



REPORT FOR ACTION

Authority to Receive Funds for Research Study about Singles on Ontario Works in Toronto

Date: December 15 2016

To: Economic Development Committee

From: General Manager, Toronto Employment & Social Services

Wards: All

SUMMARY

In October 2016, Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) was successful in a research proposal submission to the Ontario Centre for Workforce Innovation (OCWI), funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development. The research project aims to better understand the service experiences, service pathways and service needs of single people on the Ontario Works caseload to inform practices and interventions offered by service providers. The funding from OCWI will support TESS' work to better understand and address the needs of vulnerable groups while also advancing systemic change.

This report recommends that City Council grant authority to TESS to receive and allocate research funds at its January meeting. Pending approval of the receipt of funds, it is anticipated that the research project will be completed in one year, at which time a final research study report will be submitted to OCWI, as per the research agreement. Any opportunities stemming from the research findings to enhance services and/or programs for this population will be incorporated into subsequent divisional work plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Toronto Employment & Social Services recommends that:

1. City Council grant authority to the General Manager, Toronto Employment & Social Services to receive and allocate research funds from the Ontario Centre for Workforce Innovation for the purposes of conducting research relating to single applicants on the Ontario Works caseload in Toronto.
2. City Council grant authority to the General Manager, Toronto Employment & Social Services to execute on behalf of the City an agreement with the Ontario Centre for Workforce Innovation with respect to the previously mentioned research funds, which agreement shall contain terms and conditions satisfactory to the General Manager, Toronto Employment & Social Services and be in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

This report requests authority to receive research funding, totalling \$49,600. The resources required to administer this research project are included in the 2017 base operating budget request for Toronto Employment and Social Services.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

Not applicable

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In February 2016, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (now called the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development) provided funding of \$7.5 million to establish the Ontario Centre for Workforce Innovation (OCWI). Consisting of a broad range of partners from employment organizations, academia and business associations, and led by Ryerson University, OCWI was designed as a leading-edge centre of research and innovation to support the employment and training sector and help to build a skilled, resilient and productive Ontario workforce.

OCWI provides a single, coordinated access point for research and evidence-based employment and training approaches in Ontario. It has five hubs -- Central (Toronto), North (Thunder Bay), East (Kingston) and West (London) and Francophone (Sudbury) - to effectively address the needs of diverse populations and communities.

Research suggests a need to redesign employment service systems to better address the needs of employers and jobseekers. By researching, piloting, testing, and evaluating evidence-based approaches, the OCWI seeks to advance innovative approaches in employment and training service delivery and to build capacity for a stronger employment system in the province.

In June 2016, OCWI launched its first call for research proposals. Toronto Employment & Social Services (TESS) submitted a proposal to conduct research on the service experiences, pathways and needs of single applicants on the Ontario Works caseload in Toronto. The proposal was successful and was fully funded in the amount of \$49,600.

COMMENTS

The proposed study was considered important given shifts in social assistance caseloads that have taken place in Ontario and elsewhere. As Stapleton [1] notes, in Ontario, the number of singles in receipt of Ontario Works increased from 92,000 in 2000 (compared to 95,000 lone parents) to 151,000 in 2011 (compared to 76,000 lone parents). In other words, the number of lone parents declined by 20%, while singles increased by 65%. Similar changes took place in 5 other provinces, including British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec. Meanwhile, Pulkington [2], found that the proportion of single individuals on the caseload in British Columbia grew from 62% in 1995 to 81% in 2012. Moreover, while single men remain the largest group of social assistance recipients (49%) in British Columbia, single women are now the second largest group at 32%, up from approximately one fifth over the same period.

The growth of the number of single people on social assistance represents an important policy issue. Singles represent the largest proportion of the caseload; experience the deepest poverty; and have access to fewer financial supports outside social assistance. Yet, the experiences of singles are rarely the focus of research examining social assistance. This study will document:

- the size of the singles caseload in Toronto and how it has changed over time compared to other family types;
- the sub-populations of singles (e.g. first time recipients, longer-term recipients, youth, newcomers, older individuals) and how their receipt of assistance compares with the broader population of singles on the caseload in Toronto;
- the service experiences of singles, their specific service needs compared to other populations and any service gaps that exist; and
- the policy and program responses undertaken in other jurisdictions.

It is important to better understand the pathways singles take onto assistance, the programs and/or services they participate in and how these can be improved. The primary study objective is that the findings -- whether more detailed understanding of the experiences and services needs of singles (including different subgroups such as older individuals and those who have been on the caseload longer), or the enhanced awareness of best practice approaches in other jurisdictions -- will contribute to the design and delivery of more effective workforce development and employment services in Toronto. In addition, the study findings will inform and support the work of OCWI to advance system change across the province.

Given the importance of this research and the fact that funds have been awarded to conduct it, TESS is requesting authority to receive and allocate funding. Should funds be accepted, this research project is anticipated to be completed in one year, at which time, TESS will submit a final research study report to OCWI as per the research

1 Stapleton, J. (2011), *Trading Places: Single Adults Replace Lone Parents as the New Face of Social Assistance*. Mowat Centre EI Taskforce, Mowat Centre.

2 Pulkington, J (2015), "Social Assistance in British Columbia", in Beland, D. and Daigneault, P-M. *Welfare Reform In Canada: Provincial Social Assistance in Comparative Perspective*, University of Toronto Press. Toronto

agreement. Any opportunities, stemming from the study findings, to enhance services and/or programs for this population, will be incorporated into subsequent divisional work plans.

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SIGNATURE

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