

Memorandum

To: Employment Ontario Delivery Partners
From: Cordelia Abankwa, Assistant Deputy Minister
Date: September 13, 2021
Subject: Employment Services Transformation – Update on Provincial Rollout

Dear Employment Ontario partners:

I hope you and your families are well, and that you got some time to enjoy a break this summer. In June, I committed to keeping you informed about the ongoing rollout of Employment Services Transformation (EST) across the province. I am pleased to share that building on the three prototype catchment areas (Peel, Muskoka-Kawarthas, Hamilton-Niagara), where the Integrated Employment Services Delivery (IESD) model has been implemented since January, our ministry is proceeding with the selection of Service System Managers (SSMs) in a further four catchment areas.

As you know, on June 10th the government [announced](#) a multi-stage competitive process which would see SSMs selected for all catchment areas in Ontario between now and the end of 2023. This carefully sequenced approach will see the government finalize agreements with SSMs in the following Phase 1 catchment areas by April 2022:

- York
- Halton
- Stratford-Bruce Peninsula
- Kingston-Pembroke

These catchment areas were identified to be part of the next phase based on findings from stakeholder engagement, organizational interest, and service delivery considerations.

[Qualified organizations](#) which participated in the Request for Qualification (RFQ) process will be invited shortly to the Call for Proposal via the Ontario Tenders Portal. Each organization which participated in the RFQ has received a letter of notification advising them whether or not they will proceed to the next stage of the competitive process. Unsuccessful organizations have been offered an opportunity for a debrief with ministry staff.

Further Information and Next Steps

I want to reiterate that this competitive process will not have an immediate impact on funding, service delivery or the Employment Ontario network of service providers. As with the three prototype catchments, new SSMs will have Planning and Transition periods before taking full responsibility for the local service delivery network and prior to the referral of Ontario Works clients into Employment Ontario service delivery. Lessons learned from the prototype phase demonstrated that this was key to successful transition. As a result of this gradual implementation timeline, the Integrated Employment Services Delivery period for this phase of implementation will begin in 2023. My ministry, as well as the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services will work with all delivery partners to provide support throughout the transition period.

As we continue to move through this process, I am committed to providing regular updates to our service providers and stakeholders. Additional details about what is happening now, and next steps, are available in Qs and As posted on the [Employment Ontario Partners Gateway](#).

Looking ahead to future phases in the provincial rollout, the next group of catchment areas will be competed in 2022, with a final round for Toronto and the Northern catchments occurring in 2023. Information about the timelines and next steps will be shared as decisions and planning are finalized.

As the economy continues to re-open, many people will need quick and easy access to our services to get and stay employed. Employment Services Transformation is grounded in providing job seekers with a clear path to employment. Integrating employment programs is key to better serving those clients who need assistance now more than ever. We are seeing encouraging early signs, both in terms of client service and collaboration between SSMs and Social Assistance delivery partners.

Thank you for your partnership and ongoing flexibility – both throughout this pandemic, and as we move forward with this important transformative initiative which will modernize Ontario's employment and training system.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Heather Cross

On behalf of

Cordelia Abankwa
Assistant Deputy Minister
Employment and Training Division

Cc:

David Carter-Whitney, Assistant Deputy Minister, Workforce Policy and Innovation Division,
Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development

Aki Tefera, Assistant Deputy Minister, Social Assistance Programs Division, Ministry of
Children, Community and Social Services