

Operations and Capacity

AECEA's Approach

AECEA is a member-based organization. The association communicates openly and shares information with its members. It relies on members' feedback and ideas to develop policy, advocacy and programs to meet their needs.

AECEA is accountable to its membership and to the funders, stakeholders and partners that support the association's work.

AECEA fosters continuous improvement and sets measurable goals to monitor progress. It practises prudent fiscal management and prides itself on its ability to accomplish great things with small budgets supported by passionate volunteers.

AECEA's policies, programs and approaches are based on the latest research evidence and proven best practice.

AECEA's approach is collaborative. The association works closely with governments, institutions and community agencies across the province and across the country. AECEA's strong partnership network facilitates the sharing of ideas, resources and expertise. The support of organizations that share AECEA's vision strengthens the association's position in advocating for early childhood educators.

AECEA's operations are respectful and inclusive. The association's work for the benefit of its members is also for the benefit of all society. The best interests of children and their families are at the heart of everything AECEA does.

AECEA's Work

AECEA's work on behalf of Alberta's early childhood educators falls within five broad categories:

- leadership and planning
- advocacy (see p. 49)
- system building (see p. 51)
- professional learning and support (see p. 55)
- communication and public relations (p. 59)

Leadership and Planning

As a voice for Alberta's early childhood educators, AECEA plays a leadership role.* The association establishes a clear vision for the future and shares this with its members and stakeholders. It provides its members with the information, knowledge, tools and resources needed to translate vision into reality. In doing so, AECEA empowers its members and inspires them with the confidence they need to help the association realize its goals.

AECEA's leadership approach is participative and supportive. The association regularly consults with members and stakeholders and considers their ideas and opinions. It identifies its members' needs and works for its members' welfare and best interests. In setting a path for the future, it coordinates and balances conflicting interests and priorities.

* Lutha, "Leadership," and Hellriegel et al., *Organizational Behavior*, pp. 385–403.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

AECEA has participated in several strategic planning sessions over the course of its history. The most recent of these, in the summer and fall of 2017, were facilitated by Alberta Culture and Tourism's Community Development Unit. AECEA's 2017 strategic planning meetings helped the association set priorities and develop a timeline for the work that needs to be done to attain professional recognition for Alberta's early childhood educators.

RESEARCH

AECEA's decision-making and planning are solidly grounded in the latest research about early learning and child care. AECEA's staff and board members keep on top of the latest national and international academic research and studies. AECEA also conducts regular surveys of its members and commissions Alberta-specific research when necessary.

AECEA responds to its members' needs

In June 2015, AECEA board members participated in minimum wage consultations sponsored by the Government of Alberta. Prior to these discussions, AECEA surveyed its members on how minimum wages affect early childhood educators and their employers.

BUILDING A STRONG ORGANIZATION

Establishing a strong professional organization is one step toward establishing a profession. AECEA works hard to provide its members with the **support** they need. This includes access to the following:

- networks of colleagues
- research and resources
- funding for professional learning
- opportunities for leadership and engagement in issues that affect them

AECEA also provides opportunities for its members to link research to practice. These include opportunities to engage in professional learning communities (see p. 61), to work on association committees and to share their expertise as invited presenters at AECEA events.

The **recruitment** of new members is an ongoing task for organization building. AECEA's board members are well-connected in communities across the province. They use every opportunity to spread the word about the association and its work.

In 2015, AECEA developed a **ten-year framework*** for professionalizing the early learning and child care workforce. The framework is an internal planning document that draws on the latest research and on data collected directly from the workforce. AECEA has shared its framework with government and post-secondary partners who support the association's efforts to develop a professional early learning and child care workforce.

AECEA's future plans include the development of a **code of ethics** and **standards of practice** for the early childhood education profession. The standards of practice will deal with early childhood educators' relationships and interactions with children and families, with other professionals and with the community.

AECEA's ten-year framework

MacEwan University is using AECEA's framework as part of its work to develop a new degree program in early learning and child care. MacEwan currently offers a two-year diploma in the field.

* AECEA's ten-year framework is presented in detail in the chapter called "The Future: Steps Toward a Professional Early Learning and Child Care Workforce." See p. 53.

AECEA reaches out to its members

In 2016–17, AECEA board members made more than a dozen presentations at colleges, universities and community events across Alberta.

In 2018–2019, AECEA is planning member-engagement and information-sharing consultations that will reach 2,500 early childhood educators across the province—including Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray.

