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The Northern Ontario
Service Deliverers
Association

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AN OVERVIEW OF SERVICE SYSTEM MANAGEMENT & EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE:

A NOSDA Position Paper

INTRODUCTION

This paper has been developed to highlight the importance of Service System Management, the roles and responsibilities under a Service System Management framework and how this form of management integrates programs within its purview. Specifically, it is clear that this approach is well suited to the delivery of Employment Services and to the integration of those services with Income Support Services for the maximum benefit to clients and communities. Two District Social Service Administration Boards (DSSAB's), namely Cochrane and Manitoulin-Sudbury already operate in this manner in parts of their jurisdiction and offer the opportunity for further "pilot" analysis. This paper identifies possible opportunities within the service system that could be used in DSSABs across Northern Ontario and urges action in this regard.

WHAT IS SERVICE SYSTEM MANAGEMENT?

Generally speaking, Service System Management includes establishing and managing relationships with community agencies, local planning bodies, other orders of government and consumer stakeholders to achieve outcomes and local priorities. What this means is that service provision - across agencies, other providers and stakeholders as well as orders of government - is coordinated and aligned. This approach provides an opportunity to improve efficiencies and most importantly improve outcomes for individuals seeking attachment to local labour markets.

The concept of Service System Management underpinned the expectations of delivery systems that were created through Local Services Realignment (LSR) and figured prominently in the analysis and decision making that informed the Provincial Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review (PMFSDR).

In its 2001 report, *"Roles and Responsibilities - 2001: The Provincial-Municipal Relationship in Human Services,"* the Province defined Service System Management as:

"...the management of service delivery activities of governments and organizations with the necessary authority to implement and oversee services that are delivered through a network of organizations and/or departments. These activities differ from programmatic/linear management in that they are conducted using a 'systems' approach. Such an approach aims to achieve a system of services that effectively meets the needs of client groups through partnership and collaboration among organizations within the network."

Given the nature of the organizational and inter-organizational relationships involved in a systems approach to service provision, Service System Management supports an outcomes based accountability model through the focus on integrated planning and collaboration. Outcomes based planning is a shift away from compliance monitoring wherein governments are responsible to ensure that standardized delivery mechanisms meet simple accountability requirements, which are increasingly more efficiently offered through computer systems and e-government. To respond to complex, community/regional/provincial based issues, greater flexibility in planning and delivery is required to achieve the overall outcomes established by the government.

WHAT ARE THE SERVICE SYSTEM MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES?

There are four generic functions that are required to plan for, manage, and deliver a program and various activities that are required under each function. Systems can look very different depending on geography and community need, however the basic principles stay the same. The authority for each subsequent function is established through legislation, regulation, guidelines, and/or directives.

I. Funding

System funding is made of contributions from both the province and the CMSM/DSSAB. Often, provincial legislation or regulations will deem the level and duration of program funding, including cost-sharing and revenue generation. CMSMs/DSSABs are responsible individually for determining the level of funding beyond the agreements.

II. Planning & Resource Allocation

Service system planning includes establishing and managing relationships with community agencies, local planning bodies, other orders of government, and consumer stakeholders to establish local priorities and outcomes. Plans for delivery are developed through the planning process and take into consideration unique community circumstances such as need, strengths, and assets. Service system managers, through planning, identify gaps, and are expected to look for ways to fill those gaps, as well as any opportunities for better coordination between service providers.

Resource Allocation includes ensuring resources are allocated in a way across the service system that achieves predetermined outcomes.

III. Service Delivery

Service system managers are not required to directly deliver services. The approach for service delivery is determined through the local planning process in which a plan is developed that works best for the individual communities.

Direct client service can be delivered by the municipality or by contracting an outside community agency. In some smaller or rural communities where they are fewer resources to draw on, integration and better coordination have been used effectively as a way of improving access to services.

IV. Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance includes ensuring all parts of the service system comply with provincial and municipal expectations and resources, and governing the service delivery organization through setting and implementing accountability structures to manage the service system.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE IN SERVICE SYSTEM MANAGEMENT APPROACH?

Service System Management is based on clear accountabilities between the Provincial and Municipal levels of government to ensure that provincially defined Outcomes are achieved.

The Province sets the legislative and regulatory policy framework, as well as establishing province-wide priorities and objectives. It further defines outcome targets and outcome measures and determines the adequate funding allocations to achieve those targets.

Municipalities and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSAB) are responsible for community based planning and ensuring that local outcomes are congruent with the Provincial Outcomes. They also determine local linkages with other planning bodies and determine the appropriate service delivery approach, and, in some cases, partner on the funding of the objective.

