

SOCIAL_SERVICE_EMPLOYMENT_PROGRAM
(SSEP)

PROGRAM_GUIDELINES_AND_PROCEDURES

Procedures within this package are specific to the Toronto Area and may differ from other locations in the Province.

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APPENDIX

A sample of the program legal agreement is included with this package.

PROPOSAL FORM

A set of proposal forms is included with this package. For additional copies, please contact the Employment Team, at 325-0699.

I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND GUIDELINES

1. Program Intent

The Social Service Employment Program (SSEP) is a job creation program. It is designed to provide a 12 month subsidized work experience for long term social assistance recipients who are job ready, but who are having difficulty finding and maintaining employment.

The goal of the Social Service Employment Program is to enable job ready Social Assistance Recipients and Vocational Rehabilitation Services clients to secure employment, obtain employment generated income, gain current employment experience, and reduce barriers to employment.

While the program provides employment opportunities for clients, it also provides an opportunity for participating agencies to obtain time limited staffing assistance and to increase awareness and acceptance of social assistance and employment equity populations.

The employer is expected to make a commitment to hire the SSEP staff on to a permanent position if a suitable vacancy occurs either during or at the end of the one-year term. Consideration is based, of course, on the employee's work performance, the suitability of the vacant position, and the competition process established within the organization. If no suitable vacancy occurs, the employer is expected to assist the employee to identify agencies in the service network which may have suitable positions available.

2. Target Group

Individuals receiving social assistance often experience difficulties obtaining employment. SSEP is designed to provide services for this client group, which will enhance their labour market attachment. Eligible participants include: individuals receiving social assistance or their spouses (who are included in the allowance) and who are:

At risk of long term dependence

The Social Service Employment Program is intended to provide work experience for individuals who would be unlikely to obtain employment without the program. It is designed to assist social assistance recipients who have some barriers to employment, for example:

- little or no recent work experience
- low self-esteem
- obsolete or deficient job skills

It is not intended to provide service for individuals who are receiving social assistance temporarily or for those who are able to take advantage of mainstream programs, such as those provided through CEC, the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Colleges and Universities.

Ready to make the transition to employment

The SSEP program is intended for social assistance recipients who want to become employed and who feel they are ready to accept the challenge of overcoming the barriers they face.

Have not participated in the program for the past three years

Participation in SSEP does not always lead to employment. Some individuals face such significant barriers to employment that, after their employment experience, they may again become dependent on social assistance. The program does not permit continuous or consecutive placements, but it does allow an individual to have a second placement three years after his/her last participation in the program. If a placement is terminated because of illness or extraordinary circumstances, another full placement within the three year time frame may be considered appropriate.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) clients, who are not in receipt of FBA or GWA, are also eligible for participation in the program.

Employers are encouraged to target the program to long-term recipients of social assistance, usually sole support parents and persons with disabilities. (See Target Group Page 1.)

The Social Service Employment Program is a voluntary program. Applicants are motivated by the desire to become independent of social assistance and to enrich their lives through financial gains and self-growth.

SSEP applicants bring a wide range of skills, knowledge, and experience to the program. Their reasons for choosing the Social Service Employment Program vary and may include:

- A chance to gain on-the-job experience in the field related to their education.
- An opportunity to regain confidence in their abilities after a break in their employment history.
- A way to enter into the labour force without a previous history of paid employment.

- A chance to fine tune job-related skills.
- An opportunity to experience a specific field of work with a view towards further education and a future career.

3. Eligible Employers

Non-profit social service or non-profit community agencies are eligible to participate in this program. An employment experience under the Social Service Employment Program may be provided by:

- municipalities
- District Welfare Boards
- First Nation Communities
- MCSS transfer payment and incorporated non-profit community agencies

MCSS field offices, directly operated facilities and corporate Ministry offices are *not eligible employers. This program is not intended to augment the direct operating expense budgets of provincial ministries and, therefore, they are not eligible for funding.*

A wide range of positions may be created through SSEP. These may include but are not limited to the following:

- Social Service Workers
- Clerical or Secretarial positions
- Administrative Assistants
- Maintenance Workers
- Food Services Workers
- Home Support Workers for Seniors and the Disabled
- Audio/Visual Technician
- Computer Operators
- Day Care Teachers or Assistants
- Apprenticeship (non-traditional jobs for women) (e.g. electrician)

In order to maximize the potential for permanent employment upon completion of the SSEP term, the qualifications for the position created must equal the qualifications established for similar positions within the organization.

