



## **Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) Implementation and Ontario Works Business Recovery**

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The Ontario Municipal Social Services Association  
SAMS Business Recovery Work Group Report

September 2015

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#### **About this Report:**

This report is a summary of the work of Ontario Municipal Social Services Association's (OMSSA) Business Recovery Work Group (BRWG). The Work Group included representation of 11 Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs), and OMSSA staff.

## OMSSA Business Recovery Work Group (BRWG) Report

### 1. Executive Summary and Recommendations

Over the last several months, the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) along with 11 member Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) have reviewed and analyzed impacts of the implementation of the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS).

The main imperative of this work has been to understand how the implementation of SAMS has impacted the business processes and obligations of CMSMs and DSSABs in the planning, funding and delivery of Ontario Works. Understanding this information is to help inform a remediation plan to alleviate capacity constraints, reduce impacts on service delivery and clients and to attempt a return to “business as usual”.

Following the release of SAMS and as CMSMs and DSSABs sought to stabilize the delivery of Ontario Works, all indications were that challenges with SAMS implementation would continue for the foreseeable future. OMSSA and its member CMSMs and DSSABs have been deeply concerned with the impact and implications on the Ontario Works systems and that these be well understood in an effort to stabilize municipal and DSSAB operations and services and supports to clients. It is also clear that evidence was needed in order to plan towards business recovery.

The key areas of concern that emerged once SAMS was in place included: resource planning – human and financial implications (resulting in additional work effort and duplication of work effort), financial reporting and reconciliation and client services/impacts. These issues and the mounting concerns for the individuals and families relying on CMSMs and DSSABs to deliver Ontario Works, prompted the formation of the OMSSA Business Recovery Working Group (BRWG).

The preliminary findings captured by the work of the BRWG members in this report presents a point in time analysis and a basis for understanding how SAMS has changed the business of Ontario Works at this time. The next and most important steps will be to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the impact of SAMS and what is needed to move towards stabilization of the system and the ability for CMSMs and DSSABs to fulfill what is required and expected of them. The Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) is currently moving forward on undertaking such an assessment.

### What the BRWG Committed to

The Business Recovery Work Group committed to achieving the following objectives:

**Objective 1:** Collaborate with the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) to promote greater understanding of the impact of the technology improvement cycle for a coordinated and planned approach to business recovery.

**Objective 2:** Provide an opportunity for CMSM and DSSAB representatives to identify the current status/issues and recommendations for a short to medium-term remediation plan.

**Objective 3:** Develop recommendations for MCSS for a long-term remediation plan.

**Objective 4:** Share information, best practices, tools and local solutions among the Work Group membership.

## What was Measured

Recognizing that performance data is an essential component of business recovery planning, the BRWG collaboratively identified and prioritized key performance indicators to monitor the business and service impacts in the following priority areas:

- Applications
- Case management functions
- Payments
- Client outcomes
- Staff indicators

Through a prioritization exercise, the BRWG selected over 30 metrics for measurement. The selection criteria considered the following:

- the priority for measurement;
- existing program standards/expectations;
- high volume and high impact transactions;
- workload measures; and
- the availability of data.

The BRWG identified limitations related to the performance metrics included in this report. These are described in further details in Section 7 “Limitations of the Reports”.

The scope of this report does not include specific findings related to the long term risk and liability to CMSMs and DSSABs as organizations and in their mandated role for Ontario Works. In many ways it is too early in the SAMS implementation process to fully understand what these will be. This does not mean these considerations are not important. Ongoing efforts to understand as well as mitigate organizational and business practice implications are needed and must be addressed as the Province continues its SAMS stabilization efforts.

The BRWG report does not include a financial costing analysis of business impacts and business recovery. We believe this is work that must be undertaken going forward in the same way as a risk analysis will be needed for the sector.

## Findings

Overall, the BRWG Report presents the following findings:

- 1) SAMS requires increased staff time to perform key eligibility and case management functions.
- 2) The Provincial service standard for Ontario Works applications has been maintained only as a result of sites deploying additional staff resources to meet client needs.

- 3) Staff workload has increased in administrative areas related to payments, including overpayments and underpayments.
- 4) Staffing requirements have increased since SAMS to respond to staff absences and requirements for overtime hours to meet client needs.
- 5) The transition to business recovery requires ongoing monitoring and performance measurement. The following areas are of high priority and need to be monitored closely in order to effectively plan for recovery:
  - a. Ontario Works caseload levels.
  - b. Client outcomes and participation levels (i.e. cases removed from the caseload and exits to employment).
  - c. The volume and amount of overpayments need to be monitored and resolved and additional attention is needed for the reconciliation of payments.
  - d. As the administrative relief measures are lifted and regular business processes resume (i.e. Outcome Plans, Eligibility Verification Process (EVP), Rules Suppression, Year-to-Date Reporting), overall capacity will need to be assessed and recovery plans will need to be further defined.

## **Recommendations**

OMSSA and the Business Recovery Work Group's position is that the Province should be responsible for SAMS Business Recovery including all additional costs related to the stabilization of SAMS and CMSM and DSSAB operations.

The Business Recovery Working Group recommends the following:

### **Client Service Delivery**

1. That the Province recognize that in addition to the BRWG sites, that many CMSMs and DSSABs have significantly realigned staff to support SAMS and, as a result, program delivery has been reduced in areas such as Employment Services, Family Support, Eligibility Review, Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and community referrals. And, as a result, impacts to clients and case management outcomes can be anticipated in the medium to long term.
2. If current levels of data input and management are required permanently, increased staff resources will be needed to maintain Provincial standards for service delivery. The BRWG recommends that additional staffing resources be 100% provincially funded on an ongoing basis.
3. That the Province, in partnership with OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs, develop and implement the SAMS Business Recovery Plan, as part of the SAMS Transition Plan, and that the Plan includes deliverables and milestones for the restoration of the services that are currently reduced.

4. That the Province, in partnership with OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs, develop standard business processes to ensure optimal client service across the province. This includes standards related to case file notes, file transfer documentation, communication tools, etc.

### **Staff Training & Development**

5. That the Province, in partnership with OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs, develop a comprehensive standardized and coordinated Provincial training program by December 2015.
6. That the SAMS training be delivered by training experts through Regional Training Centres and made available on an ongoing basis to accommodate the learning and development needs of new staff, existing staff and returning staff, as an option for CMSMs and DSSABs. This training program needs to be flexible and responsive to meet local training needs and be made available at no additional cost to CMSMs and DSSABs.
7. That the SAMS training program include training modules and job specific training with updated and easy to use learning tools and a practice test environment that can be utilized for training on a full continuum of case management functions.
8. That the Province continue to develop and operationalize relevant SAMS job aids/knowledge wizards to support staff and populate the help fields within the SAMS software and develop imbedded prompts as reminders to staff at the time of data entry.

### **Ontario Works Policies**

9. That the Province continue to work in partnership with OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs to ensure ongoing communications and engagement in order to inform policies, service delivery changes (i.e. Client Portal) and business recovery planning. This includes discussions related to the timelines for the reactivation of workload reduction measures to support post SAMS implementation activities such as Family Support, Overpayments and Recovery, Eligibility Verification Process (EVP), Outcome Plans, etc.
10. That the Province, in partnership with OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs, identify the system enhancements needed to ensure compliance with Ontario Works policies (i.e. outcome plans for ODSP participants).
11. That the Province complete the SAMS Implementation Transition Plan with SAMS stabilization achieved prior to the implementation of any significant or new policy changes (such as the upcoming changes to the employment related benefits).

### **Financial Requirements**

12. That the Province, in partnership with OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs, discuss and identify additional financial resources which are required to implement and maintain SAMS. This includes additional costs related to staff overtime, realignment of staff, hiring of new staff, etc.
13. That the Province, in partnership with OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs, discuss potential baseline adjustments on employment penalties in recognition that sites realigned employment staff to support SAMS.

14. That the Province, in partnership with OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs, prioritize a strategy that provides flexibility in the reconciliation of financial transactions including overpayments/underpayments and subsidy claims.
15. That the Province in partnership with OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs work collaboratively to develop a cost analysis of SAMS business recovery.
16. That the Province continue to work in partnership with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA), OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs to identify opportunities to improve the way services are delivered to Ontario Works clients, including the development and implementation of a cost effective funding approach for the delivery of Ontario Works programs and services (i.e. training, staff, resources, etc.).

### **Performance Measures**

17. That the Province provide flexibility on existing and future service standards and targets.
18. That the Province continue to build and enhance SAMS reports to monitor the business recovery levels and expand reporting to include other areas such as client participation levels, client outcome plans, employment outcome measures and financial reporting. Timely and accurate reports are required to plan and optimize service delivery.
19. That OMSSA and the Business Recovery Work Group members, conduct a follow-up time measurement study in the fall of 2015 to measure the time required to complete applications and case management functions before and after the release of the revised SAMS. The date of the time measurement study should be determined in collaboration with the Province and coincide with the release of the revised version of SAMS.

