

#BlueprintCDS

Alberta Council of Disability Services Blueprint Project: Initial Assessment

Prepared by KPMG for ACDS

August 19, 2022



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#BlueprintCDS

Executive Summary



50 YEARS



Executive Summary

Project Blueprint CDS: 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.

The chronic nature of these challenges requires the development of workforce strategies that focus the CDS sector on switching from a mode of reacting to immediate pressures to proactively creating and sustaining a successful future workforce to support the individuals with disabilities they serve.

ACDS has received funding from Government to lead the development of a workforce strategy for the CDS sector, and engaged the consulting services of KPMG to provide research and facilitation support for this important work.

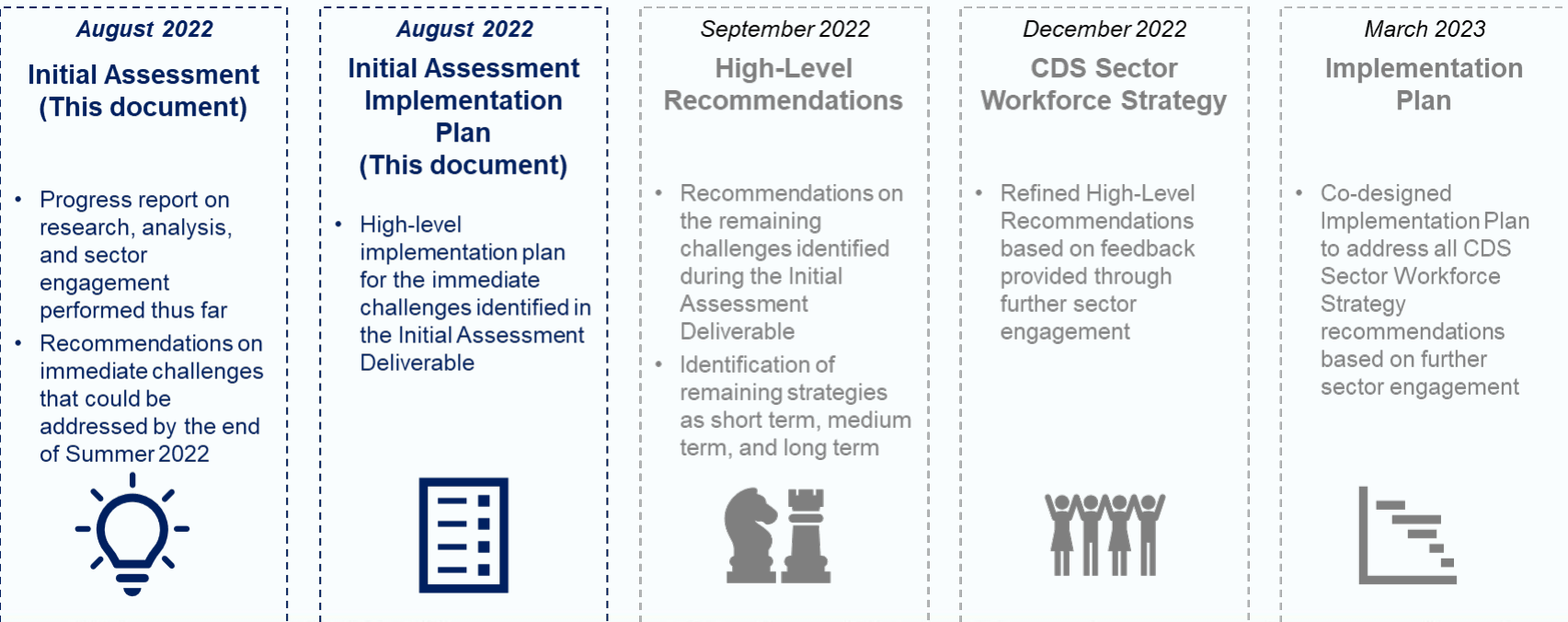
Known as **Project Blueprint CDS**, this initiative includes labour market analysis and stakeholder engagement in developing a robust, sector-led strategy for a CDS workforce targeted to meet the changing and growing needs of Albertans with disabilities. The outcomes from the initiative will be used by ACDS to provide evidence-based recommendations to Government to address recruitment and retention issues in the sector and promote a sustainable workforce.

Executive Summary

About This Document

This Initial Assessment is a summary of the progress made, based on sector engagement and research gathered during Phase One of Project Blueprint CDS. It describes the key workforce challenges in the current CDS sector across three major themes and proposes preliminary recommendations. It is important to note that this work is sector-driven, and further work is underway to build out a complete set of recommendations based on this interim document. The final recommendations will be included as part of an overarching CDS Sector Workforce Strategy with an accompanying Implementation Plan for stakeholders in March 2023. Phase One was intended to present foundational research and identify actions that can be taken to address the most immediate workforce challenges beginning in Summer 2022, while the remaining work is completed by Spring 2023.

Project Blueprint Overview



Executive Summary

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*
- **Desktop research** with specific focus on:
 - *Jurisdictional research*
 - *ACDS reports*
 - *Labour market data*

Analysis from the above sources were used to identify key workforce challenges, organized under a framework of three overarching themes:

- A. Understanding workforce context,
- B. Recruiting and retaining the workforce, and
- C. Developing the workforce

Based on the findings, a series of preliminary recommendations are proposed. As stakeholder input is foundational to Project Blueprint CDS, there will be upcoming opportunities for members of the CDS sector to provide their unique perspectives on the issues and recommendations as this work progresses.

Executive Summary

Overarching Themes – Key Workforce Challenges



A. Understanding workforce context

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

Lack of visibility and buy-in 

Increasingly complex service needs 

Parallel and duplicate systems 


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 

Leadership gap 


Work environment 



C. Developing the workforce

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

Restrictive contracts 

Barriers to training 

Lack of post-secondary training 

Mismatched staff skill sets 

Executive Summary

Key Workforce Challenges and Preliminary Recommendations

This Initial Assessment presents a suite of preliminary recommendations for consideration by sector stakeholders, which have been validated by ACDS.

Three of these recommendations are proposed for action to be initiated in the immediate term to address the most critical challenges.

A2: Build a shared understanding of the service needs of those accessing CDS sector services.

B6: Provide immediate and ongoing wage relief.

C9_c: Identify current state of training.

The remainder of the proposed recommendations are intended to be tested and developed further with the CDS sector through additional engagement planned for fall 2022 and winter 2023.



A. Understanding workforce context

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

- Lack of visibility and buy-in
- Increasingly complex service needs
- Parallel and duplicate systems
- 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
- Leadership gap
- Work environment



C. Developing the workforce

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

- Restrictive contracts
- Barriers to training
- Lack of post-secondary training
- Mismatched staff skill sets

Key Workforce Challenges

1. Build a shared understanding of the value of the CDS sector

2. Build a shared understanding of the service needs of those accessing CDS sector services

3. Adopt common workforce classifications

4. Adopt a network model to support cross-ministry coordination

5. Develop a forecasting model to support strategic workforce planning

6. Provide immediate and ongoing wage relief

7. Promote the professionalization of the CDS sector workforce

8. Build a community of practice

9. Increase education and training levels of CDS sector workforce

10. Revisit PDD contract structure

11. Implement innovative workforce fund

Preliminary Recommendations

Executive Summary

Preliminary Recommendations and Suggested Overall Timeframe

As depicted on right, the Initial Assessment proposes that while three of the preliminary recommendations be acted on immediately, the remainder would be acted on in the short- to long-term.

Sequence of priorities, timing estimates, and specific steps will be further developed and validated through sector engagement in subsequent phases of the project.

A. Understanding Workforce Context



	Immediate (Summer 2022)	Short-Term (1 to 2 years)	Medium-Term (2 to 3 years)	Long-Term (3+ years)
1. Build a shared understanding of the value of the CDS sector		X		
2. Build a shared understanding of the service needs of those accessing 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



6. Provide immediate and ongoing wage relief	X			
7. Promote the professionalization of the CDS sector workforce. This could include:				
7 _A Establish a target credential requirement for frontline CDS sector workers			X	
7 _B Build a wage scale guide for frontline service delivery staff				X
8. Build a community of practice		X		

C. Developing the Workforce



9. Increase education and training levels of CDS sector workforce. This could include:				
9 _A Establish a system for micro-credentialing		X		
9 _B Expand post-secondary programming				X
9_C Identify current state of training	X			
9 _D Develop a provincial training framework		X		
9 _E Centralize training opportunities			X	
10. Revisit PDD contract structure			X	
11. Implement innovative workforce fund			X	

Executive Summary

Initial Assessment Implementation Plan – Addressing Immediate Challenges

The following provides additional details on the high-level activities related to each of the three recommendations proposed to address immediate challenges.

Recommendation	Activity ID	Activity	Description
A2: Build a shared understanding of the service needs of those accessing CDS sector services: In order to (i) better understand how to support individuals accessing CDS sector services and (ii) more effectively plan for the sector's workforce, it is important to understand the scope of service needs, particularly as the sector continues to evolve in terms of complexity. The CDS sector should create an inventory of services provided and the competencies needed to adequately provide those services.	1	Commence Project and Develop Charter	This would involve working with the ACDS Advisory Committee to stand up a project team to lead this work. The project team could include members of the sector who are subject matter experts.
	2	Sector Engagement Approach	This would involve designing an engagement approach that defines who will be engaged, how will they be engaged (e.g., survey, focus sessions), and provides the framework for what questions will be asked during engagement (e.g., what information exists in silos within individual service providers, what services are offered), and reiterates to the sector why this work is important so as to maximize buy-in.
	3	Perform Sector Engagement	This would involve conducting the sector engagement.
	4	Compile and Analyze	This would involve taking the learnings and materials provided by the sector engagement and creating an inventory of services performed. This would also involve additional rationalization for services that may be duplicative in nature which could require additional sector engagement.
	5	Validate Service Inventory	This would involve presenting the Service Inventory to the sector for their feedback and to promote buy-in.
	6	Refine Service Inventory	This would involve finalizing the Service Inventory based on feedback provided by the sector.

Executive Summary

Initial Assessment Implementation Plan – Addressing Immediate Challenges

Recommendation	Activity ID	Activity	Description
B6: Provide immediate and ongoing wage relief: Wages are historically not competitive and were reported to be a critical issue in the recruitment and retention of staff within the CDS sector. ACDS should collaborate with Government on (i) providing additional immediate funding for services to increase wages for all staff in order to stabilize the current situation, and (ii) co-designing a strategy for achieving wage parity and sustainability.	1	Consolidate Evidence Base	This would involve extracting the evidence base provided in this Initial Assessment and developing a wage brief to Government.
	2	Government Engagement	This would involve providing the wage brief to Government representatives within the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The wage brief could highlight the need for an immediate infusion, and the evidence supporting the need for wage parity between CDS workers and other competitive sectors.
	3	Continued Advocacy by ACDS	This would involve holding continued discussion with Government for a co-designed strategy to achieve wage parity .

