Consortium Member
Council Information Report

Background:
The Counties of Bruce (lead), Grey, Huron, and the City of Stratford are the Employment Service System Manager (SSM), funded entirely by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD), for the Stratford – Bruce Peninsula Economic Region. The SSM is to build and implement a locally responsive employment services system that effectively meets the needs of a diverse range of job seekers and employers in the catchment area. Integrated Employment Services Delivery (IESD), the SSM newly designed system went live on April 1, 2023. This report provides a semi-annual update to council on the performance of the SSM, and updates on future work to be completed.

Information Update:
The SSM's new service delivery model started the intake of clients on April 1, 2023, through our ten Employment Service Providers (ESP). These are third party organizations that have service delivery agreements with the County for the delivery of employment services for those eligible in the catchment area. The following outlines our performance after two quarters of operations.
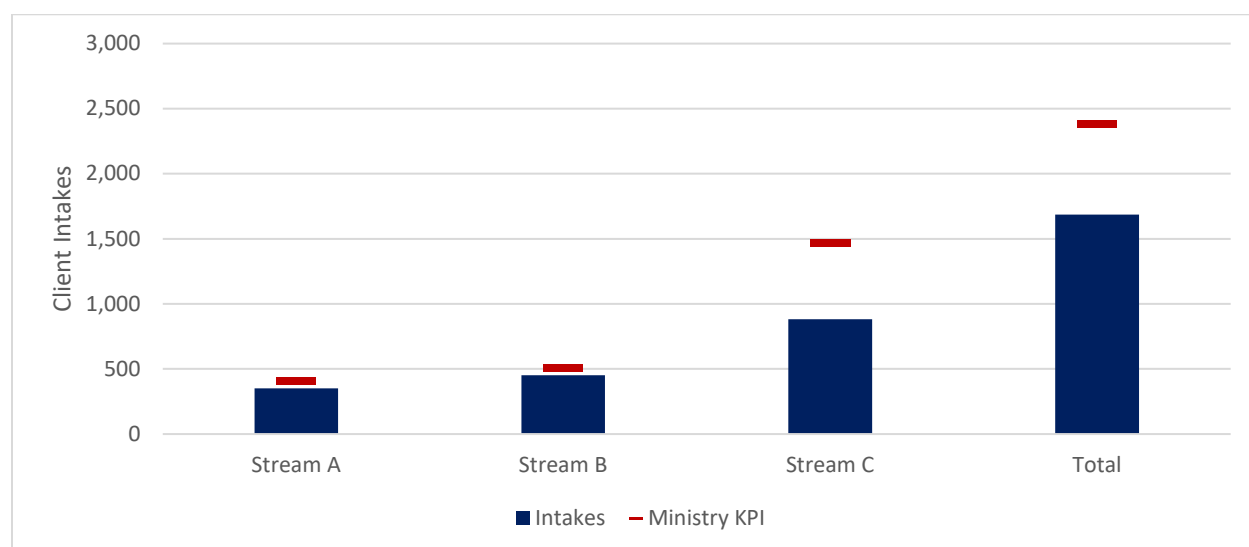
Table 1 – Client Intakes

Table 1 outlines the SSMs performance against client intake key performance indicators (KPI) set by MLITSD. Stream A clients are those at low risk for long-term unemployment, Stream B clients are those at medium risk for long-term unemployment,

and Stream C clients are those at high risk for long-term unemployment. Table 1 shows that Stream A is at 86.5% of target, Stream B is at 89.3%, Stream C is at 60.1%, and total client intakes are at 70.8% of target. In evaluating this result, it is important to consider two things, (1) this represents a slight increase of the network compared to 2021-2022 program years, despite the start-up of a new system; and (2) the summer months in Employment Ontario are generally slower. The SSM is working with ESPs to continue to support performance improvements.