### **Governance and Planning**

20. That the newly formed SAMS Transition Ontario Works Executive Committee continue to provide shared governance oversight for business recovery and that business recovery plans include short, medium and longer term plans and support. The Committee should also continue as a forum to monitor progress on the SAMS Transition Plan and rely upon the performance metrics in the SAMS Performance Transition Reports to make evidenced based decisions.
21. That the reconstitution of the Directors and Administrators Group (DARG) include an oversight role in the implementation of the SAMS Transition Plan to ensure sector issues, considerations and recommendations are reflective in the Plan and its implementation.
22. That the Province, in partnership with AMO, NOSDA, OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs, work collaboratively on the longer term strategy related to the social services delivery system including implications to the role of CMSMs and DSSABs.
23. That the Province engage AMO, NOSDA and where appropriate OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs in discussions on provincial initiatives and efforts that include potential human resource and labour relations implications.
24. That the Province, in partnership with OMSSA, establish a governance structure that examines all SAMS related workgroups with the goal to minimize duplication of work and

promote/support a collaborative and focused approach to SAMS integration and stabilization.

## **2. Purpose of Report**

OMSSA and its members are clear that through ongoing partnership, both across the sector and with the Province, we will continue to see improvements to SAMS that will enable CMSMs and DSSABs to move to a better state for front line staff, clients and their organizations.

The OMSSA BRWG report serves as an important effort and resource for further planning and resolution for system-wide issues related to the SAMS implementation. It is also a confirmation, at this time, of the challenges that the implementation of SAMS has presented to CMSMs and DSSABs as partners in the social assistance system and in their role as Ontario Works delivery agents.

Like the Province, CMSMs and DSSABs are committed to the key principle of Ontario Works in that clients are to be assisted to help find sustainable employment and achieve self-reliance. CMSMs and DSSABs also share with the Province, the understanding that a critical support to achieving this is the importance of “system integrity”.

Concerns remain with the longer term impacts regarding SAMS including on clients and what achieving “stability” will mean to the Ontario Works system and the business recovery of CMSMs and DSSABs. We believe the work of the BRWG is in first step in continuing to advocate for business recovery that addresses the impact and concerns of CMSMs, DSSABs, the Province and clients alike.

We also believe that SAMS implementation has presented an additional opportunity to be clearer and more purposeful on what social assistance reform, including and beyond SAMS, means to CMSMs and DSSABs. And once we understand this, to be able to plan in a purposeful and effective way.

## **3. Background**

In November 2014, the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) launched the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS), the new case management technology for the delivery of Ontario Works (OW), the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and the Assistance for Children with Severe Disability Program (ACSD).

Mandated by legislation, regulations, directives and guidelines, and as the designated delivery agents for Ontario Works, CMSMs and DSSABs rely on SAMS for the provision of Ontario Works benefits and services to clients. SAMS is critical in every aspect of Ontario Works service delivery including: applications, caseload management, outcome planning, financial reporting and to measure provincially mandated performance standards, targets and employment outcomes. The implementation of SAMS has also, in many cases, resulted in a significant impact in the provision of employment services and supports to clients.

CMSMs and DSSABs are also funding partners in the provision of Ontario Works Benefits (8.6% municipal and 91.4% provincial) and for 50% of the cost of administration.



The launch of the new software created complex issues that have impacted Ontario Works service delivery sites across the province. CMSMs and DSSABs experienced and continue to face ongoing challenges with SAMS that have directly impacted clients, have resulted in case management pressures and increased demands on staff time as well as impacted community partnerships through a decrease in referrals to community agencies.

In February 2015, OMSSA, in collaboration with 11 CMSMs/DSSABs formed the Business Recovery Work Group (BRWG). The purpose of the BRWG is to advance business recovery planning to support the implementation of SAMS and to mitigate its impacts on CMSMs and DSSABs. In this report, the BRWG presents an overview of some of the issues surrounding SAMS implementation and provides recommendations to the Province for business recovery planning. Please refer to Annex 1 for the BRWG's Terms of Reference.

As Table 1 indicates, the 11 CMSMs/DSSABs collectively manage an Ontario Works caseload of 68,920<sup>1</sup> cases and provide a range of supports to 114,700+<sup>2</sup> beneficiaries including adults and children. Combined, the Ontario Works caseloads of the 11 BRWG member sites represent 27% of the total Provincial Ontario Works caseload (250,946<sup>3</sup>).

**Table 1- Summary of the Ontario Works Caseloads<sup>4</sup> across the BRWG sites**

Ontario Works Caseload	May 2014	Sept 2014	Oct 2014	May 2015	Change May 2014 to May 2015	Change Oct 2014 to May 2015
<b>Chatham-Kent</b>	3,042	2,874	2,774	3,023	-0.6%	9.0%
<b>Cornwall</b>	2,409	2,213	2,140	2,405	-0.2%	12.4%
<b>Durham</b>	8,857	8,695	8,399	9,306	5.1%	10.8%
<b>Hamilton</b>	12,054	11,578	11,426	12,700	5.4%	11.2%
<b>Ottawa</b>	17,095	16,797	16,555	18,330	7.2%	10.7%
<b>Rainy River</b>	259	237	236	274	5.8%	16.1%
<b>Sault Ste. Marie</b>	2,100	1,945	1,901	2,188	4.2%	15.1%
<b>Sudbury (City)</b>	3,340	3,164	3,031	3,509	5.1%	15.8%
<b>Waterloo</b>	8,620	8,226	8,084	8,862	2.8%	9.6%
<b>Wellington</b>	1,986	1,955	1,979	2,137	7.6%	8.0%
<b>York</b>	5,700	5,469	5,466	6,186	8.5%	13.2%
<b>Total (11 BRWG)</b>	<b>65,462</b>	<b>63,153</b>	<b>61,991</b>	<b>68,920</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>11.2%</b>
<b>Province</b>	<b>245,203</b>	<b>235,827</b>	<b>231,504</b>	<b>250,946</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>8.4%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Source: SAMS Transition Performance Report, v1.0, May 2015 caseload. The Ministry is validating SAMS caseload data. The caseload information included in v1.0 does not represent the official OW caseload statistics and is subject to revision when data validation is complete.

<sup>2</sup> Source: SAMO Operational Indicator Report, September 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Source: SAMS Transition Performance Report, v1.0, May 2015 caseload. The Ministry is validating SAMS caseload data. The caseload information included in v1.0 does not represent the official OW caseload statistics and is subject to revision when data validation is complete.

<sup>4</sup> Source: SAMS Transition Performance Report, v1.0. The Ministry is validating SAMS caseload data. May 2015 caseload does not represent the official OW caseload statistics and is subject to revision when data validation is complete by MCSS.

Table 1 indicates that the Ontario Works caseloads in all of the 11 BRWG sites have increased during the period of October 2014 to May 2015. It is important to note that the MCSS is validating the SAMS caseload data.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4. SAMS Implementation

In anticipation of the release of the new technology, and in collaboration with MCSS, CMSMs and DSSABs dedicated a significant amount of time and effort to provide extensive staff training and to review and revise local business processes to ensure sites were ready for SAMS implementation. These efforts were based on the SAMS training and preparation provided by MCSS over two years in advance of the technology going live.

While some implementation challenges were expected, the high volume and complexity of the system issues encountered during the implementation of SAMS were unforeseen by the SAMS Project Team. The provincial training provided to staff in advance of the SAMS implementation did not adequately prepare staff to work with the version of SAMS that was released<sup>6</sup>.

While CMSMs and DSSABs quickly activated contingency plans to mitigate initial service slowdowns and to minimize client services impacts, the ongoing and complex issues of SAMS exceeded the normal scope of business contingency planning in most offices.

“Since go-live, MCSS and its service delivery partners have experienced several transition challenges with SAMS, that include resolving system defects, improving user adoption and addressing data conversion issues all with the focus of enhancing the predictability of SAMS for front line staff and enhancing operations. MCSS and its delivery partners have invested time and resources to advance SAMS transition in order to reach full operations.”

PricewaterhouseCoopers Report – Ministry of Community and Social Services SAMS Transition Review, May 2015

#### The Ministry of Community and Social Services Actions to Address SAMS Implementation

MCSS initiated some important actions to address the challenges created by SAMS including the following:

- In December 2013, MCSS provided administrative relief for Ontario Works. The relief included 100% one-time Provincial funding and workload reduction measures. This relief was provided in recognition of the impacts that delivery agents experienced in order to plan for and implement SAMS<sup>7</sup>.
- In August 2014, in preparation for the launch of SAMS, MCSS extended the administrative relief measures to March 31, 2015<sup>8</sup>.
- In December 2014, in recognition of the impacts of SAMS, MCSS approved additional temporary workload reduction measures to provide greater flexibility for delivery agents to manage SAMS post-implementation and support stabilization<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Source: SAMS Transition Performance Reports, User Guide 1.0, MCSS, June 2015.

<sup>6</sup> OMSSA letter to Richard Steele, Assistant Deputy Minister, Social Assistance Operations, MCSS, dated January 29, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Memo from Jeff Butler, Director, Ontario Works Branch, on Administrative Relief dated December 27, 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Memo from Jeff Butler, Director, Ontario Works Branch, MCSS, on Extended Administrative Relief, dated August 20, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Memo from Jeff Butler, Director, Ontario Works Branch and Jeff Bowen, Director, Social Assistance and Municipal Operations Branch, on Additional Administrative Relief, dated December 16, 2014.