Recommendation	Activity ID	Activity	Description
C9c: Identify current state of training To better understand the current training needs for service providers and workers, develop a comprehensive province-wide map of training opportunities, especially in complex needs and specialized supports, and conduct a gap analysis. It will then be possible to make a coordinated effort to addressing those gaps	1	Commence Project and Develop Charter	This would involve working with the ACDS Advisory Committee to stand up a small project team to lead this work. This work could be completed by 1 or 2 individuals on a part-time basis.
	2	Sector Engagement Approach	This would involve designing an engagement approach that defines who will be engaged, how will they be engaged (e.g., survey, focus sessions), provides the framework for what questions will be asked during engagement (e.g., what training is being offered by their organization, how effective is that training, have they accessed the repository of training through ACDS' website, what training is required by their organization?).
	3	Perform Sector Engagement	This would involve conducting the sector engagement.
	4	Compile Results	This would involve taking the learnings and materials provided by the sector engagement and creating a map of the different training that is provided across the province.
	5	Conduct Gap Analysis	This would involve reviewing the key gaps in training by region and by subject-matter.
	6	Validate Current State of Training	This would involve presenting the current state of training to the sector for their feedback and to promote buy-in.
	7	Refine Current State of Training	This would involve finalizing the current state of training based on feedback provided by the sector.

Executive Summary

Next Steps

The contents of this document will inform ongoing work to develop a fulsome Workforce Strategy for the CDS sector. The remaining phases of work include:

- Development of high-level recommendations (and implementation timelines) on the remaining challenges identified in this document.
- Conducting broad CDS sector engagement across Alberta to refine the high-level recommendations based on feedback from CDS sector service providers.
- Developing an overall workforce strategy for the CDS sector based on the refined high-level recommendations.
- Co-designing an implementation plan with CDS sector service providers that addresses all CDS sector workforce recommendations.



End of Executive Summary

#BlueprintCDS

Introduction & Background



50 YEARS



Project Blueprint CDS

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.

The chronic nature of these challenges requires the development of workforce strategies that focus the CDS sector on switching from a mode of reacting to immediate pressures to proactively creating and sustaining a successful future workforce to support the individuals with disabilities they serve.

ACDS has received funding from Government to lead the development of a workforce strategy for the CDS sector, and engaged the consulting services of KPMG to provide research and facilitation support for this important work.

Known as **Project Blueprint CDS**, this initiative includes labour market analysis and stakeholder engagement in developing a robust, sector-led strategy for a CDS workforce targeted to meet the changing and growing needs of Albertans with disabilities. The outcomes from the initiative will be used by ACDS to provide evidence-based recommendations to Government to address recruitment and retention issues in the sector and promote a sustainable workforce.

Project Blueprint CDS

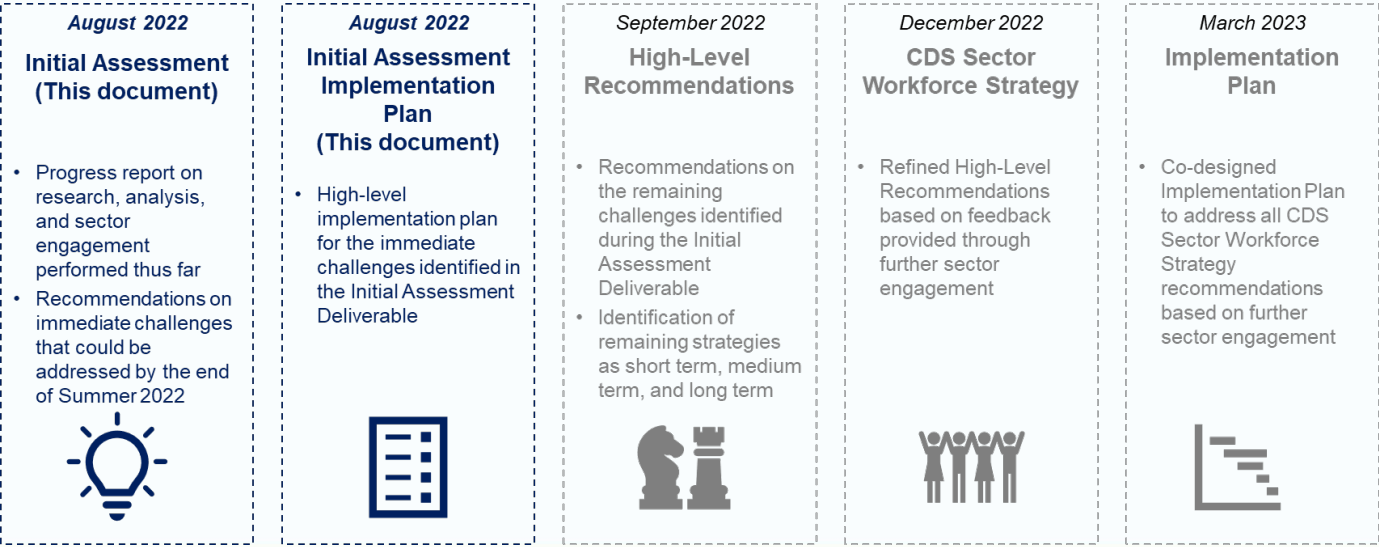
About This Document

This Initial Assessment (or document) is a summary of the progress made, based on sector engagement and research gathered during Phase One of Project Blueprint CDS. It describes the key workforce challenges faced in the current CDS sector across three major themes, and for each of these themes identifies preliminary recommendations.

It is important to note that this work is sector-driven, and further work is underway to build out a complete set of recommendations based on this interim document. These recommendations will be included as part of an overarching CDS Sector Workforce Strategy with an accompanying Implementation Plan for its stakeholders.

This initial phase of work was intended to identify actions that can be taken to address the most immediate challenges for the CDS sector workforce beginning in Summer 2022, while the remaining work is completed by Spring 2023. Figure 1 provides an overview of the schedule for Project Blueprint CDS.

Figure 1: Project Blueprint Overview



Project Blueprint CDS

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* – The Blueprint CDS Survey was created with the goal of being the first opportunity for CDS sector’s 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. Further information on the Blueprint CDS Survey can be found in Appendix A: Project Blueprint CDS Survey.
 - *Focus sessions* – Three focus sessions were held with CDS sector executives in Spring 2022. These sessions were intended 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. Further information on the focus sessions can be found in Appendix B: Sector Engagement.
- **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. Examples from within Alberta, and from British Columbia, Ontario, and Australia, as well as other examples of promising practices from around the globe, have been referenced in this document. Further information on the jurisdictional research can be found in Appendix C: Jurisdiction Scan.
 - *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.

Project Blueprint CDS

Methodology

- *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 System¹ (NAICS) industry groups 623 – Nursing and Residential Care Facilities and 624 – Social Assistance, as well as National Occupational Classification² (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.
- 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, 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.

Analysis of the findings that were gleaned from the above sources were used to identify key themes related to workforce challenges, organized under a framework of three overarching themes:

- A. Understanding workforce context,
- B. Recruiting and retaining the workforce, and
- C. Developing the workforce

Based on the findings, a series of preliminary recommendations are proposed. As stakeholder input is foundational to Project Blueprint CDS, there will be upcoming opportunities for members of the CDS sector to provide their unique perspectives on the issues and recommendations as this work progresses.

#BlueprintCDS

Community Disability Services (CDS) Sector



50 YEARS



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 agency'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

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 (found on the following page) 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.

CDS Sector

About Individuals in Service

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

Building relationships Trauma informed care
Communications Preventative health measures
Flexibility Non-violent crisis intervention
Interpersonal relations and respect Addiction services
Positive behavioural supports Mental Health first aid
Medication administration Suicide prevention

CDS Sector

About the Workforce

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.

CDS Sector

About the Workforce

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 on page 19 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.

CDS Sector

About the Workforce

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 on page 19 outpaced the relative population growth in Alberta from 2006⁴ to 2016⁵. 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 immigrants⁶ 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. 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.

CDS Sector

About the Workforce

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. This is shown in Table 5.

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.

CDS Sector

About the Workforce

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.

CDS Sector

About the Workforce

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%.⁷ 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.

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)



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

CDS Sector

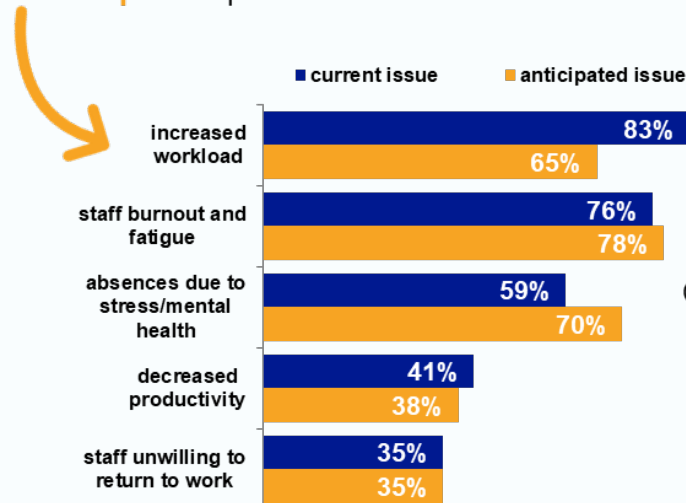
About the Workforce

Current Context

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 of recruitment and retention of skilled and qualified workers. Figure 4 shows high levels of turnover, staff burnout and fatigue, absences, and other challenges faced by CDS sector agencies in 2021.

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

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



23% annual turnover in 2021

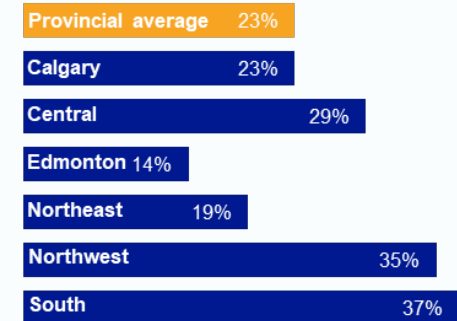
Turnover was the highest among frontline positions of:

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:



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.

CDS Sector

About the Workforce

The challenges faced by the CDS sector are not unique to Alberta. Research into British Columbia, Ontario, and Australia found that each jurisdiction is also struggling with ongoing recruitment and retention of their CDS sector workforce. British Columbia is experiencing low interest and high turnover, reportedly due to low wages in comparison to other sectors like health and education.⁸ Barriers to recruitment and retention in Ontario were noted to include a lack of opportunities for advancement, increasing workloads, and expectations to work evenings and weekends.⁹ In Australia, the disability sector is facing competition from other community care sectors, exacerbated by COVID-19 concerns.¹⁰

The effects of high turnover on the CDS sector are significant. The success of CDS sector work is based on strong relationships between individuals receiving service and the workers who support them. It is difficult for individuals to get the support and stability they need when their support staff are changing often.

