research facility in Guelph in late 2017. The facility plans to be operational by June 2018.
- Linamar of Guelph continues to grow with the announcement of a \$49 million federal investment in manufacturing technologies. The investment is expected to create 1,500 new jobs, mostly in Guelph.
- Polycorp Ltd. in Elora is in expansion mode, after a \$14.5 million investment in 2016 and being awarded an additional \$2.5 million from the province in 2017. While the expansion is expected to create 26 new jobs by 2022, the company continues to experience challenges in filling available positions.

- Pintar Manufacturing has relocated to Erin from Mississauga with the acquisition of the dormant Guardian plant. Open in August 2016, they are still not a capacity due to a lack of applicants suited for the available roles, and lack of transportation and local affordable housing.
- Guelph's Stone Road Mall is currently feeling pressure with the loss of Sears Canada. While this loss has had a negative impact on the employment prospects of our caseload, the mall has attracted several large national retailers which may offer new opportunities in the retail sector locally. Where possible, our Employment Team will work with employers and our economic development colleagues to directly connect and support appropriate OW clients to these opportunities.
- The ongoing site and expansion of the Groves Memorial Hospital in Fergus is attracting employment for local skilled trades during the construction phase. A shortage of skilled construction trades is being felt across the County due to large infrastructure projects such as this hospital expansion.

Community Engagement

At every level of the organization, OW staff continue to be involved in the community through collaborative work and meaningful partnerships. Investing in these activities strengthens our connection to the local community, region and province, enabling us to stay informed on issues that impact the delivery of our services. These efforts also lead to client service improvements as we plan, coordinate and integrate human services at a community level. A few collaborative efforts are highlighted below.

Housing

The OW programme is highly integrated with the delivery of homelessness related programmes and supports, which have proven highly beneficial in helping OW and ODSP clients maintain or obtain housing. Building on the momentum of the 20,000 Homes campaign and the 2016 Point in Time (PiT) Count, we are conducting a PiT Count in April to understand the extent of homeless in Guelph and Wellington, as well as gain insight into changes in homelessness at a community level. In the delivery of Housing First programmes, we work to ensure that supports are delivered in a wrap-around manner for clients in order to increase their success in maintaining housing. OW caseworkers flag issues of housing instability as early as possible and they ensure that clients are assisted seamlessly in accessing the prevention supports available in our community.

Income

With the understanding that many individuals and families in Guelph Wellington, including those working full time, face challenges related to inadequate income, our staff have been supporting social assistance reform advocacy through involvement with the local PTF. In 2017, the OW Family Support Team worked with the Housing Services and Children's Early Years divisions as well as the local ODSP office and the YMCA Teenage Parents Program to offer support to those clients in accessing child support. We continue to monitor the impacts of the provincial changes to family support announced in 2016. With the recent increase to minimum wage in January 2018, we are also monitoring the impact of this change on clients with respect to employment earnings and income.

Food Security

In partnership with local townships and Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health, the OW office in Fergus continued the delivery of the Market Bucks programme, where OW and Settlement Services clients in Wellington North and Minto were provided farmer's market vouchers. This allowed OW and Settlement Services clients to purchase fresh and healthy food in a manner that maintains dignity and builds community. The Market Bucks programme is now in its fourth year and saw increased usage and higher voucher redemption rates compared to previous years. The County is also supporting the City of Guelph's Smart Cities application for federal funding, with a focus on food, including food insecurity at the local level. In 2017, the County became more involved with a local community food project, the SEED, which delivers community programs and advocates to address the causes and effects of food insecurity. The County is involved as a member of the SEED's steering committee and is working with the organization to involve youth in receipt of OW in their social enterprise initiatives, including the Guelph Youth Farm and Community Food Markets. These programs are both addressing food insecurity and providing OW clients with meaningful employment opportunities.

Health

In early 2015, three oral health programmes for low income children were integrated into one rebranded public oral health programme to simplify and streamline access. This integration included the social assistance dental programs for children. The OW office continues to be involved with the local Oral Health Action Committee in order to ensure the needs of our clients are understood and continue to be met. The Committee brought forward a Dental Health Access Resolution to Guelph City Council in early 2018, which was approved in April. The resolution mobilizes and commits the City of Guelph to advocate for dental health access for low-income adults and seniors at the municipal and provincial levels.

The OW office is also an active partner with the Wellington Guelph Drug Strategy. The Drug Strategy is a multi-stakeholder group that addresses issues related to substance misuse. In 2018 key priorities of the Drug Strategy include:

- Supporting the community opioid strategy
- Continuing to support the work of the local Drug Treatment Court
- Supporting the work of the Rapid Access Addiction clinic which is now open two days per week and is seeing increased demand for services from the community
- Supporting the work of the Supported Recovery Room which opened in early 2018 to provide a low-barrier intervention for community members to sleep and recover from cyclical substance use

Integrated Service Planning

The County Social Services Department supports coordinated service planning at a community level. A key initiative in this area is the Toward Common Ground (TCG) project, which has moved beyond Trillium funding and is now being sustained by the community. TCG has brought together 12 key human and social service organizations in the community to build a sustainable model for integrated human service planning. TCG launched the Data Portal in late 2017, which contains population-level data and information about social and health wellbeing in Guelph and Wellington. It has also partnered successfully with the Guelph Community Foundation on the launch of the Guelph and Wellington County Vital Signs report. TCG provides leadership on moving the community forward on key priority areas. Access to data, reports and opportunities for collaboration through TCG helps us advance our goals.

3 Programme Management

Analysis of Resources + Service Delivery Rationale:

The organizational chart on page 20 provides an overview of the staffing resource allocations within Ontario Works. Major functions are described below with attention given to identifying potential risks, priority actions, and improvements.

The total number of full-time employees dedicated to Ontario Works functions was 65.15 FTEs as of January 1, 2018, with a staff to manager ratio of 8.15 including all levels of management. As of January 1, 2018, our case to caseworker ratio for the general caseload was approximately 103, and 94.5 when our intensive case management programmes are included.

