



Hamilton

ONTARIO WORKS EMPLOYMENT SERVICES REVIEW (REPORT 2016-09)

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BACKGROUND

The City of Hamilton has an agreement with the Minister of Community and Social Services (Ministry) to deliver the Ontario Works (OW) Program. The goal of the Program is to help people in financial need find sustainable employment and achieve self-reliance. The Employment Services (ES) Section within the City's OW Division assists OW clients in finding employment. The importance of finding work for OW clients is emphasized by the fact that a portion of Ministry funding is contingent on achieving certain targets. Two of the four targets, the percentage of caseload with employment earnings, and the percentage of terminations exiting to employment, require that OW clients find work. As long as performance targets are met the Ministry continues to fund a substantial portion of these programs. In 2016, Ministry funding totalled 94.2% of these program costs. The City has discretion on how programming is delivered.

In November 2014, the Ministry introduced the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) to replace the antiquated Service Delivery Model Technology. Like other municipalities in Ontario, the City of Hamilton's OW division encountered many difficulties with SAMS. As a result, in 2015 eighteen of the 44 ES employees were re-assigned to help deal with SAMS issues. By late 2016, work related to SAMS was nearing completion and management wanted to review current staffing levels in ES to determine if opportunities exist to utilize staff in a more efficient and effective way. Management requested that Audit Services perform this review.

REVIEW OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The objectives of this review were to:

- Assess the current level of employment services' effectiveness and in collaboration with Ontario Works (OW) make recommendations for improvements to optimize the organization so as to comply with the OW Service agreement and related directives in the most efficient manner;
- Make recommendations that optimize or leverage external service providers so as to improve the overall client delivery efficiency;
- Identify gaps and duplications in program services, including those with external providers; and,
- Identify opportunities for more effective staffing deployment in the OW service portfolio.

The scope focused on:

- Statistical information from January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2016;
- Was limited to the following Employment Service Delivery Programs (note some are referred to by alternate names):
 - Employment Workshops or Making Changes Happen, Career Essentials, and Applied Job Search workshops
 - One-to-one Employment Counselling or Employment Development Counselling (EDC)
 - Helping Hands
 - Community Participation or Community Placement
 - Job Development
 - Career Development Centre (CDS) or Resource Centre
 - Vocational Training; and,
- The following programs were not in scope: Addiction Services Initiatives (ASI) and the Ontario Disability Support Programs (ODSP) as these are mandatory programs. A more detailed description of the programs is attaches as Appendix "B" to Report AUD17007(a).

Methodology followed:

1. Review OW Service agreement and directives;
2. Review applicable literature and documented policies;
3. Interview City staff and document the relevant processes followed;
4. Review the operational and financial records;
5. Perform detailed testing as required and present the information in a manner consistent with the Results Based Accountability framework (e.g. how much we do; how well we do it, and whether anyone is better off); and,
6. Review studies performed by other municipalities and other organizations in the community.

KEY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM TRENDS

The caseload in recent years has remained consistent at 12,000 to 13,000 cases at any given time. In the course of a typical year, 600 to 700 new cases are added to the workload each month with a roughly equivalent number being removed. This activity is supported by 109 case managers who process the new cases in addition to supporting the existing files with a load of approximately 112 cases per manager. This load is comparable to other cities with the exception of Peel Region which has a ratio of 145 cases per manager (Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison to other Municipalities	Hamilton	London	Peel Region	Niagara Region
Caseload (a)	12,259	12,206	18,000	10,981
# of Case Managers (CM) (b)	109	115	124	98
Caseload/CM (c)=(a/b)	112	106	145	112

Source: (a) Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) Oct 2016; (b) November 2016 Survey

In looking at performance trends relevant to employment services for the last 3 years, one notes that the number of case terminations to employment dropped after the introduction of SAMS in November 2014 and this has continued at a lower percentage (9%) due to fewer referrals (Table 2). Other municipalities experienced a similar drop. Although the number of cases terminating to employment was lower, it still met the Ministry's targets. The measure indicates that of the 7,617 exits from the OW Program in 2016, 9% (686 cases) found employment and left the program. Management believes that this number is understated due to the fact that not all individuals that find jobs inform the Program when they leave OW. This issue has been an historical challenge.