We're all in service to meet people's needs – if people aren't forming relationships, we can't provide long-term, sustainable, consistent care.

– Focus session participant

CDS Sector

Labour Market Outlook

Note on Current Data Limitations

Project Blueprint CDS initially sought to provide forecasts of labour demand and supply. This line of analysis was intended to use publicly-available statistics to project a five-year demand and supply trends for up to three job groupings (e.g., frontline staff, specialty staff and supervisory staff). Unfortunately, due to lack of publicly-available data related to CDS sector specific positions, forecasting is not possible to a reasonably accurate or useful level at this time.

Information about PDD and FSCD caseload trends was obtained from the Government of Alberta Open Data Portal. There could be an opportunity in the future to support the sector in strategically planning for their workforce by obtaining relevant data for the demand side from other sources. Alberta's Ministry of Community and Social Services – Disability Services Division, is working with ACDS to identify potential analyses from the Government's internal program data that could assist with more refined caseload projections. To the extent that these analyses are useful and shareable, the results could be incorporated into the later stages of this project to inform stakeholder planning.

In the meantime, for the purposes of this document, qualitative examples of the types of skills and capabilities that would be required by CDS sector staff over the next five years and beyond have been provide in this document based on sector input. This is further detailed in the mismatched staff skillsets section beginning on page 60 of this document. In addition, quantification of the broader social services workers has been performed by the Government of Alberta's Occupational Outlook tool, the output from this tool is found on the following page.

CDS Sector

Labour Market Outlook

The Government of Alberta releases the Alberta Occupational Outlook¹¹ report every 2 years to predict 10 years of job shortages and surpluses. It uses factors such as economic and occupational outlooks, demographics, and education to forecast future demand for occupations and supply of potential workers in Alberta. It also includes labour market information for CDS sector-related occupation groups that could be used to estimate future labour market supply and demand for the CDS sector. The most recent Alberta Occupational Outlook was published in February 2022.

As shown in Table 8, the Alberta Occupational Outlook report predicts that the job market for the two CDS sector-related occupation groups are expected to see an overall labour shortage of 2,121 workers by 2030. This means that the number of job openings created through things like retirement, out-migration, expansion demand or economic growth are projected to be greater than the number of job seekers from in-migration or finishing school. While Social and Community Service Workers (NOC 4212) are estimated to have a surplus of 1,413 workers by 2030, Home Support Workers are estimated to experience a shortage of 3,534 workers by 2030. It is important to note that Disability Support Workers are representative of one of 130+ occupations that could be classified as NOC 4212 or NOC 4412 and that would be seeking qualified workers for their open jobs.

Table 8: Supply and Demand Forecast for Alberta's Workforce (2021 to 2030)

		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
NOC 4212 – Social and community service workers	Job Openings	1,368	762	795	849	880	969	1,033	1,032	1,036	1,034
	Job Seekers	1,355	1,213	1,079	1,043	1,035	1,071	1,089	1,092	1,091	1,103
	Net Impact	13	(451)	(284)	(194)	(155)	(102)	(56)	(60)	(55)	(69)
NOC 4412 – Home support workers, housekeepers, and related occupations	Job Openings	788	664	636	639	643	686	718	723	728	730
	Job Seekers	522	413	321	292	287	310	320	320	316	320
	Net Impact	266	251	315	347	356	376	398	403	412	410
Cumulative Impact		279	79	110	263	464	738	1,080	1,423	1,780	2,121

Note: A negative impact indicates a surplus of workers, while a positive impact indicates a shortage of workers. Cumulative impact includes previous year impact carried forward.

Source: Government of Alberta. Alberta's occupational outlook (2021 to 2030).

The Alberta Occupational Outlook report does not provide additional insight into specific causes for the trend shown for the two CDS-sector related occupation groups but does note that by 2030, the provincial labour market is expected to experience labour shortages by 2030. It cites this imbalance is due to a) continued robust economic conditions that will generate strong demand for workers, and b) a lower number of job seekers, specifically fewer people re-entering the labour force after a period of non-participation, will continue to reduce the provincial workforce.

Alberta's forecasted labour shortage across CDS sector-relevant occupational groups would only further magnify the existing workforce challenges faced by the CDS sector.

#BlueprintCDS

Overarching Themes



50 YEARS



Overarching Themes

Based on the stakeholder engagement, research, and analysis conducted to date, three overarching themes became evident in the kinds of challenges, and preliminary recommendations, that were emerging.

These themes are presented in Figure 5 and are used to guide this document’s content.

Figure 5: Overarching Themes of the Initial Assessment



A. Understanding Workforce Context

Current State Challenges

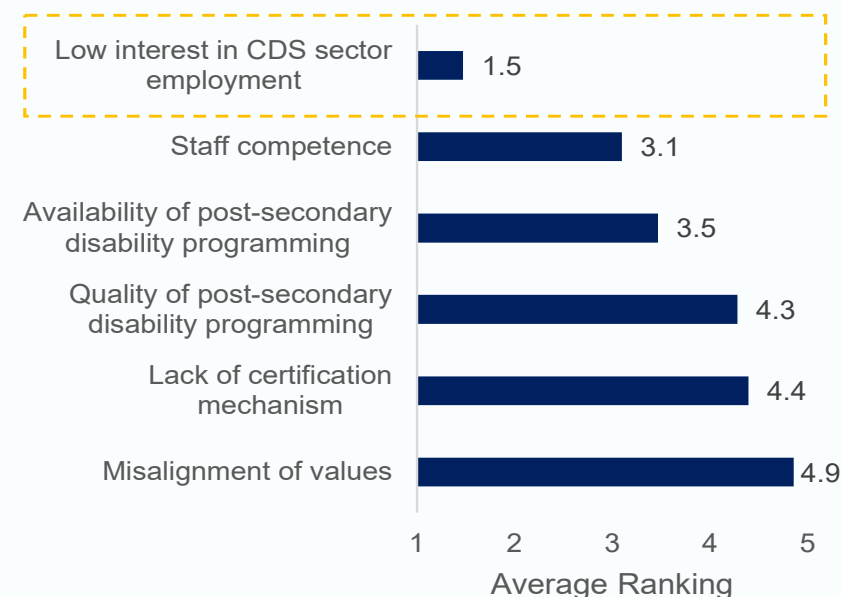
Lack of awareness and buy-in: There is a lack of awareness into and buy-in to the value and complexity of the work of the CDS sector.

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.

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.

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 through the Blueprint CDS Survey (these results are highlighted in Figure 6). Based on this input results, sector executives believe that low interest in CDS sector employment by job seekers is the primary reason why their organizations have challenges finding the right staff.

Figure 6: Why Organizations Have Issues Finding the Right Staff?



Note: Respondents were asked to rank options from 1 to 5 based on prevalence in their organization where 1 is most prevalent.
Source: Blueprint CDS Survey.

A. Understanding Workforce Context

Current State Challenges

Lack of awareness and buy-in: There is a lack of awareness into and buy-in to the value and complexity of the work of the CDS sector.

Focus session participants emphasized the need to share the success stories and impacts of folks accessing these services – for example, they shared the story of a man who was told upon release from Alberta Hospital that “he’d last six months” but with the right CDS sector supports he was able to live safely in the community for the remaining 18 years of his life.

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 for the health, justice and other systems, as well as the value created for individuals receiving services and for the broader Alberta economy.

A stronger evidence base supporting the impact of the work of the sector could help support investment of funding and resources into the sector, as well as attract potential CDS sector workers looking to make a difference in their community.

A. Understanding Workforce Context

Current State Challenges

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 2021¹², an increase of 31.5%. The 2021 total caseload number does not include an additional 2,010 individuals who have not yet started receiving services for various reasons, as shown in Table 9, from the categorizations reported by PDD.

Table 9: PDD Waitlists (2018 to 2021)

Types of waitlists	Length of waitlist as of			
	Dec 2018	Dec 2019	Dec 2020	Dec 2021
Waiting for services - PDD-eligible individuals who have completed an outcome plan but have not been prioritized for services	29	3	49	105
No service provider – PDD-eligible individuals who do not have a service provider available in their area to address their particular needs	32	19	92	493
Service planning – PDD-eligible individuals who have been assigned a caseworker but have not yet started receiving services	1,897	2,357	1,935	1,412
TOTAL	1,958	2,379	2,076	2,010

Source: Government of Alberta Open Data, PDD – Service Planning Caseload – Provincial Data; Government of Alberta Open Data, PDD – Waiting for Services.

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 range 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.

This increasing complexity of needs was reported to be an issue across Alberta. 96% of Blueprint CDS Survey participants noted that their organization serves at least 3 or more different populations (e.g., individuals that may be diagnosed with a combination of developmental disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, brain injury, and addiction / addictive behaviours).

A. Understanding Workforce Context

Current State Challenges

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

Several factors were reported to be contributing to this shift in needs:

- PDD criteria to triage and prioritize individuals with “urgent and critical” needs has increased the demand on service providers to support these types of cases, including on service providers who may not be equipped to support these individuals, thereby resulting in expanding their scope of practice.
- Participants in the focus sessions noted that medical advancements are enabling more diagnoses. It was also reported to be more common for individuals to be living in community where historically many of them may have been in the justice system or other institutional settings. Combined this contributes to the growing demand on community service providers to support individuals with more complex needs.
- The CDS sector was reported to be treated like a “catch all” for the needs of individuals with an IQ below 70. It is perceived that as soon as they are seen as eligible for PDD-funded supports, all other needs are left to be treated through the CDS sector. This idea is explored further in the following section on parallel and duplicate systems.

Based on input from CDS sector, the bundle of issues presented by individuals with disabilities is now broader, more intense, and requires higher skills 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.

ACDS has a Workforce Classification System (WCS) to support the CDS sector workforce and service providers with job competency information. The WCS was developed with sector stakeholders and last updated in 2018. The WCS competencies focus on critical skills often considered to be “soft” skills like interpersonal relationships and respect but could be updated to better reflect the growing competencies required to support the increasingly complex service needs of individuals in service.

