

Customer Service Report

Highlights

The Social Services division continues to enhance our customer service delivery across our 4 strategic themes:

- People We Serve
- Working Together
- Community Partnerships
- Technology

As we prepare for Social Assistance Modernization and ongoing provincial changes, being people-centred to “help people, change lives” remains our core goal.

The Bridges out of Poverty model informs our thinking as we review and improve the programs and services we offer. Through the Bridges lens, we have been successfully improving relationships and assisting our customers to stabilize their lives by building the essential resources needed for a better quality of life. This framework supports long-term success for individuals, organizations and communities.

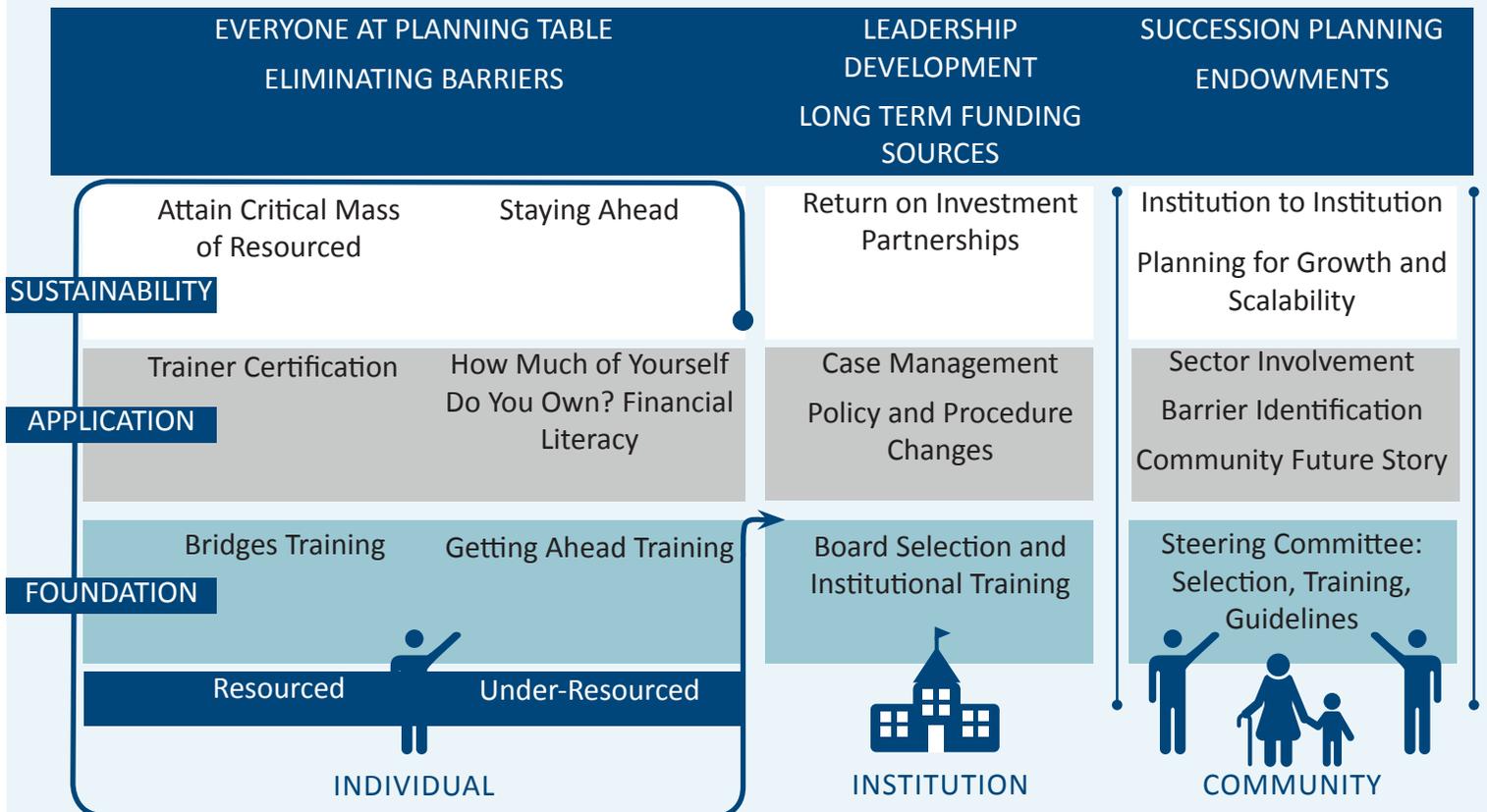
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Bridges Model: Philanthropy, Policy, and Quality of Life



People We Serve

As we continually improve, we recognize we are not always experts in what our clients need to stabilize their lives. Seeking customer feedback is a regular part of our processes. We use comment cards and program evaluation summaries, host bi-monthly client advisory group meetings, and client and staff surveys to increase our understanding.

