

# Ontario Works Service Plan

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Northumberland County

2024

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# Overview

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The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) and Social Assistance (SA) delivery sites share the common goal of improving employment results for people relying on social assistance. This service plan template is the tool used for SA delivery sites to document the service planning required activities, including the strategies to achieve performance outcomes.

## Section 1 – Conduct Community Analysis

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In this section, SA delivery sites provide a summary of the community context in which Ontario Works person-centered supports and services and employment assistance is delivered over the four-year service planning period

### 1.1 Key Caseload Demographics

Enter a **focused overview of the key findings** from the current demographic composition of the caseload and anticipated changes over the service plan cycle:

#### Enter a focused overview of key caseload findings (500 words max recommended)

- According to the 2021 Census profile for Northumberland County
  - Population: 89,365
  - 29% of the population is over the age of 65
  - 79.1% of dwellings in Northumberland County are single detached homes
  - 18% of households spend more than 30% or more on housing costs and 6.1% spend more than 50% or more
  - As of December 2023, the unemployment rate for Central Ontario (the Employment Insurance Economic Region that Northumberland falls under) was 5.7%, sitting below the provincial average of 6.3%
- As of September 2023:
  - 95% of caseload (as of September 2023) born in Canada, with approximately 1% in Canada less than 3 years
  - 54% of caseload has been on more than 12 months and 26% more than 24 months.
  - 69% of the caseload is single.
  - 14% of the caseload is under 25 and 12% is over 55 years of age.
  - 33% of adult members have less than Grade 12 education
- As of January 31, 2024, Northumberland County has identified 101 individuals or families on our Homelessness By-Name List
  - 39% have identified their income source as ODSP, with 36% of ODSP recipients identifying as high-acuity for supports
  - 34% have identified their income source as OW, with 32% of OW recipients identifying as high acuity for supports

## 1.2 Service Needs (EST Prototype sites only for 2024)

A **focused assessment of key service needs** (in relation to your caseload) that have linkages to meeting the performance outcomes:

### Enter focused assessment of service needs (500 words max recommended)

- According to CRS356 (January 27, 2024) the following are the top support needs (as a percentage of the caseload; note that some clients have more than one support need):
  - Mental Health (35.5%)
  - Transportation (23.7%)
  - Caregiving Responsibilities (18.0%)
  - Addictions – substances (12.3%)
  - Financial (12.2%)
  - Activity Limitations – mobility, dexterity (11.5%)
  - Education – No Grade 12 (10.2%)
  - Housing Instability (8.6%)
  - Health – Medical/Dental provider required (6.0%)
  - Housing – Homelessness (4.6%)
  - Food Security (4.1%)
  - Legal Support (4.0%)
  - Violence – Partner & family (4.0%)

## 1.3 Community Needs Assessment

Use the information from your community needs assessment and parts 1-2 to identify the following as it relates to social assistance:

### Strengths: Identify existing strengths and resources

- Wide range of services offered throughout the geographic area relating to mental health, addiction, legal supports.
- Strong labour market within Northumberland with jobs in Manufacturing, Food Services, Health Care and Education
- 3 Universities and 4 Community Colleges located within a 90-minute drive of Northumberland County, with one Community College (Loyalist College) offering courses within Northumberland as of September 2023
- 2 Hospitals (Northumberland Hills Hospital in Cobourg and Campbellford Memorial Hospital) located within Northumberland County
- Homelessness Coordinated Response Table (HCRT) chaired by Northumberland County Community & Social Services established to support coordinated response to homelessness and maintain a Homeless “By-Name List”

### Gaps: Determine where there may be gaps in services or required resources

- Absence of John Howard Society & Elizabeth Fry Society to support those involved in the justice system.
- Lack of youth shelter (for youth under the age of 18)
- Hours of operation for most community organizations limited to Monday to Friday, 9 to 5.

