#BlueprintCDS

Blueprint CDS: A Comprehensive Workforce Strategy for Community Disability Services

Technical Document
December 19, 2022

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Background

The Alberta Council of Disability Services (ACDS) is a non-profit association of Community Disability Services (CDS) sector organizations in Alberta. ACDS works closely with the Government of Alberta (Government) and other partners to strengthen the CDS sector to benefit Albertans with developmental disabilities, through information gathering, advocacy, accreditation and other avenues.

ACDS has invested in a process to identify and describe the challenges faced by the CDS sector regarding the recruitment and retention of their workforce. Living and working through the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing workforce challenges and highlighted new and emerging ones.

In Spring 2022, ACDS received funding from the Government to lead the development of a sector-driven workforce strategy, called **Project Blueprint CDS**. With support from KPMG, this work has included research, labour market analysis, survey data and sector engagement to identify key workforce challenges, and co-created (with the CDS sector) a set of recommended strategies.

These recommended strategies have been refined as part of the ongoing work of Project Blueprint CDS and will ultimately be finalized with an accompanying Implementation Plan that is expected to be released in Spring 2023.

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Project Blueprint CDS

About this Document

This document is intended to provide an overview of the work of Project Blueprint CDS, including a summary of the research and analysis performed to date and details of the refined recommended strategies.

The set of Workforce Strategy documents (the Strategy Summary document and this Technical Document) are the culmination of several phases of work, including the following:

– Completion of an Initial Assessment and High-Level Recommendations that used a mixed methods approach to identify the key workforce challenges experienced by the sector and develop a suite of preliminary recommendations.

– Engagement with the CDS sector to validate, review and add to the preliminary recommendations. This engagement was conducted in Fall 2022 via a series of workshops across Alberta. These workshops were attended by a total of 133 participants representing 78 CDS organizations.

Figure 1: Project Blueprint CDS Overview

August 2022 **Initial Assessment**	*August 2022* **Initial Assessment Implementation Plan**	*September 2022* **High-Level Recommendations**	*December 2022* **Comprehensive Workforce Strategy for the CDS Sector**	*March 2023* **Implementation Plan**
• Progress report on research, analysis, and sector engagement performed thus far • Recommendations on immediate challenges that could be addressed by the end of Summer 2022	• High-level implementation plan for the immediate challenges identified in the Initial Assessment Deliverable	• Recommendations on the remaining challenges identified during the Initial Assessment Deliverable • Identification of remaining strategies as short term, medium term, and long term	• Refined High-Level Recommendations into a Comprehensive Workforce Strategy based on feedback provided through further sector engagement	• Co-designed Implementation Plan to address all CDS Sector Workforce Strategy recommendations based on further sector engagement

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Methodology

A mixed methods approach was used to complete the Workforce Strategy. The approach included:

Sector engagement through:

- *Blueprint CDS Survey* – The Blueprint CDS Survey was created with the goal of being the first opportunity for CDS sector service providers to give their input as part of this project. The Blueprint CDS Survey was administered to ACDS members during Spring 2022 in order to supplement the material provided by the sector through ACDS' annual workforce surveys. The results of the Blueprint CDS Survey were used to develop priority themes to be further developed through focus sessions and to identify the key workforce challenges faced by the sector.

- *Focus sessions* – Three focus sessions were held with CDS sector executives in Spring 2022. The goal of these sessions was to test the validity of the priority themes that emerged from the Blueprint CDS Survey and to build on the information collected. The results of the focus session were used primarily to inform the current state challenges and to brainstorm and validate potential recommendations for strategies that could address the key workforce challenges faced by the CDS sector.

- *Roadshow workshops* – Six workshops were held with CDS sector executives in Fall 2022. The goal of these sessions was to gather feedback and insights from the CDS sector on the preliminary recommendations. The results of the workshops were used to further refine the recommended strategies and will serve as a key input into the development of an implementation plan for all strategies before Spring 2022. Further information on the workshops can be found in Appendix A: Sector Engagement.

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Methodology

Desktop research with specific focus on:

- *Jurisdictional research* – Desktop research was conducted to better understand the context of the CDS sector in other provinces and to identify promising practices occurring in other provinces and countries. Relevant examples from within Alberta and from British Columbia, Ontario and Australia have been referenced in this document.

- *ACDS reports* – A literature review of existing ACDS reports was conducted to leverage the expertise and effort expended by ACDS in supporting sector agencies. These reports included annual ACDS workforce surveys, member engagement reports and policy research briefs.

- *Labour market data* – Desktop research was conducted on the trends and issues related to macro trends in labour, the labour market within Alberta, the CDS sector workforce, and similar sectors within the North American Industry Classification System[1] (NAICS) industry groups 623 – Nursing and Residential Care Facilities and 624 – Social Assistance, as well as National Occupational Classification[2] (NOC) occupation groups 4212 – Social and Community Services Workers and 4412 – Home Support Workers. Additionally, this includes the compilation of sector labour statistics which include results from the survey launched through this project, ACDS' annual surveys and relevant statistical profiles obtained from federal and provincial Government sources in order to paint an objective picture of the CDS workforce. Further information on the jurisdictional research can be found in Appendix B: Labour Market Analysis.

    - Statistical profiles obtained from federal and provincial Government sources include key occupations that are part of Alberta's CDS sector. This includes province-wide data as well as figures for three Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs): Calgary, Edmonton and Lethbridge. The three CMA profiles use data from the 2016 census. The Alberta CDS sector profile includes a historical comparison of 2006 and 2016 census data where possible.

    - NAICS 623, NAICS 624, NOC 4212, and NOC 4412 were selected for the analysis based on feedback provided by Project Blueprint CDS team members and the literature review. These NAICS and NOC groups were identified as those most relevant to Alberta's CDS sector. Information for detailed levels of NAICS and NOC groups are not always publicly available. In these cases, higher-level codes were used as the best approximation of CDS sector occupations.

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Summary of Research and Analysis

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CDS Sector

About the Sector

The CDS sector in Alberta provides community-based supports to individuals with developmental disabilities. These community-based service providers employ approximately 15,000 staff to support individuals to live full lives in the community. Community-based supports include home living, community access, employment and specialized support for individuals as well as respite, short-term support or training for caregivers.

ACDS members are largely CDS organizations that are primarily funded by the Government of Alberta's Persons with Developmental Disabilities Program (PDD). A 2021 survey of ACDS members found that, on average, approximately 85% of a member service provider's operating revenues came from PDD, with the remaining amount coming from other sources (e.g., other Government of Alberta sources such as Family Support for Children with Disabilities, social enterprise, fundraising, and the Federal Government).[3]

The CDS sector provides critical supports to individuals with developmental disabilities who generally also have other needs. The supports provided are often preventative in nature – meaning that with the right supports, individuals receiving services can maintain a safe, stable, good quality of life. Without these supports, individuals may be more likely to experience isolation, poverty, homelessness, addiction, severe mental illness, etc. and to require expensive interactions with the health and justice systems.

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CDS Sector

About Individuals in Service

CDS sector service providers support a wide variety of individuals, with needs ranging from relatively simple to highly complex. The profiles in Figure 2 are illustrative of some of the "typical" individuals that may access PDD-funded CDS sector supports. These profiles were developed during the project and validated by ACDS. They are not intended to be representative of the full spectrum of needs across the CDS sector, but rather to bring to life examples of the range of needs across the sector and how they impact the competencies needed in the workforce.

Figure 2: Profiles of Individuals in Service

Sophie is a mixed race woman in her 50s. Sophie loves music, games and swimming.

She has a Down's syndrome diagnosis.

Sophie lives with a roommate and receives shared day supports.

Sophie has support with community activities, life skill development, groceries and medical appointments.

Joe is an 20 year-old Cree man. He loves to be outside, play sports and participate in Cree traditions and ceremonies.

Joe has a diagnosed developmental disability, abuse and trauma history, and minor medical needs.

Joe is housed in a support home where he receives overnight supports shared among residents.

Stephanie is a 35 year-old white woman. She loves art, drawing and watching movies.

She has a diagnosis for a developmental disability, has experienced abuse and trauma, is experiencing mental illness and has significant safety considerations.

She previously lived in Alberta Hospital. She now lives in an overnight staffed residence with 24-hour care from two staff.

Complexity of service needs / Workforce capabilities →

Building relationships	
Communications	
Flexibility	
Interpersonal relations and respect	
Positive behavioural supports	

Building relationships	Medication administration
Communications	Trauma informed care
Flexibility	
Interpersonal relations and respect	
Positive behavioural supports	

Building relationships	Trauma informed care
Communications	Preventative health measures
Flexibility	Intervention techniques
Interpersonal relations and respect	Addiction services
Positive behavioural supports	Mental Health first aid
Medication administration	Suicide prevention

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CDS Sector

About the Workforce

CDS Sector Workforce

ACDS conducts an annual survey which collects point-in-time data from responding CDS sector member agencies on the makeup of their workforce. Figure 3 shows data from a recent ACDS workforce survey.

Anecdotal information from the CDS sector supports the data provided by the survey. The CDS sector workforce is reported to be largely young and female, with a high representation of newcomers. There was also reported to be a component of the workforce that is aging and, due to high turnover, is not being replaced at the same rate by younger colleagues.

The low wages prominent in the sector were noted by participants as a significant factor in the composition of the workforce. For example, focus session participants noted that many new workers are students completing post-secondary programs in other similar fields who work in the CDS sector for the work experience it provides, but not stay in the sector due to low wages. Participants noted that many other workers in the sector are working two jobs to be able to make a living.

Service providers also reported that many workers do not enter the CDS sector with sector-specific training or credentials. Employers then have to support these new staff to complete basic skills training once they have started working in the sector.

Figure 3: CDS Sector Workforce Stats (2019)

15,000 people employed in the Community Disability Services sector in Alberta

73% of workers identified as female

60% of workers were younger than 45

60% of employees worked full-time hours

27% of employees worked multiple positions within the same organization*

94% of staff who held multiple positions were **frontline employees**

87% of staff were in frontline direct service positions

*This reflects the employment status reported by the employer, not employee. Many workers hold multiple jobs across different organizations

$21.27 average hourly wage in sector

56% of workers earned **<$20** / hour
84% of workers earned **<$25** / hour

Source: Alberta Council of Disability Services. 2019. ACDS Survey 2019. Calgary, AB.
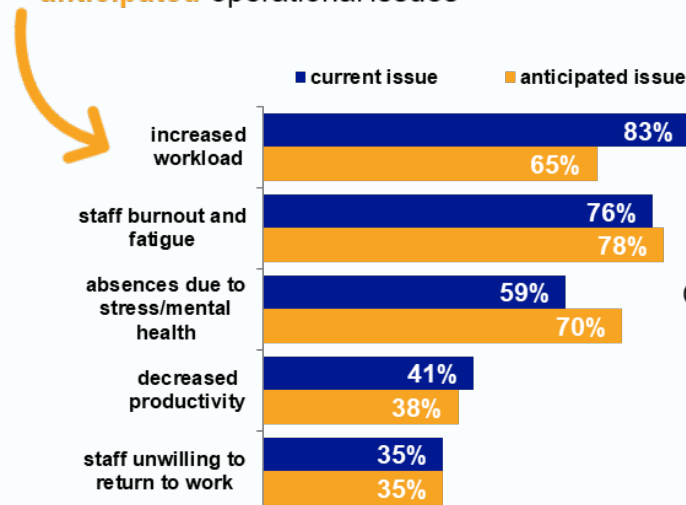
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CDS Sector

About the Workforce

Prior to the pandemic, many CDS sector workers were also working in other sectors, such as long-term care. The impacts of COVID-19 workplace restrictions that limited workers to one worksite resulted in many CDS sector workers choosing jobs in long-term care due to the higher wages in that sector. This resulted in an exodus from the CDS sector, compounding the sector's ongoing challenge with recruitment and retention of skilled and qualified workers. Figure 4 depicts high levels of turnover, staff burnout and fatigue, absences and other challenges faced by CDS sector agencies in 2021. Additional detail surrounding the labour market trends prevalent in comparable industries can be found in Appendix B: Labour Market Analysis.

Figure 4: CDS Sector Workforce Stats on Organization Wellness and Workforce (2021)

Organizations struggling with **current** or **anticipated** operational issues

	current issue	anticipated issue
increased workload	83%	65%
staff burnout and fatigue	76%	78%
absences due to stress/mental health	59%	70%
decreased productivity	41%	38%
staff unwilling to return to work	35%	35%

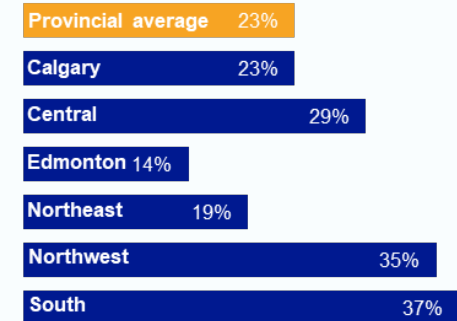**23%** annual turnover in 2021

Turnover was the highest among **frontline positions** of:

Employment specialists **32%**

Community disability service workers and practitioners **27%**

Complex support needs workers **24%**

79% Of all turnover was due to **employee resignation**

Annualized industry **turnover** differed between **regions:**

Region	
Provincial average	23%
Calgary	23%
Central	29%
Edmonton	14%
Northeast	19%
Northwest	35%
South	37%

Vacant staffing positions are an indicator of recruitment challenges. The CDS sector had an overall **vacancy rate** of: **7.4%**

Source: Alberta Council of Disability Services. 2021. ACDS Survey 2021: Organization Wellness and Workforce. Calgary, AB.

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CDS Sector

Key Workforce Challenges

Based on the findings from the preliminary engagement, research and analysis performed, the following key workforce challenges emerged, organized under a framework of three overarching themes.

Additional detail on each of the key workforce challenges is found on the following page and included as part of the evidence section for each of the recommended strategies.

Figure 5: Key Workforce Challenges

A. Understanding workforce context

The context, purpose, value, and functions of the CDS sector workforce.

Lack of visibility and buy-in 🚫

Parallel and duplicate systems ↑↑

Increasingly complex service needs 📈

Rural factors 🗺️

B. Recruiting and retaining the workforce

The things that affect whether workers choose to enter and stay in the CDS sector.

