A MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

Thriving Communities: Our Way Forward is a plan developed by ministry staff and our partners that unites us in a common mission to create the conditions necessary for Ontarians to achieve success.

At the very core of what we believe – and why we do what we do – is that we know all Ontarians are rich in potential. We know that no matter their circumstance, Ontarians are more likely to be successful when they feel a strong sense of belonging and when they are empowered to shape their lives and their communities.

We understand the benefits that result when we work together, and we know that our personal contributions can lead to better opportunities for Ontarians. Across the human services system, there are countless examples of how we have shared innovative ideas, deployed our resources efficiently and strengthened business processes, with the ultimate goal of providing more timely and responsive services.

However, there is more work to do – and this plan will guide and support both staff and partners towards 2020. We thank all of you for your invaluable contributions to the development of this document, and encourage you to review the plan to see where and how you fit. This plan challenges all of us to think and work differently to meet the ever-changing needs of Ontarians. Leaders, staff and our partners all have an important role to play and we must all share accountability.

We have heard a clear message that the status quo is no longer an option. We must change how we view the people we support and the assumptions we make. We need to be more agile and work in partnership with each other.
across the organization and across the province, to deliver meaningful and measurable results.

The ministry leadership team is committed to reducing barriers and creating conditions for success throughout the ministry and across the province.

We are also committed to measuring and regularly reporting on our progress. But, we must all work together in order to arrive at our desired future state. Your continued support and dedication to the people we serve will help ensure Ontarians achieve their full potential.

Your Ministry Leadership Team,

**Back Row, Left to Right:** Tony Lazzaro, Paul DeGray, Karen Glass, Susan Erwin, Nelson Loureiro, Jeff Bird, Dafna Carr, Josh VandeZande, Jeff Bowen, Bruno Bevilacqua, Lisa Zanetti, Sue Pettersone, Sheila DeCuyper, Sal Marrello, Tony Paniccia, Richard Steele, Erin Hannah

**Middle Row, Left to Right:** Paul Wheeler, Katherine Kulson, Anna Cain, Bob Davidson, Rupert Gordon, David Remington, Karen Eisler, Christine Kuepfer, Janet Menard, Diane Zimnica, Erin O’Connor, Nicole True, Patricia Kwasnik, Anne Stark, Kikee Malik, Nadia Cornacchia, Garth Cramer

**Front Row, Left to Right:** Patti Redmond, Gloria Lee, Saba Ferdinands, Lourdes Valenton, Bani Bawa, Jill Vienneau, Laura Summers, Madeleine Davidson, Maxine Daley, Karen Chan, Barbara Simmons
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INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) supports a large and diverse population in urban, rural and First Nation communities across Ontario. For more than 85 years, our dedicated and passionate staff have served Ontarians well, and we know they will continue to meet the public’s expectations for timely, responsive and high quality services.

Our mandate is clear and it comes from the Premier and our Minister. We are committed to fulfilling that mandate by implementing a number of key priorities (detailed in Appendix 1). As public servants, it is important to understand that change is constant in our environment and that political considerations may inform how we work.

Our priority is to improve the opportunities of all Ontarians, specifically including:

- people with physical and developmental disabilities and mental health conditions
- survivors of human trafficking and sexual and domestic violence
- people who are underemployed or unemployed
- families supported through the Family Responsibility Office
- Indigenous and First Nations Communities

The unique needs of the people receiving our services, combined with a highly decentralized delivery system and the increasing expectations of Ontarians all contribute to what is a highly complex undertaking.

In 2005, the ministry launched a strategic plan called Thriving Communities to guide the delivery of human services across the province. The plan set a ten year direction, established operating principles and identified several priorities and strategies for meeting them.

In the past 12 years, the ministry has taken great strides forward. And while much has changed over those years, the principles and values contained in the original plan still resonate today.

That said, people’s needs have evolved, as have their expectations. This plan aims to support our ministry as it also evolves, becoming an organization that truly engages with our partners and Ontarians, especially those relying on our services and supports.