- Lack of recognized English as a Second Language courses within the community and limited availability of interpreters for those with language barriers
- Limited transportation options across large geographic and rural area
- Since the pandemic walk-in clinic services have been reduced or eliminated from much of Northumberland County
- Limited professionals within the community that can support with ID Replacement (ie Guarantors to sign for Birth Certificate replacements)

**Challenges: Common themes around concerns/challenges that impact SA**

- Ontario Works Rate Structure is not sufficient to meet high costs of rent and food.
- Limitations on current shelter system (limited spacing; service restrictions; type of shelter); location of shelter; separation of shelter, warming room and homelessness services.
- Language services
- Lack of permanent presence of ODSP for case management supports within Northumberland (Regional ODSP Office)
- Lack of primary care providers, psychiatric services, publicly funded rehabilitation centres
- Waitlist times for services, specifically mental health, addictions, psychiatric services and rent-gear-to-income Housing
- Many community services offered in Northumberland are a satellite for a larger location in another municipality (including Mental Health counselling services through the Community Counselling and Resource Centre; Four Counties Addiction Support Team; CMHA; New Canadians Centre, Probation & Parole)
- Adjudication timing for ODSP applications create financial gaps for clients that often needs to be made up through other municipal funding sources (such as the Homelessness Prevention Program)
- Lack of shared consent forms result in individuals accessing services needing to tell their “story” multiple times; understanding of what information can be shared to provide collaborative approach to case management

**Opportunities: Current or upcoming opportunities that can be leveraged by SA**

- Recent purchase of new building for sheltering services to centralize service needs (warming space; shelter; resources)
- Regular Monthly presence of an ODSP Caseworker in OW Office to support client needs.
- Integrating services with EO by co-locating in rural areas, utilizing office space rented by Ontario Works/Social Services
- Launch of the Homeless Individuals & Families Information System (HIFIS) within Northumberland County anticipated for 2024; intended to provide real-time homelessness data and support the day-to-day operational activities of Canadian homelessness service providers

## Section 2 – Review Performance Outcome Targets

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Enter the ministry prescribed targets in the “Outcome” section in the budget submission in TPON.

## Section 3 – Develop Service Strategies

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This section establishes the contracted expectations of all SA delivery sites and connects the first two planning components (i.e., community analysis and performance outcome targets).

### 3.1 Risk Assessment

Complete the risk assessment using the **Performance Outcomes Risk Assessment template**.

### 3.2 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

**Part A:** Articulate specific tactics that will consider the needs of equity seeking groups from the initial service planning stages through to delivery.

**Enter the local equity, diversity, and inclusion strategy here (500 words max recommended)**

- We have not established an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy
- In preparing for a strategy, we will be completing the following:
  - Coordinating with our corporate departments (Communications and Human Resources) to ensure alignment and limit duplication of key work.
  - Review opportunities for staff learning and development on topics of diversity & inclusion.
  - Ensuring client choice in the delivery of services, including providing culturally sensitive services and ensuring the ability to bring a support person or ally to appointments.
  - Establish a feedback mechanism for those accessing services through Community & Social Services on the service delivery

**Part B:** Complete the French Language Services strategy using the ministry provided templates. For more information refer to the Main Guidelines document.

### 3.3 Logic Model

A logic model maps the linkages between services delivered and performance outcomes. It is a tool to support how service strategies will help to achieve targets and is included as part of the Service Planning template.

Complete one logic model for each of the 4 performance outcomes. For 2024, only complete the “Highest Risk(s) Mitigation” section for only the two identified outcomes. Add or remove rows, as needed.

**Definitions:**

- a. **Inputs:** Describe the organizational, community and/or external inputs within your organization used to coordinate services to meet the stated performance outcome (e.g., staffing, internal processes, training, relationship with community organizations, gaps in services, etc.).
- b. **High Risk:** Identify the highest risks as indicated in the Performance Outcomes Risk Assessment Template. Note for 2024, this will only be applicable to 2 performance outcomes and will be indicated on the applicable logic model templates.

- c. **Activities:** Operational and strategic activities (e.g., processes, tools, events, actions, etc.) that will be carried out as part of the strategy (e.g., staff training, recruitment, staff supports, community relationships, retention strategies, workshops, etc.).
- d. **Expected outputs linked to outcome:** What are your expected results given the planned activities and what changes do you expect to realize?

