



The Alberta Council of Disability Services

Presents

A Human Resource Strategy for Community Disability Services November 2006



Acknowledgements

A series of integrated strategies and projects designed to examine human resource issues facing Community Disability Services, known as Workforce 2010, have been carried out during 2004, 2005 and 2006. Workforce 2010 was lead by a Provincial Advisory Committee¹ and the Alberta Council of Disability Services (ACDS) and supported by Alberta Human Resources and Employment, Family Supports for Children with Disabilities (FSCD), PDD Provincial Board, PDD Community Boards, and Service Providers. The design methodology included opportunities for direct input from employers, staff, families and people who receive services. The project owes a great deal to people who work in the field, families who both hire and access services and educators within the province who have generously given of their time to ensure their ideas were part of the research conducted.

Building on the knowledge gained, the Workforce 2010 Advisory Committee held three human resource forums. A Human Resource Strategy (HRS) for Alberta's Community Disability Services : **An Action Plan for Building People Capacity** is the result.

Thank you to the senior staff and human resource managers from service provider organizations, Board members, government employees, and educators for contributing their wisdom to create this Human Resource Strategy.²

¹ Advisory Committee Members are listed at the end of the document.

² A listing of participants at the forums are attached at the end of the document.

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I: Introduction

Alberta is facing a significant labour market shortage and the provincial government is working hard to address this threat to the thriving economy. The *Building and Educating Tomorrows Workforce: Alberta's 10-Year Strategy* has a vision that "Alberta has the people with the knowledge and skills to meet its potential to be the best place to live, work and do business."

While the shortage of skilled and unskilled labour in the private sector is no longer news, the impact this overall shortage is having on the social services sector is a problem. The booming economy means Alberta's social services sector can not compete in a competitive labour market. And, for the province's community disability service providers, this situation has reached a crisis stage which has economic, social and legal consequences for both Alberta's government and its citizens.

The Alberta Council of Disability Services being well aware of the overall labour market trends in Alberta started a project in 2004 that has become known as Workforce 2010. The vision of the project being "By the year 2010, the Province of Alberta will have a well-trained and stable community disability services workforce recognized as professionals providing valued services."

Emerging from the project is a comprehensive human resource strategy for Community Disability Services entitled "--- *An Action Plan for Building People Capacity*---". The strategy reflects the four pillars of recruit, develop, engage and retain. It provides an action framework that will assist in achieving the vision.

2. Why the sector needs an HR Strategy

The current reality for Community Disability Services is alarming, creating concern for its long term viability. With one in four Albertans connected to someone with a disability, this concern is shared by a significant constituency within the province. Families need to know that the sector that provides their approved staffing supports will be there.

Research conducted under the Workforce 2010 project indicates several competing trends that together create a significant threat to the sector. High turnover rates and lower levels of education within the workforce coincide with increasing number and complexity of needs of service recipients.

The turnover rate for 2005 was over 40%³ for community-based agencies providing services to adults with developmental disabilities. The current workforce is largely female (80%) and up to 45% of employees have education levels of high school or less. Fewer Albertans are enrolling in post-secondary programs related to disability studies (a decrease of 16% between 1998 and 2003), so even fewer educated people are entering the sector each year. In fact, the research indicates that even as long ago at 1999, over 46% of new workers hired into vacant positions are less qualified than the worker they replaced.

While the sector struggles with turnover and ability to attract qualified employees to fill vacant positions, research estimates the number of service recipients will rise from 16,000 children and adults to up to 19,000 by the year 2010. An increasing number of service recipients have more complex needs, and there are growing numbers of older adults also requiring higher levels of support. They also represent increasingly diverse backgrounds and cultures. As a result, the future workforce will require greater levels of skill development in order to perform their jobs. With service providers already struggling to maintain support to individuals and families, the sector is at significant risk.

Though many Albertans have disabilities (350,000) and rely on professional services, a lack of knowledge and/or limited exposure affects public perception and appreciation of the sector as a service and as a career choice.

A comprehensive, proactive HR Strategy is not optional for Community Disability Services. It is the best way to reduce major risks to the organizational capacity to deliver future services. It is the best way of reducing risks to individuals receiving support.

