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Blueprint CDS: A Comprehensive Workforce Strategy for Community Disability Services

March 31, 2023

ACDS | 50 YEARS

KPMG

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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. Specifically, ACDS' research suggests that the majority of the sector's workforce challenges are due to low wages, increasing demands brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing complexity of needs for individuals being cared for. These challenges are exacerbated by COVID-19 pandemic-related worker burnout and fatigue, manifesting through higher vacancy and turnover rates.

In spring 2022, ACDS received funding from the Government to **lead the development of a sector-driven workforce strategy for the CDS sector, called Project Blueprint CDS**. With support from KPMG, this work has included research, labour market analysis, survey administration and sector engagement to identify key workforce challenges, and co-create (with the CDS sector) a set of recommended strategies and implementation activities.
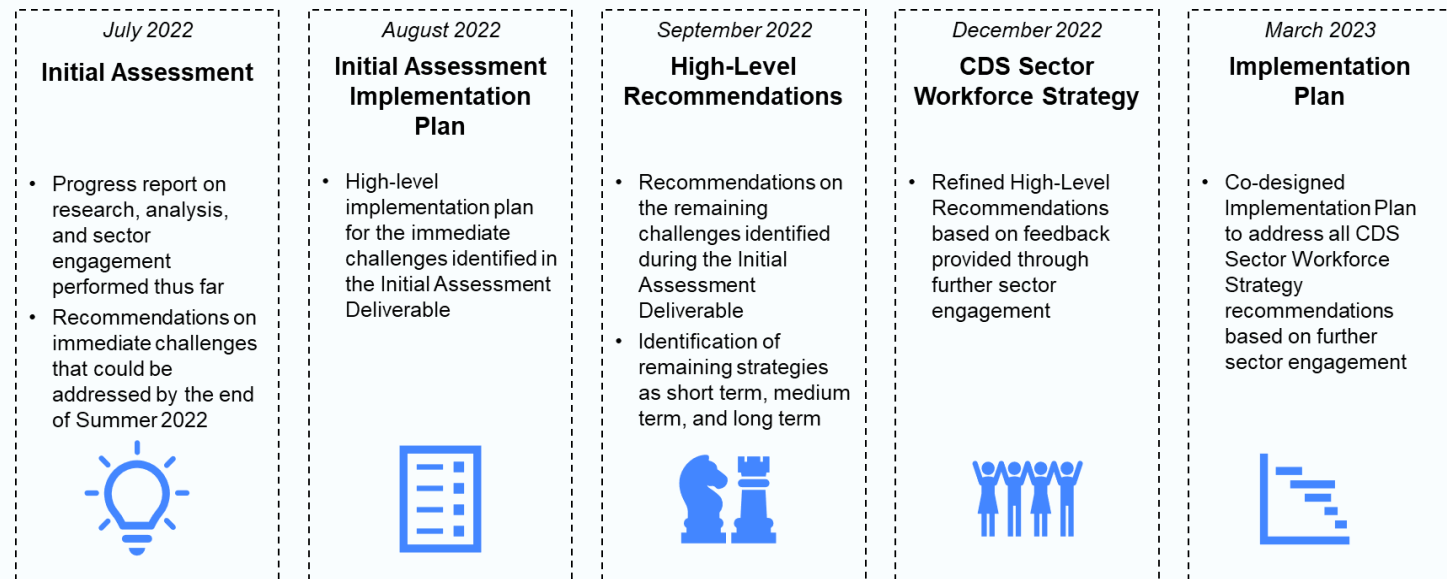
This document is intended to highlight the importance of the recommended strategies as a tool to recruit and retain a sustainable CDS sector workforce that will safely deliver services that meet the needs of Albertans with disabilities.

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Background

The Comprehensive Workforce Strategy is intended to be used as a tool to recruit and retain a sustainable workforce that will safely deliver quality services that meet the needs of Albertans with disabilities. The strategy is the culmination of several phases of work, including the following:

– Completion of an Initial Assessment and High-Level Recommendations that highlighted the key workforce challenges faced by the sector and outlined a suite of preliminary recommendations designed to address those key workforce challenges.

Figure 1: Project Blueprint CDS Overview

July 2022 **Initial Assessment**	*August 2022* **Initial Assessment Implementation Plan**	*September 2022* **High-Level Recommendations**	*December 2022* **CDS Sector Workforce Strategy**	*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 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

– 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 roughly 133 participants representing 78 CDS organizations as well as other sector stakeholders.