- In March 2015, MCSS provided additional funding in administrative relief to CMSMs and DSSABs. In total, MCSS provided 100% Provincial funding in the amount of \$15 million<sup>10</sup> to support the operational costs associated with SAMS implementation.
- In addition, in March 2015, as an update to the administrative relief measures, MCSS identified specific dates for the return to regular business processes for the Eligibility Verification Process (EVP), Rules Suppression, Outcomes Targets, Budget Submissions and Year-to-Date Reporting.
- MCSS convened a Technical Working Group to resolve the most urgent “fixes”; this has resulted in system functionality improvements.
- Site visits from the Minister of Community and Social Services, Deputy Minister and Provincial staff were undertaken to gain a greater understanding of the impact of SAMS implementation on clients, challenges for staff and for the CMSMs and DSSABs.
- To further investigate and address SAMS functionality concerns, MCSS convened a multi stakeholder frontline users group.
- MCSS retained PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to conduct an independent third party review of SAMS and subsequently, in May 2015, received the recommendations contained in the PricewaterhouseCoopers’ report.
- MCSS is moving forward on the development of an Integrated SAMS Transition Plan which includes the development of a Business Recovery Plan.
- The first monthly installments of the SAMS Transition Performance Reports were released to all OW delivery agents on June 12, 2015. These are the first operational reports produced since SAMS implementation in November 2014<sup>11</sup>. In recognition that operational data is essential for business recovery planning, MCSS worked collaboratively with the BRWG to identify the key performance indicators included in the report.

## Local Solutions to Address SAMS

In addition to the Provincial strategies and actions, CMSMs and DSSABs implemented a range of strategies that were responsive to clients:

- The redeployment of staff to provide additional supports to ensure effective service delivery to clients.
- Assigning additional resources to support intakes ensuring applications were processed in a timely and efficient manner.
- Additional resources assigned to validate client payments.
- Assigned dedicated staff to the development and delivery of training to support the learning needs of colleagues to provide up to date SAMS training, support staff who were struggling with the technology and to orient new and returning staff to SAMS.
- Creation of business transformation teams to oversee emerging operational issues, to develop and implement contingency plans and ongoing SAMS implementation activities.
- Deployment of dedicated subject matter experts with SAMS knowledge to resolve technical issues.
- CMSMs/DSSABs have re-engineered business processes and modified service delivery models to adapt to and accommodate SAMS.
- Promoting and increasing the use of direct bank deposits as a strategy to minimize further delays related to timely issuance of benefits to clients.

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<sup>10</sup> Memo from Richard Steele to OW Administrators on Additional Funding for SAMS Implementation, dated March 19, 2015

<sup>11</sup> Memo from Jeff Bowen to OW Administrators on the SAMS Transition Performance Reports, dated June 12, 2015

- Reducing the number of staff appointments and meetings to ensure that resources are available to provide front line services to clients and a dedicated emphasis on applications and issuance of benefits.
- In many areas, contingency plans remain in effect 8 months after SAMS implementation and will continue for the longer term.

CMSMs and DSSABs have employed effective strategies to mitigate the immediate impact of SAMS. However in many areas services have been reduced in other core Ontario Works areas such as employment, EVP, Family Support, Overpayments and Recoveries, etc. As a result, services to clients are not being offered at pre-SAMS levels.

While the proactive efforts of CMSMs and DSSABs have gone a long way to mitigate the immediate impact of SAMS on clients, business services changes have been driven directly by the technology and not necessarily as improvements to client services or for internal organizational improvement processes. Concerns have also emerged that CMSMs and DSSABs continue to implement SAMS and make changes to accommodate this without the full knowledge of the government's long term social assistance and employment transformation plans.

## **5. Business Recovery Work Group and the Data Sub Group**

Since February 2015, as indicated above, members of the OMSSA BRWG have been working collaboratively to advance business recovery planning to reduce the impacts of SAMS on service delivery and to restore stability for CMSMs and DSSABs in the business of Ontario Works. Established by OMSSA and 11 of its members, the BRWG collaborated with representatives from the MCSS on its Data Sub Group.

### **Commitment to 4 Key Objectives:**

The Business Recovery Work Group committed to achieving the following objectives:

**Objective 1:** Collaborate with the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) to promote greater understanding of the impact of the technology improvement cycle for a coordinated and planned approach to business recovery.

**Objective 2:** Provide an opportunity for CMSM and DSSAB representatives to identify the current status/issues and recommendations for a short to medium-term remediation plan.

**Objective 3:** Develop recommendations for MCSS for a long-term remediation plan.

**Objective 4:** Share information, best practices, tools and local solutions among the Work Group membership.

The BRWG was formed by members who shared a common desire to advance business recovery planning to mitigate the impacts of SAMS on CMSMs and DSSABs and to further support the implementation of SAMS.

Between February and June 2015, the BRWG met 12 times. Work focused primarily on identifying SAMS implementation issues, defining priority needs and sharing local solutions and resources related to SAMS implementation.

The BRWG also formed a Data Sub Group whose role was to identify performance measures to monitor the impact of SAMS, develop common definitions, a standardized data collection methodology and consistent tracking mechanisms while also identifying opportunities to obtain system generated (SAMS) data.

The Data Sub Group was co-led by a representative from MCSS and a CMSM/DSSAB representative. The Data Sub Group met 7 times. The Data Sub Group Membership List is available in Annex 2.

Common concerns and priorities were identified and form the basis of this report's findings. Many of the priority issues have also been addressed in the final PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) report. These PwC recommendations are now being incorporated in MCSS' SAMS Integrated Transition Plan which also includes the development of a Business Recovery Plan.

OMSSA, members of the BRWG, and CMSMs and DSSABs look forward to a continued partnership with MCSS on addressing SAMS implementation concerns and the business recovery of CMSMs and DSSABs in their obligations related to Ontario Works.

We believe that an integrated approach that will minimize the impact of the SAMS transition, stabilize SAMS so that it can achieve its desired operational end state and most importantly to restore and deliver services to clients is the best way forward.

## 6. Performance Metrics: Methodology for Measurements

Recognizing that performance data is an essential component of business recovery planning, the BRWG collaboratively identified and prioritized key performance indicators to monitor the business and service impacts in the following priority areas:

- Applications
- Case management functions
- Payments
- Client outcomes
- Staff indicators

Through a prioritization exercise, the BRWG selected over 30 metrics for measurement. The selection criteria considered the following:

- the priority for measurement;
- existing program standards/expectations;
- high volume and high impact transactions;
- workload measures; and
- the availability of data.

The Data Sub Group refined the objectives and intent of the measures and developed common definitions. They also developed the process and methodology for collecting the baseline and post implementation data.

The performance data was collected in two ways;

- 1) several performance measures were system generated by MCSS and originated from SAMS and SDMT and;
- 2) local metrics were collected by the BRWG sites, using time study measurements.

**1) Reports Produced with SAMS and SDMT Data:**

In June 2015, MCSS provided the SAMS Transition Reports. These are the first performance reports produced since the implementation of SAMS. It is important to recognize, that prior to their release, MCSS invested a significant level of effort in developing the reports and validating the data<sup>12</sup>.

**2) Time Study Measurements Across the 11 BRWG Sites:**

In May 2015, for a period of 2 weeks, the 11 BRWG members conducted time studies to measure the time required to complete applications and to make changes in SAMS. This required a considerable effort on the part of the BRWG, including a pilot phase to test the clarity of the definitions and the data collection methodology. A common data collection tool was used to report data and analyze results.

There are additional measures, deemed critical, that were not included in this report. This includes tracking activities in SAMS related to case management<sup>13</sup>, financials<sup>14</sup> and outcome management<sup>15</sup>. This report also does not include key performance measures such as client outcomes and participation levels. It is anticipated that the newly released SAMS Transition Performance reports will provide very useful performance metrics for ongoing planning related to business recovery in these areas.

The BRWG emphasizes the importance of building and enhancing SAMS reports to monitor the business recovery levels in these other areas including: client participation levels, client outcome plans, employment outcome measures, financial data and reporting, etc.

OMSSA and the BRWG are committed and available to support MCSS's efforts in the refinement of the SAMS Transition Performance Reports and the restoration of other SAMS reports.

## **7. Limitations of the Reports**

As mentioned above, MCSS invested a significant level of effort in the validation of the SAMS Transition Performance Report. Similarly, the BRWG's Time Study measurement was based on consistent definitions and common methodology for the data collection. The Time Study Data is representational of the experience across the 11 BRWG members, which include urban, rural and northern areas. As a result of these efforts, the BRWG has confidence in the data presented in this report. However, it is important to note that there are some limitations that

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<sup>12</sup> Source: Memo from MCSS Director Jeff Bowen to CMSM/DSSAB OW Administrators, SAMS Transition Performance Reports, dated June 12, 2015

<sup>13</sup> Case management include the following: Tasks and notifications, letters and forms, managing evidence, income reporting, benefits, changes to eligibility, change in benefit unit, file transfer.

