ALBERTA ASSOCIATION ON GERONTOLOGY

Improving the Lives of Older Albertans

AAG CULTURE CHANGE PROJECT

ENHANCING SENIORS' SERVICES WORKFORCE

THE CONDITIONS OF WORK ARE THE CONDITIONS OF CARE AND SERVICE –

THINK TANK Dec 5, 2022

ONE YEAR PROGRESS REPORT… STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATIVE COMMITTEE DISCUSSION, December 13, 2023

--Report prepared by AAG January 31, 2024 –

1. Progress Review Process

o   The Think Tank in December 2022 was unique with its cross-sector focus. The logic model and resulting recommendations identified changes required in process and structure to enable 4 targeted outcomes:
    a. *Retain* employees with sufficient staffing and funding for success.
    b. *Develop work environments with empowered teams*, with flexibility in service delivery.
    c. *Ensure/evolve workforce supply.*
    d. *Implement new macro human resource management practices.*

o   Priorities for action were identified for the next two years, as part of a longer-term journey of change, to create an environment for improved workforce results.

o   AAG undertook a one-year review of progress in relation to action set out in the Workforce Think Tank Report as accountability in relation to value of the Think Tank Process.

o   This review took place at the December 13th, 2023, Stakeholder Collaborative Committee. There were three inputs into the One Year Review reflecting the multi-party expectations from the Think Tank:
    ▪ Action taken by Ministries regarding areas identified for their leadership.
       --with a presentation from the Ministry of Health related to work of the Continuing Care Workforce Working Group.
    ▪ Input from Educators, based on a survey of actions related to their responsibilities.
    ▪ Input at the meeting from Association Leaders regarding their work in support of workforce priorities.

o   A summary report was presented at the January 17th, 2024 Stakeholder Collaborative Committee, including recommendations for continued action. Next steps were outlined for continued multi-party leadership, along with opportunities for continued cross-sector dialogue, learning, and action.
    ▪ Recommendations are well-aligned with the expectations for the workforce priority identified in Alberta's Plan for Restructuring and Alberta's Workforce Strategy (November 2023).

o   This Report has been prepared by AAG based on the Summary Report presented on Jan 17th, 2024.

2. Progress in Relation to Think Tank Recommendations

2.1 Action in Relation to Think Tank Recommendations

o   *Action has taken place/is taking place in relation to all priority recommendations in the Think Tank Report*. This work is foundational to creating conditions which will allow improvement in workforce retention and attraction.
    ▪ A summary of actions is outlined in Table 1 of the Attachment to this Report.

- *SCC members were/are encouraged by the scope of action.*

- *Concerted action needs to continue to address workforce issues in the seniors' serving sector: hiring gaps continue; changes in acute care and primary care services impact supply of the workforce for community and continuing care, calling for system-wide thinking and action; service delivery expectations and sustainability of providers are at risk. Rural providers have greater challenges with smaller labor pools and access to housing for employees and they lack economies of scale in planning staff utilization with current funding and accountability requirements.*

2.2 Alignment of Think Tank Recommendations with Alberta's Workforce Strategy

- A central principle for Alberta's plan for restructuring the health care system (Nov 2023) is to support an empowered workforce across the four pillars of the new organization.
  - Table 2 in the Attachment to this Report provides an illustration of the alignment of priority recommendations in the Think Tank Report to the five pillars for action in Alberta's Health Workforce Report.

- This analysis demonstrates strong alignment of priorities, with opportunities to continue work to strengthen the seniors' serving sector workforce as work continues across all sectors.

3. Action to Address Continuing Workforce Stresses

- The need for continued cross-sector action is clear. Workforce issues are complex and expected to be long-lasting.

- Discussion at the January SCC provided a framework for continued action and investment (see Table 3 of the Attachment to this Report).
  - Momentum continues with initiatives currently underway, across all areas of responsibility.

  - With respect to new areas for attention:
    a. System design challenges remain areas for attention by the Ministry of Health.
    b. Work announced by Alberta Seniors, Community & Social Services to inventory the workforce in the community-based seniors serving sector in early 2024 will create a valuable foundation for further work to strengthen this sector.
    c. The importance of concerted multi-party action to review Health Care Aide policies and practices needs to be emphasized given the importance of these staff members to quality of community and continuing care. This can include review and strengthening of cross-ministerial work with Education regarding preparation of high school students for health care careers.
    d. The recommendation to invest in technology to support the workforce is brought forward for action; this is a new and recurring theme, nationally and globally, given opportunities for service modernization enabled by technology innovation to support retaining, attracting, and evolving the workforce.