Table 2: Performance Trends	2014	2015	2016
Number of Cases Terminated (d)	8,078	7,269	7,617
Number of Exits To Employment (e)	1,481	649	686
% of Termination Exiting to Employment (f)=(d/e)	18.3%	8.9%	9.0%

Source: (d) and (e) MCSS

The measures in Table 3 below show how efficient and effective the Employment Services section has been at achieving the intended objectives of finding sustainable employment for clients. The number of jobs found is a measure of effectiveness. The greater the number of jobs found for OW clients, the more effective the section has been providing this service to the clients. One can also see the variability that can arise in efficiencies and cost per job found when the number of referrals falls.

Table 3: OW Employment Services Related Measures	2014	2015	2016
Number of Jobs Found (g)	1,364	325	435
# of Staff Positions (h)	67	45	42
Efficiency - Ratio of Jobs Found per Staff (i)=(g/h)	20.4	7.2	10.4
Cost per Job Found (j)	\$5,674.28	\$21,760.61	\$14,478.36
# Referrals to Employment Development Counsellors (k)	3,977	415	1,083

Source: (g), (h), (i) and (k) ESD Review

The measures below in Table 4 show the trend of an increased time on assistance. Management indicated that this reflects an increase in the number of clients that have barriers to employment.

Table 4: Other Measures	2014	2015	2016
Time on Assistance (in months) (l)	29.8	31.5	32.3
Recidivism Rate * (m)	10.3%	10.0%	10.0%

Source: (l) and (m) ESD Review

* 2015 an 2016 rates are estimates

(Note, the recidivism rate indicates the percentage of former OW clients returning to OW after they have found work.)

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As noted above, the effectiveness of the employment services programs were framed by referring to the following evaluation questions: a) How much do we do? b) How well do we do it? and, c) Is anyone better off?

How much do we do?

Four of the seven programs reviewed measure “how much we do” by the number of participants in the program. For the past three years (2014 to 2016 inclusive) the programs with the most participants have been Helping Hands, Workshops and Vocational Training. The number of participants in Helping Hands in 2016 has remained virtually unchanged from 2014. Both Workshops and Vocational Training saw their number of participants decline from 1,093 and 124 respectively in 2014, to 365 and 77 in 2016. These are analysed in the “How well we do it” and “Is anyone better off” sections below.

	2014	2015	2016
Helping Hands	386	507	388
Workshops	1,093	163	365
Vocational Training	124	109	77
Community Placement	78	53	60
Overall	1,681	832	890

Other Programs

The three programs not included above use different measures to determine “how much we do”. The EDC program gauges output by caseload size and the number of referrals (see below). The metric used by the Job Development program is the number of jobs found. Since the number of jobs found is also a measure of “how well do we do it” this is discussed in the section found on page 12. Likewise the metrics for the Resource centre are discussed in the “Is anyone better off” section found on page 15.

EDC

The average caseload per EDC Counsellor in 2016 decreased to less than half its level in 2014. Had the transferred EDC workers (16 EDC and 2 Job Developers) still been seeing clients, the average caseload per EDC Counsellor would be even lower still. Likewise the number of referrals decreased from 3,977 in 2014 to 1,083 in 2016. The reduction in the number of referrals and the caseload drop in the EDC program are significant. We conclude there is not enough work for the transferred 18 EDC workers to return to in the EDC program at this time.

	2014	2015	2016
Average Caseload size/yr.	2,525	459	431
Average Caseload per EDC	88	40	38
# of EDC Referrals	3,977	415	1,083

Recommendation 1

That the 16 EDC counsellors that were assigned to help with implementing SAMS in 2015 be rationalized and /or reassigned to other positions. The positions to which some might be reassigned include helping implement recommendations numbers 10 and 11 below. That is,

evaluating clients on their barriers to employment and triaging clients as they enter the OW program (see recommendation 3 on page 12 regarding the additional 2 FTEs).