Over the course of 2017, the delivery of homelessness-related programs and services was transitioned from OW to Housing Services. The two services, however, continue to be strongly integrated and staff continue to work together across divisions to support clients with housing needs.

Managers and staff continue to respond effectively to provincial policy changes through ongoing work to update and modify business processes and service delivery approaches. More specifically we plan to complete the following actions in 2018:

- Continuing to work with IT services to complete an update for our secondary CAAPS technology system to support case management, especially in the area of outcome plans
- Support the implementation of policy changes related to the 2018 provincial budget pending the outcomes of the provincial election
- Ongoing implementation of the OW Strategic Pathway that we finalized in 2017
- Roll-out of modernization initiatives in line with provincial direction, including DBDs and electronic statements for vendor payments

Currently, our Trainer and other expert staff continue to deliver SAMS training to both new and returning staff. Refresher sessions are also offered, with the goal of ensuring all staff are well-equipped and comfortable working in SAMS while we continue to meet the established service standards. In 2017, this training was increasingly targeted to key areas where staff required additional support. Additionally, the development of clearer client outcome pathways and

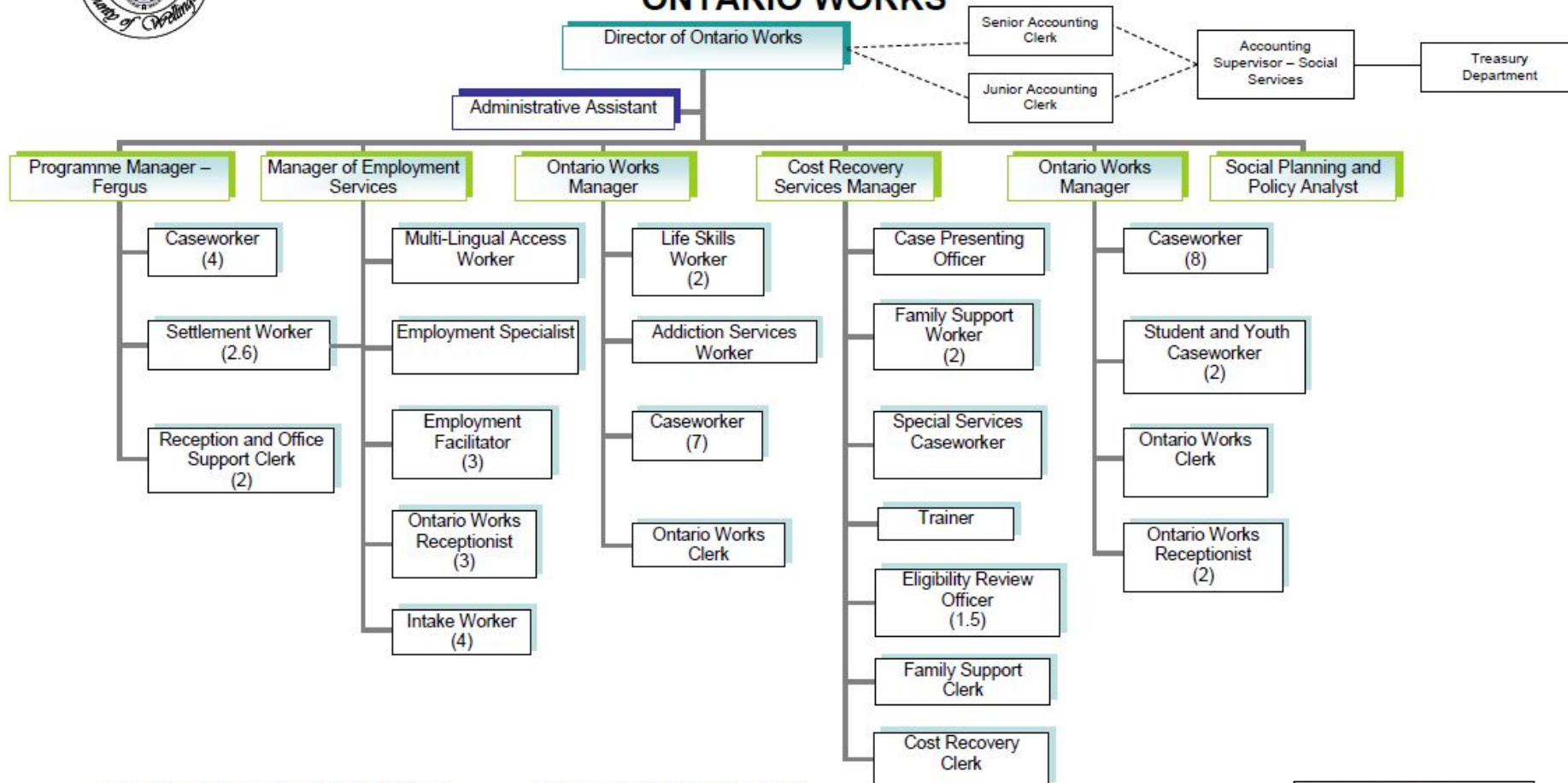
supporting staff in adopting this case management approach is currently underway. In 2018, we plan to deliver the refreshed SAIL curriculum to all front line staff.

The Social Services Department, comprised of Children’s Early Years, Housing Services and Ontario Works divisions, continued the process of integrating client reception and help services at our 129 Wyndham Street office in 2017. The development of tools and training related to integrated client service, as well as the service integration that is underway are significant undertakings that will take a phased approach. Consultation and communication at all levels of the organization, along with clients and the community is occurring throughout the process. Integration efforts continue in 2018, with a focus on the delivery of training to front line staff. The County continues to implement changes to the configuration of our office spaces to bring social services staff more closely together. We are also preparing for the launch of a social services help centre at our 129 Wyndham Street North office by ensuring that we are better equipped to assist clients in navigating services across a number of areas.

County of Wellington Ontario Works Organizational Chart



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON ONTARIO WORKS



*Unless noted, each position has one incumbent.

