**Background:**

The Counties of Bruce (lead), Grey, Huron, and the City of Stratford are the Employment Service System Manager (SSM), funded entirely by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD), for the Stratford – Bruce Peninsula Economic Region. The SSM is to build and implement a locally responsive employment services system that effectively meets the needs of a diverse range of job seekers and employers in the catchment area. Integrated Employment Services Delivery (IESD), the SSM newly designed system went live on April 1, 2023. This report provides a semi-annual update to council on the performance of the SSM, and updates on future work to be completed.

Information Update:

The SSM's new service delivery model started the intake of clients on April 1, 2023, through our ten Employment Service Providers (ESP). These are third party organizations that have service delivery agreements with the County for the delivery of employment services for those eligible in the catchment area. The following outlines our performance after two quarters of operations.

Table 1 – Client Intakes
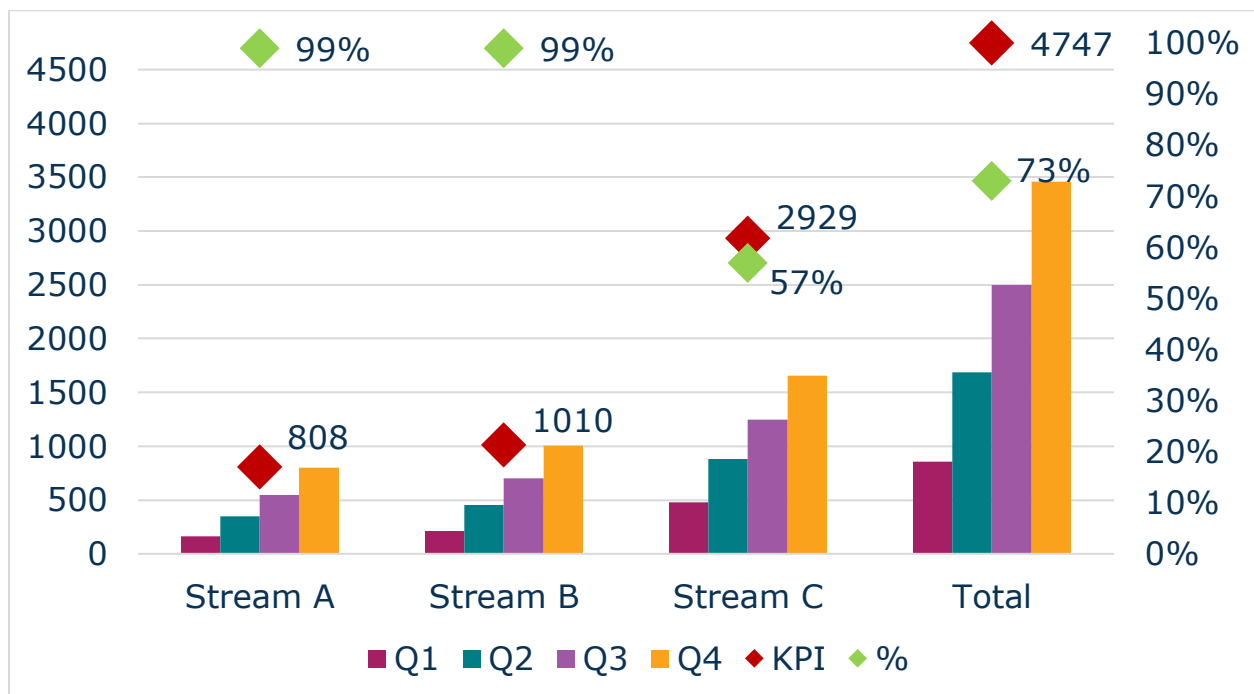
Table 1 outlines the SSMs performance against client intake key performance indicators (KPI) set by MLITSD. Stream A clients are those at low risk for long-term unemployment, Stream B clients are those at medium risk for long-term unemployment, and Stream C clients are those at high risk for long-term unemployment. Table 1 shows that Stream A is at 99% of target, Stream B is at 99%, Stream C is at 57%, and total client intakes are at 73% of target. In evaluating this result, it is important to consider two things, this represents a slight increase of the network compared to 2021-2022 program years, despite the start-up of a new system. The SSM is working with ESPs to continue to support performance improvements.

