



# **Government Financial Empowerment Trailblazers**

## **CLB Pilot City of Toronto**

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# Toronto Employment & Social Services (TESS)

## Mandate & Shared Purpose Statement

- As the administrator of the Ontario Works (OW) social assistance program in Toronto, TESS provide financial benefits, employment services, and social supports to city residents with no or very low incomes.
- “Together, we encourage purpose and possibility to help the people we serve pursue their best lives.”

## Key Stats (2017)

- 108,602 Ontario Works “cases” served, representing 188,529 residents
- 19 offices; 1900+ staff

# Motivation for a CLB Pilot (1 of 2)

## Workforce Development & Poverty Reduction

- TESS' work with low income city residents is informed by Toronto's Workforce Development (WFD) & Poverty Reduction (PRS) strategies
- Financial empowerment interventions – especially those which boost education and skill levels -- are increasingly recognized core elements of both WFD and PRS strategies
- 2018 City of Toronto PRS work plan action item: *"Promote savings options and work with partners to increase the uptake of RESP / Canada Learning Bond...focussing on residents in receipt of Ontario Works"*



# Motivation for a CLB Pilot (2 of 2)

## Money for Residents' Future Education

- Low take up rates – in Toronto at present, approximately 10% of eligible children whose families are in receipt of Ontario Works access the **Canada Learning Bond**
- Approximately 35,000 children in receipt of Ontario Works in Toronto are not accessing the Canada Learning Bond
- Thus, among this population, up to \$70 million in CLB benefits is not being accessed