Ontario Works Organizational Chart

Updated: April 2018

Intake Services

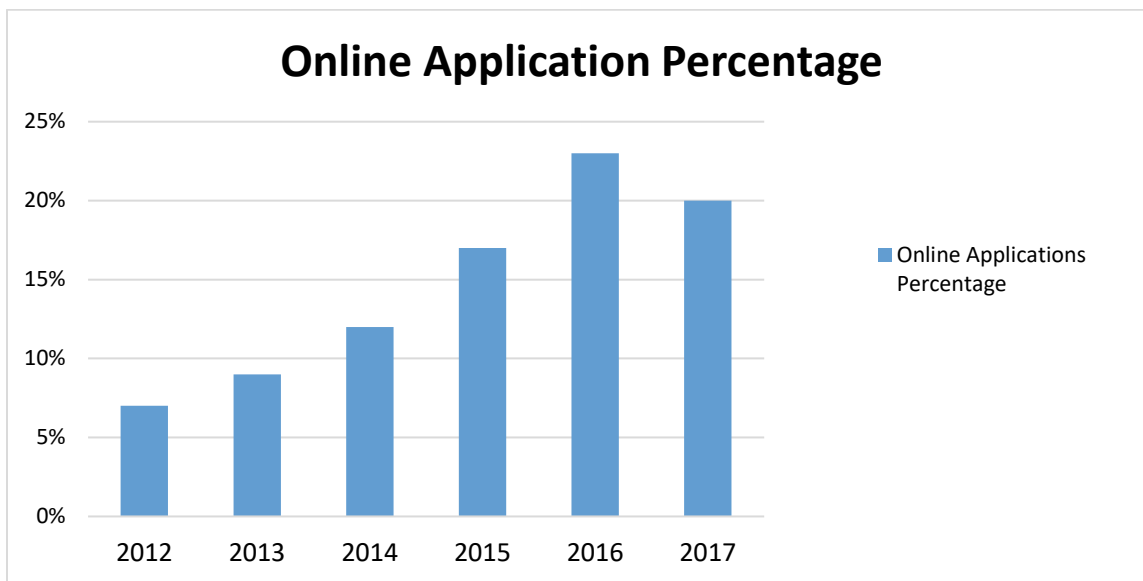
Applicants for Ontario Works have three options to apply for assistance:

Call: 1.800.265.7294 x 3390 or 519.837.2670 x 3390

Click: www.ontario.ca/socialassistance

Visit: Our main office at 138 Wyndham St N. Guelph ON

We continue to promote the online application for Ontario Works through various channels including our website, voice message system, and through community partners. It is worth noting that 2016 was the first year that the Social Assistance Operations Performance Report was used to obtain the number of Online Applications and the corresponding percentages. For the years prior to 2016 a manual internal tracking method was used. There was a slight decrease in the average percentage of online applications over the course of 2017 (20%), compared to the previous year at 23%. In 2017, we made changes to intake to make intake workers more accessible to clients in the client help centre area, with the goal of improving access to in person intakes to reduce barriers for those who struggle to apply online or by phone. In 2018, we continue to improve the phone and online access channels to ensure that we are responding to clients quickly and that they are well prepared for their appointment.



The majority of intakes continue to be completed over the telephone. Additionally, clients who have completed an online application are also contacted by telephone to confirm information and to schedule a Verification Interview as appropriate. In an effort to streamline access, enhance customer service, and provide efficient responses to callers, we are exploring changes

to the phone system that would see an increase in the percentage of calls answered directly by our intake unit.

Our intake unit makes arrangements for interpretation services where needed for clients attending Verification Interviews. Caseworkers continue to have access to interpretation supports for their clients in the delivery of services. Our intake team also has primary responsibility for identifying cases where emergency assistance might be appropriate. The team works through their manager to refer these clients to either our Housing Stability team or directly to a caseworker for assistance. According to the December 2017 Social Assistance Operations Performance Report, the Intake Team responded to 2287 requests for assistance. Of the total number of requests received, 66.8% of the applications were found to be eligible. The remaining requests were either deemed ineligible, or the client voluntarily withdrew their application. These numbers do not include general inquiries or situations where an application for assistance was not initiated after a brief initial screening.

In reviewing the December 2017 Social Assistance Operations Performance Report for Wellington County as well as the Province, the local average number of business days from screening to a decision matches the provincial average at 5 days. Online applications represent 20% of the total number of applications compared to 26% for the provincial average. We continue to strive to make decisions on applications within 4 business days whenever possible; currently we meet this target 61% of the time, which is slightly lower than the provincial average of 63%.

Case Management Services

In 2017 we placed an increased emphasis on assisting participants with employment supports. Caseworkers worked hard throughout the first phase of this planning cycle to ensure that Outcome Plans and Two Year File Reviews are up to date, and managers have returned to regular file auditing. In 2018 our focus will be on continued work to develop client pathways and supporting the associated training needs of caseworkers and employment staff. We completed motivational interviewing training for all caseworkers in 2017, providing a solid foundation for case management focused on individual client needs in 2018.

Caseworkers continue to benefit from utilizing the Comprehensive Assessment and Action Plan System (CAAPS) to capture and monitor employment activities for OW clients. We continue to work with our IT department to enhance CAAPS and improve functionality, as working with the

current extracts from SAMS continues to be a challenge. We have connected with other CMSMs to explore how other jurisdictions are understanding and using data extracts, and we continue to move forward with a plan to complete case management enhancements by 2019. We have also completed a review and update of our provider management in SAMS and we are now working on implementing this concurrently with client outcome pathways for use by caseworkers.

To support a more participant-focused LEAP programme, we have purchased the required technology to allow us to access our computer network, including SAMS, from remote locations. This has enabled us to strengthen our partnerships in the community by allowing staff to maintain regular scheduled office hours at off-site locations. Staff can now more easily case conference with community partners and provide warm referrals to community supports. In 2017, we identified a lack of parenting resources for our LEAP clients in rural communities. To remove this barrier for clients, we purchased licenses for access to Triple P Online, a parenting tool that allows clients to complete the parenting portion of the program from home and at times convenient for them. We are monitoring the outcomes of this intervention over the course of 2018. Although recent provincial changes no longer require OW caseworkers to verify school attendance, our Student and Youth caseworkers continue to work closely with schools to support LEAP clients in achieving their academic goals.