As we continue to transform our services, we will require a shared view of where we are going, and broad agreement on the priority actions that will get us there, ensuring consistent, positive outcomes for Ontarians today and tomorrow.
It is time for a new, refreshed plan. Thriving Communities: Our Way Forward is that plan. It builds on the achievements of the past and outlines how we in the ministry will work together, and with Ontarians and our partners, in the future.

THRIVING COMMUNITIES:
SUCCESS OVER THE YEARS (2005 – 2016)

Champion community inclusion
• significantly increased direct funding and supports in the community to promote innovative and flexible services that support people with developmental disabilities and their families

Collaborate with partners for social change
• strengthened and improved how we engage with community planning tables to develop holistic policies and services that are locally sensitive, responsive and collaborative
• continue to work with various ministry partners and more than 750 agencies to provide integrated support and a one-window approach to ensuring seamless services across the human services system

Build individual resilience and opportunity
• transitioned from residential institutions and sheltered workshops to inclusive employment through community-based supports
• provided greater financial support by increasing social assistance rates, asset limits and the Ontario Child Benefit

Safeguard vulnerable Ontarians
• contributed to a multi-year, government-wide approach by providing funding for crucial supports designed to better protect women and children and reduce domestic violence
• made an unprecedented investment in community and developmental services to reduce waitlists, modernize and innovate, and better support adults with developmental disabilities

Model excellence in public service
• established dedicated programs to enhance leadership development, learning, organizational health, employee engagement and diversity, inclusion and accessibility
• modernized services and increased access by investing in technology, including implementing the FRO Case Management System (FCMS), Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) and introducing online applications processes for financial assistance
WHO WE ARE, WHO WE SERVE AND HOW WE DO IT

Approximately 10 per cent of Ontario’s population relies on our ministry’s services, including people living in poverty, people with disabilities, families entitled to child and spousal support, and those surviving the impacts of human trafficking or domestic violence. In other words, people most at risk of social and economic exclusion.

OUR SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

42,000 people
70,000 adults with developmental disabilities receive ODSP with 42,000 accessing one or more DS services

COMMUNITY SERVICES

56,000 Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy (AHWS) people
15,700 Deafblind-deaf-deafened-hard of hearing people

INCOME SUPPORTS

960,000 People
457,000 Ontario Works
290,000 Adults, 167,000 Children
503,000 ODSP
354,000 Adults with disabilities, 54,000 Non-disabled adults, 95,000 Children

DELIVERED BY OR PROVIDED THROUGH

370 Transfer Payment Agencies

CHS Canadian Hearing Society: Interpreter Services

47 AHWS Partners and Providers (460 projects)

NPO Range of Community Agencies

Our Way Forward
Approximately 10 per cent of Ontario's population relies on our ministry's services, including people living in poverty, people with disabilities, families entitled to child and spousal support, and those surviving the impacts of human trafficking or domestic violence. In other words, people most at risk of social and economic exclusion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Supports</th>
<th>Safety and Security Supports</th>
<th>Child and Spousal Supports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>241,000</strong> People in OW Employment Assistance</td>
<td><strong>17,700</strong> Women and children receiving Violence Against Women (VAW) services</td>
<td><strong>380,000</strong> People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12,000</strong> People in ODSP Employment Supports</td>
<td><strong>10,800</strong> Women</td>
<td>180,000 Payors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14%</strong> of OW/ODSP people accessing Employment Ontario Supports</td>
<td><strong>6,900</strong> Children</td>
<td>180,000 Recipients</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

People receiving income supports also access employment assistance/supports

- **45** Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) Local Offices (1,575 front line MCSS staff)
- **101** First Nations (OW)
- **47** Municipalities / District Social Service Administration Boards (OW)
- **150** Employment Supports Service Providers
- **207** Violence Against Women Transfer Payment Agencies
- **FRO** MCSS (400 frontline Family Responsibility Office (FRO) staff)
PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

**Community and Developmental Services**
We fund agencies, municipalities and First Nations communities to provide supports for Indigenous people, adults who are deaf, deafened, hard of hearing or deafblind, and others who are most at risk of social exclusion.