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.¹³

A. Understanding Workforce Context

Current State Challenges

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

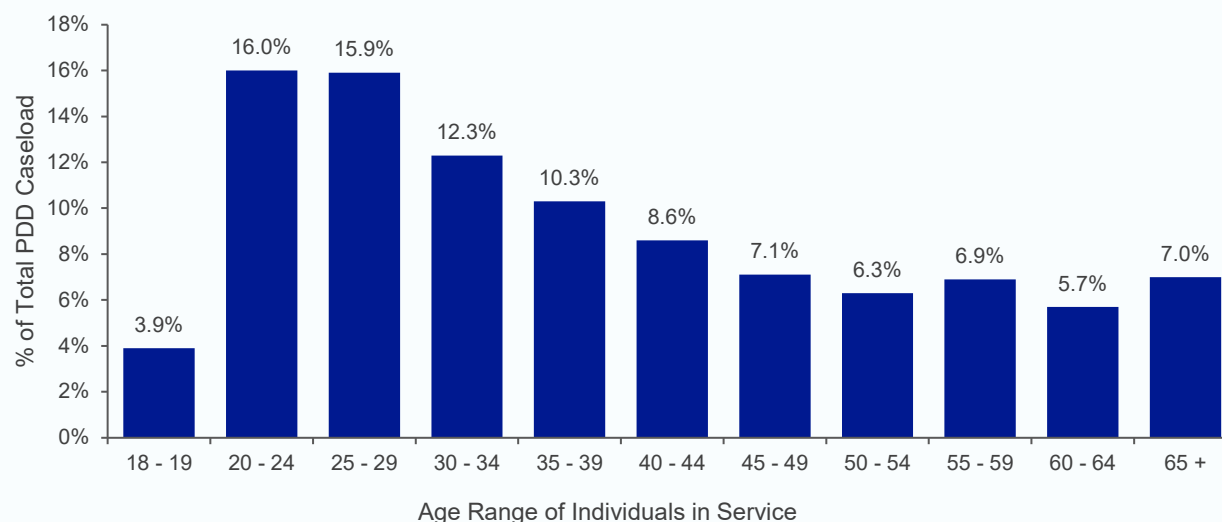
As shown in Figure 7, there is a large portion of individuals accessing PDD that are between the ages of 20 to 29, meaning they will likely be accessing supports for a long time, as they age. The potential compounding impacts of this are likely to have drastic impacts on the sector.

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.¹⁴

Additional understanding of the way the increasingly complex service needs impact workforce capabilities and requirements could support service providers to meet changing needs.

Figure 7: PDD Caseload by Age Breakdown (2021-22)



Note: n = 12,640 cases

Source: Government of Alberta Open Data, PDD Caseload by Age Group

A. Understanding Workforce Context

Current State Challenges

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.¹⁵ 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.

Community disability support workers must also learn how to navigate programs offered by a wide range of programs and systems, each with their own access criteria, processes, and service protocols. Because of system design issues, many of these demands on the community disability service workforce are unrealistic and unsustainable, further adding to the risk of compromised care for individuals and burnout of staff.

Higher levels of coordination are needed to improve and streamline service access and provision for individuals.

A. Understanding Workforce Context

Current State Challenges

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 2021,¹⁶ while Alberta's towns, villages, and rural areas have experienced population stagnation or decline. This is primarily due to two causes:

- Alberta's cities offer increasing employment in the growing service sector, while smaller communities in the province have seen declines in employment in the resource and manufacturing sectors that have historically been important to their economic success. This means that they are losing their residents to urban areas that have employment opportunities; and
- Alberta's growth has come to depend almost as much on international immigration as on natural population growth, and newcomers to Alberta tend to prefer major urban areas such as Edmonton or Calgary.¹⁷

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. None of the very few existing post-secondary programs for disability support are located in rural areas and students may be less likely to relocate to a rural community following graduation in the existing programs.
 - 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.

A. Understanding Workforce Context

Current State Challenges

Rural factors: Rural communities experience workforce challenges more severely.

- 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.”¹⁸

A range of strategies may be needed to address the multiple barriers to engage qualified workers in a rural setting.

A. Understanding Workforce Context

Preliminary Recommendations

The following preliminary recommendations were identified with ACDS to improve the understanding of the CDS sector workforce context. The preliminary recommendations that may be addressed in the immediate term have been outlined later in this document. Further work will be completed to refine these as Project Blueprint CDS progresses.

A1. Build a shared understanding of the value of the CDS sector

Work should be undertaken to complete a Social Return on Investment (SROI) study to better understand and communicate the social and economic impact of the CDS sector in Alberta and support a case for further investment in the sector.

A2. Build a shared understanding of the service needs of those accessing CDS sector services

In order to (i) better understand how to support individuals accessing CDS sector services and (ii) more effectively plan for the sector's workforce, it is important to understand the scope of service needs, particularly as the sector continues to evolve in terms of complexity. The CDS sector should create an inventory of services provided and the competencies needed to adequately provide those services.

A3. Adopt common workforce classifications

Recommendation A2 above may identify additional competencies needed by staff to support the growing complexity of needs among individuals in service. ACDS should revisit the WCS to identify any opportunities to build out the existing competencies. ACDS should continue to advocate for consistent use of common workforce classifications using the WCS across the CDS sector.

A. Understanding Workforce Context

Preliminary Recommendations

The following preliminary recommendations were identified with ACDS to improve the understanding of the CDS sector workforce context. The preliminary recommendations that may be addressed in the immediate term have been outlined later in this document. Further work will be completed to refine these as Project Blueprint CDS progresses.

A4. Adopt a network model to support cross ministry coordination

Develop a CDS sector specific network model adapted from the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) Network model. The network may include cross-ministry leadership, the sharing of resources and expertise to support individuals as well as an integrated cross-system case-management system.

The FASD Network is an established, evidence-based model in Alberta that has undergone multiple evaluations and is considered to be best practice. 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, and may present an opportunity to collaboratively address some of the parallel systems in place across the sector.

5. Build a forecasting model to support strategic workforce planning.

Develop a forecasting model that highlights the demand and supply of the sector's workforce to support service providers to anticipate their current and future workforce needs. As it currently stands, there is limited data available to support the development of a reasonable forecast. This could involve leveraging future ACDS Annual Surveys as well as collaboration with Government to identify and obtain the required information.

B. Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

Current State Challenges

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

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 \$21.50.²³ 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.²³

In comparison, as shown in Table 10, the average hourly wage for CDS staff (\$21.50) is \$8 per hour less than the Canadian average wage, and \$11.20 per hour less than Alberta's average wage in that same time period.²⁴

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 and British Columbia.²⁵

CDS sector wages are not competitive when compared to other service sectors, including Government. Table 11 shows the results of a 2019 salary survey in Alberta that found that the average hourly wage for Alberta's non-profit / social service organizations is considerably lower than for-profit or public sector organizations.

Table 10: Wage Table (\$/hour)

Average Hourly Wage	British Columbia	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Manitoba	Ontario	Canada
All Industries (2020)	\$29.76	\$32.73	\$29.13	\$26.32	\$30.24	\$29.51
Disability Support Worker (2022)	\$21.91	\$18.93	\$18.71	\$16.15	\$19.54	\$18.82

Source: Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0064-01 Employee Wages by industry, annual; Indeed. June 2022. Disability Support Worker Salary Report by Province.

Table 11: Alberta Wage and Salary Survey (\$/hour)

Average Hourly Wage	Non-profit / social service organizations	For-profit organizations	Public sector organizations
Alberta Wage and Salary Survey (2019)	\$24.46	\$28.21	\$39.17

Source: Government of Alberta. 2019 Alberta Wage and Salary Survey: non-profit sector report.

B. Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

Current State Challenges

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

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 those Government employees that provide direct care for a small number of individuals and as such, would be comparable to frontline CDS sector staff. Based on their most recent collective agreement, ISW wages start at \$20.63 and build up to \$25.07 per hour with increases of up to 2.8% scheduled by September 1, 2023.²⁶ The ISW starting wage (per the collective agreement) of \$20.63 is roughly 9% higher than the average hourly wage of \$18.76 for CDSW. This gap in starting wage is even larger at 38% for service providers that start their CDSW at Alberta's \$15 per hour minimum wage. It is also important to note that participants noted that the CDS sector does not offer the same level of employee benefits and pension that the Government employees are provided.

HSWs include Government Social Service Coordinators and Caseworkers and would be comparable to coordinator and middle management roles within the CDS sector. Based on the most recent collective agreement, HSWs earn between \$26.79 to \$51.93 per hour.²⁷

B. Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

Current State Challenges

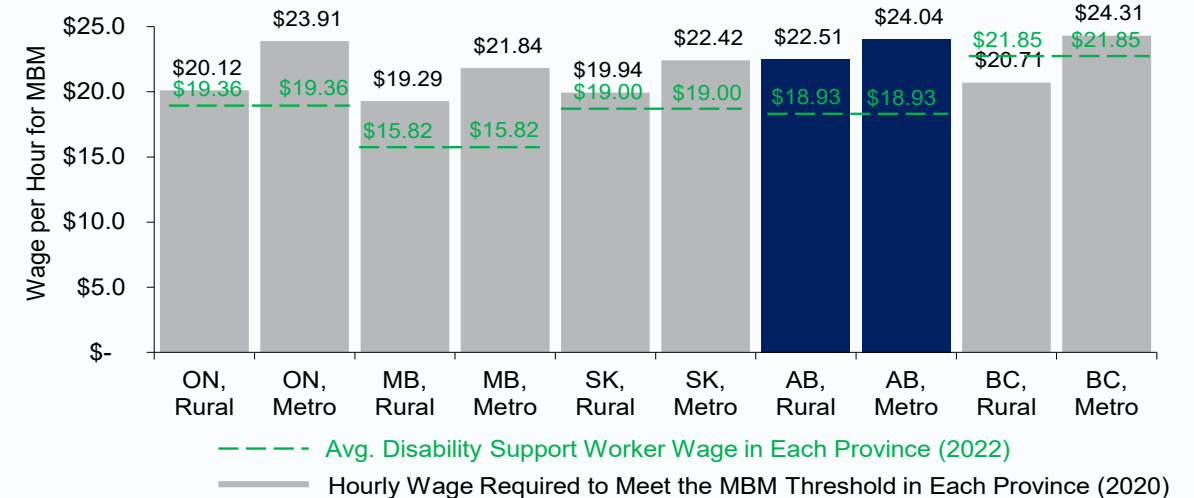
Low wages: Wages are low relative to similar sectors and have been outpaced by the increasing cost of living in Alberta.

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..

Figure 9 highlights the hourly wage that would be needed to meet MBM for comparator provinces, assuming a 40-hr work week. It is important to note that in October 2021, according to ACDS survey results, only 58% of the CDS workforce were working full time hours; it is unclear if this is by choice or due to other reasons.²⁸

Based on the MBM measure, in Alberta's rural regions, an individual would need to make \$22.50 per hour in order to afford a baseline level of goods and services. That number increases to \$24.04 per hour for Alberta's metro region (i.e., Calgary and Edmonton).²⁹ The average wage for both Disability Support Workers and the broader CDS Sector staff in Alberta are below Alberta's MBM threshold. This finding is consistent across Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia, with exception to rural Ontario and rural Saskatchewan which are close to MBI Threshold, and rural British Columbia which is higher than the MBM threshold.