Low wages 🪙

Competition from other sectors 🛡️

Work environment

Leadership gap

C. Developing the workforce

The things that affect the CDS sector's ability to deliver quality services.

Barriers to training

Rigid contracts

Mismatched staff skill sets 🎓

Lack of post-secondary training

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Current State Workforce Challenges

A. Understanding Workforce Context

Those challenges that relate to the context, purpose, value and functions of the CDS sector workforce include:

Workforce Challenge	Evidence
Lack of visibility and buy-in	**There is a lack of visibility into and buy-in to the value and complexity of the work of the CDS sector.**
	Focus session participants reported that there may be a lack of awareness among Government decision makers and the broader public about the impact and importance of the work of the CDS sector, both in supporting the quality of life of individuals with developmental disabilities, but also in preventing costly interactions with other systems.
	As part of the Project Blueprint Survey, CDS sector executives were asked to identify and rank potential reasons why their organization might be facing challenges in finding the right staff for their services. Respondents believed that low interest in CDS sector employment by job seekers is the primary reason why their organizations are challenged in finding the right staff.
	Participants also noted the importance of more research for evidence on the importance of the CDS sector. For example, participants suggested the need for understanding and quantifying the extent to which the preventative nature of the services provided by the CDS sector results in savings and benefits for health, justice and other systems, as well as the value created for individuals receiving services and for the broader Alberta economy.
Parallel and duplicate systems	**The CDS sector is creating duplicate processes to support individuals to access the supports they need outside of what is delivered by CDS organizations.**
	Like all Albertans, individuals with disabilities encounter and are impacted by a wide range of programs, services and systems, such as income supports, health, justice, housing, and seniors. For individuals with complex needs, the intersections with certain systems are more frequent, intense and demanding than other individuals.[4] However, individuals receiving PDD funded services can be cut off from accessing these services through regular means, leaving PDD and the CDS sector to bear the costs of these services, but also in many cases to provide a duplicate process for people with disabilities to access these services – creating, in effect, a "parallel system".
	For example, CDS sector staff are being expected to provide skilled medical and other care such as managing feeding tubes, administering medication, physical accessibility supports, etc. However, staff in the CDS sector are often not supported with many of the resources available to staff who provide these services in a health or other institutional setting. Examples of these resources could include security, psychiatric supports, multidisciplinary teams, etc.

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Current State Workforce Challenges

A. Understanding Workforce Context

Workforce Challenge	Evidence
Increasingly complex service needs	**The scope and needs of individuals referred to CDS sector supports and their families are growing and becoming more complex.** The number of individuals qualifying for CDS sector supports is increasing. In December 2011, the provincial PDD caseload was 9,611 compared to 12,640 in December 2021[5], representing an increase of 31.5%. The 2021 total caseload number does not include an additional 2,010 waitlisted individuals who have not yet started receiving services.[6] In addition to the rising number of individuals qualifying for CDS sector supports, service providers have observed that the needs and diversity of those individuals is also increasing – ranging from a broader variety of cultural and ethnic diversities, ages, as well as complexity of needs and diagnoses. For example, individuals may require supports for multiple disabilities, aging, dementia and / or complex medical and mental health issues. Based on input from CDS sector, the bundle of issues presented by individuals with disabilities is now broader, more intense and requires higher skill levels than the individuals with disabilities who have been supported in the past. Other skill sets are also needed, such as providing culturally sensitive supports, medical supports, etc., meaning that service providers now need to hire and train for those skills sets as well as the level of service historically provided by the sector. Families also bring higher expectations than they did previously – families transitioning from Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) funding bring expectations of a higher level of support than that provided under the PDD Program. ACDS membership engagement sessions found that families are also turning more frequently to the CDS sector for supports for themselves in addition to their loved ones. In some cases, service providers have decided to stop providing service to certain individuals (whom they could easily support) because they cannot support the families. Staff do not have the training or experience to provide family supports.[7] This challenge of responding to individuals in Alberta with increasingly complex needs is consistent with findings from British Columbia, where leaders in the community services sector reported in interviews that "the needs of their clients are becoming more complex with more people experiencing multiple, interconnected challenges (e.g., mental illness, addictions, food insecurity, precarious housing)." 87% of these leaders reported that the level of demand for services at their organization was higher or much higher compared to three years ago.[8]

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Current State Workforce Challenges

A. Understanding Workforce Context

Workforce Challenge	Evidence
Rural factors	**Rural communities experience workforce challenges more severely.** The majority of Albertans live in Edmonton or Calgary. A 2022 report on the changing population in Alberta states that Calgary and Edmonton have seen their share of Alberta's population grow from 56% in 1981 to 68% in 2021,[9] while Alberta's towns, villages, and rural areas have experienced population stagnation or decline. Challenges that affect CDS service providers in urban centres often have a greater impact on similar service providers in rural communities. This means: – Rural communities have a smaller pool of skilled resources to draw from. – This smaller pool of skilled resources means that service providers operating in the same rural community find themselves in competition with each other for staff. – The impacts of other industries and sectors are felt more intensely in rural communities – where the draw of higher paying industries (e.g., oil and gas, meatpacking) can be stronger. – Individuals receiving services in urban centres have access to a variety of supports and services, and often have access to transportation options. In rural areas, individuals are less likely to be able to access the specialized services they need and have limited options to access to public transportation, compounding their service needs and requiring more from their relationships with existing service providers. This means that a situation that may not be considered complex in an urban centre can become complex in a rural community because of the limitations in the community. – Rural workers have to do more because there are less supports around them for referral. – Several service providers in the focus sessions explained that the limitations on their staffing mean that they do not serve individuals that they deem as beyond their capacity because of staff numbers and competencies, meaning that some individuals with complex service needs in rural areas may not be able to access the supports they need. – Service providers do not receive additional funding to travel to support individuals living in remote settings. Leaders in the community services sector in British Columbia also reported that recruitment and retention challenges are particularly severe in certain geographic communities – "northern, rural, and remote communities face a lack of qualified local candidates for many positions. They also face difficulty recruiting non-local candidates due to their communities' lack of quality education, public transportation, social services and affordable housing." Like Alberta, "many of these… rural, and remote communities have resource-based economies with transient labour pools."[10]

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Current State Workforce Challenges

B. Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

Those challenges that affect whether workers choose to enter and stay in the CDS sector.

Workforce Challenge	Evidence
Low Wages	**Wages are low relative to similar sectors and have been outpaced by the increasing cost of living in Alberta.** Wages continue to be a chronic issue in the CDS sector. Focus session participants noted that Alberta's CDS sector employment is generally no longer viewed as a credible, long-term employment option. CDS staff often leave for higher paid employment in similar sectors (e.g., teaching, nursing, occupational therapy). They also noted that during economic boom times they struggle to compete with higher paying employment opportunities in other industries (e.g., the oil and gas sector). Participants also noted that COVID-19 further exacerbated wage pressures faced by the CDS sector. Public health orders limiting staff to one worksite led to staff choosing employment in higher paying sectors with similar competency requirements (e.g., long-term care). In 2020, 54% of the entire CDS workforce made less than $20.00 per hour and the average hourly wage of all CDS staff was $21.50. This includes executive leadership as well frontline service delivery positions such as Community Disability Service Workers (CDSW) averaging $18.76 per hour and Community Disability Services Practitioners (CDSP) averaging $21.59 per hour.[11] There have been no wage increases from Government-funded contracts since 2014. During that same time period in Alberta, inflation has increased by 19%[12], the minimum wage has increased by 47%[13] to $15 per hour, and the average wages for workers in related industry sectors have increased by 12% to $25.21 for NAICS 623- Nursing and residential care facilities workers and 18% to $23.43 for NAICS 624- Social assistance workers, respectively.[14] In comparing the wages for similar positions between Government and CDS sector (i.e., non-Government) disability workers, CDS sector wages are lower than the Government's Individual Support Worker (ISW) and Human Services Workers (HSW) classifications. ISWs include positions that provide direct care for a small number of individuals and is most comparable to frontline CDS sector staff. ISWs earn between $20.63 and $25.07 per hour.[15] HSWs includes positions such as Caseworkers and Social Service Coordinators and would be most comparable to the CDS sector's middle management. HSWs earn between $26.79 and $41.93 per hour.[16] The wage situation that CDS sector staff are faced with is further intensified when compared with indexes of affordability and livability across the province. One such index of affordability, the Market Basket Measure (MBM), provides a baseline cost for a basket of goods and services (i.e., food, clothing, transportation, shelter) that represent a basic standard of living. The MBM is $24.04 in Alberta's metropolitan areas (i.e., Edmonton and Calgary) and $22.51 in Alberta's rural areas.[17] The average wage for both Disability Support Workers and the broader CDS Sector staff in Alberta are below Alberta's MBM threshold. An analysis of wages for frontline disability support workers across Canada shows that Alberta's disability support workers are paid less per hour than those same positions in Ontario where they are paid an average $19.54 per hour and British Columbia where they are paid an average of $21.91 per hour.[18]

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Current State Workforce Challenges

B. Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

Workforce Challenge	Evidence

Competition from other sectors	**There is competition for resources from organizations and support sectors that provide better pay, work environment, multidisciplinary teams, etc.**
	
	Competition for workers is a challenge for the CDS sector in a variety of ways, including competition from within the sector as well as competition from very different fields.
	
	– It is difficult for rural service providers to hire qualified staff due to competition from service providers in urban areas.
	
	– There is competition across service providers; larger organizations with greater capacity for raising funds (e.g., via social enterprises, larger donor basis) are more likely to be able to offer higher wages, benefits or other amenities, as well as better employment opportunities such as working in different jobs, locations or teams, than smaller or less-resourced organizations.
	
	– The Family Managed Services (FMS) model, which gives PDD funding to families to recruit and manage staff to provide direct supports, was also noted by focus session participants as an additional source of competition in the market for skilled staff. The number of individuals that access FMS has risen by 21.6% over the last 3.5 years; over that same time period, the total PDD caseload has increased by 3.8%.[19]
	
	– There is also competition between community-based service providers and Government. As noted earlier, ISW and HSW staff in Government-run facilities receive higher wages and better benefits than CDS sector staff.
	
	– Competition with the broader human services sector is perhaps the largest challenge. Workers interested in this type of work can pursue employment in a range of fields such as teaching, nursing, occupational therapy, counselling, etc. that provide higher wages, multidisciplinary support teams and other benefits, as well as fewer demands (e.g., caring for highly complex individuals). Focus session participants noted that often students and other new entrants interested in careers in human services work in the CDS sector because of the low barriers to entry and gain valuable work experience while they are students, and then leave the field once their post-secondary studies are complete.
	
	   – This was also reported as one of the main retention issues for the community services sector in British Columbia – staff leaving for higher-paying jobs with better benefits in the Government or the education or health sectors.[20]
	
	   – In Alberta, this was particularly a challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic when workers were required to keep to one worksite. Many workers in the CDS sector were also working in long-term care and when forced to choose, chose higher wages and better working conditions within the long-term care system – resulting in an immediate, and not yet resolved, workforce crisis in the CDS sector.

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Current State Workforce Challenges

B. Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

Workforce Challenge	Evidence
Work environment	**The workforce brings expectations about work environment, supports, working in multidisciplinary teams, etc. that the CDS sector is not currently able to meet.**
	Generation Z is the most recent generation to begin entering the workplace, considered generally to be individuals born between the mid-1990s and the 2010s.[21] According to the labour market analysis, these individuals make up 12% of Alberta's Social and Community Workers and 9% of Alberta's Home Support Workers.[22]
	Research into the work environment expectations of this upcoming generation identified the following sought-after workplace characteristics:
	– Family and home life are a priority, and they see work as a place to support their home life,
	– They care about the ethics of their work / workplace (e.g., sustainability, public good) and want to impact the world in positive ways,
	– They are keen on growing and learning, and seek to develop their personal abilities,
	– They want to feel valued and be able to establish productive relationships, and
	– They want to feel comfortable in their workplace and have flexibility.[23]
	Participants in the focus sessions also reported seeing the potential workforce caring that their job makes a difference and wanting to work at an organization that aligns with their values. However, they are finding that young people are looking to other sectors to achieve that.
	The current work environment of the CDS sector – including low wages, shift work, long hours, potentially unsafe working environments, demanding and complex work without the training and multidisciplinary support needed (e.g., occupational therapy, nutrition, speech language, nursing, psychiatric) – do not align with what young people are looking for, resulting in them seeking out caring work in other sectors.
	Community social services leaders in British Columbia expressed the same concerns, noting that "many young people are no longer entering the sector because they have made significant investments into their education and are looking for long-term career prospects and a reasonable work-life balance… fewer people are willing to work odd hours, overnights and weekends in increasingly complex and demanding service environments without proportionate compensation or job stability".[24] An Ontario survey of their disability sector found that "even organizations that reported good retention rates found retaining employees who have to work evening and weekends a challenge".[25]

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Current State Workforce Challenges

B. Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

Workforce Challenge	Evidence
Leadership gap	**Senior leaders in the CDS sector are retiring and there is a lack of experienced, willing staff to take their place.** The challenges around the leadership gap in the CDS sector are twofold: – There are many CDS sector senior executives retiring and other organizational leaders are less inclined to move into these positions, either because they too are close to retirement age themselves or have seen the demands that these positions entail. This churn in executive positions has created a leadership gap and a succession issue. Several executive positions are being filled by people from outside the disability sector; the benefits and challenges of this have yet to be assessed.[26] – The lack of retention of experienced staff in the CDS sector means that fewer employees are working up the internal ranks of their organization, this means that many more senior positions need to be recruited externally and that internal experience and wisdom is lost.

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Current State Workforce Challenges

C. Developing the Workforce

Those challenges that affect the CDS sector's ability to deliver quality services.

