

Community Disability Services Sector Priorities 2023 – 2026

Collaboration Opportunities with Alberta Government

About ACDS

ACDS is a nonprofit association of over 140 community disability service providers, representing 85% of agencies contracted by the PDD program. Our members employ about 14,000 disability professionals to support over 11,000 adults with developmental disabilities to live full lives in their communities.

We are a trusted partner, working closely with the Alberta Government and community stakeholders to strengthen policies, programs, and services in the Community Disability Services (CDS) sector.

ACDS Impact and Sustainability Framework

Vibrant communities thrive when all citizens feel safe, healthy, connected, and valued.

We believe three principles are foundational for impactful and sustainable programs to support Albertans with disabilities participate in and contribute to vibrant communities.



Guided by these foundational principles, the CDS sector and the Government of Alberta can collaboratively achieve an impactful and sustainable system of supports for Albertans with disabilities.

CDS Sector Priorities and Collaboration Opportunities with Alberta Government

Respectful Relationships

The delivery of government-contracted supports by agencies thrives on relationships built on a common vision, trusted mechanisms, evidence-based decisions, and transparent processes for mutual accountability.

what we are asking for:

1. Continued engagement by Alberta Government on the Service Provider Partnership Committee to strengthen community disability services

Co-chaired by ACDS and Alberta Seniors, Community and Social Services, the Committee (SCSS) has guided the service delivery partnership since 2019 through cogenerated solutions to current and emerging issues. The mechanism is viewed as a successful structure by all partners.

2. Comprehensive and timely data

2a. Data about current and potential program beneficiaries so service providers can prepare for changing demands

2b. Forecasting model to support policy development, program delivery, and service capacity growth

Publicly-available PDD and FSCD data is outdated and lacks the depth needed by community partners to plan who will require services. There is also no consolidated data to assess growth potential (or shrinkage risk), capacity, and scope of organizations to fulfil the potential demand for services.

how we can help:

ACDS and members are committed to investing time and resources on this trusted mechanism to benefit Albertans with disabilities.

ACDS is ready to provide input to Alberta Government on data and analytics needed by service providers for effective forecasting and planning.





Impactful Investment

Investing in community disability services helps people become contributing citizens and strengthens society. Impactful investment occurs when the network of service delivery partners is sustainable, there is a skilled and dependable workforce, and quality and innovation are encouraged.

what we are asking for:

3. Support the sustainability of service providers so they can increase their service capacity to help reduce the PDD waitlist

3a. Fund the full costs of service delivery, including unforeseen administrative, indirect, and inflationary costs

3b. Address organizational capacity challenges

- Reduce red tape and regulatory burdens as government does for businesses
- Leverage existing government resources (e.g., priority access to Culture's nonprofit capacity-building services)
- Support organizations to explore capacity-development opportunities with community and business partners

Several hundred individuals eligible for PDD supports are without services. Service provider capacity to support more individuals has been challenged due to inadequately funded service delivery costs.

- In 2022, **68%** of organizations surveyed stated their **PDD services were at high or moderate risk over the next 1 to 3 years due to increasing costs.**

Financial limitations are impacting organizational effectiveness in core areas such as governance, financial and HR systems, risk management, strategic planning, and technology.

Government must support community disability services the same way it supports businesses: as job creators contributing to Alberta's economy and social well-being, with real costs that need to be fully paid to operate viably, and requiring regulatory regimes that provide both predictability and agility to be effective and responsive to changing conditions.

how we can help:

ACDS and members have the expertise to identify capacity limitations and generate multiple solutions to support Alberta Government's goal to eliminate the PDD waitlist so that all individuals receive required services.

what we are asking for:

4. Planned, ongoing increases in wage funding to address recruitment and retention challenges caused by chronic low wages in the sector

4a. Close existing wage disparity with competing sectors through predictable and sustainable schedule of increases in wage funding

4b. Provide annual inflation-indexed adjustments, similar to public sector workers

In 2022, overall turnover in the CDS sector was 30%, the highest recorded in the past 12 years. Low wages that have not kept up with inflation, and better compensation in competing sectors have created chronic recruitment and retention challenges for the sector.

- In 2020, **54% of the CDS workforce made under \$20/hr.**
- Average wage across all positions, including executive leadership, was **\$21.50/hr.**
- Community Disability Support Workers (**CDSW**) earned, on average, **\$18.76/hr** in 2020, which is 10% to 34% lower than their counterparts in government (Individual Support Workers) who earn between \$20.63 and \$25.07/hr and have better benefits and inflation-indexed adjustments.

The recent 10% funding increase for direct services staff compensation is a welcome improvement, but not enough. It comes after a decade of no increases to wage funding, and does not fully address increasing wage disparity with competing sectors.

how we can help:

ACDS is willing to explore various cost estimate scenarios with SCSS for fair, ongoing, and sustainable wage increases.

With member input, ACDS can also advise on efficient roll-out processes to minimize administrative burden for government and service providers.



