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DATE	8 August 2000
TO/DEST.	Coordinator, Community Services Committee
FROM/EXP.	Commissioner, Social Services
SUBJECT/OBJET	SOCIAL SERVICES PRIORITIES FOR 2001 AND 2002 PROJECT GRANTS

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Community Services Committee approve the following funding priorities for the 2001 and 2002 allocation of Social Services Project Grants:

Employment sustainability and self-reliance strategies that:

- 1. Support projects that engage disadvantaged populations in economic development activities that facilitate integration into the work force;**
- 2. Support groups of individuals towards employment readiness; and**
- 3. Provide services to Ethnic and Racial Minorities and Aboriginal Groups.**

PURPOSE

This report defines proposed funding priorities for Social Services Project Grants in 2001 and 2002.

BACKGROUND

Since 1991, Social Services has assumed responsibility for the allocation of project grants which support creative time-limited initiatives to deal with the social, and currently, employment issues of people on low-income as per the goals of the Department.

As established since 1995, Social Services plans to review applications for project grants in year 2001 in collaboration with the Region's Health Department and United Way/Centraide Ottawa-Carleton. Within this streamlined approach, each funder continues to establish priorities related to its specific mandate.

DISCUSSION

The Department identified three strategic performance goals in 1997: assist clients to obtain jobs; reduce reliance on social assistance; and assist clients to meet basic needs. These goals are implemented through the development of employment opportunities, the provision of employment support services in three Regional Employment Resource Centers, Home Management Services, the support of two job retention workers, the purchase of training for clients, the development of community placement opportunities to help clients gain work experience, the provision of employment placement and self employment services by community agencies and the purchase of personal support services from community social services agencies. The Department continues to focus its efforts on the development of employment opportunities in partnership with the business, educational and non profit sectors.

The following community initiatives and studies involved intensive community consultation and provided direction for funding priorities.

The Partners for Jobs Task Force on Employment Initiative, under the guidance of the Social Services Commissioner, was established to develop an employment strategy focusing on the employment needs of the unemployed, the underemployed and social assistance recipients. It brought together a broad cross section of community representation including the Board of Trade, business industries, the Caledon Institute, community agencies, community members, economic development agencies, the federal government, the francophone community, health services, labour, literacy, the local training board, the provincial government, the regional government, le Regroupement des gens d'affaires and the Task Force on Poverty. As a result, creative partnerships and employment opportunities continue to support the integration of local residents into the work force.

The Task Force on Poverty represents a process unique in Canada. It brought together elected representatives of communities of the poor with appointed delegates of Regional government to work together to find ways to improve the lives of people living in poverty. The Task Force on Poverty represents a community based approach to poverty reduction combining social and economic objectives. As defined by the Caledon Institute, a community based approach to poverty reduction is based on four key interventions: meeting basic needs; removing barriers; building skills; and promoting economic development. The final report, People First: Removing the Barriers through Action was presented to Community Services Committee in February 2000.

In July 2000, the Action Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness - update 2000 was presented to Community Services Committee. It describes the actions taken to date on each of the 22 recommendations contained in the Action Plan. Actions in the plan focus on improvements to both support services and housing supply. Affordable housing remains a critical stabilizing factor in people's lives.

In the fall of 1996, Social Services and United Way/Centraide Ottawa-Carleton sponsored the development of a Poverty Funding Framework for the funding of programs and services specifically designed to strengthen the capacity of the community to respond to poverty and to promote self-sufficiency. Based on input from people on low income and community agencies, there is agreement that a comprehensive response to poverty requires that funds be directed towards a continuum which includes the five overlapping categories of basic needs, strategies that build capacity, strategies that target disadvantaged groups, community economic development initiatives and advocacy and social action/planning.

As highlighted in Tale of Two Cities, a publication of the Social Planning Council of Ottawa-Carleton in the spring of 1999, the gap is growing between the region's richer and poorer residents. It is increasingly difficult for poor families to feed themselves adequately. As reported in the Tale of Two Cities the percentage of children living in low income families in Ottawa-Carleton nearly doubled from 15% in 1986 to 27% in 1996, and children form the single largest group dependent on emergency food programs, such as the Ottawa Food Bank, at 42%. This is substantiated in People First, Removing Barriers to Action, the final report of the Task force on Poverty in February 2000, which report that of 85 people who told their stories at the Hearings on Poverty held in 1997, 31 said they have problems putting food on the table for themselves and their children. This was the most commonly cited material need.

The initiatives and studies described in this report acknowledge that hardship has increased for people living in poverty. Within the context of diminished financial and personal supports to the poor, all acknowledge the importance of building individual and community capacity to help cope with insufficient income and explore new partnerships to deliver services and help people towards economic self-sufficiency. It is worth noting that in Survival-of-the-Fittest, Caledon Institute April 2000, Sherri Torjman argues that the current employment system is geared towards those who can be helped with minimal assistance.

Further, the initiatives described earlier encompass all strategic goals of the Department. The purpose of the proposed funding priorities for Social Services project grants in 2001 and 2002 is to provide an opportunity for community based organizations to assist groups and individuals attain integration into community and into the work force.

Priorities for years 2001 and 2002

Support projects that engage disadvantaged populations in economic development activities that facilitate integration into the work force.

Projects are needed that assist disadvantaged populations in the coordination of activities and development of partnerships towards sustainability and self-reliance (for example, initial development of a community economic development initiative, food security initiatives, employment related mentorships, actions to influence current employment policies).

Support groups of individuals towards employment readiness

Many people experience personal and systemic barriers to employment or are having difficulty accessing available resources. Strategies are needed that support groups of individuals enhance their employment readiness (for example, stabilization of personal or family issues, work skills assessment/development, transition to the work force, introduction of newcomers to the local work environment, access to opportunities and resources for the disabled, services for sole-support parents)

Services to ethnic and racial minorities and aboriginal groups

There is a continued need for funding in matters dealing with racism and services to ethnic and racial minorities and aboriginal groups. Community-based organizations working in these areas often represent the essential intervention enabling the integration of these groups within our community (for example, ethno-specific activities that aim to build knowledge and self-confidence, ethno-specific or mainstream organization activities that aim community integration and access to available services).

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The initiatives and studies described in this report involved extensive public consultation with hundreds of people including and particularly the communities of the poor. No additional public consultation is involved in the development of this report.

Social Services has traditionally worked in collaboration with community partners and values their knowledge and expertise. The studies described in this report provide arguments that support the project grant funding priorities proposed for years 2001 and 2002.

FUNDING IMPLICATION

It is anticipated that the amount of \$366,981 will be available for project grants in year 2001.

CONCLUSION

Social Services proposes that support projects that engage disadvantaged populations in economic development activities that facilitate integration into the work force; that strategies that support groups of individuals towards employment readiness; and that the provision of services to Ethnic and Racial Minorities and Aboriginal Groups be approved for the project grant priorities in years 2001 and 2002.

*Approved by
Garry Armstrong*