<sup>14</sup> Financials includes: payments, overpayments, underpayments, cancelling payments, repayments, reimbursements, pay directs, trustees, financial reconciliation, etc.

<sup>15</sup> Outcome management includes: creating new and managing existing outcome plans, etc.

apply to the SAMS Transition Performance Reports and the Time Study data as described below.

- The SAMS Transition Performance Reports are the first operational reports produced since SAMS implementation. Further refinements of the business requirements and/or methodologies for extracting data from SAMS may be required<sup>16</sup>.
- The first version of the SAMS Transition Performance report was released on June 12, 2015. Due to the timing, only a few performance measures from that report were reviewed for the purpose of this report. Although November 2014 data was included in the SAMS report, it is important to note that November data may not be reliable as it was the month of the transition to SAMS.
- The access and availability of SAMS reports continues to be limited, therefore limiting the selection of performance measures included in this report.
- The availability of the Time Study data was restricted for the pre-SAMS timeframe and for the period of January to April 2015. As only a select number of BRWG members had data for these periods, for the purpose of this report, these measurements were considered as representational.
- The Time Study represents a snapshot in time. As all 11 CMSMs and DSSABs provided Time Study data for the month of May 2015, this time frame is highlighted in this report. Future time studies would be beneficial to provide evidence that business recovery efforts are progressive.

Despite the limitations above, the findings of the Time Study provide important information to be used in efforts and commitments to address SAMS implementation. Of note, the Time Study was conducted 6 months post SAMS implementation and not at the height of implementation challenges, rather in a period of “relative stabilization” adding emphasis to the findings.

#### **Areas Not in Scope for the BRWG’s Report:**

For the purpose of this report, the BRWG has not included systems enhancements that fall within the recommendations of the SAMS Technical Working Group.

This report does not present a comprehensive overview of all the areas of SAMS business recovery, rather, it is focused on measuring the key performance indicators in the priority areas as identified in Section 6.

The BRWG report does not re-state recommendations that have been adequately addressed in the SAMS Integrated Transition Plan, although references to the PwC Report and SAMS Integrated Transition Plan have been identified.

It is important to note that the scope of this report does not include specific findings related to the long term risk and liability to CMSMs and DSSABs as organizations and in their mandated role for Ontario Works. Much of this, however, is inherent to the findings provided. This does not mean these considerations are not important. It does mean that ongoing efforts to mitigate organizational and business practice implications need to be understood and addressed as the Province continues its SAMS stabilization efforts.

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<sup>16</sup> Excerpt from the Memo from MCSS Director Jeff Bowen to CMSM/DSSAB OW Administrators, SAMS Transition Performance Reports, dated June 12, 2015.

The BRWG report does not include a financial costing analysis of business impacts and business recovery. We believe this is work that must be undertaken going forward in the same way as a risk analysis will be needed for the sector.

## 8. Observations

The BRWG reviewed the available performance indicators to assess the status of business recovery and measure the impacts of SAMS to support evidence-based business recovery planning.

The BRWG noted the following observations:

**Change:** The data highlights certain areas that have changed since SAMS implementation and now present a new business reality for the CMSMs/DSSABs. The change in technology has resulted in increased time, effort and additional resourcing to provide OW programs and services to clients. This includes:

- SAMS functionality has irrecoverably complicated frequent and regular tasks such as completing an Ontario Works application from beginning to end, completing critical case management tasks such as submitting an income reporting card, adding a dependent and changing an address.
- Following SAMS implementation, there was a significant increase in new overpayments created. While remaining above pre-SAMS levels, the number of new overpayments created decreased monthly during the period from March to May 2015. It is important to note that it is more time consuming to process all tasks associated with overpayments in SAMS, thus resulting in increased staff workload in this areas. As a result, there is still more effort required for recovery in this area.

**Progress:** The data also indicates progress towards business recovery in some areas such as:

- System improvements have positively impacted the functionality of SAMS and somewhat increased efficiency. For example, the deactivation of some functionality in SAMS, such as relationships and income evidence, has positively impacted the average time for applications.

**Stabilization:** There are other measures where movement towards stabilization has been noted but there is still work to do to return to pre-SAMS level. Our assumption is that stabilization is based on time measures that are at pre-SAMS levels and that CMSMs and DSSABS will be expected to and can resume the delivery of the entire OW program in local offices. Ongoing monitoring is required to confirm stabilization.

**Opportunity:** While the SAMS Integrated Transition Plan charts the course towards business recovery, the ongoing monitoring of key performance indicators will provide the evidence to track progress, evaluate the effectiveness of the business recovery efforts and identify further opportunities for improvements.



## 9. Findings

“...SAMS requires the collection of more data than would have previously been required under SDMT, thus having a resulting impact on time and effort on the part of the front line staff. Moving to SAMS is not a “like for like” change in technology platforms; rather, the implementation represents a fundamental change in how front line staff use the enabling technology tool to manage client cases, specifically for the level and amount of information collected and retained.”

PwC Report, Ministry of Community and Social Services SAMS Transition Review, p.10 & 11.

Overall, the BRWG Time Study measurements and the SAMS Transition Reports present the following findings:

- 1) SAMS requires increased staff time to perform key eligibility and case management functions.
- 2) The Provincial service standard for Ontario Works applications has been maintained only as a result of sites deploying additional staff resources to meet client needs.
- 3) Staff workload has increased in administrative areas related to payments, including overpayments and underpayments.
- 4) Staffing requirements have increased since SAMS to respond to staff absences and requirements for overtime hours to meet client needs.
- 5) The transition to business recovery requires ongoing monitoring and performance measurement. The following areas are of high priority and need to be monitored closely in order to effectively plan for recovery:
  - a. Ontario Works caseload levels.
  - b. Client outcomes and participation levels (i.e. cases removed from the caseload and exits to employment).
  - c. The volume and amount of overpayments need to be monitored and resolved and additional attention is needed for the reconciliation of payments.
  - d. As the administrative relief measures are lifted and regular business processes resume (i.e. Outcome Plans, Eligibility Verification Process (EVP), Rules Suppression, Year-to-Date Reporting), overall capacity will need to be assessed and recovery plans will need to be further defined.

The availability of timely and accurate SAMS reports is integral to support planning and decision making at the local and provincial level around capacity and recovery.

The following section presents additional information on the above findings.

## 1) SAMS Results In Increased Staff Time To Perform Case Management Functions And To Complete Applications

The BRWG recorded the time to complete an Ontario Works application from beginning to end, and the time it takes to complete critical case management tasks such as submitting an income reporting card, adding a dependent and changing an address. The time study measurements indicate that it now takes longer for staff to perform these functions in SAMS.

### Case Management Tasks Require More Time

The BRWG Time Study indicates the following:

- In the new SAMS data rich environment it takes longer to collect all the required information.
- It takes close to 6 minutes longer to enter an income statement card in SAMS - more than double the amount of time it took in SDMT (from 3.8 minutes to 9.9 minutes in May 2015).
- During the early implementation of SAMS, on average, staff reported that it took over 15 minutes to enter an income statement card (January to April 2015).
- To change an address in SAMS and enter all related evidence tasks, it now takes 18.6 minutes<sup>17</sup>, up from 8.6 minutes in SDMT. Although it is still taking more time to process an address change, the May data shows an improvement over the average of 32 minutes recorded for January to April 2015.
- Adding a dependent in SAMS is taking 40+ minutes<sup>18</sup>. Depending on the complexity (converted data issues); it can take longer to perform this task. During January to April 2015, it took an average of 80 minutes<sup>19</sup>.

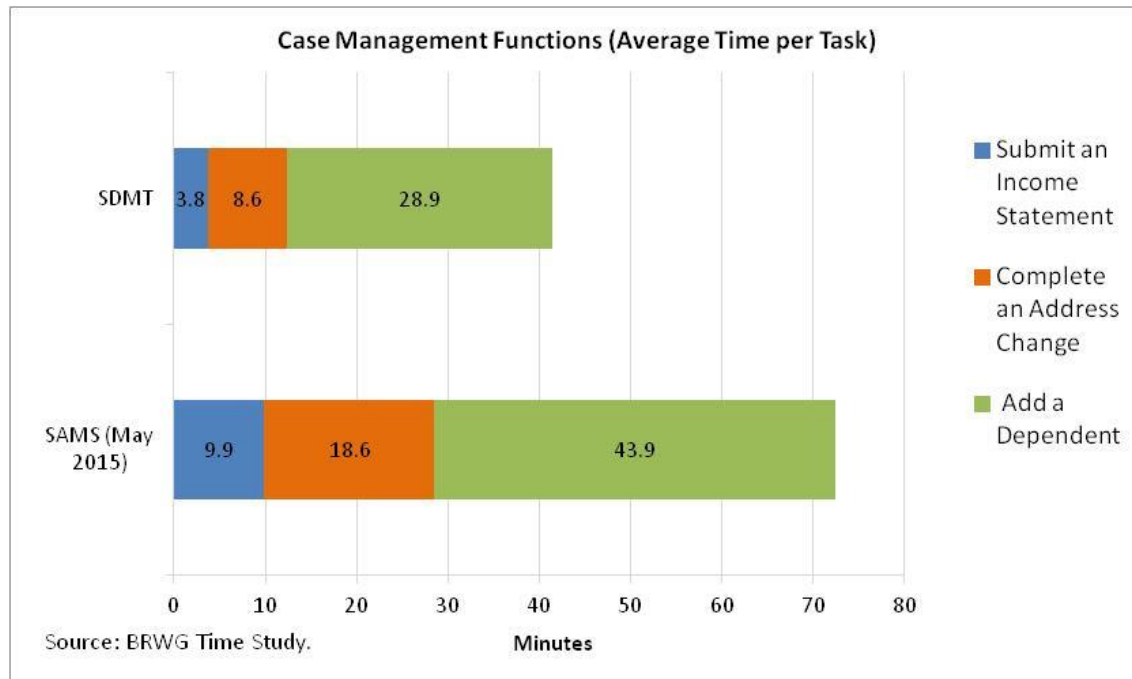
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<sup>17</sup> Average, May 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Average, May 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Average, January to April 2015.