– Implementation planning, with input from an Advisory Group of service providers, selected by ACDS to reflect the diversity of organizations in the CDS sector, to gather feedback on implementation activities, timing, sector engagement, and dependencies across the strategies.

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Background

Methodology

A mixed methods approach was used to develop an understanding of the current CDS sector workforce and its future needs. The approach included:

- **Sector engagement** through:
  - *Blueprint CDS Survey*
  - *Focus sessions*
  - *Roadshow workshops*
  - *Implementation workshops*
- **Desktop research** with specific focus on:
  - *Jurisdictional research*
  - *ACDS reports*
  - *Labour market data*

As a starting point, based on sector engagement, research and analysis conducted to date, three overarching themes became evident of the kinds of workforce challenges that are currently facing the CDS sector. These are outlined on the following page.

A. Understanding workforce context,

B. Recruiting and retaining the workforce, and

C. Developing the workforce.

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Current State Workforce Challenges

A. Understanding workforce context

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

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.

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.

Increasingly complex service needs. The scope and needs of individuals referred to CDS sector supports and their families are growing and becoming more complex.

Rural factors. Rural communities experience workforce challenges more severely.

B. Recruiting and retaining the workforce

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

Low wages. Wages are low relative to similar sectors and have been outpaced by the increasing cost of living in Alberta.

Competition from other sectors. There is competition for resources from organizations and support sectors that provide better pay, work environment, multidisciplinary teams, etc.

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.

Leadership gap. Senior leaders in the CDS sector are retiring and there is a lack of experienced, willing staff to take their place.

C. Developing the workforce

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

Barriers to training. There is a lack of funding available for training. Specialized training opportunities can be limited or expensive. Services providers find themselves having to provide their own time consuming, expensive training which is further compounded due to high staff turnover.

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.

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.

Lack of post-secondary training. There is a lack of post-secondary training available as many programs across the province have closed due to lack of demand.

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Recommended Strategies

Overview

The workforce challenges depicted have led to a CDS sector that is in crisis. High vacancy rates and staff turnover prevent the sector from being able to maintain required staffing ratios and minimum training requirements. If these workforce challenges are not addressed, the sector could see an increased risk to frontline staff safety, an increased risk to the safety of individuals receiving services, as well a decrease in the well-being and quality of life of individuals receiving services due to the ongoing erosion of continuity of services. Government and CDS service providers share in the responsibility for these risks and their consequences.

The CDS sector-led workforce strategy has identified a set of recommendations that aim to create an adequate, sustainable and skilled workforce. The recommended strategies will help drive transformational change for the sector by focusing on **recruitment and retention of a more skilled and professional workforce that delivers a higher-quality service to Albertans.**

The recommended strategies align with the following three themes. Additional detail related to each of the recommendations is found on the following pages.

- **Understanding Workforce Context:** The strategies that are designed to increase understanding of the impact and competencies of the workforce;

- **Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce**: The strategies that are designed to increase the level of recruitment and retention of the workforce; and

- **Developing the Workforce**: The strategies that are designed to increase the level of skills and capabilities of the workforce.

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Recommended Strategies

Overview

It is crucial to the success of Project Blueprint CDS that the CDS Workforce Strategy be sector-led. Engagement with the CDS Sector to validate, review and add to the recommendations was completed in Fall 2022 via a series of workshops across Alberta. These workshops were attended by roughly 133 attendees representing 78 CDS organizations, as well as other sector stakeholders.

By engaging with the CDS sector, Project Blueprint CDS gained valuable insights into the sector's needs and concerns while simultaneously building support for the recommendations. While detailed revisions were made to the recommendations based on input from the workshop participants (laid out on the following pages), common themes also emerged across the feedback provided:

Overall, the recommendations were supported

Some of the recommendations are dependent on an initial stabilization of the sector, such as through the increase in wages.

There was overarching support for efforts to professionalize the sector, including increasing expectations, wages and training.

There may be an opportunity to leverage existing efforts being made by others in and close to the sector around the province.

There was support for efforts to better understand and document the current state of the sector, as well as to determine if the current state is appropriate for the sector.

There needs to be a balance between consistency across the Province and respect for service provider autonomy to tailor to the unique needs of their organization and the individuals they serve.

Implementation of the recommendations needs to respect service provider time and capacity.