Workforce Challenge	Evidence
Barriers to training	**There is a lack of funding available for training. Specialized training opportunities can be limited or expensive and services providers find themselves having to provide their own time consuming, expensive training which is further compounded due to high staff turnover.** Service providers bear much of the time and financial costs of training new workers. In their 2018 report on membership engagement sessions, ACDS noted that overall, funding from Government pays 60% of total training costs in the sector, while service providers pick up the remaining balance through their contract-based funding.[27] The overall funding in the sector has created a cycle of recruiting untrained and inexperienced workers, providing core training, and then losing these staff to higher paying jobs once they are trained and qualified. Time to train staff impacts directly on service provision and quality of life for individuals being served. Staff who are not properly qualified can lead to lower quality supports and potentially create a safety risk for individuals, staff and the public. On average, ACDS reports that service providers spend almost $400 per employee for mandatory training each year, which can quickly add up given staff turnover and the cost of covering work while staff are at training.[28] In 2019, ACDS reported that access to training also varies greatly. Basic and mandatory training are readily available, often through train-the-trainer programs and local community partners; however, specialized training opportunities especially in rural areas or remote northern locations are unavailable or expensive.[29] Analysis from British Columbia and Ontario also found that training was a significant issue in the CDS sector. Many frontline workers surveyed in British Columbia found the training they received insufficient. Half of the disability support workers surveyed in Ontario felt they were receiving the training necessary to develop skills and competencies to meet increasingly complex service needs. Difficulty in access training and inability of service providers to meet the costs of training were noted as challenges in both jurisdictions.[30] [31]

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Current State Workforce Challenges

C. Developing the Workforce

Workforce Challenge	Evidence
Rigid contracts	**The current contract parameters with Government are rigid and do not allow for service providers to be flexible about how they deliver services and support their workforce.** Focus session participants reported that contract funding amounts do not recognize the full / true workforce costs of providing services. For example, they noted that the cost of administration within an organization, training and onboarding, along with other areas, are not included in contract funding amounts. They also noted that the funding amounts have not been updated in a long time. Some service providers engaged by ACDS reported that their funding contracts still require them to report on units or hours of support delivered rather than on outcomes achieved. There are restrictions on how funding can be used, which limits service providers from using their funding dollars to meet the unique needs of their workforce and organization and adapting to the needs of the individuals they serve. This causes difficulty in how staffing resources are allocated as needs change. Community services leaders in British Columbia also noted restrictive funding contracts as a challenge, explaining that they have "little-to-no space for innovation or adjustments to help meet the changing needs and complexities of their clients and most contracts have no funding for ancillary costs".[32]
Mismatched staff skill sets	**It is difficult to find and hire individuals with the skill sets needed by service providers. Competency criteria are not consistent and most new workers do not enter the field with a formal disability services qualification.** Service providers report difficulty in finding staff with the training, skills and experience needed to deliver services. As the majority of post-secondary education programs for the CDS workforce are no longer available, most new workers do not have formal disability service qualifications when they enter the field. Moreover, since most people typically do not understand the range and complexity of skills needed to support individuals with disabilities, job seekers with false expectations or irrelevant experience are applying to work in disability services. Focus session participants noted that it is difficult to find staff with many of the basic skills they require, such as good verbal and written communication skills. Participants reported that they are choosing between hiring staff who do not have the competencies they need or not hiring at all. Given these challenges, participants noted that when possible, they hire for ethics, values and passion and train for CDS skills, as it is much harder to train for those fundamental characteristics. However, potential staff who come from other sectors or other countries often bring different approaches and expectations to working with individuals with developmental disabilities and require training to align with the approaches of the CDS sector (e.g., rights-based model of support), even when they are passionate about the work. The lack of credentials for the disability sector is consistent with other jurisdictions. None of the jurisdictions researched had one consistent credentialling system for disability support workers.

#BlueprintCDS

Current State Workforce Challenges

C. Developing the Workforce

Workforce Challenge	Evidence
Lack of post-secondary training	**There is a lack of post-secondary training available as many programs across Alberta have closed due to lack of demand.** Since 2008, most disability post-secondary programs in Alberta have been discontinued due to low enrollments. Enrollments have reduced because of low interest in the CDS sector for many reasons shared throughout this document, including low wages, complex service needs and work environments. Only 27% of Project Blueprint CDS survey respondents believe that the current post-secondary system would support the development of the desired workforce skills and capabilities their organizations would need. Certification through a post-secondary program is not required for work in the CDS sector and is not directly tied to level of wage provided, offering little incentive for potential CDS sector workers to pursue post-secondary education in disability support. Some focus session participants reported the lack of educated and professional workers to be a significant challenge in recruiting competent and skilled staff to meet their needs. This has impacted service providers: – There are significantly fewer trained community disability support workers entering the workforce. – When the training and certifications are not in place, the training falls to employers, as noted in the barriers to training section above. – A lack of training can contribute to higher risk of unsafe situations for both staff and individuals receiving services. The scarcity of post-secondary disability programming is not unique to Alberta. Sector leaders in British Columbia reported that existing education and training programs either fail to address the complex issues that workers face or simply lack offerings in key service areas (e.g., supporting people with developmental disabilities and/or mental health issues, behavioural intervention, early childhood education, victim support services).[33]

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Recommended Strategies

ACDS | 50 YEARS

Recommended Strategies

This set of recommended strategies is intended to address the workforce challenges facing the CDS sector in Alberta. These strategies focus on the recruitment and retention of a more skilled and professional workforce that delivers a higher-quality service to Albertans.

The recommended strategies are organized under the three overarching themes, as depicted in Figure 6, and include the anticipated timing for work to being on each recommendation. Additional detail related to each of the recommendations is found in the following section.

As part of Project Blueprint CDS, further work will be completed in early 2023 to co-design an implementation plan with CDS sector service providers that addresses all CDS sector workforce recommendations.

Figure 6: Recommended Strategies

A. Understanding Workforce Context

	Immediate (within 1 year)	Short-Term (1 to 2 years)	Medium-Term (2 to 3 years)	Long-Term (3+ years)
1. Build a shared understanding of the economic impact of the CDS sector			X	
2. Build a shared understanding of the scope of practice of CDS sector services		X		
3. Adopt common workforce classifications			X	
4. Adopt a network model to support cross ministry coordination			X	
5. Develop a forecasting model to support strategic workforce planning			X	

B. Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

	Immediate (within 1 year)	Short-Term (1 to 2 years)	Medium-Term (2 to 3 years)	Long-Term (3+ years)
6. Provide immediate and ongoing wage relief		X		
7. Build a wage scale guide for frontline service delivery staff				X
8. Engage CDS sector workers to co-design a community of practice				X

C. Developing the Workforce

	Immediate (within 1 year)	Short-Term (1 to 2 years)	Medium-Term (2 to 3 years)	Long-Term (3+ years)
9. Increase education and training levels of CDS sector workforce. This could include:				
9A Establish a target credential requirement for frontline CDS sector workers			X	
9B Establish a system for micro-credentialing			X	
9C Expand post-secondary programming				X
9D Identify current state of training		X		
9E Develop a provincial training framework		X		
9F Centralize training opportunities			X	
9G Expand the suite of training offered by ACDS			X	
10. Revisit PDD contract structure			X	
11. Implement innovative workforce fund			X	

#BlueprintCDS

A1: Build a shared understanding of the economic impact of the CDS sector

Recommendation

Complete an economic impact analysis to better understand and communicate the economic impact of the CDS sector in Alberta in order to support a case for further investment in the sector.

The scope of this recommendation includes the completion of an economic impact analysis that would have the following objectives:

– Identify and explore the economic impact of the CDS sector, including the impacts of employment of the CDS sector workforce and labour market participation of the families of individuals in service.

– Assess the downstream impact of what the costs would be to other sectors (e.g., Justice, Health) if the CDS sector did not exist.

– Communicate the findings to the CDS sector, Government and the public.

Evidence

There is a lack of awareness regarding the impact and importance of the work of the CDS sector - supporting the quality of life of individuals with developmental disabilities, preventing costly interactions with other systems in Alberta and employing nearly 15,000 Albertans.

The low interest in CDS sector employment by job seekers is a primary reason why organizations in the sector have challenges finding the right staff.

More research for evidence on the importance of the CDS sector was requested by the CDS sector to understand and quantify:

– The extent to which CDS sector services result in savings for the health, justice and other systems,

– The value created for individuals receiving services, and

– The value created for the broader Alberta economy.

Rationale

An economic impact study can help to assign a value to the estimated cost savings and benefits attributable to the CDS sector.

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#BlueprintCDS

A1: Build a shared understanding of the economic impact of the CDS sector

Anticipated Benefits

– The Government and Albertans have a better understanding of the ways in which investment in community disability supports achieve positive outcomes for individuals in service, their families and all Albertans.

– The Government understands the ways that the CDS sector offsets costs to other areas of the system and creates economic value.

Potential Limitations and Barriers

– There may be barriers to engaging other Government Ministries to understand the importance of this work and to make changes based on the results.

– All of the required data may not be available to support an economic impact analysis.
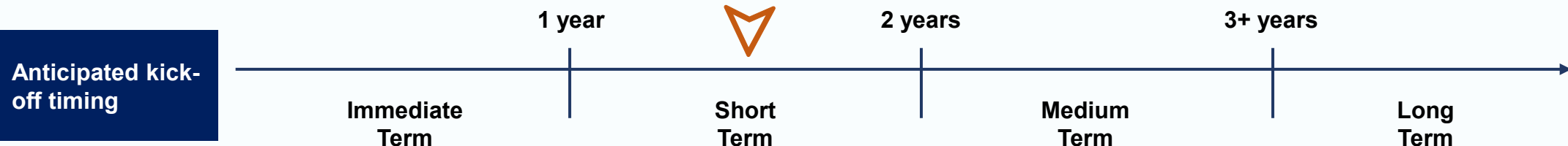
Stakeholders

– ACDS

– CDS sector service providers

– Government – Seniors, Community and Social Services (SCSS), Health, Justice

#BlueprintCDS

A1: Build a shared understanding of the economic impact of the CDS sector

Implementation Considerations

- This work could include gathering of stories from individuals in service and their families, as well as the workforce to show the impacts of the sector.
- There is a connection with **recommendation A2** in terms of having an understanding of what the CDS sector does. There may also be a connection with **recommendation A4** in terms of close coordination with other Ministries to show the impacts of the sector on their work.
- The economic analysis could include:
  - Comparison to PDD direct operations.
  - Workforce participation of CDS sector staff.
  - All of the roles provided by CDS sector staff that result in cost savings to other systems (e.g., medication administration).
  - The cost savings to other ministries because individuals are supported to stay out of the hospital, prison and other systems. Consider specific impacts such as homelessness prevention,
  - The economic impact of the families of individuals in service participating in the workforce.
  - The value of services provided for individuals – including quality of life, inclusion, future prevention, safety, etc.
  - Quantification of the volunteer effort that supports the CDS sector.
  - Regional considerations to delivering services (e.g., lack of access to psychologists in rural communities).

	1 year		2 years		3+ years
Anticipated kick-off timing	Immediate Term	Short Term	Medium Term		Long Term

#BlueprintCDS

A2: Build a shared understanding of the scope of practice of CDS sector services

Recommendation

Create an inventory of the services provided to support individuals across the sector and the competencies needed to adequately provide those services.

The scope of this recommendation includes working with CDS sector organizations to:

- Take inventory of the services currently being offered by the sector across Alberta.
- Build common definitions for those services.
- Define what specific competencies are needed to provide those services.
- Compile and share this inventory with the sector as a whole, as well as with Government.

Evidence

The number of individuals qualifying for CDS sector supports is increasing. The provincial PDD caseload has increased by 31.5% between 2011 and 2021, not including an additional 2,010 individuals on the waitlist who have not yet started receiving services.

The needs and diversity of individuals in service are also increasing – for example: cultural and ethnic diversities, ages, and complexity of needs and diagnoses such as addiction, trauma, medical needs, etc. The skills required to support these individuals has also changed as additional required skill sets now include providing culturally sensitive supports, medical supports, etc.

Service providers now need to hire and train for those skills sets as well as the level of service historically provided by the sector. Additional understanding of the way the increasingly complex service needs impact workforce capabilities and requirements could support service providers to meet changing needs.

Rationale

The creation of an inventory of services provides a process to work through all of the growing and new needs of individuals in service and the skill sets staff should possess to support those individuals. An inventory would provide ACDS and CDS sector service providers with a clear understanding of what skills are being required of staff in the sector, support a better understanding of how to support individuals accessing CDS sector services and promote more effective planning for the sector's workforce needs.

#BlueprintCDS

A2: Build a shared understanding of the scope of practice of CDS sector services

Anticipated Benefits

– There is a stronger, common and consistent understanding of the range of supports being provided under the CDS sector umbrella among:
  – Government (contracting, managing outcomes and monitoring performance),
  – The CDS sector (contracting clarity, standard setting and accreditation, training, and service delivery and workforce planning), and
  – The workforce and educators (understanding required competencies and expectations for services).
– There is a better understanding, particularly by Government, of the true costs of service provision.
– There is accessible, consistent information about the full scope of practice available to the entire CDS sector.

Potential Limitations and Barriers

– As the scope of practice changes regularly, the inventory will present a moment in time.
– There may be a lack of agreement among service providers on a consistent inventory of services.
– The scope of services provided is not necessarily considered by the sector to be the scope of services they should be providing. There may also be a lack of agreement among services providers and Government of what the current scope of practice of the CDS sector should be.
– Service providers expressed concern that Government will not be willing to pay to the high skill levels that will be better understood through this exercise.

#BlueprintCDS

A2: Build a shared understanding of the scope of practice of CDS sector services

Stakeholders

– ACDS
– Government - SCSS
– CDS sector service providers
– Alberta Disability Workers Association (ADWA)

Implementation Considerations

– As much as possible, the inventory should highlight the competencies that are anticipated to be needed in the future, not just the current competencies.
– The scope of practice for each level or role within the sector should be inventoried as it is important to understand how the changing scope of practice has impacted all levels of CDS sector organizations.
– There is potential to reference ADWA's previous work to develop its Community Disability Support Worker Competency Standards.[34]

Anticipated kick-off timing

	1 year	2 years	3+ years
Immediate Term	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term

#BlueprintCDS

A3: Adopt common workforce classifications

Recommendation

Revisit ACDS' Workforce Classification System (WCS) to address any new competencies identified through **recommendation A2** to support the growing complexity of needs among individuals in service.

The scope of this recommendation includes:

- Meeting with sector stakeholders to review the outputs of **recommendation A2** and identify the competencies that should be included in the WCS (e.g., editing out outliers, identifying areas of practice that are being provided by the sector that are not within the sector's scope).
- Updating the WCS to include the competencies identified by stakeholders.