While the “Bridges out of Poverty, Strategies for Professionals and Communities Workshop” is offered across our community by our certified trainer, “Getting Ahead in a Just Getting By World” is offered to our clients who are ready for change. Both Bridges-based workshops result in a greater understanding of economic class issues, and transformational changes for professionals and community members. A unique factor of the Getting Ahead workshop is



participants are considered to be “investigators” (rather than students), who investigate their lives and communities, and what brought them to where they are today. This is a crucial and necessary step in the process of change.

Another unique factor of Getting Ahead is that a graduate of the previous group applies and interviews to co-facilitate the next group as a paid community placement opportunity. It is an amazing experience to watch the investigators grow and learn together, and then proceed to lead a new set of peers through the same process.

In 2019, we are launching “Staying Ahead” monthly meetings for all of our Getting Ahead graduates in order to continue working on building the **eleven (11) essential resources for life stabilization** as identified in the Bridges out of Poverty model:

Financial
Emotional
Mental/Cognitive
Language

Social Support Systems
Physical
Spiritual
Integrity and Trust

Motivation and Persistence
Relationships/Role Models
Knowledge of Hidden Rules

Quotes from Getting Ahead grads:

“Getting Ahead was the most amazing experience of my life. I feel way more confident in my approach to find work now!”

“Big reality checks for me. It forced me to take the time to look at my life and my situation to re-evaluate things to make changes.”

“GA was by far the best workshop I have ever attended. The most helpful part was understanding the hidden rules of work and school that I didn’t know before. I am excited about actually making real goals for the first time in a long time.”

62 total grads

97% attendance of all 16 sessions

22% have exited OW

ALL would recommend the group to others to move forward and become self-sufficient.

Quotes from professionals after Bridges training day:

“I was really impressed by this workshop and its relatability to personal and professional life. I had more than one aha moments today which was awesome!”

“Was a good reminder of the struggles I’ve never had to face. I will be a better listener and build supportive relationships with the people we serve.”

“Thank-you for an excellent workshop I have learned a lot that will be very useful with my students in the classroom!”

“Great day! An eye opener to the clients we work with. The most significant piece for me was the distinction in driving forces (relationships vs. achievements). I think that this will really influence the ways that I engage with clients.”

In our efforts to promote financial literacy, Social Services hosted four income tax clinics in 2018 for 102 customers in total. The clinics are jointly facilitated with the Happy Wanderers (a volunteer organization registered with Revenue Canada) who helped complete and file income tax forms for the community.

In total
221 years of income tax was completed.

Resulting in
\$84,596.86 in refunds.

Throughout 2018 we continued to enhance our team approach to customer service. We have 8 areas of focus for client supports:

- County Outreach
- Adult Learning
- Children and Youth
- Intake
- Disability Supports
- Mental Health and Addictions
- Employment Supports
- Homelessness

The intent of this model is to ensure that our customers do not have to tell their stories more than once to receive the individual supports, service and information they need.

Our Intake team continues to offer several methods to apply for Social Assistance and/or Child Care subsidy. Whether it be on-line, walk in or telephone:

5 business days was our average time line from initial contact to eligibility determination throughout 2018.

An average of **174** applications for Social Assistance were completed per month in 2018.

Once granted, people are referred to the appropriate team for supports to stabilize their life and move forward to employment and an improved future story.

We served over 1,500 clients in receipt of Ontario Disability Support (ODSP) in **addition** to serving our caseload of ongoing Ontario Works clients.

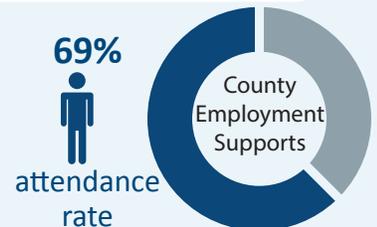
67 new referrals for employment supports were seen by the employment counsellor for ODSP spouses and dependant adults.

We provided discretionary benefits and/or benefits related to their Housing Stability.

