

## **Ontario Works Culinary and Carpentry Fundamentals Training Program Outcomes**

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### **Report Summary**

This report provides an update regarding the employment outcomes for clients on social assistance who were enrolled in the Culinary Arts and Carpentry Fundamental Training Programs through services purchased by Social Services from Collège Boréal in 2019.

### **Relationship to the Strategic Plan, Health Impact Assessment and Community Energy & Emissions Plan (CEEP)**

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan in the area of Quality of Life and Place for Citizens of the City of Greater Sudbury as it aligns with the Population Health Priority of Resiliency by investing in families, enabling, promoting mental health, and encouraging holistic health as it provides supports to low income families. This report has no relationship to the Community Energy and Emissions Plan.

### **Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications associated with this report, as it was funded with employment assistance program funding from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.

### **Executive Summary**

In the fall of 2019, Social Services purchased spaces in Collège Boréal's 16-week Carpentry Fundamentals and Culinary Arts Fundamental Training programs for 20 Ontario Works clients (10 in each program) to be enrolled at the start of 2020.. This report provides an update on the outcomes of these training programs, which were selected based on results of the previous year, labour market information, and the need to achieve service-planning priorities for Ontario Works (OW) Employment Assistance Programming in 2019.

A report on employment outcomes was expected to be brought back to the Community Service Committee in the second quarter of 2020; however, this was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A review of employment outcomes in the first quarter of 2021 revealed lower employment results directly related to the impact of the pandemic. This led to a smaller percentage of graduates declaring earnings. The Carpentry Fundamentals program enabled one graduate to further their learning, successfully enrolling in a Carpentry Pre-apprenticeship Program at Collège Boréal while another became self-employed.

## Background

The Ontario Works Program (OW) requires participation in employment activities in order to qualify for social assistance. Approved activities may include one or a combination of options including upgrading, literacy, community placements, employment placements, or job specific skills training. Spouses and dependent adults on the Ontario Disability Supports Program (ODSP) are also required to participate in employment activities and are referred to Ontario Works by their ODSP caseworker.

The Children and Social Services Division uses the latest statistical labour market data coupled with consultations with employers, local unions, workforce partnership boards, and other community partners to determine where opportunities for sustainable employment exist in the surrounding area. When an occupational need is identified, experiential training opportunities by reputable providers with industry recognized training and certification are explored.

In 2019, it was determined there was a need to train workers in the Accommodation & Food Industry and Construction Industry in Greater Sudbury. These industries are the sixth and fourth largest in the city. Combined, they employed 13,800 workers respectively, where an entry-level job for kitchen helpers, cooks, cooks assistants, construction trades helpers, and labourers were in demand. Past-specialized training opportunities for participants included truck driving, heavy equipment operator, introductory welding fundamentals, bricklaying, drywall application and finishing, and personal support worker training.

## Participant Selection

Equally significant to the selection of entry-level training programs is the selection of suitable, training-ready participants. The process of participant selection is outlined below:

- Ontario Works Caseworkers and Employment Counsellors referred participants to customized group information sessions. These sessions were delivered by the Division's Employment Support Analyst providing local labour market industry and occupational data, listings of potential post training jobs, course details, desired criteria, and an overview of employment financial supports and next steps
- Interested participants completed a screening questionnaire and attended a personal interview. Participants scoring in higher percentiles, demonstrating life stabilization, learning readiness and program suitability, were offered admission into one of the programs
- A designated Employment Counsellor was assigned to provide wrap around supports during course delivery. This included soliciting daily feedback from college instructors and attendance monitoring
- At graduation, successful participants were referred to the YMCA of Northeastern Ontario Employment & Career Services for assistance with job search and marketing to employers for potential employment placements and job opportunities

None of the selected participants were employed at the beginning of the Programs. While most participants had been on longer-term assistance for over two years, all lacked attachment to the workforce and possessed limited transferable skills. None had recent job specific skills certification or training.

It is also important to note that even if a participant were deemed as not ready for job specific training at the time of assessment, caseworkers would continue to work on life stabilization to prepare clients for future employment opportunities.

## Program Delivery

Participants began the training programs on December 2, 2019; however, on March 10, 2020, programs were suspended due to the provincial state of emergency and operation orders under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of the suspension, there were five participants remaining in Carpentry and six remaining in Culinary. Participants had completed between 60 – 80% of the training programs.

With the relaxing of provincial measures, it was agreed that course participants would benefit from the addition of a two-week refresher added to the remaining weeks for both programs when they resumed in August 2020.

## Post Program Outcomes

In September 2020, four students graduated from Carpentry while four graduated from Culinary. All graduating participants were referred to the YMCA of Northeastern Ontario Employment Services for assistance with employment preparation and marketing to local employers. With the exceptional challenges created in the labour market due to the pandemic, the accommodation and food services industry was one of the hardest hit. The majority of restaurants laid off kitchen staff due to the closure of dining areas leaving take-out options only.

The construction industry also suffered losses with project slowdowns or suspensions on many existing or pending projects. The interruption of the Carpentry Fundamentals program in March 2020 resulted in participants graduating in the fall instead of spring when the bulk of hiring occurs for summer projects.

Although local unemployment rates fared lower than provincial and national averages, the city reported an unemployment rate of 8.6% in September 2020, one of the highest in recent memory. Follow up with participants revealed 40% experienced challenges with securing available child care services while some had no option but to stay at home with their school-aged children during restrictions.

A review of outcomes was conducted in March 2021, six months post program.

Program	Average Monthly Net Employment Earnings Declared Post Program	Proportion Trained Declaring Earnings
Carpentry	\$1,500	25%
Culinary	\$300	20%

Pandemic challenges continued to plague employment opportunities as the community moved in and out of restrictive zone levels in the province's COVID 19 Response Framework. Despite these challenges, foundational skills learned in the Carpentry Fundamentals program enabled one graduate to further their learning, successfully enrolling in a Carpentry Pre-apprenticeship Program at Collège Boréal while another became self-employed. All graduates in the Culinary Fundamentals Program learned valuable life skills leading to efficient food preparation and enhanced nutritional awareness for their families.

## Next Steps

Ontario Works' caseworkers and community employment support staff continue to work with participants to secure employment opportunities and transition to self-sufficiency. Historically, 48% of participants in Carpentry Fundamentals and 38% of participants in Culinary Fundamental programs exited to employment.

For the upcoming year, staff are reviewing labour market data and consulting with industry stakeholders in order to prepare an RFP for skills training to commence in the fall of 2021. With the acceleration of the Province's Social Services Modernization and the transformation of employment services from municipalities to the Ministry of Labour, Training, and Skills Development, 2021 may be the last year that the municipality offers skills training as part of the local Ontario Works Program. An update on the next round of job specific training will be provided in the second quarter of 2022.

## Resources Cited

Social Services Employment Programs Information Report presented to the Community Services Committee on May 13, 2019, found at Item 1-6 under Correspondence for Information Only in the Agenda below;

<https://pub-greatersudbury.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=c658ef96-9dfc-4713-b2b9-63d147f9bf9f&Agenda=Agenda&lang=English>