

The Future: Steps Toward a Professional Early Learning and Child Care Workforce

“Regulated” child care includes licensed day care, preschool and out-of-school care programs, licensed “innovative” and “group family child care” programs (as defined in the Child Care Licensing Regulation) and approved family day homes.

A professional early learning and child care workforce is the foundation of an effective, affordable, high-quality early learning and child care system for all Albertans.

Professionalizing the workforce begins with increasing the educational qualifications of early childhood educators. Several interrelated factors must come together to build a solid foundation for success. These include the following:

- legislative amendments to support higher educational standards
- workforce remuneration (including wage enhancements)
- professional learning funding to support educational upgrading and help early childhood educators build specialized skills and knowledge related to their work
- the capacity of post-secondary institutions to graduate more diploma-level students
- the capacity of post-secondary institutions to offer post-diploma programs and bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degree programs in early learning and child care
- quality standards for publicly funded post-secondary early learning and child care programs

- workplace support for early childhood educators (including access to funding and paid release time for upgrading and ongoing professional learning)
- funding to support AECEA and other non-profit organizations that advocate on behalf of the early learning and child care workforce
- public and political recognition of the value of early childhood educators and the important work they do
- increased public investment in early learning and child care

The steps outlined on the following pages constitute AECEA’s ten-year framework for building this foundation.

The framework is AECEA’s action plan for professionalizing Alberta’s early learning and child care workforce. It was developed through discussions with the association’s members and stakeholders. Its proposed approach is grounded in research and best practices that have proven effective in other jurisdictions, including Manitoba, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.*

AECEA’s ten-year framework is a living document

The framework is responsive to changes in the political and social environment and to new research findings related to Alberta’s early learning and child care workforce.

* AECEA’s international research focused on countries with mixed market systems, like Alberta’s, that include non-profit and for-profit child care.

Framework Steps at a Glance

Step 1: Raise the educational requirements for early childhood educators in Alberta’s regulated child care sector. (See p. 69.)

Step 2: Make ongoing professional learning mandatory for all early childhood educators in the regulated system. (See p. 75.)

Step 3: Develop infrastructure to support the new standards for education and ongoing professional learning. (See p. 78.)

Step 4: Address the issue of workforce remuneration. (See p. 83.)

AECEA’s ten-year workforce framework is one element of an integrated, high-quality child care system. As such, it includes strategies and actions outside the scope of the association’s mandate.

In the following discussion, subheadings indicate actions that are the responsibility of AECEA’s partners and other stakeholders within the child care system. In sections where there are no subheadings, responsibility for the specific action is shared across the system.

Step 1: Raise the educational requirements for early childhood educators in Alberta’s regulated child care sector

1.1 Amend the Child Care Licensing Act and regulations. Legislate new minimum requirements for higher educational qualifications for early childhood educators in all parts of the regulated system.

Position	Training Requirement	Workforce at this Level	Average Employer-Paid Wage	Pre-accredited Program Wage Top-Up	Accredited Program Wage Top-Up
Child Development Assistant	54-hour child care orientation course or equivalent	5,924 (39%)	\$13.85	\$15.29 (\$1.44)	\$15.99 (\$2.14)
Child Development Worker	one-year post-secondary certificate in early learning and child care or equivalent	2,503 (16%)	\$14.90	\$17.60 (\$2.70)	\$18.95 (\$4.05)
Child Development Supervisor	two-year post-secondary diploma in early learning and child care or equivalent	6,771 (45%)	\$16.65	\$21.07 (\$4.42)	\$23.27 (\$6.62)

Table 7. Certification levels (March 2017) and wages (2017) for early childhood educators in Alberta.* The dollar figures in parentheses are hourly wage enhancement top-ups provided by the provincial government.

The level of qualification of early childhood educators is a key predictor of quality in early learning and child care programs.† A significant proportion of the current workforce is poorly educated and underqualified. As shown in Table 7, close to half of the child care providers in regulated programs have only a 54-hour orientation course.

1.1.1 Adopt the term **early childhood educators** to acknowledge the education, skills and important role this workforce plays in nurturing healthy children and building a healthy society.

Early childhood educators are not babysitters. Like teachers in the K-to-12 school system, they bring a wealth of knowledge, experience and talent to their profession. They deserve to be acknowledged as educators—not just child care “workers” or “assistants.”

* The March 2017 workforce numbers were provided to AECEA by the Ministry of Children’s Services. The workforce also includes 288 “Not Certified (Unassigned)” child care educators, which brings the total number to about 15,500.

