

Evaluation of Early Learning and Child Care Centres



FINAL REPORT – YEAR ONE (2017-2018)

June 1, 2018

Prepared by: R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd.



Contact Information:
Eleanor Hamaluk,
Executive Vice President Research
R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd.
#300 - 10621 100 Ave.
Edmonton, AB T5J 0B3
Phone: (780) 448-9042 ext. 223
Fax: (780) 448-9047
E-mail: e.hamaluk@malatest.com
Web: www.malatest.com



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Government of Alberta (GoA) has provided operational grant funding to Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Centres to better support access to, and affordability of, quality child care spaces in Alberta. As part of the grant agreement, each ELCC Centre is required to participate in an evaluation of the ELCC Centre Initiative. The evaluation, which is being undertaken over three-years, is intended to assess the relevance and performance (implementation, outcomes and sustainability) of the ELCC Centre Initiative.

This report provides the findings from the Year 1 evaluation. The data sources used to conduct the evaluation include:

- A review of Children’s Services (CS)-provided administrative data;
- Site visits to ELCC Centres, including interviews with ELCC Centre supervisors (n=18), ELCC educators (n=45) and focus groups with parents/caregivers (n=103 participants);
- Interviews with ELCC Centre partners (n=24), ELCC Curriculum Framework pedagogical partners (pedagogical partners hereinafter) (n=15) and Getting Ready for Inclusion Today (GRIT) coaches (n=11);
- Interviews with Comparison Centre supervisors (n=20);
- A survey of ELCC educators (n=198)¹; and
- A survey of parents/caregivers (n=294 for ELCC Centres and n=227 for Comparison Centres)².

Additionally, to explore what would happen in the absence of the ELCC Centre Initiative, the evaluation involved a comparison group of 22 non-ELCC Centres. The data sources used for the Comparison Centres included interviews with Comparison Centre supervisors and a survey of parents/caregivers.

When interpreting the findings presented in this report, the following considerations should be taken into account:

- 19 of the 22 ELCC Centres were open as of March 31, 2018;
- Administrative data are for 19 of the 22 ELCC Centres;
- For ELCC Centres, data collection from interviews, surveys and focus groups are for 18 of the 22 ELCC Centres; and
- For Comparison Centres, data collection from interviews are for 20 of the 22 Comparison Centres and data collection from the parent/caregiver survey are for 18 of the 22 Comparison Centres.

Impact on Family and Child Well-Being

The ELCC Centre Initiative is positively impacting family and child well-being. The quality of care at ELCC Centres is providing children with a solid foundation for their growth and development, advancing children’s growth and development and improving children’s behavior. Additionally, the ELCC Centre Initiative is enabling parents/caregivers to return to school or work and to exercise more freedom of choice regarding their career and work arrangements. It is also reducing parents/caregivers’ stress and providing them with peace of mind as well as contributing to reducing the financial burden of daycare that families’ face; thereby enabling them to make ends meet, pay off debts, save for the future and afford to do fun activities with their children.

¹ Survey percentages are out of the full base of 198 respondents unless otherwise stated.

² Survey percentages are out of the full base of 294 respondents for ELCC Centres and 227 respondents for Comparison Centres unless otherwise stated.

While both ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and Comparison Centre parents/caregivers reported that licensed child care has improved their quality of life, increased their labour force attachment and increased their children's skills, abilities, confidence and socialization, the parent/caregiver survey results suggest that the ELCC Centre Initiative potentially has a larger impact on these elements of well-being than licensed child care in a Comparison Centre. Through the survey of parents/caregivers, those who had children enrolled in an ELCC Centre or a Comparison Centre indicated that the quality of child care was the main contributor to the impacts of child care on their family and children's well-being.

Improved Accessibility

The accessibility of child care has been improved by creating 362³ net new licensed child care spaces in ELCC Centres (136 spaces in 13 'existing' ELCC Centres and 226 spaces in six 'new' ELCC Centres), which is below the proposed target 636 net new spaces (based on 22 ELCC Centres); co-locating 12 unique ELCC Centres with a Parent Link Centre, a Parent Link Centre Outreach program, other child care programs (for school age children) or a school; supporting child care in rural communities through 10 ELCC Centres (including five that are located in rural communities); and offering flexible child care hours at 11 ELCC Centres. Between March 2017 and March 2018, the number of children enrolled in ELCC centres has increased by 72% from 729 to 1,251; this includes an increase of 293 enrollments in 13 'existing' ELCC Centres, which exceeds the proposed target of 78 additional enrollments in existing ELCC Centres (based on 22 ELCC Centres).

According to the parent/caregiver survey, about 4 in 10 respondents said it took them less than one month to three months to secure a space at their child care centre (43% at ELCC Centres and 39% at Comparison Centres).⁴ ELCC Centre supervisors reported that the number of children on their waiting list has increased dramatically since the ELCC Centre Initiative began.

Improved Affordability

Almost all parents/caregivers who responded to the survey (91%) stated that they were paying \$550 or less per month for one child's enrollment in an ELCC Centre. According to the responses received to the parent/caregiver survey, the average parent fees to enroll one child in an ELCC Centre were \$474 per month (standard deviation \$235) compared to \$782 per month (standard deviation \$346) for licensed child care in a Comparison Centre.⁵

According to CS administrative data, the proportion of parents/caregivers at ELCC Centres who were receiving the child care subsidy (35%) was slightly higher than the proportion of parents receiving the child care subsidy for all day care programs in Alberta (34%). With the \$25 per day child care at ELCC Centres, parents/caregivers at these centres who receive the full subsidy do not have any out-of-pocket parent fees.

Almost all ELCC Centre parents/caregivers who responded to the survey (98%) were very satisfied (83%) or satisfied (15%) with the cost of child care at the ELCC Centre their children attended. Only half of the Comparison Centre parents/caregivers who responded to the survey (52%) were very satisfied (25%) or satisfied (27%) with the cost of child care at the ELCC Centre their children attended.

³ While this report identifies changes in licensed spaces from March 2017 to March 2018 (n=362 net new spaces), there were two ELCC Centres (Kids Campus Day Care Society and Willow Lake Tiny Tots Daycare) that expanded the number of licensed spaces from 71 to 98 (n=27 net new spaces) in February 2017 and from 0 to 14 (n=14 net new spaces) in March 2017.

⁴ No statistically significant differences between responses from ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and Comparison Centre parents/caregivers.

⁵ Differences between responses from ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and Comparison Centre parents/caregivers are statistically significant.

Improved Quality of Care

As of March 2018, 13 of the 19 ELCC Centres which were open were accredited and the six remaining ELCC Centres were pre-accredited. As per the ELCC Centre grant agreements, ELCC Centres have up to 18 months to apply for an accreditation site visit.

ELCC Centres differ in the extent to which they have started to use ELCC Curriculum Framework in their child care practices; however, at the majority ELCC Centres, ELCC educators are beginning to reflect the principles of the ELCC Curriculum Framework in their practice. For example, ELCC educators are beginning to use the ELCC Curriculum Framework language and terminology; creating more responsive environments; providing natural materials and loose parts for children to interact with; planning and organizing activities in relation to holistic goals, the children's interests and learning stories; being more responsive to children; providing children with more opportunity to explore and freedom of choice; documenting learning; and building stronger relationships with families.

ELCC educators are beginning to incorporate the Access, Support and Participation (ASaP) Continuum Project into their daily child care practices and interactions with children by using universal principles; observing children to see what is contributing to the way they are feeling and behaving; helping children to understand and express their emotions; creating boundaries and room expectations for the children; assisting children with transitions; and helping children develop problem-solving skills.

The same proportion of respondents to the parent/caregiver survey from ELCC Centres and Comparison Centres were very satisfied or satisfied with:

- The quality of care provided at the Centre their children attend (97% of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 95% of Comparison Centre parents/caregivers); and
- The degree to which their child is meaningfully engaged in Centre activities (97% of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 95% of Comparison Centre parents/caregivers).

This finding is not surprising as it is highly unlikely that a parent/caregiver would choose to keep their children enrolled in a child care centre that they did not perceive as providing high quality child care. However, based on the wording of the survey questions, it is not possible to determine how these parents/caregivers define 'quality care' or 'meaningful engagement in Centre activities'.

Impact on Labour Force Attachment

According to CS administrative data, as of March 2018, the ELCC Centre Initiative contributed to 328 Albertans entering or re-entering the workforce (19 of 22 ELCC Centres), which is just below the proposed target of 357 Albertans entering or re-entering the workforce (based on 22 ELCC Centres). Respondents to the parent/caregiver survey indicated that their children's enrollment at a child care centre enabled them to:

- Return to work full-time (194 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (66%), including 164 females and 161 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (71%), including 129 females);
- Return to work part-time (41 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (14%), including 38 females and 28 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (12%), including 26 females);
- Return to school full-time (33 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers, including 30 females and 29 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (13%), all of whom were female);
- Return to school part-time (nine ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (3%), all of whom were female and 14 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (6%), all of whom were female); and

- Take more classes in school (three ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (1%), all of whom were female and one Comparison Centre parent/caregiver (<1%), who was female).⁶

Less than 1 in 10 parents/caregivers who responded to the survey said that their children's enrollment at a child care centre did not enable them to return to work or school (22 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (8%), including nine who were female and 13 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (6%), including one who was female).⁷ Based on the wording of the survey question, it is not possible to determine whether these respondents were already working or attending school and therefore using an alternative child care arrangement for their children.

Additionally, some respondents to the parent/caregiver survey indicated that their children's enrollment at a child care centre had enabled someone else in their household who provided child care duties for the child to:⁸

- Return to work full-time (63 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 42 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers);
- Return to work part-time (10 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and seven Comparison Centre parents/caregivers);
- Return to school full-time (one ELCC Centre parent/caregiver and two Comparison Centre parents/caregivers);
- Return to school part-time (three ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and no Comparison Centre parents/caregivers); and
- Take more classes in school (no ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and no Comparison Centre parents/caregivers).⁹

Based on the wording of this survey question, it is not possible to determine the gender of the other individuals who were enabled to return to work or school as a result of the child's enrollment in a child care centre.

When asked a series of statements about the impact of their children's enrollment at a child care centre on their career, parents/caregivers who responded to the survey reported that 'yes', it enabled them to:

- Focus more on work (86% for ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 83% for Comparison Centre parents/caregivers);
- Work more hours (67% for ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 62% for Comparison Centre parents/caregivers); and
- Accept more work responsibility (61% for ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 56% for Comparison Centre parents/caregivers).¹⁰

⁶ No statistically significant differences between responses from ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and Comparison Centre parents/caregivers

⁷ No statistically significant differences between responses from ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and Comparison Centre parents/caregivers

⁸ The base number of respondents for ELCC Centres was 79 and for Comparison Centres was 55.

⁹ No statistically significant differences between responses from ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and Comparison Centre parents/caregivers.

¹⁰ No statistically significant differences between responses from ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and Comparison Centre parents/caregivers.

Summary of Parent/Caregiver Survey Findings

	Overall (n=294)
Reasons for Choosing ELCC Centre	
Agreement that the most important factor in decision to enroll child in this Centre was...	
a. accessibility	21% [#]
b. affordability	36% [#]
c. quality	39% [#]
Accessibility	
Satisfaction with the location of this Centre	96%*
Satisfaction with this Centre's hours of operation	95%*
Affordability	
Average cost per month	\$474/month
Satisfaction with the cost of child care at this Centre	98%*
Quality Processes for Parents/Caregivers	
Proportion of parents aware of quality improvement processes	71% [#]
Proportion of parents that have participated in quality improvement processes	55% [#]
Inclusiveness	
Agreement that 'Staff make me feel welcome and accepted'	98% ⁺
Proportion of parents who believe that this 'Centre provides learning activities that celebrate different cultures'	75% [#]
Parenting Supports	
Proportion of parents aware of parenting supports available through this Centre	63% [#]
Quality	
Agreement that staff at the ELCC Centre are professionals	94% ⁺
Agreement that staff regularly communicate with parents about their child's day so that they can incorporate their child's interests into activities at home	86% ⁺
Satisfaction that their child is meaningfully engaged in Centre activities	97%*
Satisfaction with the quality of care provided at this Centre	97%*
Outcomes	
Agreement that the quality of care has positively impacted their child	97% ⁺
Agreement that child's enrollment has enabled them/another caregiver to...	
a. accept a promotion	26% [#]
b. switch to a new job	29% [#]
c. study more for a better position or job	34% [#]
d. work more hours	67% [#]

Source: ELCC Parent/Caregiver Survey

[#] Percent 'yes'; * Percent 'very satisfied' and 'satisfied'; ⁺ Percent 'strongly agree' and 'agree'

Summary of ELCC Educator Survey Findings

	Overall (n=198)
Professional Development	
Satisfaction with professional development opportunities	81%*
Proportion of staff who feel they have been provided with the necessary training and resources to complete work effectively	89%#
Proportion of staff who feel they have more professional development opportunities than at other child care centres	79%# (n=113)
ELCC Curriculum Framework	
Proportion of staff who feel that the Curriculum Framework has supported them to...	
a. develop responsive curriculum	87%#
b. provide responsive and interesting activities and experiences to the children	92%#
c. provide responsive and interesting environments to the children	93%#
Inclusion Training	
Satisfaction that inclusion training has...	
a. increased staff competency (generally and specifically)	31%**
b. improved staff interactions with parents and children	26%**
c. resulted in operational changes at this Centre	13%**
Staff Workload and Retention	
Proportion of staff able to manage workload effectively	89%#
Proportion of staff intending to stay at this Centre over the next 12 months	87%#
ELCC Initiative Outcomes	
Proportion of staff that feel they are treated as a professional in this Centre	88%#
Proportion of staff that have more confidence in the quality of care provided (compared to other child care Centres they have worked at)	83%# (n=113) [§]
Proportion of staff that feel there is an ongoing need for the ELCC Initiative	81%#

Source: ELCC Educator Survey

Percent 'yes'; * Percent 'very satisfied' and 'satisfied'; ** Provided top of mind in open-ended response (multiple responses allowed)

[§] The n-size represents the number of ELCC educator survey respondents who answered 'yes' when asked 'aside from where you currently work, have you worked at other child care centres?'

Sustainability

The majority of ELCC Centre supervisors reported that, although there was a shortfall between the fees collected and the costs associated with running their ELCC Centre, the shortfall was covered by the ELCC Centre grant. However, they do not believe the \$25 per day maximum is sustainable for ELCC Centres without the ELCC Centre grant.

Generally, ELCC Centre supervisors and ELCC Centre partners believed that the flat fee of \$25 was reasonable for child care in Alberta and did not think the parent fees needed to be further reduced. Interviewees did not have any suggestions for other funding models for the ELCC Centre Initiative.

Recommendations

1. CS should continue to support ELCC Centres to implement the ELCC Curriculum Framework and inclusive child care practices.
2. ELCC Centres should continue to develop and strengthen partnerships with other organizations to support implementation of the improvements included in their ELCC Centre grant agreements.
3. ELCC Centres should continue to build and strengthen relationships with parents/caregivers and raise their awareness and understanding of child care practices and available supports.

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Table of Acronyms

Name	Acronym
Access, Support and Participation Continuum Project	ASaP
Ages and Stages Questionnaires	ASQs
Alberta Children's Services	CS
Alberta Health Services	AHS
Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement	ARCQE
Child and Family Services	CFS
Child Care Information System	CCIS
Community of Learning groups	CoL
Early Childhood Development Branch	ECD
Early Learning and Child Care Centres	ELCC
Family and Community Social Services	FCSS
Gender-Based Analysis+	GBA+
Getting Ready for Inclusion Today	GRIT
Government of Alberta	GoA
Gross Domestic Product	GDP
Outcome Measurement Framework	OMF
Parent Link Centre	PLC
Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act	PIPEDA
Play, Participation, and Possibilities	PPP
Social and Economic Impacts	SEI
Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool	TPOT

1. INTRODUCTION

In November 2016, the Government of Alberta (GoA) announced \$10 million¹¹ in funding for Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Centre Initiative (the ELCC Centre Initiative), to establish ELCC Centres to better support access to, and affordability of, quality child care spaces. Receiving operational grant funding over three years, these ELCC Centres illustrate what a new child care system could look like, by focusing on space creation, job creation, early learning and a maximum parent fees of \$25 per day per child. As part of the grant agreement, each ELCC Centre is required to participate in an evaluation of the ELCC Initiative’s effectiveness in increasing the accessibility, affordability and quality of early learning and child care in Alberta.

1.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to:

- Assess program implementation including fidelity to the ELCC Centre activities specified in the operating grant agreement;
- Determine the extent to which intended outcomes specified in the expression of interest and ELCC grant agreement documents can and will be achieved;
- Measure and assess the effectiveness of ELCC Centre activities at improving the accessibility, affordability and quality of early learning and child care in Alberta;
- Identify lessons learned/best practices that can be used to improve program design, delivery and effectiveness;
- Demonstrate accountability for the effective and efficient use of program funding;
- Inform potential future investment in ELCC Centres; and
- Assess the potential social impact and sustainability of ELCC Centres in Alberta.

The evaluation is being undertaken in three stages (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Evaluation Stages

Title	Timing
Three-Year Evaluation Plan	Completed: April 2017 to August 2017
Annual ELCC Centre Evaluations: Year 1	April 2017 to June 2018
Annual ELCC Centre Evaluations: Year 2 and Year 3 Summative Evaluation	April 2018 to June 2020

1.2 Parallel Activities

In addition to this evaluation, CS conducted audits of ELCC Centre expenditures to determine whether accreditation and subsidy grant funding provided to each ELCC Centre is being used for the purposes intended and whether ELCC grant funding for Quarter One is accounted for by the ELCC Centre to support quality programming. CS also conducted a separate audit to assess whether parents/caregivers of children enrolled in ELCC Centres pay no more than \$25 per day (\$550 per month) for child care.

¹¹ Graney, E. (2016, November 15). “Premier Rachel Notley unveils funds for new \$25/day childcare centres.” *Edmonton Sun*. <http://www.edmontonsun.com/2016/11/15/premier-notley-unveils-funds-for-new-affordable-childcare-centres>. [Accessed August 13, 2017].

Additionally, CS updated the Economic Impact Assessment Model it developed regarding a policy shift to \$25 per day child care in regulated day care programs. This work projects the economic impact of incrementally implementing day care programs by March 2021. The model addresses questions related to the:

- Impact on child care spaces supply and demand;
- Impact on participation of women's labour force and working mothers in Alberta;
- Return on investment: impact on the Government of Alberta's child care budget expenditures (grants) and revenues as a result of implementing the policy shift; and
- Impact on Alberta's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

To supplement the economic impact assessment, the completion of a Social Return on Investment (SROI) is also underway.

1.3 Purpose of the Report

Building upon the preliminary findings presented in the Year 1 Interim Report (March 21, 2018), which provided an overview of the preliminary themes emerging from the evaluation, this report presents the findings for the Year 1 evaluation of the ELCC Centre Initiative. The data sources used to conduct the evaluation include:

- A review of Children's Services (CS)-provided administrative data;
- Site visits to ELCC Centres, including interviews with ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators and focus groups with parents/caregivers;
- Interviews with ELCC Centre partners, ELCC Curriculum Framework pedagogical partners (hereinafter referred to as pedagogical partners) and Getting Ready for Inclusion Today (GRIT) coaches;
- A survey of ELCC educators; and
- A survey of parents/caregivers.

Additionally, to explore what would happen in the absence of the ELCC Centre Initiative, the evaluation involved a comparison group of 22 non-ELCC Centres. The data sources used for the Comparison Centres included interviews with Comparison Centre supervisors and a survey of parents/caregivers.

When interpreting the findings presented in this report, the following considerations should be taken into account:

- Administrative data are for 19 of the 22 ELCC Centres; and
- For ELCC Centres, data collection from interviews, surveys and focus groups are for 18 of the 22 ELCC Centres; and
- For Comparison Centres, data collection from interviews are for 20 of the 22 Comparison Centres and data collection from the parent/caregiver survey are for 18 of the 22 Comparison Centres.

While the interim report (March 2018) was based on partial evaluation data collection and analysis, this Final Year 1 Report is based on full evaluation data collection and analysis. Subsequent data collection and analysis did not result in substantial changes to the findings or themes presented in the Interim Report; rather, further analysis facilitated discussion of the themes in greater depth. The following table summarizes the differences between the Interim Report and the Final Year 1 Report.

Table 1.2: Comparison Between the Year 1 Interim Report and the Final Report

Element	Interim Report	Final Report
Administrative data	March 2017 to December 2017 18 ELCC Centres	March 2017 to March 2018 19 ELCC Centres
Evaluation data collection and analysis (interviews, surveys and focus groups) with ELCC Centres	17 ELCC Centres Based on partial data collection and analysis	18 ELCC Centres Based on complete data collection and analysis
Comparison Centres	Excluded	Included

2. OVERVIEW OF THE ELCC CENTRE INITIATIVE

In November 2016, CS initiated an expression of interest process inviting not-for-profit organizations to apply to become an ELCC Centre. CS screened the 75 proposals it received by the January 20, 2017 deadline against the following mandatory requirements:

- Be a not-for-profit organization;
- Have good governance standing (e.g. up-to-date filing of annual returns, provide current list of directors, officers);
- Increase the number of new day care spaces;¹²
- Cap parent fees at \$25 per child, per day;
- Implement the Play, Participation, and Possibilities (PPP): An Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum Framework for Alberta (hereinafter referred to as the ELCC Curriculum Framework);¹³
- Support on-site professional development that enables full participation of all children in the program including children with diverse needs;
- Engage parents/caregivers in a quality assurance process;
- Develop one or more ELCC Centre improvements (see list below);
- Participate in the Child Care Accreditation program;
- Participate in an evaluation process;
- Use GoA and ELCC branding guidelines and logos;
- Demonstrate compliance with Alberta’s Child Care Licensing Act and Child Care Licensing Regulation; and
- Demonstrate strong leadership at the Child Development Supervisor level.

Each applicant was required to include one or more of the following six improvements as part of their proposal:

- Offer flexible child care to support parents/caregivers who are working or attending school outside of typical child care operations and/or who work on a part-time basis;
- Identify opportunities to collaborate with other service organizations for co-location in delivering early learning and child care;
- Ensure collaboration with other service organizations that support knowledge about cultural learning as it relates to Indigenous, immigrant and refugee children;
- Ensure collaboration with other service organizations to support the provision of parenting supports to families attending the child care program;
- Collaborate to support vulnerable families (e.g. families with low socio-economic status, lone parent families, parenting teens, and women facing additional barriers); and/or
- Support child care in rural communities.

¹²The Government of Alberta defines “new child care space” as a “newly licensed space or a new enrollment in existing centres due to hiring new child care staff to ensure legislated staff-to-child ratios are met.” Source: GoA (2017). “Decision Document.”

¹³ While this report uses the term, the ELCC Curriculum Framework, the evaluation data collection instruments refer to the PPP curriculum framework or the curriculum.

Of the submitted applications, 67 proposals¹⁴ were selected for further assessment by a committee of Ministry subject-matter experts. Each proposal was assessed using a standard five-point Likert Scale based on the following requirements:

- Access (space creation);
- Affordability (\$25 per day);
- Quality;
- Improvements; and
- Operational preparedness.¹⁵

Following the January 2017 application deadline, regional assessment committees comprised of Regional Early Childhood Development managers/specialists, licensing staff, and contract specialists and Early Childhood Development (ECD) Branch participants, reviewed and scored the proposals. Proposals that scored above 70% were provided to the provincial committee for review and validation. Twenty-two (22) child care programs, located in communities with a high need for child care, were recommended for funding.¹⁶

Through the ELCC Centre Initiative, selected child care centres whose proposals were approved received funding of up to \$500,000 in Year 1 through an ELCC Centre grant agreement. Provided that recipients meet the obligations set out in the ELCC Centre grant agreement, each ELCC Centre will potentially receive up to two more years of funding.¹⁷

Throughout the duration of the ELCC Centre grant agreements, CS will conduct audits of ELCC Centre expenditures to determine whether funding is being used for the purposes intended, to ensure that grant funding paid by the Ministry has been used by the ELCC Centres to support quality programming and that parents/caregivers pay no more than \$25 per day per child.¹⁸

In addition, to ensure effective monitoring of the ELCC Centre Initiative by the Regional Service Delivery grant managers, and to support a three-year evaluation of the ELCC Centre Initiative, ELCC Centres are required to submit reports to CS by the end of each quarter, annually and at the conclusion/termination of their ELCC Centre grant agreement.¹⁹

In December 2017, the GoA announced that, as part of a Multilateral Agreement with the federal government, provincial and territorial partners, it would fund up to an additional 78 ELCC Centres.²⁰ Non-profit organizations interested in applying to become an ELCC Centre were invited to submit a proposal in response to the expression of interest by January 31, 2018.²¹

¹⁴ Of the eight proposals that were not selected, six were submitted by for-profit programs and were not eligible for the grant. The other two proposals did not meet a number of mandatory requirements, including the commitment to create more spaces. Source: Alberta Children's Services (CS) (2017), "Overview of Approach to Evaluating Early Learning and Child Care Centres Proposals for Three Year Funding."

¹⁵ CS (2017). "Overview of Approach to Evaluating Early Learning and Child Care Centres Proposals for Three Year Funding."

¹⁶ GoA (2017). "Early Learning and Child Care programs – Recommendations and funding."

¹⁷ GoA (2016). "Alberta Early Learning and Child Care Centres."

¹⁸ GoA. (2017). "Child Care Accreditation Funding and Subsidy 2017-2018 Audit Plan." Ministry of Children's Services.

¹⁹ GoA. (2017). "Early Learning and Child Care Grant Agreement Template." Ministry of Children's Services.

²⁰ GoA (2017). "Expanding Alberta's Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Centres." <https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/elcc-fact-sheet.pdf>

²¹ GoA (no date). "Early Learning and Child Care Centres." <https://www.alberta.ca/early-learning-child-care-centres.aspx>

Table 2.1 lists the location and operational status of the 22 ELCC Centres that received funding as of March 31, 2018.

- Four ELCC Centres that had not opened by December 31, 2017, which was the cut-off date for evaluation data collection activities, were excluded from the Year 1 evaluation survey, interview and focus group data: ABC Head Start, Bissell Centre Child Care Centre, Oliver Centre Learning Program for Children and Families Society and Rainbow Lodge Centre (Métis Child and Family Services)/Little Sundance Centre.
- Although Bissell Centre Child Care Centre, which opened in March 2018, was excluded from the evaluation data collection (interviews, surveys and focus groups), it was included in the CS administrative data for March 2017 and March 2018.

**Table 2.1: ELCC Centres by Location, Program and Status of Operation as of March 31, 2018
(CS Administrative Data)**

Centre	Location	Existing/New	Status
Northwest Region			
Child's World Day Care Centre	Fairview	Existing	Open
Sugar Plum Tree Day Care Centre	Peace River	Existing	Open
Children's Centre Demonstration Daycare	Grande Prairie	New	Open
Northeast Region			
Willow Lake Tiny Tots Daycare	Anzac	New	Open
Edmonton Region			
ABC Head Start (program name to be determined)	Fort Saskatchewan	New	Not open
Rotary Early Learning Program Childcare	Edmonton	New	Open
Bissell Centre Child Care Centre*	Edmonton	Existing	Open
Intercultural Daycare	Edmonton	Existing	Open
Oliver Centre Learning Program for Children and Families Society	Edmonton	New	Not open
Central Region			
Kids Campus Day Care	Camrose	Existing	Open
Provost Daycare Society	Provost	Existing	Open
Calgary Region			
The Catholic Family Services (CFS) – Dr. Clara Christie Learning Centre	Calgary	Existing	Open
Thornhill Child Care – Lumino Centre	Calgary	New	Open
Imagine Early Learning and Childcare Centre	Calgary	New	Open
Rainbow Lodge Centre (Métis Child and Family Services)/Little Sundance Child Care Centre	Calgary	New	Not open
Hillhurst Sunnyside Daycare/Out Of School Care	Calgary	Existing	Open
Puzzles – Banff	Banff	New	Open
South Region			
Opokaa'sin Childcare Centre	Lethbridge	Existing	Open
North Central Region			
Wildflowers Childcare	Jasper	Existing	Open
Westlock Community Day Care Centre	Westlock	Existing	Open
Bonnyville and District Daycare	Bonnyville	Existing	Open
Lac La Biche Little Sprouts Child Care	Lac La Biche	Existing	Open
* As noted above, Bissell Centre Child Care Centre, which opened in March 2018, was excluded from the evaluation data collection (interviews, surveys and focus groups), but was included in the CS administrative data for March 2017 and March 2018.			

For the 19 open ELCC Centres for which CS administrative data were available, Appendix A provides information related to licensed day care spaces, child enrollments and improvements at each ELCC Centre. As of March 31, 2018:

- Four ELCC Centres had increased the number of licensed day care spaces as planned with one of the four ELCC Centres creating seven more new licensed day care spaces than planned.
- Eleven ELCC Centres had not yet increased the number licensed day care spaces as planned.²²
- Four ELCC Centres did not have any plans to increase the number of day care spaces.
- Five ELCC Centres met or exceeded their proposed increases in child enrollments in licensed day care spaces.
- One ELCC Centre had not achieved its proposed increases in child enrollments.
- Thirteen ELCC Centres (including six new ELCC Centres) did not propose increases in child enrollments.²³

Please refer to Section 4.2.2 for additional information related to licensed child care spaces and child enrollments.

Table 2.2 summarizes the status of implementation of improvements as of March 2018.²⁴

Table 2.2: Status of Implementation of Improvements as of March 31, 2018 for 19 open ELCC Centres (CS Administrative Data)

Improvement	Number Proposed	Number Implemented	For additional Information, refer to...
Flexible child care	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11, including one ELCC Centre that had not proposed the improvement 	Section 5.2.2
Collaborate – co-location or new partnerships	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18, including two ELCC Centres that had not proposed the improvement 	Section 5.3.3.7
Collaborate – support Indigenous, immigrant and refugee children	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19, including one ELCC Centre that had not proposed the improvement 	Section 5.3.3.7
Collaborate – parenting resources and supports to families	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19, including one ELCC Centre that had not proposed the improvement 	Section 5.3.3.7
Collaborate – support vulnerable families	19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 	Section 5.3.3.7
Support child care in rural communities	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 	Section 5.2.2

²² While this report identifies changes in licensed spaces from March 2017 to March 2018, the new program, Willow Lake Tiny Tots Daycare, was licensed in February 2017 for 14 spaces and by March 2018 met its target of 30 licensed spaces. Thus, 10 ELCC Centres, instead of 11, had not yet met their target by March 2018.

²³ Information on proposed increases in licensed day care spaces and child enrollments is drawn from CS administrative data. Proposed improvements is drawn from the ELCC Centre grant agreements. Information on actual licensed day care spaces and child enrollments is based on data contained in CS' Child Care Information System (CCIS). Please note that when an ELCC Centre has children enrolled on a part-time basis, the number of enrollments may exceed the number of licensed day care spaces.

²⁴ Information on improvements implemented as of March 31, 2018 comes from the Quarterly ELCC Grant Reports submitted by the ELCC Centres.

3. EVALUATION APPROACH

In Phase 1 of the evaluation, which involved developing the three-year evaluation plan for the ELCC Centre Initiative, a rigorous methodological approach was designed to ensure that data is collected from a range of sources and at different points in time. The triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data will ensure that evaluation findings are comprehensive and robust. Through the implementation of this data collection methodology, the evaluation provides evidence-based findings that can help inform future decision-making regarding the ELCC Centre Initiative.

The following sections detail the multiple data collection activities that were conducted with a range of stakeholders in the Year 1 evaluation. Data collection activities for the ELCC Centres are grouped into four main categories: review of CS administrative data, program site visits (including interviews and focus groups), surveying parents/caregivers and ELCC educators as well as interviews with ELCC Curriculum Framework pedagogical partners and Getting for Inclusion Today (GRIT) coaches.

Year 1 of the evaluation also included data collection from comparison not-for-profit child care centres. The purpose of including a comparison group was to explore the counterfactual: in this case, to explore what would happen in the absence of the ELCC Initiative. For each ELCC Centre, CS regional managers identified a not-for-profit Centre that matched each ELCC Centres in their region. Comparison centres were matched across a range of characteristics, including: region (urban/rural); not-for-profit status; number of licensed spaces; total number of children enrolled; total number of staff; and number of subsidized children. Not-for-profit daycare programs that were implementing the ELCC Curriculum Framework and the ASaP Continuum Project were not included in the comparison group. Once the comparison centres had been identified, CS regional managers contacted the Comparison Centre supervisor to explain the purpose of the evaluation and to invite them to participate in the evaluation. Once Comparison Centre supervisors agreed to participate in the evaluation, and with their permission, CS regional managers provided the consultant with the name and contact information of Comparison Centre supervisors.

3.1 Data Collection Overview

The data sources used to conduct the evaluation include:

- A review of Children’s Services (CS)-provided administrative data including the ELCC Centre Initiative Outcome Measurement Framework (OMF), Child Care Information System (CCIS) administrative data (e.g. licensed child care spaces, child enrollments, staffing, etc.), ELCC Centre audit reports, ELCC Centre grant monitoring reports and ELCC Centre Quarterly Progress Reports prepared by CS;
- Site visits to ELCC Centres, including interviews with ELCC Centre supervisors (n=18), ELCC educators (n=45) and focus groups with parents/caregivers (n=103 participants);
- Interviews with ELCC Centre partners (n=24), ELCC Curriculum Framework pedagogical partners (pedagogical partners hereinafter) (n=15) and Getting Ready for Inclusion Today (GRIT) coaches (n=11);
- Interviews with Comparison Centre supervisors (n=20);
- A survey of ELCC educators (n=198)²⁵; and

²⁵ Survey percentages are out of the full base of 198 respondents unless otherwise stated.

- A survey of parents/caregivers (n=294 for ELCC Centres and n=227 for Comparison Centres)²⁶.

Appendices E to N contain the evaluation data collection instruments.

Coordination with ELCC Centres

At the onset of Year 1 data collection, CS regional managers contacted ELCC Centre supervisors to advise them of the evaluation and that the consultant hired to conduct the evaluation would be contacting them. To support this, the consultant designed and provided CS with a letter template to support the regional manager in communicating the purpose and timelines of the evaluation to Centre supervisors (Appendix E). The consultant then emailed ELCC Centre supervisors to introduce the evaluation and the evaluation team as well as to provide an overview of the data collection activities and approximate timelines for data collection within the year. The email was followed up with a phone call to confirm the data collection process for the ELCC Centre. Items discussed and confirmed with ELCC Centre supervisors during the planning phone call included:

- Program site visit dates and space/resource requirements;
- Daily schedule for site visit data collection activities;
- ELCC Centre partners to be interviewed, most appropriate contact methods, and receipt of contact information;
- Preferred method of notifying ELCC educators and families about the evaluation;
- Method of gathering consent and contact information from ELCC educators;
- Method of gathering consent and contact information from families; and
- Method of notifying and recruiting families for the focus group.

To support on-site data collection activities, the consultant provided ELCC Centre supervisors with all relevant data collection tools. All cover letters and consent materials are included as Appendix F.

ELCC Centre site visits were designed to last either one full day or two half days. During the day(s) of the site visit, the consultant was available to answer questions from ELCC educators and families.

Interviews with ELCC Centre supervisors

Interviews with ELCC Centre supervisors were conducted in-person during the site visit to the ELCC Centre. Typically, the Centre supervisor interview took place at the beginning of the site visit, as it provided important context required to complete or inform the other evaluation data collection activities. Prior to the scheduled interview time, ELCC Centre supervisors received a copy of the interview guide (see Appendix G) to help them prepare for the discussion. Interviews lasted between one and a half to three hours. With the interviewees' consent, interviews were audio-recorded. Notes were taken during the interview and the audio-recording was used to fill in information gaps.

Interviews with ELCC educators

Interviews with ELCC educators were conducted in-person during the site visit to the ELCC Centre. At each ELCC Centre, ELCC Centre supervisors identified two to three ELCC educators to participate in an interview. The ELCC educators targeted for interviews were those who had participated in the MacEwan University online course for the ELCC Curriculum Framework, those who had participated in the ASaP Continuum Project and those involved in the ELCC on-site leadership team working to implement ELCC

²⁶ Survey percentages are out of the full base of 294 respondents for ELCC Centres and 227 respondents for Comparison Centres unless otherwise stated.

Curriculum Framework and inclusive child care practices. ELCC Centre supervisors were given a copy of the interview guide (see Appendix H) to provide to ELCC educators prior to the interview. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. With the interviewees' consent, interviews were audio-recorded. Notes were taken during the interview and the audio-recording was used to fill in information gaps.

Interviews with ELCC Centre partners

Most interviews with ELCC Centre partners were conducted by telephone, although a few of the interviews were conducted in-person during the site visit to the ELCC Centre. At each ELCC Centre, ELCC Centre supervisors identified two to three ELCC partners who they were working with to implement one or more of the ELCC Centre Initiative improvements to participate in an interview. Prior to the scheduled interview time, ELCC Centre partners received a copy of the interview guide (see Appendix J) to help them prepare for the discussion. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and one hour. With the interviewees' consent, interviews were audio-recorded. Notes were taken during the interview and the audio-recording was used to fill in information gaps.

Focus Groups with ELCC Centre Parents/Caregivers

At each ELCC Centre, the consultant worked with the ELCC Centre supervisor to organize a focus group with parents/caregivers. Coordination of the focus groups was flexible to best accommodate each ELCC Centre's individual needs. Typically, the focus groups were held in a separate room at the ELCC Centre around typical child collection time (beginning at 4:30 p.m. or 5:00 p.m.), but within normal ELCC Centre operating hours. Parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups were not charged additional fees for extended child care hours and the ELCC Centres were not required to pay ELCC educators to work extended hours.

Each ELCC Centre supervisor was asked to recruit 12 to 14 parents/caregivers to participate in a focus group. As shown in Table 3.3 below, typically between five and seven parents/caregivers participated in each focus group. Focus groups lasted between 45 minutes and one hour; participants were provided with light refreshments. With the participants' consent, focus groups were audio-recorded. Notes were taken during the focus group and the audio-recording was used to fill in information gaps. The moderator's guide appears in Appendix L.

Survey of ELCC educators

The ELCC educator survey was open to all ELCC Centre staff at all ELCC Centres (census). Prior to surveying, the consultant obtained consent from ELCC educators. This process involved providing the ELCC Centre supervisor with consent forms (see Appendix F) to be completed by all ELCC educators working at the ELCC Centre to release their contact information to the consultant. The consent forms outlined the purpose of the survey, how respondents' privacy would be protected and the survey administration process. ELCC Centre supervisors provided the consultant with scanned copies of the completed consent forms via email or the consultant collected the completed consent forms during the site visit.

The survey was designed to take approximately 15 minutes to complete. A copy of the questionnaire appears in Appendix I. The questionnaire was available to ELCC educators online and via paper. Given the survey administration process, it was not possible to determine the response rate for the survey.

Survey of ELCC Centre Parents/Caregivers

The target number of survey completions was 18 per ELCC Centre. Prior to surveying, the consultant obtained consent from ELCC parents/caregivers. This process involved providing the ELCC Centre supervisor with consent forms (see Appendix F) to be completed by parents/caregivers to release their contact information to the consultant. The consent forms outlined the purpose of the survey, how respondents' privacy would be protected and the survey administration process. ELCC Centre supervisors provided the consultant with scanned copies of the completed consent forms via email or the consultant collected the completed consent forms during the site visit.

The questionnaire was available to parents/caregivers online, over the phone and via paper. A copy of the questionnaire appears in Appendix K. The survey was designed to take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Respondents who completed the survey received a five dollar gift card to Starbucks as a thank-you for their participation. Given the survey administration process, it was not possible to determine the response rate for the survey.

Interviews with Pedagogical Partners / GRIT Coaches

Interviews with pedagogical partners and GRIT coaches were conducted by telephone. CS provided the consultant with the names and contact information for the interviewees. Prior to contacting interviewees to schedule an interview, the consultant emailed prospective interviewees an introductory letter explaining the purpose of the evaluation and inviting their participation in an interview (see Appendix F). Prior to the scheduled interview time, pedagogical partners and GRIT coaches received a copy of the interview guide (see Appendix N) to help them prepare for the discussion. Interviews lasted between one and one and a half hours. With the interviewees' consent, interviews were audio-recorded. Notes were taken during the interview and the audio-recording was used to fill in information gaps.

Interviews with Comparison Centre supervisors

Interviews with ELCC Centre supervisors were conducted by telephone. Prior to the scheduled interview time, Comparison Centre supervisors received a copy of the interview guide (see Appendix M) to help them prepare for the discussion. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. With the interviewees' consent, interviews were audio-recorded. Notes were taken during the interview and the audio-recording was used to fill in information gaps. Comparison Centre supervisors were provided with a \$50 incentive for participating in an interview.

Survey of Comparison Centre Parents/Caregivers

The target number of survey completions was 18 per Comparison Centre. Prior to surveying, the consultant obtained consent from Comparison Centre parents/caregivers. This process involved providing the Comparison Centre supervisor with consent forms (see Appendix F) to be completed by parents/caregivers to release their contact information to the consultant. The consent forms outlined the purpose of the survey, how respondents' privacy would be protected and the survey administration process. Comparison Centre supervisors provided the consultant with scanned copies of the completed consent forms via email. Comparison Centre supervisors were provided with a \$100 incentive for organizing the parent/caregiver survey.

The questionnaire was available to parents/caregivers online, over the phone and via paper. A copy of the questionnaire appears in Appendix K. The survey was designed to take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Respondents who completed the survey received a five dollar gift card to Starbucks as a

thank-you for their participation. Given the survey administration process, it was not possible to determine the response rate for the survey.

3.2 Evaluation Data Collection Activities Completed

Evaluation data collection took place between December 12, 2017 and March 16, 2018. Table 3.1 provides the number of completions, and percentage of target data collection achieved, for the interviews, surveys and focus groups.

Table 3.1: Percentage of Data Collection Activities Completed

Activity	Number of Completions	Target	Percentage of Target
ELCC Centres (percentage completed is based on 18 sites)			
Interviews with Supervisors	18 (interviews completed at 18 sites)	18	100%
Interviews with ELCC educators	45 (interviews completed at 18 sites)	2-3 interviews per Centre	100%
Interviews with ELCC Partners	24 (interviews completed at 15 sites)	2-3 interviews per Centre	66%
ELCC Educator Survey	198 completions (received responses from 18 sites)	unknown denominator	n/a
Parent/Caregiver Survey	294 completions (received responses from 13 sites)	306 (18 completions per site)	96%
Parent/Caregiver Focus Groups	103 participants (groups conducted at 15 sites)	Groups at 18 sites	83%
Interviews with Pedagogical Partners and GRIT Coaches			
Pedagogical Partners	15	15	100%
GRIT Coaches	11	11	100%
Comparison Centres (percentage completed is based on 22 sites)			
Interviews with Supervisors	20	22	91%
Parent/Caregiver Survey	227	396	57%

Table 3.2 lists the number of completions by data collection activity (interviews, surveys and focus groups) at each ELCC Centre.

Table 3.2: Number of Completions by Data Collection Activity and ELCC Centre

Region	Centre	Interviews			Surveys		Focus Group with Parents
		Supervisor	ELCC Educators	Partners	ELCC Educators	Parents	
		Number of Completions					
Northwest	Child's World Day Care Centre	1	2	0	9	6	4
	Sugar Plum Tree Day Care Centre	1	2	2	15	16	5
	Children's Centre Demonstration Daycare	1	2	1	7	15	5
Northeast	Willow Lake Tiny Tots Daycare	1	2	0	7	11	4
Edmonton	Rotary Early Learning Program Childcare	1	2	0	1	4	5
	Intercultural Daycare	1	4	1	19	22	20
Central	Kid's Campus Day Care	1	3	2	16	35	9
	Provost Daycare Society	1	2	2	12	18	4
Calgary	The Catholic Family Services – Dr. Clara Christie Learning Centre	1	1 (2 staff)	2	18	17	4
	Thornhill Child Care – Lumino Centre	1	3	1	16	18	3
	Imagine Early Learning and Childcare Centre	1	2	2	6	14	No focus group; 2 parent interviews completed
	Hillhurst Sunnyside Daycare/Out of School Care	1	3	1	4	19	No focus group; 6 parent interviews completed
	Puzzles	1	3	1	8	18	9
South	Opokaa'sin Childcare Centre	1	3	2	5	12	6
North Central	Wildflowers Childcare	1	2	1	11	18	7
	Westlock Community Day Care Centre	1	3	2	15	13	No focus group; 2 parent interviews completed
	Bonnyville and District Daycare	1	3	2	18	16	14
	Lac La Biche Little Sprouts Child Care	1	3	2	11	22	4
Total		18	45	24	198	294	113
		Interviews	Interviews	Interviews	Surveys	Surveys	Parents

3.3 Analysis

The analysis approach used to develop the findings presented in this report involved:

- **Interview and Focus Group Data:** Interview and focus group data was analyzed using inductive and/or deductive analysis (as appropriate) to identify the core concepts and themes emerging from the data. This analysis approach was applied separately to each respondent group including ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators, ELCC Centre partners, pedagogical partners, GRIT coaches and parent/caregiver focus group participants. Following independent analysis of each respondent group, cross-group analysis was conducted to determine whether the answers provided by each respondent group were complementary or divergent.

Qualitative data tends to be descriptive in nature, does not yield discrete responses and is not quantifiable. Furthermore, qualitative data collection methods result in the gathering of a diverse range of information that is dependent upon the different backgrounds, depth of knowledge and experiences of interviewees and focus group participants. For these reasons, this report refrains from quantifying the number of interviewees or focus group participants that provided a specific response. Rather, this report uses the following adjectives to describe how widely shared the views and opinions of interviewees and/or focus group participants were:

- **All:** findings reflect the views and opinions of all participants;
- **Most/Majority:** findings reflect the views and opinions of approximately three-quarters or more participants;
- **Many:** findings reflect the views and opinions of between approximately half and three-quarters of participants;
- **Some:** findings reflect the views and opinions of between approximately one-quarter and half of participants; and
- **Few:** findings reflect the views and opinions of at least two, but fewer than approximately one-quarter, of participants.

It is important to recognize that these categories are intended to provide a general sense of the prevalence of interviewees' comments as opposed to a fixed proportion of responses and therefore should not be interpreted numerically nor as an indication of the relative importance of the comments.