Performance Outcome 1: Ontario Works adult and ODSP non-disabled adults with participation requirements have an Action Plan		
Inputs (e.g., organization, community, external)	Operational and Strategic Activities	Expected Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal Organization – completion of Action Plans may be impacted by staffing availability (ie staff on vacation, long-term illness; recruitment and retention)</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure all new grants (ie Auto-grants) are scheduled for an intake within 30 days.</li> <li>Development of Job Aid on required steps to activate an Action Plan</li> <li>Caseworkers provided with Weekly Reports (CRS355 and CRS356) to review status of Action Plans</li> <li>Dedicated staff assigned to ODSP-NDAs to ensure timely communication with caseload upon referrals being made.</li> <li>Joint Collaborative Committee between ODSP and OW Caseworkers to discuss referrals, challenges, and opportunities with NDA Caseload</li> <li>Utilizing Community of Practice to share best practices amongst caseworkers on completion of Action Plans</li> <li>Ensure support needs and referrals are clearly identified in the Action Plan to support future community-based planning</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Updated and meaningful Action Plans are developed to support the individual to meet program requirements and individual goals.</li> <li>Achievement of outcome of files with an Action Plan within 30 days</li> <li>Identify all barriers/service needs associated with the client’s needs within the Action Plan and continue to revisit and update needs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>External – Transportation Barriers preventing ability to connect in-person</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate services with other community needs (such as Food Bank hours of operation)</li> <li>Build connections with community-based transportation options (such as Community Care)</li> <li>Issue funding to support transportation costs (where appropriate/practical)</li> <li>Issue funding to support cell phone service and/or internet where practical to allow for virtual connection with resources</li> </ol>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>External – Connectivity to be able to complete Action Plan in Person</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Issue funding to clients to purchase cell phone and/or internet services (where appropriate and practical) to build additional delivery options into service delivery</li> </ol>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal – ability to connect to ODSP NDAs to update Action Plan</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure Work Queue is being checked daily in effort to connect with individual within 48 hours of referral.</li> <li>Regular meetings between ODSP Manager and OW Manager to review referrals and discuss any barriers</li> </ol>	



**Highest Risk(s) from Risk Assessment Template (applicable to the two in the risk assessment only):**

1.2: SA Staff and clients are not aligned with the goals/support services that will support the client towards employment readiness (score: 12)

Performance Outcome 2: Ontario Works adult and ODSP non-disabled adults with participation requirements are referred to EO		
Inputs (e.g., organization, community, external)	Operational and Strategic Activities	Expected Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal Organization</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular engagement with SSM and EO on level of referrals and return reasons.</li> <li>Building Community of Practice for caseworkers to share best practices relating to case management discussions for SA Clients</li> <li>Training on motivational interviewing and trauma informed case management</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce the number of returned referrals due to unable to contact.</li> <li>Continue to send appropriate referrals (20% of returns are for duplicate referrals; 34% due to unable to contact)</li> <li>Increased integration through regular communication with EO on client needs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>External – Access to Primary Health Care Services (clients could be jointly working with EO and on stability if they could access primary care)</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stay connected with updated health care professionals taking on new patients.</li> <li>Ensure clients are aware of resources (ie Health Care Connect) to register.</li> <li></li> </ol>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal – Clients with a historical understanding of the requirements of OW may not be honest about their readiness</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All Staff undergo SAIL Training as part of onboarding; regular check-ins on SAIL training tools.</li> <li>Building trust in relationship with client using the 3-D Coaching Model from SAIL</li> <li>Build more promotional material on the supports available.</li> <li>Increase coordination with EO</li> </ol>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community – lack of transportation and limited transportation options in rural communities to connect to services</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate services with other community needs (such as Food Bank hours of operation)</li> <li>Build connections with community-based transportation options (such as Community Care)</li> </ol>	

