

## **CONTRACT RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY**

### **Workforce Development in a Changing Landscape**

*August 31, 2020*

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#### **Background**

The City of Toronto's [Working as One: A Workforce Development Strategy for Toronto](#) was developed to address the needs of employers and help residents get jobs. Since its introduction in 2012, it has driven many important changes: Encouraging more and deeper partnerships with industry and employers; advancing sector work to support pathways into good quality jobs in high demand sectors; maximizing broad community benefits and enabling a range of innovative initiatives to better prepare jobseekers for work. The strategy's focus on demand-driven workforce needs was considered innovative at the time.

Over the past eight years, there have been important developments in the policy and service landscape, as well as significant changes to the labour market and the nature of work. Toronto has seen, for example, the growth of working poverty, the spread of precarious work, the rise of the gig economy, and most recently the impact of COVID-19 on the global economy and income security systems writ large. In addition, COVID-19 has revealed deep disparities that exist within our socio-economic system that disadvantages racialized populations, youth, newcomers and immigrants among other marginalized groups.

Looking ahead, the Province of Ontario is embarking upon a [plan to transform employment services](#) for all job seekers through the integration of social assistance (Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program) employment services currently funded through the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) with the provincial Employment Ontario (EO) network. As part of this work, the province announced that new employment service system managers would also be selected based on a competitive process, to plan, manage and deliver the new employment services model starting in [three prototype regions](#): Region of Peel, Hamilton Niagara and Muskoka Kawarthas. While the timing for full provincial rollout and when Toronto will be impacted is uncertain, as currently envisioned, the integration will see a shift in accountability and capacity for employment supports and workforce development programming intended for Toronto residents in receipt of OW to the new service system manager for the Toronto region.

It is in this environment that the Intergovernmental Committee for Economic and Labour Force Development (ICE Committee) is commissioning this contract research project. ICE is seeking to engage a researcher / research team to take stock of workforce development best practices and emerging models in other jurisdictions and identify key issues that the Toronto region will need to take into account to best serve residents and employers in a new decade.

## Purpose

This project will begin to gather and synthesize key research and concepts, and document lessons from key stakeholders and initiatives. The purpose is to lay a foundation to inform future direction for workforce development in the Toronto region, and relevant government and ecosystem partners within it.

## Current Context

Toronto's existing employment and training services "ecosystem" is complex. It involves multiple provincial ministries and a large network of community non-profits, private sector, public colleges, school boards and government stakeholders who plan, manage, and deliver varied – and often overlapping – employment and training programming for residents and "clients" of one of Ontario's two social assistance programs, OW and ODSP.

Employment assistance through OW includes a range of activities and services such as participation in basic education and literacy training, support with job search, employment placement, volunteering, and self-employment. These services are administered by local/municipal OW service delivery partners who may directly deliver and/or contract with third-party service providers. Locally, the City of Toronto's Employment and Social Services (TESS) division is one of 47 OW service delivery partners across the province responsible for serving an average monthly caseload of 84,000 cases comprised of Toronto residents with varying employment and wellness needs.

Employment Ontario, funded through the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, is a system of programs and services designed to assist individuals and employers with a wide range of employment, skills training and workforce development needs. EO is comprised of a large service delivery network of contracted service providers, including municipalities, public colleges, school boards and not-for-profit organizations.

Furthermore, while the EO and OW systems are major components of the employment service landscape provincially, there are a range of other training and employment programs funded by other provincial ministries, as well as federal departments, which target programs to youth, newcomers, Indigenous Peoples and people with disabilities.

## Scope of Work

The specific responsibilities and key activities of the successful proponent will include:

1. Developing a **project work plan** that incorporates engagement with key stakeholders, research approach and sources of data;
2. Conducting an **environmental scan/jurisdictional review** of evolving workforce development strategies in other jurisdictions and in Toronto to:
  - a. determine key/common issues, service system management approaches/models and emerging best practices; and
  - b. identify if and how other jurisdictions address issues of inclusion and equity in their approaches to workforce development as it relates to low-income groups, racialized groups, youth, and newcomers and immigrants.

The key underpinning questions for this review are:

- *How do other Canadian (e.g. British Columbia, key Ontario municipalities) and large international urban jurisdictions perform, on a city or regional basis, the function of service system manager for employment services (whether through government departments, para-governmental bodies, commercial or NGO organizations, or consortia)?*
  - *What workforce development collaborations/partnerships/ad hoc systems are currently being developed or implemented within the Toronto region that exist independent of government-led approaches?*
  - *How are community priorities (such as poverty reduction, addressing the specific needs of newcomers, racialized groups, youth, etc.) addressed by the different approaches/models?*
  - *What specific outcomes are associated with the different approaches/models identified in respect to system impact and individual jobseeker/employer impacts, with a specific focus on equity seeking groups?*
3. **Undertaking interviews/focus groups** with key City of Toronto staff and other stakeholders (including business, community, employment service prototype regions, research/policy and government) to better understand the current landscape. The needs of newcomer job seekers should be explicitly included; and
  4. Developing **key considerations** and principles to inform future direction in respect to workforce development in the Toronto region.

## Deliverables

The deliverables for this assignment will include the development of the following:

- Development of detailed project work plan;
- Detailed report summarizing the findings from stakeholder engagement and literature review/jurisdictional scan that synthesizes key approaches in other jurisdictions and describes options and considerations for a transformed workforce development landscape in Toronto (this may take the form of key considerations, a roadmap for change, or some other product);
- Glossary based on literature review/jurisdictional scan describing key workforce development and labour market concepts, including inclusion and equity considerations;
- Presentation of report at a (likely virtual) ICE Committee meeting for internal discussion; and
- Participation in a report launch event beyond the completion of the report (likely through a virtual event should COVID-19 still be a consideration).

## Budget

The maximum budget for this contract research project is **\$10,000** plus HST (if applicable).

## **Timeline**

The anticipated project timeline start date is November 2, 2020, with a draft report due February 10, 2021 and a final report due March 10, 2021. The successful applicant(s) should be available for the launch event of the report beyond completion of the report (depending on COVID-19, likely through participation in a virtual event).

## **Application Process**

To apply, email a two- to three-page submission to [info@icecommittee.org](mailto:info@icecommittee.org) with the subject line "ICE Contract – Workforce Development in a Changing Landscape".

Your submission should:

- Outline how you propose to carry out the work related to this project.
- Demonstrate the requisite experience and capacity to carry out the project in the allotted timeframe, including your ability to do the required research.
- In addition to the two- to three-page submission, include a short resume or CV.

**Application deadline: 5:00 p.m. Monday September 21, 2020**

We will accept joint applications from groups of individuals or organizations. We encourage applications from current graduate students and graduates with relevant degrees. Credentials and professional experience earned either in Canada or internationally will be recognized.

Selection schedule (subject to change):

- All applicants will be notified of receipt of their submission when received.
- Applications selected for an interview will be contacted during the week of October 5, 2020.
- Interviews will take place via videoconference the week of October 19<sup>th</sup> at a time and date to be determined.
- The project contract will be awarded by October 28, 2020.
- The project start date is November 2, 2020.

## **About the ICE Committee**

The ICE Committee was established in 1997 by officials in the Government of Canada, the Province of Ontario, and the City of Toronto. The purpose of the committee is to coordinate the economic and labour force development activities of the three governments (and the various departments and ministries within each government) in Toronto. The ultimate goal of the ICE Committee is to achieve the effective delivery of economic and labour force development programs in Toronto. ICE has played a key role in bringing together critical players to share information on their respective programs and projects. For more information about ICE, please visit [www.icecommittee.org](http://www.icecommittee.org).