Table 2 – Service to Priority Populations
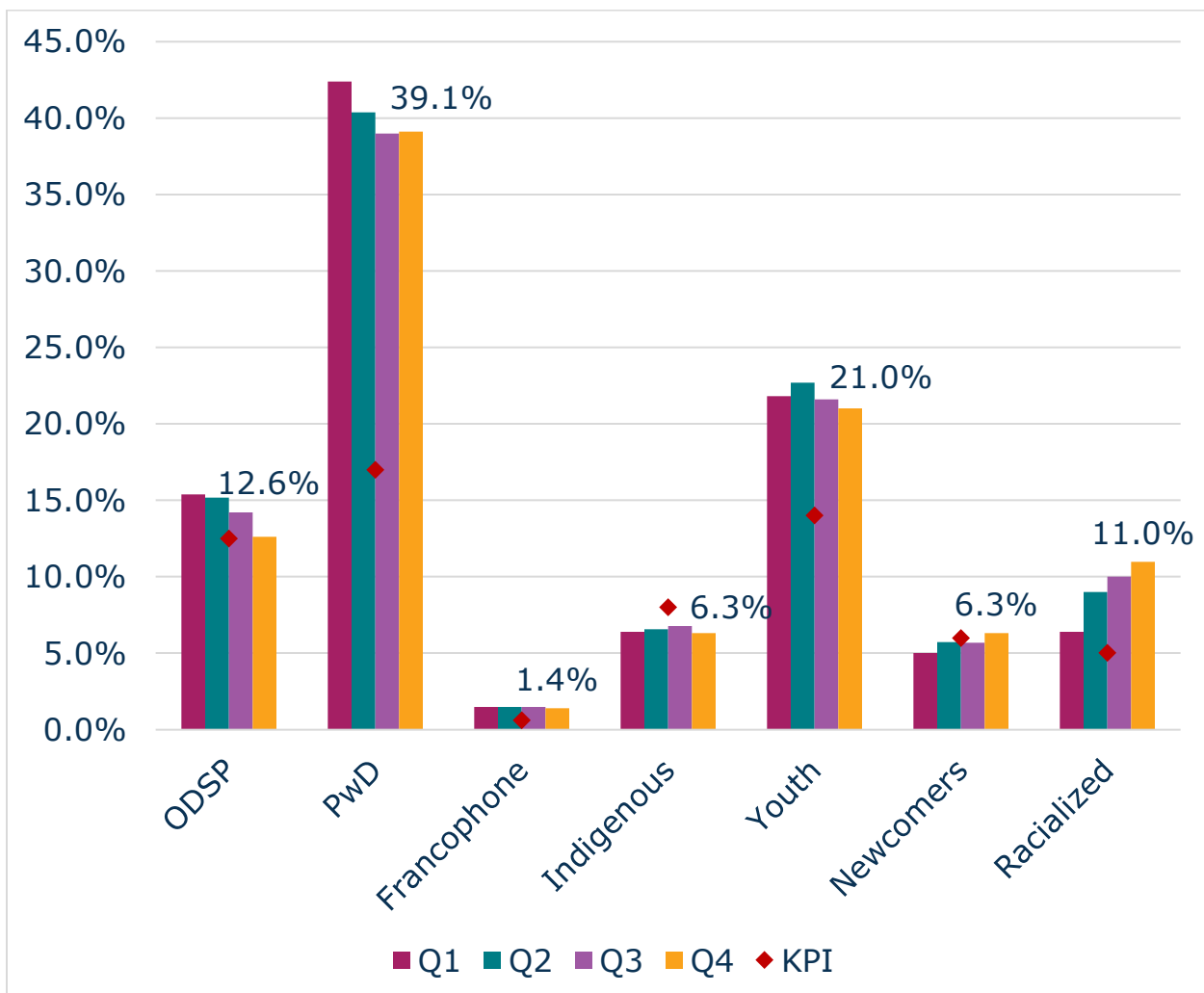
The Ministry outlines priority populations that the SSM and its network of ESPs are to provide service. Table 2 outlines the SSMs results in these KPIs. As can be seen the SSM is meeting or exceeding targets in all areas apart from Indigenous individuals. The

SSM anticipates that the Indigenous individuals target will be meet as we continue to support the success of our Indigenous service provider. Overall, the SSMs performance against these KPIs is a significant success, it represents a significant increase is service to these individuals compared to the historical baseline; ensuring those that need employment services the most are getting access to the needed support.