We work with people, families, communities and our partners to ensure all adults with developmental disabilities can live as independently as possible in their communities and are fully included in all aspects of society.

**Income and Employment Supports**
We provide income supports to low-income Ontarians that are delivered by municipalities and First Nations communities through Ontario Works and directly by the ministry through the Ontario Disability Support Program for people with disabilities. The ministry also coordinates provision of medical benefits and facilitates access to other community-based services.

We fund employment support services through community-based providers for people with disabilities who want to work. MCSS also supports municipalities in providing a range of employment assistance activities to help people prepare for, find and keep work.

**Provide Safety and Security Supports**
We fund a range of services and supports that are delivered through agencies and organizations across Ontario to increase the safety of women and children experiencing abuse, ensuring they can live independently and safely.

**Child and Spousal Supports**
We help entitled families secure their support payments by administering and enforcing court-ordered support responsibilities.

**Poverty Reduction**
We lead strategic policy development, cross-ministry partnerships, stakeholder relations, performance measurement and program evaluation in support of the Poverty Reduction Strategy and its initiatives.

**Internal Supports: Corporate Services, I & IT, Policy and Legal Services**
The ministry has dedicated corporate capacity such as Human Resources, Finance, Capital, Communications, I & IT, Policy, and Legal expertise to support the development and delivery of services to Ontarians.
OUR APPROACH

While our mandate and strategic priorities are clear and identify the work that we must accomplish over the next three years, we have the ability to shape how we work as an organization and build a culture that will make us successful.

To kick off this process, the leadership team – composed of the Deputy Minister, Assistant Deputy Ministers and directors across the ministry – asked one initial question: **what do we want to see in place in five years as a result of our ministry’s work?**

After drafting high-level direction and goals, the ministry undertook an extensive engagement process with staff at all levels, as well as with our partners and the people who access our services. The reason? When more people are involved, better ideas are generated and a stronger approach is developed. We wanted to learn from staff and our partners and hear diverse perspectives. We wanted to identify improvement areas and discuss the conditions that are present when we achieve success.

Throughout this engagement process, we identified a common vision, mission and guiding principles that will allow us to be successful when we work with each other – within the ministry, across levels of government and with our partners.

The ministry’s ability to deliver on our priorities and achieve long-term success is largely dependent on the willingness and ability of staff and leaders to embrace and exemplify our guiding principles and meet our commitments. We know that improvements are needed in the ministry to enact change and support each other in our important and challenging work.

Many of the suggestions we received are currently being implemented. Other recommendations, however, still require our attention. We will prioritize suggestions that align with our guiding principles and those that have the greatest potential to help us achieve our priorities.
Looking to 2020...

It starts with a vision. The ministry can only succeed when staff, partners and the people receiving our services have a clear idea of the type of organization we want to create and how we are going to get there. Our long-term vision gives us the focus required to meet future challenges and allows us to pursue opportunities that help Ontarians achieve their full potential.

**VISION**

Thriving Communities where all people are respected, included and empowered to achieve their full potential

Our long-term vision is driven by one fundamental desire: the social and economic inclusion of all people in Ontario’s communities. Inclusion means that all people have access to the labour market and have the opportunity to make meaningful contributions in the communities where they live, work and play.

**MISSION**

With our partners, the ministry will design, deliver and connect Ontarians with a system of integrated supports that improve their well-being and allow them to live independently

The ministry oversees a complex service system. In order to succeed, we need strong partnerships with municipalities/district social service administration boards, First Nations communities, community partners and agencies. We recognize that the perspectives of people with lived experience and of our partners are critical to designing an integrated system that is easy to navigate and improves personal well-being.

**STRATEGIC GOALS**

Three strategic goals guide our work and support the achievement of our long-term vision: Thriving Communities where all people are respected, included and empowered to achieve their full potential.

- **PERSON-DIRECTED SERVICES**
- **ENHANCED CAPACITY TO DELIVER**
- **IMPROVED OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE**
WHAT WILL THIS LOOK LIKE?