Community Development

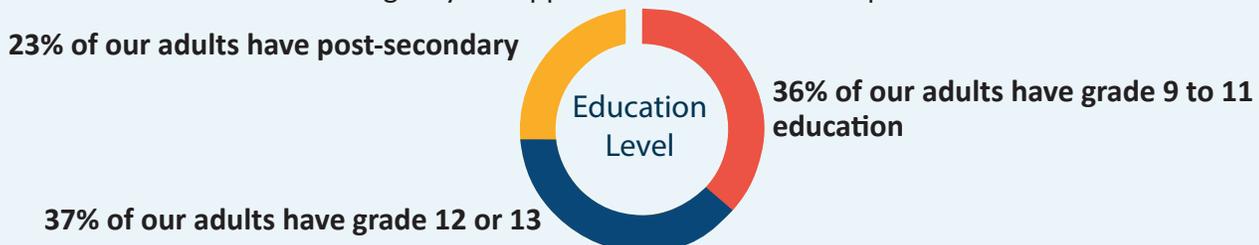
Throughout 2018, we increased employment supports at several County locations for residents in Havelock, Millbrook, Apsley, Lakefield, Buckhorn and Norwood. Attendance rates to appointments were 69%. Sixteen clients who received supports began new employment in 2018.

Transportation challenges and limited employment opportunities continue to be noted as main barriers.



Ontario Works

Our focus on supporting literacy, education and training has expanded throughout 2018. In addition to providing outreach supports at Peterborough Alternative Continuing Education (PACE), we now attend Fleming CREW Academic Upgrading and Trent Valley Literacy Association to meet mutual clients where they are and collaborate with the agency to support the learners in all aspects of their life.



The Wellness Program (Addiction & Mental Health services)

Consists of four case managers in an intensive case management model for approximately 130 clients.

In 2018, we moved to an in-the-moment model, where clients are greeted by a member of the Wellness team as soon as they express an interest in services. The presence of an Addiction Counsellor from FourCAST in the office has added depth to this service model, which helps connect those who are interested in help with wellness and substance use.

Children’s Services

In February 2018, Children’s Services developed a needs assessment questionnaire for use with all new Fee Subsidy applicants. The goal was to increase knowledge of, and ability to access community supports based on the families’ needs.

216 assessments completed

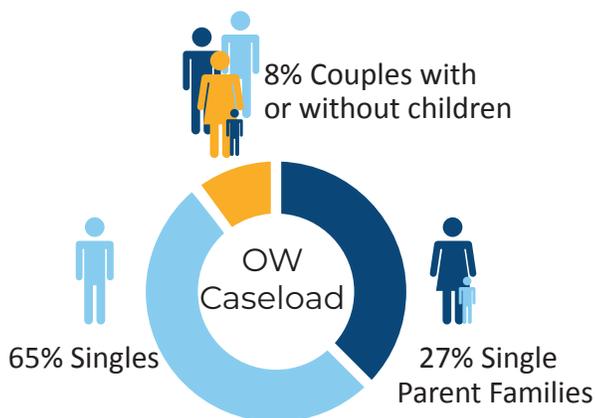
335 referrals

Regular follow up on referrals and reassessment after one year will help determine the impact of these additional supports to our customers. Our goal is to offer high impact service and enhance relationships between clients and staff. Children’s Services Case Managers began quarterly outreach at all EarlyON program centres within the County of Peterborough, reaching a diverse range of clients in order to increase awareness of all Division services and programs. An inter-agency protocol with Kawartha-Haliburton Children’s Aid Society was created with the goal of improving information sharing and collaboration between the two agencies. This will allow us to wrap supports around families who are clients of both organizations.



Employment

In the Peterborough Employment Resource Centre (PERC), we continue to increase employment supports. Our mornings remain available for computer access for activities such as housing search and mental and physical health supports. Our afternoons now have a dedicated employment focus, including mock interviews, resume building, setting up informational interviews, and cold calling employers. “Tech-Tuesdays” are dedicated to helping people increase their knowledge and comfort with technology, including setting up e-mail accounts, accessing benefits online and applying for ID. Community partners deliver workshops on Wednesday afternoons, while a drop-in Job Finding Club runs Thursdays. Centre staff are dedicated to providing individual support as needed.



73% are showing as **not ready or minimally ready** for employment – meaning life stabilization is a priority.

20% of our cases are **employed**.

27% of our **caseload is job ready** as indicated by the Employment Readiness Scale.

Housing and Homelessness

The Homelessness team continues to provide outreach supports at local shelters each morning to try and minimize the length of stay. We are continuing with an outreach pilot to try and locate anyone living rough in any community park in order to provide them with resource information and connect them with other services. Staff also attend the One Roof Drop-in Centre once a month to meet with clients regarding benefits, birth certificate applications and financial resources. This has been working well to prevent crises and work towards building the eleven essential resources for life stabilization.

Working Together

Staff champions passionate about creating inclusive and welcoming client-centred services continue to come together in internal working groups.