THE POSITION MAY SUPPLEMENT BUT NOT REPLACE A PERMANENT POSITION.

4. Funding

MCSS will subsidize the full cost of salary and benefits for the first six months of employment. During the second six months, the agency/employer is expected to contribute towards the cost of salary and benefits, according to the cost-sharing policies already established between the agency/employer and the ministry. When no cost-sharing arrangement exists, this contribution will be negotiated by the Area Office based on the principles of fairness and consistency. (In Toronto, the formula is 90% MCSS, 10% agency/employer).

There is no provision for administration and/or capital costs for the agency/employer.

Legislative Authority

The Social Service Employment Program (SSEP) is funded under the *Ministry of Community and Social Services Act*, Section 8.

II. PROPOSAL PROCESS

1. Application

To participate in SSEP, employers are invited to submit proposals to the Ministry of Community and Social Services, using the forms available for this purpose.

Proposals must meet the basic criteria as outlined under "Program Description and Guidelines". The Employment Liaison Officer, in conjunction with the Program Supervisor, will be responsible for determining the suitability of the proposal in the context of the kinds and numbers of positions being created, their geographical distribution, and the SSEP budget allocation. If approved, the agency will receive written confirmation of acceptance.

NOTE: PRIORITY CONSIDERATION WILL BE GIVEN TO PROPOSALS FOR WHICH AN ELIGIBLE CANDIDATE HAS ALREADY BEEN IDENTIFIED.

Referrals to the program may be made by income maintenance officers, VRS counsellors, employment support programs or by the individuals themselves (self-referral).

Agencies interested in participating in the program as an employer are required to submit application with supporting documentation (e.g. job descriptions, proof of non-profit status, training plans) to the Area Office.

2. Approval

Legal Agreement

Positions approved for funding under SSEP require a legal agreement. This agreement forms the program and funding contract between the agency and the ministry.

Once the position is approved, two originals of the legal agreement will be sent to the agency for two signatures and the corporate seal. If your agency does not have a corporate seal, the agreement must be witnessed by a third party.

NOTE: PLEASE DO NOT ALTER THE LEGAL AGREEMENT.

The employer then returns both completed originals to the appropriate Legal Administrative Clerk for the signatures of the Employment Program Supervisor and Financial Analyst. (Please see Section III Administration Process for the Legal Administrative Clerk for your agency.)

A fully executed original is returned to the employer.

NOTE: WITHOUT A FULLY EXECUTED LEGAL AGREEMENT, MCSS IS UNABLE TO PROCESS CLAIMS FOR REIMBURSEMENT.

3. Recruitment

Once a proposal is approved, the job posting is forwarded to employment counsellors throughout Metro Toronto. These include:

- Municipal (Metro) and Provincial Employment Program Counsellors.
- MCSS Vocational Rehabilitation Counsellors and Job Placement Officers.
- Employment Preparation and Rehabilitation Counsellors in community agencies e.g. Focus on Change, Opportunity for Advancement, Goodwill, C.N.I.B., etc.

The decision to refer will be based largely on the information provided in the job posting. It is important that the posting clearly describe the duties and qualification requirements of the position.

Either the counsellor or the client may phone the employer to schedule an interview or request more details about the position. With the client's permission, the counsellor may choose to speak to the employer about the applicant in specific situations and may request feedback about the employment interview. The employer may also recruit independently but must limit applicants to those eligible to participate in SSEP. (See "Target Group")

The employer may choose to interview all or a limited number of the applicants referred prior to making a decision. If no further referrals are being accepted for interviewing, the employer should notify the appropriate Legal Administrative Clerk. (Please see Page 7).

4. The Job Offer

- i) **Before a job offer is made**, the employer must phone the appropriate Legal Administrative Clerk to confirm the chosen candidate's eligibility to participate in the program.

THE MINISTRY CANNOT PROVIDE SALARY AND BENEFITS REIMBURSEMENT TO AN EMPLOYER IF THE PERSON HIRED IS NOT ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE.

- ii) The employer should be prepared to provide the client name, surname, date of birth, and social insurance number for the purpose of checking eligibility.
- iii) Once the job offer is made and accepted, the employer should phone the Legal Administrative Clerk to advise that the position is filled. In turn, the job posting will be marked as filled by the secretary and all employment counsellors calling regarding vacancy of jobs will be advised that it is filled.
- iv) The successful candidate may then commence employment on the date agreed upon with the employer.
- v) The employer completes the procedures as outlined under "Administration."