- **Survey Data:** For close-ended questions, descriptive analysis of each survey question was conducted to generate frequencies presented as the percentage of respondents who selected each of the possible response options. For close-ended questions including an 'other specify' response option, a review of written responses was conducted to develop a coding list. Using the coding list, written responses were up-coded to existing response options where appropriate, or coded to a new response option. Any new response options that were created as a result of the coding process were presented in the frequencies. Idiosyncratic and/or uncodeable responses were left in the 'other' category.

Responses to open-ended survey questions were also coded by reviewing the written responses provided to develop a preliminary coding list and then collapsing and expanding codes as needed throughout the coding process. Given the nature of open-ended questions, the coding process may result in a respondent's answer being assigned to more than one coded response options created for the question. Therefore, frequencies for open-ended questions are

presented as the percentage of respondents who mentioned each coded response. This means that the percentages reported in the frequencies may add to more than 100% because respondents may have provided more than one answer.

Following the initial analysis for open-ended survey questions, smaller categories were collapsed into broader categories. For example, when asked to explain why there is an ongoing need for the ELCC Centre Initiative, individual responses including 'general supports to parents,' 'supports to vulnerable families,' 'increased affordability of child care' and 'increased accessibility of child care' were combined into a broad category called 'benefits to parents.' Frequency tables for this question will present the percentage of respondents who mentioned the broad category as well as each of the individual categories.

For both the ELCC educator survey and the parent/caregiver survey, unless otherwise stated, the percentages provided in the report are out of the full base of respondents (198 for the ELCC educator survey, 294 for the parent/caregiver survey at ELCC Centres and 227 for the parent/caregiver survey at Comparison Centres).

For the ELCC educator survey, cross-tabulation analysis was conducted based on the following: Centre location (urban/rural); length of time worked in child care; length of time worked at the ELCC Centre; experience working at other child care centres; and certification level. Statistical significance of differences for closed-ended questions was tested for using Chi-square tests. However, given that there was not a lot of variance in ELCC educator responses to the survey questions, the results of the cross-tabulation analysis is not included in the report. Furthermore, for many questions in the parent/caregiver survey, the results of the statistical significance tests may have been invalid due to the small number of responses for some categories; therefore, for the parent/caregiver survey questions meeting this condition, the results of the significance tests are not included in this report. As data collection progresses through the subsequent years of the ELCC Centre Initiative, the response patterns of the ELCC educator survey will be re-assessed for appropriateness of cross-tabulation analysis.

For the parent/caregiver survey, cross-tabulation analysis was conducted based on the following: Centre type (ELCC Centre versus Comparison Centre); Centre location (urban/rural); education, citizenship, marital status and gender. Statistical significance of differences was tested for using Chi-square tests. However, for many parent/caregiver survey questions, the results of the statistical significance tests may have been invalid due to the small number of responses for some categories; therefore, for questions meeting this condition, the results of the significant tests are not included in the report.

- **Key driver analysis.** This analysis was conducted using the results of the ELCC Centre parent/caregiver survey and the ELCC educator survey to better understand the factors that had the strongest impact on the ELCC Centre Initiative outcomes. For each of the surveys, two statements were selected as dependent variables. These statements enabled respondents to provide broad ratings concerning key goals of the ELCC Centre Initiative. Each of these outcome variables was then regressed against other questions in the survey that asked about more specific experiences of the respondents. The results of the regressions show which of the specific behaviours or activities have the strongest impact on the dependent variables. The

initial models tested for ELCC Centre parents and ELCC educators are described below, however, only those variables retained in the final model are discussed.

Backwards regression was used to determine the final models. In backwards regression, the dependent variable is initially regressed against all of the independent variables. The regression then removes the least significant variable in the equation. The regression is re-run without this variable, and the least significant variable in the new equation is removed. This process is repeated, through a series of iterative steps, until all of the remaining variables in the equation are significant at a $p=.10$ level. Backwards regression was used as it provides for a generous inclusion of variables in the final model, while helping to prevent overfitting of the model with extraneous variables. As such, backward regression matches the exploratory nature of the first round of data collection for the ELCC Centre Initiative.

The final models show the adjusted r-squared value for the overall model, the standardized beta coefficients for the independent variable as well as their relative importance of each independent variable to the model. The adjusted r-square is a measure of the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the model, adjusted for the number of independent variables in the model; it represents how well the model fits the independent variable. The standardized beta coefficients are included to demonstrate the direction of the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables. Positive standardized beta coefficients indicate a positive relationship between the variables, i.e. as the independent variable increases so does the dependent variables. A negative standardized beta coefficients would indicate an inverse relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The relative importance represents the proportion of the model's impact that is driven by each independent variable. The relative importance is derived by dividing each independent variable's standardized beta coefficient by the sum of all the standardized beta coefficients in the model.

ELCC Centre Parent/Caregiver Survey

Dependent Variable:

- Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of care provided at this centre?

Independent Variables:

- Centre staff encourage my child(ren) to participate in activities.
- Child care centre activities help my child(ren) understand other cultures.
- Child care centre activities evolve out of the interest of the child(ren).
- My child(ren) is/are provided with opportunities to play and explore.
- Centre staff change activities in response to the needs of my child(ren).
- Centre staff activities help connect my child(ren) to our family and community.
- Centre staff regularly communicate with me about my child(ren)'s day so that I can incorporate my child(ren)'s interests into activities at home.
- I consider the staff at this Centre to be professionals.
- Does the centre have a Parent Advisory Board that provides oversight and direction to the management of the Centre?
- Does the centre have regular meetings for parents to provide feedback concerning the Centre?

- How satisfied are you that [Centre] reflects the diversity of the community in which it is located?
- Do you agree that the early learning staff at [Centre] make you, as a parent, feel welcome and accepted?

Dependent Variable:

- Overall, to what extent do you agree that the quality of care provided at the centre has positively impacted your child(ren)?

Independent Variables:

- Centre staff encourage my child(ren) to participate in activities.
- Child care centre activities help my child(ren) understand other cultures.
- Child care centre activities evolve out of the interest of the child(ren).
- My child(ren) is/are provided with opportunities to play and explore.
- Centre staff change activities in response to the needs of my child(ren).
- Centre staff activities help connect my child(ren) to our family and community.
- Centre staff regularly communicate with me about my child(ren)'s day so that I can incorporate my child(ren)'s interests into activities at home.
- I consider the staff at this Centre to be professionals.

ELCC Educator Survey

Dependent Variable:

- Do you intend to stay at this Centre over the next 12 months?

Independent Variables:

- What is your current level of certification?
- How satisfied are you that the professional development opportunities provided by the Centre have enhanced your ability to meet the care needs of the children at the Centre?
- Do you feel that your work meaningfully contributes to the goals of the Centre?
- Have you had the necessary training and resources to complete your work effectively?
- Do your co-workers support you when something unexpected comes up in your work?
- Are you able to manage your workload effectively?
- In general, do you feel that you are treated professionally in this Centre?
- Do you feel the staff you work with have the necessary qualification to support the team in providing child care?
- Do you feel that your direct supervisor has the necessary skills or knowledge to support the team in providing child care?

Dependent Variable:

- Overall, how satisfied are you with working at your Centre?

Independent Variables:

- What is your current level of certification?
- How satisfied are you that the professional development opportunities provided by the Centre have enhanced your ability to meet the care needs of the children at the Centre?
- Do you feel that your work meaningfully contributes to the goals of the Centre?
- Have you had the necessary training and resources to complete your work effectively?
- Do your co-workers support you when something unexpected comes up in your work?
- Are you able to manage your workload effectively?

- In general, do you feel that you are treated professionally in this Centre?
- Do you feel the staff you work with have the necessary qualification to support the team in providing child care?
- Do you feel that your direct supervisor has the necessary skills or knowledge to support the team in providing child care?

Key driver analysis could not be completed for the ELCC educator survey due to a lack of variance in the independent variables. The vast majority of survey respondents completing the ELCC educator survey provided responses that reflected positive perceptions of the ELCC Centre Initiative. As many of the statements required a binary response, i.e. yes/no, this resulted in some items having as few as two ELCC educators providing a negative response. As a result, there were insufficient numbers in response categories to appropriately address the underlying assumptions of the regression analysis. As data collection progresses through the subsequent years of the ELCC Centre Initiative, the response patterns of the ELCC educator survey will be re-assessed to appropriateness of key driver analysis.

3.4 Limitations and Mitigating Strategies

The following are the limitations and mitigating strategies for the evaluation. Overall, the findings are based on robust data and analysis and should be viewed as reflective of participants' experiences with and perspectives of the ELCC Centre Initiative and the Comparison Centres.

Interviews with ELCC Centre supervisors

Although the interviews with the ELCC Centre supervisors were long, up to three hours in length, all ELCC Centre supervisors were able to respond to each of the interview questions. To ensure that ELCC Centre supervisors had the opportunity to address each of the interview questions, in some cases, the interviews were conducted over multiple sessions. There are no limitations impacting the validity of these interview findings.

Interviews with ELCC educators

ELCC Centre supervisors identified the ELCC educators that participated in the interviews. To mitigate against ELCC Centre supervisors only selecting ELCC educators who they believed would provide favorable responses to the interview questions, the consultant asked the ELCC Centre supervisors to identify ELCC educators to participate in an interview who had participated in the MacEwan University online course for the ELCC Curriculum Framework, participated in the ASaP Continuum Project, or were involved in the ELCC on-site leadership team working to implement ELCC Curriculum Framework and inclusive child care practices. Additionally, ELCC Centre supervisors were asked to identify ELCC educators who worked with children of different ages and had been at the ELCC Centre for different lengths of time. ELCC educators with a wide range of experiences with the ELCC Centre Initiative were interviewed and they provided balanced responses to the interview questions; therefore, participant selection bias was not found to impact the validity of the interview findings.

Interviews with ELCC Centre partners

The contractor relied upon the ELCC Centre supervisors to provide the names and contact information for ELCC Centre partners that could be invited to participate in an interview. However, due to challenges obtaining identifying ELCC Centre partners, fewer interviews than anticipated were completed. Challenges identifying potential interviewees were the result of:

- Some ELCC Centres still being in the process of forming partnerships thereby making it too early to conduct interviews with potential partners and/or newly identified partners.
- The inability to obtain the requested contact information for ELCC Centre partners from a few ELCC Centre supervisors, despite numerous follow-up attempts.
- The inability to reach all of the ELCC Centre partners for whom contact information was provided, despite multiple contact attempts.

Given the diverse range of organizations that ELCC Centres partner with, the relevance of the interview questions varied by interviewee. Consequently, some ELCC Centre partners indicated that they were not well placed to answer some of the interview questions being posed to them. For example, many ELCC Centre partners stated that it was outside the scope of their knowledge to answer questions relating to ELCC Centre operations.

Given that the ELCC Centre supervisors were asked to identify the ELCC Centre partners to be interviewed, the findings may be subject to selection bias. As interviewees provided balanced responses to the interview questions, participant selection bias was not found to impact the validity of the interview findings.

Focus Groups with ELCC Centre Parents/Caregivers

ELCC Centre supervisors were relied upon to coordinate the parent/caregiver focus group at their site, including promoting the focus groups to parents/caregivers and recruiting participants. The majority of ELCC Centre supervisors were able to assist in the coordination of the focus groups; however, focus groups did not occur at three of the ELCC Centres for the following reasons:

- One ELCC Centre supervisor was unwilling to coordinate the focus group as it was believed that parents/caregivers were too busy to put further demands on their time.
- One ELCC Centre supervisor did not have enough time to coordinate the focus group. This ELCC Centre supervisor also stated that, based on prior experience, parents/caregivers were unlikely to participate in a focus group, although they might be willing to participate in short, one-on-one conversations.
- One ELCC Centre supervisor contacted parents/caregivers to invite them to participate but none showed up for the focus group.

To mitigate the lack of focus group data from these three ELCC Centres, the ELCC Centre supervisors agreed to provide the names and telephone numbers of parents/caregivers (with their consent) so that they could be contacted to participate in short, one-on-one telephone conversations. The short one-on-one conversations were not as comprehensive as the focus groups and did not include the 'dotmocracy' exercise regarding the factors that influenced parents/caregivers' decision to enroll their child(ren) in the ELCC Centre. However, the one-on-one conversations resulted in comparable findings as the interviews covered the main themes addressed in the focus group moderator's guide and gathered parent/caregivers' perspectives on the accessibility, affordability and quality of child care at the ELCC Centre.

Another challenge associated with conducting the parent/caregiver focus groups was that, at several ELCC Centres, some of the parents/caregivers brought their children into the focus group.²⁷ Consequently, the parents/caregivers had to divide their attention between their children and the conversation; this may have led to these parents/caregivers not providing as detailed or comprehensive responses as they may have, or withholding information that they may have shared, if their children were not present in the room. However, there were no focus group questions for which responses were not obtained.

There is the potential that the focus group findings may be subject to selection bias as the ELCC Centre supervisors were relied upon to recruit parents/caregivers to the focus groups. This may result in overly positive findings if ELCC Centre supervisors only recruited parents/caregivers they knew were satisfied with the ELCC Centre. Although the focus group findings were highly positive, it is unlikely that selection bias played a role in influencing the findings as it is unlikely that parents/caregivers would keep their child enrolled in an ELCC Centre with which they were unsatisfied. For this reason, the focus group should be considered reflective of the parents/caregivers experiences with the ELCC Centre. Additionally, the focus group findings and the parent/caregiver findings are complementary.

Survey of ELCC educators

A census of ELCC educators was attempted; however, given that the total population of ELCC educators is unknown to the consultant, it is not possible to determine the response rate. Given that five or fewer completions were obtained at some individual ELCC Centres, the results may not be reliable at the individual Centre level. However, given that a total of 198 completions were obtained across all ELCC Centres, it is likely that the majority of the ELCC educators completed the survey and therefore the findings should be considered reliable at the ELCC Centre Initiative level.

The ELCC educator survey was based on self-report data which may be subject to respondents providing exaggerated or overly positive/negative answers. Additionally, the survey findings may be subject to selection bias as ELCC Centre supervisors were relied upon to provide ELCC educators the opportunity to participate in the survey. Consequently, ELCC Centre supervisors may have only provided the surveys to those whom had positive experiences with the ELCC Centre Initiative. Furthermore, because the survey administration involved an active consent process, only those who had perspectives about the ELCC Centre Initiative that they wanted to share may have agreed to participate in the survey. Although the ELCC educator survey findings are largely positive, it is likely that the majority of ELCC educators completed the survey and therefore respondent selection bias was not found to impact the validity of the survey findings.

Survey of ELCC Centre Parents/Caregivers (ELCC Centres and Comparison Centres)

Given that the target completions per child care centre was set at 18, it is not possible to determine the response rate for the parent/caregiver survey.

- Given that ten or fewer completions were obtained at some individual child care centres, depending on the total number of parents/caregivers with children enrolled in these centres, the survey results may not be reliable at the individual Centre level. However, given that a total of 294 completions were obtained across all ELCC Centres and 227 completions were obtained across all Comparison Centres, the findings should be considered reliable at the aggregate level.

²⁷ When working with the ELCC Centre supervisors to organize the focus groups, evaluators attempted to mitigate this by asking ELCC Centre supervisors to provide a private space to conduct the focus group and to request that parents/caregivers leave their children in the supervised child care rooms until the focus group was complete.

- Given that the target number of completions per child care centre was set at 18, it is possible that some child care centres are over- or under-represented in the survey results.

The parent/caregiver survey was based on self-report data which may be subject to respondents providing exaggerated or overly positive/negative answers. Additionally, the survey findings may be subject to selection bias as Centre supervisors were relied upon to provide parents/caregivers the opportunity to participate in the survey. Consequently, Centre supervisors may have only provided the surveys to those whom had positive experiences with the ELCC Centre Initiative. Furthermore, because the survey administration involved an active consent process, only those who had perspectives that they wanted to share may have agreed to participate in the surveys.

Although the parent/caregiver survey findings are largely positive, the responses provided by parents/caregivers at ELCC Centres and parents/caregivers at Comparison Centres are similar; therefore respondent selection bias was not found to impact the validity of the survey findings.

For future years of the evaluation, opportunities exist to include additional survey questions designed to explore the impact of the ELCC Centre Initiative on the labour force participation of parents/caregivers who are on maternity/paternity leave as well as to further explore the impact of the ELCC Centre Initiative on lone parent, low income and vulnerable families.

Interviews with Pedagogical Partners / GRIT Coaches

Some pedagogical partners and GRIT coaches worked with multiple ELCC Centres. To ensure the interviews were comprehensive and inclusive of all ELCC Centres, these interviewees were asked to discuss their experiences with each of the ELCC Centres they had worked with.

Some pedagogical partners and GRIT coaches were not able to provide comprehensive responses to each of the interview questions for the following reasons:

- The ELCC Centre to which they had been assigned had not yet opened or they had only had preliminary interactions with the ELCC Centre.
- The majority of pedagogical partners and GRIT coaches did not have any interactions with parents/caregivers at the ELCC Centres and therefore were not able to respond to questions related to parents/caregivers.

Participant selection bias was not found to impact the validity of the interview findings. Furthermore, where ELCC Centre supervisor interviews and the pedagogical partners/GRIT coaches were asked similar interview questions, the findings are complementary.

Interviews with Comparison Centre supervisors

Comparison Centre supervisors did not have any challenges responding to the interview questions. There are no limitations impacting the validity of these interview findings.

3.5 Profile of ELCC Educator Survey Respondents

The survey of ELCC educators found that, on average, survey respondents have been working in child care field for about eight years and have been working at their current ELCC Centre for about three years.

- Less than 1 in 5 (16%) ELCC educators have been working in child care for less than one year.
- More than half (57%) of the ELCC educators have worked at other child care centres.
- Just under 1 in 3 (30%) ELCC educators have been working at their current child care centre for less than six months.
 - The majority of ELCC educators (80%) did not come to work at their current child care centre because it received ELCC Centre grant funding.
 - The 25 ELCC educators who said they came to their current centre because of the ELCC Centre grant explained²⁸ that they had an interest in the ELCC Centre Initiative, the ELCC Centre was able to hire more staff because of the ELCC Centre grant, the ELCC Centres offered higher salaries/wage top-ups, child care was more affordable for staff members and the ELCC Centre was accredited (the percentage of respondents who provided each coded response is not provided due to small sample sizes).

See Table 3.4 for these and other results.

²⁸ Question A1E. Please explain.

**Table 3.4: Profile of ELCC Educators
(ELCC Educator Survey, n=198)**

Question A1A. How long have you worked in child care?

Question A1B. Aside from where you currently work (this Centre) have you worked at other child care centres?

Question A1C. How long have you been working at this centre?

Question A1D. Did you come to work here because this Centre received ELCC funding?

	% n=198
Length of time working in child care	
Less than 1 year	16%
1 to 3 years	20%
4 to 6 years	18%
7 to 10 years	20%
More than 10 years	23%
Don't know	2%
Prefer not to answer	1%
Worked in other child care centres	
Yes	57%
No	41%
Don't know	1%
Prefer not to answer	2%
Length of time working at this Centre	
Less than 6 months	30%
6 months to 11 months	13%
1 to 3 years	24%
4 to 6 years	13%
7 to 10 years	8%
More than 10 years	8%
Don't know	3%
Prefer not to answer	2%
Came to this Centre because of ELCC funding	
Yes	13%
No	80%
Don't know	6%
Prefer not to answer	2%

As shown in Table 3.5, ELCC educators who are in a wide range of roles and are responsible for providing care to children in various age groups responded to the ELCC educator survey. About 4 in 10 ELCC educator survey respondents were Child Development Supervisors (43%) and just over one-third were Child Development Assistants (36%).

**Table 3.5: ELCC Educator Roles and Certification
(ELCC Educator Survey, n=198)**

Question A2A. What is your current position at this child care centre? Select all that apply.

Question A2B. What age group do you care for in the Centre? Select all that apply.

Question A1E. What is your current level of certification?

	% n=198
Current position *	
Child Development Assistant	13%
Child Development Worker	18%
Child Development Supervisor/Team Lead	13%
Early Childhood Educator	21%
Float	10%
Support	8%
Program Director	5%
Executive Director	3%
Enhancement Worker	3%
Assistant Director	2%
Other	3%
Don't know	-
Prefer not to answer	10%
Age group care for *	
0 to 12 months	28%
13 to 18 months	38%
19 months to less than 3 years	53%
3 years to less than 4.5 years	54%
4.5 years and older	34%
Prefer not to answer	7%
Certification Level	
Child Development Assistant (formerly Level One)	36%
Child Development Worker (formerly Level Two)	14%
Child Development Supervisor (formerly Level Three)/Team Lead	43%
Other	3%
None	4%
Prefer not to answer	1%
*Note: Numbers add to more than 100% due to responses being coded to multiple themes.	

3.6 Profile of Parent/Caregiver Survey Respondents

Table 3.6 provides a profile of ELCC Centre and Comparison Centre parent/caregiver survey respondents' children.

- Over 8 in 10 parents/caregivers (86% of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 84% of Comparison Centre parents/caregivers) had one or two children.
- Most parents/caregivers only had one child under the age of 5 (68% for ELCC Centres and 75% for Comparison Centres) (differences are statistically significant).
- Parents/caregivers who responded to the survey had a total of 666 children under the age of five, including 391 children for ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 275 children for Comparison Centre parents/caregivers.
- Across ELCC Centres and Comparison Centres, 15 parents/caregivers reported that they had a child with special needs.

**Table 3.6: Parent/Caregiver Profile of Children
(Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=294 and n=227)**

Question A1. In total, how many children do you have in your care?

Question A1B. How many of the children you have in your care are under the age of 5 years?

**(Differences are statistically significant)*

	ELCC Centres (n=294)	Comparison Centres (n=227)
Number of children		
One	41%	49%
Two	45%	35%
Three	12%	13%
Four or more	2%	4%
Prefer not to answer	-	-
Number of children under the age of 5		
One	68%	75%
Two	29%	19%
Three	2%	1%
Four or more	-	-
Prefer not to answer	1%	5%
Child's Age**	(n=391)	(n=275)
Less than one year	10%	2%
One	18%	23%
Two	23%	26%
Three	22%	20%
Four	27%	24%
Five	<1%	1%
Prefer not to answer	1%	5%
Number of Children with Special Needs		
None	96%	97%
One	3%	3%
Prefer not to answer	1%	<1%
# Percentages based on number of children. n=391 for ELCC Centres and n=275 for Comparison Centres. Note: Numbers do not add to 100% due to rounding.		

According to the parent/caregiver survey, the main child care arrangement respondents were currently using for the children attending this Centre was a daycare (85% for ELCC Centres and 93% for Comparison Centres). See Table 3.7.

Table 3.7: Parent/Caregiver Reported Main Child Care Arrangement Currently Using (Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=294 and n=227)

Question A5. What is the main child care arrangement you are currently using for the children attending this Centre? (Results of testing for statistical significance are not reported due to the small number of responses in some categories)

Main Child Care Arrangement	ELCC Centres (n=294)	Comparison Centres (n=227)
A daycare	85%	93%
A preschool centre or a nursery	4%	<1%
In the child's home	1%	<1%
A home daycare	1%	<1%
Before or after school program	-	3%
Another type of child care	-	<1%
Don't know	4%	-
Prefer not to answer	3%	2%
Note: Numbers do not add to 100% due to rounding.		

Table 3.8 profiles the child care arrangements for all of the children under the age of five that parent/caregiver survey respondents reported having:

- Most children under the age of five were attending licensed child care on a full-time basis (71% for ELCC Centres and 77% for Comparison Centres). However, a greater proportion of children attending an ELCC Centre (17%) were enrolled on a part-time basis than children attending a Comparison Centre (5%) (differences are statistically significant). It is possible that differences in the children's child care enrollment status may reflect the number of children that parents/caregivers survey respondents said they have. As shown in Table 3.6, a greater proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (57%) have two or three children than Comparison Centre parents (48%). Furthermore, a greater proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (31%) have two or three children under the age of five than Comparison Centre parents (20%).
- A greater proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers' children under the age of five (26%) were at home with a parent/guardian than Comparison Centre parents/caregivers' children under the age of five (10%). This finding suggests that the \$25 per day child care fee may be encouraging parents/caregivers to enroll their child in child care so that they can engage in the labour force, rather than stay at home with their children. However, based on the survey questions, it is not possible to determine if these were parents/caregivers were on a maternity/paternity leave; this issue will be explored in future years of the evaluation.

**Table 3.8: Parent/Caregiver Reported Child Care Arrangements
(Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=391 and n=275)**

Question A2. For each of the children in your care, please indicate their age and whether they are attending school, a licensed child care centre, another form of child care, or are at home with a parent or guardian.

Question A3. How many of your children attending this Centre have special needs?

**(Differences are statistically significant)*

	ELCC Centres (n=391) [#]	Comparison Centres (n=275) [#]
Child Attending School		
Yes	12%	13%
No	85%	82%
Prefer not to answer	3%	5%
Child Attending Licensed Centre*		
Full-time	71%	77%
Part-time	17%	9%
This child is not attending a licensed child care centre	8%	3%
Prefer not to answer	4%	11%
Child Attending Another Form of Child Care		
Yes	5%	9%
No	92%	86%
Prefer not to answer	3%	5%
Child at Home with Parent or Guardian*		
Yes	26%	10%
No	67%	72%
Prefer not to answer	8%	18%
[#] Percentages based on number of children. Note: Numbers do not add to 100% due to rounding.		

Prior to enrolling their child in a child care Centre, the majority of the parents/caregivers who responded to the survey reported that their child was cared for by a stay-at-home parent or caregiver (69% for ELCC Centres and 64% for Comparison Centres). See Table 3.9.

**Table 3.9: Parent/Caregiver Reported Caregiver Prior to Enrollment
(Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=294 and n=227)**

Question A4. Prior to enrollment, who provided care for the children currently attending this Centre?

(Results of testing for statistical significance are not reported due to the small number of responses in some categories)

Caregiver Prior to Enrollment	ELCC Centres (n=294)	Comparison Centres (n=227)
Stay-at-home parent/caregiver	69%	64%
Extended family	10%	10%
Friends/neighbours	6%	2%
Day home	11%	13%
Different child care centre	11%	11%
Other	6%	5%
Don't know	1%	1%
Prefer not to answer	<1%	1%
Note: Numbers do not add to 100% due to rounding.		

Table 3.10 provides the gender, age, marital status and education level of parent/caregiver survey respondents. Generally, parents/caregivers from ELCC Centres and Comparison Centres had similar demographic profiles; however, a greater proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (19%) are common-law than Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (10%).

**Table 3.10: Parent/Caregiver Demographics
(Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=294 and n=227)**

Question F1. What is your gender?

Question F1A. What is your age?

Question F6. What is your marital status?

Question F2. What is the highest level of education you have attained?

(Results of testing for statistical significance are not reported due to the small number of responses in some categories)

	ELCC Centres (n=294)	Comparison Centres (n=227)
Gender		
Female	83%	83%
Male	17%	17%
Other	-	-
Don't know	-	-
Age		
24 and younger	4%	12%
25 to 34	45%	40%
35 to 44	42%	41%
45 and older	3%	4%
Prefer not to answer	6%	3%
Marital Status		
Married	58%	56%
Common-law	19%	10%
Separated	6%	8%
Divorced	2%	2%
Widowed	1%	1%
Single (never married)	15%	23%
Don't know	-	-
Prefer not to answer	<1%	1%
Education		
Less than high school	6%	10%
Graduated high school	12%	15%
Some commercial, technical or vocational college or trade certificate	5%	9%
Graduated commercial, technical or vocational college or trade certificate	23%	23%
Some university	6%	4%
Completed university	33%	30%
Post-graduate	13%	8%
Don't know	2%	-
Prefer not to answer	1%	1%

Table 3.11 provides information about the adults in the survey respondents' households.

- Most households consist of two adults (71% for ELCC Centres and 64% for Comparison Centres).
- A lower proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (17%) are a single member household than Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (26%).

**Table 3.11: Parent/Caregiver Household
(Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=294 and n=227)**

Question F7A. How many adults, including yourself, are in your household?

Question F7B. What is the relationship of the adults to the children in the household?

(Results of testing for statistical significance are not reported due to the small number of responses in some categories)

	ELCC Centres (n=294)	Comparison Centres (n=227)
Number of Adults in Household		
One (you)	17%	26%
Two	71%	64%
Three or more	11%	8%
Don't know	-	-
Prefer not to answer	1%	1%
Relationship of Adults to Children*		
Parent/step-parent	99%	97%
Caregiver	1%	1%
Grandparent	7%	7%
Aunt/Uncle	4%	2%
Other family member	2%	2%
Non-relative	1%	-
Don't know	1%	-
Prefer not to answer	<1%	1%

*Numbers do not add to 100% due to individuals providing more than one answer.

Table 3.12 provides the employment status and annual income for parent/caregiver survey respondents:

- More than three-quarters of ELCC Centre (77%) and Comparison Centre (77%) parents/caregivers who responded to the survey are currently employed.
- A lower proportion of the 84 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (25%) than the 59 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (34%) who reported their annual income said it was less than \$50,000.²⁹
 - Nonetheless, as discussed in Section 4.1.1, a greater proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (32%) than Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (5%) said the main reason they chose the child care centre they were using was because of the affordable cost.
 - However, a greater proportion of Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (31%) than ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (20%) said the main reason they chose the child care centre they were using was because of its location.

²⁹ The respondent base for the question about annual income is lower than for other questions as only those who did not report what proportion of their income they spend on child care were asked the question (see Section 4.2.5). In future years, the structure of this question will be revised to ensure it is asked of all respondents.

**Table 3.12: Parent/Caregiver Employment and Annual Income
(Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=84 and n=59)**

Question F9. What is your current main activity?

Question F8. What is your annual household income?

(No statistically significant differences except for questions marked '#' where results of testing for statistical significance are not reported due to the small number of responses in some categories)

	ELCC Centres (n=294)	Comparison Centres (n=227)
Current Main Activity#		
Employed	77%	77%
Self-employed	4%	4%
In school/training	14%	15%
Unemployed	3%	4%
Retired	-	-
Don't know	1%	<1%
Prefer not to answer	<1%	<1%
Annual Household Income	(n=84)	(n=59)
Under \$50,000	25%	34%
\$50,000 to \$80,000	16%	9%
\$80,001 to \$120,000	7%	7%
Over \$120,000	19%	22%
Don't know	17%	9%
Prefer not to answer	17%	20%

As shown in Table 3.13, ELCC Centre parents/caregivers who responded to the survey appear to come from a wider range of ethnic/cultural backgrounds than Comparison Centre parents/caregivers.

**Table 3.13: Parent/Caregiver Citizenship and Background
(Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=294 and n=227)**

Question F3. What is your ethnic/cultural background?

Question F4A. Do you identify as an Indigenous/Aboriginal person?

(Results of testing for statistical significance are not reported due to the small number of responses in some categories)

	ELCC Centres (n=294)	Comparison Centres (n=227)
Ethnic/cultural background		
White	69%	78%
Indigenous	7%	3%
Black	6%	5%
Filipino	4%	1%
Chinese	3%	2%
European	2%	3%
South Asian (East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)	2%	-
Mixed race	2%	2%
Other	4%	5%
Don't know	-	1%
Prefer not to answer	2%	1%
Indigenous/Aboriginal		
Yes	9%	8%
No	90%	90%
Don't know	1%	<1%
Prefer not to answer	1%	1%

Table 3.14 profiles the citizenship of parent/caregiver survey respondents:

- A greater proportion of the ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (24%) reported that they are either naturalized in Canada or are not a Canadian citizen than Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (19%).
- Of the 61 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 42 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers who said they are not Canadian citizens:
 - A greater proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (61%) entered Canada as a permanent resident than Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (50%).
 - A lower proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (3%) entered Canada as a refugee than Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (17%).
 - A greater proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (16%) entered Canada as an international student than Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (7%).
 - A greater proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (9%) have been in Canada for two years or less than Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (2%).

Reasons for the differences between parent/caregiver survey respondents at ELCC Centre and parent/caregiver survey respondents at Comparison Centres cannot be determined based on the survey questions.

In future years of the evaluation, consideration could be given to including some survey questions regarding how parents/caregivers became aware of the child care centre they are using. As discussed in Section 4.1.1, 11% of ELCC Centre parent/caregiver survey respondents and 19% of Comparison Centre parent/caregiver survey respondents said the main reason they chose the child care centre they were using was because it was recommended by someone.

Table 3.14: Parent/Caregiver Citizenship

Question F5A. Are you a Canadian citizen?

Question F5B. Did you enter Canada as...?

Question F5C. How long have you lived in Canada?

(Results of testing for statistical significance are not reported due to the small number of responses in some categories)

	ELCC Centres (n=294)	Comparison Centres (n=227)
Canadian Citizenship		
Yes, born in Canada	78%	81%
Yes, naturalized in Canada	13%	11%
No	8%	8%
Don't know	<1%	-
Prefer not to answer	1%	<1%
Entered Canada as		
	(n=62)	(n=42)
Permanent resident	61%	50%
International student	16%	7%
Temporary foreign worker/work permit	15%	17%
Refugee	3%	17%
Other	3%	7%
Don't know	2%	-
Prefer not to answer	-	2%
Length of Time in Canada		
Less than 1 year	2%	-
1 to 2 years	7%	2%
3 to 5 years	16%	21%
6 to 10 years	32%	24%
More than 10 years	44%	52%
Don't know	-	-
Prefer not to answer	-	-

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Relevance

4.1.1 *Continued Need for the ELCC Centre Initiative*

**SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 1:
WHAT IS THE NATURE AND LEVEL OF CONTINUED NEED FOR THE ELCC CENTRE INITIATIVE AND ASSOCIATED
ELEMENTS?**

Interviews with ELCC Centre supervisors, interviews with ELCC Centre partners and the ELCC educator survey found there is an ongoing need for the ELCC Centre Initiative. Specifically, these respondents reported the following:

- Families continue to need access to affordable, quality child care in order to help facilitate labour force attachment.
- ELCC Centres identified an ongoing need to:
 - Improve the quality of child care;
 - Increase the number of qualified ELCC educators;
 - Increase the professionalization of ELCC educators; and
 - Implement the learning gained from the ELCC Curriculum Framework and the ASaP Continuum Project.

ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators and ELCC Centre partners overwhelmingly stated that there is an ongoing need for the ELCC Centre Initiative.

- The majority of ELCC Centre supervisors indicated that the ELCC Centre Initiative is needed to support ongoing improvement to the quality of child care provision. As one ELCC Centre supervisor explained: *“The need for day care and quality child care that actually meets the children’s needs ... is very important.”*
- Although most ELCC Centre supervisors acknowledged that the ELCC Curriculum Framework and the ASaP Continuum Project are helping ELCC Centres improve the quality of child care, they said that ELCC Centres need more time and experience with the ELCC Curriculum Framework and the ASaP Continuum Project for the quality elements of the ELCC Centre Initiative to become engrained in the day-to-day ELCC Centre operations and child care practices. Sections 4.2.6.2, 4.2.6.3 and 4.3.3 provide additional information on ELCC Centres experiences with and use of the ELCC Curriculum Framework and the ASaP Continuum Project, as well as how ongoing support from pedagogical partners and GRIT coaches is critical to enabling ELCC educators to provide quality child care and to continue to enhance the professionalization of ELCC educators.
- The majority of ELCC educators (81%) responding to the survey reported that there was an ongoing need for the ELCC Centre Initiative because of the benefits it provides parents/caregivers (48%), children (25%) and ELCC educators (17%). See Table 4.1 below for additional information.

Table 4.1: ELCC Educator Identified Reasons for Continued Need for the ELCC Centre Initiative (ELCC Educator Survey, n=190)

Question B8B. Why is there an ongoing need for the ELCC Centre Initiative? (open-ended question)

Reason for Ongoing Need	% n=190
Benefits to parents/caregivers (net)	48%
Provides/increases supports to parents/caregivers/families – general	21%
Increases/ensures affordability of care	20%
Provides/increases supports to vulnerable families	1%
Increases/ensures accessibility to care	10%
Benefits to children (net)	25%
Provides/increases supports to children	11%
Increases/ensures quality care	15%
Provides/increases supports to ELCC educators	17%
Provides/increases supports to the community	11%
Creates jobs	5%
Other	6%
Don't know	15%
Prefer not to answer	17%
<small>Note: Numbers do not add to 100% due to individuals providing more than one answer 'Net' categories are an aggregate of the indented sub-categories listed underneath. The percentages reported in the 'net' category may be lower than the sum of the percentages reported for each of the subcategories comprising the 'net' as the 'net' only counts a response to one or more of the subcategories category once.</small>	

- A few ELCC Centre partners explained that without the ELCC Centre Initiative low income families would have reduced access to affordable child care leading to less labour force attachment (section 4.2.7 describes the impact of the ELCC Centre Initiative in labour force and school opportunities) and well-being among these families.
- As discussed in Section 4.2.1, the quality of child care is the main factor contributing to the impacts of the ELCC Centre Initiative on family well-being (e.g. improved quality of life; increased labour force attachment; increased children’s skills, abilities, confidence and socialization; improved financial situation).
- Aligning with the ELCC Centre Initiative’s objective to improve the affordability and accessibility of child care, the parent/caregiver survey found that the main reason that over half of the responding ELCC Centre families (52%) chose to enroll their child in a specific ELCC Centre was because it was affordable (32%) or accessible (i.e. location) (20%); this compares to just over one-third (36%) of responding Comparison Centre families, including only 5% who chose their Centre because it was affordable and 31% who chose the Centre because it was accessible (see Table 4.2). Sections 4.2.4 and 4.2.5 discuss the impact of the ELCC Centre Initiative on accessibility and affordability, respectively.

Table 4.2: Parent/Caregiver Reported Main Reason for Choosing a Specific Child Care Centre (Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=294 and n=227)

Question E8. What is the main reason you chose this child care centre, rather than a different one? Please select one only. (Results of testing for statistical significance are not reported due to the small number of responses in some categories)

Main Reason for Choice	ELCC Centres (n=294)	Comparison Centres (n=227)
Affordable cost	32%	5%
Location (close to home or work, school, etc.)	20%	31%
Was recommended by someone	11%	19%
Only option available	7%	9%
Learning program	6%	7%
My other children go (have gone) there	4%	9%
It is safe	4%	5%
Quality of care	4%	1%
For the child's socialization	3%	2%
Care by someone trustworthy (family member, friend)	2%	1%
Hours of operation	1%	4%
Low child-adult ratio, more employees/one-on-one time	<1%	4%
Other	4%	3%
Don't know	<1%	1%
Prefer not to answer	-	-
Note: Numbers do not add to 100% due to rounding.		

- Many ELCC Centre supervisors also mentioned that there is a continued need for the ELCC Centre Initiative to help increase the number of qualified ELCC educators and increase the professionalization of ELCC educators. Sections 4.2.6.5 and 4.3.3 provide additional information related to ELCC educators' professional development, training and professionalism.
- Almost all ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators and ELCC Centre partners did not identify any elements of the ELCC Centre Initiative that are no longer needed.

4.1.2 Alignment with the Multilateral Framework on ELCC

**SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 2:
HOW IS THE ELCC CENTRE INITIATIVE ALIGNED WITH THE MULTILATERAL FRAMEWORK ON ELCC?**

A review of the ELCC Centre grant agreements and the Multilateral Framework on ELCC found that the ELCC Centre Initiative and the Multilateral Framework on ELCC align across all five themes including:

- Early learning experiences/environments;
- Relationships;
- Flexible and broadly available care that is accessible and affordable;
- Respect and value diversity; and
- Staff qualifications and training.

As shown in Table 4.3, Alberta’s ELCC Centre Initiative and the Multilateral Framework on ELCC, signed by federal/provincial/territorial Ministers in June 2017, align across six main themes: early learning experiences/environments; relationships; flexible and broadly available care; accessibility and affordability; respect and value diversity; and staff³⁰ qualifications and training. Representatives of CS indicated that the GoA developed the ELCC Centre Initiative prior to the signing of the Multilateral Framework on ELCC; therefore, when the GoA entered multilateral framework negotiations, it was able to advocate for alignment between the ELCC Centre Initiative and the Multilateral Framework on ELCC.

Table 4.3: Alignment Between the Multilateral Framework and the ELCC Centre Initiative Grant (Document Review)

Goals of the Multilateral Framework ³¹	Terms of Alberta’s ELCC Centre Initiative Grant Agreement	Aligned?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides rich early learning experiences and environments and views children as capable, competent learners who are full of potential. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work collaboratively with the ELCC supports (MacEwan University and Mount Royal University pedagogical partners) to develop practices to explore the implementation of the <i>Play, Participation and Possibilities: An Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum Framework for Alberta</i>. 	<p>✓</p> <p>The ELCC Curriculum Framework is being implemented at ELCC Centres. The ELCC Centre Curriculum Framework is designed to provide children with rich early learning experiences and environments and view children as capable competent learners who are full of potential.</p>

³⁰ Throughout this report, the term ‘staff’ is used when referring to Centre staff generally (i.e. not educators specifically), in direct quotes or when common phraseology is employed (e.g. ‘staff remuneration’, ‘staff turnover’).

³¹ Government of Canada. (2017). ‘Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework.’ Available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/early-learning-child-care/reports/2017-multilateral-framework.html> [Accessed 21 February]

**Table 4.3: Alignment Between the Multilateral Framework and the ELCC Centre Initiative Grant
Continued
(Document Review)**

Goals of the Multilateral Framework ³²	Terms of Alberta’s ELCC Centre Initiative Grant Agreement	Aligned?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values the importance of building strong, responsive and respectful relationships in which purposeful interactions support optimal learning for children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure parents are involved and engaged in their children’s learning and development. • Engage parents/caregivers in quality assurance processes. 	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>By providing quality child care practices (e.g. ELCC Curriculum Framework and inclusive child care practices), collaborating with other service organizations and involving parents/caregivers in quality assurance practices, the ELCC Centre Initiative strives to build responsive and respectful interactions between ELCC educators, parents/caregivers and children.</p>

³² Government of Canada. (2017). ‘Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework.’ Available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/early-learning-child-care/reports/2017-multilateral-framework.html> [Accessed 21 February]

Table 4.3: Alignment Between the Multilateral Framework and the ELCC Centre Initiative Grant
Continued
(Document Review)

Goals of the Multilateral Framework ³³	Terms of Alberta’s ELCC Centre Initiative Grant Agreement	Aligned?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-quality early learning and child care should be flexible and broadly available to respond to the varying needs of children and families to promote early childhood development. • Accessible, affordable and flexible early learning and child care also supports families participating in employment, education or training, and harder-to-serve populations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer parent/caregiver fees at no higher than \$25 a day. • Increase enrollment and/or spaces. • Offer flexible child care to support parents/caregivers who are working or attending school outside of typical child care operations and/or who work on a part-time basis. • Identify opportunities to collaborate with other service organizations for co-location or new partnerships in delivering ELCC. • Ensure collaboration with other service organizations that support knowledge about cultural diversity and learning as it relates to Indigenous, immigrant and refugee children. • Ensure collaboration with other service organizations to support the provision of parenting resources and supports to families attending the child care program. • Collaborate to support vulnerable families (i.e. low socio-economic status, lone parent families, parenting teens and women facing additional barriers). • Support child care in rural communities. 	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>The ELCC Centre Initiative is designed to better support access to, and affordability of, quality child care spaces in Alberta. ELCC Centres are providing high quality and flexible early learning and child care by implementing the ELCC Curriculum Framework, inclusive child care practices and one or more of the six improvements included in the expression of interest (e.g. flexible child care, co-location, cultural learning, parenting supports, supporting vulnerable families and/or supporting child care in rural communities). Additionally, the ELCC Centre Initiative improved the accessibility of child care by creating additional child care spaces and providing flexible child care arrangements. It also improved the affordability of child care by setting parent/caregiver fees at a maximum of \$25 per day.</p>

³³ Government of Canada. (2017). ‘Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework.’ Available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/early-learning-child-care/reports/2017-multilateral-framework.html> [Accessed 21 February]

Table 4.3: Alignment Between the Multilateral Framework and the ELCC Centre Initiative Grant
Continued
(Document Review)

Goals of the Multilateral Framework ³⁴	Terms of Alberta’s ELCC Centre Initiative Grant Agreement	Aligned?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive early learning and child care systems respect and value diversity, which could include but is not limited to: children and families who are experiencing vulnerability; and children with varying abilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work collaboratively with Getting Ready for Inclusion Today (GRIT Edmonton) to enable the full participation of all children in the program, including children with diverse learning needs. 	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>ELCC Centres are providing inclusive early learning and child care systems by implementing the ASaP Continuum Project and partnering with other service organizations that support knowledge about cultural learning and/or that support vulnerable families.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes the importance of qualifications and training for the early childhood work force. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that program leaders and ELCC educators are provided with support and release time to attend professional learning activities. • Develop onsite pedagogical leadership to support ELCC educators in their exploration of curriculum concepts and resources. • Identifying a staff member as the ‘Site Lead’ to participate in all training, onsite coaching, modeling of professional practices and mentoring of other ELCC educators in their use of new practices. • Establishing a leadership team that meets on a regular basis for the purpose of developing program level goals and communication with staff on varied topics such as: responding to challenging behavior, activities for family engagement, meaningful inclusion, accessing supports, policy development, etc. 	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>The ELCC Centre Initiative and ELCC Centres recognize the importance of qualifications and training for the early childhood work force by supporting professional development and providing mentoring and coaching to implement the ELCC Curriculum Framework and the ASaP Continuum Project.</p> <p>In Alberta, licensing requirements stipulate that all staff must be certified based on education and/or equivalencies.</p> <p>All ELCC centres must participate in accreditation. Accreditation grant funding provides up to \$1,000/year in professional development for each eligible educator.</p>

³⁴ Government of Canada. (2017). ‘Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework.’ Available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/early-learning-child-care/reports/2017-multilateral-framework.html> [Accessed 21 February]

4.2 Performance: Outcomes

4.2.1 Impact on Family and Child Well-Being

**SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 13:
HOW HAS THE ELCC CENTRE INITIATIVE IMPACTED FAMILY/CHILD WELL-BEING?**

Interviews with ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators, ELCC Centre partners, pedagogical partners, GRIT coaches; parent/caregiver focus groups; and the survey of parents/caregivers found that the ELCC Centre Initiative has impacted family and child well-being in the following ways:

- Improved quality of care;
- Increased parenting skills;
- Increased labour force attachment (entering/re-entering the workforce);
- Reduced stress and increased peace of mind for families;
- Improved family relationships;
- Reduced financial burden for families;
- Improved accessibility of child care;
- Reduced vulnerability for families;
- Increased community involvement; and
- Increased supports for ELCC educators.

ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators, ELCC Centre partners, pedagogical partners, GRIT coaches and parents/caregivers provided a wide range of comments about how the ELCC Centre Initiative is positively impacting family and child well-being:

- **Improved Quality of Care**
 - Most ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators, pedagogical partners and parent/caregiver focus group participants indicated that the ELCC Centre Initiative provides children with a solid foundation for their growth and development. In the words of one parent/caregiver who participated in the focus groups: *“There are so many different activities for our children to get involved in at the day care. We wouldn’t be able to do/afford all of those different activities at home. Our children are exposed to many different experiences.”*
 - Most ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators, pedagogical partners and GRIT coaches said children are receiving higher quality care and advancing their education and development (emotional, social, intelligence, physical, gross/fine motor, cognitive, literacy and vocabulary).
 - Many parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups reported that the ELCC Centre Initiative is improving their children’s behavior in child care and with families and friends outside of the child care centre. For example: *“My child now knows how to play and talk with others and has friends.”*
 - Many parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups noted that with the ELCC Centre Initiative, child care is more child-centred, which makes both the children and

families happier. For example: *"I like hearing from my children how their day was positive. My children love it; they are flourishing."*

- Some ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators, pedagogical partners and GRIT coaches indicated the ELCC Centre Initiative is:
 - Helping ELCC educators to value children's well-being and view them as mighty learners;
 - Increasing children's confidence;
 - Helping children understand their routines and regulate their emotions; and
 - Increasing possibilities for children and helping improve the future for the next generation.
- **Increased Parenting Skills**
 - Many ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators, pedagogical partners and GRIT coaches reported that the ELCC Centre Initiative creates the potential for families (and ELCC educators) to see children through a different light and shifts parents/caregivers' perception of what learning looks like and makes learning visible. They explained that: parents/caregivers are learning from their children (e.g. provides the opportunity for parents to model the child care practices they see in ELCC Centres in their homes); a continuum in child care practices is being established between day care and home; and families are receiving training around social-emotional development.
 - Some ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators and parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups said that the ELCC Centre Initiative improves the relationships and increases communication between ELCC educators and parents/caregivers and provides parents/caregivers with support and partnership. They also indicated that families are able to obtain the information, resources and support they need from ELCC educators (because they have good relationships with ELCC educators and the educators have received more training).
- **Increased Labour Force Attachment and School**
 - A few parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups and ELCC Centre supervisors reported that, at ELCC Centres targeting parenting teens, the ELCC Centre Initiative has enabled teen parents to complete their high school education.
 - Some parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups said that the ELCC Centre Initiative enabled them to go to work or school. Parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups provided the following examples of how the ELCC Centre Initiative has impacted their attachment to the labour force: *"I was able to go back to work; it wouldn't have made sense to go back to work without \$25 per day child care," "I didn't lose my career" and "I am able to work full-time hours."*
 - Some parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups also mentioned that the ELCC Centre Initiative has enabled them to make a decision that they may not have made outside of the ELCC Centre Initiative such as making a career change (even if it meant accepting a lower wage); accepting job offers and/or picking up extra shifts. For example, parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups said: *"I can do the work I want" and "I can accept jobs and shifts without time constraints [because the child care centre is open for extended hours]."*

- A few parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups also noted that the ELCC Centre Initiative has enabled them to focus on work during their day because they know their children are being well cared for.
- **Reduced stress and peace of mind**
 - A few parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups reported that the ELCC Centre Initiative has reduced their stress and they no longer have to rush to pick up their children after work. Parents/caregivers explained that they do not have to rush because some ELCC Centres are open extended hours and, with the maximum \$25 per day child care parent fees, they are no longer charged late fees.
 - Many parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups also said that the ELCC Centre Initiative has given them peace of mind. As one parent/caregiver explained: *“I was able to increase the number of days my child went to day care and no longer have to worry about making other child care arrangements. We have peace of mind knowing that we have reliable child care.”*
 - Many parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups indicated that, at ELCC Centres: they know that their children are being taken care of; they have confidence in ELCC educators and see that the ELCC educators are involved with their child; and they know their children are learning and see evidence of it. According to one parent/caregiver: *“I no longer feel guilty when I drop my child off. I don’t have to worry about the quality of care my child is receiving.”*
- **Improved Family Relationships**
 - A few ELCC Centre supervisors and ELCC Centre partners said the ELCC Centre Initiative helps break the cycle of unhealthy families.
 - Some parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups reported that the ELCC Centre Initiative has reduced stress for families; helped families create positive, healthy environments at home; and enabled parents/caregivers to be present with their children when they are at home and improve parent/caregiver-child relationships. As some parents/caregivers explained:
 - *“We have more time to spend together as a family and I can enjoy our family time more because I am not stressed.”*
 - *“We have better work-life balance. We have less stress because we don’t have to juggle our schedules anymore.”*
 - *“We are able to spend more time together as a family and bond as a family.”*
- **Reduced Financial Burden**
 - Many parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups reported that, given the \$25 per day child care fees, they can now afford child care. They said that a smaller proportion of income is going towards child care; for example: *“half of our income is no longer going to child care”* and *“we are not working to pay for child care.”* They also indicated that they are able to save hundreds of dollars per month on child care expenses and those who receive the full child care subsidy may not have any out-of-pocket expenses for child care. According to one parent/caregiver: *“\$1,200 to \$1,400 per month [for child care] was more than my rent and utilities combined.”*

- Some parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups said that, with the \$25 per day child care fees, they are now able to make ends meet and pay bills that they couldn't afford before. For example, parents/caregivers reported that: *"It has alleviated my financial stress. I am able to keep my head above water and keep on top of my bills. I am able to make ends meet"* and *"I am no longer living paycheck to paycheck."*
- Some parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups indicated that, with the \$25 per day child care fees, they now have more money in their pockets and are able to provide basic needs for their children (e.g. healthier food, diapers, new clothes, braces). In the words of one parent/caregiver: *"It provides my family with extra income for life necessities."*
- A few parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups also said that they can now afford to enroll their children in extracurricular activities and that they have more disposable income to do fun activities with their children and take vacations. For example, one parent/caregiver said: *"We can afford to go out together as a family."*
- Additional financial impacts of the \$25 per day child care fees that a few of the parent/caregiver focus group participants mentioned include being able to: afford to buy a car or a home, begin to pay-off debt, and save money (e.g. RRSPs, RESPs).
- A few parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups also indicated that the increased affordability of child care has influenced their decision to have another child sooner rather than later (because they can now afford child care).
- **Increased Child Care Accessibility**
 - Some parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups and ELCC Centre supervisors said that the ELCC Centre Initiative has increased the accessibility of child care. They explained that it is easier for families to access day care because ELCC Centres are open earlier and later, parents/caregivers do not need to look for babysitters on the weekend because the Centre is open and families can use the ELCC Centres for casual care.
 - A few parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups who work shift work mentioned that with the ELCC Centre Initiative, they now have more time to spend with their families.
 - A few ELCC Centre supervisors said the ELCC Centre Initiative has resulted in some children being removed from unsafe care arrangements.
- **Reduced Vulnerability**
 - A few ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators and ELCC Centre partners reported that the ELCC Centre Initiative prevents vulnerable families from becoming more vulnerable, for example, by providing families with information about, and referrals to, supports that may be available to them (refer to Section 4.2.6.7 for a more detailed discussion the improvements that ELCC Centres implemented to support vulnerable families) and, through the requirements that ELCC Centres must meet, equalizes Albertans' access to affordable, quality child care.

- **Increased Community Involvement**

- A few ELCC Centre partners who participated in an interview and a few parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups said the ELCC Centre Initiative provides structure and stability for communities. A few focus group participants indicated that, because of the relationships they had formed with other families who have children enrolled in the ELCC Centre, they feel more connected to their community. For example, a few parents/caregivers reported that *“people say ‘hi’ to us now when we are out in the community”* and *“we are able to meet other people and make new friends.”* Additionally, a few parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups also noted that, because of the availability of affordable, accessible and quality child care, *“we have more time to help other people in our community.”*

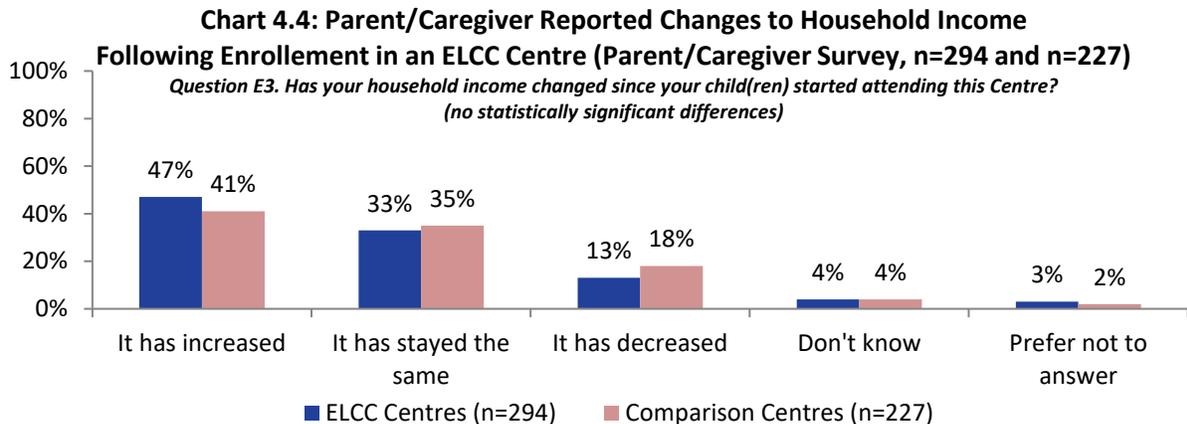
- **Increased Support for ELCC Educators**

- Most ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators, pedagogical partners and GRIT coaches said the ELCC Centre Initiative supports the well-being, development and professionalism of ELCC educators. They also noted that staff who view themselves positively can increase their ability to provide high quality programs to children.

Additionally, as shown in Chart 4.2, the survey of parents/caregivers found that, since parents/caregivers’ children started attending the child care Centre:

- 47% of responding ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 41% of responding Comparison Centre parents/caregivers reported that their household income had increased (no statistically significant differences).
 - A greater proportion of parents/caregivers whose child attended a rural ELCC Centre (55%) said that their household income had increased since their children started attending the child care Centre compared to those who children attended an urban ELCC Centre (44%); however, there are no statistically significant differences.
 - A greater proportion of male respondents (50%) said that their household income had increased since their children started attending the ELCC Centre compared to female respondents (46%); however, there are no statistically significant differences.
 - A greater proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers who were married/common-law (51%) said that their household income had increased since their children started attending the child care Centre compared to parents/caregivers who were single/separated/divorced/widowed (32%); however, there is no statistically significant difference
- 33% of responding ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 35% of responding Comparison Centre parents/caregivers 33% said that their household income had stayed the same.
 - Approximately the same proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers whose children attended an urban (13%) or rural (12%) ELCC Centre said that their household income had stayed the same since their children started attending the child care Centre.
 - A greater proportion of male respondents (16%) said that their household income had stayed the same since their children started attending the ELCC Centre compared to female respondents (12%); however, there are no statistically significant differences.

- A greater proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers who were single/separated/divorced/widowed (41%) said that their household income had increased since their children started attending the child care Centre compared to parents/caregivers who were married/common-law (31%); however, there is no statistically significant difference
- 13% of responding ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 18% of responding Comparison Centre parents/caregivers indicated that their household income had decreased (see Chart 4.4; there are no statistically significant differences between ELCC Centre respondents and Comparison Centre respondents).
 - A greater proportion of parents/caregivers whose child attended an urban ELCC Centre (36%) said that their household income had decreased since their children started attending the child care Centre compared to those who children attended a rural ELCC Centre (25%).
 - A greater proportion of female respondents (34%) said that their household income had decreased since their children started attending the ELCC Centre compared to male respondents (30%).
 - Approximately the same proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers who were married/common-law (13%) said that their household income had decreased since their children started attending the child care Centre compared to parents/caregivers who were single/separated/divorced/widowed (12%).



Almost all parents/caregivers who responded to the survey strongly agreed or agreed that the quality of care provided at the ELCC Centre has positively impacted their children:

- 97% of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers agreed, including 72% who strongly agreed;
- 95% of Comparison Centre parents/caregivers agreed, including 60% who strongly agreed;
- Across all ELCC Centres and Comparison Centres, only four parents/caregivers disagreed.

Reflecting the aforementioned qualitative findings, ELCC Centre parents/caregivers who responded to the survey identified the following impacts of the ELCC Centre Initiative on their family:

- Improved quality of life (32%) through peace of mind, more quality family time, access to reliable child care, increased community connections, increased opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities and ability to take maternity/paternity leave;

- Increased labour force attachment (31%) such as enabling parents/caregivers to go to or return to work, continue to work, or go to or return to school, or change the hours worked;
- Increased child’s skills, abilities, confidence and socialization (28%); and
- Improved financial situation (16%).

According to Comparison Centre parents/caregivers who responded to the survey, their child’s enrollment in a child care centre yielded the same range of impacts, although a greater proportion of Comparison Centre parents (22%) reported that the enrollment had no impact than ELCC Centre parents (14%). See Table 4.5 for these and other responses.

Table 4.5: Parent/Caregiver Identified Impact of Enrolling in an ELCC Centre on Families (Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=294 and n=227)

Question E9A. What impact has enrolling your child(ren) in this Centre had on your family? (open-ended question)

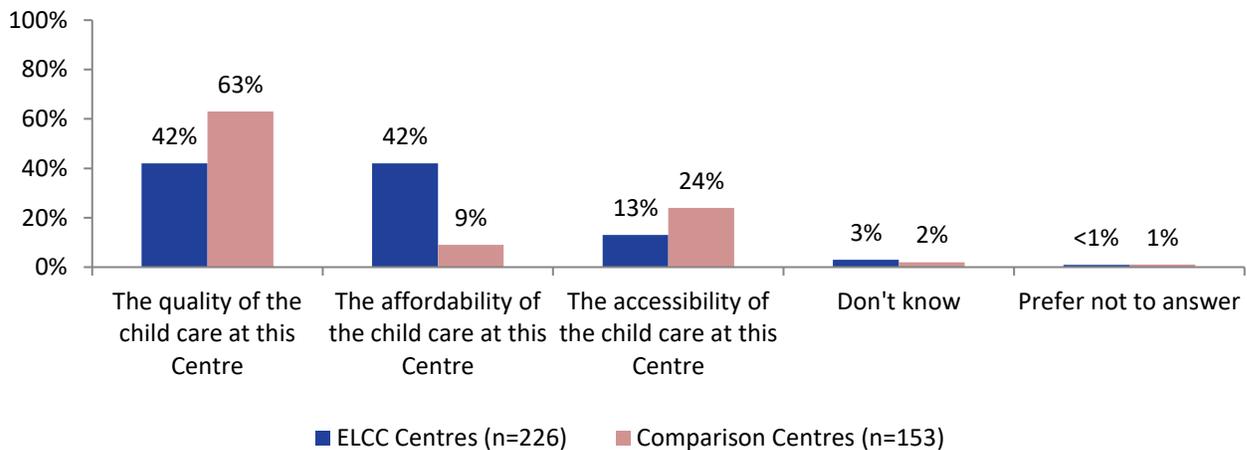
Impact on Family	ELCC Centres (n=294)	Comparison Centres (n=227)
Improved quality of life (net)	32%	25%
Peace of mind	17%	15%
Improved quality of life	8%	5%
Increased amount of quality family time	6%	1%
Access to reliable child care	5%	3%
Increased community connection(s) for parents/family	3%	4%
Increased opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities	3%	<1%
Can take maternity/paternity leave while continuing to send older child to day care	1%	-
Increased labour force attachment (net)	31%	24%
Go to/return to work or career	19%	16%
Continue to work/focus on career	6%	5%
Change in hours worked	4%	1%
Continue in/finish education	3%	1%
Go to/return to education	1%	1%
Increased child(ren)’s skills/abilities/confidence/socialization	28%	29%
Improved financial situation	16%	6%
Other	17%	12%
No impact	14%	22%
Don’t know	-	-
Prefer not to answer	10%	11%
Note: Numbers do not add to 100% due to individuals providing more than one answer ‘Net’ categories are an aggregate of the indented sub-categories listed underneath. The percentages reported in the ‘net’ category may be lower than the sum of the percentages reported for each of the subcategories comprising the ‘net’ as the ‘net’ only counts a response to one or more of the subcategories category once.		

The 226 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers who responded to the survey, and identified an impact(s) that the ELCC Centre had on their family, reported that the impact(s) resulted from the quality (43%) or the affordability (41%) of child care at the ELCC Centre. Compared to ELCC Centre parents, a higher

proportion of the 153 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers reported that the impact(s) resulted from the quality of care at the Centre (63%) or the accessibility of the Centre (24%). See Chart 4.6.

Chart 4.6: Parent/Caregiver Identified Factors Influencing the Impact of ELCC Centre Enrollment on Families (Percent of Respondents) (Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=226 and n=153)

Question E9B. Thinking about the impact you described, what was the main cause that allowed this to occur? (Results of testing for statistical significance are not reported due to the small number of responses in some categories)



4.2.2 Key Driver Analysis

ELCC Centre Parent/Caregiver Satisfaction with Quality of Care

The final regression model of parent/caregiver satisfaction with quality of care has an adjusted r-squared value of 0.46. This demonstrates that the model has moderate³⁵ explanatory power for the survey item ‘Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of care provided at this centre?’. As shown in Table 4.7, only four of the twelve statements included in the model remained in the final model (refer to section 3.3 for more information on the statements that were included in the model).

Of the four statements in the final model, two statements, ‘To what extent do you agree that the staff at this Centre make you, as a parent/caregiver, feel welcome and accepted?’ and ‘Centre staff encourage my child to participate in activities’ had the greatest relative importance, demonstrating that Centre staff interactions with parents and children have a large impact on satisfaction with quality of care. Additionally, the cultural nature of the child activities and the professional attitudes of staff were related to satisfaction with quality of care.

³⁵ Chin, W.W. (1998). The Partial Least Squares Approach to Structural Equation Modeling. In G.A. Marcoulides (Ed.) *Modern Methods for Business Research* (pp. 295-336). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Recommends interpreting R-Squared values as: 0.19 (weak), 0.33 (moderate), 0.67 (strong).

**Table 4.7: Drivers of ELCC Centre Parents/Caregivers’ Satisfaction with Quality of Care
Relative Importance (Key Driver Analysis)**

Dependent Variable: Parent/Caregiver Survey D12A. Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of care provided at this centre?

ELCC Centre Parent/Caregiver Survey Statement	Standardized Beta Coefficient	Relative Importance	Adjusted R ²
To what extent do you agree that the staff at this Centre make you, as a parent/caregiver, feel welcome and accepted?	0.374	36%	0.46
Centre staff encourage my child to participate in activities.	0.185	32%	
Child care centre activities help my child understand other cultures.	0.177	17%	
I consider the staff at this Centre to be professionals.	0.160	15%	

ELCC Centre Impact of Quality of Care on Child

The final regression model of the ELCC Centre Initiative’s positive impact on child(ren) also has an adjusted r-squared value of 0.46. This demonstrates that the model has moderate explanatory power for the survey item ‘Overall, to what extent do you agree that the quality of care provided at this centre has positively impacted your child?’. As shown in Table 4.8, of the eight statements included in the model, five had a statistically significant impact on parental perceptions of the ELCC Centre’s positive impact on their child(ren) (refer to section 3.3 for more information on the statements that were included in the model).

The relative number of the statements in the final model, five out of eight, and the range of topics they cover illustrate the complexity between child care activities and positive impact on child(ren). The provision of play opportunities, the encouragement of children to participate in activities, and the cultural nature of these activities all impacted parent/caregivers’ perceptions of the ELCC Centre’s positive impact. The inclusion of the various play-related statements in the final model suggests the need for thoughtful development and implementation of play activities at the ELCC centre. Additionally, communication with parents about their child’s day was related to a perceived positive impact, indicating the importance of keeping parents informed. Finally, the perception of staff as professionals had the greatest relative importance on perceived positive impact on children. Both the deliberate development of child activities and the consistent communication with parents help underscore parents viewing staff as child care professionals.

**Table 4.8 Drivers of ELCC Centre Parents/Caregivers’ Perceptions of Positive Impact on Child(ren)
Relative Importance (Key Driver Analysis)**

Dependent Variable: Parent/Caregiver Survey E5. Overall, to what extent do you agree that the quality of care provided at this centre has positively impacted your child?

Parent/Caregiver Survey Statement	Standardized Beta Coefficient	Relative Importance	Adjusted R ²
I consider the staff at this Centre to be professionals.	0.241	28%	0.46
Centre staff encourage my child to participate in activities.	0.184	21%	
My child is provided with opportunities to play and explore.	0.171	20%	
Child care centre activities help my child understand other cultures.	0.143	17%	
Centre staff regularly communicate with me about my child’s day so that I can incorporate my child’s interests into activities at home.	0.125	14%	

4.2.3 Factors Influencing Parents/Caregivers’ Enrollment Decisions

As shown in Table 4.9, the parent/caregiver survey found that:

- The most important factor that impacted responding parents/caregivers’ decision to enroll their child in a particular child care centre was quality (39% for ELCC Centres and 50% for Comparison Centres); and
- The second most important factor that impacted responding parents/caregivers’ decision to enroll their child in a particular child care centre was affordability for ELCC Centres (34%) and accessibility for Comparison Centres (41%).

**Table 4.9: Parent/Caregivers’ Identified Most Important Factor on Enrollment Decisions
(Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=294 and n=227)**

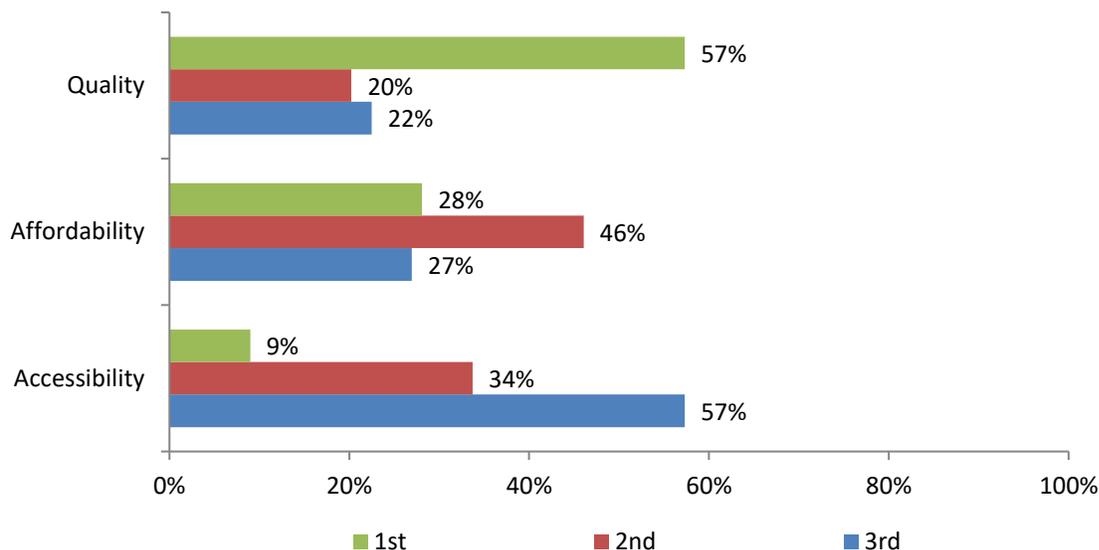
*Question E10A. What was the most important factor that impacted your decision to enroll your child at this Centre?
Question E10B. What was the second most important factor that impacted your decision to enroll your child at this Centre?
Question E10C. What was the third most important factor that impacted your decision to enroll your child at this Centre?
(Results of testing for statistical significance are not reported due to the small number of responses in some categories)*

Factor in Enrollment Decision	ELCC Centres (n=294)	Comparison Centres (n=227)
Most Important Factor		
Accessibility (for example, location, operating hours)	21%	29%
Affordability (for example, low parent fees, minimal additional fees)	36%	13%
Quality (for example, inclusive activities, partnerships with other community organizations)	39%	50%
Combination of two or more	3%	3%
None of these factors informed my decision	-	1%
Other	-	-
Don't know	1%	1%
Prefer not to answer	<1%	2%
Second Most Important Factor		
Accessibility (for example, location, operating hours)	31%	41%
Affordability (for example, low parent fees, minimal additional fees)	34%	22%
Quality (for example, inclusive activities, partnerships with other community organizations)	28%	26%
Combination of two or more	1%	1%
None of these factors informed my decision		
Other	<1%	<1%
Don't know	4%	2%
Prefer not to answer	1%	5%
Third Most Important Factor		
Accessibility (for example, location, operating hours)	40%	21%
Affordability (for example, low parent fees, minimal additional fees)	20%	37%
Quality (for example, inclusive activities, partnerships with other community organizations)	26%	21%
Combination of two or more	<1%	<1%
None of these factors informed my decision	5%	8%
Other	1%	<1%
Don't know	1%	4%
Prefer not to answer	7%	9%

When asked to rank the importance of accessibility, affordability and quality in their decision to enroll their child(ren) at their current ELCC Centre, the majority (57%) of ELCC Centre parent/caregiver focus group participants identified quality as the main reason they enrolled their child(ren) in their current ELCC Centre (Chart 4.10). Just under half (46%) identified affordability as the secondary reason for their

enrollment decision and just over half (57%) identified accessibility as the tertiary reason for their decision.

**Chart 4.10: Parent/Caregivers' Reasons for Enrollment in ELCC Centre
(Participants in Parent/Caregiver Focus Groups, n=89)**



Parents/caregivers who participated the focus groups who identified quality as the main reason they enrolled their children in their current ELCC Centre stated that it was important for them that the ELCC educators care about their children, that their children were safe and that had peace of mind knowing that their children were in 'good hands'. These parents/caregivers ranked quality above accessibility, with some stating that they would 'go out of their way' to get their child to the ELCC Centre and that the quality of care at the ELCC Centre was 'worth the drive' and/or 'worth the travel time'. These parents/caregivers also ranked quality above affordability, with many stating that if the quality of care at an ELCC Centre was perceived by them to be 'cheap' they would not enroll their children there, because 'quality has no price'.

Some parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups ranked quality as the main reason for their enrollment decision did so based on their experiences at other child care facilities where they had experienced what they deemed to be lower-quality child care, and now prioritized the importance of their children attending a 'good quality' child care centre as a result. When asked what 'good quality' looked like to them, some parents/caregivers stated that the ELCC Centre should be inviting to children; places where their children were going to learn and play; where programs are play-based; where the activities follow creativity and are child-led; where meals are provided; where activities are provided (e.g. going swimming, going to the library); and where children are encouraged to engage in physical activity. Some parents/caregivers also described quality child care centres as places where parents/caregivers felt comfortable leaving their children, because they believed their children were safe and well-cared for.

In the words of parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups...

... describing the importance of quality

- *"I put quality as number one. I have four children and these are my youngest two. I have been through lots of day homes and day care centres. I have had some great experiences and some not so great, so it was important to find somewhere where it was good quality. An environment that was inviting for my kids, where they were going to learn and play. This particular day care has been the best one I have had by far."*
- *"It isn't that easy as because the reason why I came here was for the affordability part but the quality is just as important as if I didn't think the quality was a good I wouldn't have cared how much money I was saving, I wouldn't have switched."*
- *"It's important for me to know that she is in good hands."*
- *"It's important that I know she is safe."*
- *"Because it doesn't matter where something is located or how cheap it is, it has to be good for the children."*
- *"If it was a horrible daycare, they wouldn't go there, regardless of proximity and convenience."*
- *"My number one choice was the quality because quality has no price. If I can give my child the best quality education possible, I will do whatever it takes to ensure that. Affordability will work its way into that, but I'm going to work harder to ensure that he gets the quality that I want him to have."*
- *"I am a very protective parent so quality was number one, as well as the atmosphere, the set up, the way it's structured. I really didn't really care about the cost at that time to be honest."*
- *"Quality was number 1. I think it's important, as a parent, to really have the peace of mind. You don't feel guilty when you are making your ends meet and at the same time you have your child in a quality center."*
- *"My kids spend over 10 hours a day here while I'm at work and I'm willing to pay if it's worth it, and honestly I've spent so much money in centers that have not been worth it. I finally don't feel rushed to come now, because I'm not worried about the kids because I know that they are happy and safe. I know for a fact that they'd rather be here in the gym versus being with me at the grocery store. Before, if I took that extra 20 minutes I would be charged another \$20, which really was just another 20 minutes of Paw Patrol."*
- *"Even if it is affordable, the price would not matter if the quality was bad."*

... describing quality versus accessibility

- *"As far as accessibility; I would bring my kids to this day care on the far side of the moon. It is an amazing program."*
- *"Accessibility was not even a factor because this is a great place. As the other [participant] stated: I would bring my kids to the moon and back because this is a fantastic program."*
- *"Accessibility was third because like the others ones said, I don't care how far I had to drive, even if it was an hour out of town, I would still drive to bring them here."*
- *"It's worth the drive to bring them here."*
- *"Accessibility might have been a bigger issue if the program wasn't so good."*
- *"The first week I thought it was a long way to come in, but after the first two days I was thinking that I didn't care how [long] it takes me, I was going to take them there."*
- *"The location doesn't matter that much to me, as I promised myself I would keep bringing them to this daycare as its quality is much higher."*
- *"I take the bus, so it takes about two hours to get here. Everything they provide here makes it worth it."*

Many parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups who identified accessibility as the main reason they enrolled their children at the ELCC Centre identified the hours of operation, the location and ease of access as of key importance to them. Many of these parents/caregivers were shift workers and/or worked irregular hours, and stated that their ELCC Centre’s extended hours or operation meant they and/or their partner could work and not have to worry about picking up or dropping of their children at the ELCC Centre. Tied into accessibility was consistency: a few of these parents/caregivers stated that they had previously had to rely on family, friends or day homes that did not always provide reliable child care services, and that having their children enrolled in a centre that they could rely on, was important. A few of these parents/caregivers also stated that they did not live close to family or friends, so having access to an ELCC Centre that they could rely upon helped them to enter or maintain employment.

In the words of parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups...

- ... describing the importance of accessibility**
- *“Both my husband and I have irregular schedules and we had family watching her. It was great, but there was no consistency and we had a hard time with her sometimes, so I really wanted a daycare that would give her some more structure and learning that I wasn’t able to provide because I had to work so much.”*
 - *“The hours here make it easier for me to keep my children here for my whole shift. I would have had to find several sitters to cover otherwise. So the hours of operation and the location make the accessibility second.”*
 - *“The co-location with the school is a bonus. There is the library, a hot lunch program, language opportunities. The co-location makes it easier for parents who have children in both school and child care.”*
 - *“For me, accessibility is important as my family is in [another province]. I don’t have any family here so the fact that [the Centre is] accessible and willing to work with me as I work 10 hour day, very awkward schedule to work around but they make it work for me.”*
 - *“For me, it was accessibility. I was unable to find a place in a day home that opened at 6:30am and provided 12-hour care, so I had to pay for private babysitting for the seven months that I went back to work, because nothing else was available.”*
 - *“Accessibility ... and affordability has worked out to make our family life better as well. Before signing back onto it, [my partner and I] were just both working opposite shifts full time, so we had a really long period where we just didn’t see each other. Life is better for the kids because we are not as tired all the time when we are at home.”*
 - *“I think the accessibility is number one because regardless of the price, we will have to pay it. The price is just an absolute that has to be paid. Location, ability to get to the location, is there public transportation to get there, and it is very centrally located.”*
 - *“The hours: trying to get two shifts that work together to try and take care of kids was difficult, and now we don’t have to worry about that.”*
 - *“Accessibility first, because it allows us to take classes and work on time.”*

Some parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups who identified affordability as the main reason they enrolled their children at the ELCC Centre stated that, although quality was very important to them, if they could not afford to send their child to daycare then the quality of the care being provided there was irrelevant. A few of these parents described how they had previously had to ‘settle’

for what they perceived to be lesser-quality day care simply because they could not afford anything else. Some of the parents/caregivers who identified affordability as the main reason they enrolled their children at the ELCC Centre said that affordability was of key importance because they were paying fees for more than one child. Many parents/caregivers who identified affordability as their main reason stated that having access to affordable daycare meant that they no longer had to ‘choose’ between child care and employment: previously, many of these parents/caregivers were required to stay home as they could not afford to work or because it did not make economic sense for their family for them to work; now, they were able to re-enter the workforce and/or advance their career because the care for their children was affordable.

In the words of parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups...

... describing the importance of affordability

- *“If it wasn’t affordable, I wouldn’t be able to work. It wouldn’t make sense for me to have to work and pay for both children in the program.”*
- *“I went with affordability first because I am a single mom of three kids. I was paying \$75 a day for my two girls and I was having a really hard time getting that money together. So affordability was number one.”*
- *“If you can’t afford to send your kids to daycare, there are not a lot of things you can cut out of a budget to make it easier to pay for childcare.”*
- *“I know the quality is integral and it’s very important to know that, [but] the \$25 is the main thing. We came from [another child care centre], one [that] was more manageable: it was around \$1,200 per month and now we have another kid who is just starting a daycare. So it was coming to the point where my wife had to stay at home or we had to figure something else out. We need more daycare that can provide good quality services and at the same time, be affordable. If you think about that \$2,400 goes towards your kids every month, it’s like a mortgage payment. We need good daycares like this one with all the amenities and to have skilled teachers in them but keeping it affordable, more so with those who don’t qualify for subsidy.”*
- *“Before the \$25 a day came, it was very tight and hard and after it really helped us out.”*
- *“I want my daughter to go to high quality programs, but if I can’t afford it then I have to go to a lower quality place which is affordable. Really, it all comes down to the bottom line of what you can afford and yes, you want the best for your family, however it’s not always realistic. If it’s too much then you have to look elsewhere and that can make a huge difference in your child’s life.”*
- *“If this was not offered I would think of another option because there is no way I could get the quality for the same price.”*
- *“For us, it was affordability. I could not advance my career: I was forced to stay home and had no option other than to stay home until we were able to get a spot here.”*
- *[For] our family, it was affordability. It has made such a huge difference to us, for the price.”*

4.2.4 Progress Towards Improved Accessibility

**SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 6:
WHAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE TOWARDS IMPROVED CHILD CARE ACCESSIBILITY IN ALBERTA (E.G. NEW SPACES,
ENROLLMENT, CO-LOCATION, FLEXIBILITY, RURAL COMMUNITIES)?**

Administrative data from CS, Interviews with ELCC Centre supervisors and the ELCC educator survey found that the ELCC Centre Initiative has helped improve the accessibility of child care in the following ways:

- Creating 362* net new licensed child care spaces in ELCC Centres;
- Co-locating 12 unique ELCC Centres with a Parent Link Centre, a Parent Link Centre Outreach program, other child care programs (for school age children) or a school;
- Supporting child care in rural communities through 10 ELCC Centres (including five that are located in rural communities);
- Offering flexible child care hours at 11 ELCC Centres; and
- Increasing the number of children enrolled in ELCC centres by 72% from 729 to 1,251.

According to the parent/caregiver survey, it took fewer than half of the 294 responding parents (43%) less than one month to three months to secure a space at their child care centre. However, ELCC Centre supervisors reported that the number of children on their waiting list has increased dramatically since the start of the ELCC Centre Initiative.

* While this report identifies changes in licensed spaces from March 2017 to March 2018 (n=362 net new spaces), there were two ELCC Centres (Kids Campus Day Care Society and Willow Lake Tiny Tots Daycare) that expanded the number of licensed spaces from 71 to 98 (n=27 net new spaces) in February 2017 and from 0 to 14 (n=14 net new spaces) in March 2017.

4.2.4.1 Licensed Child Care Spaces

According to the ELCC Centre grant agreements, to improve the accessibility of child care, 15 ELCC Centres proposed to increase the number of licensed child care spaces in the centre (four ELCC Centres did not propose any increases to child care spaces). As shown in Table 4.11, based on administrative data information provided by CS, four of these ELCC Centres were able to improve accessibility by increasing the number of licensed child care spaces as planned. However, 11 ELCC Centres have not yet been able to increase the number of licensed child care spaces that they offer; in these cases, ELCC Centre supervisors said that expanding the number of licensed child care spaces has been hindered by physical space constraints and staff shortages.

**Table 4.11: Number of ELCC Centres Able to Increase Child Care Spaces as Intended*
(CS Administrative Data, n=19)**

Able to meet?	Number of ELCC Centres
Yes	4 of 15
No	11 of 15
Not applicable (increase in child care spaces not proposed)	4 of 4
<small>*While this report identifies changes in licensed spaces from March 2017 to March 2018, the new program, Willow Lake Tiny Tots Daycare, was licensed in February 2017 for 14 spaces and by March 2018 met their target of 30 licensed spaces. Thus, 10 ELCC Centres, instead of 11, had not yet met their target by March 2018.</small>	

Table 4.12 shows the number of licensed child care spaces at ELCC Centres in Alberta. As of March 2018, there was a total of 1,133 child care spaces in 19 ELCC Centres (which is below the proposed target of 1,296 spaces based on 22 ELCC Centres). According to the ELCC Centre Initiative Fourth Quarter 2017-18 Report as of March 31, 2018, as a result of the ELCC Centre Initiative, there were 362 net new child care spaces in ELCC Centres (136 spaces in 13 'existing' ELCC Centres and 226 spaces in 6 new ELCC Centres).³⁶

Between March 2017 and March 2018, with the implementation of the ELCC Centre Initiative, the number of spaces in ELCC Centres increased by 47% (from 771 spaces to 1,133 spaces). This compares to a 10% increase (from 46,343 spaces to 50,972 spaces) in the number of spaces across all centres in Alberta.

³⁶ While this report identifies changes in licensed spaces from March 2017 to March 2018 (n=362 net new spaces), there were two ELCC Centres (Kids Campus Day Care Society and Willow Lake Tiny Tots Daycare) that expanded the number of licensed spaces from 71 to 98 (n=27 net new spaces) in February 2017 and from 0 to 14 (n=14 net new spaces) in March 2017.

Table 4.12: Number of Licensed Child Care Spaces – March 2017 and March 2018³⁷

	March 2017		March 2018		Percentage Change
	Number of Programs	Number of Spaces	Number of Programs	Number of Spaces	
Alberta					
ELCC Centres	13	771	19	1,133	47.0%
All Centres	831	46,343	902	50,972	10.0%
Northwest Region					
ELCC Centres	2	115	3	177	53.9%
All Centres	35	1,521	36	1,625	6.8%
Northeast Region					
ELCC Centres	1	14	1	30	114.3%
All Centres	12	538	17	672	24.9%
Edmonton Region					
ELCC Centres	1	84	3	133	58.3%
All Centres	352	18,909	389	21,570	14.1%
Central Region					
ELCC Centres	2	132	2	178	34.8%
All Centres	62	2,870	66	3,132	9.1%
Calgary Region					
ELCC Centres	2	124	5	293	136.3%
All Centres	279	18,062	300	19,429	7.6%
South Region					
ELCC Centres	1	33	1	53	60.6%
All Centres	63	3,150	63	3,306	5.0%
North Central Region					
ELCC Centres	4	269	4	269	0.0%
All Centres	27	1,280	30	1,225	-4.3%
Métis Settlements					
ELCC Centres	--	--	--	--	--
All Centres	1	13	1	13	0.0%
Source: CCIS (March 2018 lockdown data)					

³⁷ ELCC numbers reflects the addition of the Bissell Centre Early Childhood Program daycare spaces to the baseline data of March 2017.

4.2.4.2 Other Accessibility-Related Improvements

Some ELCC Centres also improved the accessibility of child care by implementing various accessibility-related improvements.

Co-location (18 ELCC Centres implemented)

- 16 of 19 ELCC Centres (84%) proposed a co-location-related improvement.
- 15 of the 16 ELCC Centres that proposed this improvement implemented it.
- Two ELCC Centres that had not proposed the improvement implemented it.
- Of the ELCC Centres:
 - Two are co-located with Parent Link Centres or Parent Link Centre Outreach programs.
 - Nine are co-located with other child care programs (e.g. for school age children).
 - Two are co-located with a school.³⁸

Most of the 173 ELCC educators who responded to the survey found that collaborating with other organizations to provide families with access to multiple services in the same physical space has helped ELCC Centres, either ‘a lot’ or ‘somewhat’, to:

- Support parents/caregivers with the development of their children (88%);
- Create a more culturally-inclusive learning environment for families (88%);
- Create learning environments that recognize different family types (88%);
- Provide parents/caregivers with quality care in their community (87%); and
- Support parents/caregivers who work or study outside of typical business hours (69%) (see Table 4.13).

Table 4.13: ELCC Educator Reported Extent that Collaborations Help ELCC Centres Meet the Needs of Families – Co-Location (ELCC Educator Survey, n=173)

Question B7. To what extent do you think the improvement(s) that your Centre has implemented helped Centre staff meet the needs of children and families? Has the improvement collaborate with other organizations to provide families with access to multiple services in the same physical space helped the Centre...

Collaborate with other organizations to provide families with access to multiple services in the same physical space; (n=173)	Has helped a lot	Has helped somewhat	Has not helped at all	Don't know	Prefer not to answer
Support parents/caregivers in the development of their child(ren).	64%	24%	0%	9%	3%
Create a learning environment that recognizes different family types.	57%	31%	1%	9%	3%
Create a more culturally-inclusive learning environment.	50%	38%	1%	9%	3%
Provide families with quality care in their community.	69%	18%	1%	9%	4%
Support parents/caregivers who work or study outside of typical business hours.	51%	18%	5%	20%	6%

Note: Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

³⁸ A total of 111 daycares (13%) in Alberta were co-located with a school.

Rural (10 ELCC Centres implemented)

- 10 of 19 ELCC Centres (53%) proposed to support rural communities.
- All 10 of these ELCC Centres (100%) are supporting rural communities (this includes five ELCC Centres that are located in rural communities).

Of the 109 ELCC educators who responded to the survey, 89% found that offering child care in rural communities has helped ELCC Centres, a lot or somewhat, to provide parents with quality care in their community (see Table 4.14).

Table 4.14: ELCC Educator Reported Extent that Collaborations Help ELCC Centres Meet the Needs of Families – Child Care in Rural Communities (ELCC Educator Survey, n=109)

Question B7. To what extent do you think the improvement(s) that your Centre has implemented helped Centre staff meet the needs of children and families? Has the improvement offer child care in rural communities helped the Centre...

Offer child care in rural communities; (n=109)	Has helped a lot	Has helped somewhat	Has not helped at all	Don't know	Prefer not to answer
Provide families with quality care in their community.	73%	16%	0%	10%	2%

Note: Numbers do not add to 100% due to rounding

Flexible Hours (11 ELCC Centres Implemented)

- 13 of 19 ELCC Centres (68%) proposed to offer flexible child care.
- 10 of these 13 ELCC Centres (77%) are offering variable or extended hours.
- One ELCC Centre that had not proposed the improvement implemented it.

Of the 128 the ELCC educators who responded to the survey, 85% found that offering flexible child care has helped ELCC Centres, a lot or somewhat, to support parents who are working or attending school outside of typical business hours (see Table 4.15).

Table 4.15: ELCC Educator Reported Extent that Collaborations Help ELCC Centres Meet the Needs of Families – Flexible Child Care (ELCC Educator Survey, n=128)

Question B7. To what extent do you think the improvement(s) that your Centre has implemented helped Centre staff meet the needs of children and families? Has the improvement [insert improvement] helped the Centre...

Offer flexible child care, to support parents/caregivers who are working or attending school outside of typical business hours; (n=128)	Has helped a lot	Has helped somewhat	Has not helped at all	Don't know	Prefer not to answer
Support parents/caregivers who work or study outside of typical business hours.	68%	17%	5%	8%	2%

In terms of hours of operation, 84% of ELCC educator survey respondents who worked at ELCC Centres offering extended hours stated that their ELCC Centre's hours supported parents/caregivers who worked or studied outside of typical business hours.

According to the parent/caregiver survey, 33% of ELCC Centre respondents and 21% of Comparison Centre respondents reported that their Centre provides child care outside of normal business hours.

- Of the 97 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 48 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers who said their Centre has extended hours, just over one-third of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers reported that they used the extended hours, including 11% who used them at least once per week and 3% who used them at least once per month and about 4 in 10 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers reported that they used the extended hours, including 17% who used them at least once per week and 8% who used them at least once per month.
 - The parent/caregiver survey results for the use of extended hours in ELCC Centres align with data from the interviews with ELCC educators, which found that use of the ELCC Centre's the extended hours was 'up and down', particularly during the evening (as opposed to early morning).
- Of the 97 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 48 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers who said their Centre has extended hours, 23% of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 40% of Comparison Centre parents/caregivers said there were additional fees to have their child in care during extended hours.

According to the parent/caregiver survey, a greater proportion of the respondents whose child was enrolled in an urban ELCC Centre (40%) said their Centre has extended hours compared to the respondents whose child was enrolled in a rural ELCC Centre (12%). Of the 88 parent/caregiver respondents whose child was enrolled in an urban ELCC Centre that offered extended hours, 36% of respondents reported that they used the extended hours at least once every few months, including 13% who used them at least once a week. None of the nine parent/caregiver respondents whose child was enrolled in a rural ELCC Centre that offered extended hours reported using the extended hours.

A similar proportion of female (33%) and the male (32%) respondents reported that their ELCC Centre offered extended hours, although a slightly higher proportion of the 16 male respondents whose ELCC Centre offered extended hours had used them at least once every few months (38%) compared to the 81 female respondents whose ELCC Centre offered extended hours had used them at least once every few months (31%).

According to the parent/caregiver survey, over 9 in 10 of respondents stated that they were satisfied with their Centre's operating hours:

- 95% of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers were satisfied, including 68% who were very satisfied. Only four parents/caregivers were unsatisfied.
- 91% of Comparison Centre parents/caregivers were satisfied, including 59% who were very satisfied. Only six parents/caregivers were unsatisfied.
- Across all ELCC Centres and Comparison Centres, the 10 parents/caregivers who were unsatisfied with their centre's operating hours said it was because the centre opened too late, closed too early or was closed for too many holidays/statutory holidays.

Over 9 in 10 parent/caregiver survey respondents whose child was enrolled in an urban (very satisfied, 70% or satisfied, 26%) or rural (very satisfied, 60% or satisfied, 31%) ELCC Centre reported that they were with their ELCC Centre's operating hours.

Regardless of gender, almost all parent/caregiver survey respondents reported that they were satisfied with their ELCC Centre's operating hours (female: very satisfied, 65% or satisfied, 29%; male: very satisfied, 80% or satisfied, 18%).