**Figure 1 - Average Time to Complete 3 Key Case Management Functions**



For the purpose of the time study, only 3 case management functions were measured. However, on a daily basis, in order to ensure SAMS contains all necessary information to comply with policy and data requirements, staff regularly perform a multitude of similar tasks, all of which now take more time and effort to complete.

In order to keep the time study manageable, the BRWG decided to focus its measurement on the 3 case management functions that are noted above. These 3 tasks were selected as they were representative of frequent case management functions that were deemed critical yet simple to measure. In May 2015, at the time of the study, office processes for these functions were well developed and the technology (SAMS) was considered stable in those areas and workarounds were not required.

In addition to collecting the Time Study data for the BRWG Priority Measures, Durham Region simultaneously collected data on two other measures. They tracked the length of time to complete an outcome plan/participation agreement and the length of time to make a referral to the Disability Adjudication Unit (DAU) for ODSP. Similarly, the findings concluded that it takes more time and resourcing to perform these tasks as follows:

- 51 minutes in SAMS to complete an Outcome Plan/Participation Agreement compared to 27 minutes in SDMT
- 35 minutes in SAMS to complete a DAU/ODSP Referral, compared to one minute (estimate) in SDMT

Beyond the areas noted above, SAMS functionality has irrecoverably complicated frequent and regular tasks in other areas such as Family Responsibility Office (FRO) reimbursements, validation of overpayments and arrears, financial reconciliation, data management of multiple records (Product Delivery Cases, PDCs), etc. The interconnectivity of cases and sheer number of “persons” registered in SAMS has increased the risk of confidentiality breaches.

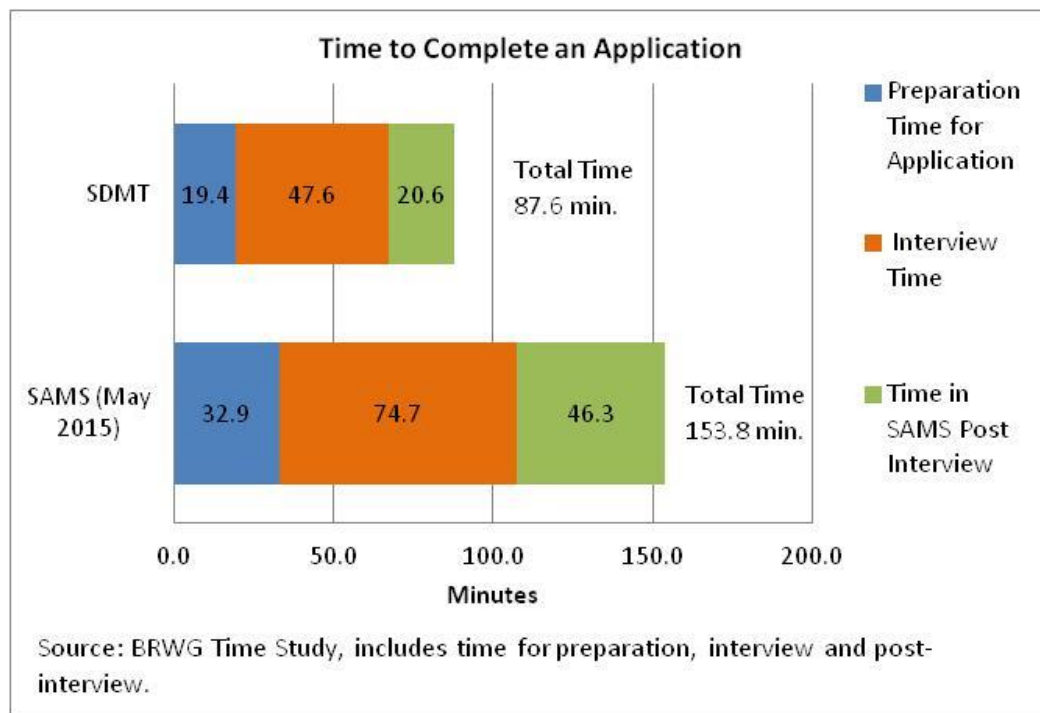
CMSMs and DSSABs have identified confidentiality as a critical risk and potential liability that requires further review and attention.

### Applications (Intakes) Require More Time to Complete

The Time Study indicates the following:

- The time to complete an application end-to-end has increased by 75% since SAMS (from 87.6 minutes in SDMT to 153.8 minutes in SAMS in May 2015).
- This has improved since the early implementation of SAMS where it took upwards of 232 minutes (over 3 hours) to complete an application<sup>20</sup>.
- Since SAMS, the majority of time is focused on preparing for the application and the post application follow-up (51%), while 49% of the time is spent with the client<sup>21</sup>.

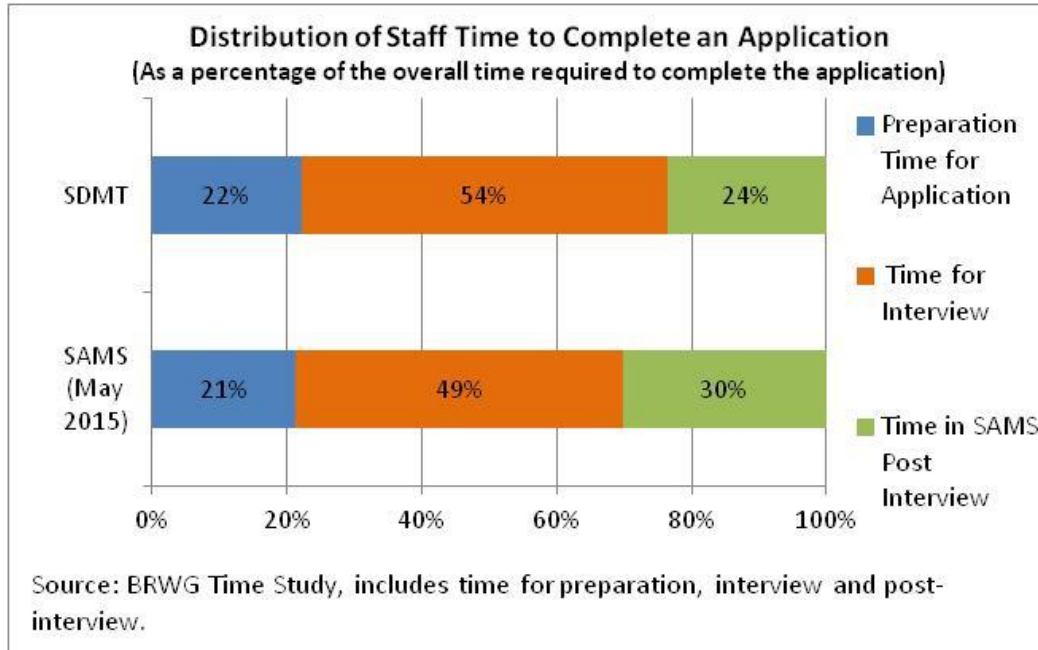
**Figure 2 - Time to Complete an Application.**



<sup>20</sup> Average, January to April 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Distribution of staff time as a percentage of the overall time required to complete the application.

**Figure 3 - Distribution of Staff Time to Complete an Application.**



Changes in SAMS related to applications, including the deactivation of some functionality in SAMS, such as relationships and income evidence, has positively impacted the average time for applications. However, it is still taking significantly more time to complete applications in SAMS.