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Recommended Strategies

A. Understanding workforce context

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.
Scope	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.
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. Engagement with the Advisory Group suggested that there is a desire for this work to begin in the immediate stage (i.e., within one year). Based on the current volume of recommendations that are frontloaded or considered for immediate implementation, the implementation of this recommendation could be pushed back to begin in 2024. There is potential to reference the Ladder Project underway by Excel Society which is looking into similar concepts. 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).
Implementation Activities	It is anticipated that implementation of this recommendation could take 12 months based on the following implementation activities: – Build plan / framework for economic impact analysis – Conduct research – Conduct analysis on findings of research – Targeted engagement of CDS sector - gather feedback on findings – Develop report of findings

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Recommended Strategies

A. Understanding workforce context

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.
Scope	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.
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.
Implementation Activities	It is anticipated that implementation of this recommendation could take 7 months based on the following implementation activities: – Build preliminary mock-up of service inventory – Broad engagement with CDS sector – Gather feedback on preliminary service inventory design – Build services and competencies inventory – Targeted engagement with CDS sector – Gather feedback on service and competencies inventory – Finalize service and competencies inventory.

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Recommended Strategies

A. Understanding workforce context

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.
Scope	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.
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.
Implementation Activities	It is anticipated that implementation of this recommendation could take 7 months based on the following implementation activities: – Build preliminary mock-up of service inventory – Broad engagement with CDS sector – Gather feedback on preliminary service inventory design – Build services and competencies inventory – Targeted engagement with CDS sector – Gather feedback on service and competencies inventory – Finalize service and competencies inventory.

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Recommended Strategies

A. Understanding workforce context

A4. Adopt a network model to support cross-ministry coordination (1/2)	
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.
Scope	The scope of this recommendation includes: – Engage directly with SCSS, the Health and Justice to build buy in and commitment into network model; 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; Meet with other ministries to propose CDS sector 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.
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.

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Recommended Strategies

A. Understanding workforce context

A4. Adopt a network model to support cross-ministry coordination (2/2)	
Implementation Activities	It is anticipated that implementation of this recommendation could take 8 months based on the following implementation activities: – Review FASD network models and findings of FASD network reviews and evaluations – Research what has made other cross-ministry efforts succeed or not succeed – Meet with SCSS, Health and Justice to gauge commitment to a network model – 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, may need targeted CDS sector engagement – Targeted engagement of CDS sector – Gather feedback on the initial model – Engage directly with SCSS, Health and Justice to propose the network model and encourage their commitment

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Recommended Strategies

A. Understanding workforce context

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.
Scope	The scope of this recommendation includes: – 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.
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.
Implementation Activities	It is anticipated that implementation of this recommendation could take 6 months based on the following implementation activities: – Gather data (Government, service providers, etc.) – Develop forecasting model – Distribute initial model outputs to CDS sector along with training about purpose and use – Share model outputs with Government partners

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Recommended Strategies

B. Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

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).
Scope	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.
Updates	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 the Ministry with an evidence-based briefing document that, among other things, estimated the funding required for each of the preliminary recommendations outlined in the Initial Assessment. In December 2022, The Government of Alberta announced funding of $26 million in December of 2022 to support wage increases for direct services staff in the CDS sector followed by a commitment in March 2023 of an additional $330 million over three years primarily to increase the wages of disability support workers and $125 million over three years to address the waitlist for services. This represents a partial funding of this recommendation.
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.
Implementation Activities	It is anticipated that implementation of this recommendation will be ongoing and supported by the following implementation activities: – Ongoing advocacy by ACDS.

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Recommended Strategies

B. Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

B7. Build a compensation scale guide for frontline service delivery staff	
Recommendation	Develop a compensation 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 compensation 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 compensation scale guide could include elements that address broader compensation outside of wages, such as RRSP matching, and health and wellness benefits. While any compensation scale would need to be voluntary, a guide could support service providers in advocating for additional funding and workers in advocating for higher wages.
Scope	The scope of this recommendation includes: – Development of a draft compensation 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 compensation scale guide; Finalization and distribution / promotion of the compensation scale guide.
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 compensation scales that have been developed by individual CDS sector service providers.
Implementation Activities	It is anticipated that implementation of this recommendation could take 7 months based on the following implementation activities: – Determine scope and purpose of compensation scale guide – Conduct compensation comparison survey of CDS sector – Collect and review existing compensation scales developed by individual CDS sector service providers – Develop a draft compensation scale guide that is based on findings from service providers and leading practice and research into relevant, comparable industries – Broad engagement of CDS sector – Gather feedback on the compensation scale guide – Finalize the compensation scale guide – Distribute compensation scale guide to CDS sector along with training about purpose and use.