ACDS should continue to advocate for consistent use of common workforce classifications using the WCS across the CDS sector.

Evidence

The number, needs and diversity of individuals in service in the CDS sector is increasing, resulting in changes to the skills required by the workforce to support these individuals.

ACDS has a WCS to support the CDS sector workforce and service providers with job competency information. The WCS competencies focus on critical skills often considered to be "soft" skills like interpersonal relationships and respect.

The WCS could be updated to better reflect the growing competencies required to support the increasingly complex service needs of individuals in service.

Rationale

The documentation of frequently required competencies in the WCS would support a common understanding of the evolving skills and competencies needed by CDS sector workers.

#BlueprintCDS

A3: Adopt common workforce classifications

Anticipated Benefits

- Accessible, consistent information about scope of practice is available to the entire sector.
- The CDS sector has a more consistent common language and shared understanding of evolving workforce skill and competency needs by position and service.
- Training programs are more relevant, consistent and meet the defined workforce competency requirements of the CDS sector.
- There is a greater sense of credibility and professionalism among the workforce.
- There is a better understanding of the cost and complexity of services being provided among Government and CDS sector service providers.

Potential Limitations and Barriers

- Government may not be willing to pay to the high skill levels that will be better understood through this exercise.
- Some service providers may choose not to, or may not be able to fully able to, adopt the updated workforce classifications.
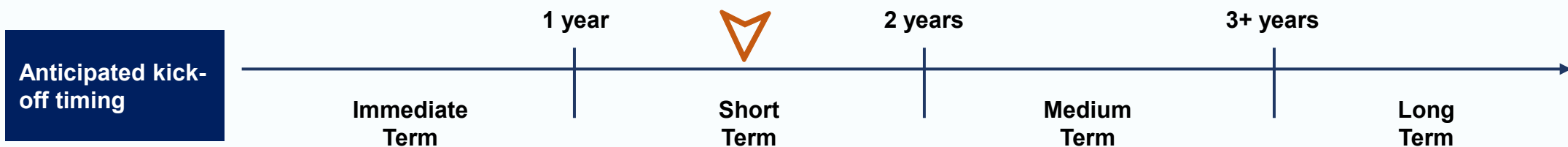
Stakeholders

- ACDS
- CDS sector service providers
- ADWA

#BlueprintCDS

A3: Adopt common workforce classifications

Implementation Considerations

– The workforce classifications need to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to adapt to the changing service environment, including regular consideration of what should and should not be in scope of the CDS sector.

– Consideration should be given to how to build buy-in, confidence and investment from the CDS sector into the importance of the updated ACDS Workforce Classifications beginning during implementation of **recommendation A2** to ensure highest possible adoption of the Classifications.

	1 year		2 years		3+ years
Anticipated kick-off timing					
	Immediate Term	Short Term	Medium Term		Long Term

#BlueprintCDS

A4: Adopt a network model to support cross-ministry coordination

Recommendation

Design a CDS sector-specific network model adapted from the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) network model.

The network includes:

- Cross-Government of Alberta Ministry leadership.
- Case planning and coordination.
- Sharing of resources and expertise to support individuals.
- An integrated cross-system case management system.

The scope of this recommendation includes:

- Review FASD network models and findings of FASD network reviews and evaluations.
- Connect with FASD network members to understand the evolution, implementation characteristics and potential improvement areas for the model.
- Create an initial model design adapted from the FASD network model and tailored to the CDS sector.
- Meet with the CDS sector to review and validate the model.
- Engage directly with SCSS, the Health and Justice to propose the network model and encourage their commitment.

The implementation of the model and an integrated cross-system case management system is not in scope of this recommendation.

#BlueprintCDS

A4: Adopt a network model to support cross-ministry coordination

Evidence

All individuals in service encounter and are impacted by a wide range of programs, services, and systems such as income supports, health, justice, housing and seniors. Individuals receiving PDD funded services can be cut off from accessing these services through regular means, leaving PDD and the CDS sector to bear the costs and often to provide a duplicate process to access these services – creating a "parallel system".

There is a lack of coordination between CDS sector organizations and Government Ministries to ensure individuals in service have access to the services they need in the right system in a way that meet their needs. These Ministries are also not always aware of the ways the CDS sector work aligns with their mandates. Community disability support workers are often required to learn how to navigate programs offered by a wide range of programs and systems, each with their own access criteria, processes, and service protocols. There is also opportunity to improve and formalize coordination between service providers.

Higher levels of coordination are needed to improve and streamline service access and provision for individuals, as well as to increase visibility and buy-in into the work of the CDS sector among other Government Ministries.

Rationale

In the early 2000s, an FASD Cross-Ministry Committee (FASD-CMC), made up of representatives from Alberta Health, Alberta Children and Youth Services, Alberta Seniors and Community Services, Justice and Solicitor General, Alberta Education, Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, etc., was formed to develop a 10-Year FASD Strategic Plan (the Plan).[38] [39]

The FASD-CMC initiated the Alberta FASD Service Network Program to carry out four of the Plan's service delivery pillars: Awareness, Prevention, Assessment and Diagnosis, Supports.[38] [39]

The Alberta FASD Service Network Program provides single point access to integrated FASD resources, programs and supports across Alberta. There are twelve FASD networks, each unique to the region it serves;[35] however commonalities across the networks include:

Please note that the names of the Ministries are noted as they were at the time the FASD-CMC was established

#BlueprintCDS

A4: Adopt a network model to support cross-ministry coordination

Rationale (continued)

- The purpose of each Network is to build community capacity to respond to FASD. The Networks do this through a combination of direct service delivery and coordination between FASD service provider organizations and Government representatives.[35]
- Each Network has at least one staff member – the Network Coordinator – whose role is to drive the work of the Network forward.
- Each Network brings together its membership, which includes local community agencies and organizations that deliver FASD-related supports and services,[36] as well as representatives from Government ministries and agencies, for regular coordination meetings.
- Government Ministries and agencies are champions of the work of the Networks.[37]

The FASD Network Model has been reviewed and evaluated multiple times and has been found to be best practice in supporting individuals with FASD.[39]

This kind of model could support organizations related to the CDS sector (Government ministries, Alberta Health Services, community organizations, service providers, etc.) to come together to address some of the challenges with coordinating supports and services for individuals, which may present an opportunity to collaboratively address some of the parallel systems in place across the sector.

The FASD Network model has strong potential for application to the CDS sector, including the following elements:

- A requirement of active participation of representatives from provincial Government ministries and departments and agencies – providing them with visibility and buy in into the important work of the CDS sector,
- Regular, formal coordination of service delivery, including case planning, between service providers to support consistent approaches for individuals served by more than one organization,
- Regular, formal coordination between service providers to support sharing of learnings and resources and to problem solve regional system issues, and
- Presence of a minimum of one staff member for each Network to ensure efforts to coordinate service delivery and reduce administrative and system barriers remain a focus.

#BlueprintCDS

A4: Adopt a network model to support cross-ministry coordination

Anticipated Benefits

- Health and Justice and Solicitor General develop a stronger buy-in into the importance of the work of the CDS sector and understand the impacts of the sector on their mandates. There is an increase in the coordination of supports across ministries.
- There is an increase in coordination through the network model, reducing administration efforts for the CDS sector and providing CDS sector workers with increased capacity to provide services.
- Families and individuals have access to more skilled supports and experience higher quality, more coordinated services.

Potential Limitations and Barriers

- It may be challenging to gain a firm, ongoing commitment from Government ministries and agencies to commit funding and / or resources to the network model.
- If it is determined that a case management system is required to support the network model, there may be barriers to securing the initial and ongoing funding needed.

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# A4: Adopt a network model to support cross-ministry coordination

Stakeholders

– ACDS
– Government
– CDS sector
– Other related systems – e.g., housing, additions, FSCD, education, municipalities, etc.

Implementation Considerations

– While learnings from the FASD model will be used, the model will be tailored to reflect the unique circumstances and needs of the CDS sector and the individuals in service.
– It will be important to have commitment from partner ministries to participate and contribute both a committed staff resource (or more) as well as funding to support the network model.
– While establishment of a case management system is not in scope of this recommendation, the use of a case management system to support the work of the network may need to be considered as part of designing the network model.
– Membership should be position-based, so membership continues if there was turnover.

	1 year		2 years		3+ years
Anticipated kick-off timing	Immediate Term	Short Term	Medium Term		Long Term

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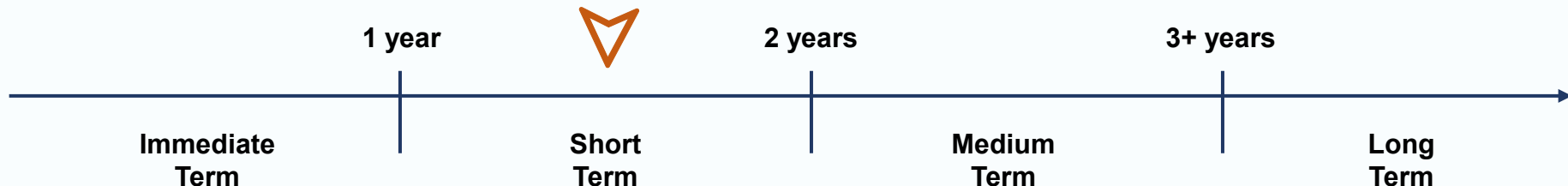
A5: Develop a forecasting model to support strategic workforce planning

Recommendation

Develop a forecasting model that gives service providers the information they need to anticipate and strategically plan for their future workforce needs. This includes inputs such as current staffing levels, service provision waitlist information and historic FSCD caseloads to highlight the supply and demand considerations of the sector's workforce.

The scope of this recommendation includes:

- Collaboration with the CDS sector to establish forecasting model parameters such as granularity of outputs (e.g., outputs provided at municipality, region or service provider level), and to set the scope in regards to types of services incorporated into the model (e.g., Mental Health, Addiction).
- Collaboration with the CDS sector to understand their current staffing numbers and services providers, and SCSS to understand historic FSCD caseloads, current PDD caseloads and waitlists.
- Development of the forecasting model that delivers an output that meets the established parameters.
- Sharing the forecasted outputs with the CDS sector and Government partners.

Evidence

The needs of individuals accessing service are becoming more complex, requiring additional skills and competencies. Service providers have reported challenges with hiring individuals who bring these required skills and competencies as well as challenges with training existing staff.

There is not a comprehensive understanding of the current cohort of CDS sector workers, their skills and competencies and what is needed for the future. Ability to forecast future workforce needs, including the size, skills and competencies of the workforce, could help support services providers to staff their organizations an anticipation of future needs. As it currently stands, there is limited data available to ACDS to support the development of a reasonable forecasting model for workforce planning.

#BlueprintCDS

A5: Develop a forecasting model to support strategic workforce planning

Rationale

A forecasting model would bring together data that currently exists in silos to create a more comprehensive view of the future workforce needs of the CDS sector to inform planning, funding, decision making and hiring.

Anticipated Benefits

– The CDS sector is better able to identify their future workforce needs and direct recruiting efforts and resources to developing their workforce.
– Workforce levels are more stable and sustainable, which improves safety for workers and individuals in service, as well as improving the quality of life of individuals in service.
– Service providers have a better understanding of future needs for specialization.

Potential Limitations and Barriers

– Government data may not be publicly available and coordination may be required to make some information available to ACDS and CDS sector service providers.
– The desired level of granularity may not be possible given the available data.
– Some of the required data does not currently exist outside of individual organizations. While ACDS collects workforce data annually via survey, the data sets are limited by the survey response rate and are not comprehensive.

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A5: Develop a forecasting model to support strategic workforce planning
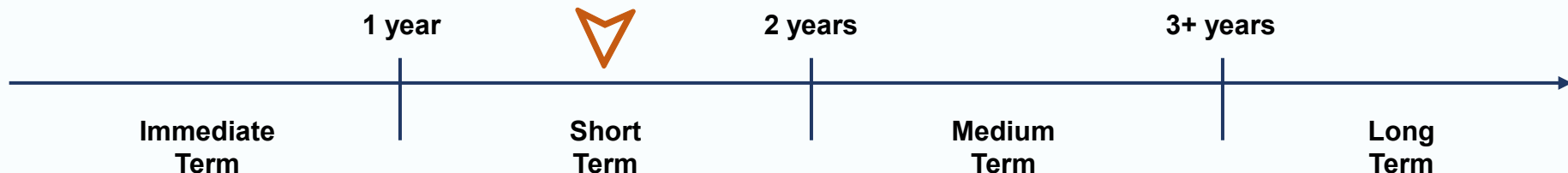
Stakeholders

– ACDS
– CDS sector service providers
– Government – SCSS, Children's Services, Education

Implementation Considerations

– The output of the model would need to be accessible to the entire CDS sector.
– Training may be required for organizations to understand and use the information provided by the model.

	1 year		2 years		3+ years
Anticipated kick-off timing					
	Immediate Term	**Short Term**	**Medium Term**		**Long Term**

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#BlueprintCDS

B6: Provide immediate and ongoing wage relief

Recommendation

Collaborate with Government on providing immediate and ongoing wage relief for the entire CDS sector workforce (e.g., frontline, back office and administration).

The scope of this recommendation includes:

– Providing one-time wage relief funding to current CDS staff to address and stabilize the current workforce retention issues. The amount of wage relief funding could be tied to inflation.

– Funding wage parity within the CDS sector on an ongoing basis. This includes funding parity across government and the CDS sector (non-government roles, and the indexation of wages to inflation moving forward to promote continued wage parity.

– Providing a one-time reattachment bonus to incent former CDS staff to rejoin the sector after leaving through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Evidence

There have been no wage increases from Government-funded contracts since 2014. During that same time period in Alberta, inflation has increased by 19% and the minimum wage has increased by 47% to $15 per hour.

In comparing the wages for similar positions between Government and CDS sector (i.e., non-Government) disability workers, CDS sector wages are lower than both the Government's Individual Support Worker (ISW) and Human Services Workers (HSW) classifications.

The average wage for both Disability Support Workers and the broader CDS Sector staff average in Alberta are below Alberta's market basket measure (MBM) threshold, which is an index for affordability against wages.