³ Staff Turnover in PDD Services for 2005: research report prepared for the PDD Alberta Provincial Board by the VRRRI (May 15, 2006)

3. What a long-range, comprehensive HR Strategy will do.

Community Disability Services as a workforce sector values dignity and respect, quality of life, developing human potential and citizenship for individuals. The Community Disability Workforce strive to be educated and trained professionals dedicated to enabling persons with developmental disabilities to achieve personal milestones that promote dignity, self-worth, improved quality of life and independent living. Human Resource capacity is a prerequisite for meeting individuals' support requirements now and in the future. This in turn is a key contribution to creating the kind of communities and quality of life Albertans need and want.

“ A Vibrant and prosperous province where Albertans enjoy a superior quality of life and are confident about the future for themselves and their children.” from the Government of Alberta’s 20-year vision.

Specifically the human resource strategy for Community Disability Services: “ *An Action Plan for Building People Capacity*” will:

- Build future people capacity
- Proactively respond to Alberta’s competitive labour market
- Help ensure the sector’s sustainability
- Improve service quality
- Reap benefits of common solutions

4. Building on Momentum

The Alberta Council of Disability Services (ACDS) is taking leadership to strengthen the Community Disability Sector consistent with its' mission " *To Lead, Support and Influence Community Disability Services through Education, Partnerships and Accreditation*". The following are key activities that have been undertaken to address the Human Resource Issues in the sector.

Education and Advocacy

ACDS is actively involved in educating and informing government about the issues that impact Community Disability Services. A booklet " *A Human Resource Crisis in the Disability Services Field*" outlines the facts about the crisis facing this labour market sector. Members of ACDS are active meeting with elected officials to ensure they understand the issues facing this labour market and the actions required to create solutions.

Labour Market Intelligence

The Alberta Council of Disability Services has undertaken comprehensive research to develop credible and useful data about the work done in Community Disability Services. This includes information on people who receive supports, the workforce and the work itself and how it is perceived by the public.

The following reports are available:

Facts for Solid Foundation: Essential Intelligence for Planning the Future Workforce

A Snapshot of Alberta's Universities and Colleges: Student Enrolment in Rehabilitation and Related Programs

Workforce Profile and Employer Perspectives

Service Expectations for the Future: Results of Family Focus Groups

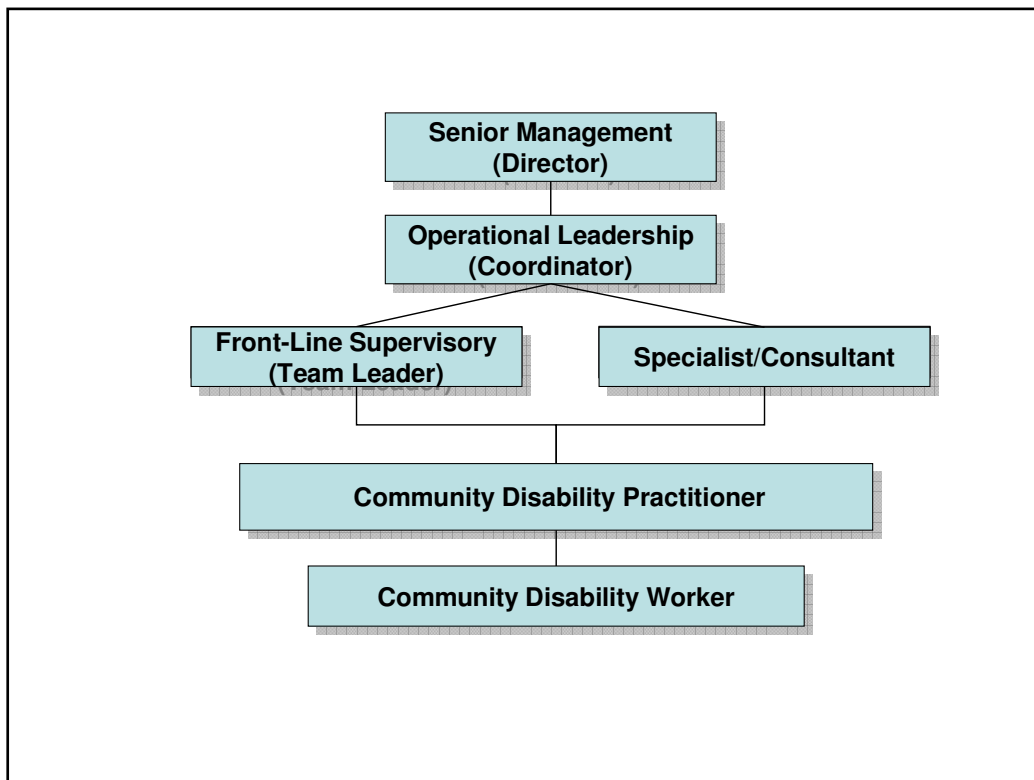
Who is Receiving Services? A Profile of Persons in PDD and FSCD Services

Public Attitude Research Report

Data from the Labour Market Intelligence research has been used to create a website that provides information on the Community Disability Sector www.workforce2010.com

Benchmark Role Profiles

Benchmark profiles provide a description of the typical role, nature of major job responsibilities and required qualifications for jobs within community disability services. Six role profiles have been created to guide career progression from entrance to the field to senior management, with an option for non-managerial specializations. Each profile is designed as a reference or benchmark that individual agencies can use as a guide to designing and defining jobs.