A simplified system that puts the “human” in human services

The service system of tomorrow will reduce complexity, provide greater flexibility and make it easier for people to access services. Making the connections necessary for an integrated system of human services will enable the ministry to become more efficient and support seamless transitions between different service offerings.

The top priority of our staff and partners will be to respond to the goals and aspirations of Ontarians. The ministry will emphasize the human in human services by focusing on the delivery of timely, high-quality services, rather than on transactions that do not add value.

The right service, at the right place, at the right time

We will design programs and services that respond to the unique needs of Ontarians. People receiving support will be empowered and have real choice around when, where and how they access services. They will have the opportunity to make meaningful choices as they navigate our service pathways. Ontarians will also see a ministry committed to reducing barriers to service and increasing the use of self-service options, including supports that are accessible 24/7.

Genuine engagement and strong partnerships with people, families and service providers

We will adopt a comprehensive engagement and collaboration approach that demonstrates our commitment to working differently. Our policies and programs will be co-designed to reflect the first-hand experiences of people who access our services and the expertise of partners and staff who deliver those services.

Ontarians will see the ministry engage with trust, openness and transparency. We will listen carefully. We will invest in building partnerships and ensure your advice helps us develop solutions and shape our future priorities.
ENHANCED CAPACITY TO DELIVER
Continuously improve to deliver value and earn the public’s trust

WHAT WILL THIS LOOK LIKE?

Structures and processes are optimized and refocused on high-impact activities

A highly efficient organization is one where redundant processes and routine tasks that do not add value are streamlined or eliminated. Minimizing routine, paper-based or transactional tasks will allow us to focus on working directly with Ontarians and our partners. Leveraging technology will also be central to maximizing our organization’s resources. Investments will reduce manual, labour-intensive work and will foster more integrated and improved connections between people, processes and information.

The ministry is also committed to using risk-based approaches to improve our capacity and capabilities. Embedding risk practices into our day-to-day processes will help ensure that our limited resources are used effectively, targeted to deliver optimal value and provide the trust necessary to build strong relationships with Ontarians.

Talented and empowered teams

We will create an environment where talented teams are encouraged to achieve their potential. Caseworkers and frontline staff will be empowered and supported to make decisions, offer their unique perspectives and take risks informed by evidence. Partners will work with ministry staff who are fair, approachable and willing to be influenced. They will experience a workforce that possesses a “can do” attitude.

Working seamlessly with partners across an integrated system

An integrated management and service delivery system will improve coordination, reduce complexity and result in better services. Ontarians will experience an integrated human services system that removes silos, requires them to only have to tell their story once, and helps them navigate more easily between different services.

Under this future vision, our partners will have increased levels of flexibility to innovate and deliver services in ways that best meet local needs. The focus will shift from completing compliance and output activities to achieving real program outcomes.

The ministry will also be flexible and explore best practices and IT solutions that lead to efficiencies and increased productivity.
Thriving Communities
Our Way Forward

ACHIEVING OUR GOALS

Achieving our goals will require us to become a modern, flexible and innovative organization. It will also require steady and fair leadership that sets clear priorities and creates the conditions for our staff and partners to excel. These conditions take the form of success factors we all need to understand and embrace in order to provide best-in-class service to Ontarians.

IMPROVED OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE
Measurably improve the well-being of Ontarians who access our services and supports

WHAT WILL THIS LOOK LIKE?

Meaningful measures to support evaluation, increase accountability and demonstrate integrity

All programs and services will have high-quality performance measures to provide meaningful reporting and evaluative data. Measures will be outcome-focused and demonstrate the impact of our services and supports on people and their families.

Measurement data will be released to support our commitment to transparency, demonstrate our progress and earn the public’s trust.

Planning and decision making informed by evidence

Our goal is for MCSS to be viewed as a leading organization in how we use data to inform policy development and program delivery. We will have clear governance practices to ensure that our data is trustworthy and high quality. Improved access to data that can be customized to user needs and is available on demand will enable more effective decision making.