In the parent/caregiver survey, over 9 in 10 respondents stated that they were satisfied with their Centre's location:

- 96% of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers were satisfied, including 77% who were very satisfied. Only three parents/caregivers were unsatisfied.
- 96% of Comparison Centre parents/caregivers were satisfied, including 69% who were very satisfied. Only two parents/caregivers were unsatisfied.
- Across all ELCC Centres and Comparison Centes, the five parents/caregivers who were not satisfied with the location of the child care centre said it was because the centre was too far from home or work, was in a high traffic area, was in a residential area or was too far from local transit.

Over 9 in 10 parent/caregiver survey respondents whose child was enrolled in an urban (very satisfied, 76% or satisfied, 21%) or rural (very satisfied, 77% or satisfied, 17%) ELCC Centre reported that they were with their ELCC Centre's location.

Regardless of gender, almost all parent/caregiver survey respondents reported that they were satisfied with their ELCC Centre's location (female: very satisfied, 78% or satisfied, 18%; male: very satisfied, 72% or satisfied, 26%).

Of the 15 parents/caregivers who responded to the parent/caregiver survey who had a child with special needs (nine ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and six Comparison Centre parents/caregivers), all of the parents/caregivers except for one indicated that the Centre layout met the physical needs of their child.

4.2.4.3 Enrollments

Table 4.16 shows the number of enrollments in child care spaces at ELCC Centres in Alberta. As of March 2018, there were 1,251 enrollments across 19 ELCC Centres. According to the ELCC Centre Initiative Fourth Quarter Report Update, as of March 31, 2018, the ELCC Centre Initiative contributed to the enrollment of 293 additional children in 13 'existing' ELCC Centres which exceeds the proposed target of 78 additional children in 'existing' ELCC Centres.

Between March 2017 and March 2018, with the implementation of the ELCC Centre Initiative, the number of enrollments in ELCC Centres increased by 72% (from 729 to 1,251). This compares to a 12.3% increase (from 40,424 to 45,398) in the number of enrollments across all centres in Alberta. Overall, 10.5% of all new enrollments (522 of 4,974) in Alberta were in ELCC Centres.

When comparing Table 4.12 (licensed child care spaces) and 4.16 (enrollments), it is important to recognize that the number of enrollments can be greater than the number of licensed child care spaces because, if children are attending the day care on a part-time basis, more than one child can be enrolled in one space.

Table 4.16: Number of Enrollments in Licensed Child Care Spaces – March 2017 and March 2018³⁹

	March 2017		March 2018		Percentage Change
	Number of Programs	Number of Enrollments	Number of Programs	Number of Enrollments	
Alberta					
ELCC Centres	13	729	19	1,251	71.6%
All Centres	831	40,424	902	45,398	12.3%
Northwest Region					
ELCC Centres	2	152	3	223	46.7%
All Centres	35	1,444	36	1,602	10.9%
Northeast Region					
ELCC Centres	1	0	1	31	--
All Centres	12	366	17	517	41.3%
Edmonton Region					
ELCC Centres	1	67	3	95	41.8%
All Centres	352	15,645	389	17,189	9.9%
Central Region					
ELCC Centres	2	150	2	215	43.3%
All Centres	62	2,560	66	2,795	9.2%
Calgary Region					
ELCC Centres	2	113	5	288	154.9%
All Centres	279	16,313	300	18,829	15.4%
South Region					
ELCC Centres	1	24	1	49	104.2%
All Centres	63	2,919	63	3,102	6.3%
North Central Region					
ELCC Centres	4	223	4	350	57.0%
All Centres	27	1,165	30	1,351	16.0%
Métis Settlements					
ELCC Centres	--	--	--	--	--
All Centres	1	12	1	13	8.3%

Source: CCIS (March 2018 lockdown data) (March 2017: 13 ELCC Centres, including 12 existing and one new ELCC Centre)

The majority of ELCC Centre supervisors said the expansion in spaces allowed additional children to be enrolled in their ELCC Centre.

4.2.4.4 Length of Time to Access Child Care

According to the parent/caregiver survey respondents, it took ELCC Centre parents/caregivers an average of six months and Comparison Centre parents/caregivers an average of seven months to secure a space at the Centre (no statistically significant differences). See Chart 4.17. Over time, this baseline data can be compared to data in future years to determine if the ELCC Centre Initiative impacts the amount of time parents/caregivers are waiting to access child care spaces.

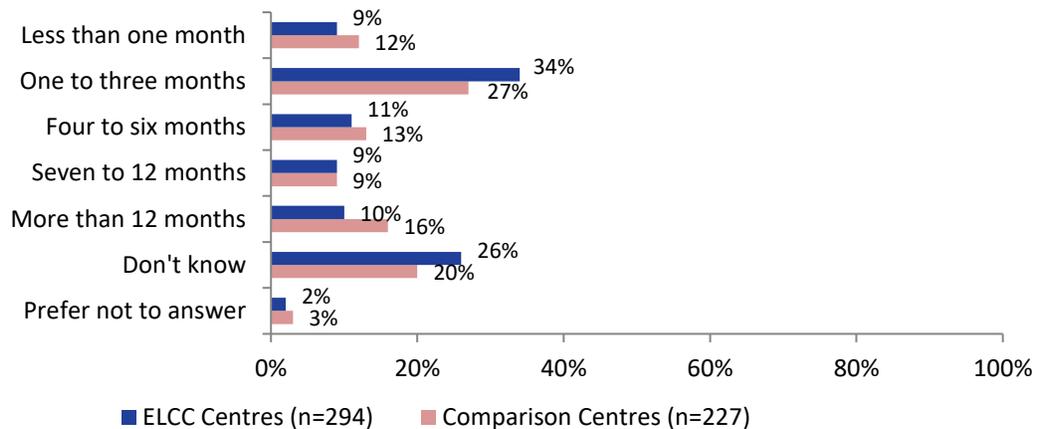
³⁹ ELCC numbers reflects the addition of the Bissell Centre Early Childhood Program daycare spaces to the baseline data of March 2017.

For parent/caregiver survey respondents whose child was enrolled in an urban ELCC Centre, it took an average of six months to secure a space at the Centre. This compares to an average of five months for those whose child was enrolled in a rural ELCC Centre.

For both female and male parent/caregiver survey respondents, it took an average of six months to secure a space at the ELCC Centre.

**Chart 4.17: Parent/Caregivers Reported Length of Time to Access Child Care Spaces
(Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=294 and n=227)**

*Question B1A. How long did it take you to secure space at this Centre for your child? (in months)
(No statistically significant differences)*



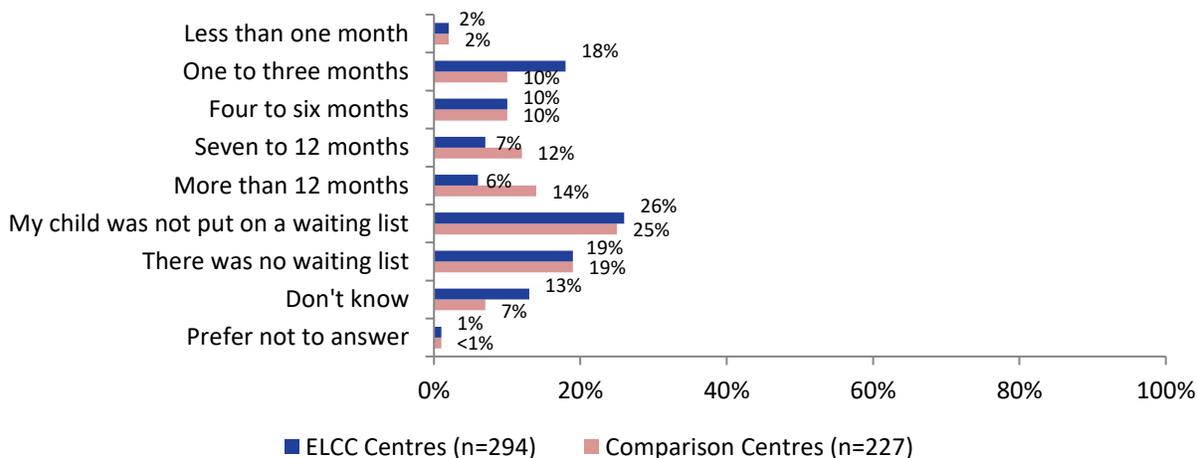
One of the issues ELCC Centres now face is significantly increased waiting lists. The majority of ELCC Centre supervisors reported that the number of children on their waiting list had increased dramatically or, if they had not had a waiting list previously, they had one now. This placed stress upon ELCC Centre supervisors, because although increased waiting lists demonstrated that the ELCC Centres were filling a need within the community, some ELCC Centre supervisors said they are now struggling to meet this need.

According to the parent/caregiver survey respondents, ELCC Centre parents/caregivers said their child was on a waiting list for the Centre for an average of seven months and Comparison Centre parents/caregivers respondents said their child was on a waiting list for the centre for an average of nine and a half months. See Chart 4.18.

Regardless if a child was enrolled in an urban or rural ELCC Centres, according to the parent/caregiver survey responses, ELCC Centre parents/caregivers said their child was on a waiting list for the Centre for an average of seven months. However, the children of female respondents were on a waiting list for an average of eight months compared to an average of five months for the children of male respondents.

**Chart 4.18: Parent/Caregivers Reported Length of Time on a Waiting List
(Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=294 and n=227)**

*Question B1B. How long was your child on a waiting list to enroll in this Centre? (in months)
(Results of testing for statistical significance are not reported due to the small number of responses in some categories)*



Overall, ELCC Centre supervisors identified several ways in which they would like to continue to improve the accessibility of child care, including:

- Having more child care spaces to help reduce long waiting lists (some);
- Having more ELCC educators to cover child care spaces (some);
- Providing universal access to ELCC Centres for teen mothers (a few);
- Improving the physical accessibility of the ELCC Centre (a few);
- Offering child care on weekends and/or open earlier/stay open later (a few);
- Providing vouchers for travel/transportation (a few).

The majority of ELCC Centre partners interviewed stated that they did not provide ELCC Centres with supports that helped to improve child care accessibility.

4.2.5 Progress Towards Improved Affordability

**SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 7:
WHAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE TOWARDS IMPROVED CHILD CARE AFFORDABILITY IN ALBERTA?**

CS administrative data, interviews with ELCC Centre supervisors and ELCC educators as well as the parent/caregiver survey revealed that the affordability of child care has improved.

- March 2018, \$885 average monthly program fees in Alberta (\$40.69 per day)
- 91% of the 294 ELCC Centre parent/caregiver survey respondents pay \$550 or less per child per month (average \$474, standard deviation \$253; Comparison Centre (based on 227 respondents) average \$782, standard deviation \$346)
- Average subsidy of about \$521 per month or \$23.94 per day = \$16.74 per day parent fees
- With the \$25 per day child care at ELCC Centres, parents/caregivers at these centres who receive the full subsidy (\$25.46 per day on average) do not have to pay any monthly parent fees
- 98% of the 294 ELCC Centre parent/caregiver survey respondents are satisfied with the cost of child care
- Increased affordability allows:
 - Increased access for low income families
 - Increased labour force attachment
 - Reduced family stress
 - Increased family disposable income for ‘extras’ (e.g. extra-curricular experiences)

Table 4.19 shows that, as of March 2018, the average monthly program fees for day care programs in Alberta was \$885, or \$40.69 per day.⁴⁰ The average subsidy amount for parents receiving full or partial subsidy was \$521 per month or \$23.94 per day, which makes the average parent portion of the child fees \$16.74 per day. For parents receiving full subsidy only, the average amount they received was \$554 per month or \$25.46 per day, which makes the average parent portion of the child fees \$15.23 per day.

**Table 4.19: Average Monthly Fees and Subsidies at Day Care Programs in Alberta
as of March 31, 2018**

Subsidy Status	Average Monthly Program Fees	Average Monthly Subsidy	Average Monthly Out-of-Pocket Parent Fees
Non-subsidized parents	\$885	--	
Parents receiving full or partial subsidy	\$880	\$521	\$359
Parents receiving full subsidy only	\$909	\$554	\$355
Source: CCIS (March 2018 lockdown data). Note: There were 902 licensed day care programs in Alberta in March 2018.			

According to CS administrative data, in March 2018, the proportion of parents/caregivers at ELCC Centres who were receiving the child care subsidy (35%) was slightly higher than the proportion of parents/caregivers receiving the child care subsidy for all day care programs in Alberta (34%). With the

⁴⁰ Daily fees are computed by dividing monthly fees by 21.75 days.

\$25 per day child care at ELCC Centres, parents/caregivers at these centres who receive the full subsidy (\$25.46 per day on average) do not have to pay any monthly parent fees.

According to the parent/caregiver survey, which was conducted between January and March 2018, found that 35% of responding ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 38% of responding Comparison Centre parents/caregivers reported that they received child care subsidies to help pay for their child's enrollment in the child care Centre. Among the parent/caregiver survey respondents:

- A greater proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers who said that their highest level of education was graduated high school/less than high school (67%) reported that they received child care subsidies compared to parents/caregivers who completed some/graduated college (27%) or parents/caregivers who completed some/graduate university (25%).
- A greater proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers who were single/separated/divorced/widowed (84%) said that they received child care subsidies compared to parents/caregivers who were married/common-law (19%).
- A greater proportion of respondents whose children were enrolled in an urban ELCC Centre (38%) said they received care subsidies compared to those whose children were enrolled in a rural ELCC Centre (25%).
- A greater proportion of female respondents (36%) said they received care subsidies compared to male respondents (28%).

The majority of the ELCC Centre supervisors, and all ELCC educators, believed that, because of the maximum \$25 per day child care fees, child care spaces are now more affordable than they used to be; however, they indicated that the improved affordability can impact families in different ways.

Some of the ways that ELCC Centre supervisors and ELCC educators said the change in affordability could impact lower-income families included:

- Provided low income and vulnerable families the opportunity to access child care (some);
- Parents/caregivers could go back to work because they could now afford to put their children into day care (many);
- Being able to put children into child care meant that both parents/caregivers could work towards improving their family's living situation (some);
- Subsidized families now had the money they were previously paying in fees to put toward other expenses, meaning they had more 'wiggle room' (a few);
- Children's lives outside of day care could now be enhanced because parents could afford to provide them with extra-curricular experiences (a few);
- Parents/caregivers could now do more than meeting only their family's basic needs: they could provide a few extra things (e.g. can buy new clothes for their children, put gas in the car, take their family to a restaurant) or not have to use the food bank (a few); and
- It took stress off of families in terms of debt; for example, it was helping to alleviate the stress of having unpaid child care fees build month upon month (a few).

A few ELCC Centre supervisors and ELCC educators suggested that the factors impacting higher-income families were different than those impacting lower-income families, although the stress of being able to afford child care was still present for such families. A few of these respondents noted that the cost of child care was a 'huge issue' for middle-income families, because they earned too much to qualify for the child care subsidy but still could not necessarily afford the high cost of child care alongside the high

cost of living. These few respondents went on to explain that families with multiple children had to make choices about whether or not to return to work. For example, one ELCC educator reported: *“We have a lot of parents now having second or third kids and trying to go back to work. If both parents have full time jobs, they normally cannot afford to send three kids to day care so the mom normally stays home to take care of them. But now we have parents with two or three kids coming in and people are planning to have more kids.”*

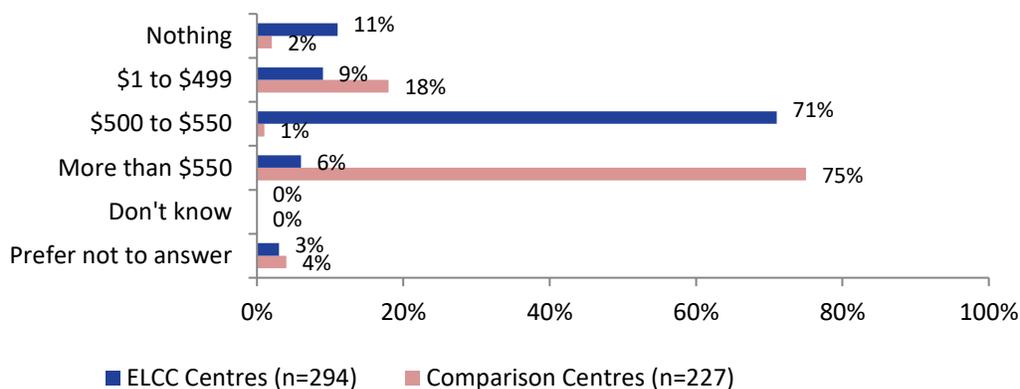
A few ELCC Centre supervisors and ELCC educators said that for families that could afford the cost of child care as it was previously, the ELCC Centre Initiative provided them with other benefits such as enhanced programming, the quality of the ELCC educators or the supports for children with developmental needs. For example, at one ELCC Centre some of the families that could afford the cost already donated the extra money back through a fundraiser.

Chart 4.20 (differences are statistically significant) shows, according to the parent/caregiver survey, respondents’ reported monthly child care fees at the Centre their child was attending:

- Almost all ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (91%) stated that they were paying \$550 per month or less for one child’s enrollment (average \$474, standard deviation \$235), while the majority of families (75%) were paying less than \$1,000 per month for the total cost of their family’s child care (i.e. including all children attending child care – average \$640, standard deviation \$445).
 - The average parent fees for those whose child was enrolled in an urban ELCC Centre were \$460 (standard deviation \$253) compared to \$514 (standard deviation \$168) for those whose child was enrolled in a rural ELCC Centre. Additionally, the average parent fees for female respondents were \$463 (standard deviation \$288) compared to \$529 (standard deviation \$265) for male respondents. In both cases, differences likely reflect the number of days per month that respondents chose to have their child attend the ELCC Centre.
 - A greater proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers who said that their highest level of education was graduated high school/less than high school (27%) reported that they do not pay any fees to have their child enrolled in the ELCC Centre compared to parents/caregivers who completed some/graduated college (6%) or parents who completed some/graduate university (5%). This finding follows the same pattern as the one reported on the previous page regarding the education level of parent/caregiver survey respondents who reported that they had received child care subsidies.

**Chart 4.20: Parent Reported Monthly Child Care Fees
(Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=294 and n=227)**

*Question C1A. How much do you pay to have your child enrolled in this Centre?
(Differences are statistically significant)*



A CS audit to assess whether parents/caregivers of children enrolled in ELCC Centres pay not more than \$25 per day (\$550 per month) for child care was conducted in November 2017. The audit involved conducting an online survey of parents/caregivers that inquired about the child care fees that they paid directly to the ELCC Centres. There were 17 operational ELCCs at the time the survey was open and parents/caregivers from 13 of those centres accessed the survey. Results were analyzed to determine whether a monthly fee of no more than \$550 per month was charged. (This reflects an average of 22 working days of child care per month at \$25 per day.) Out of 244 responses, 16 respondents reported paying over \$550 per month. Ministry staff worked with ELCC Centres to ensure that parents/caregivers were not paying more than \$25 per day.

In March 2018, CS administrative data identified that in two of the 19 open ELCC Centres, there were six of 1,251 children enrolled in ELCC Centres where the parent child care fee reported in the monthly claim was over \$550 per month. CS examined the reported fees and determined that the overages were the result of administrative errors made by the ELCC Centre when they filled out their monthly child care claim, as opposed to the parents/caregivers actually paying more than \$25 per day.

Chart 4.21 (differences are statistically significant) shows, according to the parent/caregiver survey, respondents' reported total monthly child care costs for the family:

- Three-quarters of Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (75%) stated that they were paying more than \$550 per month for one child's enrollment (average \$782, standard deviation \$346). Additionally, more than one-third (34%) were paying more than \$1,000 per month for the total cost of their family's child care (i.e. including all children attending child care – average \$1,019, standard deviation \$615).
 - The average total monthly cost for child care for those whose child was enrolled in an urban ELCC Centre was \$649 (standard deviation \$489) compared to \$614 (standard deviation \$271) for those whose child was enrolled in a rural ELCC Centre (no statistically significant differences). Additionally, the average monthly child care cost for female respondents was \$643 (standard deviation \$461) compared to \$626 (standard deviation \$356) for male respondents. In both cases, differences may reflect the number

of days per month that respondents chose to have their child attend the ELCC Centre as well as the number of children that parents/caregivers have enrolled in child care.

Chart 4.21: Parent Reported Total Monthly Child Care Costs for their Family
(Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=294 and n=227)
 (for all their children)

Question C1B. What is your family's total cost for child care?
 (Differences are statistically significant)

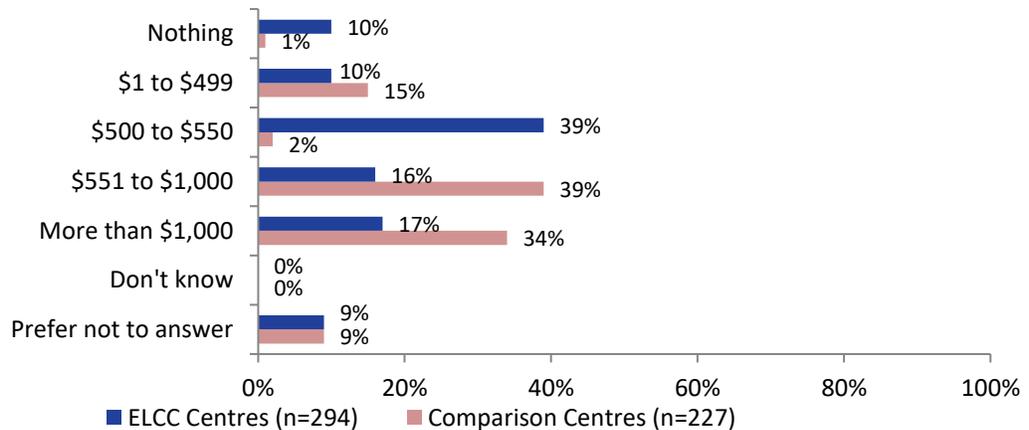


Table 4.22 shows parent/caregiver survey responses regarding how meals or snacks are covered at child care centres:

- The majority of parents/caregivers indicated that morning (92% for ELCC Centres and 91% for Comparison Centres) and afternoon snacks (92% for ELCC Centres and 91% for Comparison Centres) were included in their child care fees.
- About 7 in 10 (72% for ELCC Centres and 78% for Comparison Centres) parents/caregivers indicated that lunch was included in their child care fees, although about one-quarter (27% for ELCC Centres and 23% for Comparison Centres) indicated that they brought food from home for lunch.
- According to the parents/caregivers who reported paying a fee for a snack or lunch (the number of respondents is less than 10), the daily cost was between one dollar and three dollars for the snack or lunch.

**Table 4.22: Parent/Caregiver Identified Costs for Meals or Snack
(Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=294 and n=227)**

*Question C3A. For your child enrolled in this Centre, please indicate how the following meals or snacks are provided.
(Results of testing for statistical significance are not reported due to the small number of responses in some categories)*

Additional Fees	ELCC Centres (n=294)	Comparison Centres (n=227)
Morning Snack		
Included in my child care fees	92%	91%
I bring food from home	7%	9%
I pay an additional fee	1%	<1%
Don't know	2%	1%
Lunch		
Included in my child care fees	72%	78%
I bring food from home	27%	23%
I pay an additional fee	2%	-
Don't know	1%	1%
Afternoon Snack		
Included in my child care fees	92%	91%
I bring food from home	6%	8%
I pay an additional fee	<1%	<1%
Don't know	3%	2%
Other Snacks and Meals		
Included in my child care fees	55%	58%
I bring food from home	14%	20%
I pay an additional fee	-	-
Don't know	31%	23%

Table 4.23 shows parent/caregiver reported responses regarding field trips that have fees or costs associated with them:

- Only about 1 in 10 parent/caregiver respondents (10% for ELCC Centres and 14% for Comparison Centres) indicated that their Centre charges them fees for their child to attend field trips. The fees charged were used to cover admission costs, transportation, food and additional staffing needs.

**Table 4.23: Parent/Caregiver Identified Costs for Field Trips
(Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=294 and n=227)***

Question C4. Does this Centre charge you fees for your child to attend field trips?

(Results of testing for statistical significance are not reported due to the small number of responses in some categories)

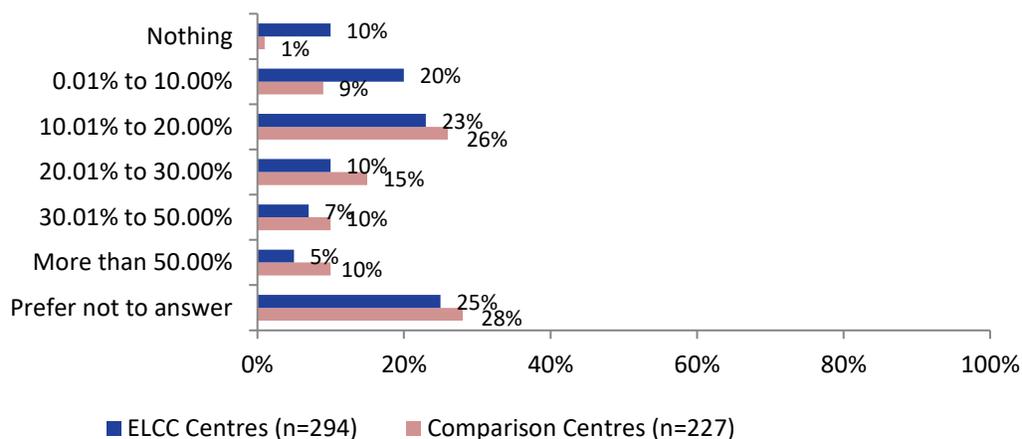
Additional Fees	ELCC Centres (n=294)	Comparison Centres (n=227)
Fees Charged for Field Trips		
Yes	10%	14%
No	49%	47%
This Centre does not provide field trips	20%	15%
Don't know	21%	24%
Prefer not to answer	-	-
Fees Charged*	(n=28)	(n=31)
Admission to attraction	86%	58%
Transportation	46%	61%
Food	21%	36%
Additional staffing needs	18%	10%
Other	-	3%
Don't know	11%	3%
Prefer not to answer	-	-

The parent/caregiver survey found that almost one-third of responding ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (30%) are spending 10.00% or less of their monthly income on child care fees; this compares to 10% of responding Comparison Centre parents/caregivers. Almost one-quarter of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (23%) are spending between 10.01% and 20.00% of their monthly income on child care fees; this compares to 26% of Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (see Chart 4.24; differences are statistically significant).

- A greater proportion of respondents whose child was attending an urban ELCC Centre (13%) reported spending 0% of their monthly income on child care fees compared to those whose child was attending a rural ELCC Centre (1%). However, a greater proportion of respondents whose child was attending a rural ELCC Centre (31%) reported spending between 10.01% and 20.00% of their monthly income on child care fees compared to those whose child was attending an urban ELCC Centre (21%) (no statistically significant differences).
- A greater proportion of female respondents (11%) reported spending 0% of their monthly income on child care fees compared to male respondents (6%). However, a greater proportion of male respondents (28%) reported spending between 10.01% and 20.00% of their monthly income on child care fees compared female respondents (22%).

Chart 4.24: Parent/Caregiver Reported Percentage of Household Income Used to Cover Child Care Costs (Parent/Cargiver Survey, n=294 and n=227)

Question C1D. What percentage of your monthly household income is used to cover child care? (Differences are statistically significant)



Overall, 98% of ELCC Centre parent/caregiver survey respondents identified that they were very satisfied (83%) or satisfied (15%) with the cost of child care at the ELCC Centre their children attended. Conversely, only half (52%) of Comparison Centre parent/caregiver survey respondents were very satisfied (25%) or satisfied (27%) with the cost of child care at the ELCC Centre their children attended (results of testing for statistical significance are not reported due to the small number of responses in some categories).

The majority of interviewed ELCC Centre supervisors reported that they had not had to change the operations of their ELCC Centre in a negative way in order to ensure affordability for parents/caregivers. Although there had been general operational changes, they were primarily viewed as positive, such as:

- Increasing the number of staff (some);
- Increasing staff wages (some);
- Increasing resources for educators (some);
- Reducing the Centre’s debt (a few);
- Reducing extraneous fees (e.g. no longer charging parents an administration fee) (a few);
- Extending the Centre’s hours of operation (a few);
- Increasing optional paid programming (e.g. French classes, sport ball, art, drama) (a few).

These positive impacts were echoed in the ELCC Centre educator interviews. Almost all interviewed ELCC educators reported that their ELCC Centre had not had to change its operation(s) in order to ensure affordability for parents/caregivers. ELCC educators predominantly noted positive impacts of the ELCC Centre grant on operations, such as:

- Increased access to education (e.g. training, workshops) (some);
- Increased staff wages (a few);
- Increased number of rooms and/or enrollments (a few);
- The Centre was now able to provide lunches to the children (a few);
- Educators now had full shifts (rather than shorter shifts due to lower enrollment) (a few).

In general, very few negative impacts, relating to having to change the operations of the ELCC Centre to ensure affordability, were identified by ELCC Centre supervisors or ELCC educators. The few that were identified included increased food costs, increased insurance/liability costs and increased fundraising requirements.

The majority of the ELCC Centre partners interviewed stated that they did not provide ELCC Centres with supports that helped to improve child care affordability. Of those that did provide such supports, a few identified the provision of subsidized rent as an important factor in ensuring child care remains affordable, while one partner identified the provision of free classes, workshops and programming as one way that they were able to support the ELCC Centre in offering affordable day care.

Comparison Centres

Among Comparison Centre supervisors, there was a mixed response as to whether they considered the fees at their centre to be affordable. Some Comparison Centre supervisors believed that the fees at their Centre are affordable. Reasons for holding this view included:

- Feedback from parents/caregivers identified the fees as 'low' or 'reasonable' (a few);
- That they keep the fees as low as they can (some);
- That they cannot lower prices any more, or would not be able to offer the same level of quality care (a few);
- Last increase was multiple years ago (a few);
- That they 'theoretically' could charge more for the type of program it is, but doesn't think parents/caregivers would pay more (a few); and
- That it must be, as they have a long wait list (a few).

On the other hand, some Comparison Centre supervisors stated that they did not believe the fees at their Centre were affordable. Reasons provided for holding this view included:

- Child care is expensive (but still have to increase fees due to minimum wage increase) (a few);
- Fees are the biggest complaint and deterrent for parents/caregivers (a few);
- The fees can be more than most people make, especially for families with multiple children in child care (a few); and
- Due to economic downturn, some parents/caregivers in the area cannot currently afford child care (a few).

One Comparison Centre supervisor described it as: *"It's a crazy amount of money, so I don't think it's affordable. But you make it work because I'd rather pay for quality. [...] The fact that we have a super-long waitlist and that it's peoples' number one choice... people are, from what I can tell, happy to spend money on quality. But parents would be doubly happy to have quality and not have to pay as much!"*

Another Comparison Centre supervisor reported that her Centre has a lot of parents/caregivers not paying, and that she had to terminate two families this month. A further Comparison Centre supervisor described how her Centre offers an 'Opportunity Fund' to support families that have lost their job so they can cover the child care fees until the family 'gets back on their feet' (have previously covered up to three months).

One Comparison Centre supervisor described how affordability of child care was a struggle for the Centre as well as for families: *"It's a challenge all around, and we feel it. I feel it when I have to tell a parent that they owe 'this much'. I feel it when a parent can't pay their full amount and I don't really want to kick them out because what good is that? Then you have to work with them on payment plans. I*

never want to look at a family and say 'you're choosing between daycare fees and food'. But then again, I also report to a board and I have to make sure we're financially accountable. It's a challenge all around, for sure."

A few Comparison Centre supervisors were 'on the fence' about the affordability of child care at their centre. For example, one interviewee stated that child care was affordable for parents/caregivers who are eligible for the child care subsidy, but it was otherwise expensive. Another interviewee stated that if parents/caregivers do not make a decent wage, they did not know how affordable child care would be for parents/caregivers. In line with this, a further interviewee hasn't heard anyone say it's too expensive, but thought it must be 'a bit of a struggle', particularly for families with more than one child at the daycare: "...I do know a few families where they say that the one parent's income basically all goes to their child care for their two children".

Some Comparison Centre supervisors that reported that although there have not been any changes in operations to ensure program fees were affordable for parents/caregivers, they indicated that their Centre relied heavily on fundraising activities to 'keep them afloat'. However, some of the Comparison Centre supervisors stated that they had to change the Centre's operations in order to ensure affordability. Operations that Comparison Centres changed included that they (each response listed was mentioned by a one or a few Comparison Centre supervisors):

- Dropped from two salaried staff to one;
- Run on the tightest budget possible;
- Decrease staff wages and cut hours during the summer, when fewer children attend;
- Maximize ratio (do a lot of switching staff between rooms to cover ratio);
- Do not have specialist educators (even though it is a specialist program);
- Are moving into another space to avoid a rent increase;
- Ask staff to take vacation when enrollment numbers are lower, so they don't have to bring in cover staff;
- Increased parent fees and lowered staff wages (happened at the same time).

A few Comparison Centre supervisors explained that they 'maxed out' the child-to-staff ratio in order to pay fair compensation to staff, and one Comparison Centre supervisor described how both the Director and assistant director currently have 'floor time' in order to save on costs.

4.2.6 Progress Towards Improved Quality

4.2.6.1 Accreditation

As shown in Table 4.25, as of March 2018, 78% of the day care programs in Alberta were accredited and 17% were pre-accredited (e.g. indicating that they had an approved application on file with the accrediting agency and were actively working towards attaining an accreditation certificate).

As of March 2018, 13 of the 19 opened ELCC Centres (68%) were accredited and the six remaining ELCC Centres (32%) were pre-accredited. Although these results are slightly lower than for all day cares in Alberta, according to the ELCC Centre grant agreements, ELCC Centres have up to 18 months to apply for an accreditation site visit.

Table 4.25: Accreditation Status of Day Care Programs in Alberta as of March 31, 2018

Region	Number of Programs	Number (%) Accredited	Number (%) Pre Accredited	Number (%) Not Accredited
Alberta	902	707 (78.4%)	156 (17.3%)	39 (4.3%)
Northwest	36	30 (83.3%)	4 (11.1%)	2 (5.6%)
Northeast	17	9 (52.9%)	8 (47.1)	0 (0.0%)
Edmonton	389	298 (76.6%)	77 (19.8%)	14 (3.6%)
Central	66	54 (81.8%)	9 (13.6%)	3 (4.5%)
Calgary	300	242 (80.7%)	45 (15.0%)	13 (4.3%)
South	63	50 (79.4%)	10 (15.9%)	3 (4.8%)
North Central	30	23 (76.7%)	3 (10.0)	4 (13.3%)
Métis Settlement	1	1 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)

Source: CCIS (March 2018 lockdown data).

4.2.6.2 Child Care Licensing Act and Regulation Non-Compliances

As shown in Table 4.26, according to CS administrative data, the average number of non-compliances that licensing staff issued in the 2017-2018 fiscal year was lower for ELCC Centres (1.11) than Comparison Centres (1.59) and all licensed Centres in Alberta (1.92). It is possible that the quality improvements being implemented in ELCC Centres may be contributing to the lower average number of non-compliances.

Table 4.26: Child Care Licensing Act and Regulation Non-Compliances as of March 31, 2018

Child Care Programs	Number of Centres with Non-Compliances	Number of Non-Compliances Issued	Average Number of Non-Compliances Issued
ELCC Centres (of the 19)	18	20	1.11
Comparison Centres	22	36	1.59
Alberta	1,783	929	1.92

Source: CCIS (March 2018 lockdown data).

4.2.6.3 ELCC Curriculum Framework

ELCC Curriculum Framework Training, Awareness and Understanding

SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 8B:

HOW HAVE THE CURRICULUM RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS BEEN ADOPTED THROUGHOUT THE ELCC CENTRES?

Interviews with ELCC Centre supervisors and pedagogical partners as well as the ELCC educator survey found the ELCC Curriculum Framework resources and supports are being adopted in the ELCC Centres in the following ways:

- Almost all ELCC educators have been introduced to the curriculum framework (although according to the ELCC educator survey, 67% of respondents said they had received training on the curriculum supports and resources)
- Most supervisors and two-to-three ELCC educators have taken online training (according to ELCC Centre supervisor interviews)
- Other ways ELCC educators have been introduced to the ELCC Curriculum Framework include through the ELCC Curriculum Framework textbook, staff meetings, professional development sessions and pedagogical partner provided overview to staff
- ELCC educators are being introduced to ELCC Curriculum Framework language and terminology, holistic goals and associated indicators, dispositions (one by one) as well as documentation and learning stories

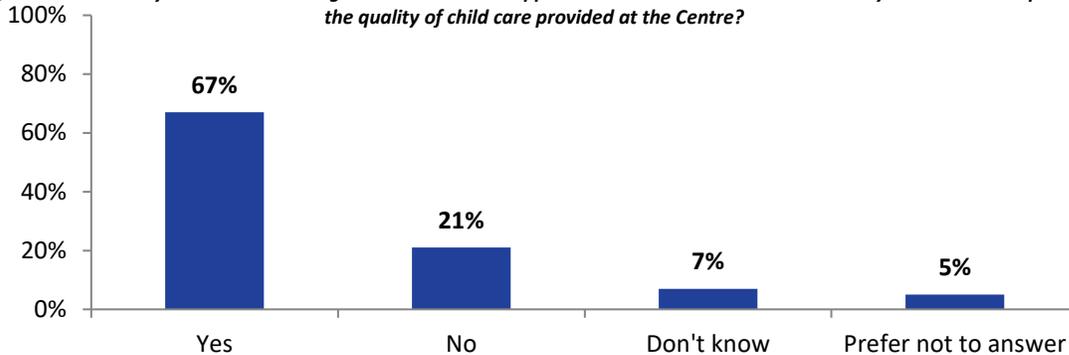
According to the ELCC educator survey, as a result of the ELCC Curriculum Framework training they received, the 198 ELCC educator survey respondents reported that they are now better able to:

- Provide responsive and interesting environments for the children (93%);
- Provide responsive and interesting activities or experiences to the children (92%); and
- Develop responsive curriculum (87%)

Adoption of the ELCC Curriculum Framework in ELCC Centres is beginning by providing ELCC educators with training and raising their awareness and understanding of the curriculum resources and supports. The majority of ELCC Centre supervisors reported that most, if not all, ELCC educators had been introduced to the ELCC Curriculum Framework; however, the depth to which they have been exposed to the ELCC Curriculum Framework varied; perhaps this helps explain why, according to the ELCC educator survey, only 67% of respondents indicated that they had received training on the ELCC Curriculum Framework (see Chart 4.27).

Chart 4.27: ELCC Educator Reported Involvement in ELCC Curriculum Framework Training (ELCC Educator Survey, n=198)

Question B1. Have you received training on the curriculum supports and resources made available to your Centre to improve the quality of child care provided at the Centre?



According to most ELCC Centre supervisors, between two and four of their ELCC educators had completed the online ELCC Curriculum Framework course offered through MacEwan University. Furthermore, some ELCC Centre supervisors reported that some of their ELCC educators are currently taking the online course.

ELCC Centre supervisors have used a variety of approaches to introduce ELCC educators who had not taken the MacEwan University online course to the ELCC Curriculum Framework. For example, some ELCC Centre supervisors said that they had (each response was mentioned by some ELCC Centre supervisors):

- Provided a copy of the ELCC Curriculum Framework textbook to each ELCC educator or child care room;
- Discussed the ELCC Curriculum Framework at staff meetings or professional development sessions;
- Asked their pedagogical partner to provide ELCC educators with a general overview of the ELCC Curriculum Framework; and
- Had ELCC educators who have completed the online course share what they learned with their room partners (including explaining the rationale behind the child care approaches they are using in their rooms).

Based on the interviews with ELCC educators and pedagogical partners, the following were identified as the key ELCC Curriculum Framework learning opportunities available to educators:

- Participating in online training (most);
- Engaging with the Community of Learning groups (some);
- Attending conferences (some);
- Participating in workshops (in-house and external) (many);
- Receiving information provided during staff meetings (some);
- Having the Curriculum Framework provided to them (hardcopy) (some);
- Going on staff field trips to other ELCC Centres (a few);
- Visits from, and interactions with, the pedagogical partner (most); and
- Being observed, receiving one-on-one coaching (a few).

The majority of pedagogical partners reported that many of the ELCC educators at the ELCC Centres, including supervisors, had little to no knowledge of the ELCC Curriculum Framework prior to being offered learning opportunities. According to a few pedagogical partners, the only ELCC educators that had some familiarity with the ELCC Curriculum Framework were two ELCC educators who had worked at a PPP⁴¹ Curriculum Framework pilot site, one staff who had been introduced to the ELCC Curriculum Framework as part of her college education and one staff who came from another province that was already using a curriculum framework. As described by one pedagogical partner: *“We were told to ... work with the level of staff and the level of training [they] have”*.

Challenges identified in engaging with the ELCC Curriculum Framework, as identified by ELCC educators, pedagogical partners and ELCC Centre supervisor interviewees included:

- It is a slow process (most);
- ‘Pushback’ from staff (for example, only taking the course because they have to) (many);
- Director is very ‘hands off’ when it comes to programming and therefore was not providing the leadership required to encourage implementation of the ELCC Curriculum Framework (a few);
- Some educators started the ELCC Curriculum Framework online course, but didn’t finish it (including staff attrition) (some); and
- Not all Centre educators could take the online course (some).

To introduce the ELCC Curriculum Framework to ELCC educators, many pedagogical partners said they were ‘breaking the framework down’ into specific topics so as to not overwhelm ELCC educators. Some pedagogical partners reported that this approach has helped them develop trust with ELCC educator and build ELCC educators’ confidence in themselves. A few pedagogical partners mentioned selecting which ELCC Curriculum Framework topics to introduce to staff in consultation with ELCC Centre supervisors. Depending on the identified needs and capacity of the centres, the topics that pedagogical partners are beginning to introduce include ELCC Curriculum Framework language and terminology through the glossary, holistic goals and associated indicators, dispositions (one by one), documentation and learning stories (each response was mentioned by a few pedagogical partners).

Most pedagogical partners reported that the resources and support they are providing ELCC educators to implement the ELCC Curriculum Framework are beginning to improve the ELCC educators’ knowledge, skills and practices, although the rate at which improvements are occurring varies across sites. Many pedagogical partners indicated that, at some ELCC Centres, progress has been slow due to factors such as:

- ELCC Centres having limited capacity to focus on the ELCC Curriculum Framework as they were overwhelmed by everything else they had to implement as part of the ELCC Centre grant requirements (many);
- ELCC Centres not being open, or only being recently opened (a few);
- Staff turnover, including the resignation of some ELCC educators that had been taking the ELCC Curriculum Framework course through MacEwan University (a few);
- ELCC educators being too busy to take the online course (some); and
- ELCC educators’ trepidation about taking the online course (some).

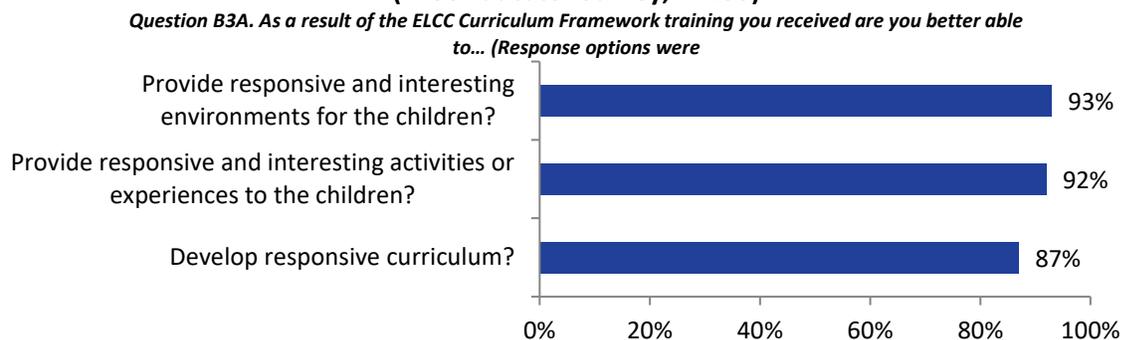
Pedagogical partners said the aspects of the ELCC Curriculum Framework that ELCC educators seem to understand best included holistic goals, the image of the child, the value of play, documentation (e.g.

⁴¹ PPP is used here as the pilot site was not an ELCC Centre.

making learning visible) and learning stories (each response was mentioned by a few pedagogical partners). Aspects of the ELCC Curriculum Framework that ELCC educators find the most challenging are the terminology used in the ELCC Curriculum Framework; the role of the educator and how to support that within the classroom; reflective practice, including having time to be reflective; how documentation connects to planning; and how the ELCC Curriculum Framework philosophies connect with different cultural backgrounds (each response was mentioned by a few pedagogical partners).

Overall, the ELCC educator survey found that, of the 133 responding ELCC educators who had received training on the ELCC Curriculum Framework resources and support, the majority of ELCC educators said they were better able to provide responsive and interesting environments for the children (93%), provide responsive and interesting activities or experiences to the children (92%) and develop responsive curriculum (87%) (see Chart 4.28).

Chart 4.28: ELCC Educator Reported Impact of ELCC Curriculum Framework Training on ELCC Educators* (ELCC Educator Survey, n=133)



*Individuals who answered "yes" to receiving ELCC Curriculum Framework training

Adaptations to Curriculum Materials, Equipment and Other Resources

Some ELCC Centre supervisors and pedagogical partners provided examples of adaptations to curriculum materials, equipment or other resources including (each response was mentioned by some interviewees):

- Purchasing open-ended items for children to interact with such as loose parts and art materials;
- Introducing more sensory items for the children, especially natural materials (e.g. baskets, burlap, shells, wood blocks/balls, rocks, pine cones, branches);
- Bringing 'real' items into the Centre for children to use (e.g. real pots, pans and dishes);
- Using natural/neutral colors for walls, carpets and furniture in the ELCC Centre;
- Purchasing books for staff (e.g. ELCC Curriculum Framework textbook, books on loose parts, books on inspired spaces); and
- Upgrading (or plans to upgrade) outdoor areas (e.g., building a fence that incorporates a tree area so the children can do more nature discovery).

Other ways that ELCC Centre supervisors and pedagogical partners said ELCC Centre spaces were being revamped included:

- Purchasing ‘busy boards’ and collapsible cribs (a few); and
- Purging toys and materials that do not align with the ELCC Curriculum Framework (e.g. plastic toys and furniture) (a few).