Job Evaluation Handbook

Job evaluation is a process to determine the relationships among jobs within an organization. It supports internal equity and external comparability for jobs within a workforce sector.

The Job Evaluation Handbook outlines a point-factor job evaluation approach to measure characteristics of the work. This evaluation of internal relationships is gender-neutral and measures the relative value of different bundles of work when they are compared one to another within an organization.

The eight compensable factors used in the Workforce 2010 job evaluation approach are as follows:

1. Knowledge Gained Through Formal Education
2. Knowledge Gained Through Experience
3. Physical Skills and Demands
4. Leadership and Internal Relationships
5. Complexity of Information and Decisions
6. Communications and External Relationships
7. Working Conditions, Work Environment and Personal Hazards
8. Independence, Accountability and Authority to Act

Training on Workforce Classification System

A one day training session has been developed to support Community Disability Services in understanding the job profiles and the application within their organization.

Employer of Choice

“Employers of Choice” are organizations that exemplify innovative and effective human resource management principles and practices that the most highly qualified and desirable employees choose to work for. They are industry leaders and their organizational structures, cultures and systems set the benchmark standards of excellence for others in their industry.

The Alberta Council of Disability Services (ACDS) has put together a document entitled “*Be an Employer of Choice: Human Resource Practices that Attract and Retain the Best People*”. The document presents the best practice ideas found in literature, a review of these ideas by 35 practitioners, best practice from four organizations and a self-assessment tool for organizations to examine their recruitment and retention processes.

In-Service Training

An in-service training course **Foundations in Community and Disability Studies** has been introduced. This training is designed to provide a strong foundation of the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for success as a person committed to supporting individuals with disabilities and their families to live their lives.

The learning objectives have been aligned with the skills, competencies, attitudes and values identified in the newly created job profiles for the field.

This course has been designed to enhance the skills of direct service staff. It has application to both entry and intermediate level staff.

Successful completion of the Foundations Program of study will result in participants receiving a certificate from the Alberta Council of Disability Services. This certificate clearly identifies the learning outcomes for each learner. Alberta colleges are reviewing the outcomes and it is expected that credits will be awarded toward a college diploma.

4. Strategic Framework

Vision

An Action Plan for Building People Capacity maintains the vision established in Workforce 2010:

By the year 2010, the Province of Alberta will have a well-trained and stable community disability workforce recognized as professionals providing valued service.

Guiding Principles

- The Human Resource Strategy (HRS) is an opportunity to revitalize the sector for the 21st century, building on leading HR practices already in use within the sector and on the momentum created by Workforce 2010.
- The HRS contributes to a redesigned service delivery system and redefined relations with individuals who receive care and with other stakeholders.
- The HRS enables a refocused mission on a core of person-centred services, with stronger links to families and communities.
- Changes in the sector's service delivery model are needed in order to leverage new investments in staff development.
- The HRS is a framework that facilitates coordinated actions at the provincial and regional levels, also providing the flexibility agencies require to take innovative steps that meet their particular HR needs and fit their local contexts.
- Cooperation at the provincial and regional levels and follow-through on HR actions at the local level requires a strong commitment from agency boards and executives.
- The HRS also is an opportunity to strengthen governance within the sector, giving the ACDS a lead role in workforce renewal and calling on regional and agency boards and agency executives to advocate for new investments in the sector's human resources.
- The HRS promotes continuous learning and improvement when it comes to people practices, which directly supports continuous improvement in client service quality.
- The HRS is closely linked to improved internal and external communication, which needs to provide clear and consistent messages about how the sector values people—individuals receiving care *and* employees—and strengthens communities.

6. The Strategies

6.1 Branding and Marketing the Sector

The Approach

Roll out a social marketing plan that educates Albertans about people with developmental disabilities and to build awareness and clarity around the work itself.