Commitment to improve

The ministry is committed to working with legislative and oversight bodies (e.g., Office of the Ontario Ombudsman; Office of the Auditor General) to continuously strengthen our services. We will listen to their recommendations, implement corrective actions and regularly report back to demonstrate progress and improve outcomes for Ontarians.
Thriving Communities
Our Way Forward

VISION
Thriving Communities where all people are respected, included and empowered to achieve their full potential

MISSION
With our partners, the ministry will design, deliver and connect Ontarians with a system of integrated supports that improve their well-being and allow them to live independently

OUR SUCCESS FACTORS
- Trust and Empower
- Connect Authentically
- Collaborate and Integrate
- Continuously Improve
- Embrace Diversity and Celebrate Ability
**STRATEGIC GOALS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person-directed Services</td>
<td>Provide services designed to respect Ontarians and respond to their unique needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced Capacity to Deliver</td>
<td>Continuously improve to deliver value and keep the public's trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved Opportunities for People</td>
<td>Measurably improve the well-being of Ontarians who access our services and supports</td>
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**VISION**

Thriving Communities where all people are respected, included and empowered to achieve their full potential

**MISSION**

Ministry of Community and Social Services

**OUR SUCCESS FACTORS**

- Person-directed Services
- Enhanced Capacity to Deliver
- Improved Opportunities for People

**AT A GLANCE**
MCSS staff, like all staff in the Ontario Public Service (OPS), are guided by a core set of values.

**OPS VALUES**

- Trust
- Fairness
- Creativity
- Collaboration
- Diversity
- Excellence
- Efficiency
- Responsiveness

During our engagement process, it became clear that there is also a set of common factors present in the ministry when we are at our best.

**MCSS SUCCESS FACTORS**

- Trust and Empower
- Collaborate and Integrate
- Connect Authentically
- Continuously Improve
- Embrace Diversity and Celebrate Ability

These success factors complement the OPS values. They are so vital to our future success that the ministry is committed to affirming and displaying them more broadly across the organization – entrenching them in all day-to-day workplace interactions between staff and our partners, and with people and families receiving support.

To ensure these factors are present and practiced throughout the entire organization, the ministry is making a set of commitments to staff and our partners.
“We are most successful when we feel supported by our manager to take risks and make logical decisions. This creates a sense of empowerment and accomplishment.”

– Staff member, Kingston session

We succeed when we:

• trust and empower each other to use our best judgement and make evidence-informed decisions
• use clear and well-defined roles and responsibilities to navigate our day-to-day work
• enable innovation and creativity to find novel solutions

We know that our staff and partners succeed when they are empowered to make decisions, implement solutions and are given the time and space to lead. We know they want the ability to explore all possible options and the liberty to take calculated, evidence-based risks.

Empowering staff requires management support. Managers must make a concerted effort to build trust throughout the organization and create a culture where teams can operate independently and are not afraid to exercise professional judgement. Innovative and creative solutions are developed when trust is high and staff are given the time and support necessary to try new approaches.

Building trust requires accountability. Clearly defined roles help staff understand their responsibilities and know what they are expected to deliver. Holding staff to fair and professional standards helps to create dynamic, high-performing teams. We have a responsibility to ensure these things are happening, and we will.

To champion a culture of trust and empowerment, we commit to:

1. Clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities
2. Create the conditions necessary for staff and partners to exercise professional judgement, innovate, learn from mistakes and develop solutions that improve service delivery
3. Involve staff and partners during planning, implementation and when responding to issues or challenges to ensure a variety of perspectives are included in our policies, programs and supports
COLLABORATE AND INTEGRATE

“We are at our best when we collaborate and truly work together; when we understand each other’s perspectives and challenges.”

– Staff member, Toronto corporate session

We succeed when we:

• connect people to generate local and integrated solutions
• deepen the connection between policy making, corporate services and service delivery
• invest in and develop meaningful, effective partnerships
• listen first and are open to influence

Our ministry is successful when staff work together and think creatively to arrive at new solutions. It is during challenging times, like when we are helping others overcome barriers or receive services, that we learn how important collaboration and integration are to achieving success.