Considerations in Service System Management include:

Item	Activity	Prov. Resp.	DSSAB Resp.
Decision making	Program Design	✓	
	Program Delivery		✓
	Policy Statement	✓	
	Standards	✓	✓
	Funding	✓	✓ (upload)
	Local Planning		✓
Service Provision	Coordination for Planning		✓
	Oversight	✓	✓
	Budget Allocation	✓	✓
	Outreach		✓
	Accountability/Reporting	✓	✓
	Training/Professional Standards		✓
Infrastructure	Staff		✓
	Technology	✓	
	Physical Location		✓
	Materials/Resources	✓	✓
Delivery	Establish Local Networks		✓
	Case Management		✓
	Basic Supports/Benefits		✓
	Customer Services		✓
	Employer Engagement	✓	✓

HOW DOES SERVICE SYSTEM MANAGEMENT WORK IN OTHER PROGRAMMATIC AREAS?

DSSABs act as the Service System Manager in a number of program areas, including:

- Ontario Works Employment services,
- Ontario Works Administration,
- Child Care,
- Children's Services,
- Homelessness prevention programs, and
- Housing Services.

As local governments, CMSMs and DSSABs are accountable to their communities, not just a specific program funder. This dual obligation has a number of implications:

- In many cases, CMSMs and DSSABs go beyond specific program mandates and legislative requirements, in order to ensure that gaps in service are identified, and unique local service needs are met.
- Accountability goes beyond that established with the province as service system managers, as CMSMs and DSSABs are also responsible for meeting local governance requirements and exemplify informed decision-making.
- CMSMs and DSSABs contribute a sophisticated level of comprehensive information in terms of data, research, mapping, local economic development and identifying labour market trends and issues.

As the Service System Manager, the DSSABs lead the planning and coordination of services to communities and to specified client groups, all the while ensuring the achievement of Provincially defined Outcomes. In very few cases is the DSSAB both the Service System Manager and the full service deliverer – typically the delivery is completed through a patchwork of agencies and groups that are organized by the DSSAB to achieve the mandated Outcomes. The various community agencies are coordinated and organized by the DSSAB to ensure that the services achieve not only their mandated outcomes but do so in an effective and efficient manner to meet the broader interest.

To illustrate the flexibility and range of Service System Management approaches, two very different models follow for illustrative purposes:

Children's Services (Stewardship Approach)

- **Provincial interest:** That Ontario's children and families are well supported by a system of responsive, high quality, accessible, and increasingly integrated Early Years programs and services that contribute to healthy child development today and a stronger future tomorrow.
- **DSSAB/CMSM interest:** To plan for, coordinate and deliver a system of services that ensures children in our communities have the best possible chance to succeed.
- **Community interest:** To ensure a range of services are available within communities that meet and reflect the local, ethnic and linguistic diversity of its residents.
- **Economic interest:** That individuals are ready to enter to the workforce and are supported in their workforce participation.

Most DSSABs deliver the Children's Services programs through third party non-profit child care providers. Although some DSSABs do directly deliver Child Care services, the vast majority manage a system of children's services through third party contracts.

DSSABs are very familiar and competent in managing third party service delivery agreements, and as such regularly monitor, track and hold organizations accountable for the funds they are provided under the Children's Services programs.

Most DSSABs have service delivery contracts with local colleges and school boards for the delivery of Child Care services as well as administering child care fee subsidies for parents and children who qualify. DSSABs are involved in negotiations between school boards and non-profit child care providers in the allocation of space, renovations and rental agreements in schools.

In addition, DSSABs have a firsthand understanding of the need for child care as a support to employment and what services and resources are required to support the objectives of employment services.

Housing Services (Mixed delivery model)

- **Provincial interest:** To improve Ontarian's access to adequate, suitable and affordable housing, and provide a solid foundation on which to secure employment, raise families and build strong communities.
- **DSSAB interest:** To plan for the delivery of a range of housing related solutions that allow individuals to contribute to the community and meet the basic needs of daily living.
- **Community interest:** To ensure a range of options are available that sustains individuals in their daily living and meets their particular household needs.
- **Economic interest:** To support workers' labour market participation by having access to safe, affordable housing.

In the area of Social Housing and Affordable Housing most DSSAB's have a mix of directly delivered housing properties, non-profit providers, co-operatives and agreements with private landlords under various rent supplement programs.

DSSABs play a triple role of funder, service deliverer and service system manager in providing funding for and oversight of the locally overseen co-operative and non-profit organizations' infrastructure, reserves and regularly perform operational reviews with non-profits housing providers.

