

To:	Warden Hicks and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	July 22, 2021
Subject / Report No:	SSR-CW-06-21
Title:	Service System Manager Request for Qualification – Employment Services Ontario Transformation
Prepared by:	Elizabeth Brims, Ontario Works Manager
Reviewed by:	Barb Fedy, Director of Social Services
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	
Status:	Adopted as presented by Committee of the Whole through Resolution CW123-21; Endorsed by County Council CC59-21

Recommendation

1. That report **SSR-CW-06-21 regarding the Service System Manager Request for Qualification – Employment Services Ontario Transformation be received for information.**

Executive Summary

In June 2021, the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development released the [Request for Qualification 2021 - Employment Services Transformation. Responses were required July 13, 2021.](#)

Grey County Social Services staff together with staff from Bruce County, Huron County and the City of Stratford prepared a joint submission as the four counties within the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Economic Region to prequalify to become the Employment Service System Manager (ESSM) for employment services. Bruce County is acting as the lead. Should the group be invited to submit a response to a future call for proposals, further information and analysis on the responsibilities and financial implications will be brought back to Council prior to submission.

Background and Discussion

On February 12, 2019, the Ontario government announced its plan to transform the province's employment services. The vision of Employment Services Transformation is to build a locally responsive employment services system that effectively meets the needs of a diverse range of job seekers and employers in Ontario.

As part of this transformation, it was announced that a new service delivery model would be put

in place to integrate three existing services: employment programs for Ontario Works, the Ontario Disability Support Program, and Employment Ontario (EO). The new single system is to be easy to access and focused on helping all job seekers, including those furthest from the labour force and who face systemic barriers, and also to better support employers. By integrating the three current systems into one strong, more seamless service system, the province aims to address system gaps, lessen duplication of services and support municipal partners and service providers to deliver better results for people and businesses.

The role of the new, single Employment Service System Manager (ESSM) is to oversee the planning, design, and delivery of all three former employment services in a way that is integrated, inclusive, people-focused and outcomes driven, by considering local community and employer needs. The Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD), in collaboration with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS), would assume a System Steward role to set objectives, standards, funding, and reporting requirements that the ESSM would adhere to. These requirements have not yet been confirmed by the province.

A two-stage competitive selection process has been launched to select the ESSMs:

- Stage one - Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process (July/August)
- Stage two - Call for Proposals (CFP)
 - Lowest complexity areas (Fall 2021) with SSMs identified in spring 2022
 - Medium complexity areas (dates TBD) later with SSMs identified by end of 2022
 - High complexity catchments (including Toronto and the North) 2023
 - Complexity is being defined by factors related to community readiness and interest, as well as labour market conditions.

It is important to note that the timelines set by MLTSD this RFQ submission are very compressed. Should the submission be successful in the RFQ process, a more in-depth analysis and assessment would need to be taken about the implications of moving forward into the Call for Proposals stage of the selection process with recommendations related to governance structure and decision-making framework.

In 2020, implementation of Employment Services Transformation (EST) began in the three prototype regions of Peel, Hamilton-Niagara, and Muskoka-Kawartha.

On June 10, 2021, the expansion of EST to nine additional catchment areas was announced. One of these areas is the Stratford Bruce-Peninsula Economic Region, which includes Grey County as well as Bruce County, Huron County, and Stratford-Perth.

Municipal staff in the Stratford Bruce-Peninsula Economic Region have been in discussion since EST was first announced and have stayed apprised of key developments through both formal and information channels. Staff explored a joint proposal to become the Service System Manager (SSM) for this region given the vast knowledge and experience each municipality has in service system management. Further discussion has taken place and staff are now working

together on a combined RFQ to be submitted jointly by the four counties to become the SSM for the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Economic Region, with the County of Bruce acting as the lead and therefore, if successful in the RFQ, the CFP submission would follow Bruce County’s purchasing policy. Bruce County Council has agreed to proceed with the RFQ and act as the lead for the consortium.

Legal and Legislated Requirements

Qualifying in the first RFQ round does not bind the corporations to submitting a CFP in the second round. The RFQ has noted that the lead identified in the RFQ must continue to be the lead through the process and if successful, in the management of the SSM.

Financial and Resource Implications

The estimated annual budget allocation and client volumes for the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Economic Region is \$12.7 million with an estimated annual client volume of 4,850. Three core components of funding model include:

Operational Funding	Direct delivery and/or subcontracted delivery of the components of the project, including supporting administration and staffing costs, utilities and other operational costs for service delivery.
Performance-Based Funding	Performance-based funding payments to SSMs will occur when clients meet certain employment parameters at checkpoints that occur as part of the client monitoring process.
Employment-related Financial Supports for Job Seekers and Employers	Provided to support clients and employers by addressing temporary financial barriers to participation in employment or employment-related activities.

The Transfer Payment Agreement (TPA) term for the ESSM will be initially three years with two additional one-year terms possible (total potential of five years). The operational details, whether the funds are felt to be sufficient, what the targets are is unknown at this time as the RFQ only refers to the pre-qualification stage of the procurement process. The RFQ is used to establish a pool of qualified proponents who demonstrate the general ability to manage the SSM role. In this two-step process, the RFQ does not include specific details about the proposal. Should the joint RFQ submission receive invitation to the CFP stage, staff will seek further information and provide analysis on direct implications for the County.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal: Children Services, Housing, Finance, Planning and Economic Development staff
- External: Bruce County, Huron County, and City of Stratford staff and various community

agencies providing employment services.

Appendices and Attachments

[Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development Website Release Regarding Request for Qualification 2021 - Employment Services Transformation](#)