

British Columbia Care Economy Workforce Strategy Project

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Background

- In 2022, Cabinet approved a 10-year skills training policy framework and the implementation of a three-year Future Ready Skills Plans (Future Ready)
- Concurrently, senior social sector officials received anecdotal evidence suggesting competition between different provincially-funded employers for limited labour
- Concern competition between ministry, Crown agency and third-party service providers would fill gaps in one area while creating gaps in others
- Ministry led cross-ministry initiative to define BC's Care Economy, better understand interrelationships between sub-sectors and identify “high mobility” occupations
- Future Ready will include funding to establish dedicated team to develop Care Economy Workforce Strategy.

Characteristics of Care Economy

- Emerging public policy area first articulated by the International Labour Organization in 2018
- “Full Life Cycle” human services including:
 - Child Care; Education (Primary/Secondary); Health Care; Mental Health and Substance Use Care; Elder Care; and Social Services
- Formal (paid) and informal (unpaid) work
- Direct (e.g., nurturing) and indirect (e.g., housecleaning)
- Common theme is that “Care Work” contributes to well-being of current and future populations

Framing Care Economy Occupations



Formality of Role in Care Economy

The broad definition of the care economy which supports the true demand of citizens is comprised of:

- The **Formal (or Paid)** Care Economy
- The **Informal (Unpaid)** Care Economy



For the purposes of analysis, focus will be on the formal (paid) care economy



Typologies of Care Workers

To meet the service delivery objectives, the Care Economy is comprised of four kinds of workers:

- **Care Occupations** in **care industries** (e.g., doctors)
- **Care Occupations** in **Non-Care industries** (e.g., nurse at a mining company)
- **Non-Care Occupations** in **care industries** (e.g., Janitor at LTC facility)
- **Domestic workers** providing care to households (e.g., Babysitter)

Observations

- Approximately 25% of Care Economy consists of non-care occupations
 - Potentially overlook lower education, lower skill occupations that are still critical to delivery public services (e.g., cleaners, admin, food services, etc.)
- Literature conceives of the Care Economy as a continuum but governments tend to compartmentalize around functions
 - Connection/transfer points are not well articulated or understood
- Program design, service offerings and delivery models drive labour force demand and citizen expectations
- The informal Care Economy impacts labour force supply; particularly women who bear
- Many Care Economy occupations are heavily female dominated

Why We Need to Think Differently

- Demographics created shift to employee-driven labour market; particularly for specialized occupations
- Strategies focused on increasing labour supply are necessary but will not ultimately “solve” the problem
- Managing demand through service innovation can enable employers to get the most out of the workforce they have
- The Province requires greater awareness of the interrelationships between sectors within Care Economy to consider broader implications

Initial Focus Areas for Strategy Development

- Improve understanding of Care Economy service delivery landscape
- Build relationships with internal and external partners with a focus on third-party social service organizations
- Identify labour supply challenges and propose short, mid and long-term solutions
- Analyze service delivery models and explore innovation to get the most out of existing labour pool
- Develop customized Care Economy labour market data and information to support decision-making

Social Services Sector Workforce Working Group

- Social Services Sector Round Table endorsed the creation of the Workforce Working Group in Spring 2023
- The Working Group represents a cross-section of social services sector individual and umbrella organizations
 - Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC
 - Association of Service Providers for Education and Career Training
 - BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres
 - BC General Employees Union
 - Federation of Community Social Services
 - Provincial Association of Residential and Community Agencies
- Working group provides an “on the ground perspective” on provincial research, analysis and proposed workforce initiatives

Discussion Themes

- Current system reflects thinking from 20 years ago. Will Government establish a new policy vision going forward?
- System views social services organizations as contractors where they view themselves primarily as community organizations
- Corporate services capability and capacity varies across sector but no consensus whether third party provision would address the challenge
- Social services sector has always been “training ground” for others but the rate of turnover is much higher now
- Preparation of new entrants is not as strong as 10 years ago. Adding more post-secondary seats may just create more “unready” practitioners

Discussion Themes (Cont.)

- Not constructive to simply critique existing education/training system; look for ways to become more involved in setting direction with other partners
- Several social sector occupations are similar but not standardized; suggest focusing on smaller subset to establish common occupational profiles
- Opportunity to work across social sector, settlement services and WorkBC to create to encourage immigrants to enter Care Economy
- Interest in partnering on project to quantify the impact of “administrative burden” on the service delivery capacity of organizations

School to Work Transition Training Pilot Project

- Working group agreed with provincially funded Sector Labour Market Plan research studies suggesting new entrants are not “job ready”
- Post-secondary institutions indicate their mandate is to teach theory and proper academic practice; not employment readiness
- More effective school to work transition can increase employee retention while reducing burden on existing staff
- SDPR intends to co-design and implement a School to Work Transition Pilot Project in 2023/24 and evaluate results in 24/25
- This proposal will inform a feasibility analysis on the concept of a social services sector “Learning Hub” funded and administered by a third party

Employment Services Sub-Sector

- The Care Economy consists of several sub-sectors (i.e., childcare, education, health, social services, etc.)
- Broad labour market and workforce challenges apply to all sub-sectors but each also has specific challenges
- Province has not historically considered workforce challenges of third-party service delivery organizations
- Difficult to plan the future without understanding the present
- ELMSD's direct relationship with service providers represents a unique opportunity to better understand workforce challenges

What's Next?

- Intent is to develop and deploy an initial workforce survey for employment service providers
- Will keep initial survey relatively short and high-level so it is not too onerous but will provide robust baseline information
- Notional survey launch in January; could adjust based on input from providers and ELMSD staff

QUESTIONS

Small Group Discussions

- **Question 1:** Do the broader Care Economy and social services sector working group themes resonate? Why or why not? Is there anything missing?
- **Question 2:** What are the most pressing labour market and workforce challenges your organization faces? What are you doing to address them? What non-compensation actions could the Province consider that may help?
- **Question 3:** How do you see labour market, operational and service delivery drivers evolving over the next five years? How do you think these potential changes impact your workforce?