Recently, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing has tasked the DSSABs with developing 10-year Housing & Homelessness Plans that requires DSSABs to deal with all residents in each of their communities, municipal councils, building control officials, economic development officers as well as businesses and non-profit organizations within the communities the individual DSSAB represents.

HOW WOULD SERVICE SYSTEM MANAGEMENT BY DSSABs SUPPORT INTEGRATING EMPLOYMENT SERVICES?

Over the past year, a series of government announcements and reports have called for the integration of employment services, including the 2013 Provincial Budget, the Drummond Report and the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance. As it currently stands, much of the activity in employment services is transactional in nature, typified by the approval of a return to work plan on a case-by-case basis built on the discreet program objectives and requirements. Little community based planning occurs that links individual plans to broader labour market planning. A new mindset is required to move from a transactional management of employment services to a systems approach to managing integrated employment services. For example, the Drummond Commission supports the integration of Employment Services under MTCU and points directly to the importance and value of local responses in making this successful. Service System Management is the delivery tool that can bridge the provincial interest with the local need.

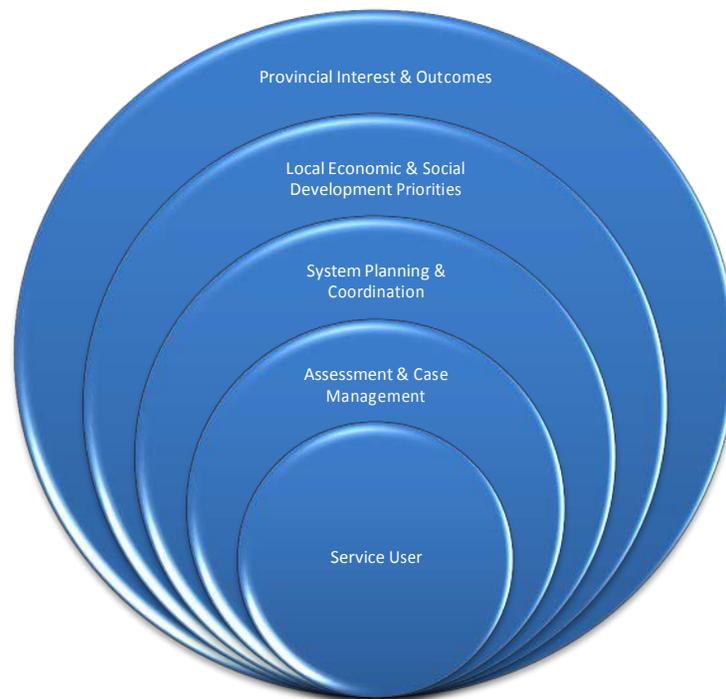
The following are examples where the benefits of collaborating with local governments and specifically DSSABs, to achieve improved economic and social outcomes, can result in a more efficient, responsive and intelligent approach to employment services:

- DSSABs are uniquely positioned to play the role of Service System Manager for the Province of Ontario. DSSAB's are already responsible for the delivery of Ontario Works Employment Services. These services are generally delivered through a mix of self-delivered programs and third party agreements with local colleges, school boards and the non-profit community agencies. DSSABs are in regular contact with local employers and businesses, offering employers job matching services, on the job coaching, employer wage subsidies and training opportunities for clients.
- DSSAB's work closely with colleges to develop appropriate programming for the individuals they serve within a particular community; often, it is by developing specific programming to meet the needs of clients in a community such as life skills training, handling transactions for cashiers or computer classes required for a specific job.

- DSSABs work closely with community literacy agencies that are in the best position to deliver basic literacy and upgrading to individuals in order to achieve a grade 12 equivalency. Further DSSABs work with Colleges and Universities to assist clients in choosing the most appropriate career path based on their individual skills. In the North, there are two DSSABs that directly deliver the full suite of Employment Ontario programs. Through the delivery of the Employment Ontario Program, DSSABs have demonstrated their ability to deliver provincially funded employment programs to all residents of its communities and not only to social assistance recipients.
- Relationships with local employers, economic development officers and the business community have been developed to ensure that potential employees have the skills and ability they need to be successful in the workplace. DSSABs have worked regularly with their local economic development agencies to host job fairs for new employers and career fairs for students.
- DSSABs, as responsive local governments, are appropriately positioned and willing to take on the responsibilities to work with local stakeholders in planning a range of employment services to meet local and provincial needs.

In short, DSSABs are positioned to link needs to resources. They are the vehicle to connect and coordinate services and resources with an eye towards outcomes and accountability.

The following graphic identifies the inter-relation of the parts of a service system management approach and the wrap-around nature of the functions.



WHAT WOULD BE THE BENEFITS OF A SERVICE SYSTEM MANAGEMENT APPROACH FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES?