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Issue funding to support transportation costs (where appropriate and practical)</li> <li>4. Issue funding to support cell phone service and/or internet where practical to allow for virtual connection with resources</li> </ol>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External – limited connectivity to be able to participate in virtual services</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support clients with cell phones and internet, where appropriate to make the connections to EO</li> </ol>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External – client trust with service providers within the community</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Build opportunity to case conference with Service Provider before referral is made.</li> <li>2.</li> </ol>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External – lack of appropriate resources through Employment Agency to support the individual (ie workshops, pre-employment programming, skills development)</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gather feedback from client on reason for not connecting.</li> <li>2. Share any feedback with service provider.</li> <li>3. Utilize case-conferencing with service provider to build appropriate plans (Action Plan and Employment Action Plan) with client.</li> <li>4. Share expectations on service needs that client has identified with Service Provider</li> </ol>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External/Community – lack of English as a Second Language Courses within community and limited access to translation services</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Caseworker to work with clients on language needs, connecting them with larger urban centres that offer ESL; review programming opportunities (online courses, in-person); review additional supports that could be issued to support.</li> <li>2. Utilize other technology to meet the needs, such as Google Translate to bridge the language barrier.</li> <li>3. Connect with Northumberland County Settlement Services and New Canadians Centre for more resources to support individuals</li> </ol>
<p><b>Highest Risk(s) from Risk Assessment Template (applicable to the two in the risk assessment only):</b>  2.3: Client's barriers/needs have not been addressed prior to referral to employment Ontario (score: 9)</p>	

**Performance Outcome 3:  
Ontario Works cases exit to employment**

Inputs (e.g., organization, community, external)	Operational and Strategic Activities	Expected Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organization – Case Management Work</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Caseworkers review monthly case closure reports to ensure closure reasons are accurately recorded.</li> <li>Caseworkers ensure paid employment records are input in SAMS.</li> <li>Caseworkers discuss earnings exemption rules and eligibility for EEHB with clients who obtain employment</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular updates are completed on files to ensure closure reasons are aligned with expectations</li> <li>Continued work refining referrals to the SSM are appropriate</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Referrals to the SSM for both job ready and referral ready clients</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrated case management between caseworkers (EO and OW) to ensure appropriateness of referrals and wrap-around service</li> </ol>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community labour market</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using data from all sources on local labour demand and supporting resourcing of opportunities to align with demand.</li> <li>Leveraging stability resources to support upgrading opportunities, payment of union dues and transportation</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Highest Risk(s) from Risk Assessment Template</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><u>Do not complete for this performance outcome for 2024.</u></b></li> </ul>		

**Performance Outcome 4:  
Ontario Works cases do not return to the program within one year**

Inputs (e.g., organization, community, external)	Operational and Strategic Activities	Expected Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organization/Internal staff connecting with those exiting to ensure supports in place</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reaching out to all clients exiting to ensure supports are in place to be successful.</li> <li>Ensuring that those exiting due to employment or income precludes have an assessment completed for EEHB or EHB, where appropriate</li> <li>Ensuring case management while file is active on all health and housing needs.</li> <li>Connecting clients to additional housing supports prior to exit</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce return rate amongst recipients exiting.</li> <li>Stabilized situation for those exiting.</li> <li></li> </ul>
<p><b>Highest Risk(s) from Risk Assessment Template</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Do not complete for this performance outcome for 2024.</u></li> </ul>		

## Section 4 – Manage Program Delivery

In this section, SA delivery sites will identify key program management activities to ensure the program supports program integrity and is delivered in accordance with legislative and policy requirements.

### 4.1 Service Delivery Expectations

Develop an outline of how service delivery expectations will be managed to ensure the program is delivered in accordance with legislative and policy requirements and that financial assistance expenditures are accurate and meet ministry expectations.

<b>Enter outline for each area of focus below (suggest 250 words max recommended per area)</b>
<b>Essential information reviewed and verified by 3<sup>rd</sup> party checks prior to transferring to ODSP (within the last 12 months)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• File reviews conducted at least once annually for files pending a decision from the DAU.</li><li>• Caseworkers are responsible for reviewing their own files and requesting third party information where necessary</li></ul>
<b>24-month Reassessment (including Third Party Checks) on all OW cases</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Caseworkers responsible for managing their own caseload, ensuring all required files are reviewed at least once every 24 months for files not pending a decision from the DAU.</li><li>• EVP also highlights any necessary case management activities.</li><li>• Local process developed for file Audits (1% of caseload per month) to review compliance-based activities</li></ul>
<b>Timely follow up on deferrals from participation in employment readiness activities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Caseworkers are provided with weekly CRS355/356 report which include files with deferrals.</li><li>• Caseworkers are expected to review deferrals at each scheduled Action Plan review</li></ul>
<b>EVP is assigned and completed in established timeframes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• EVP is assigned by the Ontario Works Manager to two dedicated caseworkers on a bi-monthly basis, within 5 days of receiving Audit Plan (generally within 1 day of receiving Audit Plan)</li><li>• Regular follow-up by OW Manager to the assigned Auditors to ensure 90% complete rate in 60 days</li></ul>
<b>Application of up to 10% recovery rate for all overpayments</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regular communication with team on requirement to follow guidelines and Directive on collection of overpayments.</li><li>• Overpayments reviewed through Local File Audit process (1% of caseload)</li></ul>
<b>Financial assistance expenditures (subsidy claims submissions) are accurate and meet ministry expectations (list all Ontario Works benefits managed outside of SAMS and identify</b>