The EDC program has more interactions with OW clients than other programs. Table 7 shows that this program also has more employees than others as EDC counsellors are the primary point of referral for OW clients. They meet with clients one-on-one at regular intervals at a minimum once per month.

Table 7: Total Number of OW Employment Staff by Program

	2014	2015	2016
Helping Hands	8	8	8
EDC	28	11	12
Workshops	7	8	7
Community Placement	1	1	0.5
Job Development	4	2	1.5
Vocational Training	2	2	2
CDC Resource Centre	9	6	6
ODSP	2	2	2
Managers & Supervisors	6	5	3
Total	67	45	42

Other cities such as Niagara and London have been able to maintain higher rates of success (i.e. number of cases terminated to employment) with fewer employment services FTEs. Niagara Region has transitioned to a generalized case management model; it does not have a separate employment services section. The City of London has 31 management and staff dedicated to employment services. London has put in place an emphasis on specialized case management to provide more support for clients with such significant barriers to overcome that they have a low chance of successful employment. Such barriers include addictions, mental health issues, criminal records, social problems etc. (Source: OW Employment Assistance Services Report, May 2013, Policy Research Analysis Branch, p 21.)

Table 8: Percentage of Terminations Exiting to Employment

	2014	2015	2016
Niagara	21.3%	16.8%	17.2%
London	17.8%	15.8%	16.5%
Hamilton	18.3%	8.9%	9.0%

How well do we do it?

One way to assess “How well do we do it?” is to look at the number of jobs found. Employment Services measures the number of jobs found for all programs collectively through a program called “Found Work”.

Table 9: Number of Jobs Found	2014	2015	2016
Number of Full Time Jobs found	844	190	231
Number of Part Time Jobs found	520	135	204
Overall	1,364	325	435

The number of jobs found is also measured by spreadsheets prepared by the individual programs.

Table 10: Number of Jobs Found per Program Spreadsheets	2014	2015	2016
CDC Resource Centre	N/A	N/A	N/A
EDC - 1 to 1 Counselling	1,278	269	335
Job Development	237	73	112
Helping Hands	86	56	100
Workshops	57	38	93
Vocational Training	49	28	27
ODSP	32	14	16
Community Placement	31	10	14
Overall	1,770	488	697

Tables 9 and 10 above show the total number of jobs reported by the individual programs (1,770) exceeds the total on “Found Work” (1,364) by 30% in 2014 and this increased to 60% in 2016 (i.e. 697 and 435 respectively). This discrepancy in data presents a significant challenge in reconciling information. Management has indicated that this discrepancy may be due to over-reporting or double counting by some programs –i.e. the same job is claimed as being found by staff in more than one program. Despite the difference in the count, both methods showed the total number of jobs found declined in 2015 to about a quarter of the level it was in 2014, and recovered slightly in 2016. Management stated that this was due to the SAMS project diverting management and staff’s attention to correcting the problems encountered.

Other municipalities spend more time and resources in tracking data. The City of Windsor has two staff dedicated to tracking former clients that have left OW to determine whether they left because they have found employment. Throughout the engagement there were instances of anomalous data, and this continues to be a challenge to effective program operations.

Recommendation 2

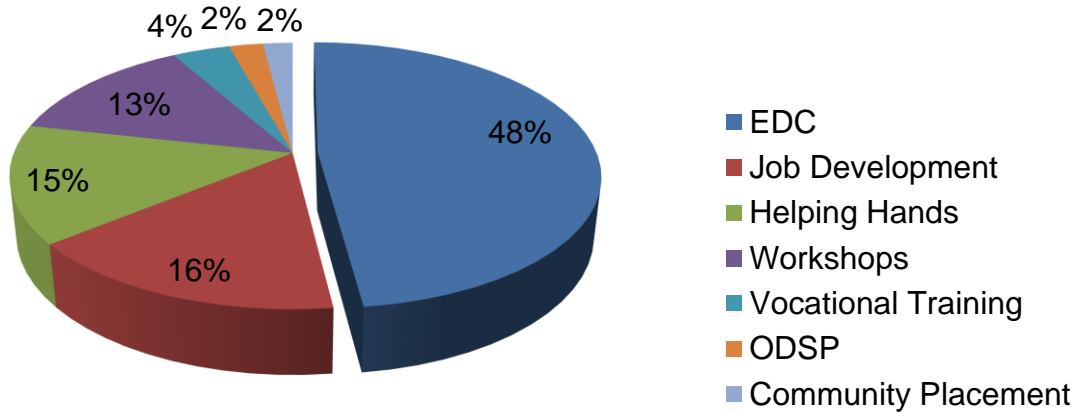
That management implement a system to improve data collection and reporting so as to accurately reflect the performance measures necessary to gauge the success of the different Employment Services Programs.

