

## A Comprehensive Sector-Driven Strategy for a Skilled and Sustainable Workforce

### PROJECT UPDATE – December 2022

#### Vision

A professional, skilled, and sustainable community disability services workforce, supporting Albertans with disabilities to live full lives as valued citizens in their communities.

#### Goal and Background

In 2019, ACDS engaged member agencies to develop the [foundation](#) for a comprehensive workforce strategy for the community disability services (CDS) sector. The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted this work, and exacerbated workforce challenges. In late 2021, in response to repeated advocacy by ACDS at the Service Provider Partnership Committee,<sup>1</sup> Disability Services encouraged ACDS to apply for grant funding to resume the development of the workforce strategy and engage a top-ranking consulting firm for research and facilitation support.

Upon receiving funding in early 2022,<sup>2</sup> ACDS initiated *Project Blueprint CDS* and contracted management consultants KPMG to support the project activities. The goal of this one-year initiative is to develop a collaborative, evidence-based strategy to address the sector's chronic human resource challenges and new pressures from the pandemic. The project will deliver actionable recommendations and an implementation plan for a skilled and sustainable workforce to support Albertans with disabilities now and in the foreseeable future.

#### Activities Completed

##### Phase 1 (Spring 2022): Labour market research and preliminary recommendations

The Project Advisory Committee was established, consisting of 10 service providers representing diverse service types and locations. ACDS member agencies were surveyed to collect data on key issues and challenges, followed by validation focus groups. Research was conducted for jurisdictional comparisons, macro labour market trends, population data, forecasts for workforces in CDS and similar industry/occupation groups, as well as analysis of client caseload trends and forecasts to the extent possible from publicly available open data.

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<sup>1</sup> Co-chaired by ACDS and SCSS, the Service Provider Partnership Committee consists of ACDS members and government staff collaborating to address emerging and chronic issues to improve community disability services.

<sup>2</sup> Financial support: Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services (SCSS) Employment Supports Division (Grant 095277785, \$282,000); ACDS (\$24,000).

[Phase One Initial Assessment](#) report summarizes the research, identifies key workforce challenges under three overarching themes, and presents a broad suite of 18 preliminary recommendations with proposed implementation timelines. One of the urgent challenges identified is low wages, with the recommendation that ACDS collaborate with the Alberta government for immediate and ongoing wage relief for the CDS workforce. The Initial Assessment was shared with the Ministry in July, and the Ministry was invited to distribute it to government teams working on related workforce projects (e.g., micro-credentialling) to leverage common objectives.

### **Phase 2 (Summer/early Fall 2022): Addressing immediate concerns, and preparing high-level recommendations for sector-driven review and refinement**

In response to the recommendation to act on the wage issue, an evidence-based advocacy brief was presented to Minister Luan in August, when he met with ACDS and KPMG to discuss Project Blueprint. The Minister requested cost estimates for the preliminary recommendations, with the intent to support a submission to Treasury Board for budget 2023/24. With additional grant funding to resource KPMG's services for this expanded scope, ACDS presented a confidential briefing package to the Ministry with the requested cost estimates for each recommendation and a more detailed calculation for the funding to address the wage issue.

Meanwhile, planned activities on Project Blueprint continued. An expanded document with high-level recommendations was produced to guide Phase 3 sector engagement. As well, the Advisory Committee suggested that ACDS should leverage the ACDS Annual Workforce Survey to begin mapping the current state of training in the CDS sector, which is another one of the preliminary recommendations for immediate action.

### **Phase 3 (late Fall 2022): Sector engagement in strategy design**

High-level recommendations from Phase 2 were presented for review, validation and refinement at one virtual and five in-person 3-hour sector engagement sessions in Calgary, Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Lacombe and Lethbridge. About 135 CDS sector leaders from close to 80 service provider agencies, plus Bow Valley College, Inclusion Alberta and Alberta Disability Workers Association attended. Resulting from these engagement process are: [Blueprint CDS: A Comprehensive Workforce Strategy for Community Disability Services](#), and its supplementary document [Blueprint CDS: Technical Backgrounder](#), which details the evidence and research methodology underlying the development of the strategy.

## **Next Steps**

### **Phase 4 (Winter 2023): Development of implementation plan**

The Advisory Committee will be consulted to confirm the proposed timelines, and identify working group members (including external stakeholders) to develop implementation plans with facilitation support from KPMG. The outcome will be a comprehensive workforce strategy with implementation plans to guide ACDS activities for a professional, skilled, and sustainable CDS sector workforce.

## **Project Lead and Contact**

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