The wage-related data for 2017 is from the Government of Alberta, “Incentives to Work in Child Care.”

† Flanagan and Beach, *Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Commission*, p. 62.

1.1.2 Replace the current three-level certification system (child development assistants, child development workers, child development supervisors) with the following classifications. At the same time, raise the minimum education requirement for early childhood educators across the board.

If educators of preschoolers are to merit the same respect and wages as educators of school-aged children, they must also have comparable levels of professional education. A fifty-four-hour course does not make someone a professional.

- The **early childhood educator I (ECE I)** classification requires a one-year certificate in early childhood education.
 - ECE I is a temporary classification intended to help workforce members transition to the new standard, which requires a two-year diploma in early childhood education.
- The **early childhood educator II (ECE II)** classification requires a two-year diploma in early childhood education.
 - ECE II is the new minimum standard for all early childhood educators in the regulated system.
- The **early childhood educator III (ECE III)** classification requires a two-year diploma in early childhood education plus post-diploma coursework in management and leadership.
 - ECE III is the new minimum standard for early childhood educators who work as program directors.
- The **early childhood educator IV (ECE IV)** level classifies educators who have an undergraduate degree in early learning and child care.
 - There is a need for early childhood educators who have higher levels of education, including master's and doctoral degrees. Further research is needed to

determine if the classification ECE IV is appropriate for early childhood educators with more than a bachelor's degree. A new classification category may be needed.

Education matters. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development notes that “better qualified staff support a higher quality pedagogy that contributes to improved outcomes for children and their families (OECD, 2012).”^{} Research shows that staff with a degree specializing in early childhood education have the greatest impact in creating high-quality early learning environments. “These staff are better able both to provide pedagogical leadership and to demonstrate the professional competencies linked to effective early learning and care practice than staff with lower level qualifications.”[†]*

- 1.2 Legislate and phase in a requirement for all early childhood educators who work in licensed and regulated child care programs to have, at minimum, **a two-year college diploma specifically in early childhood education—that is, certification as an ECE II.**

Research shows that having knowledge and skills specifically related to early childhood education is associated with better outcomes for children.[‡] Only 30% of Alberta’s early childhood education workforce has specific training, compared to 50% of Ontario’s. This is partly because current wages in Alberta do not provide fair compensation for staff investments in education and training.[§]

- 1.3 Legislate and phase in a requirement for all early childhood educators who work as program directors to be certified as **ECE IIIs**, a classification that requires **management and pedagogical leadership training in addition to a two-year diploma** specializing in early learning and child care.

^{*} Muttart Foundation and Rachel Langford, *Advancing the Educational Preparation*, p. 14.

[†] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

[‡] Flanagan and Beach, *Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Commission*, p. 62.

[§] Alberta Federation of Labour, “For Workers.”

*Researchers agree that managers need specialized training in leadership and administration, preferably at the degree level. This training should address topics such as pedagogy, learning quality, curriculum, staff performance, motivation and child development.**

- 1.4 Enforce the new minimum standards for all early childhood educators in the regulated child care system—including sectors that are currently exempt.

In a regulated system, all children should have the benefit of well-qualified staff—regardless of the child care setting. Family day home providers and providers of group family child care programs are currently exempt from Alberta’s requirements for certification.

- 1.5 Develop a timeline for implementing the new education standards. Phase in the new standards gradually—to give people time to upgrade their education to meet the new minimum requirements.
- 1.6 Legislate a requirement for early childhood educators to develop personalized professional learning plans that outline the pathways they will take to advance their education.
 - These learning plans must show how individuals will upgrade their education to meet the new minimum standards. For example, they must show how an early childhood educator plans to move from the interim minimum standard (ECE I certification) to the new, system-wide ECE II requirement and beyond (from a diploma to a degree, from a bachelor’s to a master’s, and so on).

* Muttart Foundation and Rachel Langford, *Advancing the Educational Preparation*, p. 16.

- 1.7 Eliminate the current provisions that allow educational equivalencies in lieu of specialized education.
 - 1.7.1 Implement a bridging plan to help child care providers whose certification is based on an educational equivalency to upgrade to the new standard.

A combination of early childhood specialization and higher education is considered essential for high-quality programs. “Teachers who have specific preparation, knowledge, and skills in child development and early childhood education are more likely to engage in warm, positive interactions with children, offer richer language experiences, and create more high-quality learning environments.”† In Alberta, persistent recruitment and retention issues have led to the recognition of equivalency qualifications. This is misguided. Recruitment and retention must be addressed by raising wages and providing adequate system supports, not by lowering standards.*

- 1.8 Provide multi-level support to help the existing workforce meet the new educational requirements while continuing to work.