Employment Services should be planned at the community level to ensure they are integrated, that administration is streamlined and that local needs are met – all the while being accountable to the provincially established Outcomes framework, and supporting the economic benefits of stronger communities with more people engaged in the labour market. More flexibility in administering programs and having fewer restrictions and guidelines would ensure less overlap and direct more resources to targeted services to best meet the needs of residents.

Residents, service providers, governments and other stakeholders need to be involved in planning of services to ensure that choices are available in the services provided, and to ensure public accountability. DSSAB's are uniquely positioned to understand and meet their local communities' needs in terms of Child Care, Social Housing, Income Support, Employment Services and Economic Development, as well as ensuring the provision of collateral or "wrap-around" services that are often crucial to the success of individualized employment plans. It is important to note however, that while the DSSAB role is focused on the above, the impact extends across aspects of the organization of local governments and the health of communities.

A Service System Management Approach offers benefits in a number of ways:

<p>Service User</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One door to employment system • Streamlined services leading to fewer referrals • Greater access to “wrap-around” services • Flexible and responsive services 	<p>Employers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease of access to system • Direct links through economic development • Simplification of “who does what?” • Better recruitment support in shifting economies
<p>Province</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplification of administration • Ability to respond more broadly to Outcomes based policy • Consistency in service provision • Accountability framework 	<p>DSSABs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsiveness to local need • Broader based planning • Reduced red tape • Differentiated case management to support distance from the labour market

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, when delivering employment supports in conjunction with income support, CMSMs/DSSABs have the ability to:

- Create efficiencies by serving clients in a ‘one door’ approach and through integrated case management;
- Link and refer clients to other provincially mandated human and social service supports (e.g. childcare, housing);
- Facilitate labour market attachment for clients based on knowledge of local labor market conditions and engagement with local employers through relationships with their municipal economic development arms;
- Contribute to local and regional economic development objectives and further workforce development strategies; and,
- Be responsive and accountable to local elected officials for the social and economic development of their communities.

At the April, 2013 NOSDA Annual General Meeting, this concept was approved by NOSDA’s membership by resolution and the resolution is attached as Appendix “A”.

APPENDIX "A"

RESOLUTION 2013 - 03: ONTARIO WORKS

DATE: **April 11, 2013**

MOVED BY: **Norm Laberge**

SECONDED BY: **George Jupp**

"WHEREAS the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario has submitted their final report ["Brighter Prospects: Transforming Social Assistance in Ontario"](#) to the premier on October 2012; and

WHEREAS the [Drummond Report](#) and the Commission's report both address the need to integrate Employment Programs; and

WHEREAS the Social Assistance Commission's recommendation number 20 states:

"Recognizing the importance of integrating employment services with other human services, we recommend that municipalities and First Nations continue to be responsible for employment services for social assistance recipients"; and

WHEREAS the Social Assistance Commission's recommendation number 22 states:

"We recommend that the Province expand the number of municipalities, where there is interest and capacity, designated as Employment Ontario deliverers"; and

WHEREAS the Social Assistance Commission's recommendation number 23 states:

"We recommend that municipalities be full partners with the Province in managing and planning employment services in their communities"; and
WHEREAS the Drummond Report recommendation 8-5 states:

"The Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario should examine system design options that deliver a more efficient and higher-quality service to social assistance recipients. This examination should consider combining Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program, and having the combined program delivered at the local level. It should also address the further integration of employment services available through Employment Ontario"; and

WHEREAS it has been recognized the value of direct relationships with local economic development and business is fundamental in planning for good employment outcomes in a community and by virtue of the municipal linkages to these departments with CMSM/DSSAB's; and

WHEREAS it has also been acknowledged that other municipally delivered services including Housing Services and Children's Services are fundamental to assisting individuals along the continuum of employment;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT NOSDA call on the Premier of Ontario to move forward with the integration of Employment Services and more specifically that the province engage CMSM/DSSAB's as full partners in managing and planning employment services in their communities; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Premier takes the first step along this integration path by immediately expanding the number of CMSM/DSSAB's in the North which are designated as Employment Ontario deliverers.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Premier directs the Minister of Training Colleges and Universities who is responsible for Employment Ontario to make DSSAB's/CMSM the Service System Managers for employment programs where the CMSM/DSSAB is interested which would mean Employment Ontario would only have one contract within each CMSM/DSSAB jurisdiction. This would allow CMSM/DSSAB to rationalize services and ensure that over time a streamlined and more holistic approach to employment services in a community were being funded.

CARRIED

_____ *Original Signed by Gary Scipnick* _____
NOSDA Chair