- *The goal remains to create conditions whereby employers experience increasing retention and recruitment success and employees can share experiences as an "empowered workforce" (the goal of Alberta's Restructuring Plan).*
  - This will take continuation of current plans, as well as development of new plans, implemented across sectors through collaborative efforts.
  - The ability to move from anecdotal reporting by employers to system-wide metrics regarding human resource status is a related need.

4. Summary Reflections

- The Workforce Think Tank in December 2022 was unique in its cross-sectoral focus and comprehensiveness of multi-party action planning.

- *The One Year Progress Report as of December 2023 demonstrates continuation of the approach of the Think Tank, with actions underway related to priority recommendations and evidence of a culture of cross-sector work.*
  - This provides promise for the success of continued work to address workforce issues.
  - This will be strengthened by Alberta's expectations for an empowered workforce and the presence of an Alberta Workforce Strategy to support work within pillars such as continuing care, coordination of effort and change across the four pillars for Alberta's health system, and collaboration with community services within Alberta Seniors, Community and Social Services.

- AAG looks forward to monitoring continued progress related to workforce priorities and to identifying new opportunities to support cross-sector learning and action.

1. Progress in Relation to Think Tank Recommendations: Summary of Actions (XX-Underway or In Development) as reported December 2023 meeting.

Table 1: Progress in Relation to Think Tank Recommendations

THINK TANK RECOMMENDATIONS (*Priorities-2023/24 & 2024/25)	Responsibility				Status-Dec 2023		
	Govt (AH +AHS as req'd)	Govt, Sector Leads, Educ	Sector Leads & Providers	Educa-tors	Underway	In Develop-ment	Priority to Discuss
Outcome 1: Retain Employees with Sufficient Staffing & funding for success to increase viability & value of seniors' serving workplaces.							
1.Commit to multi-year increases to sustain current services as of Apr 1, 2023* a.Cont. Care Homes: 4.5 hours/day for LTC (longtermcare); up to 4 hours/day in DSL (designated Supportive Living(b. Home Care: increased funding per hour with new contracting methods & increased total funded hours c. Increased funding to sustain community-based seniors serving sector	XX-Health SCSS				XX XX	# of Funded hours (4 may be low) Contracting Methods	XX
2.Sustain funding increases with long-term policy frameworks that a. Support cross-sector viability of seniors serving organizations **that recognize current wage/benefit costs & operating costs** b.Encourage **flexible funding approaches for different operating environments & flexibility in accountabilities to support a focus on outcomes***	As above ..AH Funding Adv Cmte				XX	Recog of Business Costs XX	
3. Reduce admin burden of reporting & inspections thro new Continuing Care Act regulations, standards and consolidation of inspections	XX						XX
4.Develop plan to test, adopt & fund technology that supports the workforce		XX					XX
5.Develop work environments to enhance retention*—such as --program/unit-based delivery models for defined populations --leadership retention (eg education, work redesign, admin support) --staff recognition & support, co-designed with employees			XX			XX	
6. Mobilize Change thro sharing exemplars		XX					XX
7.Promote inclusion & communities of support, in collab with residents/clients & family care partners in support of culture change*			XX				XX
2. Outcome 2: Develop work environments with empowered employees/teams & flexibility in service delivery with momentum to evolve service delivery							
1.Develop, fund & measure the success of innovation projects that optimize role clarity & practice capability of employees & teams* (eg care centre redevelopment, home care RFP, social prescribing, small homes) ensuring attention to issues identified in Outcome 1	XX	XX			XX	XX	
2. Move from standardized funding & accountabilities to support program-specific process & outcomes*	XX	XX				XX	
3. Remove system design barriers that prevent optimal teams & cost-effective service delivery* **(**case management -Supported Living 4; lodge home care model)	XX						XX
4.Moblize system learning from innovation initiatives		XX					XX
5.Create collab structures that lead to a better understanding of service contexts/culture & help close education to practice gaps*			XX	XX			XX
6. Evolve educ curriculum* to reflect changing service expectations & enhance faculty capacity to focus on unique contributions of work in the seniors' sector				XX		XX	
7. Implement culture change & design of work @ program/unit level, with residents and family caregivers *			XX				XX