## **2) The Ontario Works Service Standard For The Completion of Applications Has Been Maintained With Additional Staffing Resources To Meet Client Needs**

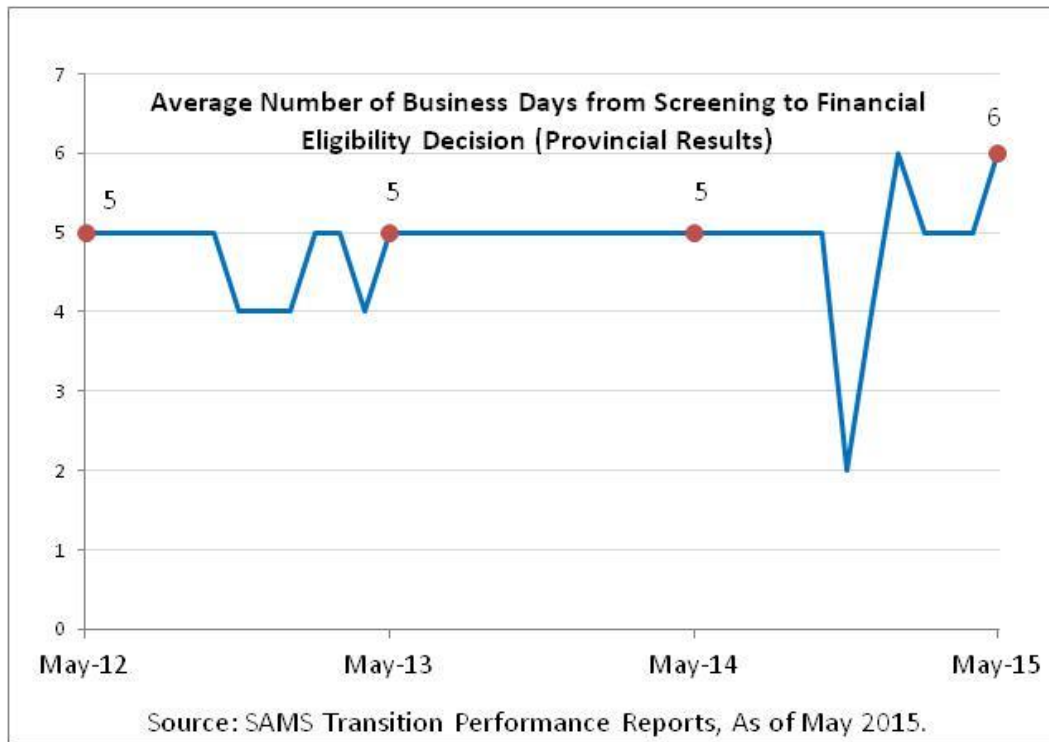
The Ontario Works service standard for the applications, the average number of days from screening to financial eligibility decision, while slightly higher, is remaining fairly consistent with pre-SAMS performance.

The SAMS Transition Performance Report<sup>22</sup> indicates the following:

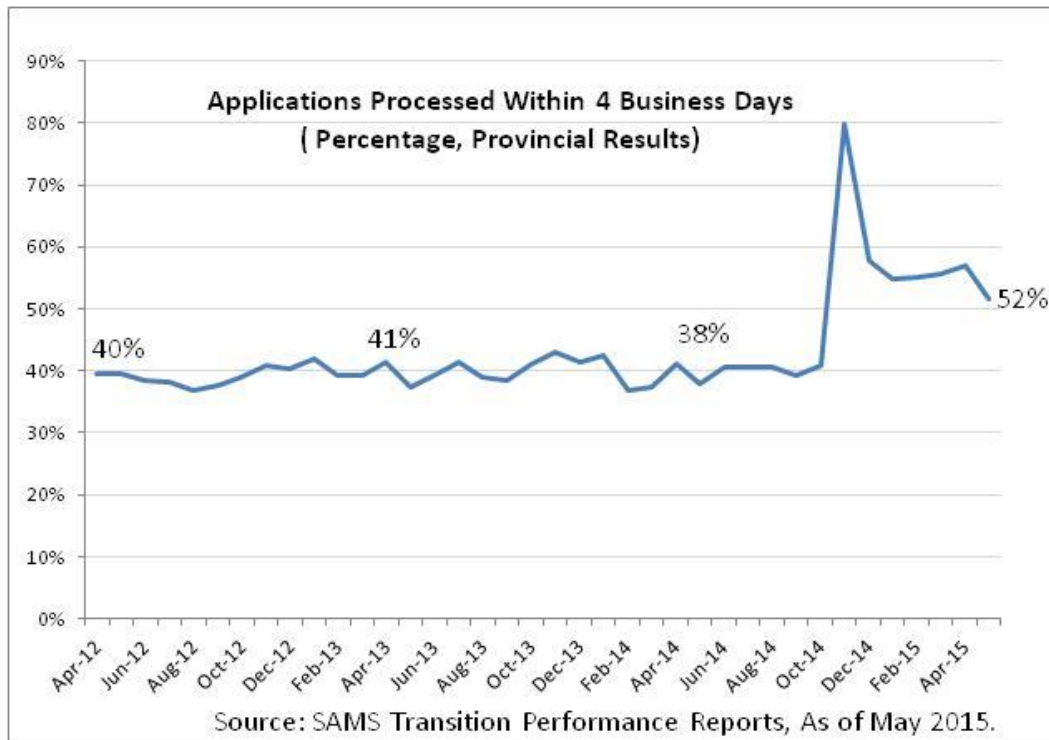
- The average number of business days from screening to financial eligibility decisions increased province wide by one day in comparison to May 2014 (from 5 days in May 2014 to 6 days in May 2015).
- In May 2015, 52% of applications were processed within 4 business days, a significant increase from May 2014 (38%).

<sup>22</sup> SAMS Transition Performance Report, v1.0. This is the first installment of the monthly report and is subject to revision as the data validation is completed by MCSS.

**Figure 4 - Average Number of Business Days from Screening to Financial Eligibility Decision.**



**Figure 5 – Percentage of Applications Processed Within 4 Business Days.**



The administrative relief provided by the Province allowed CMSMs and DSSABs flexibility in the allocation of resources in order to focus efforts on completing the applications. In response, local offices adjusted their service delivery models and allocated staff to maintain the service standard at close to pre SAMS levels.

The Provincial service standard was maintained and the applications were completed in a timely manner because CMSMs and DSSABs focused their efforts and assigned additional resources to complete the applications. Staff specialized in Eligibility Verification Process (EVP), Family Support, Employment and other areas were redeployed to ensure timely services were provided to clients.

The Provincial service standard was achieved despite the many challenges encountered with the technology during the early implementation phase. There is a concern that the service level cannot be maintained once redeployed staff resume their regular service functions if current levels of data input continue to be required.

These focused efforts helped in the completion of applications; however, it created a shortfall in the other areas, namely in areas such as employment supports and referrals, Family Support, EVP, overpayment and recoveries, etc. A significant level of effort will be required to return to normal operations across all areas.

OMSSA and CMSMs and DSSABs have identified and documented the issues related to SAMS and the provision of employment programs and services. As the Ministry moves forward on the SAMS Transition Plan, this issue and the sector knowledge and the expertise should be leveraged to strengthen the plans for continued progress.

As services are restored in those core areas of the Ontario Works business, it will remain important for MCSS, OMSSA, the CMSMs and DSSABs to continue working in partnership to ensure that vulnerable clients continue to receive timely OW services.

### **3) Staff Workload Has Increased In Administrative Areas Related To Payments, Overpayments and Underpayments**

The SAMS Transition Performance Reports indicate an increase in new overpayments with SAMS implementation. The trends indicate that progress is being made; however, this is an area that requires ongoing monitoring.

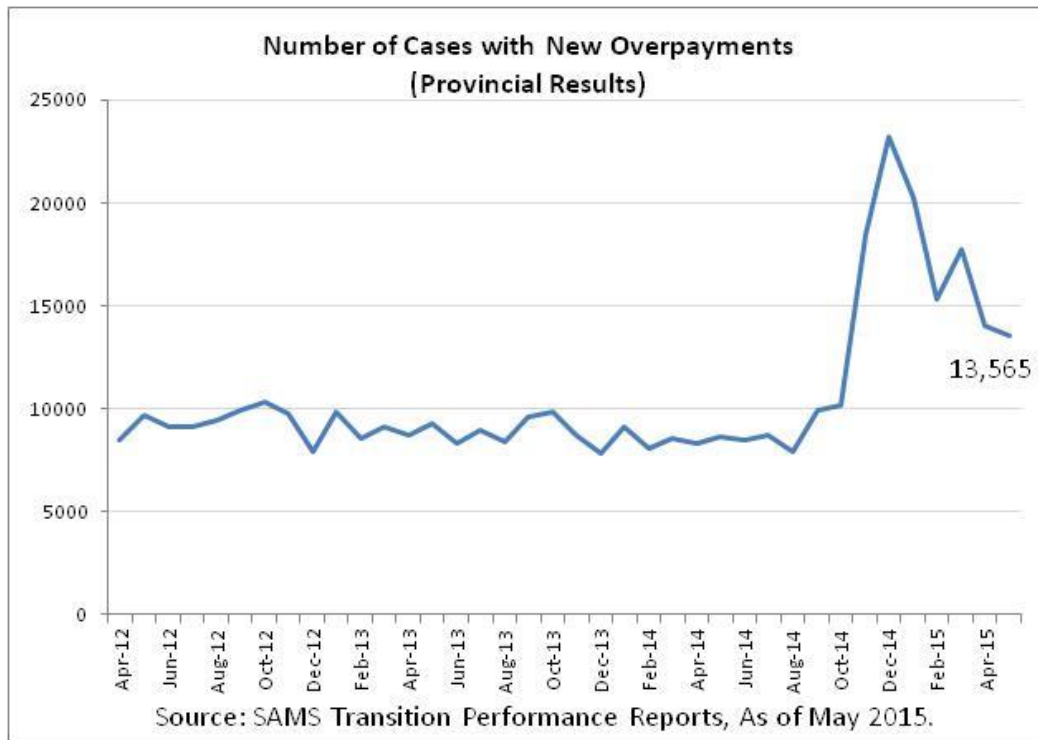
The SAMS Transition Performance Report indicates the following:

- Immediately following implementation, the number of cases with new overpayments increased by 128% Province wide (from 10,159 in October 2014 to 23,222 in December 2014). As of May 2015, there were 13,565 cases with new overpayments, up by 34% in comparison to October 2014<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Source: Measure number 18, SAMS Transition Performance Report, v1.0, data as of May 2015.