Impactful Investment

what we are asking for:

5. Support the implementation of recommendations from Project Blueprint CDS to address workforce challenges and increase service capacity

- 5a. Earmark part of 2023-24 SCSS budget increase to support one or more of Blueprint CDS immediate-term (Year 1) recommendations to jumpstart implementation
- 5b. Dedicate annually for the next two years, part of the remaining SCSS budget increase to support one or more short and medium-term (Years 2-3) recommendations that are core to the success of the strategy or for which other funding partners may be difficult to find
- 5c. Identify other grant sources in government that align with Blueprint CDS
- 5d. Identify related workforce development or job barrier removal initiatives in other ministries that may inform or leverage Blueprint CDS

In 2022, SCSS showed its commitment and joint responsibility to address the sector's workforce challenges by funding ACDS to develop Blueprint CDS: A Comprehensive Workforce Strategy for Community Disability Services.

Based on extensive labour market analysis and sector engagement by KPMG, Blueprint CDS proposes a suite of cohesive recommendations to achieve a skilled and sustainable workforce.

It is urgent that SCSS and ACDS partner as soon as possible to implement Blueprint CDS. PDD has targeted to bring 500 new individuals into services in 2023-24 and to eliminate its waitlist in three years. This goal cannot be achieved without simultaneously developing, recruiting, and retaining the additional workforce to support the additional caseload.

how we can help:

ACDS' sector-driven Blueprint CDS provides a comprehensive strategy and evidence-based plan to jointly address workforce challenges with the Alberta Government.

In addition to partnering with SCSS, ACDS will seek other funding sources and continue to provide project management support for Blueprint CDS.

Project Blueprint CDS: Implementation Timeline

Immediate Term (within 1 year)	Short Term (within 2 years)	Medium Term (within 3 years)	Long Term (3 + years)
A2. Build a shared understanding of scope of practice of CDS sector	A1. Build a shared understanding of economic impact of the CDS sector	B7. Build a compensation scale guide for frontline service delivery staff	B8. Engage CDS sector workers to co-design a community of practice
B6A. Provide immediate wage relief	B6B. Provide ongoing wage relief	B6B. Provide ongoing wage relief	B6B. Provide ongoing wage relief
C9D. Identify current state of training	A3. Adopt common workforce classifications	C9A. Establish a target credential requirement for frontline workers	C9C. Expand post-secondary programming
C9E. Develop a provincial training framework	A4. Adopt a network model to support cross-ministry coordination	C9B. Establish a system for micro-credentialing	
C12. Support organizations to build a culture of professionalization	A5. Develop a forecasting model to support strategic workforce planning	C11. Implement innovative workforce fund	
	C9F. Develop a training catalogue		
	C9G. Expand the suite of training offered by ACDS		
	C10. Address barriers to workforce flexibility in PDD contract structure		



A

Understanding
workforce context



B

Recruiting and
retaining the workforce



C

Developing the
workforce

what we are asking for:

6. Seamless access to appropriate systems for non-PDD services

6a. Review intersections between PDD and other systems to reduce duplication due to the creation of an unintended "parallel system", improve access, and eliminate gaps so that individuals receive services from the most appropriate ministry

As individuals with disabilities live longer and participate in the community in more diverse ways, they are increasingly impacted by multiple systems. For individuals with complex or ultra-complex support needs, these intersections are significantly more frequent, intense, and costly.

Many systems are not financially prepared or have the skills to respond to these needs. As such, PDD bears the costs of these interactions, or, over time, has created duplicate processes for supports that should be available as part of the evolving design of these external systems. In effect, a "parallel system" – with its associated costs – has been created. As the number of individuals in PDD increases, there is a risk that these processes will keep expanding and their costs become harder to unbundle and quantify.

Cross-system interactions may also result in service gaps or sub-optimal services. Differences in access criteria, processes, and service approaches may create barriers to access, or result in supports that are not aligned with the needs or expectations of the individual.

7. Supportive and effective regulations for PDD-funded community living homes

7a. Exempt all PDD-funded community living homes, except accommodations where the setting resembles a facility-based care site, from licensing requirement, AND

7b. Develop a new set of simplified standards appropriate for all PDD-funded community living homes (regardless of number of residents), based on principles and practices supporting dignity and self-determination

PDD-funded community living homes are currently governed by the Supported Living Accommodations Act (SLALA). Over 10,600 Albertans receiving PDD-funded home living supports, their service providers, and workforces are directly impacted by this legislation.

When proclaimed, the Continuing Care Act will perpetuate SLALA's negative consequences by applying standards and practices more suitable for large care facilities to homes with 4 or more residents, while having no standards or oversight for homes with 3 or fewer residents. This will continue to:

- Restrict residents' personal freedoms and their right to self-determination
- Perpetuate unreasonable red tape for operators, create inefficiencies and impact quality service delivery
- Curtail the capacity of the PDD program, including reducing housing choice for individuals

how we can help:

ACDS members have extensive experience on navigating multiple systems and how these impact individuals.

Through member engagement, we can help identify solutions to reduce duplication, increase efficiency, and eliminate unintended negative consequences

ACDS proposed these recommendations as part of the Continuing Care Legislative Review in February 2021.

Developed with input from members with extensive experience operating residential sites, the recommendations will create a more appropriate licensing solution for Albertans receiving PDD-funded home living supports.