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Recommended Strategies

B. Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

B8. Engage CDS sector workers to co-design a community of practice	
Recommendation	Support CDS sector supervisory 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.
Scope	The scope of this recommendation includes:
	– Using a co-design approach to identify how (and if) a community of practice could best serve supervisory and manager level workers; Bringing together a group of CDS sector supervisory workers representative of varying backgrounds, including location, ethnicity, education level, years of experience in the sector, etc. to serve as the design group. It will be important for one consistent design group to be used; 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.
Implementation Considerations	It will be critical that workers participating in both the design of the community of practice and the community of practice itself 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.
	It will be important that the community of practice is based in clear best practice. 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).
	There is potential to tie co-design activities into a ACDS Conference.
Implementation Activities	It is anticipated that implementation of this recommendation could take 7 months to design, with an additional 12 months to pilot the model based on the following implementation activities:
	– Develop co-design approach
	– Identify and bring together representative group of CDS sector service provider representatives at the supervisory level to participate in co-design process; Support the group to come together for regular co-design meetings
	– Document final design; Implement model pilot; Provide ongoing administrative support.

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Recommended Strategies

C. Developing the Workforce

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.
Scope	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; Establish a plan to implement the target credential and equivalences across the CDS sector, including grandfathering in existing CDS staff.
Implementation Considerations	The current requirements for accreditation could be used as a starting point for development of a credential requirement. There may also be a role for accreditation in supporting adoption of the credential requirement. The credential requirement may change over time, beginning as a baseline training requirement and evolving over time. 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 compensation 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 and Certification Pilot Process. The baseline credential requirement should be reviewed within five years of implementation.
Implementation Activities	It is anticipated that implementation of this recommendation could take 11 months based on the following implementation activities: – Broad engagement of CDS sector - Conduct survey to understand current credentials held by CDS sector staff – Broad engagement of CDS sector – Gather considerations for target credential requirement – Develop a draft baseline credential requirement for all new frontline workers – Establish a plan to implement the target credential and equivalences across the CDS sector, including grandfathering in existing CDS staff – Broad engagement of CDS sector – Gather feedback on the target credential requirement – Distribute target credential requirement to CDS sector along with training about purpose and use – Conduct review of baseline target credential requirement within 5 years of implementation.

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Recommended Strategies

C. Developing the Workforce

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.
Scope	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.
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 compensation scale guide outlined in **recommendation B7** and target credential requirement outlined in **recommendation C9_A**.
	There is potential to reference the micro-credentialing model used by the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) in the United States, which includes experience badges as well as courses.
Implementation Activities	It is anticipated that implementation of this recommendation could take 6 months based on the following implementation activities:
	– Work with Advanced Education and post-secondaries to determine how CDS sector credentials can fit into existing efforts to build micro-credentialing
	– Targeted engagement of CDS sector - Identify the core credentials and how they could be stacked
	– Develop process to assess existing employees for potential achievement of credentials based on previous work experience / learning
	– Work with identified post-secondary institutions to determine timing, administration and courses to be included as part of the micro-credentialing
	– Support roll out of micro-credentialing program

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Recommended Strategies

C. Developing the Workforce

C9C. 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.
Scope	The scope of this recommendation includes working with: – SCSS to provide 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.
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. There is potential to consider post-secondary models that have worked in other sectors that could be replicated in the CDS sector, e.g. apprenticeships, the model used for health care aides, etc.
Implementation Activities	It is anticipated that implementation of this recommendation could take 6 months to design, with an additional 12 months to monitor the rollout based on the following implementation activities: – Review existing models for expanding post-secondary in Alberta to identify potential learnings – Work with Advanced Education and post secondaries to determine where disability support programming should be expanded and when – Monitor roll out of expanded disability support post-secondary programming

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Recommended Strategies

C. Developing the Workforce

C9$_D$. Identify current state of training	
Recommendation	Develop a comprehensive province-wide map of existing training opportunities and conduct a gap analysis.

Scope	The scope of this recommendation includes:
	
	– Use of the ACDS Annual Survey 2022 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; 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.