A few ELCC Centre supervisors indicated that they have not yet adapted curriculum materials, equipment or other resources for the following reasons (each response was mentioned by a one or a few ELCC Centre supervisors):

- They are waiting until they complete the ELCC Curriculum Framework course and for ELCC educators to thoroughly understand the ELCC Curriculum Framework;
- They are planning to make adaptations within the next year;
- It takes time and money to secure new materials, equipment and resources (i.e. they are waiting); and
- Renovations are needed to prepare the rooms to implement the ELCC Curriculum Framework.

Comparison Centres

Comparison Centre supervisors were using program materials, equipment and resources that were similar to the ones being used in ELCC Centres to support Centre staff in the development of learning activities. The program materials, equipment and resources that Comparison Centre supervisors reported providing Centre staff included:

- Teacher resources (literature and books) (most);
- Computers/tablets and internet (some);
- Digital cameras (to capture moments during the day of children) (a few);
- Discussions at staff meetings about what is needed for play centre development (some);
- Prop boxes, books, art supplies, paint, paper, blocks, beads, baskets, cards, envelopes, photos, ribbons, strings, play dough, puzzles, toys and games (most mentioned at least one of the listed items);
- Materials to play dress-up, housekeeping and for cooking/baking experiences (a few);
- Centre playground (a few); and
- Centre garden (a few).

Like many ELCC Centres, a few Comparison Centre supervisors emphasized the use of natural materials (e.g. sand, water, branches) and wooden furniture, while a few noted that their Centre borrowed equipment from other organizations, such as Parent Link, and/or used other organizations’ space (e.g. libraries, school gyms/playgrounds). Additionally, a few Comparison Centre supervisors noted that the organization *Supports for Learning* comes and provides training to educators (e.g. Circle Time, Super Hero, Rough and Tumble Play).

Finally, while a few of the Comparison Centre supervisors mentioned that if educators need something, the Centre will get it for them, a few others stated that although they need to build up the supply of materials, they do not have a sufficient budget to purchase the materials.

Changes in ELCC Centre Operations and Staff Practices

SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 8C:

HOW HAVE STAFF PRACTICES CHANGED AS A RESULT OF ADOPTING ELCC CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK SUPPORTS?

Interviews with ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators and pedagogical partners as well as the ELCC educator survey found that, as a result of adopting the ELCC Curriculum Framework, staff practices are changing in the following ways:

- Building understanding of pedagogy;
- Using ELCC Curriculum Framework language and terminology;
- Creating responsive environments;
- Bringing in new and different materials;
- Planning and organizing activities in relation to holistic goals;
- Being more responsive to the children;
- Identifying, extending and scaffolding on child's interests;
- Providing children opportunity to explore and freedom of choice;
- Being present; less emphasis on a schedule;
- Focusing on the image of the child (mighty learners);
- Seeing each child as an individual;
- Using pictures and song to expand vocabulary and support learning;
- Managing transitions differently; and
- Documenting learning.

According to the 198 ELCC educator survey respondents, as a result of adopting the ELCC Curriculum Framework, ELCC Centres are beginning to see:

- Increased staff competency (41%) such as being more child-centred and responsive, improving planning and learning activities, changing the way language and documentation is used, increasing reflection and changing the way children are viewed; and
- Changes to centre operations (26%) such as changing culture and adaptations to the physical environment of the ELCC Centre.

Challenges associated with adopting the ELCC Curriculum Framework include:

- Fulsome change will take years;
- Some ELCC educators are resistant to the change;
- ELCC educators overwhelmed and lack confidence; and
- Parents/caregivers may not understand cultural shift and new approach.

Through the ELCC educator survey, many of the 133 responding ELCC educators who had received ELCC Curriculum Framework training identified that the ELCC Curriculum Framework training changed the way their ELCC Centre operates in the following ways:

- Increased staff competency (41%); for example, by being more child-centred and responsive, improving planning and learning activities, changing the way language and documentation is used, increasing reflection and changing the way children are viewed.

- Changed ELCC Centre operations (26%); for example, by changing the culture at the ELCC Centre, adapting the physical environment in the ELCC Centre and changing the hours of operation/access to the ELCC Centre.

Several ELCC educators reported that there had been no change because it was too early to say (9%), they did not know how operations had changed (24%) or they preferred not to answer (13%) (see Table 4.29).

Table 4.29: ELCC Educator Identified Impact of the ELCC Curriculum Framework on ELCC Centre Operations (ELCC Educator Survey, n=133)

Question B3B. How has the ELCC Curriculum Framework training changed the way the ELCC Centre operates? (open-ended question)

Changes to ELCC Centre Operations	% n=133*
Staff competency (net)	41%
Increased staff competency	16%
More child-centred/responsive	16%
Improved planning/learning activities	14%
Changes in use of language/documentation	9%
Increased reflection	4%
Changed view of the child	3%
Increased professional development/professionalization	2%
Operational changes (net)	26%
Changing Centre culture	14%
Changes in/adaptations to physical environment	10%
Changes in hours of operation/access to Centre	5%
Interactions (net)	15%
Increased/improved interactions with parents/caregivers	10%
Increased/improved interactions with children	8%
Other	4%
No change – too early to tell	9%
Don't know	24%
Prefer not to answer	13%
*Individuals who answered "yes" to receiving ELCC Curriculum Framework training Note: Numbers do not add to 100% due to individuals providing more than one answer 'Net' categories are an aggregate of the indented sub-categories listed underneath. The percentages reported in the 'net' category may be lower than the sum of the percentages reported for each of the subcategories comprising the 'net' as the 'net' only counts a response to one or more of the subcategories category once.	

ELCC Centres differ in the extent to which they have started to use the ELCC Curriculum Framework in their child care practices; however, the majority of ELCC Centre supervisors reported that ELCC educators are beginning to reflect the principles of the ELCC Curriculum Framework in their practice. Some pedagogical partners indicated that beginning to work with ELCC educators on implementing the ELCC Curriculum Framework has been a very slow process as prior to working with ELCC educators on specific practices, they first needed to develop relationships and trust with the ELCC educators and help them understand what the role of the pedagogical partner is. Some pedagogical partners emphasized

that their role is not to set any expectations of where the ELCC Centres should be at, but rather to meet them where they are, follow their lead and help them walk along the path.

ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators and pedagogical partners across multiple ELCC Centres provided similar examples of how ELCC educators are starting to reflect the principles of the ELCC Curriculum Framework in their practice, including:

- Building ELCC educator understanding of what pedagogy is (some).
- Using the ELCC Curriculum Framework language and terminology in their interactions with other ELCC educators and parents, including posting information and quotes from the ELCC Curriculum Framework on the walls in the child care rooms (some).
- Creating more responsive environments in the child care rooms by de-cluttering, using neutral colors, changing the room design and layout (e.g. creating a science area to explore plant growth, minimizing running areas, storing materials where they are always accessible for the children), bringing more nature into the rooms (e.g. bringing the ceiling down with hanging branches and leaves as well as creating displays and mobiles using nature) and including more visuals in the rooms (many interviewees mentioned at least one of the items listed). For example, as one ELCC educator described: *“We have removed the plastic and replaced it with natural items like wood. We have opened up rooms, gone to more neutral colors. We have changed the lighting to more lamps. We took down the bright coloured curtains. We have added real pots and pans to the home centre. We have gotten rid of clutter.”*
- Bringing in new and different materials in for the children to explore and engage with (e.g. loose parts, wood blocks, natural wood, rocks, other natural materials, real materials [rather than plastic materials] and sensory items) (many interviewees mentioned at least one of the items listed). For example, in the words of one ELCC educator: *“...lately it’s been a lot of sensory. They are very interested in water and water beads and touching and feeling finger paints. We did pudding finger painting. There was pudding left over so we decided to use it for paint material. It was a big hit with the kids.”*
- Planning and organizing activities in relation to holistic goals, the children’s interests and learning stories; this involves moving away from pre-planning, planning based on themes and planning based on what the ELCC educator wants to do and toward having ELCC educators think more about the activities they are doing and why they are doing them, doing more observations of the children, focusing on making activities into a learning experience as well as reflecting on observations and what did and did not go well (many interviewees mentioned at least one of the items listed). For example:
 - One ELCC educator reported: *“We are beginning to look at the holistic goals and what it actually looks like... We decided to focus on dizzy play because we’ve got a room full of very, very active children and we wanted a lot of our parents to know that when they come in and [it] looks chaotic, it’s not actually chaotic... So we started there, so that they know what it looks like. So when [parents] come in and see a child who is running back and forth..., it’s not because he is being disruptive it’s because he is actually in the middle of a play experience... We are trying really hard to use the language more so that we get used to it and that our parents get used to it as well with our holistic stuff and breaking it down into the smaller facets.”*

- Another ELCC educator said: *“I think it is really helping us stop and think about why we are doing what we are doing and how we are expanding... a lot of it we’ve been doing, but now we stop and think about it and document it. It’s really helped us with our self-reflection. We are in the process of incorporating it more and more into the planning... the old way of planning was ‘webbing’ and planning each and every area of the curriculum, but now it’s more intentional of observing the child and following the child’s lead. The child is a mighty learner, and us as a co-learner as well. Looking at it from that lens has changed... how we do our planning.”*
- Being more responsive to the children, identifying their interests, introducing provocations and extending and scaffolding on their interests (e.g. if a child is showing an interest in trains, introducing a train track; if a child is showing an interest in animals, introducing a zoo with parking spaces and roads for the animals) (many interviewees mentioned at least one of the items listed). For example, as one ELCC educator explained: *“Recently they’re begging for ice and cold stuff so one day I set-up the table, put the snow out and I watched the children. Some grabbed the dolls and buried in them in snow and others took a plant, put it in the snow and planted them like a little garden. From that activity, I did a provocation and I extended it. Now the children are learning about colors and how to take care of plants. With that one activity, I started scavenging activities out of frozen stuff. We have rocks in the rooms to knock the ice down and take the animals out from the ice.”*
- Providing the children more opportunity to explore and freedom of choice, including providing open play, giving children the chance to express themselves, be a mighty learner of their own and make their own choices (e.g. putting materials and objects in front of children and asking them, ‘what do you want to do today?’) (some interviewees mentioned at least one of the items listed).
- Being in the moment with the children and placing less emphasis on following a schedule (e.g. removing clocks from the child care rooms so ELCC educators are not so time sensitive and not stopping play because lunch is at 11:30am or it is time to do the next activity) (some). For example, one ELCC educator said: *“At the start of it, it was lot more structured – this is when we’re doing crafts, this is when we eat, this is when we go outside, etc. We always had routines but now, especially with the toddlers, I find that we’re playing a lot more. I’m going off from what the children want to do. If they’re happy doing their ten-foot long train track, I’m not going to stop them and say ‘time to put all this away, time to come sit at the table to do a craft or time to read a book.’ I’ve been giving a lot more choices with them I feel... The kids are given a lot more options.”*
- Focusing on the image of the child and viewing them as competent and capable mighty learners (e.g. building on the things the children are doing rather than limiting them or immediately saying the activity is too risky; taking pictures of routines where they are reporting that image of a strong, capable and resourceful child; and letting children serve their own lunch and pour their own milk) (some).
- Placing emphasis on each child as an individual (e.g. posting family photos of the children, giving the children individual places to store their personal items and using materials brought in by the family), creating displays that represent different cultural backgrounds (e.g. putting a map on the wall and posting children’s names next to their origin) and introducing cultural toys (some).
- Using pictures of the children and songs to help the children expand their vocabulary (some).

- Changing how they manage transitions (e.g. if it is time to go outside, telling the children to get ready to go outside and then making putting their winter clothes on an experience through a game or song) (some).
- Documenting learning (e.g. creating documentation panels; using clipboards to record observations, reflections, programming ideas; keeping journals and answering reflective questions in them; and writing learning stories that incorporate ELCC Curriculum Framework indicators, visual evidence, “a ha” moments and the theory behind the activities that the children were participating in (some interviewees mentioned at least one of the items listed).
- Making learning visible by posting photos, pictures, and learning stories on the walls as well as sharing learning stories with parents/caregivers (some).
- Building stronger relationships with other ELCC educators, the children and parents/caregivers (some).
- Portraying ELCC educators as professionals (e.g. greeting parents when they come in, speaking in a professional manner and being involved in professional organizations, calling ‘staff’ educators) (a few).

A few ELCC Centre supervisors noted that ELCC educators had already been reflecting the ELCC Curriculum Framework principles as part of their practice. Some ELCC educators agreed with this perspective and reported that their daily child care practice and interactions with children have not really changed since they learned about the ELCC Curriculum Framework; these ELCC educators explained that the ELCC Curriculum Framework is not all that different from what they were doing before, although it has provided them with new language and terminology.

A few ELCC Centre supervisors and pedagogical partners indicated that it was too early in implementation for them to comment. A few ELCC educators echoed this sentiment indicating that they had not yet taken the ELCC Curriculum Framework course and therefore had not really begun to start using it.

Interactions with Children and Parents/Caregivers

Through the ELCC educator survey, the 133 respondents who had received ELCC Curriculum Framework training were asked how the way they interact with children and parents/caregivers had changed (see Table 4.30). Many of the examples that ELCC educators provided reflected the findings from the interviews with ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators and pedagogical partners. ELCC educators responding to the survey indicated that the ELCC Curriculum Framework training changed the way ELCC educators interacted with children and parents/caregivers by:

- Increasing staff competencies (53%), which involved being more child-centred/responsive, using improved planning/learning activities, changing the use of language/documentation, having an increased understanding of play, changing the view of the child and being more reflective.
- Increasing/improving interactions (30%) with parents/caregivers, children and other ELCC educators.

Some ELCC educators reported that there was no change to the way they interacted with children and parents/caregivers because it was too early to say (8%) or because they do not think the ELCC Curriculum Framework applied to infants (1%). Additionally, several ELCC educators did not know how their interactions had changed (18%) or preferred not to answer (11%).

Table 4.30: ELCC Educator Identified Impact of ELCC Curriculum Framework Training on ELCC Educator Interactions (ELCC Educator Survey, n=133)

Question B2. How has the PPP Curriculum Framework training you received changed the way you interact with the children and parents/caregivers? (open-ended question)

Changes to Interactions	% n=133
Staff competency (net)	53%
Increased staff competency – general	29%
More child-centred/responsive	13%
Improved planning/learning activities	11%
Changes in use of language/documentation	9%
Increased understanding of play	8%
Changed view of the child	6%
Increased reflection	5%
Interactions (net)	30%
Increased/improved interactions with parents/caregivers	23%
Increased/improved interactions with children	11%
Increased/improved interactions with staff	10%
Improved interactions – general	5%
Other	5%
No change – too early to say	8%
No change – does not apply to infants	1%
Don't know	18%
Prefer not to answer	11%
*Individuals who answered "yes" to receiving ELCC Curriculum Framework training Note: Numbers do not add to 100% due to individuals providing more than one answer 'Net' categories are an aggregate of the indented sub-categories listed underneath. The percentages reported in the 'net' category may be lower than the sum of the percentages reported for each of the subcategories comprising the 'net' as the 'net' only counts a response to one or more of the subcategories category once.	

Challenges

The majority ELCC Centre supervisors and pedagogical partners reported that it will take years for ELCC Centres to engrain the ELCC Curriculum Framework into ELCC Centre operations and child care practices. Most emphasized that the ELCC Curriculum Framework is still new to ELCC educators and that ELCC educators do not yet have a full, in-depth understanding of it. Many pedagogical partners indicated that ELCC educators need time to develop more familiarity with the ELCC Curriculum Framework terminology, increase their understanding of the differences between the language they are using now compared to what they used in the past and gain experience with the ELCC Curriculum Framework in order to be able to translate the theory into their day-to-day practices (e.g. may not readily understand how to follow the child's interest and strike a balance between structured and child-led activities). Most pedagogical partners reported that they are just now at the point where they can start to take staff deeper into the ELCC Curriculum Framework and that they have been focusing on helping staff break the ELCC Curriculum Framework down into manageable parts and showing them how they can use it in their day-to-day practice.

As ELCC Centre supervisors and pedagogical partners noted, most ELCC educators also reported that they need more time to develop a fulsome understanding of the ELCC Curriculum Framework. A few ELCC educators said there was so much going on at the centres when they first became an ELCC Centre, particularly in new centres (e.g. going from having 10 children in the room to 20 children in the room), that understanding and translating practices into all of the rooms was ‘a slow process.’

Some ELCC Centre supervisors cautioned that it can be difficult for staff to change, especially for those who have been in the field for many years. They said that there has been some early resistance to the ELCC Curriculum Framework from some ELCC educators and explained that the ELCC Curriculum Framework requires ELCC educators to shift from structured planning and activities to child-led planning and activities.

Some ELCC Centre supervisors and pedagogical partners also noted that, given all of the priorities that ELCC Centres are required to action (e.g. rules, regulations, licensing, and accreditation), it is challenging for them to find the time required to implement the ELCC Curriculum Framework. They explained that, in order for ELCC Centres to implement the ELCC Curriculum Framework, they need to have time for ELCC educators to come out of their rooms to do the online course, read the ELCC Curriculum Framework textbook, meet with the pedagogical partner as well as attend staff meetings and professional sessions on the ELCC Curriculum Framework; conduct observations and reflections (both individually and with each other); plan; and prepare documentation. Some ELCC educators also reported that they find it challenging to find time to do all of the things they need to do as part the ELCC Curriculum Framework; for example, one ELCC educator said: *“I see things, but it is tough to get a piece of paper and write it down really quickly as you don’t have time when you have four babies crawling over you.”*

Some pedagogical partners indicated that it has been challenging to find suitable times to meet with ELCC educators at some ELCC Centres. Furthermore, they explained that, in order for ELCC Centres to provide the time required to implement the ELCC Curriculum Framework, they need to have other ELCC educators available to ensure that child-to-staff ratios are maintained. A few also indicated that four hours per month is not enough time for them to work with ELCC educators to help develop a deep understanding of the ELCC Curriculum Framework and translate it into practice.

Many ELCC Centre supervisors and pedagogical partners stressed that the ELCC Curriculum Framework is challenging for ELCC educators to understand. They described the ELCC Curriculum Framework as being written for scholar or university-level students and said it introduces a lot of new terminology and uses sophisticated language. Some pedagogical partners reported that it can be challenging to introduce all ELCC educators to the ELCC Curriculum Framework because they have different backgrounds and training; they found that some ELCC educators lack the theoretical foundation and knowledge required to work with the ELCC Curriculum Framework because they did not take the online course or they do not have an Early Childhood Education (ECE) diploma. A few ELCC Centre supervisors and pedagogical partners also mentioned that the ELCC Curriculum Framework could be challenging for ELCC educators whose first language was not English, although it should be noted that the provision of a ‘common’ child care lexicon can provide child care educators with success. One pedagogical partner described the success of the ELCC educator that she/he is working with as follows: *“She’s commented a lot around how this experience has increased her language and her ability to communicate, and to feel like she’s communicating at a professional level.”*

Many ELCC Centre supervisors and pedagogical partners indicated that ELCC educators need time to build the confidence needed to implement the ELCC Curriculum Framework. Some ELCC educators echoed this perspective, noting that they were ‘scared’ of the ELCC Curriculum Framework, either because they were not sure what to expect or because it involved changing their current practice, which could be intimidating. For example, as one ELCC educator said: “...I think just the intimidat[ion] of not wanting to be the first one to do it wrong and until you do it, you won’t know how easy it is. It’s just finding time and getting over the intimidation of ‘is this right?’ ...”

Some pedagogical partners mentioned that ELCC educators are overwhelmed with ELCC Curriculum Framework; however, they suggested that this is because ELCC educators need more time to understand it. For example, a few pedagogical partners said ELCC educators need to improve their understanding of the connections between the ELCC Curriculum Framework, the ASaP Continuum Project, licensing and accreditation. Some pedagogical partners also reported that ELCC educators need more time and experience translating the ELCC Curriculum Framework theory into practice (e.g. understanding how the image of the child and the image of the educator impacts the relationships between ELCC educators, children and parents; knowing which goals align with their learning stories; using the children’s interests to interact with the child and then relaying it to the ELCC Curriculum Framework; and knowing enough about the naming parts of the ELCC Curriculum Framework so they can use it to guide curriculum decisions).

Some ELCC educators said they have experienced challenges getting parents to understand the ELCC Curriculum Framework and how it impacts their children. They said that it has been difficult to get parents to understand that centres are approaching development from a ‘whole child’ approach rather than the ‘cognitive-only’ approach that some parents may be more used to. A few ELCC educators described how they had received parent complaints relating to their implementation of the ELCC Curriculum Framework in that there was not enough structure (e.g. scheduled programming) and that children should not be allowed to climb on the furniture.

ELCC Centre supervisors and pedagogical partners provided the following examples of challenges that ELCC Centres may experience integrating the ELCC Curriculum Framework into their operations (each response was mentioned by a few interviewees):

- Determining how their centre’s approach to scheduling aligns with the ELCC Curriculum Framework and other aspects of the agency (e.g. concept of time, type of schedules and routines that the children should have);
- Changing the room environments to ensure children are not over-stimulated and therefore can have better interactions and engagements of play;
- Creating a culture within the ELCC Centre that supports implementation of the ELCC Curriculum Framework; and
- Shifting their thinking from a room-lead approach to a team-approach.

Pedagogical partners suggested that challenges might be mitigated by (each response was mentioned by one or a few interviewees):

- Building the relationship(s) between the pedagogical partner and the educator(s) from very early on in the process. As described by one pedagogical partner: “*Building relationships is really*

the most important; if you don't have strong relationships with all of the educators, if they don't feel that you are on their side and that they can trust you, you are not going to move forward."

- Encouraging engagement of the Centre Director by ensuring that they receive the training 'first and foremost' (managers need to have the course so that they have the understanding, particularly if they are in charge of programming).
- Talking to Centre ELCC educators about time and time management, and about the importance of having an infrastructure: *"There needs to be a foundation, an infrastructure, so that the staff know ahead of time 'I will have this time every week to talk about what's going on'"*.
- Providing in-house support:
 - Someone who is there on a day-to-day basis to help train and mentor (reading, having the documents online is 'terribly unfriendly', particularly for people who don't read English). As described by one of the pedagogical partners: *"One of the most helpful pieces of support in the curriculum framework is the manual for the pedagogical partners that Mount Royal is putting together. It is full of hands-on experiences and exercises that a mentor can do with staff to examine and to work through concepts. Because I think it takes a certain amount of knowledge to take theory and to put it into the kind of Centre where I am. Theory alone just doesn't work: you can't just lecture and have people read. That doesn't work in my Centre."*
 - Extra staff that is available, to be moving around and ensuring that somebody needs some extra time out of the room; not a floater, but a support for the ELCC educator;
 - Having a community of learners that educators can dialogue with (curriculum framework is a reflexive process, and it is difficult to reflect on your own): *"I think one of the things we're learning is that we really need to invest in that community of practice within [the educator's] daily life, with more than just one person at a program."*
- Investing in educators. As described by one pedagogical partner: *"You need educators that are really invested in [early childhood education], who feel valued and are willing to put in the time to learn and do it."*

4.2.6.4 Inclusive Child Care Practices

SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 8B:

HOW HAVE THE INCLUSION RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS BEEN ADOPTED THROUGHOUT THE ELCC CENTRES?

Interviews with ELCC Centre supervisors and GRIT coaches as well as the ELCC educator survey found that inclusion resources and supports are being adopted in the ELCC Centres by providing ELCC educators with training and increasing their awareness and understanding of inclusion resources and supports:

- Few ELCC educators had been previously exposed to the ASaP Continuum Project
- Previous awareness of inclusive child care practices was limited
- 56% of the 198 ELCC educator survey respondents had received training on inclusion supports and resources

Training, Awareness and Understanding

Inclusive child care practices in ELCC Centres are beginning by providing ELCC educators with training and raising their awareness and understanding of the inclusion resources and supports.

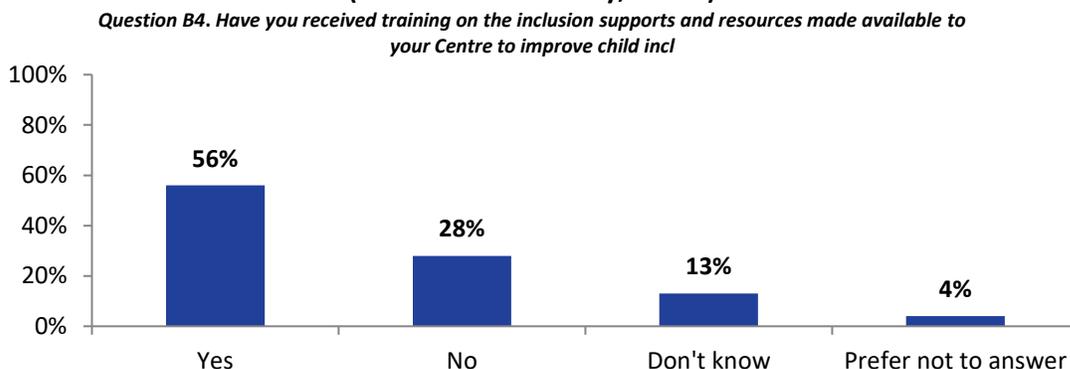
The majority of ELCC Centre supervisors reported that staff have taken one or two workshops or professional development sessions related to the ASaP Continuum Project and that GRIT coaches are coming to the ELCC centres to support ELCC educators in implementation. However, it appears that fewer ELCC educators have been exposed to the ASaP Continuum Project than the ELCC Curriculum Framework. In part, this may reflect the support model for ASaP Continuum Project, which involves GRIT coaches providing one-on-one support to one or two ELCC educators in the centre.

Most GRIT coaches reported that although some ELCC educators have awareness of inclusive child care practices, it was generally limited. Nevertheless, many GRIT coaches believed that, following ELCC educator participation in learning activities, their awareness of, and confidence to use, inclusive child care practices had increased. For example, some GRIT coaches stated that, following the training:

- ELCC educators are more comfortable demonstrating their knowledge, asking for help and putting some intentionality behind their practices (e.g. they knew why they were using the practices they had learned) (some);
- Conversations about how to include children are much more rich and involved (a few);
- ELCC educators are beginning to ask themselves ‘good’ questions; for example, the questions they are asking themselves changed from “*this child is causing problems and how am I going to protect other children and myself?*” to “*what’s the relationship like with me? Are their environments supporting them? Do they feel safe?*” (a few); and
- Increased involvement of other ELCC educators in the room (e.g. not just key lead) (a few).

The staff survey found that 56% of ELCC educators who responded had received training on inclusion supports and resources (see Chart 4.31).

Chart 4.31: ELCC Educator Reported Involvement in Training on Inclusion Supports and Resources (ELCC Educator Survey, n=198)



Changes in ELCC Centre Operations and Staff Practices

SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 8C:

HOW HAVE STAFF PRACTICES CHANGED AS A RESULT OF ADOPTING INCLUSION PRACTICES?

ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators and GRIT coaches said adopting inclusion practices is a gradual process. ELCC educators are beginning to change practices by:

- Adult Capacity Building: Using the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) results to set goals and develop action plans for ELCC educators;
- Navigation: Making referrals to speech/occupational/psychiatric therapists and other supports);
- Sustainability through Leadership: Adopting the Teaching Pyramid Model™; and
- Family Engagement: Forming relationships with parents by talking with them at drop-off/pick-up.

According to the 198 ELCC educator survey respondents, as a result of adopting inclusion resources and supports, ELCC Centres are beginning to see:

- Increased staff competency (31%), which involved; changing programming/learning activities, being more child-centred and responsive, changing the way language and documentation was used and promoting children's social/emotional education;
- Changed interactions (26%) with children, parents/caregivers and other ELCC educators; and
- Changed ELCC Centre operations (13%) including changing the culture at the ELCC Centre, increasing access to resources and adapting the physical environment in the ELCC Centre.

ELCC Centre supervisors and GRIT coaches said ELCC Centres are creating inclusive environments by:

- Establishing open door policy;
- Incorporating all children in room activities;
- Incorporating different cultures;
- Acknowledging different family structures; and
- Gaining children's trust.

Challenges associated with adopting inclusive child care practices are:

- Incorporation takes time;
- Awareness across ELCC educators not universal;
- Translation difficult with younger children; and
- Some ELCC educators are resistant to the change.

ELCC Centre supervisors and GRIT coaches reported that some ELCC Centres and ELCC educators are engaging in the following activities in support of the ASaP Continuum Project outcomes (each response was provided by some or a few interviewees):

- Adult Capacity Building
 - Beginning to use the Teaching Pyramid Model™;
 - Receiving TPOT assessments;
 - Using TPOT results to set goals and develop action plans for ELCC educators;
 - Receiving GRIT coaching, when required, to address children's behaviours in rooms;

- Increasing the emotional vocabulary of ELCC educators and children;
- Thinking about universal practices;
- Looking at children’s behaviour from a holistic point of view; and
- Sharing knowledge with other ELCC educators, holding out-of-ratio debriefs and applying what has been done in one room to other rooms.
- Navigation
 - Using visual schedules and six steps to resolve conflict;
 - Working with children on sharing, cooperation and problem-solving;
 - Using backpack tools to help address behaviours such as biting;
 - Completing Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQs) with children;
 - Making referrals to speech therapists, occupational therapists, psychiatric therapists and other supports, as required; and
 - Obtaining aides (e.g. Inclusive Child Care), where required.
- Sustainability through Leadership
 - Beginning to adopt the Teaching Pyramid Model™;
 - Implementing zero rejection policies;
 - Establishing leadership teams;
 - Working through staff roles and beginning to establish ASaP Continuum Project Leads for each room (a few ELCC Centres);
 - Creating a three-year vision for the ELCC Centre (one ELCC Centre); and
 - Thinking about how to incorporate practices and strategies in other rooms.
- Family Engagement
 - Forming relationships with parents/caregivers by talking with them at drop-off/pick-up;
 - Providing parents/caregivers with support materials resources (including the backpack series) that are linked to the goals they are working on, as required;
 - Sending notes home, as required;
 - Discussing concerns with parents/caregivers, as needed (e.g. parent meetings);
 - Providing the parents/caregivers with learning stories;
 - Preparing parent/caregivers newsletters;
 - Developing parent bulletin boards and parent resource centres;
 - Using the Tadpoles app (provides photos, date, and memories); and
 - Holding parent/caregiver engagement nights (dinners, potlucks, parties) and workshops.

Through the ELCC educator survey, the 110 respondents who reported receiving inclusion training provided the following examples of how it had changed the way their ELCC Centre operates:

- Increased staff competency (31%), which involved changing programming/learning activities, changing the way language and documentation was used, being more child-centred and responsive and promoting children’s social/emotional education.
- Changed interactions (26%) with children, parents/caregivers and other ELCC educators.
- Changed ELCC Centre operations (13%) which included changing the culture at the ELCC Centre, increasing access to resources and adapting the physical environment in the ELCC Centre.

Several ELCC educators reported that there had been no change because it was too early to say (10%), they did not know how operations had changed (26%) or they preferred not to answer (7%) (see Table 4.32).

Table 4.32: ELCC Educator Identified Impact of Inclusion Training on ELCC Centre Operations (ELCC Educator Survey, n=110)

Question B6. How has the inclusion training changed the way the ELCC Centre operates? (open-ended question)

Changes to Operations	% n=110*
Staff competency (net)	31%
Increased staff competency – general	23%
Changes in programming/learning activities	5%
Changes to language/documentation	4%
More child-centred/responsive	3%
Promote children’s social/emotional education	3%
Increased reflection	1%
Interactions (net)	26%
Increased/improved interactions with children	14%
Increased/improved interactions with parents/caregivers	11%
Increased/improved interactions with staff	8%
Operational changes (net)	13%
Changing Centre culture	6%
Increased access to resources	5%
Changes in/adaptations to physical environment	2%
Other	4%
No change – too early to say	9%
Don’t know	23%
Prefer not to answer	16%
*Individuals who answered "yes" to receiving inclusion training Note: Numbers do not add to 100% due to individuals providing more than one answer ‘Net’ categories are an aggregate of the indented sub-categories listed underneath. The percentages reported in the ‘net’ category may be lower than the sum of the percentages reported for each of the subcategories comprising the ‘net’ as the ‘net’ only counts a response to one or more of the subcategories category once.	

GRIT coaches and ELCC educators provided the following examples of how the additional knowledge and skills gained through the ASaP Continuum Project are being incorporated into daily child care practices and interactions with children:

- Using universal principles (some).
- Observing children to see what is contributing to the way they are feeling and behaving (some).
- Using visuals (e.g. emotional charts, emotions clock), color systems (e.g. “*You hurt my feelings, I’m feeling red,*” “*I feel yellow because I’m happy*”), scripted stories (e.g. Tucker the Turtle) and zones of regulation to help children understand and express their emotions and feelings (some interviewees mentioned at least one of the responses listed). For example, one ELCC educator said: “*In our room we have zones – there is a red zone, blue zone, yellow, and green. And we have a little circle that has all the emotions. For example, there was one little girl, she can get pretty upset and angry very fast. So I will say, ‘what zone are you in?’ and she will say ‘I’m in the red zone.’ She knows. So when I ask ‘what can I do to make you go into the green zone?,’ she will say ‘well, I just need time by myself’ or something. The children are all learning their emotions. If we have a child that is crying, they will say, ‘oh, she is in the blue zone, she’s sad.’ ... They are starting to identify more with their emotions and they are starting to express why they are*

- feeling these emotions.”*
- Using songs to help with emotions (e.g. anger) and transitions (e.g. going down the hall, washroom breaks) (some).
 - Using visual schedules and giving visual cues (many), for example:
 - Taking pictures of what the children are doing and posting it on the wall with words beside it (e.g. walking down the hall, using the walking rope when going to the gym, being in the quiet area, doing crafts, taking turns, washing hands);
 - Posting visual cues on the wall that instruct you to walk (e.g. doing a crab walk down the hall instead of being loud and running); and
 - One ELCC educator said: *“We have noticed that children are more aware of what will be happening next. I am noticing that they are using the schedule. They will notice which step they missed and recognize which one it is.”*
 - Setting boundaries and creating room expectations, including posting expectations on the wall (e.g. gentle hands, helping hands, walking feet) and using them when communicating with the children (e.g. use helping hands to help clean-up or to give someone a hug if they are feeling sad) (some).
 - Instead of telling the children what not to do, suggesting something they could do (a few).
 - Giving children choices and options, working with the children’s strengths and learning not to say ‘don’t’ (some).
 - Using repetitive words with pictures and providing clear directions to the children (some).
 - Using various strategies to help soothe the children (a few), for example:
 - Bringing sensory materials into the room (e.g. sand, water);
 - Using natural lighting and lamps (rather than fluorescent lights) to keep the room calmer;
 - Creating a cozy cave for the children to use if they want some alone time; and
 - Practicing toddler yoga.
 - Trying to open-up and communicate more with parents/caregivers as well as showing more sympathy and empathy for children and families (a few).
 - Giving children the skills they need to help themselves and solve problems (a few), for example:
 - If a child has an argument, teaching him/her how to think about the problem rather than crying or coming to tell a staff member; and
 - Creating a peace table. As one ELCC educator explained: *“We just had a cute little table; we transformed that into a peace table which is a small table with a cloth on it and a mirror. It has a little booklet there with four pictures that show two children yelling at each other and then another child asking for help.... You have the children talking, [using] the talking sticks that I made with the children together. We had a big stick and we decorated it; it was art and we use it. A child can invite another child to the peace table and figure out [that] whoever invited them over would have the talking stick and they are the only ones allowed to talk and state why they are upset and what’s bothering them and we’ll let the other child talk and get their opinions and figure out how we can solve the problem and they usually do themselves. So we are kind of just there listening and observing and supporting. It’s been a very positive add to our classroom for sure.”*

- Increasing caregiver confidence (a few): *“It is really making a difference for the educators, children and families. It means that [educators] are now more open to trying new things, that is maybe doing a workshop or receiving feedback from families because they understand now what is going on and how that is impacting their families.”*

Interactions with Children and Parents

Through the ELCC educator survey, the 110 respondents who received inclusion training provided the following examples of how it had changed their interactions:

- Increased/improved interactions (36%) with parents/caregivers and children as well as improving their understanding of others.
- Increased staff competency (29%), which involved changing programming/learning activities, being more child-centred and responsive, increasing reflection, changing the use of language/documentation and improving child behaviour.
- Changed ELCC Centre operations (5%), which involved changing the culture at the ELCC Centre and adapting the physical environment in the ELCC Centre.

Many ELCC educators indicated that there was no change because it was too early to say (15%) or that it did not apply to infants (5%). Additionally, many ELCC educators said they did not know how it changed (16%) or that they preferred not to answer (13%) (see Table 4.33).

Table 4.33: ELCC Educator Indicated Impact of Inclusion Training on ELCC Centre Operations (ELCC Educator Survey, n=110)

Question B5. How has the inclusion training you received changed the way you interact with the children and parents/caregivers? (open-ended question)

Changes to Operations	% n=110*
Interactions (net)	36%
Increased/improved interactions with parents/caregivers	22%
Increased/improved interactions with children	18%
Increased/improved understanding of others	10%
Staff competency (net)	29%
Increased staff competency – general	20%
Changes in programming/learning activities	6%
More child-centred/responsive	6%
Increased reflection	6%
Changes to language/documentation	4%
Improved child behaviours	4%
Operational changes (net)	5%
Changing Centre culture	4%
Changes in/adaptations to physical environment	1%
Other	3%
No change – too early to say	15%
No change – does not apply to infants	5%
Don't know	16%
Prefer not to answer	13%
*Individuals who answered "yes" to receiving inclusion training Note: Numbers do not add to 100% due to individuals providing more than one answer 'Net' categories are an aggregate of the indented sub-categories listed underneath. The percentages reported in the 'net' category may be lower than the sum of the percentages reported for each of the subcategories comprising the 'net' as the 'net' only counts a response to one or more of the subcategories category once.	

Creating Inclusive Environments

A few GRIT coaches noted that if ELCC Centres create environments where children feel successful, then fewer children will require intensive intervention. ELCC Centre supervisors and GRIT coaches said ELCC Centres are creating inclusive environments by:

- Accepting everyone, making all of the children feel like they are a part of the room and incorporating practices required to address specific needs in all rooms so no child feels singled out (most);
- Making all parents/caregivers feel welcome by having an open door policy (e.g. parents can drop into the rooms at any time), talking with parents/caregivers when they are dropping-off and picking-up their children and hosting family nights (most);
- Being mindful of different family structures when communicating with children and parents/caregivers (e.g. lone parents, grandparents, etc.) (a few);
- Gaining the children's trust (being compassionate and loving) (some);
- Incorporating different cultures in the rooms and programming (e.g. cultural displays, cultural materials, cultural food, and native languages) (some);
- Intentionally teaching children cultural values, traditions and languages (a few);

- Bringing in an Elder to talk about traditional parenting (a few); and
- Bringing additional staff into the room to provide additional support as required (some).

Although several ELCC Centre supervisors noted that they do not have children with diverse needs in their ELCC Centre, those that do reported that their ELCC Centres meet the care requirements of children with diverse needs by:

- Welcoming everyone (e.g. don't kick anyone out, don't turn anyone away) (many);
- Being sure to not discriminating against anyone (race, color, creed) (many);
- Including different cultures in daily activities (e.g. books and toys that reflect different cultures, literacy books for children) (some);
- Learning words from other languages that children speak (asking parents to provide a list of words) (some);
- Accommodating special dietary requirements (e.g. no pork) (some);
- Using visual cues to manage children's behaviours (some);
- Using sensory activities (some); and
- Having large hallways and wheelchair accessible bathroom (a few).

Many ELCC Centre supervisors also indicated that they work with other agencies to meet the care requirements of children with diverse needs:

- Bringing in specialists or making referrals for children who have special needs (e.g. Inclusive Child Care workers, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, nurses, dieticians, AHS, mental health) (most);
- Having team meetings with those who are involved in the child's care (some);
- Holding family nights where a physician is available (one ELCC Centre); and
- Bringing in other organizations to hold professional development activities with staff (e.g. Yoga to learn how bodies move) (a few).

Further, some ELCC Centre supervisors noted how they work with parents/caregivers to help meet the care requirements of children with diverse needs:

- Having one-on-one conversations with parents/caregivers to make them comfortable accessing additional supports for their children (some);
- Talking with other family members who can translate (if the parents do not speak English) (a few); and
- Making parents/caregivers aware of other child care options (daycare might not be for everyone) (a few).

Finally, a few ELCC Centre supervisors described various staffing strategies that they use to meet the care requirements of children with diverse needs: using more staff than required in classrooms (over ratio) and hiring staff from diverse cultural backgrounds (helps limit language barriers). The majority of ELCC Centre supervisors have not had to turn a child away or ask a child to go to a different Centre, because their ELCC Centre was unable to meet that child's unique needs. However, a few ELCC Centre supervisors reported that they have experienced challenges locating and funding aides to assist children with unique needs; in a few cases, these challenges have delayed the timing of when the child could start attending the ELCC Centre.

Overall, Comparison Centre supervisors mentioned using the same practices and approaches as those used in ELCC Centres to create inclusive environments and meet the care requirements of children with diverse needs.

Challenges

The majority of ELCC educators and several GRIT coaches identified challenges or problems incorporating the ASaP Continuum Project into day-to-day child care practice.

Some of the ELCC educators and GRIT coaches who identified challenges cautioned that it takes time for ELCC educators to become familiar with and learn how to implement the inclusive child care practices. Some of them also indicated that it can be challenging to ensure that all ELCC educators, including new educators and those who are not directly working with a GRIT coach, have the same level of awareness and understanding of the practices. Additionally, a few ELCC educators reported that although the information presented in workshops was clear, by time they were back in their rooms, things tended to ‘fall apart a bit.’

Some ELCC educators and GRIT coaches also reported that it can be challenging for ELCC educators to find the time to implement the practices. They explained that ELCC educators have competing demands and can find it difficult to make the time to prepare materials (some ELCC educators reported that they had to print and find resources on their own time), reflect and find new ways of doing things as well as meet with the GRIT coach (especially if there are no other ELCC educators available to provide coverage for the child care room).

A few ELCC educators said they have experienced some challenges engaging and communicating with parents. For example, they noted that it can be difficult to balance not overstepping the ‘parenting’ boundary, but at the same time ensuring that parents/caregivers receive the knowledge and information they need regarding their child.

Some of the other challenges that GRIT coaches and ELCC educators identified included:

- Determining how to translate the inclusive child care practices to support younger children (a few);
- Overcoming resistance to the ASaP Continuum Project and changing ELCC educators’ habits (some);
- Aligning the documentation requirements for the ASaP Continuum Project and the ELCC Curriculum Framework (e.g. the documentation is similar, but has a different focus) (a few); and
- Managing transitions (e.g. transitioning information and practices from one age group to another) (some).

GRIT coaches suggested that some of these challenges could be mitigated by:

- Focusing on relationship-building (some):
 - giving ELCC educators direction in a positive way;
 - remembering that everyone learns differently, and has different expectations of the process;
 - involving families as soon as possible in the process, to build that really strong foundational relationship, to be able to be open and honest about what educators see happening and to give parents a voice. As described by one GRIT coach: *“Create an ongoing dialogue with families and really focus on sharing”*

- Ensuring that the Centre director is engaged in the process (a few); and
- Bearing the importance of time management in mind (a few):
 - need to be dedicated to the process: not something that happens overnight (it is a continuous process); and
 - trying to find the balance and be supportive as a group (lots of things going on at once, can be very stressful on the educators).

4.2.6.5 Parent Perspectives on Quality

Parents/caregivers at ELCC Centres and Comparison Centres who responded to the parent/caregiver survey were equally satisfied with the quality of care at their Centre and their child’s engagement in Centre activities. Over 9 in 10 parents/caregivers who responded to the parent/caregiver survey were very satisfied or satisfied with:

- The quality of care provided at the child care centre that their children attend (97% of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 95% of Comparison Centre parents/caregivers); and
- The degree to which their child is meaningfully engaged in centre activities (97% of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 95% of Comparison Centre parents/caregivers).

No parents/caregivers who responded to the survey indicated that they were unsatisfied (see Table 4.34).

Table 4.34: Parent/Caregivers’ Satisfaction with Quality of Care and Child Engagement at ELCC Centres (Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=294 and n=227)

Question D12A. Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of care provided at this Centre?

Question D12B. Overall, how satisfied are you with the degree to which your child is meaningfully engaged in Centre activities? (Results of testing for statistical significance are not reported due to the small number of responses in some categories)

Changes to Operations	ELCC Centres (n=294)	Comparison Centres (n=227)
Satisfaction with quality of care		
Very satisfied	73%	63%
Satisfied	24%	32%
Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	2%	4%
Unsatisfied	1%	<1%
Very unsatisfied	<1%	1%
Don’t know	-	-
Prefer not to answer	-	-
Satisfaction with child engagement in Centre activities		
Very satisfied	71%	63%
Satisfied	26%	32%
Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	1%	1%
Unsatisfied	1%	-
Very unsatisfied	<1%	1%
Don’t know	1%	3%
Prefer not to answer	-	<1%

Over 9 in 10 parents/caregivers who responded to the survey and whose children were enrolled in an urban or rural ELCC Centres were satisfied with the quality of care at their Centre (urban: very satisfied, 71% and satisfied, 25% and rural: very satisfied, 77% and satisfied, 21%). Additionally, over 9 in 10 parents/caregivers who responded to the survey and whose children were enrolled in an urban or rural ELCC Centres were satisfied with the degree to which their child is meaningfully engaged in centre activities (urban: very satisfied, 68% and satisfied, 28% and rural: very satisfied, 80% and satisfied, 19%).

Over 9 in 10 females and males who responded to the survey and whose children were enrolled in an urban or rural ELCC Centres were satisfied with the quality of care at their Centre (female: very satisfied, 73% and satisfied, 23% and male: very satisfied, 70% and satisfied, 28%) (no statistically significant differences). Over 9 in 10 parents/caregivers who responded to the survey and whose children were enrolled in an urban or rural ELCC Centres were satisfied with the degree to which their child is meaningfully engaged in centre activities (female: very satisfied, 73% and satisfied, 24% and male: very satisfied, 62% and satisfied, 36%).

When asked to indicate their level of agreement with various statements about the quality of care at the child care centre that their children attend:

- Almost all ELCC Centre and Comparison Centre parents/caregivers who responded to the parent/caregiver survey strongly agreed or agreed that their child was provided opportunities to play and explore (100% and 97% respectively) and that centre staff encouraged their child to participate in activities (98% and 94% respectively); and
- More than three-quarters of the ELCC Centre and Comparison Centre parent/caregiver survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the remaining statements (see Table 4.35).

**Table 4.35: Parent/Caregivers' Perspectives on Quality of Care
(Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=294 and n=227)**

Question D1. How much do you agree with the following statements? (Response options were strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, not applicable, don't know, or no response.)