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- 1.9.1 Develop templates to help early childhood educators create professional learning plans for upgrading their education to meet the new minimum standards and for pursuing post-secondary education over and above these standards.

Post-secondary sector

- 1.9.2 Plan, develop, equip and staff flexible, accessible education programs to help early childhood educators attain the new minimum standards. Develop new degree programs and advanced degree programs to meet the needs of students specializing in early learning and child care.

* Flanagan and Beach, *Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Commission*, p. 62, and the Muttart Foundation and Jane Bertrand, *In the Best Interests of Children*, pp. 10, 16.

† Standard 6: National Association for the Education of Young Children (US), cited by Flanagan and Beach, *Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Commission*, p. 62.

Government of Alberta

1.9.3 Provide bursaries and funding support to help early childhood educators pursue higher education.

Quality care can only be delivered by a well-educated, well-trained, well-qualified workforce that stays current with latest research and best practices in the field. Earning the required qualifications comes with a price. If early childhood educators are to undertake the education expected of a professional workforce, their investment of time and tuition dollars must be properly compensated with professional-level wages.

In 2017–2018, the average tuition for full-time undergraduate students in Alberta was \$5,269 for studies in education and \$5,247 for studies in the social and behavioural sciences. Using these figures as a guide, it would cost approximately \$5,300 for a child development assistant to upgrade to the new interim minimum certification as an ECE I, and an additional \$5,300 to upgrade to an ECE II level. These costs are prohibitive for staff who don't earn much more than minimum wage.*

1.9.4 Provide post-secondary institutions with funding for staff, program development and infrastructure to support the new minimum standards and meet the needs of students in the field of early learning and child care.

Workplaces

1.9.5 Provide paid release time to allow staff to upgrade their education.

* Statistics Canada Table 477-0021, "Weighted Average Tuition."

By way of comparison, Year 1 tuition at Norquest is \$5,250 for 2017–2018. Year 1 tuition at Lethbridge College is \$6,084.

Step 2: Make ongoing professional learning mandatory for all early childhood educators in the regulated system

2.1 Amend the Child Care Licensing Act and regulations. Legislate a requirement for ongoing professional learning for all early childhood educators in all sectors of the regulated system.

2.1.1 Over time, make ongoing professional learning a requirement for wage enhancement funding and for continued certification.

Supporting early childhood educators in ongoing professional learning is “integral to high-quality practice and better outcomes for children and their families.” Unfortunately, this important area is often neglected.*

A 2016 survey conducted by Public Interest Alberta found that 11% of child care operators offered no professional development for their staff—even in the form of reading material. Only three in 10 operators supported their staff in taking post-secondary courses, and only four in 10 provided paid time off for professional development. Seven in 10 operators provided on-site workshops or funding for staff to attend educational events.

2.2 Legislate a requirement for early childhood educators to develop annual professional learning plans.

- These learning plans must show what education, training, skills development or pedagogical development activities the individuals will undertake each year to improve their qualifications and maintain their certification status.

“There is growing evidence that a comprehensive and well-delivered, high-quality program of ongoing professional development, at an institutional or program level, provides positive benefits for staff and program quality.”†

* AECEA website, “Professional Learning” page.

† Muttart Foundation and Rachel Langford, *Advancing the Educational Preparation*, p 27.

- 2.3 Provide multi-level support to help early childhood educators meet the new mandatory professional learning requirements.

AECEA

- 2.3.1 Develop templates for early childhood educators to use in creating their annual professional learning plans.
- 2.3.2 Continue to administer the professional learning funding program on behalf of the Alberta government.

Government of Alberta

- 2.3.3 Provide adequate funding for ongoing professional learning. Ensure that this funding is accessible to all early childhood educators. Include preschool teachers, early childhood educators in approved family child care programs and early childhood educators who work in licensed and approved on-reserve child care programs; this part of the workforce is excluded from current grant programs.
- 2.3.4 Until 2024, when all early childhood educators will have at least a two-year diploma, require early childhood educators who do not yet have a diploma to use their professional learning funding for post-secondary coursework—not workshops.

Professional learning can take a variety of forms, ranging from post-secondary education to workshops and conferences or participation in professional learning communities. Research shows that relevant, well-planned professional learning can be inspiring and motivating. Early childhood educators who participate in ongoing professional learning tend to stay in the field and are better equipped to deal with the demanding, complex work they do each day.