**Figure 6 - Cases with New Overpayments.**



Although there have been improvements in this area since SAMS implementation, the volume and amount of new overpayments and underpayments is an area of concern that needs to be monitored closely and addressed.

The increased volume of overpayments combined with the complexity of SAMS has resulted in a need for increased staff resources to ensure accurate payments and recoveries. As a result of SAMS, additional staff time and resources are needed both from the client service and from the accounting perspectives. Details are included in [Annex 3](#).

Ongoing effort and additional staffing resources are needed at the front-end to resolve system problems as they occur in SAMS to ensure that correct overpayment and underpayments amounts are recorded in SAMS. Extensive staff knowledge and expertise with SAMS is required to resolve these often complex overpayments/underpayment issues. In addition, a significant level of effort is required at the back-end to reconcile all payments (including overpayments and underpayments) and to reconcile and submit the monthly bank reconciliation and subsidy claims.



“Overpayment reconciliation in SAMS is complicated by the layers that a Caseworker is required to investigate in order to completely reconcile a file. Overpayments that are being created due to Provincial data fixes and past period reassessments of cases require extensive investigation to determine their source.

Workers are required to balance between SDMT and SAMS rules to manipulate evidence and correct determinations. The process of an overpayment investigation is complicated by the instability of converted evidence data and the unpredictability of the system. Frequently, additional overpayments and arrears are created in the course of correcting an overpayment case. This often requires that the Caseworkers wait for overnight processing to ensure all funds are allocated as expected by the system and creates a need for more time spent inputting detailed notes.

Overpayments that are created from a system reassessment have additional challenges as they often require supplementary steps be taken outside of just correcting the overpayment. This can include; the need for a Caseworker to refund a client for invalid recoveries, cheque management to redirect arrears, and recreation of valid overpayments that were recovered in error by invalid arrears.”

A testimonial from an experienced Case Worker in Durham

CMSMs and DSSBs have experienced numerous challenges in accurately reconciling monthly bank reconciliation due to limitations in financial reports. It has required an increased number of staffing hours dedicated to the task. In addition, MCSS has identified ongoing defects with the available reports<sup>24</sup>. With reliable reports, CMSMs and DSSABs can move forward on reconciling reports. This process requires significantly more time and greater resourcing to reconcile the payments (cheques and direct bank deposits)<sup>25</sup>. Upon review of the payment reports that are currently available in SAMS and the advanced funding that has been provided by MCSS, some sites have noted potential funding gaps (and the potential for CMSMs/DSSABs to be underpaid).

#### **4) Staffing Requirements Have Increased Since SAMS**

The BRWG collected staffing data related to overtime hours for SAMS implementation, redeployment of staff and unplanned absences of staff.

The staffing data indicates the following:

- Overall, staff unplanned absences increased by an average of 29%<sup>26</sup> when comparing a period of six months prior to SAMS implementation and the period following SAMS implementation.
- 6 of 11 BRWG members reported overtime hours in preparation for the release of SAMS. 9 of the 11 BRWG members logged overtime hours to support the implementation and address the challenges with the technology in order to provide efficient and timely client services.

<sup>24</sup> Source: SAMO website, communication #46-15, 79-15 and 98-15.

<sup>25</sup> Hamilton has tracked the time required to reconcile cheques and DBD and noted an increase of 900%, from 7 hours to approximately 70 hours.

<sup>26</sup> Source: BRWG Time Study. Including data for 6 months prior to SAMS implementation and the 6 months following SAMS implementation (November 2014 to May 2015).

- The amount of overtime hours logged varied across the sites according to capacity and local policies.
- Among the BRWG members who logged overtime hours, the average was recorded at approximately 200 hours per month (per site) from November to January 2015. In February and March 2015, over 160 hours were recorded (average), while the overtime hours decreased in April to just over 100 hours<sup>27</sup>.
- All 11 BRWG sites reassigned staff functions to support SAMS implementation and meet client needs.
- Some BRWG sites have hired additional staff to respond to SAMS issues and staffing shortfalls.

Since SAMS go-live, CMSMs/DSSABs have invested significant resources, including staff time and effort to support the implementation of SAMS. This also includes significant efforts dedicated to the development of customized training supports, materials and the delivery of the training. Members noted that there are challenges to ensure that the training material and supports are reflective of the current SAMS environment (i.e. following system enhancements and fixes).

### **Additional Costs for CMSMs and DSSABs**

For the initial and ongoing implementation of SAMS, there have been additional staffing requirements and additional costs for the CMSMs and DSSABs. Some of these costs are in excess of the Provincial funding that has been provided<sup>28</sup>.

Ongoing and additional costs continue to be identified with SAMS. The costs of SAMS implementation could be much higher once the costs of deferred work and associated lost revenues are taken into consideration. It is anticipated that it will be 12 to 18 months before all costs related to SAMS implementation can be accurately quantified.<sup>29</sup>

## **5) The Transition To Business Recovery Requires Ongoing Monitoring And Performance Measurement**

Several areas need to be monitored closely in order to plan for recovery including:

- Ontario Works caseload levels
- Client outcomes and participation levels (i.e. cases removed from the caseload and exits to employment)
- The volume and amount of overpayments need to be monitored and resolved and additional attention is needed for the reconciliation of payments
- As the administrative relief measures are lifted and regular business processes resume (i.e. Outcome Plans, Eligibility Verification Process (EVP), Rules Suppression, Year-to-Date Reporting), overall capacity will need to be assessed and recovery plans will need to be further defined.

The performance indicators highlight areas that have changed since SAMS implementation and that now present a new business reality for the CMSMs/DSSABs. The data also shows

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<sup>27</sup> Source: BRWG Time Study. Including the additional hours charged to overtime accounts measured by hours. Average based on data from the CMSMs and DSSABs who reported overtime hours excludes the CMSMs and DSSABs with no reported overtime hours.

<sup>28</sup> Additional details in the CMSMs/DSSABs reports to their respective Council and Committees.

<sup>29</sup> Source: City of Hamilton, report to Emergency & Community Services Department dated June 22, 2015.

promising trends towards stabilization in some areas. Ongoing monitoring of the performance indicators will provide MCSS, CMSMs and DSSABs a mechanism to track the ongoing progress of the transition and business recovery planning.

This report presents only a snapshot of selected case management functions. The BRWG members identified many other functions that are not yet included in the SAMS Transition Performance Report that also require more staff time and effort to complete. For example, the SAMS Performance Reports do not include at this stage, measures related to the Ontario Works Participation Level and the completion rates for the Outcome Plans. These activities have been on hold since SAMS implementation and, as a result, the sites recognize that there is additional effort needed in this area to restore performance to pre SAMS levels.

In order to support program planning; to develop budgets, financial forecasts and to complete subsidy claims, CMSMs and DSSABs require accurate and reliable SAMS reports. Further work is required at the Provincial level to develop and validate these reports.

"The Ministry and its stakeholders are all working towards the same goal – enabling SAMS to support front line staff in delivering services to their clients." - PwC Report, Ministry of Community and Social Services SAMS Transition Review, p.58

## 10. Recommendations

OMSSA and the Business Recovery Work Group's fundamental position is that the province should be responsible for SAMS Business Recovery including all additional costs related to the implementation and stabilization of SAMS and business processes within CMSMs and DSSABs.

The Business Recovery Working Group recommends the following:

### Client Service Delivery

1. That the Province recognize that in addition to the BRWG sites, that many CMSMs and DSSABs have significantly realigned staff to support SAMS and, as a result, program delivery has been reduced in areas such as Employment Services, Family Support, Eligibility Review, Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and community referrals. And, as a result, impacts to clients and case management outcomes can be anticipated in the medium to long term.
2. If current levels of data input and management are required permanently, increased staff resources will be needed to maintain Provincial standards for service delivery. The BRWG recommends that additional staffing resources be 100% provincially funded on an ongoing basis.
3. That the Province, in partnership with OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs, develop and implement the SAMS Business Recovery Plan, as part of the SAMS Transition Plan, and that the Plan includes deliverables and milestones for the restoration of the services that are currently reduced.
4. That the Province, in partnership with OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs, develop standard business processes to ensure optimal client service across the province. This includes standards related to case file notes, file transfer documentation, communication tools, etc.