Figure 9: Wage required to meet MB by Geography (2020)



Source: Statistics Canada. Table 11-10-0066-01 Market Basket Measure (MBM) thresholds for the reference family by MBM region, component, and base year.

B. Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

Current State Challenges

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

Table 12 compares Alberta wages with select provinces for relevant industry classifications across comparator provinces. Aggregate-level wages within these classification codes are generally lower in Alberta than other comparator provinces. The exception to this is within the NOC 42 code where Alberta pays a higher wage than the other jurisdictions.

Consideration for how wages can be more competitive and support 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. Higher wages could also address many of the other workforce challenges outlined in this document.

Table 12: Average Hourly Wages per Occupation Group (2021)

Occupational Group	Description	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	CAN
NAICS 623 – Nursing and residential care facilities	Industries in the Nursing and Residential Care Facilities subsector provide residential care combined with either nursing, supervisory, or other types of care as required by the residents.	\$32.60	\$27.61	\$30.93	\$28.67	\$29.18	\$29.41
NAICS 624 – Social assistance	Industries in the Social Assistance subsector provide a wide variety of social assistance services directly to their clients. These services do not include residential or accommodation services, except on a short-stay basis	\$27.52	\$25.73	\$21.43	\$22.61	\$29.53	\$25.99
NOC 44 – Care providers and educational, legal, and public protection support occupations	Includes Home support workers that provide personal care and companionship for seniors, persons with disabilities and convalescent clients. Care is provided within the client's residence, in which the home support worker may also reside.	\$25.25	\$20.94	\$24.70	\$22.78	\$25.50	\$23.81
NOC 42 – Paraprofessional occupations in legal, social, community and education services	Includes Social and community service workers that administer and implement a variety of social assistance programs and community services and assist clients to deal with personal and social problem.	\$22.47	\$25.89	\$21.64	\$20.44	\$25.77	\$24.00
Average Hourly Wage for Disability Support Worker		\$21.85	\$18.93	\$19.00	\$15.82	\$19.36	\$18.82

Note: Each industry code provides further opportunity to perform a more detailed granular analysis tailored to the Disability sector. However, there is a lack of information on wages on the more granular NAICS and NOC codes; For NAICS figures, the information provided is in terms of total compensation paid based on total hours. This consists of all payments in case or in-kind made by domestic products to workers for services rendered (i.e., labour income).

Source: Statistics Canada. Table 36-10-0489-01. Labour statistics consistent with the System of National Accounts (SNA), by job category and industry; Statistics Canada. Table 13-10-0306-01 Employee wages by occupation, monthly; Indeed. June 2022. Disability Support Worker Salary Report by Province.

B. Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

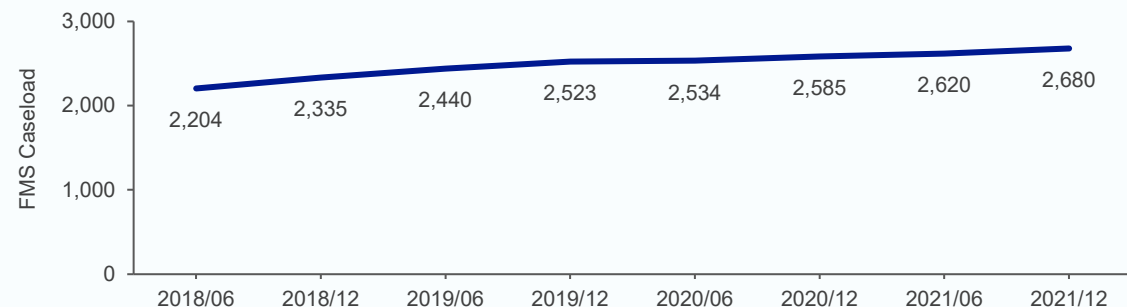
Current State Challenges

Competition from within and outside the sector: 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:

- As noted in the Rural Factors challenge, 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, etc.) 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. As shown in Figure 10, 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%.¹²

Figure 10: Family Managed Services Case Volume (2018 - 2021)



Source: Government of Alberta Open Data, PDD - Family Managed Caseloads by Region

B. Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

Current State Challenges

Competition from within and outside the sector: There is competition for resources from organizations and support sectors that provide better pay, work environment, multidisciplinary teams, etc

- 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.³¹
 - 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.

In addition to considering improving the competitiveness of wages as outlined in the previous section, consideration of other aspects that improve competitiveness such as use of multidisciplinary teams, benefits, amenities, etc. may be helpful.

B. Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

Current State Challenges

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.³² 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.³³

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.³⁴

The CDS sector offers the opportunity for employment that impacts the world in a positive way. A survey of CDS sector workers in Ontario found that the area that offered the most job satisfaction was the nature of the work in the sector. Nearly 95% of those surveyed reported that their work experiences were personally meaningful.³⁵

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 and 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 etc.) – do not align with what young people are looking for, resulting in them seeking out caring work in other sectors.

B. Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

Current State Challenges

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.

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”.³⁶ 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”.³⁷

Analysis from Australia found that work in the disability sector is increasingly casual and part time (81% of the workforce is part-time) in nature, with a preference for permanent roles. There is a very high turnover rate for casual workers — a two-year average of nearly 9% per quarter, presenting a significant cost and administrative burden for service providers.³⁸

Attracting and growing a new workforce is also not limited to young people. Some CDS sector focus session participants noted that people are much more likely now to have multiple careers, so there is an opportunity to look at non-traditional workforces to grow the sector.

Others are choosing this sector because they need employment. Many new workers in the sector, for example, are newcomers to Canada whose educational credentials are not recognized, and they are choosing the sector because they need a job. Once they gain Canadian experience or complete the process to have their credentials assessed, they are highly likely to move on to their careers of choice. Desktop research found minimal formal studies into the sought-after workplace characteristics for newcomers to Canada.

B. Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

Current State Challenges

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.

Additionally, workers already working in the field are experiencing fatigue and burnout due to having to work multiple jobs to make ends meet because of low wages in the CDS sector. Similarly, in Ontario a study found that 41.6% of disability support workers who responded to a survey were working multiple jobs compared to 8.4% of the health and social services workforce in the province.³⁹ Increasingly complex needs of individuals served, coupled with high turnover, also means reliable workers are being asked to do more and more – both in terms of the complexity of the work required, but also the volume and level of responsibility as they must offset staff who have left.

There is an opportunity to create a case for the value of the work in the CDS sector. Improving the alignment of worker skills, capabilities, and training, as well as considering other factors such as flexibility, could help create an environment more desirable for young workers. Additional work could be completed to understand how to make careers in the CDS sector a desired option for newcomers to Canada.

B. Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

Current State Challenges

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.⁴⁰
- 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 internal experience and wisdom is lost.

Non-profits and charities, in general, are also having difficulty recruiting board members, especially from younger or more diverse backgrounds.

Community service sector leaders in British Columbia also indicated challenges with succession planning. Challenges noted include overworked supervisors and senior staff who lacked availability for succession planning initiatives, lack of access to professional development opportunities – particularly intensive leadership development opportunities, due to workloads and lack of funding to cover training costs.

Supports and resources for providers to plan for succession and leadership development could help to improve the leadership gap in the long term.⁴¹

B. Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

Preliminary Recommendations

The following preliminary recommendations were identified with ACDS to recruit and retain the CDS sector workforce. The preliminary recommendations that may be addressed in the immediate term have been outlined later in this document. Further work will be completed to refine these as Project Blueprint CDS progresses.

B6. Provide immediate and ongoing wage relief

Wages are historically not competitive and were reported to be a critical issue in the recruitment and retention of staff within the CDS sector. ACDS could recommend to the Government the amount of wage infusion needed immediately based on the evidence in this document, and work with Government to identify other opportunities to enhance compensation levels.

B7. Promote the professionalization of the CDS sector workforce

- **B7_A: Establish a target credential requirement for frontline CDS sector workers.** ACDS should work with their member organizations to develop a target credential requirement for all incoming frontline staff. Additionally, a plan could be developed that supports CDS service providers in implementing the target credential requirement across the CDS sector. This could be tied to the use of a micro-credentialing system based on work that is currently ongoing with Government.
- **B7_B: Build a wage scale guide for frontline service delivery staff.** Develop a wage scale guide for the CDS sector's frontline staff that considers factors such as staff credentials, regional differences in service delivery, years of experience, and level of service provision. While any wage scale would need to be voluntary, a guide could support service providers in advocating for additional funding and could support workers in advocating for higher wages. This could be tied to the service competencies outlined in Recommendations A2 and A3. This could also include updating the salary comparison survey that was commissioned by ACDS in 2008.

B8. Build a community of practice

Explore options for adapting a multidisciplinary support model, such as communities of practice, into the CDS sector to support staff to share and learn from each other and better coordinate care for individuals in service. Partnered with other 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, etc.). Examples of multidisciplinary approaches range from the allied health provider model used in the Australian National Disability Insurance Scheme⁴² to community of practice models used within Alberta Education⁴³ and Alberta Health Services⁴⁴, and in the United States⁴⁵.

C. Developing the Workforce

Current State Challenges

Restrictive contracts: The current contract parameters with Government are restrictive and don't allow for service providers to be flexible about how they deliver services and support their workforce.

Service providers who participated in focus sessions and responded to the Blueprint CDS Survey reported that contract funding amounts do not recognize the full / true 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 organization and adapt to the needs of the individuals they serve. This causes difficulty in how staffing resources are allocated as needs change. It can also result in support models that are funding-driven rather than person-centred.⁴⁶

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”.⁴⁷

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 room to build and develop their workforce in the way that would best meet the needs of the individuals they serve.

C. Developing the Workforce

Current State Challenges

Barriers to training: There is a lack of funding available for training. Specialized training opportunities can be limited or expensive. Service providers provide their own time consuming, expensive training, compounded by 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.⁴⁸ 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.

Focus session participants noted that because service providers are responsible for training and because staff often work for more than one service provider, workers are sometimes required to complete the same training twice with both service providers bearing the cost (e.g., medications administration).

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.⁴⁹ 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.⁵⁰ Additionally, 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.⁵¹

The costs associated with providing core mandatory training in an environment of high turnover also limits available funding for professional development for longer term employees or for specialized training.

C. Developing the Workforce

Current State Challenges

Barriers to training: There is a lack of funding available for training. Specialized training opportunities can be limited or expensive. Service providers provide their own time consuming, expensive training, compounded by high staff turnover.