Table 2 – Service to Priority Populations
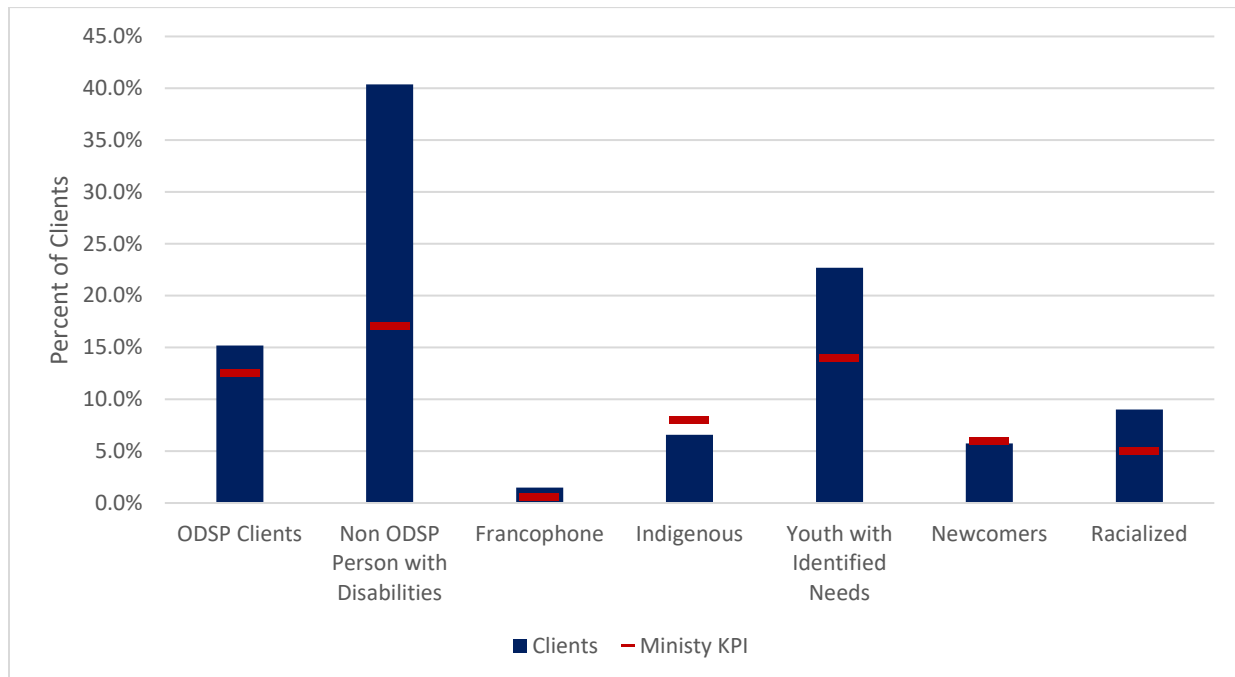
The Ministry outlines priority populations that the SSM and its network of ESPs are to provide service. Table 2 outlines the SSMs results in these KPIs. As can be seen the SSM is meeting or exceeding targets in all areas apart from Indigenous individuals, and newcomers to Canada. The SSM anticipates that the Indigenous individuals target will be meet once onboarding of our Indigenous ESP is complete. The Canadian newcomer target will continue to be monitored; and work will be completed with ESPs to ensure this continues to be an area of focus. Overall, the SSMs performance against these KPIs is a significant success, it represents a significant increase is service to these individuals compared to the historical baseline; ensuring those that need employment services the most are getting access to the needed support.

In addition to the results outlined above we have seen a near doubling of Social Assistance clients accessingemployment services. Historically our network has approximately 18% of its clients from Ontario Works, now at 28.9%, and 8% of its