RECOMMENDATIONS	Responsibility				Status-Dec 2023		
	Govt (AH with AHS as req'd)	Govt, Sector Leads/Educ	Sector Leads & Providers	Educa-tors	Underway	In Develop-ment	Priority to Discuss
Outcome 3: Ensure/evolve workforce supply with innovation in recruitment, robust education programs and certifications to sustain a productive workforce in a changing world of work.							
1. Support recruitment across the seniors serving sectors thro changes to **funding and compensation** (outcome 1**) that leads to improved working conditions & more positive messages about the value of work**.	XX				XX	XX	XX
2. **Reduce barriers to supply of Health Care Aides *(**workplace reputation, admission criteria, financial support, certification exam processes)		XX		XX	XX	XX	XX
3. **Remove barriers to timely certification of international graduates*** by regulators & prep for workplace.	XX	XX		XX	XX		
4. **Increase access to education programs*** thro educator/provider initiatives including delivery of programs locally with providers			XX	XX	XX		XX
5. **Update education curriculae*** to enhance practice readiness				XX		XX	
6. **Profile seniors' serving sector careers & career paths** using positive messages & role modelling			XX	XX			XX
7. **Make diversity, equity & inclusion hallmarks of seniors' serving workplaces*,** with benchmarks to monitor progress			XX			XX	
8. **Engage with residents/clients, family care partners & employees to reach out to local communities, schools & individuals of all ages to enrich services, increase volunteerism & enhance recruitment.**			XX				XX
Outcome 4: Implement new macro human resource practices for the changing world of work to optimize viability & sustainability of the seniors' serving sector.							
1.**Examine student financial incentives*** to increase enrollment generally & with incentives for rural & remote areas.		XX			XX	XX	XX
2.**Develop common HR metrics to track progress**		XX					XX
3. **Develop strategic Health & Human Resource Plan for the seniors' serving sector,** incorporating new service delivery models, graduated skills & knowledge certification, on-the-job-training, attracting older individuals, immigrants, etc		XX				XX-CBSS	XX
4. **Examine inter-sectoral collaboration like common casual pools,** harmonization of key contract requirements, etc.			XX				XX

**SCC SUMMARY ASSESSMENT, DECEMBER 13TH, 2023: The progress being made is to be applauded. However, there is continued angst regarding the inability to fill vacancies across the system. The reliance on caregivers to fill cracks in support is not sustainable. Work needs to continue the initiatives begun in 2023 and in development for 2023 (columns 1 & 2); action needs to be planned on priority initiatives that have yet to take place (column 3).

2. Think Tank Momentum Powers Impact for Alberta's Workforce Strategy

- In March 2023, Alberta published a Workforce Strategy with an initial focus on addressing needs for sustainable development of health homes. As outlined below, Think Tank Priorities align strongly with the five pillars of Alberta's Workforce Strategy.

THINK TANK PRIORITIES by RESPONSIBILITY: Strategies and Actions	HEALTH WORKFORCE PILLARS FOR ACTION				
	Retain & Support -4 objectives	**Attract** -3 objectives	**Grow** -2 objectives	**Strengthen** -2 objectives	**Evolve** -3 objectives
• Alberta Health & Alberta Seniors, Community & Social Services					
1. Create conditions for Positive & Competitive Workplaces with Increased Staffing & Funding 1.*1Address long-standing issues by increasing the "basic funding pool"* a. Alta Health: 2-Year Plan: Implement MNP Recommendations: 4.5 Hrs for LTC; 4 Hrs for DSL AND update funding to acknowledge current costs b.Seniors Comm & Soc Services: Increase funding for community-based supports & housing for competitive hiring & retention *1.2 Develop policy framework that supports cross-sector viability & flexible funding*	1.Improve support for workforce well-being & safety 4. Create environments that help retain a skilled workforce	**2**. Attract & retain health care workforce to rural, remote, & underserved areas 3. Provide fair & competitive compensation			
2.As a second area of investment, mobilize the transformation agenda with innovation initiatives with teams & sustainability *2.1 Implement innovation initiatives (with funding addressed as above) with system-wide learning* a. New Home Care Models in collab with partners (incl care + housing) b. Increase community-based service capacity *2.2 Implement innovation opportunities for FBCC*—promising practices with small home designs supported by funding for sustainability & outcome-focused accountability. *2.3 Assess implementation of social prescribing projects for financial sustainability & support other initiatives that strengthen community-based services* (eg MAPs) *2.4 Examine opportunities related to a technology-innovation* strategy that supports the workforce	4. Create environments that help retain a skilled workforce	**2**. Attract & retain health care workforce to rural, remote, & underserved areas		**1**. Refine roles, responsibilities, & processes for pro-active health workforce planning	1. Support & enable innovative, more sustainable models of care 2.Implement tools & processes to optimize use of staff 3. Leverage digital tools to increase access to care
• Service Provider Leadership: Change Culture for Person-centered Service and Positive Workplaces					
3.1 *Culture Change-engage employees in desired service vision, redesign work teams, remove barriers to support engagement & team work* **3.2** *Workplace Culture & leadership development* **3.3** *Enhance Retention of New Employees: DEI as a hallmark of the workplace; strengthened on-boarding* **3.4 Create "communities of support"**--residents, families, volunteers, local communities	1. Increase support for workplace wellbeing & safety 3. Build more diverse, equitable & inclusive workplaces				
• Collaboration between Government, Educators, Regulators, and Service Providers: Remove Barriers to Increasing Supply of Seniors' Services Workers					
4.1 Timely Certification of International Grads *4.2 Review Barriers to HCA Graduate Availability* *4.3 Expand access to Education Programs (at schools; rural & remote)* *4.4 Develop new messaging to promote seniors' services work*		**1**.Increase opport for internationally educ health care workforce 2.Attract & retrain healthcare workers to rural, remote & underserved areas	1.Grow provinces' post-secondary capacity to educate		