Life Skills Programmes

The Addictions Services Initiative (ASI) is an intensive case management programme for clients struggling with substance misuse issues that prevent them from obtaining and maintaining employment. Clients who are interested in working on their addiction issues are referred to the ASI Life Skills Worker, who, in collaboration with Community Addiction Services (CADS), Stonehenge, and other addiction service providers, assists clients to get the treatment and support they need throughout their recovery journey. Once the client reaches the maintenance stage and has not relapsed for a substantial period, they are ready to be referred back to a general OW Caseworker to seek employment.

The Mental Health Life Skills programme also utilizes an intensive case management model for clients. Referrals to the Mental Health Life Skills programme are made by caseworkers when a client identifies that they are struggling with significant mental health issues that prevent them from gaining financial independence. Clients receive assistance with appropriate referrals to community mental health resources or for medical and psychiatric assessments that may assist

the person in stabilizing their situation. Assistance is also provided to clients for completing ODSP applications where appropriate.

In an effort to standardize the referral process as well as track the progress of clients within each of these programmes, the County is exploring various tools and strategies to measure client needs and development. One part of this strategy includes an evaluation of the larger OW caseload to determine the level of need/functioning of clients and develop appropriate interventions to respond to these needs through ASI, Life Skills, or employment supports programming. The second part of this strategy includes implementing an ongoing evaluation tool to capture relative progress of clients within the ASI and Mental Health Life Skills programmes. Both parts of this programme will assist the County in better understanding the level of need of our clients, and stream our caseloads to appropriate, evidence-based interventions.

An annual ASI Service Plan is completed and submitted to the ministry. The service planning process gives us an opportunity to outline our service strategies, programme management functions, outcome monitoring, and partner linkages.

Fergus Social Services Office

The Social Services office in Fergus has been open since April 2012, providing County residents access to a variety of social services, including OW and Settlement as a primary focus. The office continues to host other social services including child care, social housing, and ODSP supports. Specialized workers who complete functions such as family support, eligibility review, addiction and mental health services, and LEAP travel to the Fergus office to meet with their clients that reside in the office catchment area. The addition of this office location has made a significant improvement to our ability to provide excellent customer service, making our services far more accessible to those living in the central and northern areas of Wellington County.

All applications for social assistance are received and processed centrally via the Intake Team at the Guelph office. Verification Interviews and on-going case management for clients, who reside in one of the four townships of Centre Wellington, Mapleton, Minto and Wellington North, take place out of the Fergus office. For clients that reside in the Town of Erin, we are now providing them with an option as to whether they would prefer to access service from the Guelph or Fergus option. In 2017, the Fergus office completed the piloting of the delivery of outreach services to clients through the use of space at the Arthur library on a monthly basis.

The pilot was helpful to a small number of clients, but overall numbers were low and the programme did not see high utilization levels. We are working with our partners in the Children's Early Years division on the potential delivery of service out of the County-owned facility in Mount Forest that includes an EarlyON centre as well as a directly operated child care program. The building has the necessary structure to support service delivery and a roll-out is planned for 2018.

In addition, the Fergus office is also the primary location of the Settlement Services programme. Funded through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the mandate of this programme includes assisting newcomers to Canada to access community services and adjust to life in their new communities. The federal resettlement of thousands of refugees, namely from Syria, to Canada as Permanent Residents, have greatly increased the need for Settlement Services and supports in the County of Wellington.

These refugees are entering Canada through sponsorship via the Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) programme, Private Sponsorships, or Blended Visa Office Referred (BVOR) programmes. Our Ontario Works programme has witnessed a slight increase of in-land claims via the United States. No active sponsorship exists in these cases, and applications have been taken for Ontario Works and Housing subsidies. The County of Wellington has also witnessed a great increase in Privately Sponsored refugees over the last few years, and has worked with sponsorship groups to provide information on supports available to refugees in the County. As refugees move into month thirteen of their sponsorship periods, they transition out of federal assistance and the provincial system becomes the social safety net. The County of Wellington has been providing support and information to refugees applying for social assistance, as well as presentations to sponsorship groups on benefits and the OW process.

Settlement Services supports are available at no cost to those with Permanent Resident, Convention Refugee, or Live-In Caregiver status in the County of Wellington and City of Guelph. Experienced Settlement Workers help newcomers in the areas of accessing interpreters/translators, finding housing and affordable child care, registering children in school, enrolling in language training, finding a family physician, seeking employment and navigating government and community services. Information sessions are provided to educate newcomers about labour laws in Canada, their rights, responsibilities, and safety in the Canadian workplace, and how to navigate the numerous options with Canadian banking institutions. Collaboration with Economic Development has also ensured the movement towards growing local rural communities by successfully integrating newcomers.

Cost Recovery Unit & Discretionary Benefits

The Cost Recovery Unit (CRU) is responsible for four primary programmes: Eligibility Review, Case Presenting, Family Support, and the Eligibility Verification Programme (EVP).

The Eligibility Review programme continues to operate in an efficient manner by addressing allegations and complaints early. We have a team of two Eligibility Review Officers (EROs) and one clerical support that manage complaints and referrals from various sources inside and outside of Ontario Works. The EROs continue to work with intake staff, who advise of an open allegation in SAMS when scheduling a verification interview in anticipation of resolving the outstanding issue.

The Eligibility Verification Programme (EVP) team communicates with caseworkers each month when cases are being reviewed following monthly download reports, as well as maintaining regular communication to ensure changes are flagged and all cases are followed up on as required.

Our Case Presenting officer (CPO) works with members of the cost recovery team and the Director in completing internal reviews. The CPO completes and defends subsequent submissions to the Social Benefits Tribunal. There is an open communication between the local legal clinic and the CPO in an effort to resolve outstanding issues for clients. The CPO manages assignments and reviews overpayments in accordance with policy and uses system-generated reports to ensure that established overpayments are accurate.