Other measures to gauge “How well do we do it?”

Number of Jobs Found

In 2016, the three programs with the most success in finding jobs for participants were EDC, Job Development, and Helping Hands. This was consistent with the findings in 2014 and 2015.

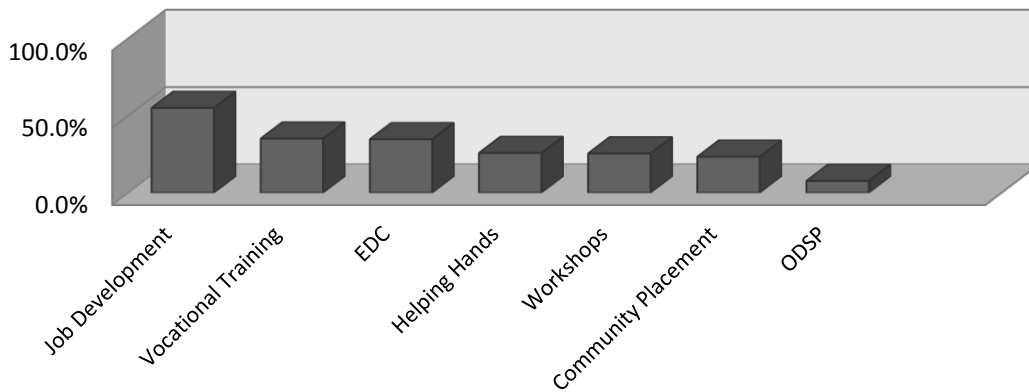
Graph 1: Jobs Found by Program as a Percent of Total in 2016



Success Ratio

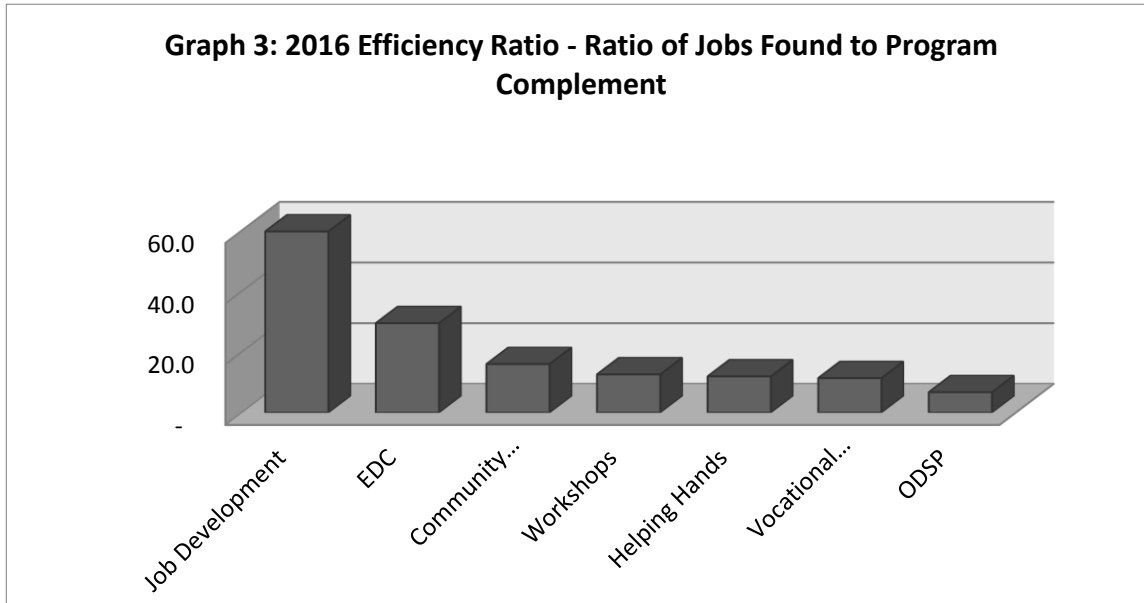
In 2016, the programs with the highest jobs found to program participant ratio were Job Development and Vocational Training. The EDC program is also considered a successful program as the number of jobs found to the number of referrals ratio is comparable to the jobs found to program participant ratio of the other two programs for the period 2014 to 2016.

