

### **Background:**

Counties of Bruce (lead), Grey, Huron, and the City of Stratford were selected as the Employment Service System Manager (SSM) for the Stratford – Bruce Peninsula Economic Region by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skill Development (MLITSD) as part of Ontario’s Employment Services Transformation in the Spring of 2022. 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.

The Transfer Payment Agreement, approved by Bruce Council, and signed with the province provides \$12.28 million to serve 4,474 clients within the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Economic Region per year until March 31, 2025; with a possible two-year extension. Councils have delegated authority to oversee this system to an Executive Steering Committee. This Steering Committee is made up of Economic Development Directors and Human Services Directors from each of the municipalities that make up the consortium.

The SSM provided an update on the activities of the SSM in September 2022 (included as an attachment to this report). In that update, details were provided on the establishment of the SSM governance structure, hiring of SSM staff, and the retention of expert support to conduct a current state network assessment.

### **Information Update:**

Over the course of September to November 2022, the SSM has been engaged in a process to assess the current performance of the employment system in the Stratford to Bruce Peninsula catchment area and develop the strategy to strengthen the system starting in April 2023. Through this strategic planning experience, the SSM engaged community partners through the Executive Steering Committee, Service Provider Network, and Regional Advisory Committee to co-design the vision and strategy for the future state employment system in the areas. The following outlined the key findings and results of that process.

- **Current State Network Performance:** Through analysis of historical quantitative performance data, and qualitative narratives from service providers and community partners, the following actionable insights were developed to inform system design.
  - **Increased capacity to service clients at high risk for long-term unemployment:** There has been limited capacity development in the service provider network to serve the most at risk; this is a combination of a resourcing, design, and training challenge. The SSM will work to develop network capacity to focus on the most at risk.



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- **Focus on Employer Engagement, and Job Development and Retention:** There are inconsistent approaches to employer engagement and job development across the service provider network. The SSM will develop and implement a model of service delivery that builds consistency and capacity to develop these services.
- **Specialized Populations:** There is limited capacity across the service provider network to deliver services to those with specialized service needs (e.g, Indigenous peoples, those with disabilities, etc.). The SSM will work with the service provider network to develop capacity to address the diverse needs of people in the community.
- **Vision, Mission, and Values:** Based on the findings of the current state network assessment, and co-design with system partners, the SSM developed the following vision, mission, and values:
  - **Vision:** A community where all are supported, as whole persons, to achieve financial security, have meaningful work, and employers have access to incredible talent.
  - **Mission:** By collaborating with our partners, we manage a system that is responsive and exceeds expectations. We invest in our network to ensure its strength and sustainability.
  - **Values:**
    - **Hope:** We foster hope in every client, every time. Clients know they have reached someone that will help when they engage with our network.
    - **Client Centred:** We focus on the whole client. Aware of their life situation, past trauma, hopes, and strengths, we design individual approaches to meet the clients' goals.
    - **Inclusive & Accessible:** We welcome everyone. We also believe when all voices are involved, we are stronger together. Our network will ensure that programming is accessible and meets the needs of our diverse community.
    - **Collaboration:** We collaborate first. Our clients, partners, network, employers, and funders have the knowledge to drive meaningful outcomes for the community when they are engaged.
    - **Accountable:** We are outcomes focused. As government funded services, we ensure there is value in our investment, and positive impact in the community.
- **Strategic Pillars of Approach:** To address the findings of the current state network assessment and to deliver on the vision and mission, the SSM will undertake design and implementation work based on the following pillars:
  - **Integration of Supply & Demand Side Employment:** Through partnership, the SSM will integrate the needs of employers and job seekers to better address the gaps that exist between those looking to hire and those seeking work.





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- **Integration of Social Assistance:** The SSM is working closely with our Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program partners to develop referral pathways and an integrated case management approach that better supports Social Assistance recipients' success in gaining meaningful and sustainable employment.
- **Community Development:** The SSM is working with a broad range of community partners to co-design the future state employment service model to ensure that the system meets the needs of various stakeholders within the catchment area.
- **Evidence Based Accountability:** The SSM is integrating census, employment service, Social Assistance; labour market, and performance data to develop targets and funding model. This will result in a framework to ensure that network is creating outcomes for stakeholders and impact for the community.
- **Right Level of Service Right Away:** The future state service system will facilitate the referral of client to the right level of service right away. This will ensure that client motivation and goals are harnessed to successfully navigate the employment system to meaningful outcomes.

The SSM has prepared a report providing an initial overview of this strategy and detailed implementation approach and submitted for review by Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. This report was reviewed by the Service Provider Network and the Executive Steering Committee prior to its submission to the Ministry. The preparation and submission of this report is an important milestone during the transition phase (July 2022-March 2023) of the SSM.

Over the course of the Winter 2023, the SSM will continue to co-design the detailed implementation approach with our stakeholders. To date, there has been strong engagement and support of the strategic plan from our community stakeholders and service provider network.