Actions

- Develop a data base of targeted community groups and potential corporate partners.
- Develop a provincial media list
- Develop visual identity for Youth
- Strengthen allegiances with target initiatives and events.
- Develop media materials
- Develop cover letters, information brochure, poster and floor display
- Develop video and brochure for grades 4-6
- Re-develop website
- Identify potential profile stories, based on best practices and develop feature articles.
- Develop cover letter and information package to targeted corporate partners and negotiate Corporate Partnerships

6.2 Actively Engage Non-Profit Community Boards

The Approach

- Board members are a vital component of the sector's human resources.
- Develop the organizational capabilities of service-provider boards to lead changes required to meet a more complex and broader mandate, including HR.
- Increase the level of awareness and understanding of regional board members about HR challenges and changes.

ACTIONS:

- Develop a communication strategy for board members so they understand and support the HR Strategy and can contribute to its success at the local level.
- Strengthen links between boards, partners, and funders.
- Identify the training required to strengthen this role.
- Strengthen networking and information sharing across boards to generate shared learning on HR issues.

6.3 Labour Market Intelligence including Human Resource Performance Measures

The Approach

- Need performance measures for people investments.
- These must be process and outcome based.
- These measures will tell managers that these investments are paying off, can be reported to funders, and can be built into accreditation standards.
- These accountability measures can be part of an agency's commitment to employees and used in employer branding

Actions

- Develop HR performance measures
- Develop an easy to use tool for collecting data on workforce demographics, employee qualifications, training, wages, benefits, turnover and recruitment.
- Create the data collection tool to be web-based.
- Engage a working group of users to validate the survey and analyze the data over a two-year period.

6.4 Being an Employer of Choice: A Total Rewards Approach to Human Resource Management

The Approach

- The sector must continue its efforts to improve compensation levels, and it must also improve work environments.
- A Total Rewards approach to Human Resource Management identifies Best Practices, addresses underlying causes of work stress, burnout and low morale, and focuses on the creation of high-quality work environments. This includes:
 - Creating jobs that are challenging, but not overwhelming/overworked
 - Creating an environment of trust, respect and fairness; open communication
 - Mutual commitment by employers and employees to best practices
 - Job autonomy and decision input
 - Opportunities for learning and development
 - Support for wellness and work-life balance
 - Effective supervision and recognition for contributions
 - Promoting sector awareness and connect employee contributions to sector branding and marketing (Project 1 and 2)

Actions:

- Initiatives to develop and recognize the sector targeted to employers, current workers in the sector, upcoming graduates and career influencers.
- Build on current best practices in the sector around employee recognition programs.
- Enhancing the profile of employees recognized by their sector through public and media relations.
- Create a network of community advocates (current sector leaders) to build relationships with schools and career influencers.
- Develop presentation packages and materials for use at career fairs and community events.
- Publish newsletters quarterly for employees and interested stakeholders highlighting the sector.
- Make this the vision of an exemplary workplace in the Community Disability Services. This defines an 'employer of choice,' which is an outcome of effective HR policies and practices.
- Focus on positive HR goals, such as improving the quality of work life for staff.
- Develop a communication plan for employees and external stakeholders that supports long-range compensation goals, positioning this as vital for client services and sector sustainability.

6.5 Professionalization of the Sector

The Approach

Professionals are typically valued and respected by their employers, clients, and the public. The work of employees in Community Disability Services provides tangible outcomes for people, using recognized skills based on educational qualifications, certification, and experience. Recognizing the professional nature of the work is essential in positioning this career within the public arena.

Actions

- Raise the minimum educational requirements by, setting standards for ongoing training and development, and providing career paths and opportunities.
- Professionalization should not detract from or diminish the contributions of existing front-line staff. The emphasis should be constructive and positive, focusing on continuous improvement and capacity building for the sector and personal development for the individual.
- ACDS and the new Workforce Council will promote opportunities and activities that reach out to all employees—in short, that are inclusive.

6.6 Strong Communication with Employees

The Approach

- A successful HRS at the agency level requires ongoing employee input and feedback.
- It is essential to develop multiple formal and informal channels for communication, and employee surveys are a powerful tool in this regard.

Actions

- ACDS will develop and administer a survey that agencies can voluntarily use for their staff and that assesses Quality of Work Life, training and development needs and activities, employee engagement, workplace relations, among other issues related to recruitment, retention, development, and engagement of staff.
- An employee survey template that agencies can adapt will be used. This includes a standard methodology, core questions that can be used as key

performance indicators for accreditation, reporting templates, guidelines for follow-up actions, and accountability to funders. Agencies can add their own indicators, within limits. Pooling resources will reduce unit costs and provide sector benchmarks and trends.

