

Project Blueprint CDS



In February 2022, ACDS (Alberta Council of Disability Services) received funding from the Alberta Government to **develop a sector-driven strategy for the Community Disability Services (CDS) workforce**. This year-long work included extensive research and sector engagement by KPMG to identify key **workforce challenges** and co-create **recommendations** to strengthen the CDS workforce.

Challenges

Understanding Workforce Context

Lack of visibility and buy-in to the value and complexity of the work of the CDS sector

Duplicate processes to provide supports that should be available from other systems

Increasingly complex service needs among individuals and families

Rural communities experience workforce challenges more severely

Recruiting and Retaining the Workforce

Low wages outpaced by increasing cost of living

Competition from other organizations and sectors for better pay and work environment

Workforce has expectations about **work environment** that CDS sector is not able to meet

Leadership gap due to senior leaders retiring

Developing the Workforce

Barriers to training, including lack of funding and limited opportunities for specialized training

Rigid government contracts limit how services can use funding to support their workforce

Difficulty finding workers with the right skills, as many new workers do not have formal disability services qualifications, and competency criteria are not consistent across the sector

Lack of post-secondary training as many programs have closed due to lack of demand

Recommendations



A1. Build a shared understanding of the **economic impact** of the CDS sector

A2. Determine **scope of practice** of the sector

A3. Adopt **common workforce classifications**

A4. Adopt a **network model** for cross-ministry coordination

A5. Develop a **forecasting model** to help plan



B6. Provide immediate and ongoing **wage relief**

B7. Build a **compensation scale** guide

B8. Co-design a **community of practice**



C9A. Establish a target **credential** requirement

C9B. Establish a **micro-credentialing** system

C9C. Expand **post-secondary** programming

C9D. Identify **current state of training**

C9E. Develop a provincial **training framework**

C9F. Develop a **training catalogue**

C9G. Expand the **suite of training** offered

C10. Increase **flexibility in workforce funding** in PDD contract structures

C11. Implement **innovative workforce fund**

C12. Build a **culture of professionalization**

Post-Project Activities

Since summer 2023, with help from the Alberta Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services, ACDS has been exploring opportunities with other ministries to help **move forward on some immediate priority recommendations**. In addition, information has been provided to several CDS sector stakeholders and other interested groups to share learnings and potential collaboration avenues.



AB Advanced Education: Apprenticeship and Industry Training, Industry Pathways Initiative

- ACDS is currently working with Advanced Education to determine if the Industry Pathways Initiative, which helps industries to establish a **province-wide, industry-driven training program** that provides learners with a government-issued training credential, would be an appropriate fit for the CDS sector.
- **Next steps:** The CDS sector will be consulted to determine if the program is viable for the sector, which occupations are included, and what the education program might look like. If the sector shows sufficient interest, ACDS will submit a formal proposal to Advanced Education to be considered for the Industry Pathways Program.

AB Jobs, Economy and Trade: Workforce Partnership Program

- Labour Market Partnership (LMP) and Workforce Attraction and Retention Partnership (WARP) grants support sectors for workforce development, attraction, and retention. Though the 2023/24 grants were already allocated, ACDS was encouraged to apply in 2024/25.
- **Next steps:** Assess advantage of applying for 2024-25 grant.

ACDS has **met various other ministries and stakeholders** to share learnings and explore potential collaborations, including: Alberta Arts, Culture and Status of Women, Alberta FASD Network, Alberta Disability Workers Association, Inclusion Alberta, Bow Valley College, Alberta Nonprofit Network, and Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, Disability Supports Program.

In addition, presentations have been made to service providers across the province, in-person, through an online webinar, and at the ACDS Impact Conference in May 2024.

ACDS continues to explore potential opportunities to advance Project Blueprint.

For more information, visit acds.ca/workforce/blueprint-cds
or contact the Project Lead, Nilima Sonpal-Valias, at nilima@acds.ca.



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