(Results of testing for statistical significance are not reported due to the small number of responses in some categories)

Statement	ELCC Centres (n=294)		Comparison Centres (n=227)	
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree
My child is provided with opportunities to play and explore.	75%	25%	69%	28%
Centre staff encourage my child to participate in activities.	71%	27%	64%	30%
Centre staff change activities in response to the needs of my child.	54%	32%	43%	38%
I consider the staff at this Centre to be professionals.	69%	25%	60%	31%
Centre staff regularly communicate with me about my child's day so that I can incorporate my child's interests into activities at home.	55%	31%	52%	34%
Child care centre activities help connect my child to our community.	48%	36%	37%	39%
Child care centre activities evolve out of the interest of my child.	52%	31%	37%	42%
Child care centre activities help connect my child to our family.	46%	37%	38%	38%
Child care centre activities help my child understand other cultures.	49%	31%	42%	36%

4.2.6.6 Staff Professional Development: Skills and Practices

**SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 9A (PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT):
WHAT LEVEL OF PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION OF IMPROVEMENTS? HOW HAVE
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IMPROVED STAFF SKILLS, PRACTICES AND RETENTION (OTHER THAN
CURRICULUM AND INCLUSION RESOURCES)?**

- Based on administrative data of educators that have asked for reimbursement for professional development costs, the rates of professional development reimbursement requests are lower among ELCC educators as compared to all educators in Alberta.
- ELCC Centre supervisors believe the ELCC Centre Initiative improved their capacity to provide professional development. The training most commonly offered at ELCC Centres included:
 - The ELCC Curriculum Framework online course;
 - ASaP Continuum Project workshops; and
 - Training to increase level of certification (i.e. upgrading).
- According to the 198 respondents to the ELCC educator survey:
 - About half of the ELCC educators (51%) had participated in one to three professional development opportunities, while one-tenth (11%) had participated in four to six opportunities.
 - The majority (68%) of professional development opportunities were provided through a combination work and personal time, and while 4 in 10 (40%) ELCC educators reported that professional opportunities had no impact on their off-the-floor time.
- Overall, ELCC educator professionalism is increasing. Almost all of the 294 parents/caregivers who responded to the survey consider staff to be professionals (95%), and almost all of the 198 respondents to the ELCC educator survey (89%) say they are treated as a professional.

Capacity to Provide Professional Development

The majority of ELCC Centre supervisors believed that involvement in the ELCC Centre Initiative had improved their capacity to provide professional development to ELCC educators. They explained that the ELCC Centre grant enabled them to allocate additional financial resources to professional development, including paying for ELCC educators' registration fees, wages (even if the professional development was outside of regular work hours), travel and accommodation. Other ways that a few ELCC Centre supervisors incentivized professional development was offering ELCC educators an 'ELCC wage top-up' (performance-based, depends on how many workshops they do, how much effort they put in) and closing the ELCC Centre for professional development days to bring training for the ELCC educators into the ELCC Centre.

All ELCC Centre supervisors emphasized the importance they placed on ELCC educators accessing professional development opportunities, and described a range of ways that their ELCC Centre supported educators in accessing professional development opportunities. These included informational, financial and operational supports, alongside general encouragement.

Provision of Information about Professional Development Opportunities

All ELCC Centre supervisors stated that they provided information to ELCC educators about available professional development opportunities, and encouraged ELCC educators to participate in them. Information is shared through emails, by printing off details and placing it in staff mailboxes, discussing

them in staff meetings and posting information communally on staff information boards and in binders in the staff room (each response was mentioned by a few interviewees).

Some ELCC Centre supervisors also said they encouraged ELCC educators to find and bring forward professional development opportunities that they want to take. As described by one ELCC Centre supervisor: *“I’ve really encouraged them to bring forward those opportunities to us and also [have let] them know we have incentives for them. If there is something they [want to] do above and beyond their hours, they can do it on weekends, evenings. Just as long as they are providing the proof [that it is] directly applicable to their employment.”*

Financial Support for Professional Development

All ELCC Centre supervisors reported that funding is provided to ELCC educators to assist them in accessing professional development opportunities. Some ELCC Centre supervisors mentioned offering ELCC educators an annual stipend (generally available to educators who had worked at the ELCC Centre for a minimum number of months), while a few other ELCC Centre supervisors said they offered to remunerate educators for professional opportunities once the government funding had been ‘maxed out’. Almost all ELCC Centres paid educators their hourly wage during the time they were participating in professional development, on top of paying expenses such as registration fees, travel and accommodation; a few supervisors described how ELCC Centre funding now enabled the ELCC Centre to cover expenses such as travel, whereas before they would not have been able to pay for travel or accommodation. A few ELCC Centre supervisors said they accessed other sources of funding (e.g. small business job credit) to support educators in accessing professional development opportunities. A few ELCC Centres paid ELCC educators at time-and-a-half for mandatory training that occurred in the evening or during the weekend and a few ELCC Centre supervisors also noted that they were able to pay for extra ELCC educators to cover absences if training was during the week, and to provide time ‘off the floor’ during the work day to complete coursework.

Operational Strategies to Accommodate Professional Development

Many ELCC Centres provided in-house training for ELCC educators. This included workshops and presentations during staff meetings, offering educators the time to participate in free webinars, as well as offering workshops and presentations during evenings and weekends (each was mentioned by some ELCC Centre supervisors).

Some ELCC Centre supervisors also explained that their ELCC Centre closed for a certain number of professional development days per year, so that all staff could attend. For example, one ELCC Centre closes for two days per year, with all costs covered by the ELCC Centre and ELCC educators paid for attendance; another ELCC Centre closes for eight days each year, to provide mandatory professional development to ELCC educators. This, the ELCC Centre supervisor explained, was as important for team building (relationship-building) as it was for staff skills development. A further ELCC Centre supervisor stated that providing ‘in house’ professional development days was something they wanted to begin to do so that their staff could attend workshops and conferences together.

Most ELCC Centre supervisors stated that, ideally, the ELCC Centre provides coverage for their ELCC educators to access professional development opportunities, or to have time out of ratio to complete professional development coursework. Some of the ELCC Centre supervisors noted that their ability to do this had increased since receiving the ELCC Centre grant: *“Any professional development that [educators] are interested, we will provide relief staff for them. So if it’s something they want to do*

during the week, we'll provide a cover for them so they can attend [...] which we would have never been able to do before. We've seen staff do more professional development time as its paid, where before they couldn't afford to go as it's a weekend. Within this year I've seen so much growth in our staff because of that. It's been huge and feel like we never have to let that go because it's amazing. This month alone we have three staff going to [professional development], we've never had that happen before."

More generally, some ELCC Centre supervisors noted that there were now more professional opportunities for ELCC educators to attend (noting the ELCC Curriculum Framework and the ASaP Continuum Project workshops in particular). On one hand, some ELCC Centre supervisors indicated that this resulted in increased ELCC educator willingness/engagement in professional development; while on the other hand, for some ELCC Centre supervisors it made things more difficult, due to increased demands on ELCC educators' time. For some ELCC Centre supervisors, this resulted in a need to rethink ELCC educator scheduling in order to maintain the required staff-to-child ratios (for example, to make more use of casual staff).

ELCC Centre supervisors provided the following examples of professional development opportunities that ELCC educators had participated in over the past year:

- ELCC Curriculum Framework online course (all);
- ASaP Continuum Project workshops (all);
- Yoga for children (a few);
- Music for children (a few);
- Training to increase their level of certification (i.e. upgrading) (many);
- Early learning conferences (a few);
- Workshop on staff conflict (a few);
- Reggio Emilia *Inspired Environments* training (a few);
- Autism conference (a few); and
- Inclusive child care conference (a few).

Educator Participation in Professional Development Opportunities

Table 4.36 provides the number and percentage of day staff that participated in professional development opportunities by certification level. According to the administrative data available, a lower proportion of ELCC Centre Child Development Workers than Child Development Workers at all day cares in Alberta participated in professional development opportunities. One possible explanation for this is that ELCC educator training appeared to be focused primarily on training related to the ELCC Curriculum Framework and ASaP Continuum project training; as a result, they had minimal time to participate in other professional development activities.

Table 4.36: Number (Percentage) of Day Care Staff Participating in Professional Development Opportunities by Certification Level, June 2017 to March 2018

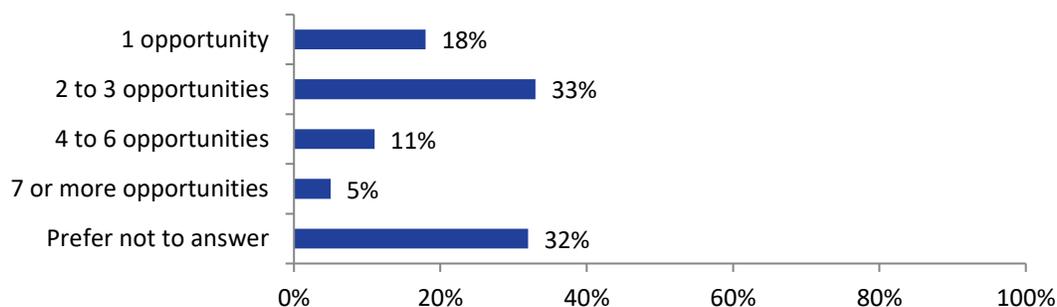
Region	Child Development Assistant	Child Development Worker	Child Development Supervisor	Total
Alberta	894 (25.1%)	434 (27.5%)	1,028 (23.8%)	2,356 (24.9%)
ELCC Centres*	25 (25.0%)	4 (9.5%)	32 (29.1%)	61 (24.2%)

Source: CCIS (March 2018 lockdown data using year-to-date average number of staff between June and March 2018).
 *Data was available for seven ELCC Centres for Child Development Assistant, one ELCC Centre for Child Development Worker and no ELCC Centres for Child Development Supervisor.
 Notes: Percentages represent the number of distinct staff who participated in professional development opportunities divided by the total number of staff in that category as of March 2018.

According to the ELCC educator survey respondents, as shown in Chart 4.37, of the 187 ELCC educators who reported that professional development opportunities were available to them through the ELCC Centre, half (51%) had participated in one to three opportunities, while less than one-fifth (16%) stated that they had participated in four to seven opportunities since the ELCC Centre opened or began receiving ELCC Initiative funding. Almost one-third (32%) indicated that they preferred not to answer the question. On average, ELCC educator survey respondents said they participated in almost 34 professional development opportunities since their Centre opened or began receiving ELCC Centre grant funding.

Chart 4.37: ELCC Educator Reported Participation in Professional Development Opportunities (ELCC Educator Survey, n=187)

Question A4A. How many professional development opportunities have you participated in since this Centre opened or began receiving ELCC Centre funding?

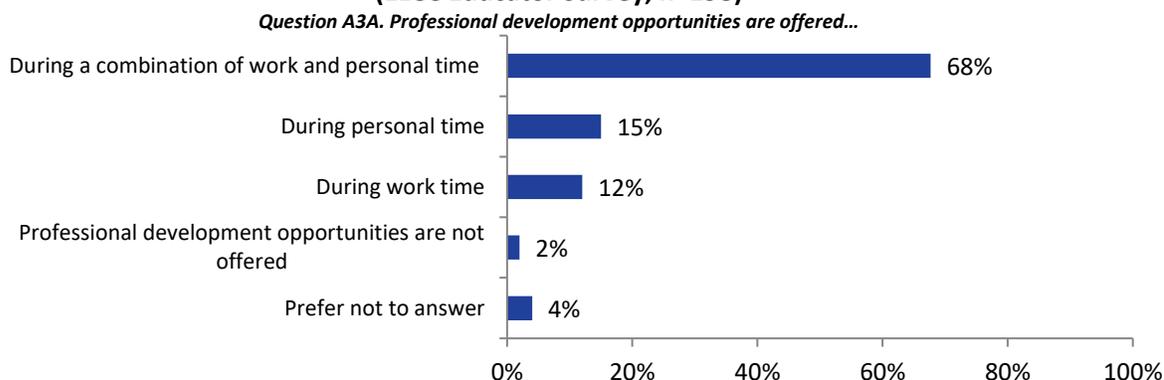


Overall, the ELCC educator survey found that the 187 ELCC educators who said professional development opportunities were available to them participated in a total of 469 individual professional development opportunities. Of the 469 professional development opportunities that these ELCC educators identified:

- 18% were related to the ELCC Curriculum Framework and 14% were related to the ASaP Continuum Project;
- 16% resulted in a credit;
- 71% were relevant to work;
- 14% contributed toward increasing certification; and
- 35% were mandatory.

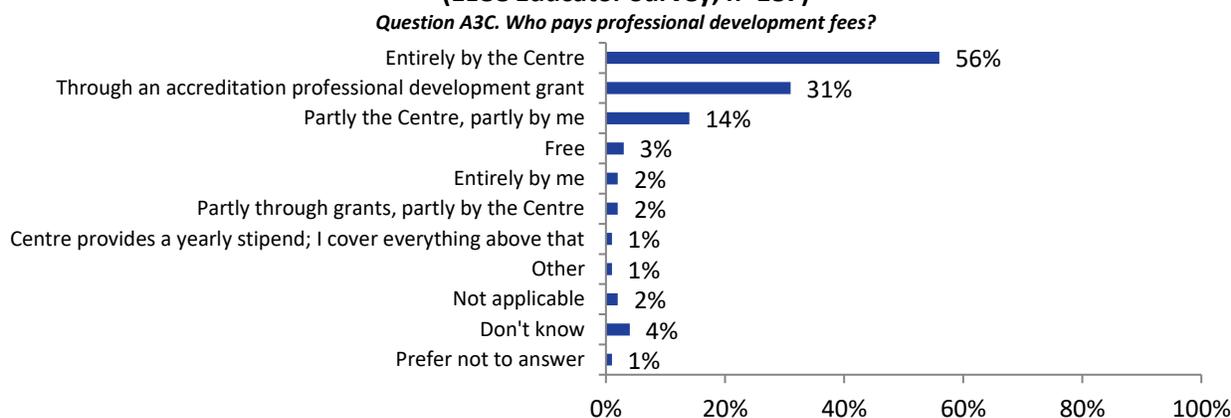
ELCC educators responding to the survey reported that professional development opportunities were offered during work time (12%), during personal time (15%) or during a combination of both personal and work time (68%) (see Chart 4.38).

Chart 4.38: ELCC Educator Reported Times that Professional Development Opportunities are Offered (ELCC Educator Survey, n=198)



Based on results from the ELCC educator survey, more than half (56%) of the responding ELCC educators reported that their ELCC Centre pays for all of their professional development fees and almost one-third (31%) said their professional development fees were covered by an accreditation professional development grant. Only 2% of respondents said they had to pay for their professional development fees entirely by themselves (see Chart 4.39).

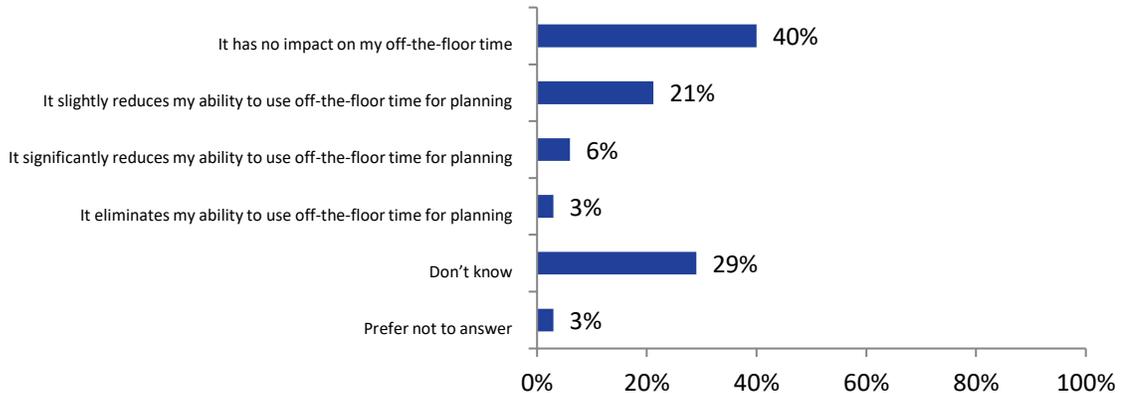
Chart 4.39: ELCC Educator Reported Coverage of Professional Development Fees (ELCC Educator Survey, n=187)



For the 157 ELCC educator survey respondents who indicated that professional development opportunities were offered during work time, 40% said it has no impact on their off-the-floor time, 21% said it slightly reduces their ability to use off-the-floor time for planning and 29% did not know how it impacted their off-the-floor time. (see Chart 4.40).

**Chart 4.40: ELCC Educator Identified Impact of Professional Development Opportunities*
(ELCC Educator Survey, n=157)**

Question A3B. When professional development is offered during work time, how does it impact the use of your off-the-floor time?



*Individuals who indicated that their ELCC Centre offers professional development opportunities

Overall, 81% of ELCC educators who responded to the survey stated that they were very satisfied (37%) or satisfied (44%) with the professional development opportunities offered by their ELCC Centre.⁴² Table 4.41 lists the reasons these 171 ELCC educators provided for their satisfaction ratings.

**Table 4.41: ELCC Educator Explanation for Professional Development Satisfaction Rating
(ELCC Educator Survey, n=171)**

Question A6B. Why have you provided the response: [recall response]? (open-ended question)

Explanation	% n=171
Positive comments	
Furthers my skills, practices, competency, useful	26%
Encouraged to access opportunities	16%
Opportunity to keep growing/developing/learning	14%
Contributes to the Centre/increased professionalization	10%
General satisfaction	7%
Many/different opportunities to access	6%
Relevant to work	5%
Opportunities for improvement	
Did not further my skills, practices, competency, not useful	2%
More time/access needed/not able to attend	2%
Not supported to access opportunities	1%
Opportunities not targeted appropriately	1%
Would like access to more opportunities/training	1%
Other	2%
I have not accessed any opportunities yet	6%
Prefer not to answer	22%

⁴² Due to a change in the questionnaire partway through the survey, the base for this question was 187.

Additionally 86% of 144 ELCC educator survey respondents were very satisfied (37%) or satisfied (44%) that the professional development opportunities offered by the ELCC Centre enhanced their ability to meet the care needs of the children at their ELCC Centre.

Challenges

One of the main barriers that many ELCC Centre supervisors identified to supporting ELCC educators to access professional development opportunities was identified as finding or having access to staff to provide coverage while ELCC educators were participating in professional development activities. Specifically, several ELCC Centre supervisors stated that they did not have enough staff to provide the coverage required to enable ELCC educators to attend training during the day, to offer time in lieu or to have all staff attend training all at once. Nonetheless, one ELCC Centre supervisor explained how, as a result of the ELCC funding, she was able to hire two extra educators that could provide cover for professional development, or when ELCC educators needed time during the day to work on professional development coursework.

ELCC Centre supervisors reported encouraging ELCC educators to attend professional development opportunities in the following ways:

- Encouraging ELCC educators to find professional development opportunities that are relevant and interesting to them (some);
- Regularly finding and sharing information with ELCC educators about professional development opportunities (many);
- Making attendance at professional development opportunities mandatory (a few);
- Providing financial incentives to ELCC educators to attend professional development activities (e.g. paying ELCC educators time-and-a-half for attending weekend training; providing an 'ELCC top-up' that is performance-based and related to professional development participation) (some); and
- Trying to put strategies in place to address the reasons that ELCC educators may give for not attending professional development activities (i.e. paying educators to attend, providing them with child care for their children) (a few).

Some ELCC Centre supervisors identified the following ongoing challenges in providing professional development to ELCC educators:

- A lack of willingness on the part of some ELCC educators (some). For example, one ELCC Centre supervisor said *"Staff just won't show up. I'll make it mandatory but I can't pull you out of your bed in the morning"*.
- Time (a few). One ELCC Centre supervisor noted: *"It's really hard to have the time to be able to find those courses"*;
- Accessibility/location of training (a few). A few ELCC Centre supervisors noted that there are not a lot of opportunities for professional development in their immediate area, so they have to bring trainers in; and
- Quality of courses (A few). A few ELCC Centre supervisors said that some of the professional development opportunities that are available are not high quality and therefore are not worth the time or cost of attending.

Comparison Centres

Comparison Centres supervisors reported using the same approaches that ELCC Centre supervisors used to support Centre staff to access professional development, including (some of the interviewees mentioned each of the responses listed):

- Providing information: (e.g. providing information to staff about opportunities in communications binder; verbally tell staff about opportunities);
- Providing encouragement and support (e.g. ensuring that staff are free to attend anything they want; requiring staff to participate in a certain number of professional development activities a year; helping staff complete claims forms for reimbursement; encouraging upgrading);
- Providing funding (e.g. ensuring staff have access to their government professional development funding; providing extra funding that can be requested by the Centre on an 'as needed' basis; paying for mandatory training such as First Aid and Food Hygiene; paying staff for out-of-hours training);
- Providing time/coverage (e.g. allowing staff to go on conferences they require; offering 'flex time' so staff can participate in training during work hours);
- Providing professional development opportunities in-house (e.g. hosting free seminars at the daycare and inviting partners to come in and give timely training; providing workshops in-house; closing the Centre for a certain number of days per year, so that all staff can attend training at the Centre; holding workshops and professional development sessions in conjunction with staff meetings); and
- Providing access (e.g. to attend conventions and conferences; to free training).
- Providing resources (e.g. providing books; providing electronics so that staff can participate in online training)

Comparison Centre supervisors reported facing the same challenges as ELCC Centre supervisors in providing staff with professional development opportunities (a few interviewees mentioned each of the responses listed):

- Access and availability of professional development (e.g. specific topics, quality);
- Staffing (including finding cover);
- Location/distance;
- Time; and
- Staff resistance (including not wanting to go on the weekend/evening).

However, many Comparison Centre supervisors reported also having challenges covering the costs associated with providing professional development (e.g. the cost of having people come to the Centre to deliver sessions, paying wages for staff to provide coverage while educators attend professional development opportunities, and reimbursing educators for the fees associated with professional development opportunities); these financial challenges were not mentioned by ELCC Centre supervisors.

Staff Professionalism

ELCC Centre supervisors' perspectives of whether there had been an increase in professionalism among ELCC educators as a result of the ELCC Centre Initiative varied. Some ELCC Centre supervisors stated that they already had good teams (e.g. they generally tried to hire qualified Level 3 educators [not staff with equivalencies] who already have a high degree of professionalism) and therefore had not noticed an increase in professionalism. A few also noted that they were starting to see higher quality candidates apply for early childhood educator positions.

Of the ELCC Centre supervisors that had noticed an increase in professionalism, some indicated that certain ELCC educators were beginning to view themselves as professionals; this appeared to particularly be the case among those that had taken the ELCC Curriculum Framework online course and those who were working with pedagogical partners and/or GRIT coaches. Some ELCC Centre supervisors indicated that ELCC Centre management referred to staff as 'educators' and noted that some ELCC educators were also starting to view themselves as such: specifically, they were beginning to consider themselves to be educators who were making a valuable contribution to the field of child care and to have a sense of pride in their work.

A few ELCC Centre supervisors described that they were creating policies around professionalism (e.g. a professional standards policy, a dress code to ensure staff were wearing professional attire).

Some ELCC Centre supervisors noted that professional development courses, including those related to the ELCC Curriculum Framework, were contributing to a higher degree of professionalism among ELCC educators. For example, some mentioned that the ELCC Curriculum Framework had been providing ELCC educators with the language and terminology required to increase their professionalism, while others noted that processes around documentation were contributing as well. A few ELCC Centre supervisors noted that ELCC educator confidence played a role in the extent to which ELCC educators saw themselves as professionals, and that participating in opportunities such as the ELCC Curriculum Framework online course contributed to this.

Based on results from the ELCC Centre parent/caregiver survey, 95% of respondents stated that they considered the staff at their child's centre to be professionals, while 89% of ELCC educator survey respondents stated that they feel that they are treated as a professional at the ELCC Centre.

Most ELCC Centre supervisors did not think the ELCC Centre Initiative increased professionalism among ELCC Centre management; a few reported that ELCC Centre management already considered themselves to be professionals. Nonetheless, a few ELCC Centre supervisors noted that, as a result of implementing the ELCC Centre Initiative, they were starting to view themselves as business professionals. Additionally, a few indicated that taking the ELCC Curriculum Framework online course had helped them provide improved leadership, mentoring and support to early childhood educators.

4.2.6.7 Staff Retention

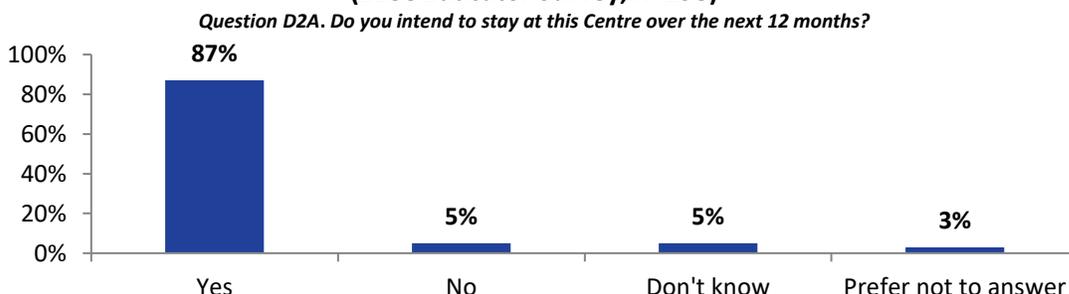
SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 9A (STAFF RETENTION):
WHAT LEVEL OF PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION OF IMPROVEMENTS? HOW HAVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IMPROVED STAFF SKILLS, PRACTICES AND RETENTION (OTHER THAN CURRICULUM AND INCLUSION RESOURCES)?

- Interviews with ELCC educators found:
 - The majority ELCC Centres reported no change in staff retention.
 - When retention was considered to have increased, it was seen to be due to higher wages; access to training and professional development (higher certification); impact of the ELCC Centre Initiative on families; love of the job; and excitement about the ELCC Curriculum Framework.
 - When retention was considered to have decreased, staff turnover was seen to be due to increased responsibility and expectations; burn out; and challenges incorporating the ELCC Curriculum Framework.
- Overall, ELCC educators reported being satisfied with their work environment. The ELCC educator survey found that, of the 113 ELCC educators who had work experience at other Centres, when comparing their experience at these other Centres with their experiences at the ELCC Centre, ELCC educators reported that, at their ELCC Centre, they have more confidence in the quality of care (83%); room for personal growth (81%); opportunity for professional development (79%); and input into the operation of the centre (64%).

The majority of ELCC educators stated that staff retention at their ELCC Centre had not changed since the ELCC Centre Initiative began. Some said that they worked with long-term staff members who had been at the ELCC Centre for over five years and if ELCC educators chose to leave, it was generally considered to be due to personal reasons (e.g. relocation, maternity) rather than because of changes at the ELCC Centre.

The ELCC educator survey found that 87% of respondents indicated that they planned to stay at their current ELCC Centre over the next 12 months. A lower proportion of ELCC educators who had worked in child care for less than one year (81%) said they planned to stay at their current ELCC Centre over the next 12 months compared to those who had been working in child care for one to three years (87%), four to six years (92%), seven to 10 years (93%) or more than 10 years (89%) (see Chart 4.42).

Chart 4.42: ELCC Educator Intention to Stay at Current ELCC Centre (ELCC Educator Survey, n=198)



The 10 ELCC educator survey respondents who said they did not plan to stay at their current ELCC Centre said it was because they were going on maternity leave, retiring, leaving the community, pursuing additional education or pursuing another career). Additionally, the 10 ELCC educators who were not sure if they would be staying at their current ELCC Centre over the next 12 months said it was because they were dissatisfied with their pay or dissatisfied with the work (percentages are not provided due to small sample sizes).

Some ELCC educator interviewees said staff turnover had decreased since the start of the ELCC Centre Initiative; perceived reasons for the decrease included (each reason was mentioned by a few interviewees):

- ELCC educators:
 - Found their jobs to be less stressful, and were therefore happy to come to work;
 - Loved what they are doing and want to help the children;
 - Had ‘amazing’ materials to work with at the ELCC Centres;
 - Said their co-workers were like a second family;
 - Were excited about the ELCC Curriculum Framework and were receiving support to implement it (e.g. online course, pedagogical partner);
 - Wanted to learn and develop;
 - Were increasingly confident about what was expected of them;
 - Were seeing the impact the ELCC Centre Initiative had on families; and
 - Were committed to achieving their next level of certification.
- The ELCC Centre Initiative had enabled ELCC Centres to:
 - Pay staff higher wages; and
 - Provide ELCC educators with more training and professional development.
- ELCC Centres:
 - Were able to do more because their budgets were not as tight; and
 - Could now afford to hire casual staff to cover shifts.

A few ELCC educator interviewees reported that staff turnover had increased following implementation of the ELCC Centre Initiative; perceived reasons for the increase included (each reason was mentioned by a few interviewees):

- ELCC educators had increased responsibility but had not received an increase in their wage;
- ELCC educators were ‘burning out’ and electing to change careers as a result of the stress and workload associated with providing child care;
- The ELCC Centre Initiative came with high expectations, yet at the same time there was a lack of clarity around how expectations could be met (e.g. confusion, no established routines);
- Change can be difficult for some people, especially for ELCC educators that had been in the field for a long time;
- Some ELCC educators found the ELCC Curriculum Framework intimidating, confusing or overwhelming; and
- Their rooms had become bigger with more children enrolled.

A few ELCC educators indicated that their perception was that it was challenging to find qualified and experienced educators, while a few others noted that turnover tended to be higher in brand new ELCC Centres that were not already operating prior to the introduction of the ELCC Centre Initiative.

Many of the ELCC Centre supervisors noted that, aside from ‘typical’ staff turnover (e.g. going on maternity leave, change in personal circumstances), retention has stayed the same or increased. As described by one ELCC Centre supervisor: *“We’ve always had good retention but we are able to offer better wages to our staff and feel like we are getting better quality staff that is applying and we are keeping the ones who may have considered leaving. It’s sad to see people leave a job because of money as they cannot afford to live off of it. In the last year before we got the grant, we had two really good staff quit and both have tried to come back since. It’s [nice] to be able to offer them a little bit more.”*

In addition, in line with the ELCC educator survey responses regarding ELCC educator intentions to stay at their ELCC Centre over the next 12 months (see paragraph above Chart 4.44), some ELCC Centre supervisors noted that there tended to be a higher rate of turnover among casual and newer educators (i.e. those employed at the Centre for under one year), but that rates of turnover among longer-standing educators was much lower.

Of the few supervisors who identified a negative impact of the ELCC Centre Initiative on retention, reasons for decreased retention included (each was mentioned by one or a few interviewees):

- Increasing ELCC educator responsibility with no increased wages, which resulted in staff not feeling supported;
- Having longstanding staff who were not happy with the operational and child care practice changes resulting from the ELCC Centre Initiative; and
- Working with a difficult target population.

Comparison Centres

Comparison Centre supervisors reported divergent experiences when it came to retaining Centre staff (educators). Some stated that they did experience challenges in retaining educators, identifying specific challenges such as finding and retaining qualified educators; location (rural); and wages and child care fees (e.g. fees are high so parents are not using Centre, which means enrollment is low which means they can’t pay staff well).

Some Comparison Centre supervisors reported having experienced no challenges in retaining educators. Similar to some ELCC Centres, reasons for this included that they provided good staff remuneration (including higher salaries, benefits, professional development); they had a ‘good team’ or it was a ‘good centre’; and they operated an enhanced child-to-staff ratio (each reason was mentioned by some or a few interviewees).

ELCC Educator Satisfaction

The ELCC educator survey included a range of ‘yes/no’ questions designed to provide markers regarding ELCC educators’ work environments, including support of co-workers, training and resources, professionalism, workload, qualifications as well as skills and knowledge. More than 8 in 10 ELCC educators who responded to the survey answered ‘yes’ to each factor tested (see Table 4.43).

**Table 4.43: ELCC Educators’ Perceptions About Their Work Environment
(ELCC Educator Survey, n=198)
Questions D3-D6C**

Question	Yes	No	Don't know	Prefer not to say
Have you had the necessary training and resources to complete your work effectively?	89%	6%	2%	3%
Do your co-workers support you when something unexpected comes up in your work?	94%	1%	1%	4%
Are you able to manage your workload effectively?	89%	4%	3%	4%
In general, do you feel that you are treated as a professional in this Centre?	88%	4%	2%	6%
Do you feel the staff you work with have the necessary qualifications to support the team in providing child care?	84%	8%	3%	5%
Do you feel that your direct supervisor has the necessary skills or knowledge to support the team in providing child care?	86%	7%	3%	4%

Additionally, the 113 ELCC educator survey respondents who stated that they had previously worked in at least one other child care centre prior to their current ELCC Centre were asked to reflect on four further elements related to their work environment. Compared to when they worked at other centres, ELCC educators said they have more confidence in the quality of care provided at their ELCC Centre (83%), more room for personal growth (81%), more opportunity for professional development (79%) and more input into the operation of the centre (64%) (see Table 4.44).

Table 4.44: ELCC Educators' Experience at an ELCC Centre Compared to at Other Centres (ELCC Educator Survey, n=113)

Compared to other child care centre you have worked at, do you feel that, at your current centre... (Q8a-d)	n=113			
	Yes	No	Don't know	Prefer not to answer
You have more confidence in the quality of child care provided at the Centre?	83%	4%	10%	3%
You have more room for personal growth?	81%	5%	12%	2%
You have more opportunity for professional development?	79%	7%	13%	1%
You have more input in the operation of the Centre?	64%	20%	15%	2%

Based on the demographic characteristics of ELCC educator survey respondents:

- A greater proportion of ELCC educators who were Child Development Assistants (88%) said they have more opportunities for professional development at their current ELCC Centre than at other centres they have worked at compared to those who were Child Development Workers (77%) or Child Care Supervisors (81%).
- A lower proportion of ELCC educators who were Child Care Supervisors (84%) said they have more opportunities for professional development at their current ELCC Centre than at other centres they have worked at compared to those who were Child Development Assistants (92%) or Child Development Workers (92%).

Overall, 91% of the ELCC educator survey respondents stated that they were very satisfied (49%) or satisfied (42%) working at their current ELCC Centre.

4.2.6.8 Improvements: Partnerships and Collaborations

Implementation of Improvements

While some of the ELCC Centre supervisors stated that all of the improvements were being, or had been, implemented as planned, a few others identified that improvements had been implemented differently than originally intended. In general, there were three key challenges to implementing the improvements:

1. Time

- Many of the ELCC Centre supervisors noted that because 'everything was happening all at once' (e.g. new educators were being hired, enrollment increased) and because there were so many demands on the ELCC Centres, it was difficult for everyone to cope with the changes; they therefore had to make some choices and prioritize accordingly.
- In particular, a few ELCC Centre supervisors noted that new ELCC Centres had so many demands placed upon them that it was difficult to focus on anything other than the 'normal' challenges that come with starting a new centre: ironing out kinks, figuring out the best way to do things, getting educators in place, and so forth. Even a few ELCC Centre supervisors at existing ELCC

Centres pointed out that there had been so many demands that it was hard to focus on anything other than ensuring the day-to-day operations of their ELCC Centre.

- A few ELCC Centre supervisors indicated that some ELCC educators did not have the time to find the people that they need to connect with (e.g. potential partners and resource-providers). ELCC Centres had until the end of March 2018 to make these connections.

2. Staffing

- Many of the ELCC Centre supervisors noted that issues of staff levels and staff retention impacted the implementation of the improvements. Some noted that significant staff turnover often meant they were ‘back to square one’ in terms of trying to move the ELCC Centre forward.
- A few mentioned that, for those that offered extended or weekend hours, finding regular ELCC educators willing to work later hours (evening shifts) could also be a challenge, insofar as ensuring reliability and quality of, as well as consistency in, the child care being provided.
- In one case, staff shortages meant that the ELCC educators were unable to access support provided by co-located partnerships because there was often not enough float/part-time/casual cover staff to allow full-time ELCC educators to attend training and other professional development opportunities.

3. Space

- A few of the ELCC Centre supervisors noted that they were unable to implement some of their proposed improvements due to issues of space. For example, one ELCC Centre had submitted their proposal based on the assumption that they would shortly be vacating their current location and moving into a new, purpose-built space. However, due to delays in the completion of the build, that had not yet occurred and they were unable to move forwards with the improvements in their current location.
- For another ELCC Centre, delays with the city in providing permission for renovations meant that they could not open the number of rooms/spaces proposed, which in turn impacted how they could foster and develop partnerships with organizations to which they wanted to offer dedicated spaces (e.g. having the space to increase the number of spaces for respite, vulnerable families).

There were also specific challenges identified with implementing specific improvements. For an overview of the proposed improvements by site, please see Appendix A.

1. Offering flexible child care

- A few of the ELCC Centre supervisors that had included this improvement in their ELCC Centre grant agreement noted that demand did not meet supply; as a result, the ELCC Centre hours were not as flexible as originally proposed, because there did not seem to be a need (e.g. if parents stated that they required child care at 6am they would offer it; however, that has not been the case so far). These few ELCC Centre supervisors stated that they were willing to have longer opening hours and maintained open lines of communication with families, to ensure that hours could be extended should the need arise.
- A few ELCC Centre supervisors reported that families with school-aged children did not utilize the day care’s extended hours for their preschool-aged children, because they still had to find and provide care for their school-aged children so ‘what was the point?’.
- Coordinating the rotating schedule for ‘rotating shift’ families has been very challenging and complicated, while staffing to accommodate these rotating shift families was also an issue.

2. Co-location partnerships

- Many ELCC Centre supervisors whose ELCC Centres had partnerships with organizations they were co-located said the partnerships were going as planned and were successful. In several cases, co-location meant that both co-located organizations had access to the same target population and were able to provide supports more comprehensively.
- For two of the ELCC Centres that had proposed implementing co-location, co-location did not occur, or has not yet occurred, due to new premises not being built or fully completed. In one case, the co-location partner no longer intends to build the proposed building, so the ELCC Centre must remain in its current spaces; in the other case, once the new premises is completed the ELCC Centre will be co-located with a school and will be able to move forward with aspects of that co-location partnership (e.g. use of the school's gym for cultural activities).
- One ELCC Centre had proposed to co-locate with a community partner, but were unable to operate child care rooms in the proposed location due to a misunderstanding in how the ELCC Centre grant funds could be used (could not be split across two different venues). This resulted in the ELCC Centre expanding its current space rather than opening in a new space, which further resulted in the number of opened spaces being fewer than proposed.

3. Other partnerships

- While many ELCC Centre supervisors reported that pre-existing or longer-standing partnerships were being successfully maintained, a few ELCC Centre supervisors identified some challenges regards to new partnerships. These challenges were predominantly related to the time it takes to develop relationships or location (i.e. partner organization moved and were therefore less easy to access/less relevant to partner with).
- A few ELCC Centre supervisors noted that staff turnover in the partner organizations could make it challenging to establish or continue partnerships.

4. Parenting supports, resources and engagement

- While some of the ELCC Centre supervisors said with the ELCC Centre Initiative they were now able to engage parents/caregivers in activities and supports, some ELCC Centre supervisors and ELCC educators noted a lack of willingness to engage from the parents/caregivers to participate in, or to access, resources and supports. For example, one ELCC Centre supervisor described how they have tried to implement some parenting courses (e.g. Circle of Security) but no parents/caregiver signed up was met with indifference.

5. Rural child care

- Two of the ELCC Centres that proposed providing child care to rural communities discovered that there was less interest/requirement than originally anticipated.
 - One ELCC Centre supervisor thought there would be more uptake from surrounding rural communities, but to date there had been none. This ELCC Centre supervisor noted that the lack of uptake might be due to a lack of awareness about the ELCC Centre, and that there might be a need to advertise the ELCC Centre better in those areas, to let families know that they can access it.
 - At another ELCC Centre, the proposal included offering access to day care services to two adjacent rural communities, but the ELCC Centre supervisor reported that, upon further investigation, it was discovered that both communities already offered licensed day care spaces.

Parenting Skills and Community Resources

**SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 9B:
WHAT LEVEL OF PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION OF IMPROVEMENTS? HOW HAVE ELCC CENTRE PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS IMPROVED PARENTING SKILLS AND UNDERSTANDING OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS?**

Interviews with ELCC Centre supervisors revealed the following information regarding ELCC Centre’s implementation progress:

- At the time of this report, ELCC Centres are at different stages of implementation.
- General challenges to implementation include time (e.g. too many elements of the ELCC Centre Initiative to implement all at once); staffing (e.g. shortages limit staff’s availability to action improvements); and physical space (e.g. insufficient space for improvements).
- Challenges specific to improvements included uptake of the improvement when offered (relating to flexible child care, rural child care); facilities not yet ready (relating to co-location); and time required to build relationship/staff turnover (relating to partnerships).

The survey of 198 ELCC educator respondents found that collaboration (partnerships) is supporting the provision of parenting resources (61% stated that the collaboration has helped a lot) and improved ELCC educator awareness of other community services (67% reported increased awareness).

Of the 188 ELCC educators who responded to the survey, 89% said that collaborating with other organizations that provide parenting resources had helped ELCC Centers, a lot or somewhat, to support parents in the development of their children (see Table 4.45).

Table 4.45: ELCC Educator Reported Extent that Collaborations Help ELCC Centres Meet the Needs of Families – Providing Parenting Resources (ELCC Educator Survey, n=188)

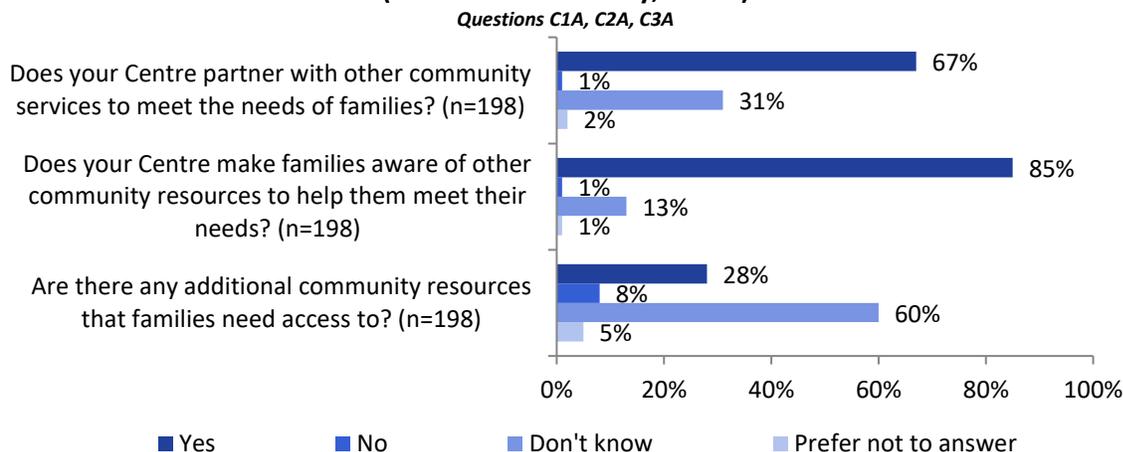
Question B7. To what extent do you think the improvement(s) that your Centre has implemented helped Centre educators meet the needs of children and families? Has the improvement collaborate with other organizations that provide parenting resources helped the Centre...

Collaborate with other organizations that provide parenting resources. (n=188)	Has helped a lot	Has helped somewhat	Has not helped at all	Don’t know	Prefer not to answer
Support parents/caregivers in the development of their child(ren).	61%	28%	1%	9%	2%

Note: Numbers do not add to 100% due to rounding

Based on the results of the ELCC educator survey, the majority of ELCC educator survey respondents (67%) were aware of other community services that their ELCC Centre partnered with (Chart 4.46). Additionally, ELCC educator interviewees identified a wide range of organizations that they were aware of and that their ELCC Centre collaborated with. Generally, these collaborations involved the ELCC Centre referring parents to other organizations (most), giving parents/caregivers materials produced by other organizations (some), hosting workshops provided by other organizations (some), educators from other organizations providing advice to ELCC educators (a few), educators from other organizations coming to work with the children in the ELCC Centre (a few) or using facilities at other organizations (a few).

Chart 4.46: ELCC Educator Reported ELCC Centre Partnerships and Community Resources (ELCC Educator Survey, n=198)



Not all of the ELCC educators interviewed had detailed information about the nature of their ELCC Centre’s collaboration with organizations. In some cases, responsibilities for collaborating with other organizations fell to the ELCC Centre supervisors rather than individual educators. According to the ELCC educator survey, a greater proportion of ELCC educators who were Child Development Supervisors (94%) said their ELCC Centre makes families aware of other community resources to help meet their needs than those who were Child Development Assistants (81%) or Child Development Workers (85%).

