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Date December 2, 2020 **Report No.** 2020-478

To Chair and Members
Social Services Committee

From Aaron Wallace, Acting General Manager
Community Services and Social Development

1.0 Type of Report

Consent Item	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Item For Consideration	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.0 Topic Homeward Bound Brantford-Brant Program Update [Financial Impact: None]

3.0 Recommendation

- A. That Report 2020-478 Homeward Bound Brantford-Brant Program Update BE RECEIVED.

4.0 Purpose and Overview

This report provides Social Services Committee with an update on the implementation of the Homeward Bound program.

5.0 Background

Homeward Bound is an evidence-based program that focuses on improving economic and social outcomes for single mothers by supporting skills upgrading, completion of post-secondary education, and transition to sustainable employment. Other communities that have implemented the Homeward Bound program have seen considerable success; Toronto's Woodgreen Community Services, which first developed the program in 2004, reports that 80% of

participants have successfully completed the full program and have transitioned from social assistance to employment.

In December 2015, Council approved the following notice of motion requesting staff to further investigate the Homeward Bound model:

WHEREAS Homeward Bound, an innovative model to provide integrated services to help families achieve education and achieve economic self-sufficiency has successfully operated for many years; and

WHEREAS Brantford/Brant provides a similar integrated approach to directing families toward self-sufficiency; and

WHEREAS Brantford/Brant will benefit from inclusion of Homeward Bound program enhancements;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT staff be requested to provide a report describing the Homeward Bound program and the required resources to implement similar enhancements to our programming.

In March 2016, Social Services Committee received an overview of Homeward Bound program and approved the following direction for staff to work with community partners to explore opportunities to locally replicate the program (PHSS2016-31, Homeward Bound):

A. THAT Report PHSSS2016-31 providing a Homeward Bound program overview and an exploration of options to enhance existing programming BE RECEIVED; and

B. THAT staff BE DIRECTED to consult with community partners including funders, post-secondary institutions, the Chamber of Commerce, and social service agencies to explore opportunities to implement a Homeward Bound Program in Brantford-Brant.

In response to the Council direction, staff secured partnerships with Brant Skills Centre and St. Leonard's Community Services to jointly develop a pilot Homeward Bound program and seek out available funding.

In March 2019, staff provided Council with a report outlining that Brant Skills Centre had been awarded \$236,300 by the Ontario Trillium Foundation to implement the Brantford-Brant Homeward Bound program over three years starting April 2019; and staff committed to provide Council with program updates (Report No. 2019-113).

Completion of the Homeward Bound program requires participants to successfully move through four sequential phases:

1. Academic upgrading and college preparatory courses;
2. Completion of a college diploma;
3. A 14-week internship in a related field; and
4. Supported job search

The program features intensive case management that prepares the participants for college-level academics and provides social and academic supports throughout each phase of the program. These supports could include housing stabilization, childcare or counselling that would be provided from a variety of local service organizations.

All participants must be female, single, 19 years of age or older, have children, and be in receipt of or eligible for social assistance. Successful candidates will most often have a Secondary School Diploma, and demonstrated ability to succeed within a post-secondary environment, and be committed to seeking and maintaining full-time employment.

6.0 Corporate Policy Context

Economic Vitality & Innovation

Brantford will build a strong, diversified economic base that provides opportunities for both citizens and potential investors while supporting and enhancing innovation and education.

7.0 Input From Other Sources

Brant Skills Centre

St. Leonard's Community Services

8.0 Analysis

8.1 Homeward Bound Success to Date

Participants have built positive relationships with the Homeward Bound coordinator and Brant Skills Centre staff, as well as their Ontario Works

Case Worker. Homeward Bound participants have been able to access needed supports and services, and have connected to childcare, housing, and social services, as well as employment and counselling supports provided by St. Leonard's Community Services.

The first cohort of four participants began phase one of the program in September 2019, and completed academic upgrading, skills training, and college preparation courses. Two participants successfully moved into phase two, and enrolled at their desired college programs at Conestoga College and Six Nations Polytechnic, in the Social Service Worker and Business programs. Unfortunately, two participants were unable to continue to phase two of the program, due to a change in personal circumstances, but indicated they are interested in rejoining the program in the future.

A second cohort of seven new participants was successfully accepted into Homeward Bound and began phase one of the program in October 2020, participating in academic upgrading and skills training courses. These second cohort participants will then begin preparing their college applications with the goal of beginning their studies in 2021. 30% of participants in cohort two have indicated an interest in pursuing a path in the skilled trades.

Homeward Bound participants have acknowledged that they feel connected to others in the program and benefit from the support and encouragement of their peers. Participants engage in ongoing communication, group meetings, and virtual activities and events that encourage connection for the entire family. Additionally, participants highlighted the impact that Homeward Bound has made for them and their families, and feel an increased connection with their children, have a greater sense of pride working towards their future goals, and have benefit from increased stability and greater connection to peers and community supports.

8.2 Impact of COVID- 19

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided challenges to the in person delivery of the Homeward Bound program, however the Brant Skills Centre has been committed to providing ongoing support to participants and their families through phone and online connections, so they are able to successfully navigate all aspects of student and family life. Participants have been able to maintain valuable connections with their peers through

virtual programs and meetings, and continue to receive community supports and services.

Participants have also been resilient and successful in adjusting to online and virtual learning as a result of ongoing support from the Homeward Bound Coordinator and Brant Skills Centre staff. Additionally, as post-secondary institutions respond to the impacts of COVID-19, they are providing more virtual learning opportunities and students have had access to a larger variety of online class options, enhancing their academic experience.

9.0 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

10.0 Conclusion

Homeward Bound Brantford-Brant aims to support single mothers and their families by connecting them with community supports and services, and supporting their skills upgrading, post-secondary education, and transition to sustainable employment. Two students have successfully begun their post-secondary studies, and seven new students are participating in skills upgrading for entry into academic programs in 2021.



Aaron Wallace, Acting General Manager
Community Services and Social Development

In adopting this report, is a by-law or agreement required? If so, it should be referenced in the recommendation section.

By-law required	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no
Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and/or City Clerk	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no
Is the necessary by-law or agreement being sent concurrently to Council?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no