- 2.3.5 Provide funding to allow workplaces to support their staff in pursuing ongoing professional learning.

AECEA, other non-profit organizations, the post-secondary sector

- 2.3.6 Plan and deliver a variety of professional learning opportunities—including courses, workshops, conferences and other events.

Workplaces

2.3.7 Give staff paid time off for ongoing professional learning.

The inherent structure of early learning and child care requires staff to be on the front line—meeting regulatory requirements for ratio. Because most programs operate with slim financial margins, staff have very little time outside of ratio time spent with children for professional learning opportunities.

- 2.4 Develop a mentorship program to support new graduates and new program managers.
- 2.5 Develop pedagogical leaders who can serve as workplace coaches and mentors to early childhood educators and practicum students. Develop a schedule for the training of pedagogical leaders. Launch the program by training 20 new leaders in the first year. Add 20 new leaders each year until 100 have been trained.

Step 3: Develop infrastructure to support the new standards for education and ongoing professional learning

All the proposals included in this step require significant public investment. In most cases, they also require ongoing core funding.

Overall Framework

- 3.1 Develop a comprehensive workforce strategy for Alberta's early childhood educators.

Post-secondary Infrastructure and Capacity

Post-secondary sector and Government of Alberta

- 3.2 Develop post-secondary courses and degree programs in early childhood education. Develop preparatory programs for early childhood educators who need additional support to help them enter post-secondary programs.
- 3.3 Develop the capacity for post-secondary institutions to offer these programs. Capacity includes facilities, equipment, resources and qualified teaching staff.
- 3.4 Develop flexible face-to-face and technology-based delivery models for early childhood education and professional learning programs.
- 3.5 Establish province-wide standards for post-secondary early childhood education programs so that students at different institutions get comparable levels of educational preparation.
- 3.6 Establish inter-institutional course and program transfer protocols. This will allow students who begin an early childhood education program at one publicly funded post-secondary institution to complete their program at another institution without having to make up courses.

In Alberta, 10 publicly funded post-secondary institutions currently offer a two-year child care diploma; 13 offer one-year certificate programs. Only one offers a bachelor's degree and one other offers an early childhood education post-degree program. No programs for more-advanced training in early learning and child care are available in Alberta, except through distance learning.

As early childhood educators upgrade their qualifications and as new students enter the field, publicly funded post-secondary institutions will need to plan and expand their capacity. They will also need to address the issue of program transferability. Currently, not all programs are transferable to other institutions.

Solid Pedagogy

Post-secondary sector, Government of Alberta, workplaces and other stakeholders

3.7 Adopt Alberta's early learning and child care curriculum framework (*Play, Participation, and Possibilities*) in all licensed and regulated child care programs in the province.

3.7.1 Embed the curriculum framework in all publicly funded post-secondary programs for early childhood educators.

3.7.2 Develop an implementation schedule and monitor progress.

3.7.3 Develop validation and performance measures related to the framework.

Alberta's early learning and curriculum framework is a complex and comprehensive document designed to be used by a well-educated workforce. Staff with modest educational qualifications will not have the capacity to follow the framework without additional foundational education and ongoing pedagogical support.

Core Competencies

AECEA and other stakeholders

3.8 Identify core **competencies** and **standards of practice** for the early childhood education profession. The latter will deal with early childhood educators' relationships and interactions with children and families, with other professionals and with the community.

Researchers have identified seven areas required for professional competence.*

- caring ethically
- applying an early years pedagogy based on knowledge of how children learn and develop
- working with curricular resources
- working with families
- supporting children with disabilities
- linking research to policy and practice
- communicating within a “democratic” community in which children, early childhood educators, parents and other stakeholders are valued and have a voice

* Muttart Foundation and Rachel Langford, *Advancing the Educational Preparation*, pp. 8–13.

Qualified early childhood educators provided quality child care

Quality child care **is not** babysitting. And early childhood educators are not babysitters. They are

- critical thinkers and researchers
- co-constructors of meaning, identity and values
- creators of possibilities and organizers of opportunities
- curious, open-minded, reflective professionals who embrace multiple perspectives and use pedagogical documentation tools to evaluate their work*

3.9 Develop a **code of ethics** for the profession of early childhood education.

3.10 Research the feasibility of enshrining the code of ethics in legislation.

AECEA, other stakeholders and the Government of Alberta

3.11 Introduce certification and credential maintenance requirements for early childhood educators.

AECEA

3.12 Explore the feasibility of establishing a professional self-regulatory college to support early childhood educators and raise the profile of the field.