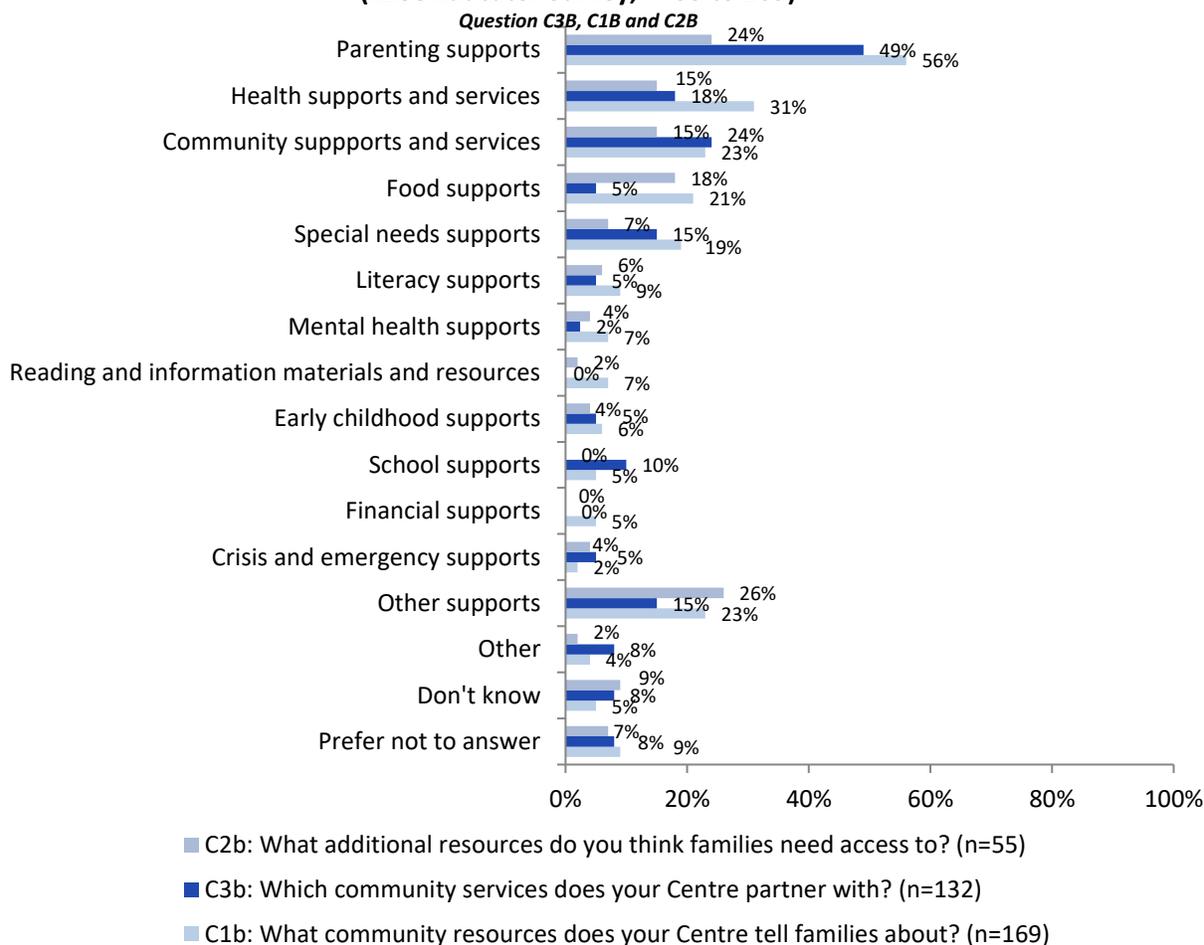
Some of the organizations that ELCC educators said their ELCC Centre collaborated with included:

- Family and Community Social Services (FCSS), which was sometimes co-located in the same building as the ELCC Centre (many);
- Parent Link, which provided parent workshops, Triple P programming for parents and advice to educators (some);
- Inclusive Child Care workers, who provided individual supports to children as needed (many);
- CS, which was working with some of the children attending the ELCC Centres (some);
- Schools (e.g. walking children to and from pre-school, visiting kindergarten classes to familiarize the children, participating with the school in the Terry Fox walk) (some);
- Health-related service providers (e.g. getting eyes and ears checked, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, mental health, visits from health unit representatives) (most);
- Providing child care spaces for respite (a few);
- Community-based facilities (e.g. swimming pool, arena, library), which provided the children with the opportunity to participate in different activities (a few);
- Service providers and businesses in the community (e.g. bakery, RCMP, fire station, dentist), which provided children the opportunity to learn about the work they do (a few);
- Women’s shelters and organizations that help people flee domestic violence (a few);
- Community teams or coalitions, providing the ELCC Centres with the opportunity to share information about the services they offer and to form relationships with other organizations (a few);

- Elders and Indigenous organizations (e.g. Friendship Centres), to teach the children about Indigenous cultures and traditions (a few);
- Cultural-based groups (e.g. Aboriginal dancers, Ukrainian dancers, Celtic singers), providing children with different cultural experiences (a few); and
- Other (e.g. churches, immigrant women’s associations, family connections, Families First, family support workers, boys and girls clubs, seniors centres, food banks) (some).

ELCC Centre partner organizations identified by the ELCC educator interviewees aligned closely with those identified in the ELCC educator survey. As described in Chart 4.47, the ELCC educator survey (n=55 to 169) found that ELCC Centres mainly told families about parenting supports, health supports and community supports.

Chart 4.47: ELCC Educator Identified Community Supports that ELCC Centres Partner with and Refer Families to (ELCC Educator Survey, n=55 to 169)



Note: Numbers add to more than 100% due to responses being coded to multiple themes.

The majority of the ELCC Centre partners that provided parenting skills identified the supports they provided as being ‘holistic’ or ‘360’, with a goal of ensuring that the services provided assist the parents/caregivers, so that the children and the family as a whole, benefit. As one ELCC Centre partner

explained: “The key piece for us is clearly adult capacity building: so, supporting the caretakers of children to do a good job in providing a rich, nurturing, safe, warm environment for children.” These partners provided parenting skills supports through parenting education workshops (e.g. Circle of Security) and resources, as well as through more specialized supports such as language or mental health therapy.

Cultural Diversity

SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 9C:

What level of progress has been made towards implementation of improvements? How have ELCC Centre partnerships and collaborations with other service-providing organizations improved the Centre’s cultural diversity (in particular: Indigenous, immigrant and refugee)?

The survey of, and interviews with, ELCC educators revealed the following findings regarding cultural diversity at the ELCC Centres:

- There are varying degrees of diversity among families at ELCC Centres.
- To support cultural diversity, ELCC Centres have implemented, or are implementing, the following: displaying visuals that depict cultural diversity; inviting families into the ELCC Centre, to teach the children about the family’s culture; encouraging linguistic diversity; and providing food and music from other cultures.
- In terms of promoting cultural diversity, according to 184 ELCC educator survey respondents, partnering with other organizations has helped to support parents/caregivers in the development of their child(ren) (59%); to create a learning environment that recognizes different family types (52%); and to create a more culturally-inclusive learning environment (48%).

Of the 184 ELCC educators who responded to the survey, 89% said that collaborating with other organizations that support cultural diversity had helped ELCC Centers, a lot or somewhat, to support parents/caregivers in the development of their children. Such collaborations had also helped the ELCC Centre, a lot or somewhat, to create a learning environment that recognizes different family types (87%) and to create a more culturally-inclusive environment (87%) (see Table 4.48).

Table 4.48: ELCC Educator Reported Extent that Collaborations Help ELCC Centres Meet the Needs of Families– Supporting Cultural Diversity (ELCC Educator Survey, n=184)

Question B7. To what extent do you think the improvement(s) that your Centre has implemented helped Centre educators meet the needs of children and families? Has the improvement collaborate with other organizations that support cultural diversity, particularly as it relates to Indigenous, immigrant and refugee children, helped the Centre...

Collaborate with other organizations that support cultural diversity, particularly as it relates to Indigenous, immigrant and refugee children; (n=184)	Has helped a lot	Has helped somewhat	Has not helped at all	Don't know	Prefer not to answer
Support parents/caregivers in the development of their child(ren).	59%	30%	0%	9%	2%
Create a learning environment that recognizes different family types.	52%	35%	1%	10%	2%
Create a more culturally-inclusive learning environment.	48%	39%	0%	10%	2%

Note: Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

In general, the amount of diversity within the ELCC Centres varies across Centres. Some ELCC educators indicated that only one or two children from different backgrounds attended the ELCC Centre, while a few other ELCC educators stated that the diversity among their child and family populations was broad. A few ELCC educators noticed that families from certain cultural backgrounds were starting to use day care, whereas previously they would have relied on other family members to care for their children.

Most ELCC educators described some of the things they do to incorporate cultural diversity into the ELCC Centre, including (each example was mentioned by one or a few interviewees):

- Displaying posters or maps on the wall showing where people come from;
- Displaying visuals on the wall showing elements of other cultures (e.g. Pow Wows);
- Creating posters with the words “hello” and “good-bye” written in different languages;
- Asking families to teach them words from the family’s native languages, so that these words could be used when communicating with the children;
- Encouraging children and educators to speak in their native languages;
- Eating food, listening to music and reading books from different cultures;
- Asking families to tell them about how their cultural holidays are celebrated, so that the Centre could incorporate them;
- Asking families to bring in different items from their cultures (although parent uptake on this offer has been low);
- Having Elders come in to tell the children cultural stories/legends and engage the children in cultural activities (e.g. smudging, moose-calling, making moccasins); and
- Inviting one family per week to come and have lunch with the child.

The parent/caregiver survey found that over 8 in 10 (86% for ELCC Centres and 83% for Comparison Centres) responding parents/caregivers said their Centre provides their child with food/snacks that accommodates their family’s dietary preferences or restrictions (16 ELCC Centre parents and 19 Comparison Centre parents responded no).

The parent/caregiver survey also found that over 7 in 10 (75% for ELCC Centres and 72% for Comparison

Centres) responding parents/caregivers said their Centre provides learning activities that celebrate different cultures (only 15 parents responded no).

In terms of organizations that the ELCC Centres partnered with, most ELCC educators did not indicate how their ELCC Centre's collaborations with organizations that promoted cultural diversity improved their own knowledge of cultural diversity. However, some ELCC educators said that they were now more aware of different cultures and backgrounds and a few ELCC educators also mentioned that they now had more confidence when working with children from diverse backgrounds.

Many of the ELCC Centre partners stated that there is already a great deal of cultural diversity within the ELCC Centres, both within the staff and within the children and families. A few ELCC Centre partners identified the following ways that their collaboration with the ELCC Centres is promoting cultural diversity:

- It is teaching caregivers strategies to improve their language, which in turn directly impacts families and interactions with children.
- As the ELCC Centres are just 'getting off the ground', they are investigating ways that the cultural diversity of the program can be leveraged to help ELCC educators and families, with the aim of making cultural inclusivity meaningful, rather than just being 'a gesture'.

According to the parent/caregiver survey, the majority of responding parents/caregivers were satisfied that their Centre reflects the diversity of the community in which it is located:

- 92% of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers were satisfied, including 58% who were very satisfied;
- 85% of Comparison Centre parents/caregivers were satisfied, including 43% who were very satisfied;
- Across all ELCC Centres and Comparison Centres, only five parents/caregivers said they were not satisfied.

The parent/caregiver survey also found that almost all responding parents/caregivers agreed that the staff at their Centre made them, as a parent/caregiver, feel welcome and accepted:

- 98% of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers agreed, including 74% who strongly agreed;
- 92% of Comparison Centre parents/caregivers agreed, including 69% who strongly agreed;
- Across all ELCC Centres and Comparison Centres, only four parents/caregivers disagreed.

SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 9D:

What level of progress has been made towards implementation of improvements? How have ELCC Centre partnerships and collaborations increased support to vulnerable families?

Interviews with ELCC educators, ELCC Centre partners, pedagogical partners, and GRIT coaches as well as the ELCC educator survey, parent/caregiver survey and parent/caregiver focus groups revealed the following findings related to support for vulnerable families:

- Support for vulnerable families has increased: ELCC Centres reported supporting vulnerable families by providing drop-in care for foster families; offering parent programming; making families aware of community supports and other learning opportunities; providing referrals for families; providing information about parenting and by building trust with families to ensure consistency between home and centre practices.
- Partnering with other organizations has helped to support parents/caregivers in the development of their child(ren) and to create a learning environment that recognizes different family types .
- 59% of 294 surveyed parents/caregivers were aware of family supports; of the 82 surveyed parents/caregivers that had accessed supports, 83% said that the supports had improved their parenting skills by increasing their understanding of child development (24%), improving their communication techniques (18%) or providing them with new or different parenting techniques (18%).
- Parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups identified that they had learned increased patience; tips for teething, potty training, napping, biting, behavioural issues; different methods of communication; how to help children during transitions; how to deal with upset; meal planning, children's self-help skills, and increased understanding of child development.

Of the 192 ELCC educators responding to the survey, about 9 in 10 said that collaborating with other organizations that provide supports to vulnerable families had helped ELCC Centers, a lot or somewhat, to support parents in the development of their children (90%) and to create a learning environment that recognizes different family types (89%) (see Table 4.49).

Table 4.49: ELCC Educator Reported Extent that Collaborations Help ELCC Centres Meet the Needs of Families – Supporting Vulnerable Families (ELCC Educator Survey, n=192)

Question B7. To what extent do you think the improvement(s) that your Centre has implemented helped Centre educators meet the needs of children and families? Has the improvement collaborate with other organizations that support vulnerable families helped the Centre...

Collaborate with other organizations that support vulnerable families (i.e. low socio-economic status, lone parent families, parenting teens, and women facing additional barriers); (n=192)	Has helped a lot	Has helped somewhat	Has not helped at all	Don't know	Prefer not to answer
Support parents/caregivers in the development of their child(ren).	66%	24%	1%	8%	1%
Create a learning environment that recognizes different family types.	60%	29%	1%	10%	1%

Note: Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

ELCC educator interviewees were able to provide many examples of how support for vulnerable families has increased in their ELCC Centre. Many interviewees mentioned that child care spaces were now more affordable which meant that parents/caregivers could go back to school or work, were able to improve their family situations and had increased opportunities to spend quality time together as a family. Some ELCC educators also noted that ELCC Centres now had more child care spaces, so they can work with a greater number of families. Other ways in which support to vulnerable families had improved or increased included (each response was mentioned by a few ELCC educators):

- ELCC Centres could now provide drop-in care for foster families, as required;
- ELCC Centres could now offer parent/caregivers events (e.g. inviting parents/caregivers into the classrooms, book reading days, Christmas party), which contributed to relationship-building;
- Family support workers were available (in some ELCC Centres) to assist parents/caregivers;
- Parents/caregivers could attend parent/caregiver meetings at which they could voice concerns;
- Some ELCC Centres provided target groups priority enrollments;
- ELCC Centres advertised community events that parents/caregivers and families can participate in;
- ELCC Centres had information (e.g. pamphlets) that they could provide to families requiring support;
- ELCC educators were able to advise families about what supports could be made available to them;
- ELCC Centres were able to provide referrals to, and received referrals from, partner organizations (e.g. Parent Link, FCSS, Inclusive Child Care);
- ELCC Centres could help families access food, a safe place to leave their children (e.g. for parents who are separating) or employment resources.

A few ELCC educators said that support for vulnerable families has not increased because their ELCC Centre had already been offering such supports to vulnerable families prior to the introduction of the ELCC Centre Initiative. A few others stated that their ELCC Centre did not have enough room for families and that there are long waiting lists. A few ELCC Centre supervisors indicated that, even with the ELCC Centre Initiative, at times, ELCC Centres may not always be able to obtain the supports some children may need because there are not enough resources available in the organizations that provide the required supports.

Some ELCC educators were not able to comment on whether support for vulnerable families has increased because they hadn't yet worked with any vulnerable families or because they believed it was ELCC Centre management's responsibility to discuss available supports with families. However, a few ELCC educators explained that if they noticed a concern with a family, they would let their supervisor know about it so that the supervisor could then connect the family with the appropriate resources.

For the most part, ELCC educators could not describe how their ELCC Centre's collaborations with other organizations that served vulnerable families improved their own interactions with the children enrolled in their ELCC Centre. However, a few educators noted that Parent Link Centres provided educators with information and/or materials they could pass on to parents (e.g. information/materials related to sleep or regulating feelings) while other organizations provided educators with information or strategies they could use to address challenging behaviours (e.g. Tucker Turtle, helping hands, listening ears, gentle touches, pod pictures for communication) and specialists provided educators with information to help children with their physical development (e.g. ideas from occupational therapists about how to strengthen arms and legs).

When considering how the ELCC Centre's collaborations with organizations that served vulnerable families improved their own interactions with the children enrolled at their ELCC Centre, ELCC educators tended to describe how these collaborations were helping them to build relationships with, and support, parents. This relationship-building included (each response was provided by a few interviewees):

- Providing parents/caregivers with information about parenting skills or how to address challenges they may be experiencing with their child;
- Telling parents/caregivers about the importance of talking to and spending time with their child;
- Working with parents/caregivers to try to ensure consistency between the child care practices used in the ELCC Centre and at home;
- Working to build trust with parents/caregivers so they will tell educators about any concerns they are having and that they will be receptive to any suggestions that educators may have;
- Providing respite for parents/caregivers;
- Developing skills to improve communication with parents/caregivers about how their child's day went;
- Helping parents/caregivers to understand challenging behaviours and developmental delays;
- Connecting parents/caregivers with various supports (e.g. speech pathologists, occupational therapists, mental health, pediatricians);
- Encouraging parents/caregivers to seek Inclusive Child Care supports or complete Ages and Stages Questionnaires when needed (a few educators mentioned that parents seemed more willing to seek these supports after they have seen how it can improve the rooms);
- Collecting items for vulnerable families (e.g. food, baby supplies); and
- Referring parents/caregivers to workshops and parenting classes offered by other organizations.

Some ELCC Centre partners that self-identified as providing supports to vulnerable families stated that they provided these supports by helping to ensure that families have access to the services they require. For example, a few ELCC Centre partners emphasized the importance of supporting vulnerable families by ensuring that their children receive comprehensive attention, that they may not otherwise have access to, in a timely fashion:

- *“The whole initiative for [our program] is that we catch children who may fall under the radar and get them to their referrals and things while they are in their pre-school years, which ultimately is going to help families feel less vulnerable. Because as a parent goes forward to kindergarten and grade 1 and they have to deal with the difficult behaviour, they become very vulnerable.”*
- *“My collaboration with supporting vulnerable families is the one I keep going back to. Those families need help to access some of the programs that are available. Music programs are great for fine motor skills, gross motor skills, [and] impulse control. We have really worked on impulse control and it’s starting to work for some of those kids.”*

In addition, some ELCC Centre partners provided training and education to ELCC educators. As described by one ELCC Centre partner: *“[The director] asked us and people from our organization to present about twice a year. We had our psychologist last month and he talked about trauma and family and what that looks like when we are opening the doors to [a vulnerable] population. I’ve presented early language learning and the curriculum framework. Even just meeting [the educators] to help them understand where the kids are at.”*

The parent/caregiver survey found that the majority of responding parents/caregivers (85% for ELCC Centres and 71% for Comparison Centres) said that as a result of their child attending this Centre, they felt like part of a community (26 ELCC Centre and 43 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers responded no).

The parent/caregiver survey also found that the majority of responding parents/caregivers (74% for ELCC Centres and 63% for Comparison Centres) said that as a result of their child attending this Centre, they felt more comfortable accessing community supports for their children (29 ELCC Centre and 44 Comparison Centre parents responded no).

- A slightly greater proportion of parents/caregivers whose children attended an urban ELCC Centre (74%) reported that as a result of their child attending this Centre, they felt more comfortable accessing community supports for their children than those whose children attended a rural ELCC Centre (70%).
- A greater proportion of female respondents (75%) reported that as a result of their child attending this Centre, they felt more comfortable accessing community supports for their children than male respondents (68%).

Parent/Caregiver Awareness of Supports and Resources/Impact on Parents/Caregivers: Confidence, Skills and Autonomy

About 6 in 10 (59%) ELCC Centre parents/caregivers who responded to the survey stated that they were aware of parenting supports available through their ELCC Centre, although only 42% of those parents/caregivers had accessed them. This compares to 54% of Comparison Centre parents/caregivers who were aware of parenting supports and 38% who had used them.

- An equal proportion of parents/caregivers whose child attended an urban (64%) or a rural (63%) ELCC Centre said that they were aware of parenting supports available through their ELCC Centre.
- A greater proportion of female respondents (67%) reported that they were aware of parenting supports available through their ELCC Centre than male respondents (44%). Of the 164 female respondents who were aware of the supports, 46% had used them. This compares to 27% of the 22 male respondents.

- A greater proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers who were born in Canada (65%) reported that they were aware of parenting supports available through their ELCC Centre than those who were born outside of Canada (58%).
- A greater proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers whose highest level of education was graduated high school/less than high school (52%) reported that they had used parenting supports compared to those whose highest level of education was some/completed college (40%) or some/completed university (44%).

The majority of the 46 to 294 parent/caregiver survey respondents (83% at ELCC Centres and 74% at Comparison Centres) who had accessed the supports stated that the supports had increased their parenting skills (see Table 4.50). Chart 4.51 lists, as identified by the 82 ELCC Centre parent/caregiver and 46 Comparison Centre parent/caregiver survey respondents, the types of supports that were accessed; results were similar for ELCC Centre and Comparison Centre parents/caregivers.

**Table 4.50: Parent/Caregiver Perspectives on Parenting Supports
(Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=46 to 294)**

Questions D9A, D10A, D11

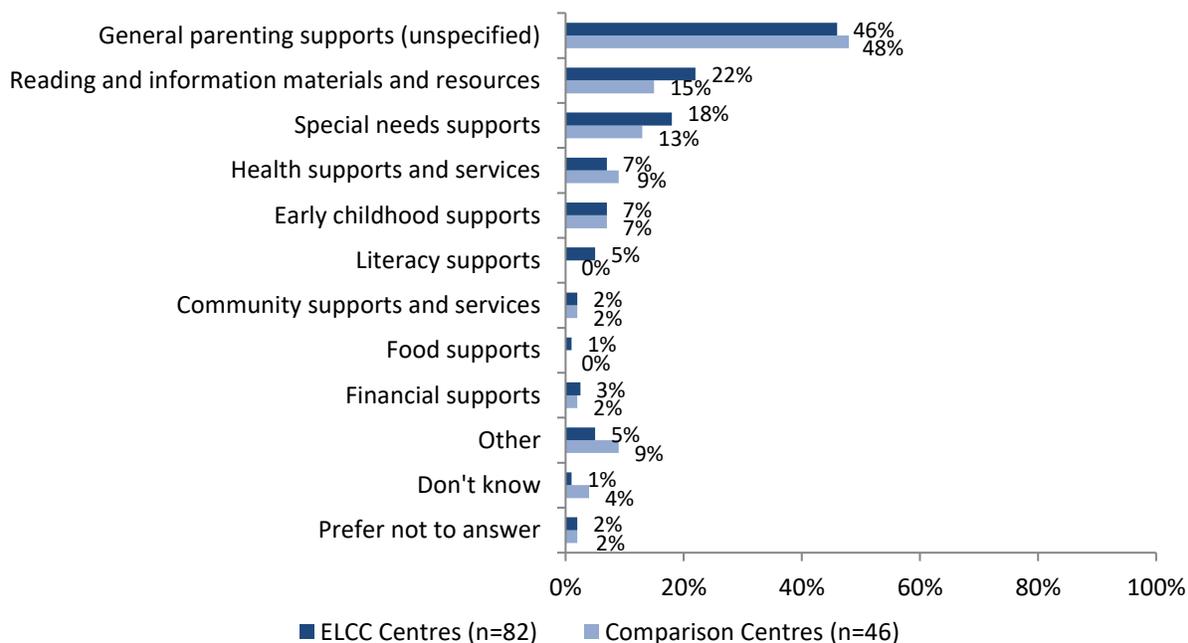
(Results of testing for statistical significance are not reported due to the small number of responses in some categories)

Question	ELCC Centres				Comparison Centres			
	Yes	No	Don't know	Prefer not to answer	Yes	No	Don't know	Prefer not to answer
Are you aware of any parenting supporting available through this Centre? (n=294 and n=227)	63%	19%	22%	1%	54%	23%	23%	-
Have you ever accessed any of the parenting supports available through the Centre? (n=186 and n=122)	42%	56%	3%	-	38%	59%	3%	-
Have any of the supports provided to you by the Centre increased your parenting skills? (n=82 and n=46)	83%	7%	10%	-	74%	17%	9%	-

Note: Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

**Chart 4.51: Parent/Caregiver Identified Types of Parenting Supports Accessed
(Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=82 and n=46)**

Question D10B. What parenting supports have you accessed through the Centre? (open-ended question)

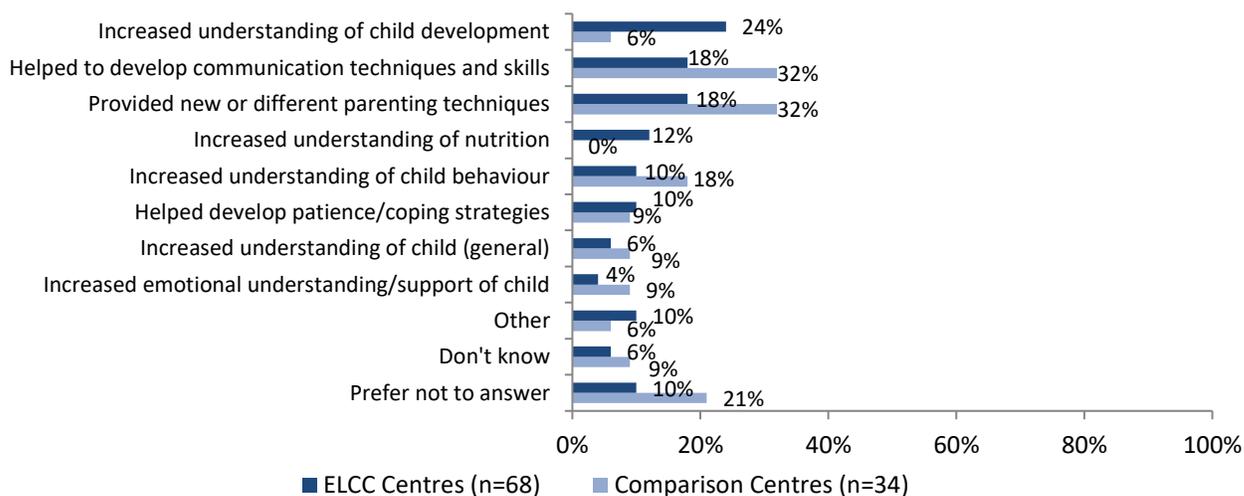


Note: Numbers add to more than 100% due to responses being coded to multiple themes.

Through the parent/caregiver survey, the 68 ELCC Centre and 34 Comparison Centre parent/caregiver respondents who reported that the parenting skills provided to them through the Centre had increased their parenting skills, provided the following examples of how the supports increased their parenting skills: increased their understanding of child development (24% for ELCC Centres and 6% for Comparison Centres), helped them to develop communication techniques (18% for ELCC Centres and 32% for Comparison Centres), and provided them with new or different parenting techniques (18% for ELCC Centres and 32% for Comparison Centres) (see Chart 4.52).

Chart 4.52: Parent/Caregiver Identified Impact of Parenting Supports on Parenting Skills (Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=68 and n=34)

Question D11B. How have these parenting supports increased your skills? (open-ended question)



Note: Numbers add to more than 100% due to responses being coded to multiple themes.

Many parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups stated that ELCC Centres provided them with information about their children or parenting tips through informal conversations at pick-up/drop-off, parent meetings/parent nights, workshops and newsletters. They believed that ELCC Centres were well-equipped to provide parents/caregivers with extra resources as required. Many parents/caregivers indicated that they were being included in their child’s education and appreciated that the ELCC Centres were not forgetting about dads.

Parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups identified that they had learned the following (each response was mentioned by a few or some focus group participants):

- The different dynamics that children could have (e.g. how they interact with educators, how they develop socially) (some);
- How to have more patience with their children (some);
- How to communicate with their children (e.g. talking without yelling, using the word ‘no’ less frequently, asking their children to ‘use their words,’ using sign language, helping with pronunciation) (some);
- Tips to help them deal with teething, potty training, napping, biting, running and behavioural issues (some);
- Tips on how to help their child develop (e.g. tummy time) (a few);
- Tips on how to help their children with transitions (e.g. repeat what is about to happen multiple times) (some);
- How to respond to their children when they are upset (e.g. due to a disruption in their routine) (some);
- How to have structured quiet time (e.g. using books and music) (a few);
- How to follow their children’s lead and to give their children more credit (e.g. recognize that they are competent and capable) (a few);

- How to engage their children in meal planning and nutrition (a few);
- Children’s self-help skills (e.g. putting on their own jacket, putting away their toys) (a few); and
- How to play with and read to their children (a few).

Most ELCC Centre partners were in general agreement that their collaboration with the ELCC Centre had increased awareness among parents/caregivers and families about the resources and support they offered. This was primarily due to promotion of the services offered via word-of-mouth (between educators and parents/caregivers, between parents/caregivers) and via monthly newsletters. Some ELCC Centre partners described this as beneficial for all: they promoted the ELCC Centre, the ELCC Centre promoted them, and parents/caregivers were made aware of the supports available to them. As described by one ELCC Centre partner: *“Whenever I put on an event [at my organization] or a free concert for the kids, the daycare will put that information up for me. Generally most of the daycare families will attend most of the events we host. There is a lot of back and forth.”*

Some ELCC Centre partners were less sure about whether the increased awareness was translating into increased access of the ELCC Centre partners’ resources by parents/caregivers, although there was a general sense that the amount of access was ‘growing’. As one of the ELCC Centre partners explained: *“One of our issues is that they do not always know by whom a family has been referred, unless the family is forthcoming with that information. So we might be serving the families that have been directed by the centre, but we are unaware because we don’t always ask.”*

ELCC Centre partners identified some challenges in ensuring that families are aware of, and can access, supports. These included:

- Awareness: In a few cases, the ELCC Centre and its partnership with community resources were new, so it was simply a matter of increasing promotion of the services and supports available, which would occur in due course: *“Once the promotion gets stronger and parents become more aware of the resources, that’s when things will pick up.”* However, some of the ELCC Centre partners stated that they were still learning how to engage, support and best-serve families. For example, one ELCC Centre partner described how difficult it was to identify and locate families with children who might benefit from the supports offered. One ELCC Centre partner described the help that she had received from the ELCC Centre in developing culturally-appropriate resources for families: *“At one point [the Centre] assembled a list of resources, particularly books, that would help highlight [their] culture to families with young children. [The ELCC Centre] really helped us to enlarge the list of resources that we then could purchase ourselves and share with other partners in Alberta.”*
- Access: A few ELCC Centre partners said challenges of transportation (*“We can provide great programming, but if the people they are targeting can’t get there, that is an issue.”*) and funding (*“We do the best we can with the resources we have!”*) were factors hindering families’ access to supports. A further challenge mentioned by a few ELCC Centre partners was parents/caregivers’ limited time. For example, an ELCC Centre partner working with an ELCC Centre that targets parents/caregivers in education noted that parents/caregivers who are also students have limited time to attend parenting classes on top of their regular classes and their schoolwork. For this interviewee, it was a matter of figuring out alternative ways to provide access to parenting resources. Limited spaces within programs was also noted by one ELCC Centre partner as limiting access – *“Parenting programs fill up with keen parents rather than vulnerable families”* – as it meant that not all families in need could access the program. However, this ELCC Centre

partner was attempting to mitigate this challenge by partnering with organizations that specifically target vulnerable families so that they might gain access to programming.

Many ELCC educators believed that families were aware of the resources and supports that could be made available to them through community organizations because the ELCC Centres promoted the resources in many different ways. For example, information, including community events and workshops, was displayed on bulletin boards, in pamphlets, on the Centre's Facebook page and through the ELCC Centre's newsletters. Some ELCC educators mentioned talking with parents about their child and their child's behaviour, and stated that, in such conversations (and as appropriate), ELCC educators shared information with parents/caregivers about organizations such as Parent Link or other relevant organizations. A few ELCC educators also said they were aware that parents/caregivers shared information about community resources amongst themselves. A few ELCC educators noted that the more ELCC educators discussed the available supports, the more parents/caregivers were aware of the supports.

Some ELCC educators stated that they could not comment on whether families have accessed supports, particularly as they did not always hear back from families about whether or not resources had been accessed. However, a few ELCC educators believed that families were aware of the resources and supports that could be made available to them through community organizations because they knew of some families that had used them. Further indications that families were aware of the resources and supports that could be made available to them included (each response was mentioned by a few or some interviewees):

- Parent Link had helped families expand their social circle (e.g. families new to the community) (a few);
- Centres supported parents to access speech therapy (some);
- Parents had networks of supports to help them with their child (e.g. behavioural supports, nutritionists) (some);
- Parents/caregivers were accessing respite care through Children's Services (a few);
- Parents/caregivers were accessing FCSS and Inclusive Child Care (some);
- Parents/caregivers were using food banks and receiving diapers from other organizations (e.g. church) (A few); and
- Centres provided parents/caregivers with taxi tokens and emergency clothing (a few).

Finally, a few ELCC educators stated that parents/caregivers seemed more willing to reach out and access the resources recommended to them if they had a good and trusting relationship with ELCC educators, and if they had seen other families accessing the supports.

Some ELCC Centre partners were not able to comment on the impact that their collaboration with the ELCC Centres was having on parents/caregivers, as they were not privy to all families and they did not 'see' the parenting. A few others mentioned that it was too early to say given that, in some cases, the partnerships were new and just forming. The few who could comment indicated that the collaboration impacted parents/caregivers' confidence in the following ways (each response was mentioned by one or a few interviewees):

- Parents/caregivers are making positive comments about how their children are being treated at the ELCC Centres;
- Parents/caregivers feel relieved and heard;
- Parents/caregivers have the confidence to ask for support and access services;

- Parents/caregivers trust in service providers and educators increases when they see different agencies and organizations working together; and
- The collaboration has increased children's confidence.

While many ELCC Centre partners did not have any comments on the impact the collaboration has had on parents/caregivers' autonomy they were able to describe how their collaboration with the ELCC Centres had impacted parenting skills through parents feeling supported, having the tools they needed to interact with their children (e.g. speech therapy helped them understand how to talk to their children) and receiving child care tips from educators at pick up and drop off times. A few ELCC Centre partners also noted that parents/caregivers were developing the communication skills they needed to raise and discuss concerns with ELCC educators (especially parenting teens), and that this was important because ELCC educators were often parents/caregivers' first point of contact when they had concerns about their child's development.

Many pedagogical partners and GRIT coaches could not provide a response to this question because it was too early for them to say or because they had not had any direct involvement with the parents/caregivers. Of those that provided a response, comments from the pedagogical partners were that parents/caregivers (each response was mentioned by a few interviewees):

- Were trying to model ELCC educators' behaviours at home;
- Were being more intentional in themselves and in watching their children's play and interactions; and
- Had increased confidence in the quality of care their children were receiving (e.g. through seeing play take place, understanding the quality of the programming, receiving more learning stories, being more engaged with educators).

Comments from a few GRIT coaches included that parents/caregivers:

- Could see more intentional strategies in the rooms;
- Were seeing ELCC educators as competent, rather than just as 'baby sitters';
- Were thanking ELCC educators for helping them after conversations they had; and
- Were taking the time to assess quality at ELCC Centres.

4.2.6.9 Quality Assurance Processes

**SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 8A:
HOW HAS THE QUALITY OF CHILD CARE IN ALBERTA IMPROVED? HOW ARE PARENTS/CAREGIVERS MEANINGFULLY ENGAGED IN QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES AT ELCC CENTRES?**

The survey of parents/caregivers and focus groups with parents/caregivers found that:

- ELCC Centres most commonly invite parent/caregiver input through surveys, one-on-one feedback and parent/caregiver meetings.
- 71% of 294 parent/caregiver survey respondents reported opportunities to engage in quality improvement processes.
- 55% of 208 parent/caregiver survey respondents had participated in quality assurance opportunities.
- Parent/caregiver focus group participants appreciated opportunities to engage in quality improvement processes and said their involvement with the ELCC Centre was meaningful.

Table 4.53 presents the opportunities available to parents/caregivers at ELCC Centres for providing feedback and/or quality assurance, as identified by ELCC Centre supervisors. The most common roles included surveys, written communication, verbal communication, and Board membership.

Table 4.53: ELCC Centre Supervisor Identified Roles Available for Parents/Caregivers to Provide Feedback to ELCC Centres (ELCC Centre Supervisor Interviews, n=18)

Roles Available	Number of ELCC Centre Supervisors Identifying the Role
Completing surveys (general, for accreditation, ASQ)	10
Providing written communication (emails, communication board, texts, Hi Momma)	10
Providing verbal communications (informal conversations with staff)	9
Being a board member	8
Attending meetings at the Centre (private (one-on-one), monthly, AGM)	7
Being a committee/ council member	4
Participating in fundraising/volunteering/making donations	4
Providing written feedback through suggestion box	4
Completing a yearly evaluation	2
Attending or participating in family events	2
Participating in parent programming	2
Open door policy	2
Newsletters	2
Parent/caregiver representative	2
Participation in Facebook group	1

Table 4.54 presents the opportunities available to parents/caregivers at Comparison Centres for providing feedback and/or quality assurance, as identified by Comparison Centre supervisors. Similar to the opportunities identified by ELCC Centre supervisors, the most common roles for parents/caregivers at Comparison Centres include surveys, written communication, verbal communication, and Board membership.

Table 4.54. Comparison Centre Supervisor Identified Roles Available for Parents/Caregivers to Provide Feedback to ELCC Centres (Comparison Centre Supervisor Interviews, n=20)

Roles Available	Number of Comparison Centre Supervisors Identifying the Role
Completing surveys (general, for accreditation, ASQ)	18
Providing verbal communications (informal conversations with staff)	17
Providing written communication (emails, communication board, texts, Hi Momma)	16
Being a board member	9
Open door policy	7
Providing written feedback through suggestion box	7
Attending meetings at the Centre (private (one-on-one), monthly, AGM)	6
Participating in fundraising/volunteering/making donations	6
Being a committee/council member	3
Attending or participating in family events	2
Participating in parent/caregiver programming	2
Newsletters	1
In-home visits	1

Some ELCC Centre supervisors noted that they would like to continue to improve and increase parent/caregiver and family engagement by (each response was provided by a few or some interviewees):

- Providing ongoing support to families;
- Increasing communication with parents/caregivers;
- Creating a Facebook page for parents/caregivers;
- Holding more family functions;
- Raising parents/caregivers' awareness of the ELCC Curriculum Framework and the ASaP Continuum Project;
- Educating parents/caregivers about the purpose/value of their involvement in the ELCC Centre and with their children; and
- Involving parents/caregivers in what is happening in the classrooms rather than just reporting back to them.

Many parents/caregivers who responded to the survey stated that their Centre offered opportunities for parents/caregivers to be involved in processes to improve the quality of child care (71% of ELCC Centre parents and 59% of Comparison Centre parents), although only about half of the respondents (55% of

209 ELCC Centre parents and 53% of 134 Comparison Centre parents) had participated in the opportunities presented to them. Activities in which the parents/caregivers had most commonly participated included surveys (34% of 114 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 32% of 71 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers), family events (11% for each of ELCC Centre and Comparison Centre parents/caregivers), meetings at the Centre (16% of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 11% of Comparison Centre parents/caregivers) and verbal communication with ELCC educators (11% for each of ELCC Centre and Comparison Centre parents/caregivers) (see Chart 4.55 for these and other responses).

Chart 4.55: Parent/Caregiver Identified Participation in Quality Assurance Processes *
(Parent/Cargiver Survey, n=114 and n=71)

Question D4C. Please identify the process(es) that you have participated in. (open-ended question)



* Individuals who participated in quality assurance processes

Note: Numbers do not add to 100% due to individuals providing more than one answer

About half (49% for ELCC Centres and 55% for Comparison Centres) of the parents/caregivers who responded to the survey stated that their Centre had a Parent Advisory Board; however, more than one-third of respondents (38% for ELCC Centres and 35% for Comparison Centres) stated that they did not know if their Centre had a Parent Advisory Board (there are no statistically significant differences between ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and Comparison Centre parents/caregivers). Of the 143 ELCC Centre and 125 Comparison Centre parent/caregiver survey respondents who were aware of, or had access to, the Centre’s Parent Advisory Board, between one-quarter (27%) of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and one-third (33%) of Comparison Centre parents/caregivers had participated in it.

- A greater proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers whose child was enrolled in an ELCC Centre located in a rural area (92%) reported that their ELCC Centre had a Parent Advisory Board compared to ELCC Centre parents/caregivers whose child was enrolled in an ELCC Centre located in an urban area (73%) (no statistically significant differences). Of the 89 urban respondents whose ELCC Centre had a Parent Advisory Board, 29% said they had participated in the Parent Advisory Board. This compares to 24% of the 54 rural respondents whose ELCC Centre had a Parent Advisory Board.

- A similar proportion of female (79%) and male (80%) respondents indicated that the ELCC Centre in which their child was enrolled had a Parent Advisory Board. Of the 119 female respondents whose ELCC Centre had a Parent Advisory Board, 26% said they had participated in it. This compares to 33% of the 24 male respondents whose ELCC Centre had a Parent Advisory Board.

About half (53% for ELCC Centres and 46% for Comparison Centres) of the parent/caregiver survey participants stated that their Centre had regular meetings at which they could provide feedback to the Centre (no statistically significant differences); of the 156 ELCC Centre respondents and the 104 Comparison Centre respondents whose Centre had regular meetings at which they could provide feedback, fewer than half (44% for ELCC Centres and 48% for Comparison Centres) had participated in such meetings.

- A greater proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers whose child was enrolled in an ELCC Centre located in a rural area (81%) reported that their ELCC Centre had regular meetings at which they could provide feedback to the Centre compared to ELCC Centre parents/caregivers whose child was enrolled in an ELCC Centre located in an urban area (70%) (no statistically significant differences). Of the 110 urban respondents whose ELCC Centre had regular meetings at which they could provide feedback, 50% said they had participated in the meetings. This compares to 28% of the four rural respondents whose ELCC Centre had regular meetings at which they could provide feedback to the Centre.
- Over 7 in 10 female (72%) and male (76%) respondents indicated that the ELCC Centre in which their child was enrolled had regular meetings at which they could provide feedback to the Centre. Of the 128 female respondents whose ELCC Centre had regular meetings at which they could provide feedback, 44% said they had participated in them. This compares to 43% of the 28 male respondents whose ELCC Centre had regular meetings at which they could provide feedback.

The majority of parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups described their participation in the ELCC Centre as meaningful. Many identified that their ELCC Centre had an 'open door' policy and although some could not take advantage of this (due to working or other time commitments), a few other went in to have lunch with their children, which they appreciated. Many parents/caregivers also stated that the engagement opportunities they were provided were not simply mundane volunteering tasks (e.g. coming in to wash towels); rather, ELCC educators wanted parents/caregivers to be involved in the 'day to day' activities of the ELCC Centre. These parents/caregivers believed that meaningful engagement was important, as it was role modelling for their children: *"It shows role modeling for them as they get older and that is teaching our kids to be more involved with the community and social skills."* These were also seen as bonding experiences. Some of the activities inspired parents/caregivers to want to do the same at home with their other children (e.g. hand-printing craft).

Most parents/caregivers in the focus groups stated that the ELCC Centre offered them many opportunities for meaningful engagement, and that if you could not find a way to engage it was only because you were not looking. However, many parents/caregivers identified time constraints as a primary reason that they were unable to participate in engagement activities.

The majority of parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups identified good staff communication as a key element in why they felt engaged. Parents/caregivers noted that information

was provided to them via a range of methods, including: child-specific communications (e.g. communication books; emails; leaving notes in the child's cubby; permission forms); in-person communications (e.g. at pick up and drop off); signage within the ELCC Centre; general written communications (e.g. newsletters, emails); and social media (e.g. keeping their Facebook group updated).

The range and breadth of the communications was also appreciated by parents/caregivers. Many of the parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups stated that there was 'constant' communication for the parents/caregivers. Key ways that parents/caregivers noted this as appreciated included:

- *"The staff all know what is going on; when you ask what's new, they'll sit and talk to you about it."*
- *"They will tell us when there are changes that we both need to know about, like teething."*
- *"My daughter will not eat breakfast, so I will tell them and they will tell us they will get [a] snack."*
- *"I love when they give you feedback like whether or not they ate their lunch today."*
- *"Parents want to hear about the funny things the kids are doing because we miss them through the day."*
- *"The staff don't judge you for being a young mom."*
- *"One-to-one conversations [show] that they care about the children."*

Many parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups indicated that ELCC educators provided both parents/caregivers and their children with encouragement. For example, ELCC educators were able to explain to parents/caregivers why their child was biting and reassured them that their child 'is normal'. Many of the parents/caregivers reported that the ELCC educators provided them with advice and feedback that they could use at home with their children; this not only ensured that there was consistency between what the child was being told at the ELCC Centre and what they were being told at home, but also improved the child's behaviour.

Many parents/caregivers who participated in the focus groups said that the ELCC educators were very open and willing to listen to them, which was important. For example: *"I always talk to the staff and ask them 'how is my kid?' I'd like to know how's my kid in the room and how can they help me and how can I help them. They are very open for those things."* This was corroborated by some other parents/caregivers, who described how ELCC educators promoted a very open and supportive communication environment. For example, one parent/caregiver said: *"Our son broke his leg half a year ago, so having the communication with the day care has been crucial. We've had to look at 'how does that look for your day care, what are the services that you provide, or can you provide or do we have to keep him at home'. Being able to work through that with them and them suggesting options in the community for different types of services and assessments and everything... the level of communication around it and the service that we got was phenomenal."*

4.2.7 Impact on Labour Force and School Opportunities

**SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 10:
HOW HAS CHILD CARE ACCESSIBILITY, AFFORDABILITY AND QUALITY IMPACTED PARENTS/CAREGIVERS' LABOUR
FORCE OPPORTUNITIES?**

The parent/caregiver survey and administrative data found that the ELCC Centre Initiative contributed to labour force attachment in the following ways:

- The ELCC Centre Initiative contributed to 328 Albertans entering/re-entering the workforce (based on 19 of 22 ELCC Centres);
- According to the 294 parent/caregiver survey respondents, enrollment has allowed 66% of them to return to work full-time and 14% of them to return to work part-time;
- According to the 294 parent/caregiver survey respondents, they are now able to:
 - Focus more on work (88%);
 - Work more hours (67%); and
 - Accept more responsibility at work (61%).
- ELCC Centres employed 117 net new child care staff.

The ELCC Centre Initiative Fourth Quarter Report Update as of March 31, 2018 indicated that the ELCC Centre Initiative contributed to 328 Albertans entering the workforce (based on 19 of 22 ELCC Centres) which is lower than the proposed target of 357 Albertans entering the workforce (based on 22 ELCC Centres).

Respondents to the parent/caregiver survey indicated that their children's enrollment at a child care centre enabled them to:

- Return to work full-time (194 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (66%), including 164 females and 161 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (71%), including 129 females);
- Return to work part-time (41 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (14%), including 38 females and 28 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (12%), including 26 females);
- Return to school full-time (33 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers, including 30 females and 29 for Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (13%), including 29 females);
- Return to school part-time (nine ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (3%), all of whom were female and 14 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (6%), all of whom were female); and
- Take more classes in school (three ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (1%), all of whom were female and one Comparison Centre parent/caregiver (<1%), who was female) (see Chart 4.56).

Less than 1 in 10 parents/caregivers who responded to the survey said that their children's enrollment at a child care centre did not enable them to return to work or school (22 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (8%), including nine who were female and 13 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (6%), including one who was female). Based on the wording of the survey question, it is not possible to determine whether these respondents were already working or attending school prior to enrolling their child(ren) in the child care centre and therefore had been using an alternative child care arrangement for their child(ren).

Based on parent/caregiver survey respondents' demographic characteristics:

- A greater proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers who were married/common-law (68%) reported that children's enrollment at an ELCC Centre enabled them to return to **work** full-time than those who were single/separated/divorced/widowed (58%).
- A greater proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers who were single/separated/divorced/widowed (35%) reported that children's enrollment at an ELCC Centre enabled them to return to **school** full-time than those who were married/common-law (4%).