Graph 2: 2016 Success Ratio - Ratio of Jobs Found to Program Participants



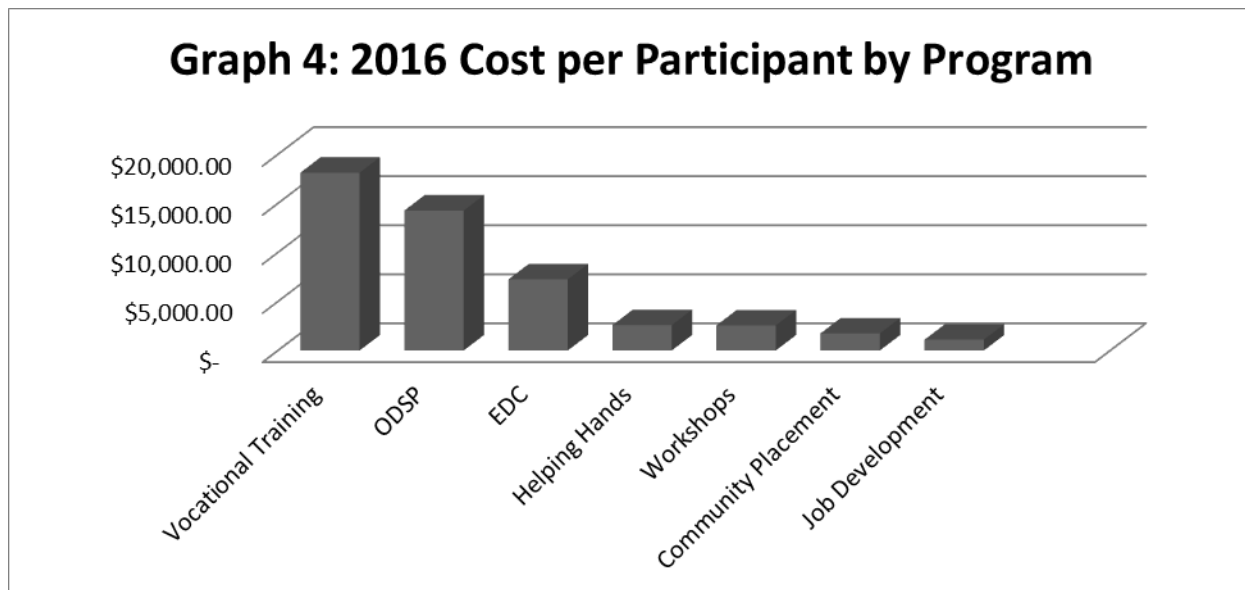
Efficiency Ratio

In 2016, the three programs with the highest ratio of jobs found to program staff complement were Job Development, EDC (even with the reduced staff), and Community Placement.



Cost per Participant

In 2016, the two most expensive programs to run per participant were Vocational Training and ODSP. The least expensive to run were Job Development and Community Placement. As a majority of program costs are employee related expenses, the least expensive programs also have the fewest number of employees as reported in Table 7.



