

# Election Priorities

## Alberta Council of Disability Services



*A commitment to these priorities is essential for a vibrant, effective, and resilient network of community-based services for Albertans with developmental disabilities.*

## Skilled and Fairly Paid Workforce

Strengthen the sector through fair compensation and a comprehensive workforce strategy



We ask for a commitment to **fair, planned, and ongoing wage top-ups** for community disability service (CDS) workers, to reflect inflation and wage disparity with competing sectors.

We ask for a commitment to a **comprehensive and cohesive approach to address workforce challenges** by supporting the implementation of the 18 recommendations in ACDS' [Project Blueprint CDS: A Comprehensive Strategy for Workforce Strategy for Community Disability Services](#).

"[The sector needs] wages and benefits that mean an employee can commit to one job and know they will have some security without having to work multiple jobs just to make ends meet."



## Increased System Capacity

Increase the capacity and effectiveness of community disability organizations to help reduce the PDD waitlist

"Operational plans are detailed, program monitoring of goals, activities and timeline in place and reviewed regularly, [however, we] DO NOT have the adequate budget or staff to implement [them] successfully."

We ask for a commitment to **fund the full and true costs of service delivery**, including proper funding for administrative and indirect costs.

We ask for a commitment to **increase the capacity of service providers to help reduce the long waitlist** of people waiting to receive PDD-funded supports.

## Comprehensive and Timely Data

Empower service providers to be an effective partner in forecasting and planning future service needs



We ask for a commitment to **timely, accurate, and complete data about current and potential program beneficiaries** so service providers can develop their capacity effectively to changing program demands.

We ask for a commitment to **collaborate with service providers to develop a forecasting model** to support effective policy and program development.

# Skilled and Fairly Paid Workforce



Strengthen the sector through fair compensation and a comprehensive workforce strategy

**A comprehensive strategy.** Developed in 2022, with funding from the Government of Alberta and sector engagement and research by KPMG, Project Blueprint CDS: A Comprehensive Workforce Strategy for Community Disability Services proposes 18 recommendations to achieve a skilled and sustainable workforce. One of the immediate recommendations is for **ongoing, adequate, and competitive compensation for community disability workers.**

**Wage infusion is welcome but not enough.** In December 2022, the Government of Alberta announced a 10% increase to funding for direct services staff compensation; budget 2023-24 extended this funding for three years. The sector welcomes this infusion. However, it comes after almost a decade of no increases to wage funding, during in which period inflation in Alberta increased by 19%. In addition, not all of the 10% is available to increase wages, as some of this has to go towards the increased costs of benefits and mandatory employment-related costs (MERCs). In other words, **a 10% increase in funding results in significantly less than 10% actually available to enhance staff wages.**

**Competing sectors.** The recent funding also does little to address a **chronic wage disparity** between community disability service workers and workers in competing sectors, many of which are in unionized environments where wages are higher, benefits are better, and inflation-indexed adjustments are commonplace.



# Skilled and Fairly Paid Workforce



We ask for a commitment to **fair, ongoing wage top-ups** for CDS sector workers to reflect inflation and narrow the wage disparity with competing sectors. **Competitive and planned** top-ups are essential to stem significant recruitment and retention challenges.

**54%** of the entire CDS workforce in 2020 made **under \$20/hr**

The average wage for the entire sector, including executive and leadership positions, was **\$21.50/hr**

**Even with the recent funding infusion of 10%, most workers in the CDS sector will continue to make well under \$25.00/hr.**

The average wage for Community Disability Support Workers (\$18.76/hr) is below Alberta's Market Basket Measure (MBM), an index of affordability and basic standard of living across the province. The MBM is \$24.04 in Alberta's metropolitan areas (i.e., Edmonton and Calgary), and \$22.51 in Alberta's rural areas.

**Comparable positions in government, such as Individual Support Workers, earn between \$20.63 and \$25.07/hr, which is 10% to 34% higher than the average CDSW hourly wage.**

Similarly, hourly average wages for comparable positions in related industries are also higher, e.g., \$25.21 for NAICS 623 - Nursing and residential care facilities workers and \$23.43 for NAICS 624 - Social assistance workers.

The recent 10% infusion narrows this gap, but only slightly, and only until competitive workers receive salary increases or inflation-indexed adjustments.

"The sector cannot even compete any longer. Staff [are] able to find unskilled jobs in other sectors with better hourly wage starts and benefits we cannot offer."

# Skilled and Fairly Paid Workforce



Strengthen the sector through fair compensation and a comprehensive workforce strategy

In addition to the immediate and ongoing priority to address compensation challenges, we ask for a commitment to support the implementation of Project Blueprint's full suite of 18 recommendations for a ***comprehensive and cohesive approach to address workforce challenges in the CDS sector.***

Produced by ACDS with support from KPMG, Project Blueprint's sector-driven workforce strategy lists 18 recommendations based on extensive research, labour market analysis, and sector engagement.