In addition to the results outlined above we have seen a large increase of Social Assistance clients accessing employment services. Historically our network has approximately 18% of its clients from Ontario Works, now at 27%, and 8% of its clients from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), now at 13%. This result is clear evidence of the effectiveness of the collaboration between our Ontario Works partners and the SSM, which was the key value proposition of our application to become an SSM.
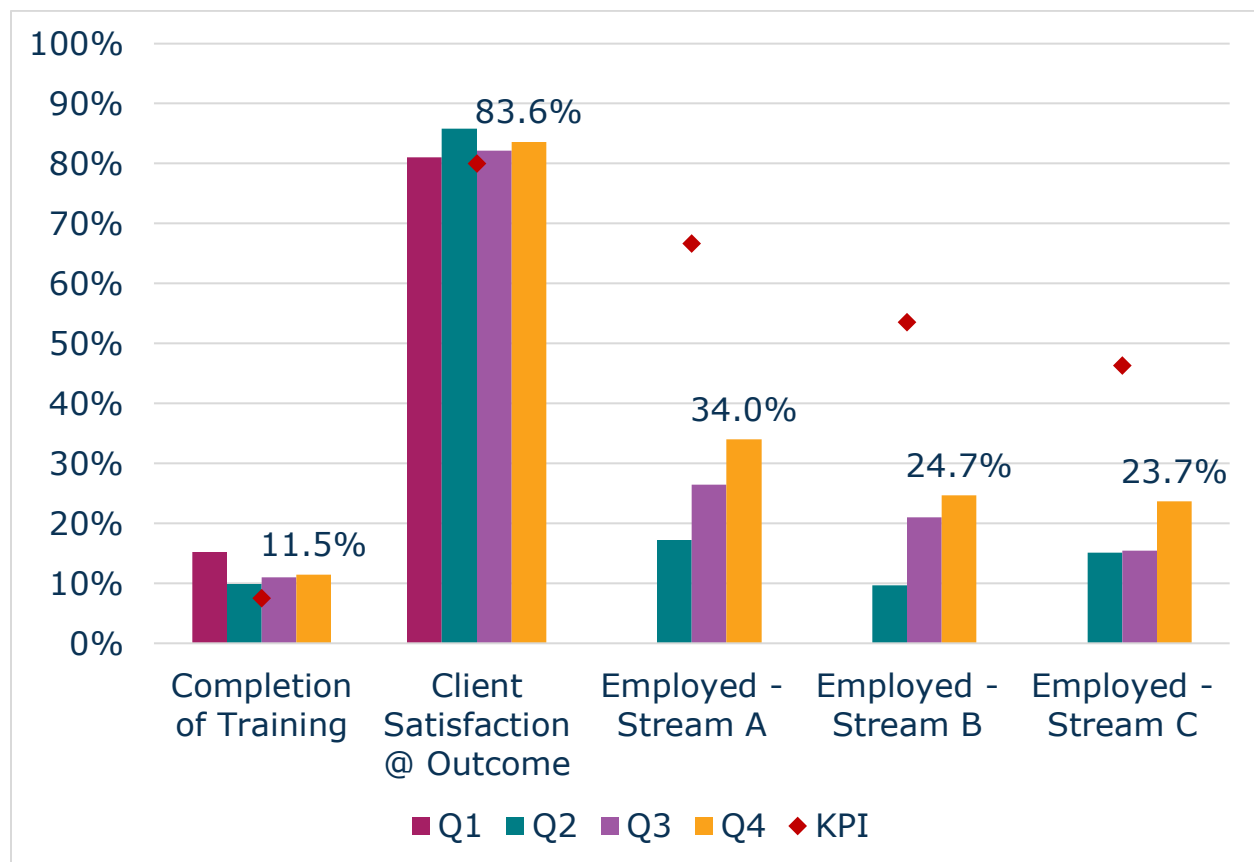
Table 3 – Outcomes

Table 3 outlines the SSM achievement of outcomes against MLITSD KPIs. As can be seen the SSM is exceeding targets in the completion of training for clients, and client satisfaction with services. However, the SSM is significantly under target in its employed outcomes in all three client streams. The SSM anticipates that this outcome KPI will

improve over the next two quarters, as we continue to implement continuous improvement strategies.

Next Steps:

Based on the results achieved to date the SSM is engaging in performance conversations individually with each ESP. These conversations are focused on key themes to support the success of the network in delivering on the transformed delivery model, including:

- **Evidence Quality:** Our new agreements with each Service Provider outline the requirement for Service Provider to build internal processes to ensure evidence submitted meets quality standards.

- **Quarterly Reconciliation:** We will be moving to quarterly reconciliation of spending to ensure that spending is well linked to outcomes.

- **Shifting to Focus on Client Served:** We will be focusing on client served as a key KPI for 2024/25 as opposed to client intake to ensure we continue to flow clients to positive outcomes.

- **Employed Outcomes:** Our employed outcomes are lagging far behind the KPIs, as we have setup the system for quality evidence collection to support outcomes, we will now be focusing on monitoring to see improvement in quality employment outcomes.

Overall, the first year of operations have been successful in setting the groundwork for long-term impact. The SSM has worked through continuous improvement initiatives that have held with change management. Two Service Provider have made the choice not to continue in the 2024/25 fiscal year, allowing the SSM to make strategic investment in modernizing our services.

Based on the learning to date, the SSM implemented the following strategies for implementation on April 1, 2024. These include:

- **Employer Activation:** Employers are the gatekeeps of access to the market. We will prioritize strategic relationships that will provide systematic access for our locked-out job seekers.

- **Digital by Default:** Simply put, there are insufficient resources to provide in-person, 1:1 service to each client. For most Stream A clients, digital delivery is essential and beneficial.

- **Employment Preparation:** Clients facing motivation, reliability, and dependability needs are often not ready for service. We are using In Motion & Momentum + (an evidence-based program) to accelerate outcomes for those that are most distant from the labour market.

- **Evidence-Based Practice:** Clients will be served using the best evidence that exists in the employment field (i.e. Cognitive Motivational approaches for pre-employment and employment, Job Development for access issues, Trauma Informed approaches)

- **Performance:** As network capacity and practice advances, our data collection framework will guide discussions around results. High performance will be acknowledged and rewarded.