Job Development

The above analysis indicates that the Job Development program is one of the most successful programs at finding employment for OW clients and is doing so at the lowest cost with a very small staff. Due to SAMS implementation, staffing levels have been reduced from 4.0 FTEs in 2014 to one

full time staff dedicated solely to the Job Development function, and a second staff that divides her time between Job Development and Community Placement. Per Table 10 on page 9 above, the number of jobs found in 2016 was 112. This is about half that of 2014 (237 jobs) when this program had 4.0 FTEs. The efficiency ratio for the Job Development program is indicated below in table 11 below.

Table11: Efficiency Ratio- Jobs Found to Program Staff Complement

	2014	2015	2016
Job Development	49.9	27.8	59.7

The table above shows that the Job Development function was 10% more efficient with less staff – 49.9 jobs per staff with 4.0 FTE compared to 59.7 jobs per staff with 1.5 FTE. Although staff are working well, more efficiency may be gained by having an additional 0.5 FTE to devote adequate time the commercial and industrial job search portfolios.

A review of other social service providers (i.e. Employment Hamilton, March of Dimes etc.) in the community found that many have their own Job Developers. These Job Developers are responsible for finding work for the community partner’s client base. Since the positions available can be filled by both OW clients and the community partners’ clients, some of the community partners’ Job Developers become territorial in the jobs they find and to whom the jobs are offered. Therefore, in order to help OW clients find jobs, the City should retain its Job Developers and simultaneously work together with the community partners’ Job Developers to find job placements for OW clients.

Recommendation 3

That management investigate the sharing of some of the Job Development duties with community partners offering this service, and that the cost benefit of sharing these services be compared with the cost benefit of decreasing the staff complement of the Job Development program from 4.0 FTEs to 2.0 FTEs to determine the best course of future action.

Community Placement

Table 10 on page 9 above shows that compared to the other programs, the Community Placement program has found the lowest number of positions for OW clients. With a complement of 0.5 FTE in 2016, it found less than half the number of jobs it did in 2014 when this program had 1.0 FTE. This suggests a direct correlation with the resources providing the service. The ratio of the number of jobs found per program staff was about the same, and in both years this ratio placed it as the third most efficient program. This program is relatively inexpensive to run with the second lowest cost per participant compared to the other programs. It provides a benefit to the community as host agencies (i.e. food banks, etc.) benefit from not having to pay for the services received and the OW clients gain valuable work experience and job references. The community partners do not offer a similar program. Since the Community Placement program relies on volunteers it is similar to the Helping Hands program.

Helping Hands

The Helping Hands program is unique to the City of Hamilton. The OW client volunteers get trained by Helping Hands Co-ordinators before being assigned their duties. They remain in the program for six months and along with a \$15 per day stipend receive work experience, health and safety training, uniforms and references. Per Table 10 on page 9, 100 OW clients found jobs through this program in 2016. This was an improvement of 14 jobs more than in 2014. The ratio of jobs found to

program participants was 25.8 % or about 1 in 4 in 2016. This was only slightly better than the 22.3% or roughly 1 in 4.5 in 2014. This program is highly regarded by the community and City Council. This program relies on OW client volunteers to provide lawn maintenance, home cleaning, and snow removal services for seniors and the disabled in the community. In doing so, it helps low income seniors stay in their homes longer. This program will likely become more important as the City’s population continues to age.

Recommendation 4

That staff investigate tying the Community Placement program to Helping Hands and ensuring both are adequately resourced so as to help the sustainability of both programs.

Is anyone better off?

In general, our review was challenged to find reliable empirical evidence on OW clients being better off and to what extent. While recidivism rates were estimated to be about 10%, the issue of OW clients finding employment that does not terminate assistance appears to be growing.

Table12: Overall Performance Measures

	2014	2015	2016
Percentage of Terminations Exiting to Employment	18.3%	8.9%	9.0%
Percentage of Caseload with Employment Earnings	11.6%	11.0%	12.9%
Recidivism Rate	10.3%	10.0%	10.0%

The percentage of terminations exiting to employment and the percentage of caseload with employment earnings are two measures used by the Ministry to assess whether OW clients have found work and are better off. These measures indicate that while the percentage of caseload with employment earnings has only increased marginally (from 11.6% to 12.9% in 2016), fewer clients are leaving OW because of employment. The percentage of terminations exiting to employment decreased from 18.3% to 9.0% in 2016; suggesting that they are not better off because they are not finding work and exiting the OW program.