These consultations will help AECEA develop and build support for its ten-year workforce development framework. They will provide opportunities for AECEA to

- engage and establish relationships with the early learning and child care workforce
- listen to workforce members’ concerns
- gather information about workforce challenges, strengths and demographics
- build trust
- provide information about the association and its work
- spread the word about the importance of professionalizing the child care workforce

The data that is collected will help AECEA identify how it can best address workforce needs and build for the future.

EMPOWERING THE WORKFORCE

A strong organization has a strong, empowered membership. AECEA encourages early childhood educators from all sectors of the workforce to join the association and work together to professionalize their field. AECEA’s direct message to early childhood educators is that increasing their education will lead to an increase in compensation, better working conditions and better outcomes—both for the workforce and for the children and families it serves.

AECEA works hard to ensure that all early childhood educators feel supported as professionals. It engages in public relations and advocacy to ensure that the work of early childhood educators is recognized and valued—by families, by child care employers and administrators, by other professionals and the associations that represent them, by policy-makers and by the public. AECEA also advocates for fulfilling work, supportive workplaces, reasonable working conditions and appropriate wages and benefits for the early learning and child care workforce.

AECEA encourages its members to recognize their own capacity for leadership. It supports them in “mobilizing themselves and their communities to advocate for higher quality early childhood education and child care for children and families.”*

From vision to action

“As trusted educators, caregivers and leaders, ECEs have the potential to reach parents and community members in a way that researchers, academics and policy-makers do not. A powerful and informed child care workforce could in fact be a key component to finally winning a national child care program.”

—Shani Halfon and Lyndsay Macdonald, “From Vision to Action: ECEs Role in the Canadian Child Care Movement,” p. 16.

* Halfon and Macdonald, “From Vision to Action,” p. 13.

Advocacy

AECEA's advocacy efforts focus on stimulating policy action and system change. They aim to shape public opinion, influence legislators and policy-makers, and garner widespread support for changing the status quo and recognizing early childhood educators as professionals.

Professionalizing the workforce is the first step in building an accessible, affordable, high-quality child care system for all Albertans—for children and their families, for business and communities, and for society as a whole. This is AECEA's long-term goal.

AECEA advocates for a comprehensive, high-quality, Alberta **system of early learning and child care** delivered by a well-educated, well-compensated, and well-supported workforce. It strives to ensure that the workforce is a priority in all decisions related to system building, funding, education, ongoing professional learning, and wages and supports.

AECEA's tools of advocacy are persuasive communication, negotiation, dialogue and partnership-building—with association members and prospective members, with the early childhood workforce as a whole, and with employers, community partners, government decision-makers, the media and the public. The intent of AECEA's advocacy efforts is to raise awareness and foster understanding about issues of importance for early childhood educators.* These issues include quality standards, working conditions, education, certification, professional learning, wages and benefits. They also include the need for public investment, the need for system-wide planning and the need to recognize high-quality early learning and child care as a public good.

* Awareness and understanding build ownership and generate buy-in. The result is collective action for the public good.

Experience matters

AECEA has honed its advocacy expertise over the course of its thirty-year history. The association today is more experienced, more confident and more effective in working with community stakeholders and with all three orders of government.

AECEA has learned to understand the issues from multiple perspectives. It has grown proficient in developing unified approaches that both respect and balance competing priorities.

REGULATORY REVIEW

AECEA has formed a multistakeholder Child Care Licensing Regulation Review Committee to prepare for the Alberta government's upcoming review of the Child Care Licensing Act and regulations. The committee is meeting with AECEA members and other early childhood educators as part of its review. It will draw on the results of these consultations in making its recommendations to government.

MULTILATERAL EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE FRAMEWORK

AECEA is working with the Canadian Child Care Federation, the Muttart Foundation, Child Care Now and provincial and territorial partners to identify priorities and next steps for Canada's recently proposed multilateral (federal, provincial and territorial) Early Learning and Child Care Framework. The framework states that "the development of early learning and child care systems is one of the best investments that governments can make to strengthen the social and economic fabric of our country."^{*} It highlights five principles: high quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility and inclusivity.

AECEA participated in framework-related discussions held in the summer of 2017. These discussions highlighted the need for an accessible, affordable, accountable system of high-quality child care that focuses on the early learning and child care workforce. The compensation,

^{*} Government of Canada, "Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework."

recruitment and retention of early childhood educators was identified as a top priority for Alberta.