supporting documentation that will be provided with adjustments to subsidy claims and describe business practices for Ontario Works benefits managed outside of SAMS)

- Gift Cards for Groceries and Gas for Emergency applications when there is a delay in being able to provide services; transportation vouchers if payment cannot be made in a timely manner or if there is a limited need (ie single bus tickets)
- Monthly allotment Gift cards and transportation vouchers are locked in a lockbox that is stored in a locked filing cabinet; additional supply is kept in a locked vault managed by the Finance department.
- Stock of gift cards are not purchased by Ontario Works but are invoiced/billed back to OW based on usage.
- Keys to the locked box are limited to 5 front-line staff, one supervisor and one manager.
- Gift cards and vouchers are signed out by a caseworker and assigned to a client using their member ID as an identifier; control sheet and receipt are filled out with required information.
- Client is required to sign the receipt indicating they have been provided with the gift card/voucher.
- All issuances are reconciled by Finance department monthly matching receipts with the control copy and the number of cards still in stock.
- Finance staff completing subsidy claims make the appropriate adjustments using the information from the control sheet reconciliation.

## 4.2 Analysis of Resources

Conduct an analysis of resources using the **Supplementary Reporting Tool**.

## 4.3 Monitoring Activities

Demonstrate how SA delivery sites will be prepared to support the monitoring activities by documenting its approach to readiness from combination of resource, awareness and understanding perspectives.

For example, the SA Delivery sites will be ready to support by reviewing and becoming familiar with all relevant materials provided by the ministry to understand the monitoring activities and OW's roles and responsibilities.

**Enter the approach for monitoring here (suggested 250 words max recommended per area)**

**Overall Readiness** (i.e., how your site will be ready to continuously support the monitoring activities)

- Continue to review performance reports and ensure alignment with Ministry vision and goals for program delivery

**Submission of actual expenditures** (i.e., how to ensure your site will be able to submit the actual expenditures in a timely manner and engage in discussion when varied from budget)

- Finance department is responsible for completing the monthly subsidy claims.
- Ensuring payments are made through SAMS to reduce reliance on ancillary reporting systems (ie gift process identified above)

**Submission of outcomes achieved** (i.e., how to ensure your site will be able to submit the actuals in a timely manner and engage in discussions on outcome performance)

- Outcome achievement reporting is subject to Ministry pushing through data to Power BI dashboard.
- Ontario Works Manager is responsible for reviewing and reporting on outcomes

**Performance reports** (i.e., how to ensure your site will be ready to leverage ministry provided reports in monitoring outcomes and key program delivery expectations)

- Ontario Works Manager accesses performance reports and shares with staff as required.
- Utilize skills of Data Analysis Coordinator(s) within department to provide more insight on the data

**Quality Assurance (QA) reviews** (i.e., how to ensure your site will be ready to leverage the results from the ministry performed QA reviews to determine possible course corrections, related monitoring and need for service plan amendments)

- Currently conducting Quality-based audits at a local level to review compliance with Ministry standards and department expectations.
- Information shared at a Ministry level regarding QA at a local level will be reviewed and action plans created on making necessary adjustments moving forward

**Risk Mitigation Testing** (i.e., how to ensure your site will be ready to use ministry provided testing scripts to carry out testing of mitigation for the highest risks impacting performance outcomes as well as how the results of the testing will be used by your site)

- Use Ministry based templates to review risks and develop mitigation action plan to resolve high-risk areas.
- Use templates at mid-cycle reviews to ensure new or emerging trends relating to the risk score haven't changed

## 4.4 Privacy

Conduct a Privacy Risk Assessment using the **Privacy Risk Assessment Template and Privacy Maturity Self-Reporting Tool**.