In their 2019 report on membership engagement, ACDS noted that staff working in the CDS sector come from a variety of diverse backgrounds, and many are newcomers to Canada. While this is largely a strength to the sector and employers appreciate the diverse backgrounds of their workforce, organizations bear the costs of teaching new workers foundational skills and the philosophical approaches guiding disability work. Organizations also noted that additional supports sometimes need to be in place to support English-language learners to complete their training and to support workers to learn the culture of the CDS sector. Sometimes these approaches or values may be misaligned because of their culture and / or field of origin: for example, people from nursing and personal care attendant backgrounds are trained in a care-focused model not a rights-based model of support.⁵²

Participants noted that the complexity of the needs of the individuals they serve creates complexity in the skills and competencies required from their staff. While basic training is readily available, access to tailored training, such as OHS and licensing requirements, lifting and transferring, feeding tubes, medication administration, addiction services, trauma informed care, etc., becomes much more complex. One participant noted that individuals being served are coming in with addictions needs, so organizations must either train up their staff to provide addictions services or bring in staff with training in addictions who then need disability training. This level of complexity of competencies required also contributes to staff turnover.

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.^{53 54}

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.

C. Developing the Workforce

Current State Challenges

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.

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.

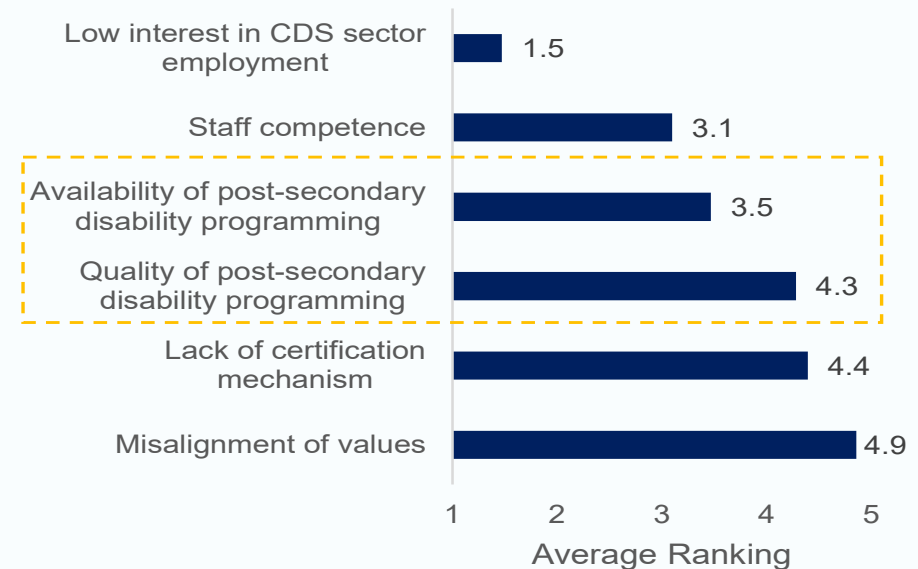
The lack of programming is felt across the sector as respondents to the Project Blueprint CDS survey were asked to identify and rank potential reasons why their organization might be facing challenges in finding the right staff for their services. Both availability and quality of post-secondary disability programming were ranked as the third and fourth most prevalent reasons, respectively. This is highlighted in Figure 11.

Additionally, 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.

Of particular note, 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 2017.⁵⁵ In comparison, funding for wages in the CDS sector has not increased since 2014.

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.

Figure 11: Why Organizations Have Issues Finding the Right Staff?



Note: Respondents were asked to rank options from 1 to 5 based on prevalence in their organization where 1 is most prevalent.
Source: Blueprint CDS Survey.

C. Developing the Workforce

Current State Challenges

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.

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 loss of post-secondary programs has also meant the loss of practicum student programs – which provided service providers with additional workers as well as with newly graduated workers with real on-the-job experience.

Currently, there are five disability programs available in Alberta for students interested in pursuing a career in the CDS sector, as highlighted in Table 13. Four of the programs are diploma programs.

Table 13: Disability Support Programming at Alberta's Post-Secondary Institutions

Municipality	Post-Secondary Institution	Program Name	Length of Program	Online Option
Calgary	Alberta Business & Educational Services (ABES)	Addiction and Disability Community Support Worker Diploma Program	6 months	
	Bow Valley College	Disability Studies Diploma	16 months	X
	CLI College	Developmental Services Worker	1 year	X
	University of Calgary	Master of Disability and Community Studies	-	
Edmonton	Norquest College	Disability Studies	2 years	X

Note: The Master of Disability and Community Studies Graduate Program at the University of Calgary is not accepting students as of July 27, 2022.

Source: Recruitment portals for each post-secondary institution.

C. Developing the Workforce

Current State Challenges

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.

The scarcity of post-secondary disability programming is not unique to Alberta. In comparison, research into comparable provinces in Canada found that:

- British Columbia has three diploma programs, and one graduate program;
- Manitoba has two diploma programs, one bachelor's program, and one graduate program.
- Ontario has six diploma programs, one bachelor's program and two graduate programs; and
- Saskatchewan has one diploma program.

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).⁵⁶

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.

C. Developing the Workforce

Current State Challenges

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 (see details in the previous section), 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.

"We continue to lower the bar for people to get into the door"

- Focus session participant

Respondents to the Blueprint CDS Survey were asked to identify the desirable workforce skills and capabilities that they anticipate their organization needing most by 2025. These skills and capabilities are summarized in Table 14.

Investment in upskilling and capability development in the near-term could produce longer-term benefits to the CDS sector workforce, as 87% of Project Blueprint CDS survey respondents don't anticipate this list of desired skills changing by 2030.

Table 14: Desirable Workforce Skills and Capabilities by 2025

Direct Service Staff	Direct Service Supervisory Staff	Mid-Management	Professional Specialists
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Crisis intervention and de-escalation- Enhanced technology / computer skills- Good verbal and written communications skills- Commitment to CDS sector- Foundational skills for inclusion, encouraging independence, and building community connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Leadership competencies (e.g., risk management, conflict resolution, effective communication)- Formal education in disability service, social work, or human services- Fully competent / experienced with direct service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- HR / Financial / Leadership competencies- Formal education in disability service, social work, or human services- Increased training on mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- HR / Financial / Leadership competencies- Trauma-informed & complex needs support- Additional subject matter expertise (e.g., nursing, counselling)- Knowledge of community resources

Source: Blueprint CDS Survey.

C. Developing the Workforce

Current State Challenges

Mismatched staff skill sets: It is difficult to find and hire individuals with the skill sets needed by service providers. There are not consistent competency criteria and most new workers do not enter the field with a formal disability services qualification.

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 2019 ACDS report described how these challenges are compounded by the lack of standardized competencies and expectations for disability support workers across the CDS sector. Different organizations and training bodies have different competency criteria. There are currently two tools in Alberta that support efforts to build more consistent credentialing:

1. The ACDS Workforce Classification System, which identifies competencies for each community disability service position, and
2. The worker certification process recently piloted by the Alberta Disability Workers Association a few years ago.

Despite efforts by both ACDS and the Alberta Disability Workers Association to increase service provider uptake of these tools, adoption across the sector is low, most likely because of the significant time and commitment required to engage in these processes.⁵⁷

The lack of credentials for the disability sector is consistent with other jurisdictions. None of the jurisdictions researched for this document had one consistent credentialing system for disability support workers.

Implementing one common set of required qualifications and credentialing system could help improve organizations' ability to assess the skills and competencies of the workforce while also providing a foundation for eventually creating a formal professional designation for positions in the CDS sector.

C. Developing the Workforce

Preliminary Recommendations

The following preliminary recommendations were identified with ACDS to develop the workforce. The preliminary recommendations that may be addressed in the immediate term have been outlined later in this document. Further work will be completed to refine these as Project Blueprint CDS progresses..

C9. Increase education and training levels of CDS sector workforce. This could include

- **C9_A: Establish a system for micro-credentialing.** Collaborate with Advanced Education to offer a series of courses that line up with the updated list of prescribed competencies within the CDS sector identified as part of Recommendations 2 and 3. These courses could be “stacked” towards diploma receipt or CDS sector credentials. Micro credentialing 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 finances). .
- **C9_B: Expand post-secondary programming.** Current levels of post-secondary disability support programming are insufficient to meet the needs of the CDS sector. Collaborate with Advanced Education to look for opportunities to expand the amount of disability support programming available. Reducing this barrier to entering a disability support program may help increase the number of credentialed individuals entering the CDS sector workforce.
- **C9_C: Identify current state of training.** To better understand the current training needs for service providers and workers, develop a comprehensive province-wide map of training opportunities, especially in complex needs and specialized supports, and conduct a gap analysis. It could then be possible to make a coordinated effort to addressing those gaps.
- **C9_D: Develop a provincial training framework.** Using the results from the current state of training, develop a training framework that addresses the gaps in training across the province and facilitates access to training for both service providers and workers. A coordinated plan to address training gaps and improve access will support service providers and workers to access a wider variety of needed training.
- **C9_E: Centralize training opportunities.** Using the results from the current state of training and the provincial training framework, expand the existing ACDS suite of training services provided and act as a clearing house for CDS sector training. This could also entail exploring mechanisms to deliver the training, such as the creation of an online learning management system (LMS) and online courses. 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.

C. Developing the Workforce

Preliminary Recommendations

The following preliminary recommendations were identified with ACDS to develop the workforce. The preliminary recommendations that may be addressed in the immediate term have been outlined later in this document. Further work will be completed to refine these as Project Blueprint CDS progresses..

C10. Revisit PDD contract structure

Revisit the PDD contract structure to provide service providers more flexibility in the use of their funding and to reflect the full / true cost of service delivery. Consideration should also be given to the challenges impacting the intended implementation of the outcomes-based funding model for PDD.

There is available research about the appropriate use of outcomes for funding arrangements in developmental disability service settings that could inform this work. As an example, research in Maryland found that value-based payments that allocated funding based on quality of services provided rather than quantity of services provided created a potential for more efficient service delivery and cost savings.⁵⁸

C11. Implement innovative workforce fund

Design and implement 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. 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.⁵⁹

#BlueprintCDS

Summary of Preliminary Recommendations



50 YEARS



Preliminary Recommendations

This Initial Assessment presents the preliminary recommendations for the CDS sector workforce which have been validated by ACDS. A subset of these recommendations can begin to be initiated in summer 2022 to start addressing the most immediate challenges. These are highlighted below in yellow and described in further detail below.

The remainder of the preliminary recommendations are intended to be tested further with the CDS sector through additional engagement planned for fall / winter 2022.

Figure 12 summarizes how the key workforce challenges and preliminary recommendations are connected with the key themes.

Figure 12: CDS Sector Key Workforce Challenges and Preliminary Recommendations



Preliminary Recommendations

Several preliminary recommendations, identified from the list in Figure 14, were identified as potential actions that could begin to be implemented in the immediate term to address critical challenges. These will be further developed and validated as part of the subsequent phases of the project.