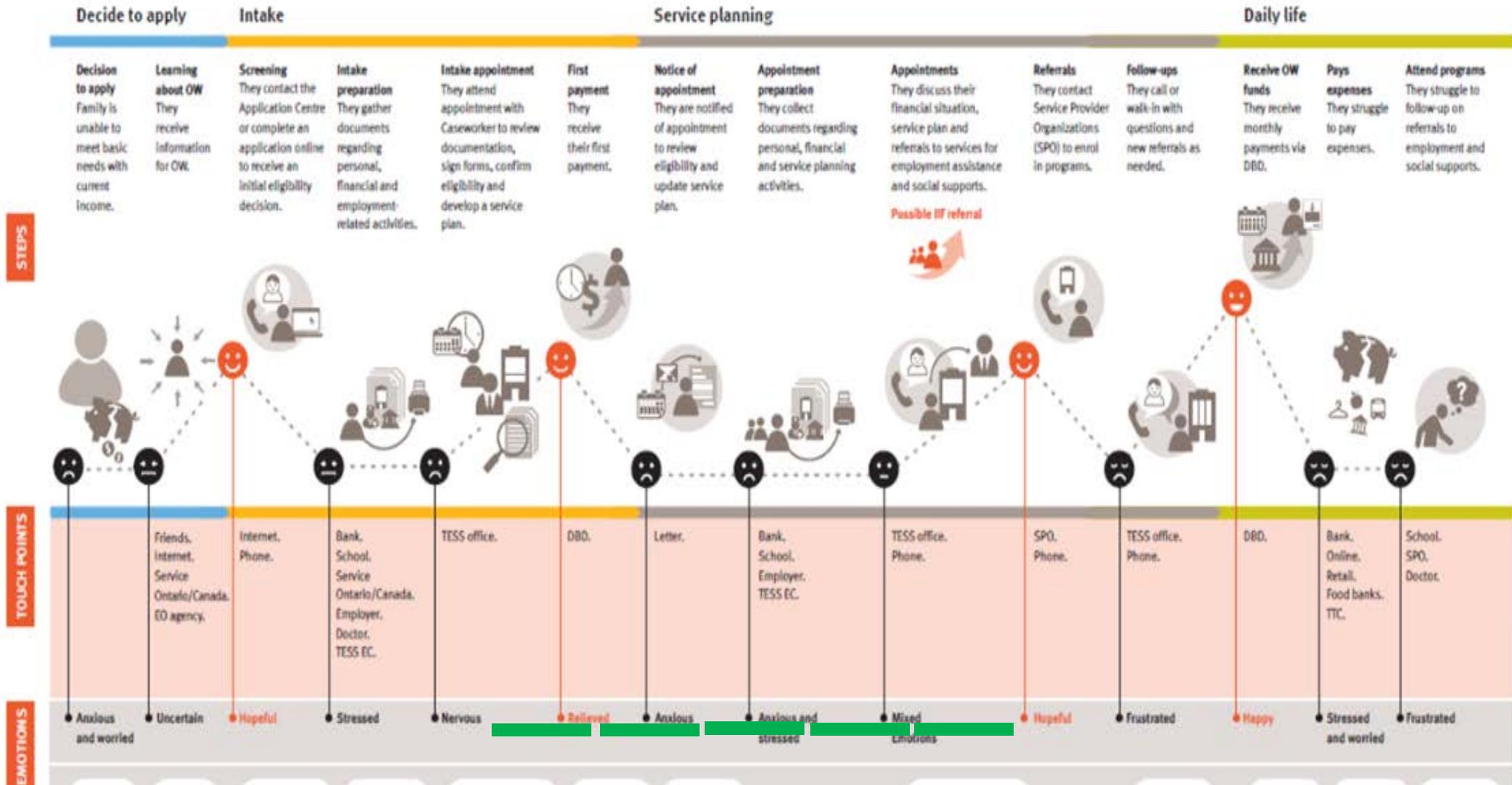
## Meaning & Motivation for Staff

- Opportunity to assist parents and children in an immediate, tangible, meaningful and measurable way – creating a platform of trust for other service planning interventions



# Client Emotional Journey Mapping

Ontario Works Program Client journey



# Key Barriers to CLB Access

Lack of awareness: parents and staff

Competing priorities related to poverty / scarcity

Complexity / multi-step process – time / \$\$

- Obtain SIN
- Access to computer to register with SmartSAVER / financial institution
- Appointment with financial institution
- Child minding support
- Interpreter support
- Transportation expenses



# Pilot Design – Barriers & Behaviour...

## *Experience & Research (on Behavioural Insights) Informed Toronto's CLB Pilot Design*

- *Information + Implementation Intention + Means / Motivation (\$\$) = Desired Outcome*
- Leverage (i) TESS' mandatory in-person contact with low income residents at service planning discussions and (ii) the on-line SmartSaver CLB access platform
- Incorporate CLB “information sharing” and “implementation intention” (i.e. stating a plan for “how” and “when” the residents will take a given action) into service planning discussions, resulting in supportive referral and initiation of contact with an RESP/CLB provider
- Use a pilot design which can – pending approvals and funding – also include and test the effectiveness of additional supports to address financial related barriers, means and motivation

# CLB Pilot Design



# CLB Pilot – Staff Training & Support

- 30 front line staff were trained
- Training developed and delivered in partnership with SmartSAVER
- Training Curriculum:
  - a. Introduction on Financial Empowerment as an approach
  - b. Alignment with divisional and City strategic priorities
  - c. Benefits of education savings
  - d. RESP basics, Canada Learning Bond (CLB) and CESG/A-CESG
  - e. Using SmartSAVER technology (hands on component)
- Tracking mechanism developed and implemented
- Post training supports: Bi-monthly teleconference calls, SmartSAVER support

# CLB Pilot Outcomes (1 of 2)

479

Client  
SmartSAVER  
Discussions

210

Client SmartSAVER  
Registrations

\*The average conversation length with clients was 10 minutes

# Top Reasons Cited by Clients for Not Pursuing CLB

- **Already have an RESP**
- **No SIN # (child or client)**
- Plan to Register for RESP at home / the bank on own
- Language barrier
- Refugee status
- Not interested
- Concerns with financial institutions

# Staff Feedback

## Challenges and Barriers:

- Lack of SIN cards (parents & children)
- Following-up with clients at every stage of the process
- Other priorities e.g. -- health concerns, eviction, childcare, etc.
- Concerns with the banks/financial institutions
- Concerns that the RESP/CLB would impact OW eligibility
- Immigration status
- Lack of financial products that complies with religious observances



# Future Opportunities (1 of 3)



- Assess experience of vulnerable and underserved populations to identify customized engagement approaches.
- Enhance referral mechanisms / warm transfers to year round income tax clinics and financial counselling services (to support savings and access to CESG and A-CESG).
- Evaluate parents' experience with financial institutions to gain insights on (additional) access barriers, and increase financial institutions' awareness of customer journey / experience.
- Develop take-away documents that remind parents of requirements for appointment with financial institution.
- Develop FAQ based on common questions/scenarios experienced by pilot staff to support training of new staff.

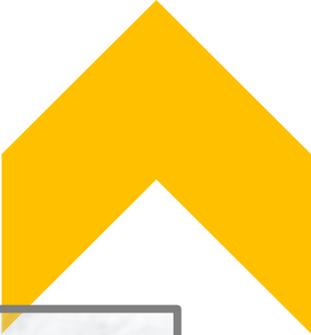
# Future Opportunities (2 of 3)

- Improve parent readiness and receptivity by embedding information about CLB within communication touch points **prior** to service planning appointments.
  - For example, in appointment letters, inform parents about (i) identification requirements, (ii) steps to obtain SIN, (iii) CLB /RESP account opening process, etc.
- To “nudge” parents to take desired action, explore application of behavioral insights – e.g. social normative, moral suasion, loss aversion, framing, etc. -- in written correspondence and in-person conversations with clients.
- Provide a CLB “access stipend” to cover (imputed) CLB access costs for transportation, child minding, etc.

# Future Opportunities (3 of 3)



# Questions / Contacts



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