#BlueprintCDS

B6: Provide immediate and ongoing wage relief

Rationale

Wages are historically not competitive and are a critical issue in the recruitment and retention of staff within the CDS sector. An immediate increase in wages is necessary to address short-term retention issues faced by the CDS sector while ongoing wage supports such as indexation to inflation and wage top-ups are needed to promote long-term recruitment and retention, parity with comparable sectors competing for staff and workforce well-being. In recognition of the high cost to onboard staff with no CDS sector experience, a reattachment bonus could be provided to attract former members of the CDS sector that left during the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions back to the sector.

Anticipated Benefits

– Workforce retention increases.

– There is reduced short staffing and lower turnover, resulting in less stress to the workforce and service providers.

– The sector's capacity to address the current backlog of individuals waiting for services and projected growth increases.

– Client safety and quality of life increases.

– There is increased sector capacity to serve additional clients by promoting growth in the available workforce.

Potential Limitations and Barriers

– There is a risk that funding levels to sustain ongoing wage efforts may not be supported by future Governments.

– Should only one or two of the three scope areas be implemented there could be equity issues within the sector (e.g., if the reattachment bonus is prioritized over the immediate wage-relief the wage supports would favour those who left the sector over those who stayed).

#BlueprintCDS

# B6: Provide immediate and ongoing wage relief

Stakeholders

– ACDS
– CDS sector service providers
– Government – SCSS

Implementation Considerations

– Workshop participants expressed concern about the impact of the reattachment bonus on existing loyal staff and emphasized the importance of all three elements of the recommendation moving forward together to mitigate that risk.

– Upon receipt of the Project Blueprint CDS Initial Assessment in Summer 2022, the Government of Alberta identified that additional information was required to support the Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Service's (formerly Community and Social Services) submission to Treasury Board for the 2023/24 budget process. ACDS provided an evidence-based briefing document that, among other things, estimated the funding required for each of the preliminary recommendations outlined in the Initial Assessment. As of the development of this document, there has been no announcement regarding funding for immediate and ongoing wage relief for the CDS sector.

	1 year	2 years	3+ years
Anticipated kick-off timing			
Immediate Term	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term

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#BlueprintCDS
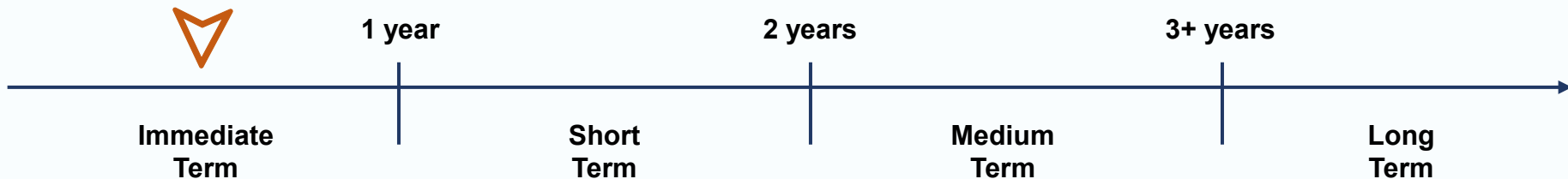
B7: Build a wage scale guide for frontline service delivery staff

Recommendation

Develop a wage scale guide for frontline service delivery staff to provide a more equitable and consistent view and baseline of wage options for CDS workers across Alberta.

The wage scale guide could consider factors such as staff credentials, competencies, regional differences in service delivery and cost of living, years of experience and level of service provision. Additionally, the wage scale guide could include elements that address broader compensation outside of wages, such as RRSP matching, and health and wellness benefits. While any wage scale would need to be voluntary, a guide could support service providers in advocating for additional funding and workers in advocating for higher wages.

The scope of this recommendation includes:
- Development of a draft wage scale guide that is based on leading practice and research into relevant, comparable industries.
- Engagement with CDS sector service providers to review and validate the wage scale guide.
- Finalization and distribution / promotion of the wage scale guide.

Evidence

Wages are a chronic issue in the CDS sector and continue to be a top-of-mind issue for service providers. Alberta's CDS sector employment is generally no longer viewed as a credible, long-term employment option. CDS staff often leave for higher paid employment in similar sectors (e.g., teaching, nursing, occupational therapy) or to similar positions within Government.

COVID-19 pandemic restrictions further exacerbated wage pressures faced by the CDS sector. Public health orders limiting staff to one worksite often led to staff choosing employment in higher paying sectors with similar competency requirements (e.g., long-term care).

#BlueprintCDS

B7: Build a wage scale guide for frontline service delivery staff

Rationale

Consideration for how wages can be more transparent, tied to workforce competencies and supportive of livability in the immediate and longer term may support increased levels of recruitment and retention of CDS sector workers and better well-being of the workers.

Anticipated Benefits

– There is an increased level of equity and consistency in staff wages across CDS sector service providers.
– CDS sector workers have a clearer understanding of what is required to reach the next wage level and what that wage level will be.
– Transparency around compensation and the potential for higher wages could lead to an increase in both short-term recruitment and long-term retention.
– The workforce has a higher incentive to complete additional professional development based on the parameters in the wage scale guide.

Potential Limitations and Barriers

– Some agencies may not be willing or able to provide data (e.g., wages, demographics) regarding their current workforce to inform the development of the wage scale guide.
– Some service providers may choose not to, or may not be able to fully able to, adopt the wage scale guide.
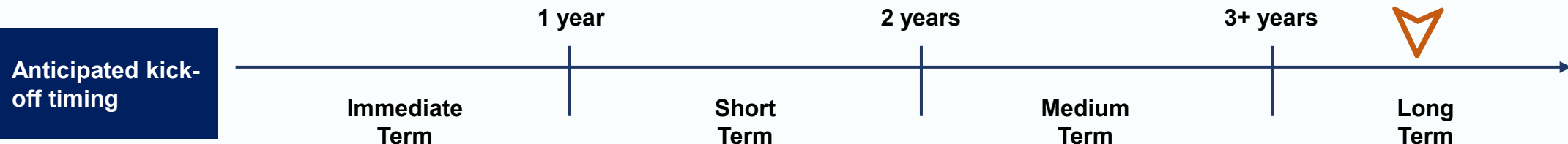
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#BlueprintCDS

B7: Build a wage scale guide for frontline service delivery staff

Stakeholders

– ACDS
– CDS sector service providers
– Government – SCSS

Implementation Considerations

– This guide would likely be dependent on the competencies outlined in **recommendations A2** and **A3**, as well as the ongoing wage relief outlined in **recommendation B6**.
– This work could also include updating the salary comparison survey that was commissioned by ACDS in 2008.
– There is an opportunity to leverage existing wage scales that have been developed by individual CDS sector service providers.

Anticipated kick-off timing	1 year	2 years	3+ years	
	Immediate Term	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term

#BlueprintCDS

B8: Engage CDS sector workers to co-design a community of practice

Recommendation

Support CDS sector workers to explore options for adapting a community of practice model to support them to share and learn from each other.

While **recommendation A4** is at a strategic, cross-ministry leadership level, **recommendation B8** is focused on building coordination and support at the service delivery level.

The scope of this recommendation includes:

- Using a co-design approach to identify how (and if) a community of practice could best serve front line workers and their supervisors and managers.
- Bringing together a group of CDS sector workers representative of varying backgrounds, including location, ethnicity, education level, years of experience in the sector, etc. to serve as the design group.
- Supporting the group in coming together for regular meetings to work through options and ultimately design a community of practice model to be piloted in the CDS sector.

Evidence

Competition within the broader human services sector and other caring fields, such as long-term care, is a challenge to the recruitment and retention of the CDS workforce. Workers interested in this type of work can choose to pursue employment in a range of fields (e.g., teaching, nursing, occupational therapy, counselling) that provide higher wages, multidisciplinary support teams and additional supports including opportunities to share technical knowledge and to share and validate experiences with peers.

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#BlueprintCDS

B8: Engage CDS sector workers to co-design a community of practice

Rationale

Partnered with other preliminary recommendations such as a wage increase, this may also help to make CDS sector work more desirable for young people and others considering work in sectors that provide this kind of support (e.g., education, health). Examples of community of practice models range from the allied health provider model used in the Australian National Disability Insurance Scheme to community of practice models used within Alberta Education and Alberta Health Services.

Anticipated Benefits

– CDS sector workers have more opportunities to connect to similar roles across the region / province.
– CDS sector workers have more opportunities to share learnings, best practices, resources, etc.
– CDS sector workers have more opportunities to get to know their peers and feel supported and validated in the workplace.
– CDS sector workers have increased access to knowledge about their chosen field of expertise.
– There are more opportunities to share learnings, including from workers to others in their organization and its leadership.
– Retention among the CDS sector increases as participants are more engaged in their work.
– Individuals in service receive a higher standard of service.

Potential Limitations and Barriers

– There may be a lack of interest or capacity to participate in a community of practice by service providers and / or workers.
– Access to funding to support this on an ongoing basis may be a challenge.

#BlueprintCDS

# B8: Engage CDS sector workers to co-design a community of practice

Stakeholders

- ACDS
- Government - SCSS
- CDS sector service providers
- ADWA
- Post-secondary institutions – e.g., Bow Valley College

Implementation Considerations

- It will be critical that workers participating in the community of practice are compensated for their time and participation and that meetings occur within regular work hours to support participation.
- There may be models of communities of practice currently in place in the province that could be leveraged or learned from, such as the model through Bow Valley College. Learnings from work previously conducted by ADWA to trial a community of practice could also help to inform the development of this work.
- The implementation of this may be most successful after some of the more time sensitive efforts to stabilize the workforce (e.g., increasing and stabilizing wages through **recommendation B6**) have taken place.
- Moderation will be required to mitigate risk of workers sharing undesirable practices or ideas. For example, a practice instructor or other neutral moderator knowledgeable in practice disability studies could be included.
- There is opportunity to leverage knowledge from other sectors to take a more multi-disciplinary approach (e.g., including other professionals such as Occupational Therapists).

Anticipated kick-off timing

	1 year	2 years	3+ years	
Immediate-Term	Short Term	Medium Term		Long Term

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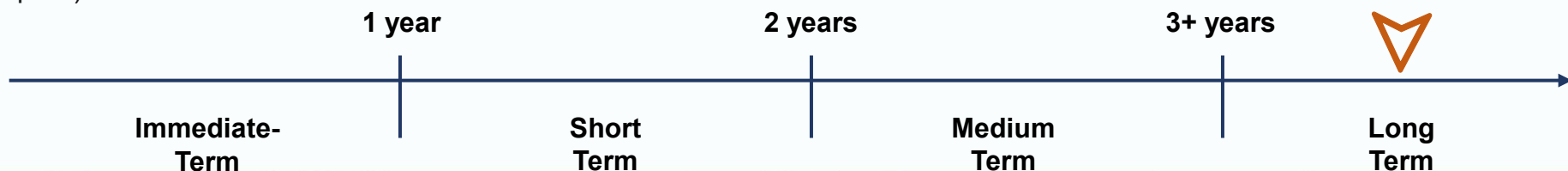
C9~A~: Establish a target credential requirement for frontline CDS sector workers

Recommendation

Develop a target credential requirement and implementation plan for all incoming frontline staff to standardize a basic training level.

The scope of this recommendation includes engagement with the CDS sector to:

– Understand the credentials currently held by CDS sector workers,

– Establish a baseline credential requirement for all new frontline workers entering the CDS sector, and

– Establish a plan to implement the target credential and equivalences across the CDS sector, including grandfathering in existing CDS staff.

Evidence

There are no requirements for staff within the CDS sector to be credentialed.

Wages are a chronic issue in the CDS sector and continue to be a top-of-mind issue for service providers. Workers interested in human and social services-type work can pursue employment in a range of credentialed fields such as teaching, nursing, occupational therapy, counselling, etc. that provide higher wages, multidisciplinary support teams, and other benefits. A move toward increasing the overall credentials of the CDS sector workforce could help drive the case for additional compensation, as well as make the field more attractive to potential workers.

Rationale

While credential requirements would need to be voluntarily set by each service provider, the requirement could enable the CDS sector to hire more qualified workers, which may reduce on the job training needs and increase the quality of supports for individuals in service.

#BlueprintCDS

C9$_A$: Establish a target credential requirement for frontline CDS sector workers

Anticipated Benefits

– The CDS sector has access to a higher skilled, better qualified workforce.
– Individuals in service receive a higher standard of service.

Potential Limitations and Barriers

– Some service providers may choose not to, or may not be able to fully able to, adopt the target credential requirement.
– The higher level of target credential may make it more difficult to recruit qualified staff.
– There may be hesitancy from Government to fund to the new credential.

Stakeholders

– ACDS
– CDS sector service providers
– ADWA

#BlueprintCDS

C9$_A$: Establish a target credential requirement for frontline CDS sector workers

Implementation Considerations

- A clear plan will be required to grandfather in existing staff in order to avoid retention issues as well as pressures on CDS sector service providers to facilitate or fund training for their existing staff. Equivalencies for newcomers to Canada should also be planned for.
- This target credential requirement would likely be dependent on the competencies outlined in **recommendations A2** and **A3**, as well as the wage scale guide outlined in **recommendation B7** and micro-credentialing outlined in **recommendation C9$_B$**.
- There may be opportunity to consider incenting adoption of the target credential requirement among service providers.
- There may be opportunity to reference previous work completed by ADWA, including work to develop its Community Disability Support Worker Competency Standards[40] and Certification Pilot Process[41].
- The baseline credential requirement should be reviewed within five years of implementation.

| **Anticipated kick-off timing** | Immediate Term | 1 year Short Term | 2 years Medium Term | 3+ years Long Term |

#BlueprintCDS

C9$_B$: Establish a system for micro-credentialing

Recommendation

Leverage the existing work being performed by SCSS and collaborate with the Ministry of Advanced Education to offer a series of disability support programming courses.

The courses will need to line up with the updated list of prescribed competencies within the CDS sector identified as part of **recommendations A2** and **A3**. These courses could be "stacked" towards diploma receipt or CDS sector credentials. Work is currently being completed by Government around micro-credentialing. The exact scope of work related to this recommendation could be defined based on the results of the micro-credentialing work that is currently underway by Government. It is assumed that this existing work is sufficient to meet the needs of the CDS sector.