Update	The ACDS Survey 2022 has collected initial information on types of training accessed, training needs that are currently unmet, as well as issues and barriers to accessing training.
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.
Implementation Activities	It is anticipated that implementation of this recommendation could take 6 months to design, with an additional 12 months to monitor the rollout based on the following implementation activities: – Establish a training needs framework – Compile survey findings; Broad engagement of CDS sector - Build on survey findings and perform training needs analysis – Collect supplemental data on current training offerings and perform gap analysis – Targeted engagement of CDS sector - Gather feedback on gap analysis – Finalize gap analysis

#BlueprintCDS

Recommended Strategies

C. Developing the Workforce

C9$_E$. Develop a provincial training framework	
Recommendation	Develop a training framework that addresses the gaps in training across the province and lays out clear training pathways. 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.
Scope	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 potential pathways for training and builds in opportunity to identify efficiencies and potential training partnerships; further engagement with the sector to validate the framework.
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. Consider use of train the trainer models as appropriate. The framework will need to adapt as additional post-secondary options (including micro-credentialing) are adopted as training is currently filling some of the gaps left by the lack of post-secondary education of the workforce.
Implementation Activities	It is anticipated that implementation of this recommendation could take 4 months based on the following implementation activities: – Develop provincial training framework – Targeted engagement of CDS sector - Gather feedback on framework – Finalize framework.

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Recommended Strategies

C. Developing the Workforce

C9_F. Develop a training catalogue	
Recommendation	Create a training catalogue 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.
Scope	The scope of this recommendation includes: – ACDS builds a catalogue of online and other training opportunities that align with the provincial training framework; ACDS investigates options for clearing house platforms that could house a training catalogue and potentially sets up a clearing house to hold the training catalogue.
Implementation Considerations	It will be important that any costs to service providers to participate in trainings are reasonable. It will be important that the catalogue does not create a one-path system but instead provides options for service providers depending on their size and resources. Additional trainings leave room for service providers to maintain some of their own training to support unique topics, such as their organizational philosophy. Consider ways to continue to encourage innovation in training in the sector. Consider use of different approaches to regional training and leveraging existing training hubs. 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.
Implementation Activities	It is anticipated that implementation of this recommendation could take 3 months based on the following implementation activities: – Define and collect business plan requirements for an online training catalogue – Compile results from work on **recommendations C9$_D$ and C9$_E$** – Develop business plan for funding to create the training catalogue.

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Recommended Strategies

C. Developing the Workforce

C9G. Expand the suite of training offered by ACDS	
Recommendation	Expand on the existing suite of training services provided by ACDS. This recommendation is dependent on completion of **recommendations C9D, C9E, and C9F** to build a provincial training map, provincial training framework, and training catalogue.
Scope	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; adding the new ACDS training to the training catalogue.
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. There are opportunities for ACDS to partner with organizations to ensure trainings have the developmental disability lens where that training does not currently exist. For example: – 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** with respect to building a community of practice.
Implementation Activities	It is anticipated that implementation of this recommendation could take 13 months based on the following implementation activities: – Identify potential training partnerships – ACDS designs and implements new training modules based on the gaps in existing training identified through the development of the provincial training framework – Targeted engagement of CDS sector - Test the draft modules using existing training testing mechanisms – Make revisions as necessary – Add the new ACDS training to the training catalogue

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Recommended Strategies

C. Developing the Workforce

C10. Identify and address barriers to workforce flexibility within the PDD contract structure (1/2)	
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.
Scope	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 funding by service providers to support their workforce; A literature review on leading practices in funding community disability and innovation in similar service provider contracts that provide flexibility in use of funding to support the workforce; Options for changes to the contract structure and impact analysis of those options; Recommendations for the specific changes sought for the contracts, an implementation roadmap of how work could proceed to change the contract structure.
Implementation Considerations	Could be dependent on completion of **recommendation A2**, to create a common inventory of the scope of practice of the CDS sector. Consider ways contract structures could be more reflective of service for life approaches rather than fixed-term contract cycles. 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; Honouring the proven track record of service providers by increasing flexibility for service providers with years of consistent service delivery results.

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Recommended Strategies

C. Developing the Workforce

C10. Identify and address barriers to workforce flexibility within the PDD contract structure (2/2)

Implementation Activities	It is anticipated that implementation of this recommendation could take 6 months based on the following implementation activities: – Broad engagement of CDS sector – conduct survey to understand challenges with current PDD contract structure – Conduct literature review of leading practices in funding and innovation in social services and other sectors – Meet with SCSS to discuss potential for changes to contract structure, scope, etc – Develop options for changes to the contract structure and impact analysis of those options – Targeted engagement of CDS sector - Review and provide inputs on options and impacts – Develop recommendations for the specific changes sought for the contracts – Develop a case for changing the contracts, including the recommendations – Develop an implementation plan for how changes to the contract structure would proceed – Meet with SCSS to present the case for change – Support implementation efforts.