The County of Wellington sees a very limited number of cases that require sponsorship debt recovery. For these cases, the CRU meets the service standards for notifying IRCC of sponsorship breakdown when a client applies for Ontario Works.

The Family Support Programme assists clients in obtaining child and spousal support orders through the Ontario Court of Justice at which time a court order for custody, access, and support is resolved. Family Support Workers (FSW) will assist clients in setting up private agreements if an application in court is not necessary. Although the pursuit of child support is now voluntary for clients, the FSWs continue to attend the court to defend municipal arrears that are owed to the County of Wellington or other municipalities when a variation has been filed by the support payer residing in this jurisdiction. The team has worked with community partners, including Housing Services, Children's Early Years, the local ODSP office and the YMCA

Teenage Parents Program, to ensure they are aware that we can provide this type of support to clients.

OW clients needing to access provincially cost-shared discretionary benefits do so through their caseworker. ODSP clients in need of discretionary benefits access this service through the Cost Recovery Unit. Staff determine eligibility and provide assistance in a timely manner. In 2017, total provincial cost-shared discretionary spending was \$813,249 and this represented 98.7% of the available provincial discretionary benefit funding. The most requested and costly benefits in 2017 included dental services for OW adults and funerals. The average cost per case for discretionary benefits in 2017 was \$9.87.

Public funeral and burial requests, as part of discretionary benefits, are also processed by the Cost Recovery Unit. Requests for this benefit continue to increase and this trend is predicted to continue. The combination of an increasing population in the City of Guelph and the County of Wellington, an aging population, and rising social assistance caseloads will likely result in a continued increase in the number of publically funded funerals and burials for the foreseeable future.

The Municipal Discretionary Benefits Programme is exclusively funded by the municipality. This programme assists individuals and families on low and fixed incomes with various needs ranging from urgent dental care to assistive devices and medical needs. This programme also assists social assistance recipients where they have a health-related need that is not provincially funded through other programmes.

Homelessness Prevention Services

The Housing Stability Team delivers homelessness prevention and support programmes. Delivered through our Housing Services Division, these programmes are closely integrated with the delivery of OW assistance and include:

- Housing with related supports for high-needs clients
- Community-based Homelessness Services and Supports
- Emergency Shelter Solutions
- Housing Stability Programme (rent, utilities, and moving costs)
- Emergency energy funds (including OESP application assistance)
- Homelessness Partnering Strategy (Federal homelessness funding)

In relation to OW case management, the Housing Stability staff work directly with individuals and families residing in both supportive housing environments and Emergency Shelters. Staff dedicated to clients at these sites facilitate OW applications, and provide support in transitioning out of shelter and support programmes and into longer term housing solutions.

Oversight Strategy

Programme integrity and risk management are high priority areas for the delivery of Ontario Works and play a significant role in our oversight strategy. By ensuring that decision making occurs in a consultative and proactive manner, possible areas of risk are identified and mitigated to promote effective operations and prevent any negative outcomes.

Our oversight strategy consists of a number of on-going activities wherein programme risks and areas for improvement are identified. Key activities are listed below:

- Comprehensive file reviews by managers of all caseworkers, ensuring that they are properly utilizing the SAMS technology and meeting service expectations
- Completion of EVP, monitoring of results and use as a training and learning opportunity
- Regular team and all staff meetings to discuss issues and seek staff input
- Bi-weekly management meetings to discuss issues, approve policy, review outcome performance and suggest ideas for improvement
- Daily review by staff of all issued payments to ensure accuracy
- Quarterly meetings between the local office and the Provincial Programme Supervisor to review programme expenditures, performance, emerging issues, and outcomes

The Director, Trainer and Policy Analyst will take the lead on interpretation, communication, and tracking of legislative changes, policies and procedures. All provincial legislation is reviewed and disseminated to staff in a timely manner. All local business practices are uploaded to our intranet for easy access by all staff. More complex questions related to policy interpretation are resolved through inquiries to our Provincial Program Supervisor or the Provincial Clearinghouse process.

The County continues to be recognized as a leader in the area of automated subsidy claims and the use of daily extracts for financial management. In 2017, the County provided a presentation to all service managers at the provincial Ontario Works Annual General Meeting, and continues to work with the Province on resolving identified issues in the daily extracts over the course of 2018.

In 2017 (December 2017 OW EVP Monthly Performance Summary), our average completion rate for eligible cases assigned for EVP was 85% compared to the provincial average of 54%. The majority of our EVP cases resulted in no change at 64%, which was slightly above the provincial average of 63%, followed by terminations (17%), overpayments (16%) and decreases in entitlement (4%). Our outcomes related to EVP case audits are in line with provincial averages.

The County completes EVP through a dedicated team. Having EVP audits completed by a specialized team helps us better identify any anomalies and focus on the verification function, allowing caseworkers to focus on case management and relationship building. The switch to bi-monthly EVP has given the team a more realistic timeframe to complete audits and this has been a welcome change. Our Family Support Workers are members of the EVP team and this accounts for our higher than average FSW referral rate.

Additionally, the County continues to rely heavily on the Social Assistance Operations Performance Report as well as other reports generated through the COGNOS module of SAMS. In certain areas we continue to ask questions and raise concerns about the integrity of the data; in some cases, this has led to corrections and in other cases it has led to further explanation that has improved our understanding of how the system operates in processing and reporting information. In 2018 we will continue to work closely with our internal Treasury colleagues as well as the Province to ensure that both our financial and outcome performance is accurately tracked and reported.

Overview of Learning Supports

Our organization remains committed to facilitating professional development and lifelong learning experiences for all of its employees. The provincial training curriculum, Supportive Approaches through Innovative Learning (SAIL), continues to form the foundation upon which other experiences are built. SAIL training is provided to all new staff that join the OW division. We are actively engaged on the provincial SAIL network and we plan to deliver the renewed SAIL curriculum to staff who have not received the training in 2018.