The scope of this recommendation includes engagement with:

– SCSS and Advanced Education to determine the exact scope of work currently being completed around micro-credentialing in Alberta.
– CDS sector service providers to determine the specific scope of post-secondary institutions and credentials to be included as part of this recommendation.
– Identified post-secondary institutions to determine timing, administration and courses to be included as part of the micro-credentialing.

Evidence

Since 2008, most disability post-secondary programs in Alberta have been discontinued due to low enrollments.

Costs for attending post-secondary programs in Alberta have steadily increased. For example, average tuition costs for an undergraduate course in Alberta has increased by more than 14% since 2017.[42] In comparison, funding for wages in the CDS sector has not increased since 2014.

Availability and quality of post-secondary disability programming were ranked as the third and fourth most prevalent reasons why their organization might be facing challenges in finding the right staff for their services in a survey of the CDS Sector.

An increase in the availability and type of post-secondary programming for CDS sector workers may be needed to meet the demand for a skilled, educated workforce. Creative solutions may be needed to reduce barriers for participants.

#BlueprintCDS

C9_B: Establish a system for micro-credentialing

Rationale

Micro-credentialling offers workers the opportunity to build their skills, competencies and credentials in small increments that may be easier for them to access, both in terms of time and financial inputs required.

Anticipated Benefits

- CDS sector workers feel supported to access the education / skills training they need.
- The CDS sector has access to a higher skilled, better qualified workforce.
- Individuals in service receive a higher standard of service.

Potential Barriers

- Existing work on micro-credentialing is not informed by the CDS sector and may not be relevant for all or many of the CDS sector workers.
- There is currently a lack of demand for disability services programming that micro-credentialing on its own may not be sufficient to address.
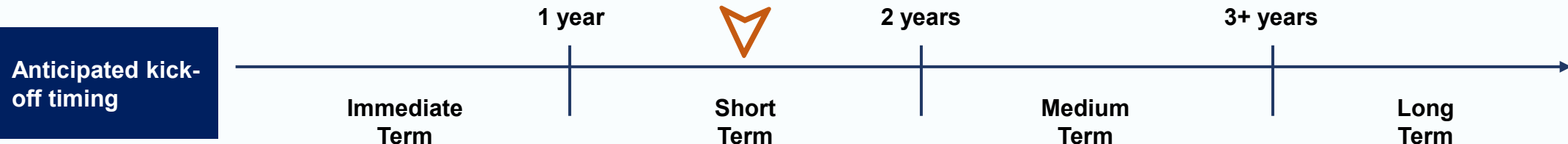
#BlueprintCDS

C9$_B$: Establish a system for micro-credentialing

Stakeholders

- ACDS
- CDS sector service providers
- Government – SCSS, Advanced Education
- Alberta Post-Secondary Institutions – e.g., Bow Valley College and Norquest College

Implementation Considerations

- This recommendation is not only dependent on the existing work underway by SCSS, but also on the competencies outlined in **recommendations A2** and **A3**, as well as the wage scale guide outlined in **recommendation B7** and target credential requirement outlined in **recommendation C9$_A$**.

	1 year		2 years		3+ years
Anticipated kick-off timing	**Immediate Term**	**Short Term**	**Medium Term**		**Long Term**

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#BlueprintCDS

C9$_C$: Expand post-secondary programming

Recommendation

Partner with Advanced Education and SCSS to fund the expansion of disability support programming available in Alberta and provide tuition support through scholarships.

The scope of this recommendation includes working with:

- SCSS to providing funding to post-secondary institutions via Advanced Education's Directed Provincial Grant Funding program for full-time, part-time and virtual disability support programming.
- The CDS sector to ensure the disability support programming meets the sector's needs.
- Advanced Education to establish a tuition support program (e.g., scholarship, bursaries) for individuals that enroll in disability support programming.

Evidence

Since 2008, most disability post-secondary programs in Alberta have been discontinued due to low enrollments. Enrollments have reduced because of low interest in the CDS sector for many reasons, including low wages, complex service needs and work environments. Current levels of post-secondary disability support programming are insufficient to meet the needs of the CDS sector. Some focus session participants reported the lack of educated and professional workers to be a significant challenge in recruiting competent and skilled staff to meet their needs. This has impacted service providers:

- There are significantly fewer trained community disability support workers entering the workforce.
- When the training and certifications are not in place, the training falls to employers.
- A lack of training can contribute to higher risk of unsafe situations for both staff and individuals receiving services.

Rationale

Increased access to disability support programming may help increase the number of credentialed individuals entering the CDS sector workforce.

#BlueprintCDS

C9$_C$: Expand post-secondary programming

Anticipated Benefits

– The CDS sector has access to a larger pool of skilled potential workers.
– Existing CDS sector workers feel supported to access the education / skills training they need.
– CDS sector providers have reduced training demands on their organization.

Potential Barriers

– There is currently a lack of demand for disability services programming that increased availability may not be sufficient alone to address.
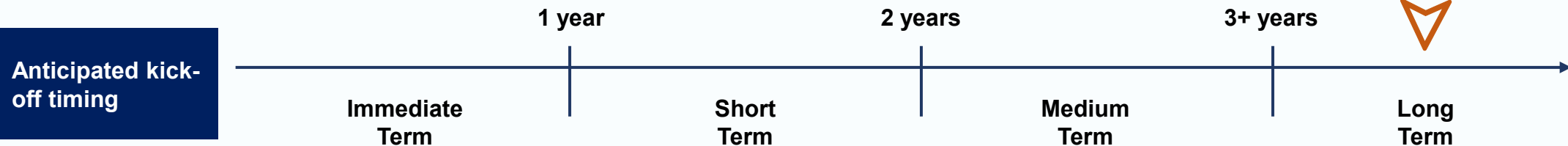– Funding for the grants and tuition support may not be available.

Stakeholders

– ACDS
– CDS sector service providers
– Government – SCSS, Advanced Education
– Alberta post-secondary institutions

#BlueprintCDS

C9$_C$: Expand post-secondary programming

Implementation Considerations

- It will be important to align disability support programming and foundational training to reduce redundancies.
- Admission requirements / pre-requisites will need to be considered and agreed to by the CDS sector.
- There is an opportunity for a CDS sector-driven curriculum.

	1 year	2 years	3+ years	
Anticipated kick-off timing	Immediate Term	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term

#BlueprintCDS

C9$_D$: Identify current state of training

Recommendation

Develop a comprehensive province-wide map of existing training opportunities and conduct a gap analysis.

The scope of this recommendation includes:

- Use of the ACDS Annual Survey 2022 (to be deployed in early 2023, with a report ready by March 31) to gather initial data on the current landscape of training offered across Alberta, including the training currently provided in house by service providers or accessed in other ways; consideration should be given to:
  - Where there are strengths and challenges in the current approach, and
  - The delivery methods, risks and benefits, and costs of the methods used.
- Engagement with the CDS sector to validate the findings from the survey,
- Supplementation of data from the CDS sector to build out a full current state of training in the CDS sector in Alberta, and
- Development of a gap analysis that identifies where needed training is not available and where some training may be provided in a way that is inefficient or burdensome to service providers.

Evidence

Most new workers do not have formal disability service qualifications when they enter the CDS sector workforce. Service providers bear much of the time and financial costs of training new workers. The overall funding in the sector has created a cycle of recruiting untrained and inexperienced workers, requiring service providers to provide core training, and then losing staff to higher paying jobs once they are trained and qualified. Organizations also bear the costs of teaching new workers foundational skills and the philosophical approaches guiding disability work.

While basic training is readily available, access to tailored training, such as occupational health and safety (OHS) and licensing requirements, lifting and transferring, feeding tubes, medication administration, addiction services, trauma informed care, etc., becomes much more complex. A lack of training can contribute to higher risk of unsafe situations for both staff and individuals receiving services.

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#BlueprintCDS

C9$_D$: Identify current state of training

Rationale

In order to improve the training opportunities for CDS sector workers, it is important to first understand the current training system – what opportunities are available as well as when and where there are gaps in terms of the types and location of training available. A current state analysis would help to understand and document what is available, what is working well and what is needed.

Anticipated Benefits

– The CDS sector has a clearer collective understanding of the sector's current training strengths and needs.

Potential Barriers

– This approach relies on service provider participation to gather information about all of the current training offerings.

#BlueprintCDS

# C9$_D$: Identify current state of training

Stakeholders

– ACDS
– CDS Sector

Implementation Considerations

– It will be important to understand the delivery approaches of the various trainings offered, the IT requirements as well as the associated costs, benefits and risks (e.g., online, in-house trainers, train the trainer models).
– It will be important to identify how much of training being used is current and up to date, and to flag training that is no longer relevant.
– There is an opportunity to capture innovative training approaches happening around the sector.
– The scope could consider both formal and informal existing training.

Anticipated kick-off timing		1 year	2 years	3+ years
	Immediate Term	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term

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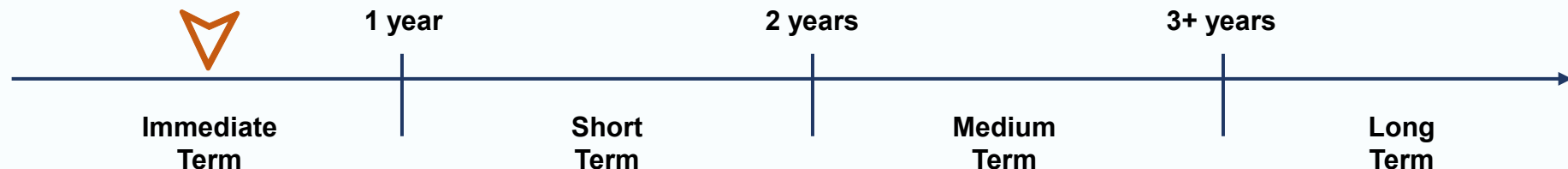
C9$_E$: Develop a provincial training framework

Recommendation

Develop a training framework that addresses the gaps in training across the province and lays out a clear training path.

This recommendation is dependent on completion of **recommendation C9$_D$** to develop a map of available training and conduct a gap analysis. There is also a dependency with **recommendation A2** in terms of having a defined inventory of competencies.

The scope of this recommendation includes:

– Sector engagement to define the scope of the framework and prioritize competencies, required trainings, and to identify training areas that could be consolidated for efficiency,

– Development of a provincial training framework that lays out what training is mandatory, describes pathways for training and builds in opportunity to identify efficiencies and potential training partnerships, and

– Further engagement with the sector to validate the framework.

Evidence

Service providers bear much of the time and financial costs of training new workers, including the task of finding and accessing available training. Training needs include foundational skills and philosophical approaches guiding disability work as well as technical skills and capabilities, which are growing more complex (e.g., medication administration, addiction services, mental health services, trauma informed care).

Basic and mandatory training are readily available, often through train-the-trainer programs and local community partners; however, specialized training opportunities especially in rural areas or remote northern locations are unavailable or expensive.

A more cohesive, organized approach to training across the sector could reduce the costs and administrative burden on service providers while improving access and consistency for workers.

#BlueprintCDS

C9$_E$: Develop a provincial training framework

Rationale

A coordinated plan to address training gaps and improve access will support service providers and workers to access a wider variety of needed training, with less administrative and financial burden on the service providers.

Anticipated Benefits

- There is a more cohesive, organized approach to training across the sector that reduces the costs and administrative burden on service providers to plan out, find and / or provide training.
- CDS sector providers and workers could have increased, consistent access to a wider variety of training opportunities.
- CDS sector workers are more skilled.
- There is more consistency across CDS sector staff skill levels.
- There is reduced safety risk to CDS sector workers and individuals in service.
- There is increased quality of life for individuals in service.

Potential Limitations and Barriers

- It may be difficult for service providers to come to consensus on what training should be mandatory within the new framework.

#BlueprintCDS

# C9$_E$: Develop a provincial training framework

Stakeholders

– ACDS
– Government
– CDS sector

Implementation Considerations

– The framework will need to respect organizational autonomy in what training to deliver and support individual service providers to provide some trainings tailored to their organization.
– The framework will need to consider the technology needs required to support the framework.
– Scope will need to includes steps to identify what training is high quality, current and up to date, highest priority, etc.
– The framework provides an opportunity to consider ways to update and streamline basic training for CDS workers (i.e., Foundations Training provided by ACDS).
– There may be opportunity to consider ways to support pooling of training resources across CDS sector service providers

Anticipated kick-off timing

1 year		2 years		3+ years
Immediate Term	Short Term	Medium Term		Long Term

#BlueprintCDS
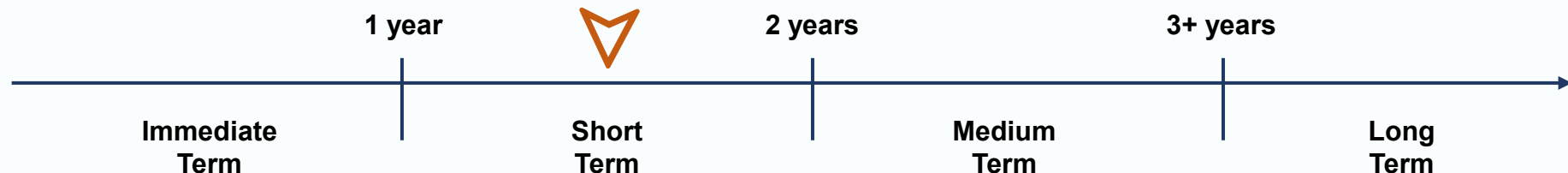
C9$_F$: Centralize training opportunities

Recommendation

Create a clearing house for CDS sector training.

This recommendation is dependent on completion of **recommendation C9$_D$** and **C9$_E$** to build a provincial training map and provincial training framework.

The scope of this recommendation includes:

– ACDS investigates options for clearing house platforms, and

– ACDS sets up the clearing house platform based on the provincial training framework.

Evidence

Training needs in the sector are evolving as workers require additional skill sets and capabilities to meet the changing needs of those they serve.

Basic and mandatory training are readily available, often through train-the-trainer programs and local community partners; however, specialized training opportunities especially in rural areas or remote northern locations are unavailable or expensive.