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Recommended Strategies

C. Developing the Workforce

C11. Implement innovative workforce fund	
Recommendation	Work with SCSS to secure funding for a grant program that encourages CDS sector service providers to try new and innovative approaches to managing their workforce. The recommendation also includes working with the CDS sector to design and implement the grant program.
Scope	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.
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.
Implementation Activities	It is anticipated that implementation of this recommendation could take 6 months based on the following implementation activities: – Research leading practices in funding innovation through grants; Design a draft grant program – Targeted engagement of CDS sector - Provide input on grant program; Implement grant program – Review grant program after first year.

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Recommended Strategies

C. Developing the Workforce

C12. Support organizations to build a culture of professionalization	
Recommendation	Work with service provider organizations to provide information, resources and other approaches intended to help build a culture of professionalization among the CDS sector workforce.
Scope	The scope of this recommendation includes initiatives and activities conducted by ACDS to: – Build understanding and buy in of workforce into ongoing efforts to strengthen and professionalize the CDS sector workforce; Provide service provider organizations with resources to strengthen the culture of professionalization among their organizations and workforce.
Implementation Considerations	Consider creative ways to engage and learn from CDS sector staff. This work can be ongoing and evolving and underpin many of the other implementation activities.
Implementation Activities	It is anticipated that implementation of this recommendation could take a minimum of 24 months based on the following implementation activities as a starting point: – Draft a communications brief about Project Blueprint targeted at the CDS sector workforce – Targeted engagement of CDS sector – Engage with long-term sector workers to understand what keeps them in the sector – Provide resources / event about creating environment with core team values and focus on professionalism

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Strategy Implementation

Prioritized Recommendations

The proposed prioritization for each of the Comprehensive Workforce Strategy Recommendations is provided below and was developed through a series of Implementation Workshops with the Project Blueprint Advisory Group in March 2023. **The prioritization summary found below and recommendation timelines found on the following page are as of April 1, 2023 and are subject to refinement based on the results of the ongoing work of Project Blueprint and changes to CDS sector priorities and Alberta's political landscape.**

Immediate Term (within 1 year)	Short Term (within 2 years)	Medium Term (within 3 years)	Long Term (3 + years)
– A2. Build a shared understanding of the scope of practice of CDS sector services.	– A1. Build a shared understanding of the economic impact of the CDS sector.	– B7. Build a compensation scale guide for frontline service delivery staff.	– B8. Engage CDS sector workers to co-design a community of practice.
– B6. Provide immediate and ongoing wage relief.	– A3. Adopt common workforce classifications.	– $C9_A$. Establish a target credential requirement for frontline CDS sector workers.	– $C9_C$. Expand post-secondary programming.
– $C9_D$. Identify current state of training.	– A4. Adopt a network model to support cross-ministry coordination.	– $C9_B$. Establish a system for micro-credentialing.	
– $C9_E$. Develop a provincial training framework.	– A5. Develop a forecasting model to support strategic workforce planning.	– C11. Implement innovative workforce fund.	
– C12: Support organizations to build a culture of professionalization	– $C9_F$. Develop a training catalogue		
	– $C9_G$. Expand the suite of training offered by ACDS.		
	– C10. Identify and address barriers to workforce flexibility within the PDD contract structure		

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Strategy Implementation

Recommendation Timing

The following Gantt Chart provides a high-level view of the timing required for those recommendations that were determined by the Blueprint Advisory Group to be priorities for the CDS sector over the next two years.

Recommendation		2023	2024	2025
	Week beginning	May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec	Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec	Jan Feb Mar Apr
Immediate Term Recommendations				
A2	Build a shared understanding of the scope of practice of CDS sector services	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬		
B6	Provide immediate and ongoing wage relief	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬	▬▬▬▬
C9D	Identify current state of training	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬		
C9E	Develop a provincial training framework	▬▬▬	▬	
C12	Support organizations to build a culture of professionalization	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬		
Short Term Recommendations				
A1	Build a shared understanding of the economic impact of the CDS sector		▬▬▬▬▬▬▬	
A3	Adopt common workforce classifications		▬▬▬▬▬	
A4	Adopt a network model to support cross ministry coordination		▬▬▬	
A5	Develop a forecasting model to support strategic workforce planning		▬▬▬▬	
C9F	Develop a training catalogue		▬▬▬	
C9G	Expand the suite of training offered by ACDS		▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬	
C10	Identify and address barriers to workforce flexibility within the PDD contract structure		▬▬▬▬▬▬	
Project Management				
-	Ongoing Project Management	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬	▬▬▬▬

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