Modernization is a major priority for the province and for us in 2018. Although we were a finalist in the modernization prototype proposal process and we were not selected, we continue to make modernization a priority. We have a Modernization lead and we have a staff working group that includes a representative from each of our teams to support the successful implementation of changes and works to identify areas for administrative improvement. Our

involvement with modernization extends to the provincial level, where we are a member of the Service Delivery Modernization Working Group as well as working groups focused on reloadable payment cards, DBDs and e-Statements. Our staff is engaged and interested in modernization initiatives and SLACK is being actively used as a tool by staff across teams and functions to share ideas and learn from others across the province. In preparation for the changes being rolled out in 2018, we are working with clients and colleagues from across the County to support the implementation of modernization initiatives. At the corporate level, the County is working on implementing a SharePoint-based Electronic Document Management system to automatically manage document retention and store corporate records. This platform could extend to include OW modernization efforts as the County progresses on implementation.

In addition to offering SAIL modules, we take concrete action to ensure that the principles of the SAIL training are lived out by our staff throughout the organization. SAIL principles are applied through various initiatives and means, lunch and learn sessions, job shadowing, a resource library, an intranet, and staff learning events. A further support for staff is the Trainer, who is a resource regularly used by staff in an advice and guidance capacity to assist them with policy interpretation and decision making.

Important priorities for training and development in 2018 will be strengthening the cultural competency of our staff as well as offering training in the area of domestic violence and human trafficking and indigenous cultural resilience and trauma-informed practice. Our Trainer and other expert staff will continue to deliver core programme delivery (legislation and work process) and SAMS technology training to both new and returning staff, and will offer refresher or specialized sessions with the goal of ensuring all staff are well-equipped and comfortable working in SAMS while we continue to meet the established service standards.

Staff are provided with a variety of training opportunities appropriate to their roles during the course of the year. The County's Performance Appraisal process allows staff, with the support of their manager, to identify their own learning and personal development goals. Throughout the year, the training unit provides 'refresher' sessions based on feedback received from staff and management as well as information received from the Province related to programme updates and changes. In addition, staff are supported in attending conferences and courses throughout the year through the Association for Municipal Employment Services (AMES); Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA); as well as local workshops related to issues such as addictions, mental health, youth services, employment and other inter-agency learning events.

Additionally, Ontario Works managers continue to be offered a variety of learning opportunities, including a Certificate in Leadership offered through the University of Waterloo. This programme aims to build the capacity of managers by offering training in leadership skills such as coaching for success, how to lead people, team building, and managing opportunities for conflict.

4 Outcome Strategies

Outcome Funding Targets for 2017

The outcome projections for 2018 reflect labour market uncertainty as employers adjust to recent changes, unknown outcomes of elections, international trade negotiations impacting local sectors, and the employment barriers experienced by OW clients (e.g. skills mismatch), all of which point to continued, gradual OW caseload growth. We are monitoring the cumulative impact of provincial changes to social assistance rules and rates with respect to their impact on caseload growth.

Our office continues to utilize a single caseworker model in assisting clients. This means that our ongoing clients have one point of contact to support them with both receiving their financial assistance as well as developing their participation agreement and outcome plans. Caseworkers are able to utilize the full range of benefits and supports to support their clients in achieving their life stabilization or employment goals. In addition, the caseworker serves as the central referral point for the client, directing them toward internal and external supports as appropriate and then following up after the fact. Clients have responded positively to this case management model as they have one clear person to work with and that person has a clear understanding of their situation.

Strategies to address the employment needs and challenges of clients in 2018 will represent a continuation and expansion of efforts from 2017, including:

- An increased focus on life stabilization and life skills interventions with clients
- Planning and goal-setting activities with clients, e.g. the Getting Ahead programme
- Targeted job placement efforts by our Employment Specialist

- Increased integration with Employment Ontario in the interests of better supporting clients (e.g. targeted referrals to Youth Job Connect, shared delivery of services)
- Work with Economic Development partners to connect OW clients to emerging employment opportunities
- Developing clear outcome pathways that caseworkers can use with clients in helping them achieve their desired outcomes

The chart below outlines our 2018 outcome targets which are reflective of a 3% improvement over the 2017 average for employment earnings, and a 1.5% improvement over 2017 averages for percent of caseload with employment income and percent of terminations exiting to employment, in line with target increases in previous years for these two measures. Our 2018 target for the average amount of employment earnings reflects the anticipated impact of recent increases to minimum wage as this is expected to benefit clients working in positions paying minimum wage. While this target is a 3% improvement over our actual performance in 2017, it represents a nearly 11% increase over our target for 2017.

Measure	2018 Baseline	2018 Target
Average amount of employment earnings for participants with earnings	\$784	\$808
Percentage of the caseload with employment income	14.64%	14.86%
Percentage of terminations exiting to employment	22.5%	22.83%

Action Steps and Resources

Labour market trends locally indicate that some of the most important factors impacting the local market are worker attraction and retention coupled with a demand for highly skilled and educated employees, and a number of unemployed individuals with lower skill sets. Additionally, those who are unemployed with a low skill set may require upgrading that requires a significant investment in time before they are able to successfully compete for sustainable employment opportunities.

The charts on the following pages identify the array of activities available for a client pertaining to basic education or training.

Basic Education

Organization	Programme
Wellington Centre for Continuing Education	Grade 12 General Educational Development (GED) Business Essentials Training
St. George's Centre for Adult ESL	English as a Second Language Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC) Writing Classes Conversation Classes
Conestoga College	General Diploma Academic Upgrading Self-Management Strategies (currently under development)
Action Read	Literacy and Writing Math Computer Literacy- NorthStar program GED Preparation

Training and Employment Services

Organization	Programme
Conestoga College	OSAP-supported Post-Secondary Training Personal Tools for Success Basic Communication and Computer Skills
Wellington Centre for Continuing Education	Computer Skills Training Skills Upgrading
Action Read	Computer Training Cash Register Training Soft Skills Training Receptionist Training
St Louis Adult Learning and Continuing Education	Personal Support Workers Hairstyling Chef Training
Workforce Planning Board	Labour Market Info Training
EO Providers: Second Chance Employment/Lutherwood/Agilec/Anishnabeg Outreach	Youth Job Connection Ways to Work ACE Second Career

Ontario Works Internal Programmes

Organization	Programmes/Services
County of Wellington Ontario Works	Employment Workshops Employment Placement Self-Employment Community Placement Addiction Services (ASI) Life Skills/Mental Health Learning Earning and Parenting (LEAP) Getting Ahead/Circles

The County of Wellington continues to operate an Employment Resource Centre (ERC) in Guelph with resources also available at the Fergus office location. The ERC provides clients with an opportunity to access the internet to perform career /labour market research and to view and apply to available job postings. Clients also have the ability to update their resume and cover letters, make photocopies, and obtain assistance from facilitation and reception staff where required.