Service providers spend time and resources designing their own suite of training, leveraging existing training, or a mix of the two. This can be a significant challenge and expense, particularly for smaller service provider organizations. Simpler, consolidated access to training, particularly specialized training, could relieve some of the burden for service providers while increasing the availability and quality of training for workers.

Rationale

This work could simplify access to training for service providers, reducing their administrative burden as well as allowing more time and resources to focus on service delivery.

#BlueprintCDS

C9$_F$: Centralize training opportunities

Anticipated Benefits

- The CDS sector has access to a centralized repository of training which could lead to a more consistent level of training among CDS sector workers.
- There is greater usage of centralized training opportunities, which could help lower the cost burden for CDS sector organizations.
- Centralized access promotes equity of access to core training across service provider organizations.
- Centralized access supports training consistency across the sector.

Potential Limitations and Barriers

- Some service providers may choose not to use the clearing house to access training.

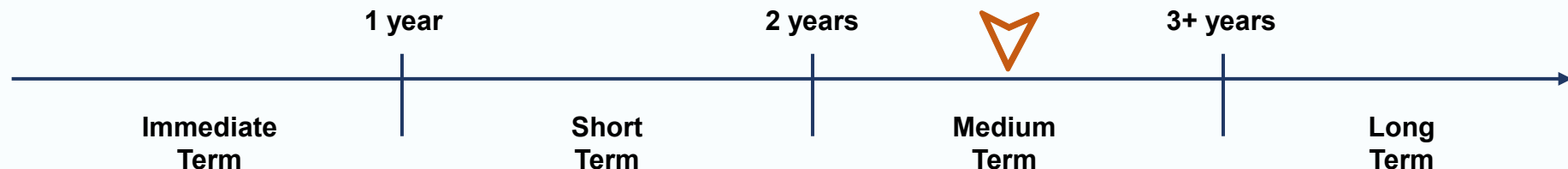#BlueprintCDS

C9$_F$: Centralize training opportunities

Stakeholders

– ACDS
– Government
– CDS Sector

Implementation Considerations

– It will be important that any costs to service providers to participate in trainings are reasonable.
– Additional trainings leave room for service providers to maintain some of their own training to support unique topics, such as their organizational philosophy.
– Work could be undertaken to support staff in understanding the value of training.
– This work could connect with **recommendation B8** with respect to building a community of practice.

	1 year	2 years		3+ years
Anticipated kick-off timing				
	Immediate Term	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term

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#BlueprintCDS

C9$_G$: Expand the suite of training offered by ACDS

Recommendation

Expand the existing ACDS suite of training services provided.

This recommendation is dependent on completion of **recommendation C9$_D$, C9$_E$, and C9$_F$** to build a provincial training map, provincial training framework, and training clearing house.

The scope of this recommendation includes:

– ACDS designs and implements new training modules based on the gaps in existing training identified through the development of the provincial training framework, and

– The new ACDS training is added to the clearing house.

Evidence

Training needs in the sector are evolving as workers require additional skill sets and capabilities to meet the changing needs of those they serve.

Basic and mandatory training are readily available, often through train-the-trainer programs and local community partners; however, specialized training opportunities especially in rural areas or remote northern locations are unavailable or expensive. ACDS provides member organizations with access to centralized training from Foundations in Community Disability Services to a more rigorous, year-long program on Trauma-Informed Abuse Investigation.

There is an opportunity for ACDS to take a larger role in providing training for CDS sector workers across the province to fill gaps in available training.

Rationale

This work could position ACDS in a leading role to support the growth of training opportunities across the province and to improve access for service providers and workers.

#BlueprintCDS

C9$_G$: Expand the suite of training offered by ACDS

Anticipated Benefits

- The CDS sector has improved access to a repository of training which could lead to a more consistent level of training among CDS sector workers.
- There is more use of centralized training opportunities which could help lower the cost burden of training for CDS sector organizations.

Potential Limitations and Barriers

- Some service providers may choose not to access training made available by ACDS.

#BlueprintCDS

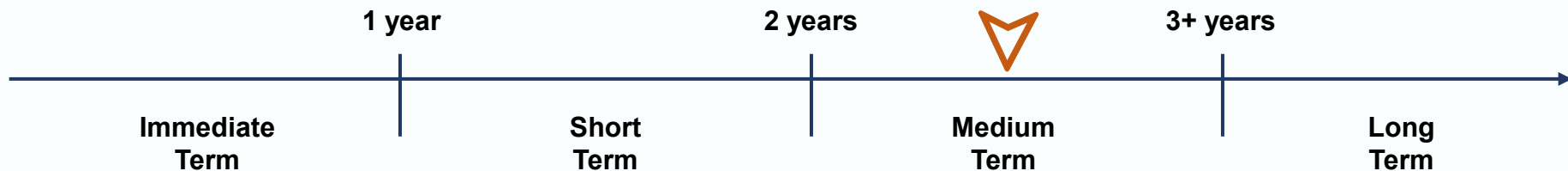# C9$_G$: Expand the suite of training offered by ACDS

Stakeholders

– ACDS
– Government - SCSS
– CDS Sector

Implementation Considerations

– It will be important that any costs to service providers to participate in trainings are reasonable.
– Additional trainings leave room for service providers to maintain some of their own training to support things like their organizational philosophy.
– ACDS could collaborate with Alberta Health Services to create a training suite for the CDS sector.
– ACDS could collaborate with Occupational Health and Safety to create tailored safety training.
– Work could be undertaken to support staff in understanding the value of training.
– This work could connect with **recommendation B8** about building a community of practice.

	1 year	2 years		3+ years
Anticipated kick-off timing	Immediate Term	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term

73

#BlueprintCDS

C10: Revisit PDD contract structure

Recommendation

Revisit the PDD contract structure to provide service providers with 1) more flexibility in use of their funding to support their workforce and 2) to reflect the full / true costs of the workforce needed to deliver services.

The scope of this recommendation includes:

– Development of a series of deliverables intended to improve upon the existing PDD contract structure, including:

  – A case for changing the contracts to include flexibility in use of service provider workforce,

  – A literature review on leading practices in funding community disability and innovation in similar service provider contracts that support flexibility in use of workforce,

  – Options for changes to the contract structure and impact analysis of those options,

  – Recommendations for the specific changes sought for the contracts, and

  – An implementation roadmap of how work could proceed to change the contract structure.

Evidence

Contract funding amounts do not recognize the full / true costs of a service provider's workforce. For example, the cost of administration within an organization, training and onboarding were reported to not be included in contract funding amounts, but are essential costs to maintaining a workforce that can deliver services.

Some funding contracts still require reporting on units or hours of support delivered rather than on outcomes achieved. There are restrictions on how funding can be used, including specific restrictions on how staff can be funded and used, which limits service providers from adapting to the needs of the individuals they serve and their organizations. This can also result in support models that are funding-driven rather than person-centred.

#BlueprintCDS

C10: Revisit PDD contract structure

Rationale

Revisiting funding parameters to improve flexibility, address needs in addition to direct service provision and measure to outcomes could give service providers more resources and flexibility to build, develop and use their workforce.

Anticipated Benefits

– Service providers are empowered and have more flexibility in how they use their resources.
– Service providers are better able to support the individuals they serve.

Potential Limitations and Barriers

– It may be difficult to reach consensus among CDS sector service providers about the specific desired changes to request regarding the PDD contract structure.

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C10: Revisit PDD contract structure

Stakeholders

– ACDS
– Government - SCSS
– CDS Sector

Implementation Considerations

– Could be dependent on completion of **recommendation A2**, to create a common inventory of the scope of practice of the CDS sector.
– Improving flexibility could be achieved through:
   – Tying contracts to program- or system-level commitments rather than individual client-level commitments,
   – Creating more space for trialing new ideas, being innovative in workforce use,
   – Considering indirect as well as direct costs to providing services, and
   – Honouring the proven track record of service providers by increasing flexibility for service providers with years of consistent service delivery results.

Anticipated kick-off timing

	1 year		2 years		3+ years
Immediate Term		Short Term		Medium Term	Long Term

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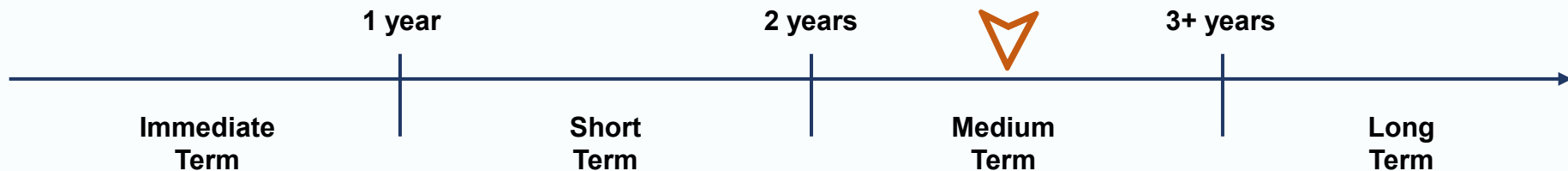
C11: Implement innovative workforce fund

Recommendation

Work with SCSS to fund the design and implementation of a grant program that encourages CDS sector service providers to try new and innovative approaches to managing their workforce.

The scope of this recommendation includes:

– Design and implementation of a grant program that provides additional resources to service providers within the CDS sector that have demonstrated plans to implement innovative approaches to managing their workforce.

Evidence

Currently funding is available via highly structured contracts with Government, or through fundraising taken on by the service provider.

Government contracts include many restrictions on how funding can be used and offer little flexibility to support service providers in tailoring their approach to their organization or the individuals they serve or ability to try creative or innovative approaches.

There is an opportunity to explore other mechanisms of funding that allow for more flexibility.

Rationale

This fund could equip service providers with flexible funding in addition to the contract funding they receive through PDD.

National Disability Services in Australia has implemented an Innovative Workforce Fund that funds and showcases projects that engage, develop and utilize the disability sector workforce in new ways that support individuals accessing services.

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C11: Implement innovative workforce fund

Anticipated Benefits

– Service providers are more supported to try new and innovative approaches to managing their workload at minimal risk.
– Retention and recruitment of CDS workers is increased.

Potential Limitations and Barriers

– Grant application processes are historically burdensome for service providers and may be a deterrent to seeking funding.
– Funding for initial grants may not be supported with ongoing program funding to support sustained use of the innovative methods.

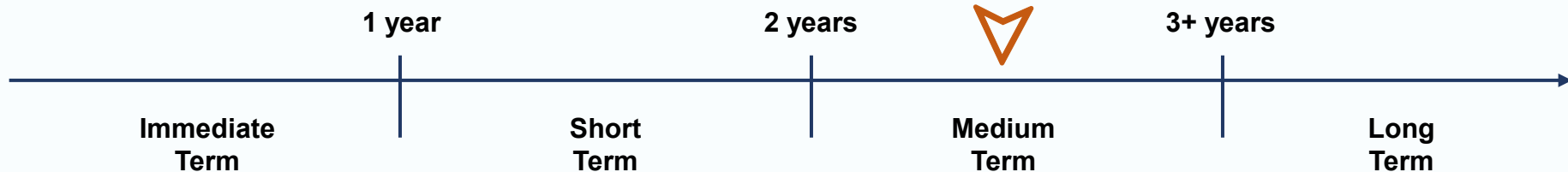#BlueprintCDS

C11: Implement innovative workforce fund

Stakeholders

– ACDS
– CDS sector service providers
– Government – SCSS

Implementation Considerations

– It will be important to consider equity of access to grant funding so that agencies with more resources are not able to monopolize the available grants.
– Applications must be simple to complete in order to mitigate the level of administration required by CDS sector service providers and Government. Alternatives to having Government allocate and distribute the grant funding should be considered (e.g., administered by the CDS sector).
– Each successful application could be supported by an outcomes evaluation to identify the benefits resulting from the funding.
– The development of the fund should include a mechanism to allow for sustained funding for initiatives that prove fruitful for service providers.
– The fund should be supported by a mechanism to share best practices or success stories that result from the innovative workforce fund.

	1 year	2 years		3+ years
Anticipated kick-off timing	Immediate Term	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term

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Appendix A: Sector Engagement

Sector Engagement

To refine and build on the work of the Initial Assessment and High-Level Recommendations, a series of engagement sessions were held across Alberta with about 133 attendees representing 78 CDS organizations and a few other stakeholders (attendance numbers were compiled from attendee and RSVP lists, and should be considered approximate).

Sessions were held in the following locations:

– Lethbridge   – Lacombe

– Calgary   – Grande Prairie

– Edmonton   – Virtual

Participants were asked to answer the following questions about the suite of preliminary recommendations outlined in the High-Level Recommendations:

– Does this bundle of preliminary recommendations resonate with you?

– Do you think these preliminary recommendations will lead to the anticipated benefits outlined?

– Are these preliminary recommendations feasible? What barriers do you expect would be encountered?

– What would be critical to successful adoption of these preliminary recommendations?

– What other players (groups / organizations, etc.) would need to be involved?

– Are there any preliminary recommendations missing?

Figure 7: Roadshow Locations

Grande Prairie

Edmonton

Lacombe

Calgary

Lethbridge

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Sector Engagement

An effort was made throughout sector engagement and analysis activities to respect all voices and perspectives brought forward and to avoid prioritizing the comments of any individual or organization over another. Participants were asked to represent their workforce in providing insight into the preliminary recommendations. Specific comments were not attributed to an organization or a participant.

The data collected across all of the engagement sessions was compiled, organized by recommendation and analyzed to identify the overall themes that emerged from the collective feedback as well as recommendation-specific feedback that:

– Reinforced the preliminary recommendations,

– Challenged the preliminary recommendations,

– Suggested improvements or revisions to the preliminary recommendations,

– Were in scope of Project Blueprint CDS, or

– Were related to workforce challenges, not system-level challenges.

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Key Themes

While participants in the sessions responded to each of the recommendations individually, there were common themes that emerged across the feedback provided. The specific feedback offered by CDS sector service providers has been incorporated into the recommended strategies found in this document.