A2: Build a shared understanding of the service needs of those accessing CDS sector services.

B6: Provide immediate and ongoing wage relief.

C9c: Identify current state of training.

Figure 13 denotes the timing of when the preliminary recommendations should be addressed. These timing estimates are based on the understanding gathered through the Initial Assessment of the current state challenges faced by the CDS sector and are subject to change as Project Blueprint CDS progresses.

Figure 13: Preliminary Recommendation and Timing

A. Understanding Workforce Context



1. Build a shared understanding of the value of the CDS sector
- 2. Build a shared understanding of the service needs of those accessing CDS sector services**
3. Adopt common workforce classifications
4. Adopt a network model to support cross ministry coordination
5. Develop a forecasting model to support strategic workforce planning

Immediate
(Summer 2022)

Short-Term
(1 to 2 years)

Medium-Term
(2 to 3 years)

Long-Term
(3+ years)

X				

B. Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce



- 6. Provide immediate and ongoing wage relief**
7. Promote the professionalization of the CDS sector workforce. This could include:
 - 7A Establish a target credential requirement for frontline CDS sector workers
 - 7B Build a wage scale guide for frontline service delivery staff
8. Build a community of practice

X				

C. Developing the Workforce



9. Increase education and training levels of CDS sector workforce. This could include:
 - 9A Establish a system for micro-credentialing
 - 9B Expand post-secondary programming
 - 9c Identify current state of training**
 - 9D Develop a provincial training framework
 - 9E Centralize training opportunities
10. Revisit PDD contract structure
11. Implement innovative workforce fund

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Initial Assessment Implementation Plan & Next Steps



50 YEARS



Initial Assessment Implementation Plan

The proposed preliminary recommendations represent a major undertaking for the CDS sector. The implementation of these recommendations would include changes to many aspects to the current CDS sector and would have far reaching impacts to the workforce.

An investment of time, money and resources would be needed to address the challenges and preliminary recommendations for the CDS sector's workforce. More importantly, this would need to occur in a staged approach over a multi-year period given the sector's constrained resources and the pace of change that service providers, their workforce, and Government would be able to absorb. Table 15 outlines these stages:

Table 15: Preliminary Recommendations by Stage

Immediate (Summer 2022)	Short-Term (1 to 2 years)	Medium-Term (2 to 3 years)	Long-Term (3+ years)
<p>A2: Build a shared understanding of the service needs of those accessing CDS sector services.</p> <p>B6: Provide immediate and ongoing wage relief.</p> <p>C9_C: Identify current state of training.</p>	<p>A1: Build a shared understanding of the value of the CDS sector</p> <p>A3: Adopt common workforce classifications</p> <p>A4: Adopt a network model to support cross ministry coordination</p> <p>A5: Develop a forecasting model to support strategic workforce planning</p> <p>B8: Build a Community of practice</p> <p>C9_A: Establish a system for micro-credentialing</p> <p>C9_B: Develop a provincial training framework</p>	<p>B7_A: Establish a target credential requirement for frontline CDS sector workers</p> <p>C9_E: Centralize training opportunities</p> <p>C10: Revisit PDD contract structure</p> <p>C11: Implement innovative workforce fund</p>	<p>B7_B: Build a wage scale guide for frontline service delivery staff</p> <p>C9_B: Expand post-secondary programming</p>

This Initial Assessment Implementation Plan is included as part of this Initial Assessment document as an interim deliverable for Project Blueprint CDS. As part of the final phase and deliverable for Project Blueprint CDS, a more robust implementation plan that includes considerations for implementation principles, risks and key dependencies with other recommendations will be designed and developed based on engagement with the CDS sector. This Implementation Plan would include the key activities required to implement each of the recommendations that are a part of the CDS Sector Workforce Strategy.

The following high-level implementation plan is intended to address only the potential recommendations that could begin to be implemented in the immediate term to address critical challenges during summer 2022.

Initial Assessment Implementation Plan

The following provides additional details on the high-level activities that should be completed by ACDS in order to address the immediate challenges faced by the CDS sector:

Table 16: Service Inventory Recommendation

Recommendation	Activity ID	Activity	Description
A2: Build a shared understanding of the service needs of those accessing CDS sector services: In order to (i) better understand how to support individuals accessing CDS sector services and (ii) more effectively plan for the sector's workforce, it is important to understand the scope of service needs, particularly as the sector continues to evolve in terms of complexity. The CDS sector should create an inventory of services provided and the competencies needed to adequately provide those services.	1	Commence Project and Develop Charter	This would involve working with the ACDS Advisory Committee to stand up a project team to lead this work. The project team could include members of the sector who are subject matter experts.
	2	Sector Engagement Approach	This would involve designing an engagement approach that defines who will be engaged, how will they be engaged (e.g., survey, focus sessions), and provides the framework for what questions will be asked during engagement (e.g., what information exists in silos within individual service providers, what services are offered), and reiterates to the sector why this work is important so as to maximize buy-in.
	3	Perform Sector Engagement	This would involve conducting the sector engagement.
	4	Compile and Analyze	This would involve taking the learnings and materials provided by the sector engagement and creating an inventory of services performed. This would also involve additional rationalization for services that may be duplicative in nature which could require additional sector engagement.
	5	Validate Service Inventory	This would involve presenting the Service Inventory to the sector for their feedback and to promote buy-in.
	6	Refine Service Inventory	This would involve finalizing the Service Inventory based on feedback provided by the sector.

Initial Assessment Implementation Plan

Table 17: Wage Relief Recommendation

Recommendation	Activity ID	Activity	Description
B6: Provide immediate and ongoing wage relief: Wages are historically not competitive and were reported to be a critical issue in the recruitment and retention of staff within the CDS sector. ACDS should collaborate with Government on (i) providing additional immediate funding for services to increase wages for all staff in order to stabilize the current situation, and (ii) co-designing a strategy for achieving wage parity and sustainability.	1	Consolidate Evidence Base	This would involve extracting the evidence base provided in this Initial Assessment and developing a wage brief to Government.
	2	Government Engagement	This would involve providing the wage brief to Government representatives within the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The wage brief could highlight the need for an immediate infusion, and the evidence supporting the need for wage parity between CDS workers and other competitive sectors.
	3	Continued Advocacy by ACDS	This would involve holding continued discussion with Government for a co-designed strategy to achieve wage parity .

Initial Assessment Implementation Plan

Table 18: Current State of Training Recommendation

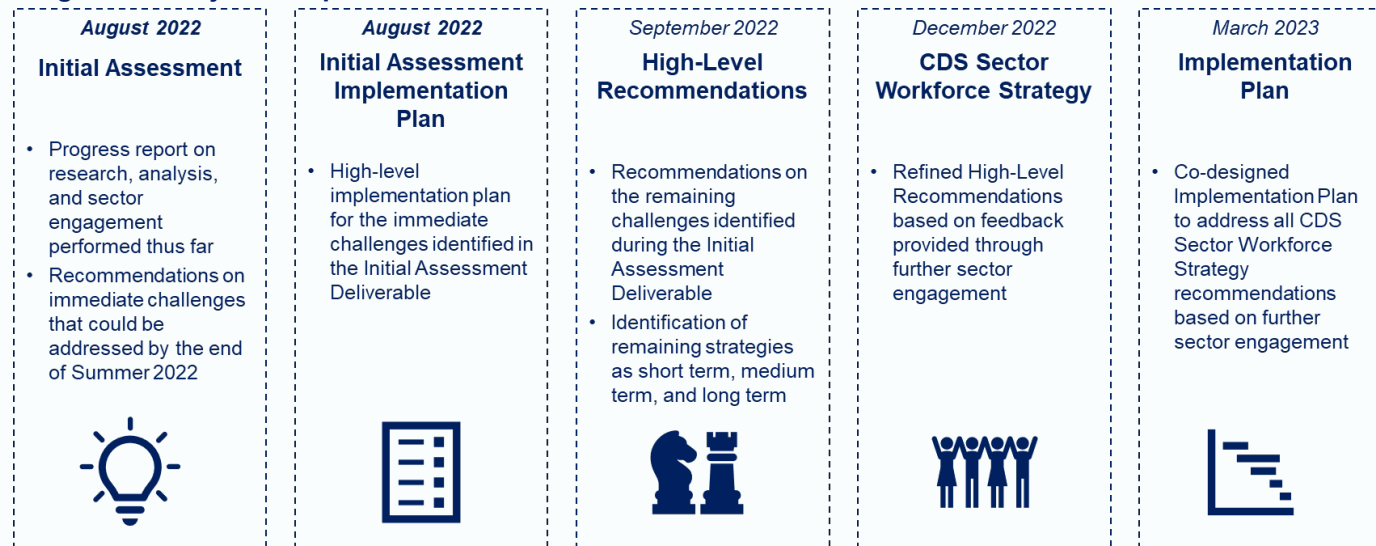
Recommendation	Activity ID	Activity	Description
C9c: Identify current state of training To better understand the current training needs for service providers and workers, develop a comprehensive province-wide map of training opportunities, especially in complex needs and specialized supports, and conduct a gap analysis. It will then be possible to make a coordinated effort to addressing those gaps	1	Commence Project and Develop Charter	This would involve working with the ACDS Advisory Committee to stand up a small project team to lead this work. This work could be completed by 1 or 2 individuals on a part-time basis.
	2	Sector Engagement Approach	This would involve designing an engagement approach that defines who will be engaged, how will they be engaged (e.g., survey, focus sessions), provides the framework for what questions will be asked during engagement (e.g., what training is being offered by their organization, how effective is that training, have they accessed the repository of training through ACDS' website, what training is required by their organization?).
	3	Perform Sector Engagement	This would involve conducting the sector engagement.
	4	Compile Results	This would involve taking the learnings and materials provided by the sector engagement and creating a map of the different training that is provided across the province.
	5	Conduct Gap Analysis	This would involve reviewing the key gaps in training by region and by subject-matter.
	6	Validate Current State of Training	This would involve presenting the current state of training to the sector for their feedback and to promote buy-in.
	7	Refine Current State of Training	This would involve finalizing the current state of training based on feedback provided by the sector.

Next Steps

The findings and recommendations outlined in this document will inform ongoing work to develop a fulsome Workforce Strategy for the CDS sector. The remaining phases of work include:

- Development of high-level recommendations on the remaining challenges identified in this document. This includes further work to identify their implementation timelines.
- Conducting broad CDS sector engagement across Alberta to refine the high-level recommendations based on feedback from CDS sector service providers.
- Development of an overall workforce strategy for the CDS sector based on the refined high-level recommendations.
- Co-designing an implementation plan with CDS sector service providers that addresses all CDS sector workforce recommendations.

