

Report SSR-SS-12-15

To: Chair Burley and members of the Social Services Committee
From: Barb Fedy, Social Services Director
Meeting Date: September 24, 2015
Subject: **2015 Social Services Staffing Model and Additional 2016 Contract Staff**
Status: Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution SSC78-15; Endorsed by County Council October 6, 2015 per Resolution CC135-15;

Recommendation(s)

WHEREAS the Province implemented the Social Assistance Management Systems (SAMS) to improve the delivery of social assistance programs;

AND WHEREAS there have been difficulties with the ongoing implementation of SAMS on a province-wide basis;

AND WHEREAS the province has recognized the need to provide additional supports to ensure a successful implementation;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT report SSR-SS-12-15 be received;

AND THAT the remainder of the contract Caseworker position for 2015 be funded equally between the provincial funding and the Caseload reserve;

AND FURTHER THAT the contract Caseworker position be extended for an additional year to be funded equally between provincial funding within the Ontario Works administration budget and Caseload reserve funding;

AND FURTHER THAT a contract Finance Officer be approved for up to one year to assist with SAMS reconciliations and claims, and to assist with the new Child Care Wage Enhancement program, funded with provincial funding within the Ontario Works and Child Care Wage Enhancement budgets and Caseload reserve funding.

Background

Since SAMS implementation in November 2014, the Ontario Works department has been attempting to stabilize its staffing, business processes and workload. The challenges have been great and there remains significant work to be done in addition to the day to day delivery of services to vulnerable residents of Grey County.

The province provided \$198,000 in 100% funding to support Ontario Works transitioning to SAMS. As a result, a contract Caseworker position was approved in the 2015 budget; however, the Province subsequently announced that the funds were to be expensed prior to March 31, 2015. Staff had anticipated more SAMS funding for 2015 however no further funding has been announced. Staff is recommending that the unfunded Caseworker position approved in the 2015 budget be funded from the caseload reserve.

Due to continuing challenges with SAMS and increasing caseloads, staff recommends the contract Caseworker position be extended through 2016. An extension of the contract Caseworker for a period of up to one year will enable staff to deliver prior levels of customer service while the Ministry addresses stabilization issues and enhancements.

A further challenge is the need for additional staffing to complete back end financial reconciliations. There are numerous unanticipated and unverified overpayments and arrears payments that require investigation and correction. In addition, reconciling data received from the Ministry with actual expenditures has been problematic. These issues have created a backlog for staff in Ontario Works and Finance Departments and with current staffing levels there is no capacity to address this backlog. A contract Finance Officer for a period of up to one year would provide support to this financial function.

In addition, this position would assist with the administration of the new Wage Enhancement Grant in Children's Services. This program provides 100% funding to childcare operators to address the wage differential between the boards of education and the local childcare system. The Ministry of Education has provided funding to Grey County as the service system manager, to increase wages for trained staff working in local childcare centres and to home child care providers. This funding includes administrative dollars which will cover 0.5 FTE of this position.

Financial / Staffing / Legal / Information Technology Considerations

Given that there has not been an announcement to date regarding additional SAMS Funding for 2016, Caseload Reserve funds needed to support the approved contract Caseworker position for the current year are estimated at \$40,378.

Further Caseload Reserve funds required to support the extension of the contract Caseworker position into 2016 for a period of up to 12 months are estimated at \$33,394.

Finally, additional funding required from the Caseload Reserve to meet the needs of a Finance Officer position is \$15,913.

There is no impact to the levy for these two contract positions.

Contract Positions	MCSS Funding	Caseload Reserve	Ministry of Education Funding	Total Salary Costs
2015 Contract Caseworker	\$40,378	\$40,378		\$80,756
2016 Contract Caseworker	\$33,394	\$33,394		\$66,788
2016 Finance Officer	\$15,913	\$15,913	\$31,826	\$63,652
Total Funding	\$89,685	\$89,685	\$31,826	\$211,196

Link to Strategic Goals / Priorities

The use of reserve funds to support staffing initiatives to relieve current pressures in the Ontario Works, Children's Services and Finance departments supports the corporate goal of Achieving Excellence in Governance and Service.

Attachments

None

Respectfully submitted by,

Barbara Fedy
Director, Social Services