Bridges out of Poverty Working Group

Goal is to share, normalize and implement Bridges constructs to improve relationships at the individual level, outcomes at the agency level and systems at the community level. Our 2018 work plan accomplishments included expanding and formalizing our Client Advisory Group and client feedback processes, conducting team engagement activities, facilitating three Getting Ahead in a Getting by World workshops with 30 successful graduates, and, offering free Bridges training to community partners.

Diversity Working Group

Raises awareness about diversity and promotes inclusivity. Throughout 2018, monthly email updates to all staff highlighted both historic and current events happening both locally and internationally. Some of the topics included Black History Month, Women's Rights and Privilege. In September 2018 the working group, joined by friends and clients, took part in Peterborough Pride celebrating:



Division Wellness Committee Working Group

Promotes a positive, engaging and fun work atmosphere. This group plans and implements engaging events, activities and fundraisers contributing to workplace health and wellness. This supports our philosophy of being people-centred at all levels and improves customer service and satisfaction.



Community Partnerships

Since certifying a staff member as a Bridges out of Poverty trainer in 2016, we have trained approximately 3,000 community partners.

As there is no fee for the workshop, this partnership saves the community a significant cost, while also supporting broad and impactful program and community improvements.

With a greater focus on life stabilization and job retention, our Bridges trainer also became certified in Workplace Stability: Bridges training specifically for employers. The goal is to work with employers for improved engagement, retention and productivity with their entry-level employees. Over 2018, we collaborated with our three local Employment Ontario partners to co-host three lunch and learn sessions for local employers. 32 employers attended, with very positive feedback on implementing strategies in their work place to increase job retention.

Quotes from employers:

"Great relevant content!! Presenter was fantastic - able to make real and connect with. Really great to see this type of education being provided in our community".

"Excellent, well paced, informative and useful. I wish I would have had this information sooner as can think of several employees I could have made a difference with".

The Bridges Community of Practice group meets twice yearly to share implementation strategies. We currently have 32 active agency representatives. The intent of this group is for service agencies across the City and County who have attended the Bridges out of Poverty workshop to share best practices related to implementing the constructs and framework within their own agencies. Improved attendance rates and customer satisfaction have been a common outcome reported across organizations who are implementing the Bridges model.

Technology

Our updated corporate website just launched this spring with improved content, navigation, design and on-line services. As part of this project, the Social Services section will also soon reflect Bridges out of Poverty projects and engagement across the community. Our various Bridges related workshops will be shared online for easier access to new information and resources.

In the fall of 2018, our division went live with a Desk-top texting app as a means to improve communication with our customers. This new communication method has been warmly received as an easier and improved way for clients and staff to stay in touch.



Good News Story

“Susan” had been out of the workforce for 10 years and receiving Ontario Works Assistance to support her family. She was actively involved in counseling and with the Children’s Aid Society. She rarely attended appointments with our office, did not follow through with her schooling, and often did not leave her house due to severe anxiety, depression and low self-esteem. She advised her case manager that she wanted to make a change in her life but did not know how – a good indication that she was ready for the Getting Ahead in a Just Getting by World workshop. She attended the Getting Ahead information session, but was still uncertain if she would be able to commit to the responsibilities required for sixteen 4 hour sessions. Susan decided to try it and began the program in March 2017. She attended the workshop regularly.



The facilitator commented that Susan was really enjoying the group and had started to “come out of her shell”. She contributed to the learning of the group and shared her personal experiences. Over the course of the 8 weeks, Susan experienced a personal transformation. Upon graduating in May 2017, she began job searching with a new confidence and as a result, was hired at a fast food restaurant by July 2017. She has since maintained that job while raising her four children. Susan is now ready to move on with her life as she is feeling confident she can make it on her own. **“I want to cut ties, get off OW, but it is scary for me. Just hard after so many years to let go of the safety net. But I am stable in my job and want to try it on my own. It is time.”** She has exited Ontario Works after 7 years of assistance. Susan knows she can reach out should she ever need our support, but the empowerment she is feeling to do things on her own is inspiring. We wish Susan and her family all the best.

Caseload and Financial Position:

Ontario Works caseload is trending slightly lower than 2017. The year to date caseload for end of 2018 is 3,599 City and County combined, compared to the 2018 average caseload of 3,783.

Total expenditures for the Social Services Division are slightly under budget. At the end of March (25% of the year), 22.2% of the annual budget had been spent. This percentage is based on the approved 2019 Municipal Budget and has not taken into consideration any of the Provincial funding changes recently announced.

Ontario Works Caseloads



Ontario Works County Caseloads