👍	**Overall, the recommendations were supported**	Overall, participants in the workshops indicated support for the suite of recommendations. While there were proposed revisions and additions, the overall sentiment was in favour of the proposed initiatives.
🧱	**Some of the recommendations are dependent on an initial stabilization of the sector**	Participants felt that the sector is not currently positioned to adopt some of the recommendations, even though they may be beneficial in the long term. They noted that an initial stabilization of the sector workforce, for example through the increase in wages, is needed before longer-term efforts, such as the recommendation around building a community of practice (B8) can be considered.
💼	**There was overarching support for efforts to professionalize the sector**	Several of the recommendations contribute to the overall professionalization of the sector. There was widespread support among participants of these efforts to increase expectations, wages and training for CDS sector staff.
🤝	**There may be an opportunity to leverage existing efforts**	Participants noted examples of where work similar to some of the recommendations has occurred within or outside of the sector. This can be leveraged and learned from to improve sector approval and implementation of the recommendations.

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Key Themes

	There was support for efforts to better understand and document the current state of the sector	Most participants noted that they saw value in efforts to build a shared understanding of the current state of specific aspects of the sector – particularly understanding the scope of practice currently being provided by staff (A2) and the training currently being provided in an ad hoc way across the province (C9$_D$). However, some participants reported that work to build a current state should also include activities to determine if the actions currently occurring are appropriate for the CDS sector, or if refinements should be part of the work to build a future state. For example, the current scope of practice may not be appropriate for the intended purpose of the CDS sector. Additionally, the training currently being provided may not be up to date or offered in the most effective manner.
	There needs to be a balance between consistency across the Province and respect for service provider autonomy	Participants supported efforts to improve consistency in service provision across the province, through recommendations like building a common set of workforce classifications (A3) and a shared provincial training framework (C9$_E$). Participants did emphasize that these initiatives need to leave room for individual service providers to tailor their workforce and training to the unique needs of their organization and the individuals they serve.
	Implementation of the recommendations needs to respect service provider time and capacity	Participants noted concerns around the potential for some recommendations to create additional effort on their part. It is noted that there is limited capacity to implement new ideas across the sector and that the recommendations should consider the level of administrative burden placed on service providers.

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Participating Organizations

The following organizations and groups participated in the engagement sessions to validate and refine the preliminary recommendations. Some organizations participated in more than one meeting.

Ability Resource Association
Accredited Supports to the Community
Action Group
Alberta Disability Workers Association
Beehive Support Services Association
Blue Heron Support Services Association (BHSSA)
Bluefox Association
Bow Valley College
Calgary Community Day Services
Calgary SCOPE Society
Camrose Association For Community Living
Canadian Mental Health Association
Cardston Support Services Association
Care Human Services
Catholic Social Services
CBI Health
Centra Cam Vocational Training Association
Chrysalis
Columbia College
Community Living Alternatives Services
Connect Society
CORE Association
Cosmos
Drumheller and Region Transition Society (DARTS)
Edenbridge Family Services
Edmonton Integrated Services
Elves Special Needs Society
Elysian Ventures

Employment Placement and Support Services
Fisher Farm Residential Association
Foothills Advocacy in Motion Society
Good Samaritan Society
Hearth Social Profit Company
Horizons Centre
Independent Counselling Enterprises (ICE)
Inclusion Alberta
kcs Association
Key Support Services
L'Arche Lethbridge
Lac La Biche Disability Services
Lamoureux Support Services
Lethbridge Family Services
LoSeCa Foundation
Marigold Enterprises
Mill Woods Society for Community Living
Mira Facilitation Center
MirkaCare Services
National accessArts Centre
New Age Services
Olds Association for Community Living
Padnoma Support Services
Parkland Community Living and Supports Society
Peak Support Services
PROS Agency
Quest Support Services
RCM Flourish

REDI
Robin Hood Association
Rocky Support Services
SASH
Signature Support Services
Skills Society
Society for Autism Support and Services
Southern Alberta Community Living Association (SACLA)
Springboard Centre
St. Paul Abilities Network
Taber Special Needs Society
The Venturers Society
Tralee Residential Services
Transitions
Universal Rehabilitation Service Agency (URSA)
Vantage Enterprises Ltd.
Vecova
Vegreville Association For Living In Dignity (VALID)
Westlock Independence Network
Westward Goals Support Services
Wetaskiwin & District Association For Community Service
Wild Rose Caregivers
Winder Inclusive Communities Service (WICS)
Winnifred Stewart Association
WJS Canada

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Appendix B: Labour Market Analysis

CDS Sector

Labour Market Analysis

Strategies that focus on the recruitment and retention of the CDS sector workforce will include specific consideration for who is working in the sector. The following section includes an analysis on labour market trends based on information obtained from a mix of federal and provincial Government publicly available sources, as well as data from ACDS' member organizations. Federal and provincial Government information specifically related to the CDS sector is not publicly available or sufficient for the purposes of Project Blueprint CDS and as such, the analysis below provides statistical profiles for the two CDS sector-relevant NAICS industry groups (i.e., Nursing and Residential Care Facilities and Social Assistance) and two CDS-sector relevant NOC occupational groups (i.e., Social and Community Service Workers and Home Support Workers).

Relevant Sector Employment

Table 1: Industry Employment Count (2006 to 2016)

Industry Group	NAICS Code	AB (2006)	AB (2016)	% Change
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	**623**	**28,610**	**38,360**	**35%**
Social Assistance	**624**	**33,750**	**45,075**	**34%**
Individual and Family Services	6241	13,370	18,455	38%

Source: Statistics Canada. 2016 Census. Catalogue Number 98-400-X2016359; Statistics Canada. 2006 Census. Catalogue Number 97-564-XCB2006006.

Table 2: Industry Employment Count by Census Metropolitan Area (2006 to 2016)

Industry Group	NAICS Code	Calgary	Edmonton	Lethbridge
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	**623**	**12,080**	**12,675**	**1,660**
Social Assistance	**624**	**15,665**	**15,095**	**1,720**
Individual and Family Services	6241	5,930	5,965	835

Source: Statistics Canada. 2016 Census. Catalogue Number 98-400-X2016359.

As highlighted in Table 1 and Table 2, Social Assistance (NAICS 624) was the largest of the two CDS sector-relevant NAICS industry groups with 45,075 people employed across Alberta in 2016 (most recent year data was available). The number of industry employees varies across the different CMAs and as expected, there are a greater number of these positions in large urban areas.

Calgary and Edmonton have the majority of the provincial share of employees in each of the two industry groups, accounting for 68% of those employed in Social Assistance and 64% of those employed in Nursing and Residential Care Facilities (NAICS 623).

Between 2006 and 2016, both sector groups experienced employment growth, with Social Assistance experiencing a 34% increase in number of employees, and Nursing and Residential Care Facilities experiencing a 35% growth.

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CDS Sector

Labour Market Analysis

Table 3 highlights that the largest CDS sector-related occupation group in Alberta in 2016 was Social and Community Service Workers (NOC 4212) with 16,845 employees. The largest share of employees in the relevant Senior Manager, Manager and Social and Community Service Workers groups are in the Edmonton CMA, while Calgary has the largest share of Home Support Workers.

The analysis on NAICS industry employment shows a large increase in the number of employees in CDS sector-relevant industries from 2006 to 2016. Similar data for the CDS sector-relevant NOC occupational groups was not available for 2006 in order to compare the historical trends.

Table 3: Occupational Group Employee Count (2016)

Occupational Group (Major / Minor)	NOC Code	AB	Calgary	Edmonton	Lethbridge
Legislators and Senior Management	**001**	**23,380**	**10,790**	**6,965**	**410**
Senior Managers – health, education, social and community services and membership organizations	014	2,500	800	950	105
Managers in Education and Social and Community Services	**042**	**9,515**	**3,035**	**3,450**	**375**
Managers in social, community, and correctional services	0423	3,515	1,175	1,340	135
Paraprofessional Occupations in Legal, Social, Community, and Education Services	**421**	**37,810**	**13,050**	**13,280**	**1,480**
Social and community service workers	4212	16,845	4,930	5,700	10
Home Care Providers and Education Support Occupations	**441**	**42,405**	**14,500**	**13,035**	**1,315**
Home support workers, housekeepers, and related occupations	4412	9,040	3,165	2,740	395

Source: Statistics Canada. 2016 Census. Catalogue Number 98-400-X2016295.

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CDS Sector

Labour Market Analysis

Sector Demographics

An analysis on demographics such as population growth, immigrant identity, age, and education level within relevant sectors was performed in order to further contextualize the labour market landscape within which the CDS sector is located.

In comparing overall population growth to employment growth, the relative growth of Alberta's two CDS sector-relevant NAICS industries found in Table 1 outpaced the relative population growth in Alberta from 2006[43] to 2016.[44] Nursing and Residential Care Facilities and Social Assistance employees rose by 35% and 34% from 2006 to 2016 respectively, while Alberta's population grew by 24% over that same time period.

As highlighted in Table 4, the share of immigrants employed in Alberta's two CDS sector-relevant NAICS industries has increased by 64% for Nursing and Residential Care Facilities (NAICS 623) and 50% for Social Assistance (NAICS 624) groups from 2006 to 2016.[45] The share of workers in Alberta who identified as immigrants grew by 23% from 2006 to 2016. This has potentially significant implications for the CDS sector as staff working in the CDS sector come from a variety of diverse backgrounds and many are newcomers to Canada.

Table 4: Share of Employees by Immigrant Identity (2006 to 2016)

Industry Group	NAICS Code	Share of Immigrants Employed (2006)	Share of Immigrants Employed (2016)	% Change
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	**623**	**26%**	**43%**	**64%**
Social Assistance	**624**	**21%**	**31%**	**50%**
Individual and Family Services	6241	17%	25%	46%

Source: Statistics Canada. 2016 Census. Catalogue Number 98-400-X2016358; Statistics Canada. 2006 Census. Catalogue Number 97-564-XCB2006006.

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CDS Sector

Labour Market Analysis

As depicted in Table 5, the largest share of workers in Alberta's Social and Community Service Workers are between the ages of 25 and 34, while the largest share of Home Support Workers were between the ages of 45 and 54.

Table 5: Age Range by Occupational Group (2016)

Occupational Group (Major / Minor)	NOC Code	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Legislators and Senior Management	**001**	**1%**	**7%**	**23%**	**33%**	**27%**	**8%**
Senior Managers – health, education, social and community services and membership organizations	014	2%	7%	16%	35%	30%	10%
Managers in Education and Social and Community Services	**042**	**1%**	**14%**	**27%**	**34%**	**21%**	**4%**
Managers in social, community, and correctional services	0423	2%	22%	27%	26%	18%	4%
Paraprofessional Occupations in Legal, Social, Community, and Education Services	**421**	**14%**	**26%**	**24%**	**19%**	**14%**	**4%**
Social and community service workers	4212	12%	27%	22%	19%	15%	3%
Home Care Providers and Education Support Occupations	**441**	**9%**	**20%**	**27%**	**23%**	**16%**	**4%**
Home support workers, housekeepers, and related occupations	4412	9%	18%	22%	23%	20%	7%

Note: Due to rounding differences, the occupational groups may not equal 100%.
Source: Statistics Canada. 2016 Census. Catalogue Number 98-400-X2016295.

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CDS Sector

Labour Market Analysis

While certification through a post-secondary program is not a requirement for employment in the CDS sector, understanding the level of educational attainment across the sector can provide additional context into the relationship between the workforce investing in their level of education and the level of wages they can expect to earn within a sector. It also helps to identify which training opportunities may be required.

Table 6 highlights the education levels obtained by CDS sector-relevant occupation groups. 77% of Social and Community Services Workers have obtained at least a certificate / diploma, while only 55% of Home Support Workers have obtained the same education level.

It is important to note that the data from Statistics Canada does not speak to the relevancy of the obtained certificate, diploma or degree to the career field of the individual.

Table 6: Education Level by Occupational Group (2016)

Occupational Group (Major / Minor)	NOC Code	High School Diploma / Equivalent	Certificate / Diploma	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Legislators and Senior Management	**001**	**16%**	**28%**	**48%**
Senior Managers – health, education, social and community services and membership organizations	014	12%	25%	62%
Managers in Education and Social and Community Services	**042**	**6%**	**21%**	**75%**
Managers in social, community, and correctional services	0423	13%	38%	48%
Paraprofessional Occupations in Legal, Social, Community, and Education Services	**421**	**20%**	**40%**	**37%**
Social and community service workers	4212	19%	37%	40%
Home Care Providers and Education Support Occupations	**441**	**30%**	**39%**	**21%**
Home support workers, housekeepers, and related occupations	4412	31%	36%	19%

Note: Certificate / Diploma includes those individuals who have obtained an apprenticeship or trades certificate / diploma, college / CEGEP or other non-university certificate / diploma, or university certificate or diploma below bachelor level.
Source: Statistics Canada. 2016 Census. Catalogue Number 98-400-X2016357.

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CDS Sector

Labour Market Analysis

Level of Work Activity

Understanding the level of work activity across the sector, specifically highlighting the prevalence of part-time or part-year work can provide additional context into the pressures faced by the workforce as staff may be required to work multiple jobs in order to make ends meet. Additionally, this could raise questions regarding additional compensation such as benefits and pensions, which are typically available through full-time employment.

As highlighted in Table 7, 47% of all Social Assistance staff and 44% of all Nursing and Residential Care Facilities staff worked part year (i.e., less than 49 weeks in a year) in 2016. This is slightly higher than the overall Alberta figure of 43%.[46] The industry group with the highest percentage of full year, full time workers was the Social Assistance sector.

Table 7: Share of Employees Working Full/Part Time (2016)

Industry Group	NAICS Code	Full Year – Full Time	Full Year – Part Time	Part Year – Full or Part Time
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	**623**	**44%**	**12%**	**44%**
Social Assistance	**624**	**46%**	**7%**	**47%**
Individual and Family Services	6241	48%	9%	43%

Note : Part Year refers to individuals who worked less than 49 weeks in 2016.
Source: Statistics Canada. 2016 Census. Catalogue Number 98-400-X2016358; Statistics Canada. 2006 Census. Catalogue Number 97-564-XCB2006006.

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Appendix C: References and Notes

References and Notes

[1] NAICs is used by Government and Businesses to classify and measure economic activity. A NAICS code can have up to 6 digits that describe the Economic Sector, Subsector, Industry Group, NAICS Industry, and National Industry of an economic activity.

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