We have learned that positive outcomes are only realized when staff collaborate effectively, work across silos and between ministries, and find alternative ways to meet people’s needs. By putting people at the centre and forming meaningful partnerships, staff can leverage the rich experiences and knowledge of their colleagues, bring key representatives together to establish shared ownership and strive to understand the unique needs of others.

We expect staff to work to their highest potential and so, we have an obligation to make that possible. That means our ministry must continue to mine all areas of the organization to find and elevate staff ideas that result in positive change and improvement. It means identifying instances of staff working seamlessly across different programs and services as a best practice and encouraging everyone to adopt those practices.

To better collaborate and integrate we commit to:

4. Use multi-disciplinary teams and solution tables to make linkages with subject matter experts and key partners to shape new projects/initiatives and address complex, organizational challenges

5. Use incentives and rewards for successful system and service integration and effective change management
“Communication and building effective relationships based on integrity is key. These things help us respond and deliver when turnaround times are short. Connecting with integrity happens when we build trust, make time for face to face meetings, are genuine and honest and appropriate.”

– Staff member, Toronto regional session

**We succeed when we:**

- use plain language and say what we mean
- build authentic relationships based on trust, listening and a willingness to be influenced
- act with integrity and deliver on the commitments we make
- communicate internally to promote understanding, engagement and a shared sense of purpose

If we can’t communicate, we can’t work together. Period. Our ministry works well when staff, partners and recipients of our services are communicating meaningfully. To achieve that, two things must happen.

1. If you want to deliver a message, make sure it is relevant, written using plain language, easily consumed and understood. The quality and quantity of information should be carefully monitored to ensure it is always helpful.

2. Communicating effectively is more than just the clarity and effectiveness of our message. It has to reflect an understanding of the other person’s point of view.

We work well when we form strong networks and relationships, when we listen carefully, when we understand different perspectives and when we respond based on what we hear. Getting to the root of a problem and acting accordingly demonstrates integrity and helps to build credibility. Most importantly, when our decisions do not align with or incorporate all the suggestions or feedback received, we must be transparent and explain why.

We understand that staff and our partners want to feel connected and committed to a common goal and purpose. We know that creating avenues to listen to leaders, provide feedback, ask questions and be heard contributes to a positive workplace. Increased access to the leadership team also helps to clarify and communicate our vision for the future.
Staff also seek greater interaction with each other. Corporate and regional staff are more effective when they work together to jointly design products, tools and processes. The ministry will pursue opportunities to support greater interaction and collaboration between staff as it designs the modern, flexible workplaces of the future.

To connect authentically we commit to:

6. Be transparent and available so that staff and partners better understand our goals, successes, challenges and rationale for decision-making

7. Share annual plans/roadmaps (key priorities, achievements, operational commitments, etc.) to improve awareness of our programs and help staff better connect across the ministry

8. Improve processes for communicating internally and with partners to enrich clarity and improve collaborative listening

 CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE

“The Ministry is good at inviting new ideas from partners and frequently initiates change based on these suggestions.”

– Partner, Sudbury stakeholder session

We succeed when we:

• provide the tools, training and information needed to succeed
• continue to simplify processes, reduce burden and improve efficiency
• support one another through change
• regularly seek out, accept and respond to improvement opportunities

Continuous improvement is the key to success. Our staff must be adequately prepared and have the training, knowledge and skills required to meet day-to-day challenges.

Comprehensive and job-specific onboarding/training is vital, as it provides necessary foundational information and helps staff understand how they fit and connect within the larger organization. We have a responsibility to our staff, partners and the people who rely on our services to ensure that everyone in our ministry has the opportunity to improve.
Proactive and fair leadership is required to support our staff and partners during periods of transformation and change. When new training or business changes are required, our staff and partners must be involved from planning to implementation to evaluation. Where information or data is required to achieve a desired outcome, our partners will be involved in determining how best to gather it.

The ministry performs best when we continuously seek out opportunities to improve and look beyond our organization and sector for ideas. We are also successful when we simplify our processes, streamline our services and reduce burden wherever possible for staff, partners and the people receiving our services.