A professional regulatory body ensures that standards of practice are met. In Ontario, the establishment of a regulatory college was fundamental for increasing wages and career opportunities for the province's early childhood educators. AECEA needs to undertake significant research and analysis before it can recommend whether or not a similar approach might be appropriate for Alberta. A hybrid model that includes both a regulatory college and a professional association is one of many options that needs to be explored.

* Adapted from Peter Moss, "Working with Uncertainty." The author uses the term "democratic" to describe these characteristics.

AECEA

- 3.13 Work toward the establishment of a professional organization for the early learning and child care workforce. Explore the feasibility of requiring all early childhood educators to be members of the association.

Doctors, lawyers, teachers, accountants and other Alberta professionals are required to belong to professional associations that represent their members' interests. Such associations can provide mentorship and professional learning opportunities or act as credentialing or disciplinary bodies.

AECEA needs to undertake new research to explore the feasibility of establishing a professional organization to represent early childhood educators. Until a significant portion of the workforce has attained a more professional level of education, establishing a professional organization may be premature.

System Planning

AECEA and other stakeholders

- 3.14. Gather reliable data on Alberta's early learning and child care workforce and on workforce challenges and needs.

Good data supports good decision-making

“Consistent collection of ECEC data is vitally important to ensure the best policy and program design, services planning, accountability of public funds, and evaluation of program effectiveness. The lack of good quality ECEC data means that meeting these objectives is increasingly difficult today.”

— Carolyn Ferns and Martha Friendly. *The State of Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2012*, p. 21.

Step 4: Address the issue of workforce remuneration

The development of a highly qualified professional workforce must go hand in hand with appropriate remuneration. But the workforce is only one element of an integrated child care system.

Appropriate remuneration requires far-reaching system-wide change supported by substantial public investment. Over the long term, this means that Alberta’s education system for preschool children must receive the same level of public funding as the province’s education system for school-aged children. Without such support, it is unlikely that Alberta’s early childhood educators will ever earn the living wages and benefits they deserve.

As AECEA refines its workforce development strategy, it will explore the feasibility of various funding and remuneration models.

Over time, it may be possible to replace Alberta’s current wage enhancement program with a salary grid that includes pension and other benefits. For now, wage enhancements are critical for the viability of the early learning and child care sector.

AECEA proposes that wage enhancements be increased as workforce education standards increase. Once early childhood educators in the province have attained the new minimum standard of certification as ECE IIs, they should receive wage enhancements greater than the current ceiling of \$6.62 per hour. (See Table 7 on p. 69.) ECE IIIs and ECE IVs should receive more substantial hourly wage enhancements than ECE IIs.

*“Day care workers earn less than zookeepers.” **

- 4.1 Increase public awareness of the importance of quality child care. Public recognition and support are critical for the increased public investment required to build a quality child care system.

Government of Alberta

- 4 .2 Increase hourly wage enhancements or develop a new funding model to reflect the new minimum education standards and new certification levels.

*“The key to quality early childhood care and education services lies in providing sufficient funding to pay adequate wages and benefits to staff.” **

* This is a paraphrase of P. Schom-Moffat’s classic line, from his 1984 study of child care wages (cited by Shani Halfon, Canada’s Childcare Workforce, p. 8).

Unless wages in the early childhood education sector are increased, there is no incentive for staff to pursue additional training or certification.

Good wages make it easier to attract and retain qualified staff

Studies show that higher levels of education and higher wages increase the quality and outcomes of child care programs. Higher wages reduce staff turnover and improve child-to-educator relationships. They also serve to attract better qualified, more experienced employees.[†]

AECEA

4.3 Research and explore the feasibility of various workforce funding and remuneration models.

Manitoba and Quebec offer pension plans for early childhood educators. Pension plans can serve as a recruitment incentive, help early learning and child care programs retain qualified staff and provide early childhood educators with a secure retirement.

^{*} Beach and Costigliola (2010), *Child Care Wages and a Quality Child Care System*, as cited in Flanagan and Beach, *Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Commission*, p. 71.

[†] Alberta Federation of Labour, "For Workers."

Work Plan to Support AECEA’s Ten-Year Framework for Professionalizing the Early Learning and Child Care Workforce (2017–2027)

AECEA’s ten-year workforce framework is one element of an integrated, high-quality child care system. As such, it includes strategies and actions outside the scope of the association’s mandate.

In the following table, tasks that are the responsibility of AECEA’s partners and stakeholders are shaded in green.