The Employment Services Team also includes three Employment Facilitators and the Employment Specialist who lead monthly workshops on employment topics, and meet with clients one on one to offer more in-depth assistance related to resumes, job searching, interview skills, and more. A preliminary OW participant workshop, Employment Services Orientation (ESO), continues to be a valuable resource to assist clients in moving forward and getting the help that may be needed to find employment. The ESO includes completion of an Employment Readiness Scale™ (ERS) that will inform participants of the kind of help that will be most useful to prepare for future employment. An Action Plan feature in the ERS gives clients a step-by-step record of the actions they plan based on their ERS outcome. An increasing amount of time is being dedicated to more in-depth life skills and goal setting programmes for our clients, such as Getting Ahead.

The County of Wellington Social Services (COW Social Services) remains the holder of the Circles® contract on behalf of the Guelph Wellington community. COW Employment Services also continues to run Getting Ahead workshops as part of the Circles® programme. This ensures programme stability and sustainability. Circles® Guelph-Wellington is a community-based initiative which began in 2014, with a focus on building relationships across socio-economic boundaries as a means of assisting low-income individuals and families to access skills, networks, and resources necessary to move them out of poverty and towards financial

self-sufficiency. Getting Ahead is a three-week intensive program, where participants think of a sustainable and self-sufficient future and create an action plan on how to take steps towards their dreams. It is a prerequisite for future participation in the Circles® programme.

COW Social Services is the recipient of a Local Poverty Reduction Fund (LPRF) grant, and over the 2016-2018 period we are completing a comprehensive evaluation of our Circles® initiative.

Employment Placement

The Employment Specialist (ES) works with both the client and the employer to ensure the success of the placement and subsequent employment retention. Although there is some discrepancy between internal tracking and provincial data; the December 2017 Operations Performance Report shows that 1973 Ontario Works participants exited from assistance in 2017, with 475 of those cases exiting to employment. Nearly one quarter of our terminations represented clients exiting to employment.

The ES continues to facilitate a structured Job Search Club, with three hour sessions in Guelph and two hour sessions in Fergus, for five consecutive days each month. This club has given the ES the opportunity to develop a rapport with motivated job seekers while advising them of current employment opportunities and offering suggestions on effective job search strategies. This relationship allows the clients to develop a rapport with the ES and the Employment Team over the course of Job Club, so that ongoing individualized supports are provided to the client beyond the one-week session. The ES is currently working in conjunction with a local Employment Ontario service provider, Agilec in Fergus and Mount Forest, by utilizing their facilities in those central and northern areas of the County. This is done to facilitate access for clients who do not have access to transportation to our offices in Guelph or Fergus. It also allows for a broader base of job developers and local employment postings in regions closer to their homes.

In 2017 we continued to see an increase in temporary employment contracts and employers working through staffing agencies. As a result of this trend, we initiated and developed working relationships with local temporary employment agencies. We have had success working with Task Force, Express, Liberty, People Store, People Source, Pivotal Staffing and Labour Ready. In 2018, we continue to foster these relationships in an effort to identify more opportunities that are suitable matches for our clients.

In our effort to maintain and create new community partnerships for 2018, the ES continues to work side by side with the County's Economic Development office. We continue to reaching out to Wellington County townships to invite Wellington County Economic Development officers to our meetings to share new developments. Working closely with our Talent Attraction Initiative officer has strengthened relationships with employers in the County, along with attracting new employers and people to the County to offer and fill available employment opportunities. This collaboration led to the implementation of an online employment posting board in conjunction with the Live and Work in Wellington initiative which increased exposure for employers in 2017. This online tool saw increased usage in 2017 and provided better access to posted positions for our clients. The ES also works closely with Employment teams from other regions including Waterloo Region, Niagara Region, and Dufferin County to share best practices and continue to create supportive programmes that will lead to employment and business opportunities.

In 2018, Ontario Works is planning to work more closely with social enterprise activities for youth that are being delivered through the SEED, a community food project of the Guelph Community Health Centre. This includes providing training incentives and supports to 6-10 youth in employment and training opportunities at their Guelph Youth Farm and Community Food Market projects. This collaboration with the SEED involves more significant financial incentives than we have used with employers in the past and we will be closely monitoring the impact and outcomes of this initiative.

Self-Employment

The County of Wellington continues to partner with Business Centre Guelph-Wellington on a per client basis to provide a comprehensive self-employment programme to clients who are approved as having an appropriate business plan.

Community Placement

We continue to support clients who have identified that volunteering could enhance their overall employability by maintaining a formal partnership with the People and Information Network (formerly the Volunteer Centre of Guelph-Wellington). This coordinated effort continues to enable caseworkers to receive feedback concerning the types of volunteer placements that the participant is seeking. This has supported case management strategies by ensuring that placements match the desired skills and experiences that are connected with the participant's employment goals.

Increased Earnings

Caseworkers continue to support clients who are in part-time positions while promoting the benefits of full time employment. Caseworkers will continue to promote the use of the Full-Time Employment Benefit (FTEB), informal and formal child care benefits, Ontario Works (OW) earnings exemptions, and the Extended Employment Health Benefits (EEHB) in this effort. We are monitoring the impacts of the increased minimum wage on our employment numbers and the incentive this increase provides to clients.