clients from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), now at 15.2%. This is matched by a low percent (7.7%) of clients being identified by an ESP as an inappropriate referral. This result is clear evidence of the effectiveness of the collaboration between our Ontario Works partners and the SSM, which was the key value proposition of our application to become an SSM. MLITSD asked the SSM to share its best practices for engaging Social Assistance at its governance table, as these results are seen as a leading practice in the province.
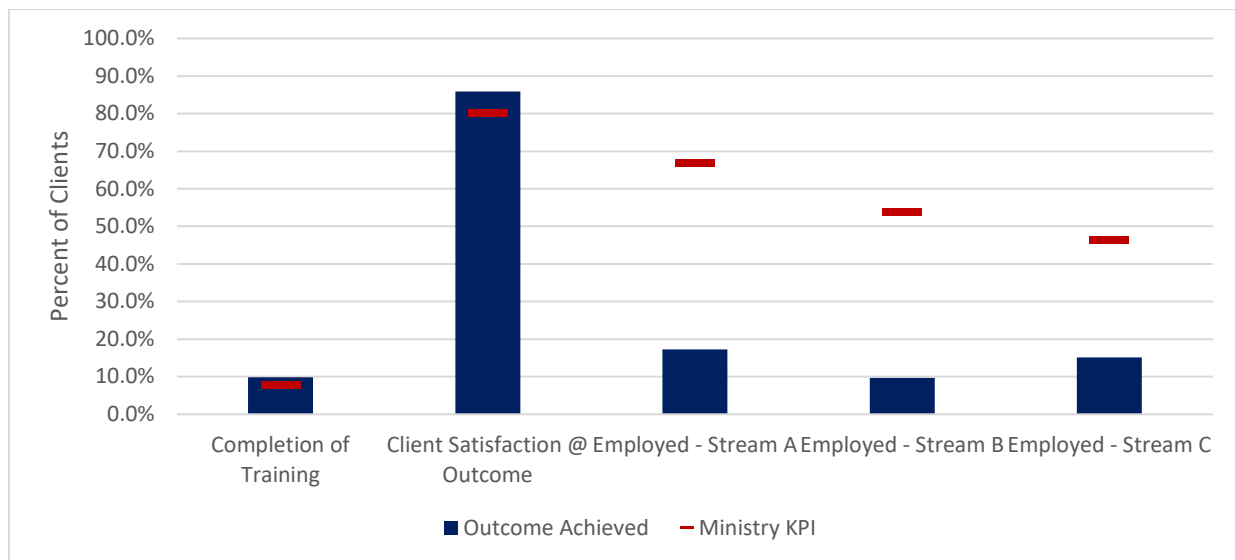
Table 3 – Outcomes

Table 3 outlines the SSM achievement of outcomes against MLITSD KPIs. As can be seen the SSM is exceeding targets in the completion of training for clients, and client satisfaction with services. However, the SSM is significantly under target in its employed outcomes in all three client streams (Stream A – 17.2%, Stream B – 9.7%, and Stream C – 15.1%). It should be noted that this result is expected, and there are two reasons for these results at this time: (1) this target is measured three months after a client becomes employed; and (2) there has been a significant increase in the evidence required to substantiate the outcome compared to the historical standards for the program. Historically the average client spent approximately 12 weeks in service before getting employed; this combined with the three months wait to measure the outcomes means that few clients have been engaged with the SSM and ESP network long enough to achieve the outcomes. The SSM anticipates that this outcome KPI will improve over the next two quarters.

Next Steps:

Based on the results achieved to date the SSM is engaging in performance conversations individually with each ESP. These conversations are focused on key

themes to support the success of the network in delivering on the transformed delivery model, including: (1) ensuring ESPs are training and managing their staff on the new service delivery expectations: (2) understanding what ESPs are doing to attract clients to their services to ensure intake targets are obtained; and (3) conducting file audits to ensure quality services that will lead to positive outcomes are being delivered.

Overall, the first two quarters of operations have been successful in setting the groundwork for long-term impact. The SSM has created training and tools to support the ESPs' success, implemented a modernized case management system to track client services and outcomes, onboarded three new service providers specializing in priority populations, created strong integration with Social Assistance, and implemented a continuous improvement approach with ESP to continue to develop the network.

Based on the learning to date, the SSM recently started conversation with ESPs about the next set of proposed strategies for implementation on April 1, 2024. These include:

- **Employer Activation**: a strategy developed in consultation with area employers to ensure employers in the catchment area see value in working with employment services and hiring the clients we service.

- **Digital First Approach**: implementing a digital first approach for clients that are self-sufficient, to ensure resources are available for those that need it the most. This will involve the deployment a robust digital delivery platform.

- **Pre-Employment Programing**: implementation of an evidence-based pre-employment program that has been proven to accelerate and sustain employment outcomes for Social Assistance clients.

- **Evidence Informed Practice**: creating dashboard for individuals, organizations, and the system to ensure all involved can see how they are contributing to outcomes and support continuous improvement.

- **Milestone Based Funding**: moving away from base funding to milestone-based funding to rationalize funding and target levels to actual performance and outcome attainment.