Figure 14: Project Blueprint Overview



#BlueprintCDS

Appendices

- A. References and Notes
- B. Project Blueprint CDS Survey
- C. Sector Engagement
- D. Jurisdiction Scan



50 YEARS



Appendix A

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.
- ² NOC is used by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada for the purposes of organizing and describing occupations. Every occupation is identified by a four digit code that includes skill level category, occupational category, and job titles.
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Appendix B

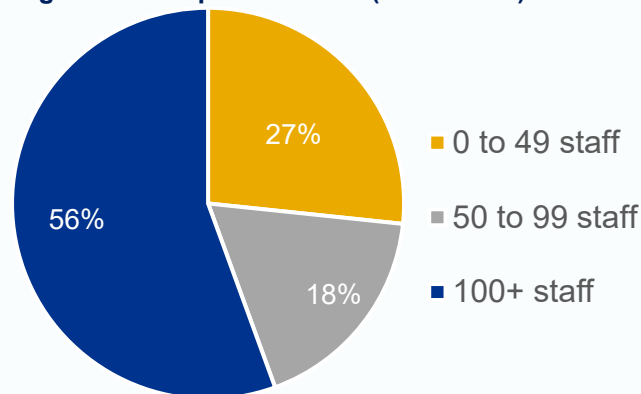
Project Blueprint CDS Survey

A survey was developed and administered in May 2022 with 49 respondents providing their preliminary input into Project Blueprint CDS. This represents an initial response rate of ~30%. The respondent profiles are found in the figures below. As per Figure 15, 50% of respondents were based in either Edmonton or Calgary. The Northeast region had the least amount of respondent representation at 7%.

As shown in Figure 16 the majority of respondents represented organizations with over 100 staff. 27% of all respondents were from relatively smaller organizations that had fewer than 50 staff.

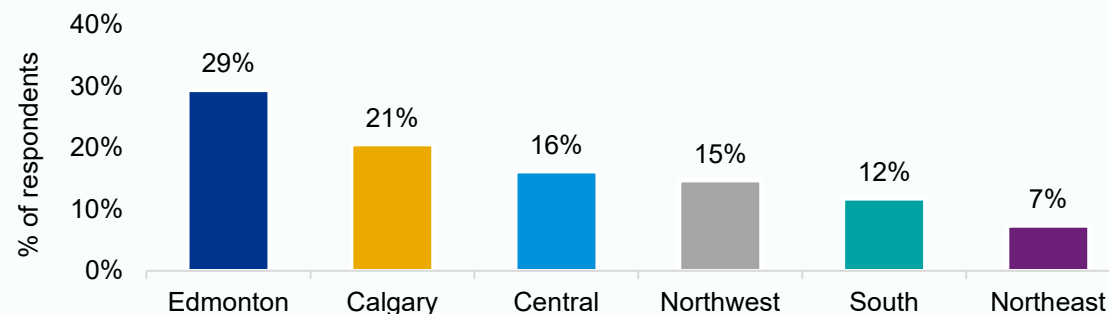
The respondent organizations also provide a wide range of services to individuals with a wide range of disabilities. Figure 17 highlights the types of services offered by respondents. Most of whom provide community access & recreation, overnight staffed residences, supported independent living and employment supports.

Figure 16: Respondent Size (Headcount)



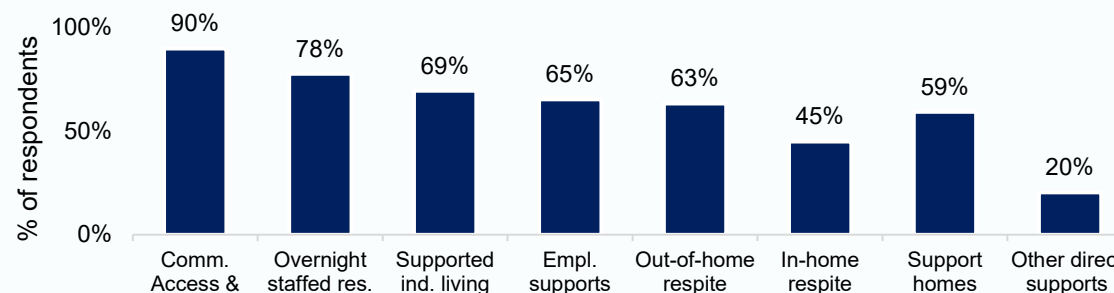
Source: Blueprint CDS Survey.

Figure 15: Respondent Region



Source: Blueprint CDS Survey.

Figure 17: Service Types Offered by Respondents



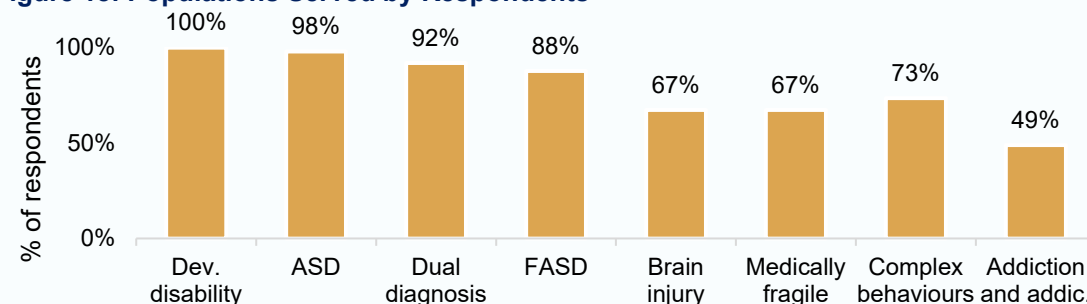
Source: Blueprint CDS Survey.

Appendix B

Project Blueprint CDS Survey

Additionally, respondents highlighted the broad scope of needs of the populations they serve. This includes individuals with developmental disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, fetal alcohol syndrome disorder, to addictions and addictive behaviors. This is highlighted in Figure 18.

Figure 18: Populations Served by Respondents



Source: Blueprint CDS Survey.

The Blueprint CDS survey explored the following topics in order to inform the current state challenges:

- Operational Challenges
- COVID-19
- Recruitment & Retention Strategies
- Workforce Skills & Capabilities
- Workforce Total Compensation
- Future of the CDS Workforce

Appendix C

Sector Engagement

Three focus sessions were held in May 2022 with 28 sector executives representing the following ACDS member organizations.

Table 15: Focus Session Attendees

Region	Participating Organization
Calgary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- URSA- Resourceful Futures- New Age Services- SCOPE
Central	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Accredited Supports to the Community- Camrose Association for Community Living- Wetaskiwin & District Association for Community Service- P.R.O.S Agency
Edmonton	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- WJS Canada- MirkaCare Services- Rehoboth Christian Ministries- Catholic Social Services- EmployAbilities- Excel Society- AdaptAbilities- Skills Society- Mill Woods Society for Community Living- The Good Samaritan Society
Northeast	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- VALID Association- Blue Heron Support Services Association- WIN Alberta
Northwest	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- E.C.H.O Society- CARE Helps
South	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Quest Support Services- REDI Enterprises- Ability Resource Association

Appendix D

Jurisdiction Scan

Desktop research was conducted to better understand the context of the CDS sector and identify promising practices in other provinces and countries. Jurisdictions included in the research included British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Saskatchewan, the United Kingdom, and Australia, as well as examples from within Alberta.

Limited relevant information was publicly available on the current state and challenges of the CDS sector workforce in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and the United Kingdom; those jurisdictions are not presented here.

British Columbia

Key themes occurring in the social services sector more broadly in British Columbia include:

Lack of awareness and buy in

- People working in the sector are interested in improving it and there is interest in building an understanding of the sector.

Complex system

- An increasing degree of complexity in the needs of individuals in service, navigating funding, and recruiting and retaining employees and volunteers.
- The added complexity, skill and personal connection required in the sector compound challenges to attract and retain staff.

Lack of workforce capabilities

- There is room for improvement in education and training within the sector.
- Time and resources are limited, and organizations are struggling to meet multiple and growing service demands.



Population	5 million
Disability supports program	Community Living British Columbia
Disability support budget	\$1.31 billion
Average wage for frontline disability support worker	\$21.91 / hour
Minimum wage	\$15.65 / hour

Low interest and high staff turnover

- Compensation in the sector is low, including compared to public service jobs such as in the health and education sectors.
- The combined nature of funding in the sector – federal, provincial, municipal, grants and fundraising – make the challenge of compensation difficult to address.
- The constant turnover of staff creates additional stress on organizations and negatively affects service delivery.

Appendix D

Jurisdiction Scan

Ontario

The following themes emerged from a survey of disability support workers in the CDS sector in Ontario:

Personal meaning in the work

- CDS sector workers surveyed in Ontario reported the highest rates of job satisfaction with the nature of the work in the sector. Nearly 95 percent of employees reported that their work experiences were personally meaningful.

Low wages

- The chronic effects of multiple years without pay increases were emphasized as a major challenge for workers in the sector.

Workers holding multiple jobs

- The proportion of disability support worker respondents who reported working multiple jobs was 41.6 percent. In comparison the proportion of multiple job holders in Ontario's health and social services workforce was 8.4 percent.

Retention Challenges accessing the training needed

- Mandatory training has been expanded, which is important but also crowds out other training opportunities
- Needs of people are changing, meaning that training needs are also changing but there is concern among workers that organizations may not have the funding needed to provide training to meet these new support needs



Population	14.6 million
Disability supports program	Ontario Disability Support Program
Disability support budget	\$5.4 billion
Average wage for frontline disability support worker	\$19.54 / hour
Minimum wage	\$15.50 / hour

Retention challenges

- There is a lack of opportunities for advancement.
- Workloads are increasing.
- Working evenings and weekends is a barrier for workers.

Appendix D

Jurisdiction Scan

Australia

Review of Australia's State of the Disability Sector and Disability Workforce Reports identified the following themes related to the Alberta context:

Prevalence of casual employees

- There is a high prevalence of casual employees in the CDS sector workforce in Australia. 42% of all workers are casual. This trend is growing at a higher rate than in the Australian workforce in general.

Recruitment challenges

- Providers are facing increasing difficulties recruiting frontline disability support workers, a problem likely exacerbated by COVID concerns and competition from other community care sectors. Competition with other sectors, and the challenges of rural and remote hiring were emphasized. 70% of providers reported challenges recruiting disability support workers.

Allied health professionals

- The CDS sector workforce in Australia includes allied health professionals - occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech pathologists, as well as nurses – that provide direct supports to individuals in services, as well as evidence, assessments and reports that inform access and planning decisions made by National Disability Insurance Scheme workers.



Population	14.6 million
Disability supports program	Ontario Disability Support Program
Disability support budget	\$5.4 billion
Average wage for frontline disability support worker	\$19.54 / hour
Minimum wage	\$15.50 / hour

Appendix D

Jurisdiction Scan – Sources

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