To improve as a ministry we commit to:

9. Give staff opportunities for learning and training/onboarding
10. Pilot new and innovative training, and use a range of delivery options, including classroom-based training delivered by trainers with field experience, where operationally possible
11. Provide forums for staff and partners to share ideas about improving efficiency and reducing burden
12. Recognize the pace and volume of change and improve the predictability of how partners and staff will be engaged in designing change and how it will be implemented
We succeed when we:

• identify, respect and celebrate everyone’s abilities and strengths
• show our commitment to Ontarians through our dedicated and determined daily effort
• respond to the unique needs of others

We embrace diversity and respect the strengths, perspectives and abilities of others. Our ministry strives to design and deliver programs and services that respond to the unique needs and abilities of individual Ontarians.

It is clear that this ministry’s greatest asset is our talented, passionate and dedicated staff. Staff are deeply committed and work relentlessly each day to ensure all Ontarians are respected, included and empowered to achieve their full potential.

To embrace diversity and celebrate ability we commit to:

13. Base our policies and practices on our understanding that Ontarians are competent, capable, curious and rich in potential

14. Build a culture of openness by providing soft-skills training (e.g., mental health awareness and cultural sensistivity) to reduce stigma and better understand the personal circumstances of the people we serve

15. Model behaviours that align with OPS values and the ministry’s success factors, including diversity and inclusion - the ministry supports leadership at all levels, but acknowledges that the management team must continually champion these attributes and set a positive example each day

16. Work towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, respecting their Aboriginal and treaty rights

“My team went out of their way to make sure I understood what I needed to know. They provided information and guidance. They mentored me. And most significantly, they shared their diverse perspectives. It was this diversity of thought that led to my success.”

– Staff member, Thunder Bay regional session

“A person’s life isn’t defined by services they receive.”

– Ontarian, London regional session
The people who depend upon the services and supports we provide are at the core of our mission and mandate. Our job is to provide timely, efficient and high quality services that help Ontarians achieve their full potential. If we are to fulfill our responsibility to them, we need to make sure we are constantly assessing and evaluating our performance. We must also demonstrate leadership by measuring the progress we make on our commitments to staff and partners.

**Advancing our Strategic Goals**

The ministry is currently implementing a Data Analytics and Evaluation Strategy to make data and information meaningful and useable for day-to-day business needs, operational and reporting requirements, and longer-term strategic objectives. As part of the strategy, all programs are developing performance-measurement frameworks to provide a consistent approach for collecting, analyzing, utilizing and reporting on performance. These frameworks are designed using a collaborative approach and include well-defined outcome-based measures. The ministry commits to leveraging work underway and develop indicators that measure the success of our three strategic goals: Person-Directed Services, Enhanced Capacity to Deliver and Improved Opportunities for People.

**Meeting our Commitments**

This plan contains a number of commitments to staff and partners that demonstrate our desire to work differently. To ensure success, we must measure our performance against these commitments, and regularly communicate our progress. Existing forums and data collection processes will be used to track the completion of our commitments:

1. **OPS Employee Survey**
   - The yearly employee survey provides timely results on the ministry's progress and will help determine if recalibrations to our approach are required.

2. **Workplace Culture Committee**
   - This committee has a mandate to foster and enhance a positive workplace culture that consists of healthy, skilled and inspired employees.
   - Membership consists of staff at all levels from each division and region across the ministry.
• Members will help to share ministry successes and challenges and assist in the roll up of information to senior leadership.
• Quantitative indicators that align with the commitments will be developed and the committee will be used as a channel where staff can provide qualitative feedback on our progress.

3. Partner Forums

• The ministry will leverage existing forums and establish mechanisms to obtain feedback. The focus will be on determining if our partners are observing changes in how staff and the ministry operate on a day-to-day basis. This will include assessing our commitment to new engagement frameworks where necessary.

4. Ontarians

• The ministry will use existing opportunities and investigate new practices (e.g., client satisfaction surveys) to connect directly with Ontarians to receive their feedback on experiences with our services and supports.