AECEA board members participated in additional, direct discussions with the federal Ministry of Families, Children and Social Development in September and November 2017. On both occasions, the association reiterated that Alberta's portion of framework-related funding should be used to support the province's early learning and child care workforce. The minister's office advised that although the federal government has no jurisdiction over provincial labour matters, provinces were encouraged to invest in support for the workforce.

*Children's Services Minister Danielle Larivee signed the multilateral child care framework agreement in June 2017. In December 2017, the ministry announced plans to create up to 78 additional \$25-a-day early learning and child care centres thanks to its agreement with the Government of Canada.**

AN EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE FRAMEWORK FOR ALBERTA

AECEA's leadership and advocacy work resulted in a coalition of partners who are lobbying the Alberta government to establish a Commission on Early Learning and Child Care. (See p. 57 for details.)

System Building

Professionalizing the early childhood education workforce is part of a broader agenda of improving the quality of Alberta's early learning and child care system. Workforce-related issues are interlinked with other parts of the system and with other segments of the province's social infrastructure.

* Government of Alberta, "More Families to Get \$25-a-day, Quality Child Care."

AECEA works closely with its partners and stakeholders to build the systems and infrastructure needed to support Alberta's early childhood educators.

COMMUNITY CAPACITY-BUILDING

In 2004, with funding support from the Alberta government, AECEA worked with the Canadian Child Care Federation and other stakeholders to develop an accreditation program for child care programs. The result was the establishment of the **Alberta Association for the Accreditation of Early Learning and Care Services, AELCS**, which supports a voluntary accreditation process for licensed day care centres and out-of-school care programs and for approved family day home agencies. Accreditation promotes excellence and enhances the quality of services provided to children and families. Accredited programs qualify for additional funding to support program quality, including wage enhancements for staff.

In 2004, AECEA was instrumental in the creation of the **Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement (ARCQE)**, which helps child care programs achieve accreditation status. ARCQE also supports early childhood education programs and educators in implementing Alberta's *Play, Participation, and Possibilities* curriculum framework.

SYSTEM-WIDE STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICES

AECEA supports Alberta's new early learning and child care curriculum framework, *Play, Participation, and Possibilities*, which was developed to guide the practice of early childhood educators working in centre-based child care and family day homes in Alberta. The framework supports staff in working with all children and families, including those with diverse abilities and diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Play, Participation, and Possibilities is founded on evidence-based practice that centres on children's well-being. It includes play-based learning, healthy nutrition, physical activity and meaningful routines.

Following the curriculum requires sound knowledge and understanding of child development and family dynamics. This means that educators view children as competent and capable beings. They plan and deliver well-designed learning experiences that reflect the uniqueness of each child and family.

The curriculum framework is a game-changer

Introducing the *Play, Participation, and Possibilities* framework into all of Alberta’s early learning and child care programs will substantially improve the quality of these programs. However, using the framework effectively requires a well-educated and well-supported workforce.

In 2016, AECEA members had the opportunity to participate in a curriculum framework training day supported by the association.

EDUCATIONAL DELIVERY

The post-secondary system

AECEA recognizes that raising the qualification standards for early childhood educators will require significant investment to increase the capacity of post-secondary education programs. More programs and more qualified instructors will be needed to meet the needs of two groups of students—(1) early childhood educators who are upgrading their education and (2) new students who are entering the field. In addition, if Alberta’s early childhood educators are to become a professional workforce, the province’s publicly funded post-secondary institutions will need to expand their early childhood education offerings to include bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees.

As Alberta builds new publicly funded post-secondary infrastructure to support early learning and child care, it must also develop program and quality standards that are comparable across delivery systems. This will allow students who begin a program at one Alberta institution to transfer

credits and complete their studies at another institution in the province. Alberta must also ensure that the instructors who teach in publicly funded post-secondary early childhood education programs are well-qualified specialists in this specialized field.

Pedagogical leadership

Managers and directors of early learning and child care programs are responsible for providing guidance and support to their staff. Because they are mentors as well as supervisors and administrators, pedagogical leadership is a critical skill. Effective pedagogical leaders must have a solid educational foundation in early learning and child care.

Pedagogical leadership provides a kind of formalized mentorship that can improve program quality and inspire organizational change. It supports and guides the teaching and learning process and engages parents in their children’s learning. It fosters continuous quality improvement and uses data to evaluate the effectiveness of early learning programs.