AECEA-specific tasks and outcomes are not shaded.

Milestones are shaded in blue.

Year 1: 2017–2018 and Year 2: 2018–2019

Framework	Completion Date	Action
Step 1 to Step 4	March 2019	<p>Launch community and stakeholder consultations to amend the Child Care Licensing Act and regulations. (AECEA created a multistakeholder Child Care Licensing Review Committee in 2016. Consultations are ongoing.)</p> <p>Develop recommendations. Solicit workforce support for the proposed recommendations.</p> <p>Present AECEA’s recommendations for legislative changes to government. AECEA’s recommendations include the following.</p> <p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Phase in new minimum standards for education and require specialization in early childhood education. – Require that, by 2024, all early childhood educators in the regulated system have at least a one-year certificate in early childhood education. (This is an interim qualification.) – Require that, by 2027, all early childhood educators in the regulated system have at least a two-year diploma in early childhood education. – Require that, by 2027, all early childhood educators who work as program directors or managers have a post-diploma certificate (six to eight credit courses) in organizational management and pedagogical leadership <i>in addition to</i> the standard minimum requirement of a two-year diploma or a degree in early learning and child care.

Framework	Completion Date	Action
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Enforce the new minimum standards for all early childhood educators in all licensed and approved child care programs, including programs that are currently exempt. (Early childhood educators in approved family child care and group family child care programs are currently exempt from Alberta’s requirements for certification.) – Require early childhood educators to develop professional learning plans that outline how they will upgrade their education to meet the new minimum requirements. <p>Classification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Adopt the term early childhood educators (ECEs). Replace the current three-level certification system with the following classifications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ECE I: one-year certificate in early childhood education (This is a temporary classification intended to help workforce members transition to the new minimum standard, which is ECE II classification.) – ECE II: two-year diploma in early childhood education – ECE III: two-year diploma in early childhood education plus post-diploma coursework in management and pedagogical leadership – ECE IV: undergraduate degree in early childhood education <p>Equivalencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Eliminate the educational equivalency process by 2020. Require all early childhood educators in the regulated system to have diplomas or degrees specializing in early learning and child care. <p>Professional learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Phase in mandatory annual professional learning for early childhood educators in the regulated system. – Require early childhood educators to develop annual professional learning plans. – Make ongoing professional learning mandatory for continued certification. <p>Professional Recognition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – As a condition of certification, require early childhood educators to be proficient in the core competencies required for high-quality, effective practice. – As a condition of certification, require early childhood educators to abide by a professional code of ethics.

Framework	Completion Date	Action
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increase public awareness of the importance of high-quality early learning and child care as a public good. Increase public awareness of the value of early childhood educators and the important work they do. <p>Professional Wages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Develop a new wage enhancement schedule or develop a new funding model that aligns with the new certification classifications.
Step 1	fall 2017	<p>Present recommendations for educational equivalency bridging to government. (These recommendations were developed by a stakeholder committee that included AECEA representatives.)</p> <p>Request that government adopt the recommendations.</p>
Step 3	April 1, 2017	Develop training to help child care programs adopt Alberta’s early learning and curriculum framework, <i>Play, Participation, and Possibilities</i> .
Step 3	ongoing to 2019	<p>Conduct pilot projects to introduce the curriculum framework.</p> <p>Adopt the implementation plans identified through the pilot projects.</p>
Step 2	ongoing	<p>Advocate for increased funding to support ongoing professional learning for child development supervisors.</p> <p>Advocate for an extension of the grant program to include supervisors in all regulated child care programs, including preschool programs, approved family child care programs, and licensed and approved child care programs on reserve.</p> <p>Advocate for increased funding to support ongoing professional learning for child development assistants and child development workers.</p>
Step 2	January 2018	Develop and submit a proposal for AECEA to manage (on behalf of Alberta Children’s Services) professional learning funding for all certified early childhood educators—child development supervisors, child development workers and child development assistants.
Step 2	ongoing	Continue to consult with the early learning and child care workforce—including preschool staff, approved family day home providers and staff in on-reserve child care programs—to explore how they would like to access professional learning funding and who should oversee and disburse this funding on their behalf.
Step 1 to Step 4	ongoing	<p>Advocate for core funding to support the new infrastructure needed for a high-quality early learning and child care system.</p> <p>Advocate for core funding to support AECEA’s workforce-related research and ongoing operations.</p>