The ministry is committed to providing a transparent and honest assessment of our progress. We commit to monitoring our achievements, reporting annually and continually reassessing if our commitments are having the intended impact on the workplace and Ontarians.
CONCLUSION

**Thriving Communities: Our Way Forward** establishes a clear direction for the Ministry of Community and Social Services and our partners. We have a vision of thriving communities in Ontario, where all people are respected, included and empowered to achieve their full potential. And we now have a plan to deliver it.

We understand that **how** we work is as important as what we do. We understand that staff and clients are more successful in an environment where they are valued, respected and free from barriers or impediments. Lastly, we know that the people of this province will be better served by a system that is united, integrated and focused on one objective – helping Ontarians achieve their potential through social and economic inclusions.

This plan is our road map forward. Together, we have agreed on where we need to go, and we have identified what we need to do to get there. We must work together ministry-wide to put the plan into action.

Projects are already underway. Our plan for Thriving Communities across Ontario is coming to life. Over the next three years, this plan will be supported by divisional and operational plans, which will provide further clarity on how the ministry will achieve its goals and positively affect the communities we serve.

The Thriving Communities website will be a valuable resource, providing updates on our progress, results of our programs and details about our services. You are encouraged to check-in regularly as our journey continues.
Our priorities are why we come to work each and every day, and it is against these priorities that we will continually measure the success of this strategic plan. Guided by the strategic goals, we will deliver on these four priorities, focusing our collective efforts on improving outcomes for Ontarians in need.

1. **Support low income Ontarians to reach their full potential**

2. **Promote inclusion and improve support for people with disabilities, including developmental disabilities**

3. **Support survivors of human trafficking, sexual and domestic violence**

4. **Modernize service delivery and increase efficiency in the workplace**

**1 SUPPORT LOW-INCOME ONTARIANS TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL**

We want all Ontarians to have the opportunity to succeed and achieve their full potential. We will build a system of accessible and integrated income assistance and employment supports that enable people in need to determine their path forward, overcome challenges, take pride in their successes and achieve independence.

**Initiatives supporting this priority include:**
- Ontario’s Poverty Reduction Strategy (including the Basic Income Pilot)
- developing and implementing a plan for social assistance reform
- supporting the service transformation of income-based and other benefit programs
- providing financial tools, education and services to low-income Ontarians
Promote inclusion and improve support for people with disabilities, including developmental disabilities.

A disability should not be a barrier to employment or social inclusion. We envision an Ontario where adults with disabilities live as independently as possible in their communities and are fully included in all aspects of society. We will make it easier for people with disabilities to receive the supports they need and find the employment they seek. We will transform the system to increase access to services, help people and families better navigate between the different supports available, and ensure long-term sustainability.

**Initiatives supporting this priority include:**

- Provincial Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities
- projects that develop job skills and employment and promote service innovation in the developmental services sector
- a plan to transition young adults with complex needs to the adult service system
- service pathway enhancements to improve service delivery and client experience in the developmental services system
- ensuring access to residential supports for people in urgent need
- transitioning from sheltered workshops to competitive employment and meaningful participation in communities
SUPPORT SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING, SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Survivors of violence need our help. We have no greater responsibility than ensuring they have the community supports they need. In addition, we will reduce family violence against Indigenous women and children through culturally appropriate services, and lead efforts to end human trafficking.

Initiatives supporting this priority include:
- Ontario’s Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan
- Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy
- Ontario’s Strategy to End Human Trafficking
- Ontario’s Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women

MODERNIZE SERVICE DELIVERY AND INCREASE EFFICIENCY IN THE WORKPLACE

The ministry continues to transform service delivery to improve outcomes for Ontarians. Leveraging technology will enable more self-service options, allowing people greater access to services, conveniently and when they need them. Additionally, the ministry will work with partners across the sector to strengthen coordination and provide seamless delivery of services.

Initiatives supporting this priority include:
- multi-year strategic plan to improve service in the Family Responsibility Office
- Human Services Integration Office to improve coordination and integration across provincial programs which are provided in partnership with municipal service managers
- social assistance modernization initiatives (e.g., electronic payments, reloadable payment cards, online portals) designed to improve the customer experience