Pedagogical leadership builds a culture of reflective practice that engages educators intellectually and emotionally. Reflective practice is interactive. It continually questions “how theory informs practice and practice informs theory.”

Pedagogical leaders raise up other leaders—building leadership capacity throughout the early learning and child care system. As part of its ten-year framework for professionalizing the early learning and child care workforce, AECEA is actively engaging and recruiting emerging leaders who can share their experience and expertise with colleagues across the sector. AECEA supports these leaders by providing professional learning funding and opportunities to take on association-related projects that broaden their education, experience and skills.

Ongoing Professional Learning and Support

Ongoing professional learning linked to a formal learning plan is an important component of quality child care. Ongoing professional learning helps early childhood educators strengthen their knowledge, skills and competencies in areas such as child development, management and leadership. It also helps them to build on specialized topics such as outdoor and nature play, nutrition, cultural diversity, inclusion, children's rights and Indigenous studies.

In the future, when early childhood education is recognized as a profession, ongoing professional learning will be mandatory for early childhood educators who wish to maintain their certification. It ensures that early childhood educators keep abreast of the latest research and best practice.

AECEA'S APPROACH

AECEA currently provides professional learning through conferences and workshops. It also provides grant funding to help child development supervisors undertake ongoing learning related to their field.*

All of AECEA's professional learning activities reflect current research trends and respond to members' needs. After each AECEA event, participants provide feedback and suggestions about topics they need to learn more about. The association uses this input to plan and develop future learning offerings. AECEA also solicits feedback on the reflection forms that its professional learning grant recipients must complete.

* AECEA administers this funding on behalf of Alberta Children's Services. In January 2018, AECEA submitted a proposal to administer professional learning grant funding for child development assistants and child development workers as well as child development supervisors. This funding is critical for advancing the early learning and child care workforce.

Ideas for professional learning

Delegates to AECEA's 2017 conference provided suggestions for professional learning topics they would like to study. Suggested topics included programming for infants and toddlers, inclusion of children with special needs, school-aged programs with diverse cultural perspectives, professionalism, leadership, curriculum framework concepts, pedagogy, parent engagement, mental health and self-care for early childhood educators.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

AECEA's popular annual two-day conference attracts hundreds of early childhood educators, administrators, family child care providers, school-age-care providers, students, instructors, research and policy analysts, and child care advocates.

Conference sessions deal with topical issues that respond to member-identified interests and learning needs.

AECEA members are eligible for a discount on their conference registration fees.

Since its launch in 2011, AECEA's annual conference has been a sold-out event that generates revenue for the association.

LEADERS DAYS

In 2017, AECEA assumed responsibility for the Leaders Day program, which was established by the Alberta Leaders Caucus as a forum for discussing change related to the province's early learning and child care system. With support from the Alberta Leaders Caucus, AECEA hosts two Leaders Days each year—in the spring and in the fall—in partnership with Mount Royal University and Bow Valley College. The partnership makes it possible for AECEA to recruit student volunteers to help with the Leaders Day program.

At AECEA's Leaders Days, leaders in the early learning and child care field come from every part of the province to network and engage in deep conversations on a host of topics, including advocacy leadership, pedagogical leadership, creativity, team-building, communication, workforce-related issues and child care–related policy and practice.

The recently formed coalition to establish an Alberta commission on early learning and child care is one of many positive results of AECEA's Leaders Day activities.

*AECEA, Public Interest Alberta, the Alberta Federation of Labour and the School Age Care Directors Association of Alberta are part of a coalition formed to lobby the Alberta government to establish a **Commission on Early Learning and Child Care**. The commission's role would be to assess and provide recommendations for improving the province's early learning and child care system.*

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING GRANT FUNDING FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT SUPERVISORS

Since 2008, AECEA has held a Children's Services grant to provide professional development funding for child development supervisors.* The association administers the grant on the ministry's behalf.

Child development supervisors who work for contracted family day home agencies or in licensed day care or out-of-school care programs can apply for professional development funding to cover program or course tuition fees, conference and workshop registration fees, and costs related to participating in professional learning communities.†

Child development supervisors who work in preschools, as family day home providers or on reserve are not eligible under current program

* Professional learning funding for child development assistants and child development workers is currently available directly from Children's Services.

† The professional learning community funding stream was a test program. Funding for this program is now depleted.

guidelines. AECEA continues to advocate for the inclusion of these early childhood educators and for additional funds to cover the growing need for high-quality professional learning across the sector. Each year, hundreds of qualified applicants are turned away because of funding shortfalls.