Framework	Completion Date	Action
Step 1 to Step 4	ongoing	<p>Share the ten-year framework with AECEA members and with the early learning and child care workforce.</p> <p>Launch member-engagement and information-sharing consultations across Alberta.</p> <p>Advocate for funding to extend these consultations to more rural and remote parts of the province.</p>
Step 1 to Step 4	ongoing	<p>Consult with front-line early childhood educators to learn more about the workforce and to solicit input on how best to advance the profession.</p> <p>Gather and analyze additional workforce data to support planning and decision-making.</p>
Step 1 to Step 4	ongoing	<p>Continue to develop and refine a workforce development strategy.</p> <p>Continue to research and analyze issues related to the early learning and child care workforce.</p>
Step 2	April 1, 2018	<p>Provide professional learning funding to early childhood educators at all certification levels and in all program areas, including preschool staff, approved family day home providers and staff of licensed and approved on-reserve child care programs.</p>
Step 2	ongoing to 2027	<p>Administer professional learning funding on behalf of the Alberta government.</p>
Step 2	October 2018	<p>Develop a list of approved professional learning offerings for early childhood educators. Restrict professional learning funding to offerings on the approved list.</p>
Step 2	October 2018	<p>Develop standards and guidelines for presenters who deliver AECEA-approved professional learning to early childhood educators who receive AECEA-administered professional learning funding.</p> <p>Develop an application process for presenters.</p>
Step 1 to Step 4	June 2018	<p>Earmark government funding for infrastructure investment, including bursaries for upgrading, grants for professional learning and support for AECEA and other infrastructure associations.</p>
Step 3	October 2018	<p>Launch the process of developing new post-secondary education programs in early childhood education.</p> <p>Continue to develop and refine the curriculum framework.</p>
Step 3	March 31, 2019	<p>Work with publicly funded post-secondary institutions and with the early learning and child care community to support the development of 20 new pedagogical leaders.</p>

Framework	Completion Date	Action
Step 3	March 31, 2019	Work with the early learning and child care community to ensure that at least 20% of regulated child care programs have adopted the curriculum framework. Work with publicly funded post-secondary institutions to ensure that the curriculum framework has been embedded in their early learning and child care programs.
Step 1	March 31, 2019	Develop templates to help early childhood educators develop bridging plans for acquiring two-year early childhood educator diplomas, post-diploma certificates and degrees.
Step 1 to Step 4	March 31, 2019	Work with the government and other stakeholders to launch a public awareness campaign about the importance of early childhood educators in the delivery of high-quality child care.
Step 3	March 31, 2020	Work with the government and other stakeholders to develop a comprehensive workforce strategy for Alberta's early childhood educators.

Year 3: 2019–2020

Framework	Completion Date	Action
Step 2	April 1, 2019	Implement standards and guidelines for workshop and conference presenters who deliver AECEA-approved professional learning to early childhood educators who receive AECEA-administered professional learning funding.
Step 4	April 1, 2019	Launch a campaign to increase public awareness about the importance of quality child care delivered by qualified early childhood educators.
Step 2	March 31, 2020	Establish a professional learning advisory committee to plan strategy, evaluate processes, design performance measures and implement a professional learning program that complies with the proposed new legislative requirements.
Step 1	March 31, 2020	Milestones All early childhood educators in the regulated system have bridging plans that identify how they will meet the new standards for education. Staff begin their journeys to upgrade their education to meet the new standards. Funding and workplace resources are in place to support staff who need to upgrade to meet forthcoming legislative changes. The educational equivalency process has been eliminated.
Step 2	ongoing	On behalf of the Alberta government, administer professional learning funding for all early childhood educators.

Framework	Completion Date	Action
Step 3	March 31, 2020	Continue to work with publicly funded post-secondary institutions and with the early learning and child care community to support the development of an additional 20 new pedagogical leaders, bringing the total to 40.
Step 3	March 31, 2020	Adopt the curriculum framework in Alberta’s \$25-a-day early learning and child care centres.
Step 3	March 31, 2020	Continue to work with the early learning and child care community and with the post-secondary sector to ensure that at least 40% of regulated child care programs have adopted the curriculum framework.
Step 2	March 31, 2020	Develop templates for early childhood educators to use in creating annual plans for professional learning.
Step 3	March 31, 2020	Work with members and stakeholders to define competencies, standards of practice and a code of ethics for early childhood educators.
Step 2	ongoing	Work with members and stakeholders to develop a mentorship program for new early childhood educators and new program managers.