## Understanding the workforce context

- A1. Build a shared understanding of the economic impact of the CDS sector
- A2. Build a shared understanding of the scope of practice of CDS sector services
- A3. Adopt common workforce classifications
- A4. Adopt a network model to support cross-ministry coordination
- A5. Develop a forecasting model to support strategic workforce planning

## Recruiting and retaining the workforce

- B6. Provide immediate and ongoing wage relief
- B7. Build a compensation scale guide for frontline service delivery staff
- B8. Engage CDS sector workers to co-design a community of practice

## Developing the workforce

- C9A. Establish a target credential requirement for frontline CDS sector workers
- C9B. Establish a system for microcredentialing
- C9C. Expand post-secondary programming
- C9D. Identify current state of training
- C9E. Develop a provincial training framework
- C9F. Develop a training catalogue
- C9G. Expand the suite of training offered by ACDS
- C10. Identify and address barriers to workforce flexibility within the PDD contract structure
- C11. Implement innovative workforce fund
- C12. Support organizations to build a culture of professionalization

# Increased System Capacity



Increase the capacity and effectiveness of community disability organizations to help reduce the PDD waitlist

## **Service provider capacity to address administrative costs**

**has been challenged for several years.** Until December 2022, there had been no funding infusion since 2014 in PDD contracts to address increases in administrative and indirect service costs (e.g., insurance, utilities, professional charges, office costs, etc.).

## **Since the COVID-19 pandemic, these pressures**

**have intensified.** Service providers have attempted to subsidize this gap through fundraising or social enterprise activities, but not all agencies have the expertise, capacity, or board support to do so.



**Funding infusion is a start, but the issues are deep.** In December 2022, the Government of Alberta announced a 5% increase for service provider administrative costs in PDD, FSCD, and FMS agreements. The increase was also reflected in Budget 2023-24.

***Although this infusion is welcome, it is not enough to address the chronic erosion in capacity that has occurred over several years of inadequate resources for administration and infrastructure costs.***

In addition, since many non-frontline staff were excluded from the 10% increase to wage funding, most organizations directed part of the increase in administrative funding to compensation for these positions to address wage compression, recruitment, and retention of qualified administrative and supervisory staff. This has left little room to address inflationary impacts on indirect costs.



# Increased System Capacity



Increase the capacity and effectiveness of community disability organizations to help reduce the PDD waitlist

We ask for a commitment to ***fund the full and true costs of service delivery***, including proper funding for administrative and indirect costs. Gaps in funding revenue are impacting the organizational health and sustainability of community service providers, and their ability to support individuals efficiently and effectively.

CDS organizations that believe their PDD services are at **HIGH RISK** in the next 1-3 years due to increasing unfunded admin and indirect costs

**37%**

Organizations that consider their PDD services to be at a **MODERATE RISK**

**31%**

**62%**

of service providers budgeted a **deficit** in their **2022/23 PDD budget**

**51%**

are considering **reducing or changing** aspects of **non-PDD-funded services** due to the financial pressures of underfunded PDD services

"We are having to fundraise and use donations to cover basic costs like audits. We have also had to increase the rent to individuals to cover rising costs. In the end it is the individuals and their quality of life and service that will be affected."

# Increased System Capacity



Increase the capacity and effectiveness of community disability organizations to help reduce the PDD waitlist

In addition to proper funding for the full costs of service delivery, we ask for a commitment to **increase the capacity of service providers to help reduce the long waitlist of people waiting to receive PDD-funded supports.**

**Long waitlist.** Over 12,600 adults with developmental disabilities receive PDD-funded supports. Of these, almost 85% (10,600) receive supports from community-based service providers; several of the 2,700 individuals funded through the Family Managed Services (FMS) model also access supports from community service providers.

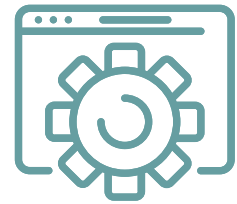
**However, about 2,000 individuals were still waiting for services (600) or in service planning stage (1,400) as of December 2021, according to the most recent data available via the Alberta Government open data portal.**

**A capacity and systemic issue.** The bottle-neck preventing individuals who require PDD-funded supports from accessing these in a timely manner is both systemic (related to the workings of the PDD program) and related to the organizational capacity of community service providers.

**Inadequate funding for the full costs of service delivery has impacted service provider capacity to support more individuals and is the primary barrier to increasing service capacity.**



# Comprehensive and Timely Data



Empower service providers to be an effective partner in forecasting and planning future service needs

We ask that community service providers be given access to **timely, accurate, and complete data** about current and potential program beneficiaries so that they can plan and develop their capacity to respond effectively to changing program demands. PDD and FSCD program data should be shared through **regular uploads every quarter**, including **active caseload, service planning/waitlist, demographic, and regional breakdowns**.

**Who will require services?** PDD and FSCD data currently available on the government's publicly-accessible open data portal is limited, outdated, and lacks the depth needed for community partners to forecast both the extent of future needs (how many people are expected to need PDD services in the foreseeable future?) or the types of supports that might be required.

## Who is available to provide services?

There is no consolidated data on organizational health, capacity, and growth potential (or shrinkage risk) of community disability service providers. Nor is there a deep understanding of the current workforce and provincial labour market trends that may impact the sector.



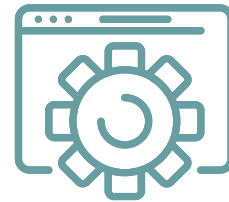
ACDS annual workforce surveys and the recently completed research for Project Blueprint have filled the gap in workforce data to some extent, but they are the only source of workforce data on the sector and much more needs to be known.





# Comprehensive and Timely Data

Empower service providers to effectively forecast and plan future service needs



We also ask that the government collaborate with service providers to develop a **forecasting model** to support effective policy development and program delivery. This can be achieved by working with service providers to identify the information they need to help them prepare their workforce and organizational capacity to **meet future service demands**.

A collaborative approach is needed to increase the forecasting power of service providers so they can anticipate and strategically plan for future organizational resources and workforce skills responsive to expected demand shifts.

***It is expected that much of the data required may already exist, but in isolated silos.***

The task would be to identify the required information and develop a forecasting model to bring together this data to inform effective policy development and program delivery planning.