The type of job may indicate how much of a benefit was received by OW clients looking for work. Job Development is one of only two programs that track the types of jobs found by OW clients. (Vocational Training is the other program, see page 15 below.) As seen in Table 13 on page 14, the most common jobs found by the Job Development Program in the period from 2014 to 2016 were Personal Support Workers (PSW) and Customer Service Reps (CSR).

Table 13: Job Developer- Most Common Positions Found

	2014	2015	2016
Part Time Personal Support Worker	22	0	17
Part Time Customer Service Rep	8	0	0
Total # of Part Time Jobs Found	84	12	29
Full Time Customer Service Rep	5	28	44
Full Time Contact Centre Agent/Rep	13	0	0
Total # of Full Time Jobs Found	134	60	83

In 2015, the pay rate for the CSR positions found ranged from \$11.25 to \$11.40 per hour, while the pay for PSWs ranged from \$12.00 to \$16.50 per hour. Since the Living Wage for the City of Hamilton in 2016 is \$15.85 per hour, OW clients accepting CSR positions are still earning less than the Living Wage, or if fortunate to get a higher paying PSW position, earning just slightly more than

the Living Wage. This suggests that clients leaving OW are better off than when they were on OW, there is still room for improvement.

Client surveys are another method to assess whether OW clients believe that they are better off by participating in the programs provided by OW Employment Services. Aside from Helping Hands and workshops, surveys have not been completed to determine whether clients are satisfied with the assistance offered. Therefore, the City does not know whether the programs offered are helping the OW clients to be better off.

Recommendation 5

That management implement a system to obtain feedback from OW clients to rate their satisfaction with the service received, and assess whether they are better off.

Recommendation 6

That management revise the role of the Job Development program or its targeting objectives so that it finds jobs offering long term employment paying wages consistent with the Living Wage in the City of Hamilton.

OTHER PROVIDERS – GAPS AND DUPLICATION IN SERVICE

A review of 50 social service organizations in the community, referred to as community partners or other providers, shows that the following programs offered by the City are unique to OW. That is they address gaps not filled by other providers in the community. These programs include Helping Hands, Community Placement, ODSP Employable Spouses & Adult Dependents, Vocational Training, and one of the three workshops (Making Change Happen). For an analysis of the Helping Hands and the Community Placement program see pages 12 and 13. The ODSP program is mandated by the Ministry. As it must be provided it is outside the scope of this review. The analysis of Career Workshops is below, and Vocational Training is analyzed on page 16.

The other programs offered by the City are also offered by community partners. These include: One-on-one Counselling (page 7), two of the three workshops (see below), Job Development (page12), and the CDC Resource Centre (page 15).

Career Workshops

Job and career workshops are provided by various community partners whereby their clients are given career and skills assessment tests; guidance on resume development and interview preparation; job search techniques/assistance training; and effective networking skills training. These workshops are very similar to the Career Essentials and Applied Job Search workshops held in house by OW’s Employment Services. Also, per Table 10 on page 9, the number of jobs found by OW clients through workshops has increased from 57 in 2014 to 93 in 2016.

Table14: Workshops Measures	2014	2015	2016
Ratio of Jobs Found to Participants	5.2%	23.3%	25.5%
Ratio of Jobs Found to Program Staff	7.4	4.4	12.6

Table 14 above shows that the ratio of jobs found to workshop participants has increased fivefold in that period, and the ratio of jobs found to program staff has almost doubled from 7.4 in 2014 to 12.6

in 2016. These statistics indicate that there is value in retaining these workshops in house. In addition, workshops can be tailored to address some of the barriers to employment faced by some OW clients in a reasonably efficient manner.