Year 4: 2020–2021

Framework	Completion Date	Action
Step 4	March 31, 2021	As part of a comprehensive work force strategy, research the feasibility of establishing provincial salary and benefit guidelines (including a pension plan) for early childhood educators. Investigate the feasibility of moving to a salary grid to replace the current model of wage enhancements. Consult with stakeholders to develop recommendations.
Step 3	March 31, 2021	Research and explore the feasibility of establishing a professional self-regulatory college responsible for setting and maintaining standards for early childhood educators. Research and explore the feasibility of establishing a professional association for early childhood educators. Consult with stakeholders to develop recommendations.

Framework	Completion Date	Action
Step 1 to Step 4	March 31, 2021	<p>Milestones</p> <p>New legislation is in force. New minimum education standards and professional learning requirements are phased in.</p> <p>Early childhood education is recognized as a profession.</p> <p>Society recognizes the importance of high-quality early learning and child care as a public good. Early childhood educators are valued for the important work they do.</p> <p>Investments in the system are in place.</p>
Step 3	March 31, 2021	<p>Milestones</p> <p>Publicly funded post-secondary institutions have the funding and capacity they need to meet the educational needs of Alberta’s early learning and child care workforce.</p> <p>Province-wide standards are in place for publicly funded post-secondary early learning and child care programs. Inter-institutional program transfer protocols are in place.</p>
Step 2	March 31, 2021	<p>Milestones</p> <p>All early childhood educators in the regulated system have annual professional learning plans.</p>
Step 3	March 31, 2021	Continue to work with post-secondary institutions and with the early learning and child care community to support the development of an additional 20 new pedagogical leaders, bringing the total to 60.
Step 3	March 31, 2021	Continue to work with the early learning and child care community and with the post-secondary sector to ensure that at least 60% of regulated child care programs have adopted the curriculum framework.
Step 3	March 31, 2021	Launch a mentorship program for new early childhood educators and new program managers.

Year 5: 2021–2022

Framework	Completion Date	Action
Step 4	March 31, 2022	Develop recommendations for sustainable supply-side funding to ensure that early childhood educators earn a living wage with appropriate benefits. Present these recommendations to government.
Step 3	March 31, 2021	Develop recommendations for setting, monitoring and maintaining professional credentials and standards for early childhood educators. Present these recommendations to government.
Step 3	March 31, 2022	Continue to work with publicly funded post-secondary institutions and with the early learning and child care community to support the development of an additional 20 new pedagogical leaders, bringing the total to 80.
Step 3	March 31, 2022	Work with the early learning and child care community and with the post-secondary sector to ensure that at least 80% of regulated child care programs have adopted the curriculum framework.

Year 6: 2022–2023

Framework	Completion Date	Action
Step 3	March 31, 2023	Continue to work with publicly funded post-secondary institutions and with the early learning and child care community to support the development of an additional 20 new pedagogical leaders, bringing the total to 100.
Step 3	March 31, 2023	Work with the early learning and child care community and with the post-secondary sector to ensure that all regulated child care programs have adopted the curriculum framework and use appropriate pedagogical practices.

Year 7: 2023–2024

Framework	Completion Date	Action
Step 1	March 31, 2024	Milestones All early childhood educators in the regulated system have ECE I certification. That is, they have at least a one-year certificate in early childhood education.
Step 4	March 31, 2024	Milestones The compensation system for early childhood educators recognizes their education, experience and value to society.

Year 8: 2024–2025 and Year 9: 2025–2026

Framework	Completion Date	Action
Step 3	March 31, 2026	<p>Milestones</p> <p>Early childhood educators are members of a professional association that represents their interests.</p> <p>Professional standards for early childhood educators are established and monitored by an appropriate regulatory body.</p>

Year 10: 2026–2027

Framework	Completion Date	Action
Step 1 to Step 4	March 31, 2027	<p>Milestones</p> <p>All early childhood educators in the regulated system have ECE II certification. That is, they have at least a two-year diploma in early childhood education.</p> <p>All early childhood educators in the regulated system comply with a professional code of ethics.</p> <p>All early childhood educators in the regulated system have the core competencies they need for effective, high-quality practice.</p> <p>All program directors and managers have ECE III certification, which requires additional training in management and pedagogical leadership. This training can be a post-diploma certificate (six to eight courses) or an undergraduate degree in early learning and child care.</p> <p>Bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degree programs in early childhood education are available at post-secondary institutions across the province.</p> <p>All early childhood educators in the regulated system have opportunities for ongoing professional learning.</p> <p>Early childhood educators are recognized as professionals, with professional wages and benefits.</p>