Between March 1, 2015, and December 31, 2017, AECEA awarded close to \$400,000 to help 2,529 child development supervisors improve their knowledge and skills.

| Funding Stream | 2015–2016 | | 2016–2017 | | 2017–2018 (to Dec. 31, 2017) | |
|--|------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| | Grant Recipients | Total Funds Awarded | Grant Recipients | Total Funds Awarded | Grant Recipients | Total Funds Awarded |
| Post-secondary courses and programs | 43 | \$19,158.43 | 56 | \$26,396.52 | 53 | \$35,368.55 |
| Workshops and conferences | 965 | \$125,417.40 | 690 | \$115,601.34 | 654 | \$50,237.76 |
| Professional learning communities | 14 | \$5,396.54 | 28 | \$10,129.41 | 26 | \$11,748.28 |
| TOTALS: | 1,022 | \$149,972.37 | 774 | \$152,127.27 | 733 | \$97,354.59 |

Table 6. Professional learning grants, March 1, 2015, to December 31, 2017

AECEA has applied for a continuation of the Child Development Supervisor Professional Learning Grant for 2018–2021—with a new focus on foundational and specialized post-secondary education. The association has requested increased funding to meet program demand. It has also requested an extension of the program scope to include the following:

- child development supervisors in preschool programs and approved family day home providers (These early childhood educators do not qualify for funding under the current guidelines.)
- child development workers
- child development assistants

Communication and Public Relations

Communication is the foundation for advocacy and for social change. AECEA uses a variety of methods to share information with its members, partners and stakeholders—including the public.

AECEA launched a new and improved **website** in the summer of 2017. Members have applauded the website's new inviting look and user-friendly structure. The content is well organized and information is easy to find.

AECEA uses **social media** to stay connected with its members and supporters. It has a Twitter account and an active Facebook site. The Facebook site can be viewed by the public, but only AECEA members can post comments.

AECEA's monthly **e-newsletter**, *Network News*, monitors the latest research and studies and keeps members up to date on upcoming events and professional learning opportunities. The newsletter also provides opportunities for members to connect with one another and to share their stories from the field.

AECEA is an information-sharing hub

AECEA's partnership networks allow the association to serve as an information-sharing hub that connects the early childhood education community and links AECEA members to colleagues across the province and across the country. The result is that AECEA members have access to the latest news, research and events information from across the early childhood education field.

Sharing information builds workforce awareness and helps to empower child care educators in advocating for their own cause. Sharing information also helps AECEA raise public awareness, build partnerships and establish relationships with communities, funders and other stakeholders.

Revenue Sources

AECEA-Generated Revenue

AECEA relies on membership dues as its primary and most stable source of funding. It generates additional revenue from its annual conference, from workshops and special events, and from partnership arrangements with business services such as Benefex, which provides AECEA associate members with access to a group health benefits plan. (See p. 28 for details.)

Membership revenues alone are expected to contribute more than \$80,000 to AECEA's 2017–18 operating budget, while partnership arrangements will contribute close to \$20,000. Although these revenues are not insubstantial, AECEA could not carry out many of its workforce-related programs without significant government support.

Grants

Association-generated revenue is supplemented by grants from a variety of sources.

As a council member of the Canadian Child Care Federation, AECEA receives funding for expenses incurred in attending annual council meetings and other federation events.

In the past, the Muttart Foundation has contracted with AECEA to undertake research and to help with stakeholder consultations and special projects. The foundation does not provide direct funding for AECEA operations. Rather, it contracts with the association to carry out joint initiatives that meet both organizations' goals.

The Government of Alberta supports AECEA's work through the Ministry of Children's Services. Grants from Children's Services have included the following.

- Between 2007 and 2011, an **educational leadership bursary program* grant** of about \$2 million allowed AECEA to help early childhood educators take courses to improve their leadership skills. AECEA supported 339 leaders with bursaries of up to \$10,000 per person over a three-year period. Bursary funds covered tuition, books and course materials. Recipients who lived more than 100 kilometres from their educational institution were also eligible for up to \$500 per year for travel costs.
- In 2008, AECEA applied for and received a **professional development grant** to support child development supervisors in Alberta. (See p. 57 for details.) Since this time, AECEA has disbursed approximately \$150,000 per year across three different funding streams:
 - workshops and conferences
 - post-secondary courses
 - professional learning communities

To meet the growing demand for professional learning support, AECEA received a \$67,500 increase to its grant for 2017–2018.