Table 2: Alignment of Think Tank Priorities and the Pillars for Action in Alberta's Workforce Strategy

3. Recommendations for Continued Action: Ministries, Providers, Educators, Cross-Sector Collaboration

Table 3: Continued Action to Strengthen Seniors' Servicing Workforce (with bolded descriptors reflecting pillars of Alberta's Workforce Plan)	
Opportunity to Build on Current Initiatives	**Areas for Discussions & New Action Plans**
Alberta Health	
1. **Continuing Care Workforce Working Group—to Retain & Support & Attract** As the initial work of the Committee is completed, look forward to implementation plans, communication strategies and next steps.	**Retain, Support & Attract**: Will the Working Group evolve to a 2 year initiative to address outstanding items such as final funding strategies, system design @ case management, home care funding model, workforce planning PLUS other initiatives identified by the Working Group? **Strengthen the Workforce** with new service delivery models & funding for innovation initiatives like small homes, team-focused home & community care. What will the approach be for knowledge mobilization & systemic learning?
2. **Funding Allocation Model Review & Advisory Strategies To Retain & Support & Attract.** Appreciate work is underway; see above comments re the importance of an implementation and communication plan.	**Retain & Support and Attract and Evolve the Workforce with investment in Technology Innovation.** What new structures, processes, and investment will be required to mobilize recommendations related to technology innovation and investment?
3. **Continuing Care Legislation Implementation Strategy to Support the Workforce** Look forward to seeing next steps in the redesign of reporting and inspection requirements,, with the hope that there will be an ability to streamline administrative processes	
4. **Cross-Ministerial work with Education to Grow the Workforce** Strong interest in seeing impact from demonstration initiatives to support HCA (Health Care Aide) education in high schools with expansion as possible	
Alberta Seniors, Community and Social Services	
Collaboration with HAA (Healthy Aging Alberta) re their workforce strategy-to **Retain, Support & Attract**	**Grow and Evolve.** Strategies to fulfill mandate letter re job attraction strategy that raises awareness for young Albertans & adults change careers of the professions available including pathways for education and training.
Educators and Partners	
Continue to strengthen curriculum & practicum relationships with expanded rural initiatives —**to grow supply** & **strengthen the workforce (cross-reference Educators report)**	**Attract and Grow.** Strong interest in further review of Health Care Aide recruitment incentives & student supports, including a focus on rural, international, & indigenous students, along with a link to the school-based initiatives. What is the forum for this?
Providers/Association Leaders	
High engagement & action as possible to implement workforce changes to evolve **& strengthen workplace cultures**, as supported by new funding and new service delivery models—to retain and attract employees	**Attract, Support and Evolve**. Association leadership to support member action and communication of ministry changes; profile new messages re careers & opportunities. Learn from initiatives by ASCHA re workplace learning & certifications
Cross -Sector Collaboration	
DEI as a Hallmark of Community & Continuing Care **to retain & attract & grow -** Support strong participation in Diversity Community Forum—March 6th,2024 to advance implementation of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion strategies.	**Attract & Grow** Health Care Aides (HCA) : Examine progress to date; consider next steps including new models for laddering and recruitment and retention incentives (like Ontario); monitor impact of changes to regulation of HCA's
Recognize & profile direct service provider exemplars with the new Vivien Lai Change Maker Awards (Jan-April Nominations)—to **retain, attract & support**	**Strengthen and Support Caregivers as partners in Care**: *Propose Provincial Caregiver Strategy* to Coordinate organizational supports, identify linkages & policy gaps, profile support.
	Retain, Attract & Strengthen the workforce *Cross-Sector -provincially and locally.* Develop Communication Strategies as a follow-up to the Workforce Task Force including messages re careers in community and continuing care; provide high school entry options; rural engagement sessions. Create momentum with publicized action.