## **Staff Training & Development**

5. That the Province, in partnership with OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs, develop a comprehensive standardized and coordinated Provincial training program by December 2015.
6. That the SAMS training be delivered by training experts through Regional Training Centres and made available on an ongoing basis to accommodate the learning and development needs of new staff, existing staff and returning staff, as an option for CMSMs and DSSABs. This training program needs to be flexible and responsive to meet local training needs and be made available at no additional cost to CMSMs and DSSABs.
7. That the SAMS training program include training modules and job specific training with updated and easy to use learning tools and a practice test environment that can be utilized for training on a full continuum of case management functions.
8. That the Province continue to develop and operationalize relevant SAMS job aids/knowledge wizards to support staff and populate the help fields within the SAMS software and develop imbedded prompts as reminders to staff at the time of data entry.

## **Ontario Works Policies**

9. That the Province continue to work in partnership with OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs to ensure ongoing communications and engagement in order to inform policies, service delivery changes (i.e. Client Portal) and business recovery planning. This includes discussions related to the timelines for the reactivation of workload reduction measures to support post SAMS implementation activities such as Family Support, Overpayments and Recovery, Eligibility Verification Process (EVP), Outcome Plans, etc.
10. That the Province, in partnership with OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs, identify the system enhancements needed to ensure compliance with Ontario Works policies (i.e. outcome plans for ODSP participants).
11. That the Province complete the SAMS Implementation Transition Plan with SAMS stabilization achieved prior to the implementation of any significant or new policy changes (such as the upcoming changes to the employment related benefits).

## **Financial Requirements**

12. That the Province, in partnership with OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs, discuss and identify additional financial resources which are required to implement and maintain SAMS. This includes additional costs related to staff overtime, realignment of staff, hiring of new staff, etc.
13. That the Province, in partnership with OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs, discuss potential baseline adjustments on employment penalties in recognition that sites realigned employment staff to support SAMS.
14. That the Province, in partnership with OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs, prioritize a strategy that provides flexibility in the reconciliation of financial transactions including overpayments/underpayments and subsidy claims.

15. That the Province in partnership with OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs work collaboratively to develop a cost analysis of SAMS business recovery.
16. That the Province continue to work in partnership with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA), OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs to identify opportunities to improve the way services are delivered to Ontario Works clients, including the development and implementation of a cost effective funding approach for the delivery of Ontario Works programs and services (i.e. training, staff, resources, etc.).

### **Performance Measures**

17. That the Province provide flexibility on existing and future service standards and targets.
18. That the Province continue to build and enhance SAMS reports to monitor the business recovery levels and expand reporting to include other areas such as client participation levels, client outcome plans, employment outcome measures and financial reporting. Timely and accurate reports are required to plan and optimize service delivery.
19. That OMSSA and the Business Recovery Work Group members, conduct a follow-up time measurement study in the fall of 2015 to measure the time required to complete applications and case management functions before and after the release of the revised SAMS. The date of the time measurement study should be determined in collaboration with the Province and coincide with the release of the revised version of SAMS.

### **Governance and Planning**

20. That the newly formed SAMS Transition Ontario Works Executive Committee continue to provide shared governance oversight for business recovery and that business recovery plans include short, medium and longer term plans and support. The Committee should also continue as a forum to monitor progress on the SAMS Transition Plan and rely upon the performance metrics in the SAMS Performance Transition Reports to make evidenced based decisions.
21. That the reconstitution of the Directors and Administrators Group (DARG) include an oversight role in the implementation of the SAMS Transition Plan to ensure sector issues, considerations and recommendations are reflective in the Plan and its implementation.
22. That the Province, in partnership with AMO, NOSDA, OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs, work collaboratively on the longer term strategy related to the social services delivery system including implications to the role of CMSMs and DSSABs.
23. That the Province engage AMO, NOSDA and where appropriate OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs in discussions on provincial initiatives and efforts that include potential human resource and labour relations implications.
24. That the Province, in partnership with OMSSA, establish a governance structure that examines all SAMS related workgroups with the goal to minimize duplication of work and promote/support a collaborative and focused approach to SAMS integration and stabilization.

## 11. Related Research and Information

The BRWG members have shared related research and information gathered at their local sites. Brief descriptions and links to some of the references are included below:

### Employment Service Challenges related to SAMS

As indicated above, the implementation of SAMS to date has required CMSMs and DSSABs to reorganize priorities and efforts related to the delivery of Ontario Works. In many cases, in the absence of “business as usual” and with work deferred, the implications to clients and CMSMs and DSSABs alike is not yet known.

An area of critical concern identified by both the BRWG and OMSSA members alike is employment services. OMSSA members have identified 5 current key areas of concern regarding the provision of employment services. These include:

- 1) Inability to develop or update outcome plans or in many cases the ability to add clients to employment programs and services rosters after program start.
- 2) Outcome measurement and employment activity reports: concerns regarding report accuracy, requiring CMSMs/DSSABs to collect data manually resulting in a larger workload and delay in client services.
- 3) Increased amount of time to go through outcome tabs in the system, compared to SDMT, impacting the quality of client interactions.
- 4) With a decrease in referrals and engagement of clients with local programs, CMSMs and DSSABs are reporting negative impacts on relationships with community partners, potentially jeopardizing agreements and future relationships.
- 5) Perceived lack of attention and effort to address the reduction in employment related activities with clients.

A key principle of Ontario Works is that clients are assisted to help find sustainable employment and achieve self-reliance. The above are only a few examples where CMSMs and DSSABs are concerned that the inability to work with clients on the core purpose of Ontario Works will see medium to longer term effects that are counter intuitive to the above principle and will result in increased costs to CMSMs, DSSABs and clients alike.

This current state is counterintuitive, not only to the requirements of CMSMs and DSSABs under legislation, regulations and directives, but fundamentally, to the Province’s poverty reduction commitments.

### Council Reports

Several CMSMs and DSSABs, including BRWG members, prepared reports related to SAMS for their Committees and Council.

### Family Responsibility Office (FRO) Reimbursements

A presentation has been developed describing the challenges related to the Provincial requirements to enter the FRO information in SAMS and the implication for Municipalities. The presentation includes a time study, financial impacts and recommendations for next steps. This was created by CMSM/DSSAB members of the Director-Administrator Reference Group (DARG).

## **SAMS Ergonomic Impacts**

Implementation of the SAMS program in the Region of Waterloo resulted in increased computer based demands on select staff groups. As a result, the Region provided ergonomic support for staff on a timely basis. Through this activity, insight into areas beyond the scope of physical ergonomics was obtained. The report presents a summary of these reflections.

## **12. Appendices**

- Annex 1 BRWG Terms of Reference
- Annex 2 Data Sub Group Member List
- Annex 3 Overpayments – Increased Workload

## **13. Sources:**

- Committee/Council reports
- PwC report and interim report, SAMS Transition Review Report
- Municipal Data collection and SDMT/SAMS Transition Performance Reports
- OMSSA correspondence related to SAMS
- MCSS Communiqués

## Acknowledgements:

This report was developed by OMSSA's Business Recovery Work Group. OMSSA acknowledges the significant contribution of the members involved in the development of this report, their time and insight is very valuable. The members representing the 11 CMSMs and DSSABs include:

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## Appendices

### Annex 1 – [BRWG Terms of Reference](#)

### Annex 2 – [Data Sub Group Membership List](#)

### Annex 3 – Overpayment and Underpayments

#### Overpayments and Underpayments

#### Increased Workload – Additional Details Related to the Accounting Aspects<sup>30</sup>

Additional staff time and resources have been added to the process of verifying overpayments and underpayments as a result of SAMS. Determining the reasons behind an overpayment can be challenging when dealing with multiple evidence changes in a day and multiple liability cases. At times, the determinations are not appearing correctly and if the overpayment is across multiple months, it can be time consuming to open each individual liability case to determine the balance, recoveries, reasons for the overpayment and the creation date.

When payments are issued with overpayment recoveries (including underpayments), additional time is required in order to determine which liability case this recovery was applied to. In the payment details the amount of recovery is included, although it does not include which liability case this recovery was applied to. This can be very difficult when verifying/reconciling a payment with overpayment recoveries or when reviewing multiple liability cases for a similar time period.

Once a liability case has been recovered in full (whether through system overpayment recoveries or client repayments), SAMS does not automatically close these cases and this is required to be done manually. Staff resources have been increased in order to accommodate the closing of these cases in order to reflect the correct active liability cases for a client and assist with reviewing liability cases in the future.

In addition, a significant amount of time has been added to the process of posting repayments in SAMS. As a result of how SDMT overpayments converted to SAMS and linked to the client's integrated case, the auto allocation feature does not function properly. Time is increased for posting repayments in order to verify if the repayment should be split between the client and a spouse's overpayment, the status of the overpayment cases and posting it to the oldest overpayment based on FIFO<sup>31</sup>. For cases with only SAMS created overpayments, the auto allocate functionality can be utilized. If a client's case has converted and SAMS created overpayments, the auto allocation feature cannot be utilized until all converted liability cases have been closed or paid in full.

Lastly, it is difficult and time consuming to determine the creation and owning office of an overpayment in SAMS, resulting in additional staff resources required to establish the record retention requirements of a client's file with an overpayment.

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<sup>30</sup> Source: Details provided by Durham

<sup>31</sup> FIFO, acronym for First In First Out.