Professional learning communities

The concept of professional learning communities can be described as “professionals coming together in a group—a community—to learn”[†] from one another and share their ideas and expertise. Group members “share a passion for something they do and...interact regularly to learn to do it better.”[‡] Members’ conversations allow new and different perspectives to emerge and facilitate a deeper understanding of the topic. They foster critical thinking and help to build leadership capacity within the early learning and child care community.

* The program was called the Child Care Bursary Program for a portion of this period.

† School leadership expert Shirley Hord, as cited in Great Schools Partnership, *The Glossary of Educational Reform* (online).

‡ Etienne Wenger, “Quick CoP Start-Up Guide.”

Management Processes

AECEA strives to run an efficient operation and use its resources as effectively as possible. The association has invested in software and technology to streamline and integrate its file management, financial analysis, membership tracking and grant distribution processes.

AECEA's Capacity

Competent Leadership

AECEA is an effective, well-respected and well-managed association. The evidence is the impressive body of work that AECEA has accomplished over the past three decades. As further evidence, AECEA maintains its ability to attract passionate, committed leaders to carry on the association's continuing efforts to professionalize Alberta's child care workforce.

In 2014, six members of the Alberta Leaders Caucus on Early Learning and Child Care put their names forward for nomination to the AECEA board of directors. (For details about the caucus, see p. 100.) The election of these candidates breathed new life into the association. AECEA's former long-serving board members were finally able to step down—after many years of work as dedicated volunteers.

In 2014, AECEA's new board undertook a governance review. It updated bylaws, revamped the association's administration, streamlined operations and introduced data-based planning processes. Using information gathered from AECEA's membership, the board identified priority areas and focused its policy work on professionalizing the early learning and child care workforce.

Effective Administration

Over the course of its history, AECEA has become a flexible, responsive, organization committed to continuous learning and improvement. Each year, AECEA learns more about how to collect data, how to use data in new ways, how to convene stakeholders to discuss issues, how to clarify its messages and how to be more comfortable and effective in meeting with senior government staff and elected officials.

AECEA has implemented strong administrative processes to ensure accountability—to its members and funders and to the public. It has improved its reporting process to ensure that the information it gathers is useful to the association, the workforce and the government.

Here are some examples of AECEA’s recent administrative improvements:

- AECEA acquired a new software system to improve its financial reporting and support the integrity of its data collection.
- AECEA developed processes for member recruitment.
- AECEA launched a new website to establish a public profile and improve communication with its members. The association uses data analytics to monitor website visits and learn what information users are searching for.
- AECEA developed reporting templates for the professional learning grant funding program it administers on behalf of Alberta Children’s Services. The templates streamline the reporting process and facilitate data analysis.
- AECEA developed reporting templates for committee heads to use in their monthly updates to the board.

Financial Constraints

AECEA's administrative expertise is demonstrated by its effective management of large-scale programs and events, including its professional development grant funding program for child development supervisors. (See p. 57 for details.) However, in spite of its many accomplishments, financial constraints often limit what the association can do.

Although AECEA has partners and members across Alberta, financial constraints limit the opportunities for face-to-face interactions to share information, recruit new members and build support for the association. Financial constraints also limit AECEA's geographic reach and make it difficult to connect with members and prospective members in rural and remote areas of the province.

AECEA currently needs additional resources for staffing and product evaluation research. This will make it possible to transfer historical data to its new systems, which use automated processes to track professional learning outcomes. AECEA also needs resources to conduct basic research and feasibility assessments for various workforce-related topics. These include exploring best practice systems for monitoring the professional learning and certification of early childhood educators.

Strengths and Authority

AECEA's strengths include its strong partnership network, its solid reputation for good work, and the passion, commitment and expertise of its staff and volunteers. Over the years, this has allowed the association to accomplish big things with small budgets.

AECEA's authority and profile have grown significantly since 2014. Today, senior staff of Alberta Children's Services regularly call on AECEA's board and its committees to discuss issues related to affordable, accessible, high-quality child care and the needs and challenges of the early learning

and child care workforce. AECEA and the ministry have established a mutually beneficial and respectful relationship.

AECEA's good work on behalf of Alberta's early childhood educators will continue until its mission is accomplished. The association is well positioned to play a key role in professionalizing the child care workforce and building an affordable, accessible, high-quality child care system for Alberta.

AECEA has track record of success.