CDC Resource Centre

Under the Ministry’s OW Directive 8.1, the City (as the delivery agent) can provide participants with access to services through an on-site centre or alternatively at locations with strong links to the OW office, i.e. a municipally operated resource centre, a co-located/co-managed resource centre with other partners such as the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, or Human Resources Skills Development Canada, or the local library. Also, in 2016 the number of clients accessing computers at the City’s Employment Resource Centre decreased to less than half what it was in 2015, while staffing levels only decreased by one third. Table 15 indicates that the utilization of the Resource Centre has declined substantially to levels about half of what they were two years ago.

Table 15: CDC Resource Centre Measures

	2014	2015	2016
Clients accessing computers	8,980	4,643	4,339
Hours of Computers in use	10,883	4,096	4,634

Recommendation 7

That management investigate partnering with other organizations in the community for our clients to use their Employment Resource Centres and repurpose the space presently occupied by the City’s Employment Resource Centre.

Vocational Training

Vocational Training is the most expensive of the eight Employment Services Programs (see graph 4 on page 11 above). The high expense is partly due to OW clients in this program qualifying for up to \$10,000 in tuition expenses.

The Vocational Training program offered through Employment Services is relatively small. Table 5 on page 7 above indicates that the number of participants in the program decreased from 124 in 2014 to 77 in 2016. Likewise Table 10 on page 9 indicates that the number of jobs found by the participants decreased from 49 to 27 over that same period.

The success of the program is difficult to measure because of the time required after graduation to find employment. Note, that while the participants in this program eventually find jobs, there is a lag as the participants are usually in school for about a year, and depending on the program and the economy, the participants may take some time (ranging from a few weeks up to a year) to find a job after completing their studies. One suggestion would be to measure the percent of graduates employed after a certain time.

The vocational courses covered by this program include Personal Support Worker (PSW), AZ driver training, hairstylist and cook. As noted above, PSW generally do not pay a living wage. Also, there did not appear to be any strong connection between the vocational training offered and future employment prospects in the City through a formal analysis or consultation with the City’s Economic Development division.

Recommendation 8

That management revise the Vocational Training program by setting performance measures and targets to more accurately evaluate the success of this program.

Recommendation 9

That management work with the City's Economic Development division to determine the jobs most needed in the City over the next two to ten years and target these jobs for Vocational Training program.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MORE EFFECTIVE STAFFING DEPLOYMENT

For most of OW clients the OW Case Managers are the face of Ontario Works. The OW clients meet with their Case Manager when they first get on the system. The Case Manager should be able to identify any barriers to employment faced by the OW clients. Such barriers may include language, Canadian work experience, culture, addiction issues, criminal records, mental health issues, etc.

Some clients may present themselves with multiple barriers and we noted opportunities to be more effective at triage similar to how Peel Region emphasizes and measures barriers to employment in order to provide more effective service. By noting the barriers faced by the client, and triaging the condition, the client could then be directed to the appropriate path. That is, clients with few or low barriers to employment could be sent to an EDC counsellor or community partner that would help overcome the barrier. This path should not take too long, and the client could be expected to remain on OW for a short amount of time. Likewise, a client with multiple or serious barriers to employment would be assigned to an EDC counsellor that would be able to address the multiple or difficult barriers either one at a time, or over an appropriate time period. Such clients would be expected to remain on OW longer. Finally, there would also be clients whose barriers to employment are so great that they will never come off the system. These would be tracked and treated differently from other clients.

We note that Peel Region has implemented measures to track more intensively various barriers to employment. This allows for improved analysis of outcomes in achieving the goal of finding sustainable employment (see Recommendation 10). Also there are measures lacking that impose major constraints – for example not knowing whether exits from OW are to employment, segregation of results for clients that are using independent job search versus more active employment services, and regular reporting of services used and which ones work (as in Ottawa for example).

Recommendation 10

That management implement a system whereby clients entering OW are evaluated on their barriers to employment. Such a system would monitor the progress made by OW clients as they work at overcoming these barriers.

Recommendation 11

That management implement a system to triage clients as they enter the OW program. The triage process can be used to gather information about the client that is evaluated by staff so as to direct the client to the OW Employment Service program (or community partner) that will best be able to help them overcome their barrier(s) with the goal of finding employment.