III. ADMINISTRATION PROCESS

1. Administration

- i) Upon filling the position, the employer is required to complete and forward an "Employee Information Form" to the attention of the appropriate Legal Administrative Clerk*. The information from this form will be used to draw up the Individual Position Schedule (IPS). A copy of the IPS will be sent to agencies and should be filed with the legal agreement.

- ii) The successful candidate should be placed directly on the employer's payroll and enrolled in the employer's benefit plan. (This may take place before the legal agreement is fully processed).
- iii) Claims for salary and benefits reimbursement must be submitted to MCSS at the end of each month, using a form entitled "Application for Payment of Provincial Subsidy." Only the actual amounts of salary and the employer's portion of benefits payments may be claimed. It takes 4 to 6 weeks for a reimbursement claim to be processed. (For further information about the claims process, please contact the appropriate Legal Administrative Clerk).*
- iv) When the employee leaves or completes the SSEP term, the employer is required to forward a "Record of Employment Termination" form to MCSS.

2. Personnel/Payroll

Under the SSEP guidelines and legal agreement, the employer assumes responsibility to include the employee within the organization's personnel and administrative practices. During the one-year term of employment, the employee is expected to achieve the same standards of performance and follow guidelines as if he or she were regular staff within the organization. The employee should receive the same orientation, training and performance evaluations as provided to regular staff. Reasonable time should be given to allow the employee to adjust to the return to employment and to achieve increased confidence in the skills required to perform the duties of the position.

With the employee's consent, a counsellor may request a follow-up meeting with the employer to discuss the employee's progress in the position. Should it become necessary to terminate employment for SSEP staff, the employee should be given the same notice** as would be given to regular staff. (Notice should follow a performance evaluation and documented discussions outlining the issues leading to dismissal.) The employee's counsellor is usually available to consult with and assist in working towards problem resolution, thus avoiding a dismissal.

* Yvonne Ayuen
Agencies in Toronto/
West of Yonge Street
North York
Etobicoke
York

Anna Borys
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** Notice must meet the requirements as stipulated by the Employment Standards Act.

IV. PROGRAM COMPONENTS

1. Work Experience

Duration. The intent of the program is to provide work experience for long-term social assistance recipients in an incorporated non-profit community agency, municipality, First Nation community or District Welfare Board. The work experience is limited to 12 months and participants may not have more than one placement within a three year period.

Type of Employment. The work experience position is full-time regular employment as defined by the employer (35 to 40 hours weekly, in most cases).

Type of Position. The program is intended to create *new* positions to provide an appropriate employment experience for the participants and may *not* be used by community agencies to replace existing staff or positions.

Wages. Wages for the position are set by the employer and will be consistent with other similar positions within the agency's salary schedule. The agency may establish a salary range which would allow some flexibility based on the applicant's qualifications and experience.

Benefits. The agency/employer must provide benefits to the participant as they would for any new employee. Mandatory benefits as outlined in the *Employment Standards Act* apply.

Prospects for Permanent Employment. The work experience must be of value to the participant. It is expected that the experience will lead to ongoing employment within the agency or the development of job skills consistent with the local competitive job market.

2. Training and Development

It is expected that participants will receive sufficient training from the agency/employer to carry out the responsibilities of the position, and that they will be included in staff training events. In exceptional cases, a participant (employee) may need special training to meet the job requirements (e.g. a specific course through the community college or other local training facility). To support the participant, the Social Service Employment Program may cover these training costs up to a maximum of \$500. This amount may be claimed within the 5% approved for salary increases (i.e. training costs plus salary increases may not exceed the 5% approved for salary increases on the budget schedule).

3. Support and Follow-Up

If the agency/employer is not able to offer the participant ongoing employment, it is expected that the agency will support the participant's efforts to find other work (towards the end of the work experience) by allowing reasonable time off for interviews and job search without loss of pay. When warranted by the employee's performance, the agency/employer may also provide job leads and letters of reference. Participants who are unsuccessful in obtaining employment may be referred to appropriate job placement and/or other employment services in the community.

A letter will be sent to the employer and employee when the SSEP term is ~~near~~ completion (around the 9th month).

The letter to the employee advises that it is now time to begin to actively search for permanent employment by applying for permanent vacancies within the employing organization or in the community.

The letter to the employer requests the employer to advise the employee about permanent employment opportunities within the organization, to provide a letter of reference, and to allow the employee reasonable time off, with pay to attend interviews.

The employee is required to complete the evaluation form enclosed with the letter and return it to the Employment Team.

The employer should complete the client evaluation with the employee and keep it on record at the agency. (This form should not be returned to the Employment Team).