- Ideally, this survey will be conducted annually. However, there will be a 24-month period between the first two surveys to enable agencies to get a system in place.
- Examples of what this survey could measure include the quality of the work environment, opportunities for training and professional development, supportive supervision, co-worker relations, work-life balance, communication, workload, stress, safety, engagement, satisfaction, and pride.

6.7 Creating a Qualified Workforce

The Approach

- Focus on recruitment and training strategies at the front-line as this is where recruitment problems are greatest, turnover highest, and skills and educational levels most in need of upgrading.
- Support the sector to implement the workforce classification system as it will demonstrate best practice in determining work and the skill set required, establish a career path based on educational requirements and experience and assist the sector in striving for greater professionalism.

Actions:

- Expand and diversify sources of recruitment. For example, tap into older and experienced workers, persons with disabilities, and males.
- Track these workforce characteristics and set realistic targets annually. Document and disseminate best practices.
- Support educational upgrading (high school completion, enrolment in sector-relevant post-secondary programs) by subsidizing tuition.
- With the help of the HR Council, design a smooth transition process from the old job classifications to the new system developed by Workforce 2010.
- Create more opportunities for career mobility. As workers acquire post-secondary credentials, move them into the Community Disability Practitioner (CDP) position. Also add several levels to both the Community Disability Worker and Practitioner positions.
- By 2010, aim to have more than 50% of workers in CDSP positions.
- As further incentive and support for career development, create three levels (based on a combination of responsibility, experience, and credentials) with corresponding pay increases.

- Have the **Foundations in Community and Disability Studies** in-service course recognized as the industry standard.

6.8 Leadership Development

The Approach

- Leadership development is a key component of succession planning. About 10% of the sector's workforce is over 55 years of age, and 19% are between 46 and 55.
- Communicate to all stakeholders, including front-line employees, a commitment to leadership development.
- Take an inclusive approach to leadership: there needs to be "1001 leaders" in the sector, and this will be supported as broadly as possible.

Actions

- Create a network of emerging leaders within the Province of Alberta and assign them the important work of seeking out, chronicling and sharing best practices in human resource management and delivery of supports to individuals and their families.
- Create a provincial leadership development training program, a more efficient way to pool resources and raise the bar for this dimension of human capital development. Regional trainers will be used, providing experienced staff with a career development opportunity.
- Identify best practices in the sector internationally, and emulate them, striving for 'world class' standards in leadership development.
- Base this on clearly defined and strategically aligned core competencies that are needed to lead agencies, and the sector, into the future. This is leadership development for the 21st century.

6.9 Integrate HR within Accreditation Standards

The Approach

- Include HR practices, the quality of work life and professional development as accreditation standards.

ACTIONS

- The way to approach this is to strengthen the HR component of the Organizational Framework standards for Creating Excellence Together (CET) certification standards and combined CET/SFQ accreditation standards.
- Set this up as a pilot in several organizations in 2007—as was done for the Leading Excellence Together standards pilot—evaluate and refine, then roll it out over the 2007-2010 period.
- Strive to bring 75% of agencies under this accreditation umbrella by 2010.