Integrated Employment Services

Guided by the shared desire to further coordinate the services delivered by Ontario Works and Employment Ontario in Guelph -Wellington, we continue to collaborate with Lutherwood and 2nd Chance Employment agencies by referring eligible clients to one-hour information sessions for the Youth Job Connection programme. This programme was designed to assist youth in securing long term employment and meaningful careers. The Youth Job Connection Programme is intended to address the gaps in youth employment programming for young people who are not in education, employment or training and are experiencing employment barriers.

In early 2017 COW Employment Services completed an agreement with Lutherwood Employment Services Guelph, Second Chance Employment Counselling Guelph/Wellington and Agilec Employment Services Wellington to jointly use the Employment Readiness Scale™ (ERS). The Employment Readiness Scale™ (ERS) is an online assessment tool that helps clients identify their strengths and challenges in becoming employment ready, measures their changes over time, and provides organizations with roll-up reports across clients for use in program planning and evaluation. This collaboration will give us better insight as we make planning and programme decisions individually at our agencies and as a community.

Employment Services continues to offer an online community employment workshop calendar that community agencies can use to post their workshop offerings in Guelph and Wellington. Developing technology to facilitate client enrollment in programs and to manage workshop signups will ensure enhanced, streamlined client service through such collaborative efforts.

Stakeholder Linkages

In order to maximize the employment attainment potential of our clients, we have linked our services with reputable community stakeholders to connect our clients with their services. As

indicated, an integration strategy for the provision of employment related services has been undertaken collaboratively by Ontario Works and Employment Ontario, and has been a key focus of this area. This work represents our efforts to increase opportunities for employment-ready Ontario Works participants to connect seamlessly with Employment Ontario providers and programs in order to achieve the best possible employment outcomes for those we serve.

The Employment Specialist currently chairs the Employment Coordination Committee (ECC). This is a group of twenty-one service providers from across the regions that share programs, best practices and employment opportunities. For the past 28 years the ECC has held an annual Employer Recognition Awards Event to acknowledge employers who have helped clients with employment barriers access work placements, skills training and competitive employment opportunities. In 2017, a Regional Job Developers committee was created as a spin-off from this group and it provides an opportunity to more intensively collaborate and share employer relationships for the benefit of the job seekers that we serve.

We continue to work closely with the Wellington Centre for Continuing Education, helping our clients access their Skills Upgrading Program. All of the upgrading programs (Literacy and Basic Skills) are contained within the Skills Upgrading Program. This programme allows clients to identify the required skills for specific employment goals and subsequently provides the client the opportunity to obtain the academic skills required to meet those goals.

The chart below lists a number of community partners that we actively work with as part of our employment programming and to support the life stabilization goals of clients:

Employment Programming Community Partners
Employment Ontario Partners
2nd Chance Employment
Lutherwood
Anishnabeg Outreach
Links to Work
Bridging Employment Supports
Agilec
Community Partners for Life Stabilization Supports
Onward Willow
Canadian Mental Health Association
University of Guelph Couple & Family Therapy

Trellis Mental Health & Development Services
Community Resource Centre in Fergus & Mount Forest
Self Help Alliance
Community Care Access Centre
The People and Information Network (formerly the Volunteer Centre of Guelph-Wellington)
Stonehenge Therapeutic Community
Homewood Health
Guelph Wellington Business Enterprise Centre
Women in Crisis

In addition to the partners noted above, Ontario Works staff members have direct links to their colleagues in the Children’s Early Years division of COW Social Services in order to ensure that participants are supported in accessing a fee subsidy if they require licenced child care. Child Care Subsidy Staff work closely with the client and the OW Caseworker to support the client through this process. The OW Caseworker can also provide a participant with support to cover the cost of informal childcare if this is determined to better meet their needs. The Ontario Works office also works closely with the local ODSP office to meet the needs of our common clients. These connections include supporting ODSP destined clients through the application period, file transfers, the provision of employment services to non-disabled ODSP adults and supporting ODSP clients with vital discretionary health and housing benefits. Our ES also held a session with ODSP staff to present our Job Club and employment services available to ODSP clients, resulting in increased client referrals to our employment supports.

We continue to participate in the two established working groups between the OW and ODSP office; one at a front-line staff level where business processes and operational information and issues are developed and shared, and another at a manager level where issues of a more strategic or broader nature can be discussed. In 2017, an OW staff member was invited to sit on the ODSP client advisory committee and has been participating regularly. In addition to strengthening our ties with the local ODSP office, this has been a great opportunity for our staff to share updates related to discretionary benefits for ODSP clients, as requests for ODSP discretionary benefits are processed through our office. We are planning another all-staff OW/ODSP session in 2019 to continue to strengthen the connection between staff and improve how the OW and ODSP teams work together.

Monitoring Service Strategies

The Provincial update of target achievements is reviewed with all OW managers as part of bi-weekly Leadership Team meetings. Outcome results and related issues are discussed with the MCSS Programme Supervisor as part of quarterly review meetings. If outcome targets must be adjusted, a business case with a clear rationale is presented to Provincial staff. As described in other areas of the Service Plan, staff are provided with a number of on-going engagement opportunities which include regular all-staff meetings, working groups, and feedback surveys related to various elements of the County's OW service model. We also have the intention to move forward with a more robust client engagement strategy over the course of 2018. The modernization initiatives being rolled out by the province over the course of the year will underpin all of our work in 2018.

The OW management team also reviews local labour market information to understand our local environment, outcome performance and required action. This information includes local unemployment rates, Workforce Planning Board reports, reports and information from our Economic Development colleagues and local business news.

The Ontario Works division is undertaking a number of programme evaluation initiatives in 2018 including:

- The use and success of newly developed client service pathways
- The child support exemption changes and modifications to service
- Employment Services programme interventions, including Circles®
- A broad understanding of the barriers our clients experience through an in depth client survey project.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our appreciation to all Ontario Works managers for their contributions and participation in the development of this Service Plan. We would also like to extend our thanks to the entire OW team for their sincere commitment to our vision, and to delivering high quality services and supports to our community.

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