7. Implementing the Human Resource Strategy

7.1 Workforce Council

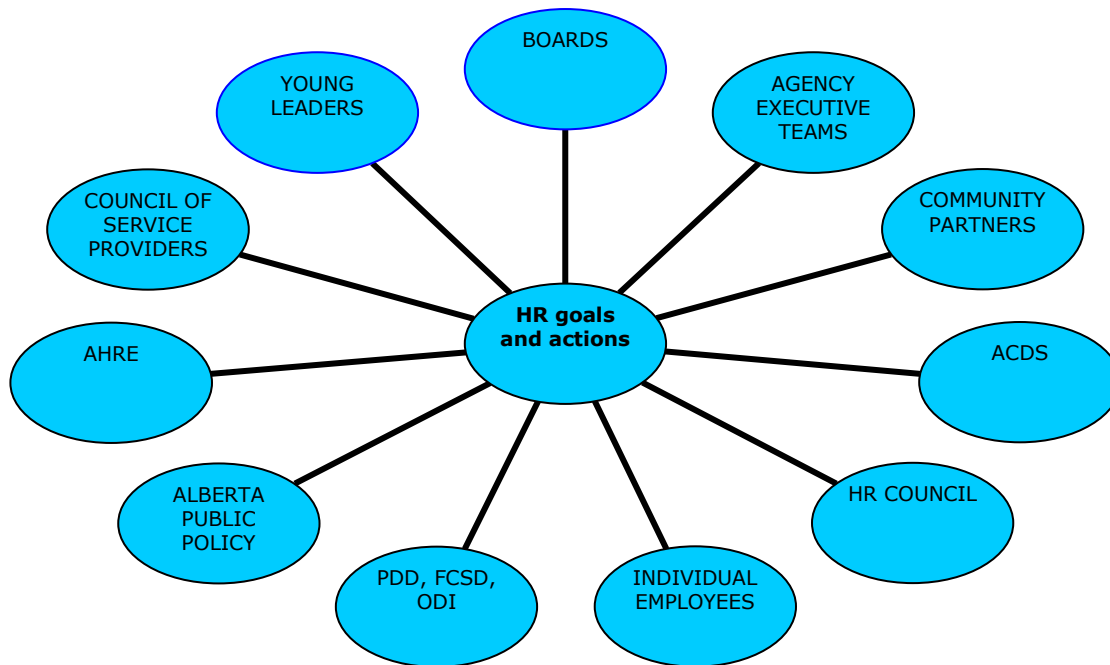
Alberta Council of Disability Services will establish a Workforce Council to assist in developing the sectors capacity at the provincial, regional and agency levels to proactively address human resource challenges.

Mandate of the Council

- Provide expertise and leadership on HR practices and strategy.
- Promote high standards of people practices, integrating these standards over time into accreditation.
- Develop the position of HR Consultant for the sector and recruit for that position.
- Document and disseminate exemplary people practices.
- Track and report relevant labour market trends.
- Launch an HR Best Practices Network to share knowledge, lessons, and experiences. Create an HR page on the ACDS website for this Network and other HR information and resources.
- Coordinate sector-wide employer branding and recruitment initiatives.
- Further develop partnerships with post-secondary institutions for continuing education and professionalization.
- Develop, disseminate, and support the use of HR tools.
- Work with agencies to help close IT skill and equipment gaps, with the medium-term goal of providing all staff access to web-based resources.
- Launch a quarterly provincial newsletter, available on the ACDS website and in hard copy, which showcases the sector's employees and their contributions, and features best people practices across the sector. The goal is to document the positive outcomes of valuing employees.

7.2 The Service Sector and ACDS Members

It will be through the actions of Community Disability Services as a sector that longterm solutions to the human resource issues will be achieved. This includes individuals, families, staff, employers and community. It means action at local levels.



Ideas for Action

- Use the HR strategy as a framework, adapting it to local needs.
- Communicate the agency's commitment to developing and implementing an HR Action Plan to staff and stakeholders, the timetable for doing this, and their roles in the process.
- Use the HR Strategy to assess current HR practices and plans, building on strengths and addressing gaps.
- Identify three or four HR priority actions, link these to the mission, and integrate them into the business plans for 2005-06 to 2009-10.
- Assign responsibility for coordinating agency actions with regional and provincial HR initiatives.
- Engage board and staff members in pieces of the action plan, ensuring that everyone understands the 'big picture'—why the plan is needed, what needs to happen for it to succeed, and how it contributes to the mission.

7.3 Community Partnerships

Community Disability Services has a long history of engaging community partners in welcoming and including people with disabilities in local communities. These community partners and new ones can be nurtured to assist in implementing the long-term solutions to human resource issues.

Ideas for Action

- Put out the challenge to Chambers of Commerce to help find jobs for persons with disabilities, modeling in the agency how these individuals can contribute to workplaces.
- Pursue 50/50 government and private sector funding for those initiatives that are most saleable to business's sense of social responsibility. The leadership development is ideal in this regard, and expertise may be gained from a leading corporate sponsor in addition to funding.
- Continue to develop and strengthen relationships with post-secondary institutions that offer diploma and degree programs in community rehabilitation. Aim to offer complete diploma programs in community rehabilitation, disability studies, or human services through *eCampusAlberta*. Encourage a learning culture within the sector by supporting educational upgrading in any related discipline.
- Build alliances with related professions such as education and social work. Explore the possibility of sub-specialties in these areas rather than competing with these professions for workers.

The People Who Made this Possible

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AN ACTION PLAN FOR BUILDING PEOPLE CAPACITY

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AN ACTION PLAN FOR BUILDING PEOPLE CAPACITY

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AN ACTION PLAN FOR BUILDING PEOPLE CAPACITY

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