Of the parent/caregiver survey respondents who indicated that their child(ren)'s enrollment had enabled someone else in their household who provided child care duties for their child(ren) to:⁴³

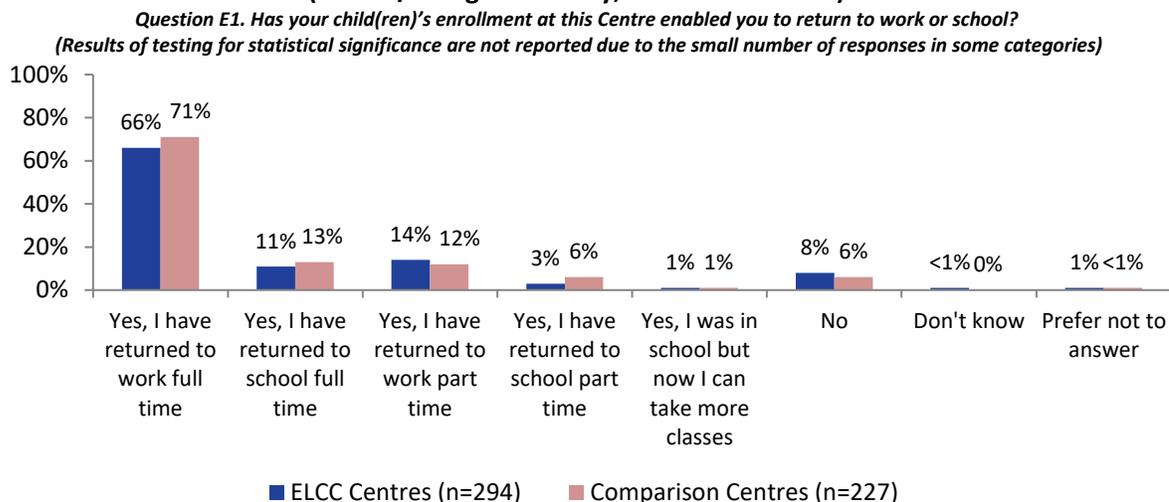
- Return to work full-time (63 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 42 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers);
- Return to work part-time (10 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and seven Comparison Centre parents/caregivers);
- Return to school full-time (one ELCC Centre parent/caregiver and two Comparison Centre parents/caregivers);
- Return to school part-time (three ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and no Comparison Centre parents/caregivers); and
- Take more classes in school (no ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and no Comparison Centre parents/caregivers).

Based on the wording of this survey question, it is not possible to determine the gender of the other individuals who were enabled to return to work or school as a result of the child's enrollment in a child care centre.

Based on the questions included in the survey, it is not possible to determine how parents/caregivers who returned to work following a maternity or paternity leave may have impacted these results; this relationship can be explored in future years of the evaluation.

⁴³ The base number of respondents for ELCC Centres was 79 and for Comparison Centres was 55.

Chart 4.56: Parent/Caregiver Reported Impact of Enrollment at an ELCC Centre on Labour Force Opportunities and School (Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=294 and n=227)



When asked about the impact of their children’s enrollment in an ELCC Centre, parent/caregiver survey respondents most commonly reported that:

- It had enabled them to focus more on work (86% for ELCC Centres and 83% for Comparison Centres; 85% for respondents in urban ELCC Centres and 89% for respondents in rural ELCC Centres; and 86% for female respondents and 84% for male respondents);
- It had enabled them to work more hours (67% for ELCC Centres and 62% for Comparison Centres; 67% for respondents in urban ELCC Centres and 67% for respondents in rural ELCC Centres; and 66% for female respondents and 72% for male respondents); and
- It had enabled them to accept more work responsibility (61% for ELCC Centres and 56% for Comparison Centres (no statistically significant differences); 60% for respondents in urban ELCC Centres and 63% for respondents in rural ELCC Centres; and 60% for female respondents and 66% for male respondents).

Between one-quarter (26% for ELCC Centres) and just over one-third (37% for Comparison Centres) of parent/caregiver survey respondents said ‘it had no impact on my career’ (see Table 4.59 for these and other responses; Table 4.60 provides responses for other adults in the household; no statistically significant differences).

**Table 4.59: Parent/Caregiver Reported Career-Related Impacts of Enrollment at an ELCC Centre:
Your Career
(Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=294 and n=227)**

*Question E4. Has your child(ren)'s enrollment at this Centre had any of the following impacts:
(No statistically significant differences, except questions marked '#' where results of testing for statistical significance are not reported due to the small number of responses in some categories)*

	ELCC Centres (n=294)				Comparison Centres (n=227)			
	Yes	No	Don't know	Prefer not to answer	Yes	No	Don't know	Prefer not to answer
It has enabled me to focus more on work [#]	86%	10%	2%	2%	83%	10%	7%	1%
It has enabled me to work more hours [#]	67%	29%	2%	2%	62%	31%	7%	<1%
It has enabled me to accept more work responsibility [#]	61%	31%	5%	2%	56%	34%	8%	2%
It has enabled me to study more for a better position or job	34%	57%	7%	2%	29%	57%	12%	2%
It has enabled me to switch to a new job	29%	63%	5%	3%	26%	61%	9%	4%
It has enabled me to accept a promotion	26%	64%	7%	4%	26%	60%	10%	4%
It has enabled me to work less hours	15%	75%	8%	2%	10%	80%	9%	<1%
It has enabled me to work fewer jobs (i.e. I had two jobs and now I have one job)	14%	72%	8%	6%	8%	77%	13%	3%
It has had no impact on my career	26%	63%	9%	2%	37%	49%	10%	4%
It has had a negative impact on my career [#]	1%	95%	3%	1%	5%	87%	6%	1%

Note: Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

Based on the demographics of parent/caregiver survey respondents:

- A lower proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers whose highest level of education was graduated high school/less than high school (58%) reported that their child's enrollment in an ELCC Centre had enabled them to work more hours than those whose highest level of education was some/completed college (72%) or some/completed university (67%). Additionally a greater proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers who were born in Canada (50%) reported that child's enrollment in an ELCC Centre had enabled them to work more hours than those who were born outside of Canada (57%).
- A lower proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers whose highest level of education was graduated high school/less than high school (15%) reported that their child's enrollment in an

ELCC Centre had enabled them to accept a promotion than those whose highest level of education was some/completed college (28%) or some/completed university (29%).

- A lower proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers whose highest level of education was graduated high school/less than high school (27%) reported that their child's enrollment in an ELCC Centre had enabled them to switch to a new job than those whose highest level of education was some/completed college (35%) or some/completed university (28%).
- A lower proportion of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers whose highest level of education was some/completed university (29%) reported that their child's enrollment in an ELCC Centre had enabled them to study more for a better position or job than those whose highest level of education was graduated high school/less than high school (42%) or some/completed college (40%).

**Table 4.60: Parent/Caregiver Reported Career-Related Impacts of Enrollment at an ELCC Centre:
Career of another Adult in Household
(Parent/Caregiver Survey, n=237 and n=162)**

*Question E4. Has your child(ren)'s enrollment at this Centre had any of the following impacts:
(No statistically significant differences, except questions marked '#' where results of testing for statistical significance are not reported due to the small number of responses in some categories)*

	ELCC Centres (n=237)				Comparison Centres (n=162)			
	<i>(those with another adult in their household)</i>							
	Yes	No	Don't know	Prefer not to answer	Yes	No	Don't know	Prefer not to answer
It has enabled them to focus more on work	62%	19%	13%	6%	56%	25%	15%	4%
It has enabled them to work more hours	48%	32%	12%	8%	43%	38%	15%	4%
It has enabled them to accept more work responsibility	45%	35%	14%	6%	38%	41%	17%	4%
It has enabled them to study more for a better position or job	18%	61%	14%	6%	11%	66%	19%	4%
It has enabled them to switch to a new job	17%	62%	14%	6%	12%	66%	16%	6%
It has enabled them to accept a promotion	22%	57%	16%	6%	15%	59%	20%	6%
It has enabled them to work less hours	10%	69%	14%	6%	5%	75%	15%	4%
It has enabled them to work fewer jobs (i.e. I had two jobs and now I have one job)	10%	66%	16%	8%	3%	75%	16%	6%
It has had no impact on their career	24%	54%	17%	5%	30%	45%	20%	5%
It has had a negative impact on their career [#]	<1%	83%	11%	5%	4%	77%	15%	4%

Note: Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

In addition to facilitating labour force attachment for parents, the ELCC Centre Initiative also has the potential to create jobs for day care staff. According to CS administrative data, as of March 2018, there were 10,053 certified day care staff in Alberta, including 298 who were employed in an ELCC Centre. Between March 2017 and March 2018, the percentage of certified day care staff in Alberta increased by 10%. Over the same period, with the implementation of the ELCC Centre Initiative, the number of certified day care staff in ELCC Centres increased by 65% (see Tables 4.61 and 4.62).

Table 4.61: Number (Percentage) of Day Care Staff at Each Certification Level as of March 2018⁴⁴

Region	Child Development Assistant	Child Development Worker	Child Development Supervisor	Total
Alberta	3,929 (39.1%)	1,665 (16.6%)	4,458 (44.3%)	10,053 (100.0%)
ELCC Centres	119 (39.9%)	50 (16.8%)	129 (43.3%)	298 (100.0%)

Source: CCIS (March 2018 lockdown data).

Table 4.62: Percentage Increase in Number of Certified Staff Overall and at Each Level between March 2017 and March 2018⁵

Region	Child Development Assistant	Child Development Worker	Child Development Supervisor	Total
Alberta	15.0%	12.5%	5.2%	10.0%
ELCC Centres	63.0%	100.0%	55.4%	64.6%

Source: CCIS (March 2018 lockdown data).

Further, the ELCC Centre Initiative Fourth Quarter Report Update as of March 31, 2018 indicated that 117 net new child care staff in the 19 ELCC Centres which has almost reached the proposed target of 119 net new child care staff (based on 22 ELCC Centres).

4.2.8 Unintended Outcomes

SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 12:

HAVE THERE BEEN ANY UNINTENDED (POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE) OUTCOMES RESULTING FROM THE ELCC CENTRE INITIATIVE?

Most interviewees (ELCC educators, pedagogical partners, GRIT coaches and ELCC Centre partners) did not identify any unintended outcomes resulting from the ELCC Centre Initiative. Some of the unintended outcomes that were identified by a few interviewees were:

- Unintended positive outcomes included:
 - Removing children from unsafe child care arrangements;
 - Reducing turnover in children attending the centres;
 - Building networks with other child care centres; and
 - Drop-in users transitioning to full or part time.
- Unintended negative outcomes:
 - Expanding ELCC Centre waitlists;
 - Lengthened waitlists for referred services;
 - Limited emergency space due to capacity issues (full);
 - Increased administrative requirements;
 - Increased stress for ELCC Centre supervisors; and
 - Families traveling greater distances to ELCC Centres.

⁴⁴ ELCC numbers reflects the addition of the Bissell Centre Early Childhood Program staff to the baseline data of March 2017.

Most interviewees (ELCC educators, pedagogical partners, GRIT coaches and ELCC Centre partners) did not identify any unintended outcomes that have resulted from the ELCC Centre Initiative. Some ELCC Centre supervisors said it was too early to comment on whether there had been any unintended outcomes.

Some of the positive unintended impacts that a few interviewees identified were (each response was mentioned by one or a few interviewees):

- Removing children from unsafe child care arrangements;
- Reducing turnover in children attending the centres;
- Increasing the number of drop-in users that transitioned to part-time or full-time attendees;
- Extending the length of time children at staying at the centre each day (they are staying later, which reduces stress for parents as they do not need to rush to pick up their children and they know they are being well taken care of);
- Becoming intimately involved in families' lives;
- Enabling ELCC Centres to develop networks with other child care centres (they were interested in seeing what we were doing);
- Empowering and inspiring ELCC educators to love their jobs again;
- Increasing community awareness of the importance of early childhood development; and
- Increasing community health and safety.

Some of the negative unintended impacts that a few interviewees identified were (unless otherwise specified, each response was mentioned by one or a few interviewees):

- Expanded waiting lists for the ELCC Centres (including parents who have not yet given birth (many);
- Limited ability for ELCC partners to refer families to ELCC Centres due to long waiting lists;
- Increased number of families that are commuting long distances to use the ELCC centres (interviewees thought the ELCC Centre would service more of their immediate community);
- Limited physical space in ELCC Centres (e.g. had to take over other spaces in the building);
- Reduced flexibility in centres to provide emergency care (because they are so full they do not have space to accommodate emergent needs);
- Varied approaches to implement the ELCC Curriculum Framework across ELCC Centres (e.g. it will look different in each centre and/or community);
- Increased staffing and administrative requirements (e.g. accounting) to meet all of the requirements in the ELCC Centre grant;
- Increased stress for ELCC Centre supervisors (e.g. too much overtime, burn-out) and ELCC educators (e.g. there are a lot of demand and expectations being placed on ELCC educators) (some); and
- Increased animosity between centres that are receiving the ELCC Centre grant and those that are not.

4.2.9 Unmet Needs

SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 11:

Do the programs adequately meet the child care accessibility, affordability and quality needs of the target group(s)? Are there groups whose needs remain unmet?

Most ELCC educators and ELCC Centre partners did not identify any gaps in the ongoing accessibility, affordability or quality of child care at ELCC Centres. However, some interviewees mentioned the need for more:

- ELCC Centre spaces;
- Qualified ELCC educators;
- Training support; and
- Support for children with diverse needs.

Most ELCC educators and ELCC Centre partners did not identify any gaps in the ongoing accessibility, affordability or quality of child care at ELCC Centres. However, a few ELCC educators cautioned that the ELCC Centre Initiative is still new. Table 4.63 lists unmet needs identified by the interviewees who provided a response (each response was provided by one or a few interviewees; no unmet needs related to affordability of child care were identified).

Table 4.63: Unmet Child Care Needs

Accessibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for more spaces for children • Need for more extended hours child care (e.g. late night care) • Need to expanded the ELCC Centre Initiative to other child care centres • Need to make the ELCC Centre Initiative universal
Quality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for more highly trained, qualified staff (especially those with ECE diplomas and child care experience) • Need for more staff training and coaching to help them understand and implement the new child care practices • Need for increased budgets to purchase the materials required to implement the new child care practices (e.g. some ELCC educators had to use their own resources to purchase materials) • Need for ELCC Centres to continue to renovate their physical environments and expand parent/caregiver engagement • Need to reduce ELCC educator-to-staff ratios to continue to improve quality of care • Need for supports for children with diverse needs

While most ELCC Centre partners said the quality of child care being provided at ELCC Centres is very high, they cautioned that these Centres would not be able to provide the same quality care without the ELCC Centre grant. They also noted that ELCC Centres are still in the process of setting the foundation for the ‘new normal’ child care practices. Further, many of the ELCC Centre supervisors pointed out that quality was, and should continue to be, something that is always ‘a work in progress’, meaning that ELCC Centres should always be striving to improve upon quality, even if the quality of the child care being provided is excellent.

That being said, a few ELCC Centre supervisors identified elements of quality that they would like to continue to improve. In particular, ELCC Centre supervisors stated that they would like (each response was mentioned by a few interviewees):

- To upgrade the ELCC Centre’s physical space (e.g. expand rooms, create a community room, improve the kitchen);
- To improve/upgrade the ELCC Centre’s outdoor space;
- More multicultural activities; and
- To make more use of ELCC Curriculum Framework and Reggio practices, including:
 - Moving toward different view of child care (e.g. not expecting children to fit into a mold, changing the range of activities that children and ELCC educators can engage in); and
 - More use of loose parts.

Some ELCC Centre supervisors mentioned wanting to implement staff-related improvements, such as the introduction of succession planning, more training (can’t have enough), upgrading more ELCC educators to ‘Level II’; role modeling when planning; increasing educator wages; reducing staff turnover; and increasing physical literacy.

Comparison Centres

Affordability

In terms of affordability, Comparison Centre supervisors indicated that it was an ongoing issue for single parents/caregivers and for parents/caregivers who had multiple children in child care, and that many parents/caregivers were 'struggling to make ends meet'. To mitigate this, one Comparison Centre supervisor explained that her Centre offers 10% off of the fees for a second child, so long as parents/caregivers are paying fees (i.e. they are not receiving subsidy), while another interviewee stated that they offer part-time spaces alongside full-time spaces, so that parents/caregivers who do not require full-time care do not have to pay fees for full-time hours.

One Comparison Centre supervisor described how the Centre had to increase parent fees when the minimum wage increased, because subsidy amounts did not increase. Additionally, another Comparison Centre supervisor explained that there are spaces available in the Centre (i.e. it is not full) but that families are choosing to take their children to day homes because they are more affordable. This Comparison Centre supervisor noted that this was, at least in part, due to the fact that subsidy rates had not increased since September 2008.

Accessibility

In terms of accessibility, many of the Comparison Centre supervisors noted that more child care spaces are required in their community, as was evidenced by their long wait lists. One interviewee described how the Centre has a two-year waitlist and that this was problematic because 'some families, (particularly socially vulnerable families) do not have two years to wait, they are not planning that far ahead.' Another Comparison Centre supervisor described the community as 'in crisis' due to needing more spaces.

Centre location was also identified by some of the Comparison Centre supervisors as being a challenge. Due to the lack of child care in some communities, families were having to travel great distances, sometimes taking multiple buses, in order to access child care services. One Comparison Centre was trying to mitigate this by opening satellite centres in surrounding smaller communities. Further, a few Comparison Centres identified opening hours as being a challenge for them. One interviewee stated that the Centre was trying to mitigate this by looking at operating extended opening hours; however she stated that it was difficult to get staff to cover the Centre's current hours, let alone extended hours.

Quality

The majority of Comparison Centre supervisors stated that there were no gaps in child care quality in their Centre. Among the interviewees who did identify ongoing gaps in child care quality, the majority described gaps relating to staffing. These few interviewees explained that it was difficult to find the 'right' educators, particularly if the budget did not accommodate hiring highly qualified (i.e. Level 3) educators. This had a 'knock-on' effect of educators that required guidance all the time and, because finding staff cover was a challenge, it was difficult to give the educators time off for professional development. A few interviewees also described staff as 'overworked and underpaid', with one interviewee describing how the educators at the Centre did not have enough time to interact with the children in a meaningful way.

Some interviewees also described ongoing gaps in their Centre's operations, such as financial management that restricts their ability to purchase new supplies and materials, ongoing gaps in technology, physical space restrictions (e.g. not having access to a gym when they cannot go outside),

difficulties accessing or connecting with other programs (e.g. dental services for the children) and managing Board expectations (i.e. what is happening at the Centre versus what they would like to see happen). A few interviewees also described how they were frustrated at the gap being able to access training for qualified staff (i.e. how to talk to a child, how to manage behavioural issues, play education).

To address these gaps, Comparison Centre supervisors identified the following priorities (each response was mentioned by one or a few interviewees):

- Ensuring staff retention;
- Increasing staff qualifications;
- Bringing the ELCC Curriculum Framework into the Centre;
- Focusing on their accreditation renewal;
- Building good relationships with parents/caregivers and children;
- Increasing or expanding programming for children (e.g. sign language); and
- Providing a hot lunch to children.

4.3 Performance: Implementation

4.3.1 Progress to Date

**SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 3:
IS THE ELCC CENTRE INITIATIVE BEING IMPLEMENTED AS INTENDED? WHAT FACTORS FACILITATED OR HINDERED THE
ELCC CENTRE INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION?**

- Administrative data and interviews with ELCC Centre supervisors indicated that ELCC Centre Initiative is being implemented as intended.
- ELCC Centre supervisors identified the following factors as facilitating implementation:
 - Partnerships;
 - Previous experience; and
 - Existing staff on board with quality improvements.
- ELCC Centre supervisors identified the following factors as hindering implementation:
 - Short implementation window;
 - Finding qualified staff to hire;
 - Administrative reporting requirements; and
 - Multi-pronged Initiative requiring many operational changes.

Across ELCC Centres the ELCC Centre Initiative is being implemented as intended. Specifically, the ELCC Centres are providing affordable child care to families at \$25 per day, have increased accessibility through new spaces (9 of the 22 ELCC Centres are new and as of March 31, 2018, 362 net new child care spaces have been established in the 19 ELCC Centres that are opened) and are in the process of implementing the ELCC Curriculum Framework and the ASaP Continuum Project to increase child care quality. Additionally, all of the ELCC Centres are in the process of implementing one or more of the six improvements. According to the ELCC Centre Initiative Fourth Quarter Report Update as of March 31, 2018, which is based on 19 ELCC Centres with administrative data, ELCC Centres are implementing the following improvements:

- 11 ELCC Centres are offering flexible child care to support parents;
- 18 ELCC Centres are collaborating with other service organizations for co-location or new partnerships for delivering the ELCC Centre Initiative);
- 19 ELCC Centres are collaborating with other service organizations that support knowledge about cultural diversity and learning as it relates to Indigenous, immigrant and refugee children;
- 19 ELCC Centres are collaborating with other service organizations to support the provision of parenting resources and supports;
- 18 ELCC Centres are collaborating with other service organizations to support vulnerable families; and
- 10 ELCC Centres are supporting child care in rural communities.

In addition to the information presented in this section, other subsections in Section 5 provide more detail about the implementation progress that ELCC Centres have been making.

As shown in Table 4.64, CS audits⁴⁵ related to the ELCC Centres identified several observations for some ELCC Centres:

- Child Care Accreditation Grant Funding: benefit contribution grant not used, claimed hours greater than actual and funding not paid.
- Child Care Subsidy Grant Funding: claimed hours greater than actual, infant care incentive acknowledgement forms not completed and reported fees greater than actual.
- The ELCC Centre Grant Funding: 2017-18 Audit Summary Report examined whether quarterly expenditures paid by the Ministry are accounted for in the financial documentation provided by the programs. ELCC grant funds provided up to \$500,000 per program and were assessed to determine whether it was used for purposes intended. The audit revealed that the financial documents (e.g. receipts) received from six programs were greater than what was reported in their Schedule B Quarter One report. The variances noted range from \$5.08 to \$3,927.87. The audit also discovered five programs with financial documents submitted that were lower than what was reported in their Schedule B Quarter One report. These variances ranged from \$0.45 to \$19,185.17. Among the 11 ELCC programs with noted variances, eight have submitted a revised Schedule B Quarter One report. The remaining three programs will be followed up to ensure a revised Schedule B Quarter One report is submitted to their respective regions.

⁴⁵ CS (2018). ELCC Centre Grant Funding: 2017-18 Audit Summary Report.

**Table 4.64: ELCC Centre Initiative CS Financial Audit Results
(CS Audit Reports)**

Audit	Recovery - Monetary Impact	Percentage of Funding	Recovery Amount (for observations over \$100)	Percentage of Monetary Impact
Child Care Accreditation Grant Funding	\$4,470	5%	\$3,935	83%
Child Care Subsidy Grant Funding	\$8,562	6%	\$8,396	98%
ELCC Centre Grants	Six ELCC Centres reported total receipts, invoices and statements <i>greater</i> than the total schedule B quarter grant expenditure reports The total variance across all six of these ELCC Centres was \$7,795.		Five ELCC Centres reported total receipts, invoices and statements <i>less</i> than the total schedule B quarter grant expenditure reports The total variance across all six of these ELCC Centres was \$21,042.	

Source: CS (2018). ELCC Centre Grant Funding: 2017-18 Audit Summary Report.

The Application, Approval and Initial Funding Process

Across all ELCC Centre supervisor interviews a range of opinions on how easy the ELCC Centre grant was to apply to, get approval for, and receive funding as part of the ELCC Centre Initiative was expressed. Terms used to describe the process ranged from positive (straightforward, smooth, easy, generally not hard) to negative (difficult, confusing, unrealistic, fast and furious, nerve-wracking, a huge, stressful event, really hard).

The primary factor that improved the process, as identified by some of the interviewees, was having different people engaged in the application process, who could bring a range of expertise to the application (i.e. proposal-writing experience, budgeting and accounting experience, expertise in early learning and childcare, knowledge of the Centre’s history and background, administrative support, etc).

There were a number of challenges identified by ELCC Centre supervisors, several of which were common across interviews.

Application form (each challenge was mentioned by one or a few interviewees):

- Template itself was not particularly user-friendly, particularly for those that did not have significant proposal-writing experience;
- Identified as ‘confusing’ and ‘difficult to complete’, with one interviewee stating that because the guidelines were unclear, they put in a lot of extra time that they did not need to;
- Text boxes in the expression of interest application template were not big enough for the amount of information required (i.e. only a certain number of characters allowed); and
- Not well-designed for its intended purpose, insofar as it was geared more for new Centres than for existing Centres: *“For people who had a centre already and wanted to better themselves the application form did not work. It did not give us the option to sell ourselves as much as we would like. I felt like it was more geared towards [centres] who are not already inclusive or connecting with vulnerable families”.*

Funding (each challenge was mentioned by one or a few interviewees):

- Funding came straight away but sat in an account until the ELCC Centre was licensed (couldn't access the funding);
- Didn't receive the funds straight away, so reached out to a community foundation and got a loan to tide them over one pay period; also got a community safety grant that they used to hire a support staff who was able to 'take off some burden off my shoulders in terms of streamlining' and helping with subsidy; and
- 'Shocked' that the funding was provided in one lump sum.

Grant interpretation and expectations (each challenge was mentioned by one or a few interviewees):

- ELCC Centre supervisors mentioned that they did not realize that the ELCC Centre Initiative included having ELCC educators attend the ELCC Curriculum Framework online course or implementation of the ASaP Continuum Project and therefore did not budget accordingly for it;
- The process of obtaining a variance to license in order to open more spaces was extremely difficult and frustrating;
- Relationships with other daycares in the region suffered because they were all so busy trying to get the application in; things have now returned to 'normal';
- Seemed quite straightforward at first, but as the ELCC Centre grant progressed it appeared that the Centre's understanding and the government's understanding of what the Centre had proposed was different; and
- Communication during the implementation process was challenging: *"Someone said something and another person said [something else] so it confused us and we did not know which step to take in what direction"*.

Facilitating Factors

Based on the interview data, the main factor facilitating the ELCC Centre Initiative implementation was the partnerships that ELCC Centres had with other organizations, including other child care providers. Section 4.2.6.7 and 4.3.2 further discuss the ELCC Centre partnerships.

The majority of ELCC Centre supervisors identified pre-existing partnerships or relationships as one factor that facilitated the establishment of their ELCC Centre. Licensing officers provided guidance on licensing requirements, effective use of space and budgeting; Boards of Directors, societies, committees, community members and administrative staff were able to provide guidance and administrative support; and ELCC Centre partners (including those with whom ELCC Centres were co-located) were able to support the ELCC centres by offering, sharing or increasing the amount of space allocated for use by the day care.

Many of the ELCC Centre supervisors also discussed the importance of networking with other child care centres and providers, as they were a key source of advice, support and guidance. For example, some ELCC Centres were able to draw on an affiliate to help train new staff and/or draw on their network of child care providers to provide guidance and support to inform their practice (e.g. providing feedback and suggestions related to new physical space, providing an opportunity to see the ELCC Curriculum Framework in practice).

Furthermore, as discussed in Section 4.3.3, having staff with previous experience as well as staff that are supportive of using new child care practices can also help facilitate implementation of the ELCC Centre Initiative.

The majority of ELCC educators stated that implementation of the ELCC Centre Initiative is going well (good, wonderful, awesome, no hiccups, amazing). Many ELCC educators emphasized the importance of conceptualizing ELCC Centre Initiative implementation as an ongoing process that takes time. Some ELCC educators described the start of the ELCC Centre grant implementation process ‘busy’, ‘crazy’ and as ‘a time of change’, when all ELCC Centre staff were ‘figuring things out’ (e.g. subsidy, learning and trying to implement the ELCC Curriculum Framework, managing increased enrollment and working with new ELCC educators), but these ELCC educators went on to say that the implementation process had gone, or was going, well and seemed to view the initial ‘ups and downs’ of the ELCC Centre grant implementation as an expected part of the process.

Positive impacts of ELCC Centre Initiative implementation identified by ELCC educators (each response was mentioned by one or a few interviewees):

- Benefitting parents/caregivers, staff and children (helping families, happy parents/caregivers);
- Helping single moms and vulnerable families, due to lower fees;
- Positive feedback from the community;
- Extremely helpful in terms of furthering the daycare (general);
- Increased number of spaces, new room(s) opened;
- Increased enrollment and ELCC Centre is now full;
- Increased number of staff;
- ELCC educators getting to learn new things, take workshops, access plenty of resources;
- Huge boost to programming; educators now have time for planning;
- New ELCC Curriculum Framework is excellent, helping ELCC educators to update their skills;
- New planning template is ‘awesome’: allows flexibility, not so rigid;
- Enabling new materials and resources to be brought in;
- Switching to more natural materials; and
- Staff are paid more.

Some ELCC Centre supervisors stated that they had been relatively successful in reaching their intended target groups, including the local Filipino community (there was a gap one year ago, but it is good now), vulnerable families (including teen mothers, lone parents, low income families, children who have experienced crisis and/or trauma), Indigenous families and stay-at-home mothers. A few ELCC Centre supervisors described how they are now prioritizing their waiting list based on family characteristics (e.g. families receiving the child care subsidy, single mothers who are attending college); another ELCC Centre supervisor described how the ELCC Centre always maintains a space for use by Children’s Services.

Many ELCC Centre partners concurred that ELCC Centres have been relatively successful in reaching their intended target groups. They based this on the fact that there are more spaces available and that more families can now afford child care. Some interviewees reported that this had the ‘knock-on effect’ of assisting some vulnerable families by enabling them to enter the workforce or return to work. As described by one ELCC Centre partner: *“So many families I know are accessing work now because they can, and they still have a little bit of money left over at the end of each day.”*

A few ELCC Centre supervisors identified the following challenges reaching target groups:

- Part time day care spaces: One ELCC Centre supervisor said there hasn't been the demand that was expected for part-time child care spaces. The ELCC Centre supervisor explained that it appears that, prior to the launch of the ELCC Centre Initiative, parents/caregivers were only seeking part time child care because it was all they could afford. Another ELCC Centre supervisor mentioned that parents/caregivers who are using part time child care are treating it as preschool; for example, mothers who are on maternity leave will send their older child to day care so they can spend more time with the baby or so the older child can interact with peers.
- The ELCC Centre does not have any spaces for babies.⁴⁶
- The ELCC Centre would like to have more spaces available for respite families (Alberta Works, foster parents, Children's Services): one ELCC Centre supervisor mentioned wanting to be able to offer respite spaces for a longer duration.
- Families who require flexible child care (e.g. shift workers, nurses, agricultural community): one ELCC Centre supervisor indicated that the ELCC Centre has not had any success reaching these groups.

Challenges in reaching target groups identified by a few ELCC Centre partners included:

- Awareness: organizations need to do a better job of promoting the ELCC Centre and partner supports that exist for children from vulnerable families.
- Waitlist: parents/caregivers of children on waitlists really want to go back to work, but cannot until they are off the waitlist.

A few ELCC Centre supervisors said they have the following plans to reach out to target groups:

- Considering offering drop-in child care on the weekends (Saturday and Sunday);
- Reaching out to Settlement Services to see if they can partner to help families living in Métis Settlements to access the ELCC Centre; and
- Raising community awareness of the availability of flexible child care.

Hindering Factors

There were several key challenges identified by the ELCC Centre supervisors when setting up the requirements of the ELCC Centre. These included staffing, time, increased waiting lists for child care spaces and administration.

Staffing

Across the majority of ELCC Centre supervisor interviews, issues related to staffing were commonly identified as a challenge. In particular, the processes of finding, recruiting and retaining qualified staff and educators (including in the role of Executive Director) while trying to action other aspects of the ELCC Centre grant agreement (e.g. opening new spaces, opening new rooms, renovating, commencing the ASoP Continuum Project and the ELCC Curriculum Framework training) were identified by several ELCC Centre supervisors as 'stressful' and 'chaotic'. Other issues related to staffing included (each response was mentioned by one or a few interviewees):

- Hiring multiple new staff at once (that ELCC Centre supervisors did not know or have a pre-existing relationship with);
- Helping some ELCC educators who are new to early childhood education understand the

⁴⁶ Changes to accommodate spaces for infants would need to be made through licencing.

- importance of professional development for career development; and
- Needing to hire new staff before being able to open new rooms or to increase spaces. For example, one ELCC Centre supervisor said: *“It happened really fast; in hindsight, we should have waited. We had the rooms ready and everything was ready to go. The hardest challenge was staffing. [Staffing is] still is a challenge but at that time it was very difficult. Once we got those staff in place it started to get a lot easier.”*

Many ELCC Centre supervisors also noted that high expectations were placed on ELCC educators at the start of the ELCC Centre Initiative. For example, one supervisor stated that any stress staff might experience in completing the ELCC Curriculum Framework was in addition to stress experienced as a result of working with new teammates, new coworkers, new children and new families. Further, if ELCC educators were required to attend training on weekends (e.g. ASaP Continuum Project), they had no ‘downtime’ in which to recuperate. Issues around the amount of stress being placed on ELCC educators to meet these expectations was echoed by a few of the ELCC Centre partners: *“I know for example that the day care director is taking all of her courses at night and the staff as well; so it’s all well and good but that’s a pretty big chunk of work added to their days.”*

Some ELCC Centre supervisors also identified a lack of willingness, on the part of some of their longer-standing staff, to change or amend their child care practices. This was mitigated in some ELCC Centres by: not pushing ELCC educators too hard; encouraging younger ELCC educators to inspire older ELCC educators with new practices; and by providing training. ELCC Centre supervisors noted that it could be hard to release ELCC educators for training due to staff levels and the need to stay in ratio. At a broader level many internal processes also had to shift to realize a ‘critical change’ in the ELCC Centre’s operations leading to improved quality.

A few of the ELCC Centre supervisors stated that thinking about how to expand and grow their existing practices helped to engage and motivate the ELCC educators (e.g. introducing ELCC educators to loose-parts play through a workshop).

Time

A few ELCC Centre supervisors identified the importance of having enough time to set the ELCC Centre up (e.g. having time to plan for, shop for and order equipment, as well as taking time to hire the ‘right’ educators before filling new child care spaces). The majority of ELCC Centre supervisors said a shortage of time was a key challenge they faced when establishing their ELCC Centre. The amount of time that was needed to commit to implementation of the ELCC Centre Initiative was significant, particularly with the requirement to implement new or revised practices. For example, there was very little time to increase the size of the child care team in line with the proposed increase in the number of spaces, or to undertake any proposed renovations (including to meet municipal planning regulations or to undertake proper procurement processes). As a result of putting other ELCC Centre Initiative elements into place, some ELCC Centre supervisors noted that they had not yet had the time to work with some of the community partners or to foster new community partnerships.

Time was further hampered by delays. For example, a few ELCC Centre supervisors noted that delays in receiving materials that the ELCC Centres ordered (e.g. furniture, resources) meant that they had to delay opening a new room or increasing spaces.

Administration

Some ELCC Centre supervisors identified that there were ‘huge administrative pressures’ that came with implementing the ELCC Centre Initiative, particularly as the ELCC Centre Initiative administration was in addition to licensing and accreditation. Lessons learned included, as mentioned by a few interviewees were:

- The importance of having a plan beforehand (e.g. spaces filled up quickly but didn’t have the ELCC educators to open spaces to meet the need);
- Having a realistic understanding of how long setting up a centre would take (e.g. how long it takes for equipment that had been ordered to arrive); and
- Having administrative and accounting support in place from the start and understanding the impact on budgeting (e.g. the cost of extra food to feed the new children, the cost of increased janitorial work).

A few ELCC Centre supervisors stated that the ‘financial piece’ (accounting) took some time to get the proper processes in place for accurate accounting of differently-funded programs.

As noted above, the majority of ELCC educators described implementation of the ELCC Centre Initiative in positive terms. Even the few ELCC educators that identified the initial process of implementation as a ‘challenge’, particularly due to timelines (“*everything was happening all at once*”) and staff shortages (“*hiring and keeping qualified staff has been a struggle*”) went on to say that it was improving or going well now that the ELCC Centre Initiative has been in place for a while. Ongoing challenges identified by some of the ELCC educators included not having enough staff or enough physical space to meet demand, resulting in a lack of spaces and long waiting lists.

- *“One of our biggest challenges has been lack of time. It is a learning process for everybody. Everyone needs to understand that and accept that in order to move forward it is going to take time. It has had a lot of success. Just introducing that \$25 a day for families was huge. There were a lot of families who were not sure they qualify. It made it possible for families to be able to afford to buy things for the kids like new clothes. We are able to care for more children in our drop-in/casual part of the program now that more families are able to afford it. We do have a long way to go but I think the initial opportunity has been a great success.”*
- *“I think at first it was a little bit challenging as it was a lot all at once. I think now that we are in it and [have] started learning more about GRIT and the [ELCC] Curriculum Framework I think it’s starting to be more practical. [...] I think people are starting to buy into it more and getting excited about implementing these ideas and having people come in and teach us more.”*

4.3.2 Collaborations and Partnerships

**SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 5:
HOW DO COLLABORATIONS/PARTNERSHIPS SUPPORT THE ELCC CENTRE INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION?**

Interviews with ELCC Centre supervisors and ELCC Centre partners revealed the following findings about how collaborations and partnerships are supporting ELCC Centre Initiative implementation:

- Partnerships are supporting implementation by providing needed supports or resources; solidifying the vision or goals of the ELCC Centre; integrating services across organizations; providing opportunities for shared learning; promoting the ELCC Centres; connecting the ELCC Centre with the larger community; and providing coalitions of local experts.
- Factors that contributed to successful partnerships include having shared goals, values and visions; good collaboration; good working relationships; and good communication.
- ELCC Centre supervisors and ELCC Centre partners believe that partnerships based on informal, personal relationships are effective.

Establishment of Partnerships

With the exception of one ELCC Centre partner, when partnerships were identified as ‘new’ it was because the ELCC Centre was new and had only recently opened. Otherwise, ELCC Centre partners reported that their partnership with the ELCC Centre pre-dated the ELCC Centre Initiative anywhere from one year to many (in one case, over 20 years). The majority of ELCC Centre partners interviewed stated that the nature of their partnership had not changed as a result of the ELCC Centre Initiative.

For pre-existing Centres, ELCC Centre supervisors also reported that most or all of their partnerships were pre-existing, with some noting that their partners had provided letters of support for their ELCC grant application. A few ELCC Centre supervisors identified one or two partnerships that were new as a result of the ELCC Centre grant, while others reported that while partnerships were not new, involvement in the ELCC Centre grant had prompted increased or expanded communication.

ELCC Centre supervisors identified a broad range of community partners that they work with. Some were general (e.g. adult learning and literacy programs) while others were examples of specific organizations (e.g. Families First). Although the specific partners vary depending on the geographic location of the ELCC Centre, types of partner organizations tend to include organizations that provide supports and services for parents and families, early childhood, health, special needs, literacy, mental health, crisis, emergency, culture and government, as well as other community supports. Examples are provided in Table 4.65.

**Table 4.65: Types of Community Partners Working With ELCC Centres
(ELCC Centre Supervisor Interviews, n=18)**

Organizations that provide...	Examples
Parent and Family supports	Parent Link Centres; Made by Momma; Families First; Families Matter; Healthy Futures, Healthy Families; Family Resource Facilitation Program; Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement (ARCQE); Adult learning and literacy programs; ESL classes; low income housing organizations
Early childhood supports	Aboriginal Head Start; CHILD coalition; Early Childhood Coalition; Early Mapping Program; First 2000 Days; EvenStart
Health supports and services	Alberta Health Services (AHS); Healthy Babies Network; Dental Bus; nutritionists/dieticians; optometrists
Special needs supports	Inclusive Child Care; speech therapy; occupational therapy
Literacy supports	Local libraries; Oilers backpack program
Mental health supports	Psychologists
Crisis and emergency supports	Brenda Stafford Centre; Hope Resource Centre; food banks
School supports	Local schools; school district; school board
Government supports	Child and Family Services (CFS); Family and Community Support Services (FCSS)
Cultural supports	Friendship Centres; First Nations and Métis communities; North Star program; Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association; Banff Centre for the Performing Arts; settlement services
Community supports and services (other)	Recreation centres; Community centres; YWCA
Other supports (including staff supports)	Providence; colleges; universities

ELCC Centre supervisors identified the following financial and in-kind supports (each response was mentioned by one or a few interviewees):

- Subsidized or free use of space, including maintenance and upkeep;
- Shared amenities (i.e. kitchen staff, kitchen facilities, food);
- Use of other facilities in same building (i.e. gym) or other facilities (i.e. community Centre);
- Funding from municipality for renovations (as Centre is located in a municipal building);
- Use of adjacent school playgrounds;
- Parent Link Centre lends toys, materials, resources; ‘come play with me’ activities; provides training for people;
- Scholastic donated 25 new books;
- Local grocery store gives 10% off;
- Local transport company waives delivery costs;
- Local library offers free programming;
- Free workshops from health unit (e.g. handwashing); and
- Local business donate things (i.e. contactors donate materials, movie theatre offers free

screenings).

Some ELCC Centre partners stated that their organization provides financial or in-kind supports to their partnering ELCC Centre. Financial supports almost exclusively take the form of rent, lease or facility subsidy. For example, one partner only charges the ELCC Centre 'break even' rent every month (no profit made: rent only covers operational costs of the ELCC Centre) while another only requires the ELCC Centre to pay a portion of the facility and maintenance fees and a third partnering organization shares the space, materials, resources, as well as the cost of chefs and cleaners, with its ELCC Centre. In-kind supports identified by ELCC Centre partners include (each response was mentioned by a few or some interviewees):

- Providing services to children at no charge (some);
- Offering free training to parents (some);
- Offering free professional development to ELCC educators (a few);
- Providing resources to families at no charge (e.g. family 'toolkits') (a few); and
- Providing materials to Centre and families at no charge (e.g. books) (a few).

Formalized Partnerships and Communication

With only a few exceptions, the majority of partnerships between ELCC Centres and community partners were identified as informal, with little or no formalized documentation. The need for partnerships to be formalized appeared to depend on the individual circumstances of each partnership. For example, more formalized processes tended to be associated with referrals and parental consents (e.g. AHS, Inclusive Child Care). For most of the ELCC Centres and ELCC Centre partners, longstanding partnerships were considered to have been successful due to the personal connections and relationships that exist between the individuals.

Again, with only a few exceptions (such as referrals to health organizations or rental/lease agreements, student practicum placements), communication processes between ELCC Centres and ELCC Centre partners were predominantly informal and ad hoc, with little or no formalized documentation. A few of the ELCC Centre supervisors and ELCC Centre partners were on the same community coalitions or participated in the same community group meetings, and were therefore able to foster relationships in that way. Outside of regularly-scheduled meetings, which could not always be attended due to work loads, regular communication was maintained through ad hoc emails, telephone and in-person conversations.

Neither ELCC Centre supervisors nor ELCC Centre partners identified a need for current partnerships to become more formalized. Most stated that the informal nature of the partnerships worked well and that formalizing them would or could lead to problems. However, a few ELCC Centre supervisors indicated that staff turnover, either within the ELCC Centre or the ELCC Centre partner organization, could be problematic in terms of maintaining ongoing working partnerships.

Factors Contributing to Successful Partnerships

Across the 18 ELCC Centre supervisor and 24 ELCC Centre partner interviews, three key factors that most interviewees said contributed to successful partnerships were:

1. Shared goals, values and vision of...

- The partnership: the desire to work together and be respectful of each other's services; shared vision of continued learning and community engagement;

- The children: shared goal of wanting to help children do better; excitement about being able to have more children engaged; always putting children first; and
- The community: shared community values; trying to help support the community and to provide supports for families in the community; wanting to help the community to thrive and grow; ensuring that everyone in the community has what they need, when they need it.

2. Good collaboration and working relationships:

- Integration of services; sharing resources; attending common conferences and workshops;
- Working together; high level of comfort with each other; interagency meetings (e.g. community coalition) *“We can’t all do it all, so let’s work together”*;
- Striving to meet each other’s needs;
- Promoting each other’s organization/services; understanding what kinds of resources each organization provides (how they complement, and differ from, each other); and
- Mutual agreement that they can support each other; more awareness and attention to their programming.

3. Good communication

- Good, open communication (e.g. willing to share what is working, what isn’t);
- Ongoing, regular contact; consistent information-sharing;
- A lot of ‘face to face’ communication; having personal relationships are very important;
- Good relationships mean that they are able to express what they want to do and why;
- Developing trust: a lot of contact and face-to-face time between partner and families; and
- Working with local organizations makes it easier to partner, hold discussions.

A few ELCC Centre partners noted that the sustainability of the collaborations could be supported in the following ways:

- Keep doing what they are already doing;
- Continue to build relationships;
- Maintain regular, ongoing, open communication;
- Be intentional in the collaborations;
- Remember that it is a partnership and that there is a need to work together; and
- Create coalitions of local experts.

Challenges

The two main challenges associated with ELCC Centres’ engagement in partnerships identified by most ELCC Centre supervisors included time and staffing.

ELCC Centre supervisors conceptualized the challenge of ‘time’ in two ways. First, some ELCC Centre supervisors noted that a lack of time impacted their ELCC Centre’s opportunity to engage in partnerships. Second, some ELCC Centre supervisors noted that developing meaningful partnerships takes time. As described by one ELCC Centre supervisor: *“We cannot just touch base with everyone in one day. It all takes time and we want the relationships to be the same way with all of our partners.”*

ELCC Centre supervisors also conceptualized the challenge of ‘staffing’ in two ways. First, some ELCC Centre supervisors said issues of under-staffing within the ELCC Centre impacted the ELCC Centre’s ability to engage in partnerships, particularly when there was no full-time executive director on site. The

impact of ELCC Centre under-staffing was that “*under-staffed means no one has the opportunity to go out and make connections*”. Second, a few ELCC Centre supervisors indicated that staffing issues (such as under-staffing and staff changes) at partner organizations impacted the ELCC Centre’s ability to develop and maintain partnerships.

Many ELCC Centre partners reported that they and the ELCC Centres were ‘doing the best they can’; however, the a few ELCC Centres partners saw a need for more staff in the ELCC Centres in order for the ELCC Centres to be able to continue to build new and expand established relationships. Specifically, both the ELCC Centre partners and the ELCC Centres had limited staff, with many people fulfilling more than one role. In some cases, partnerships with the ELCC Centre were still new and that relationship-building was still underway.

4.3.3 Lessons Learned

SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 4:

BASED ON THE ELCC CENTRE INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION, WHAT LEARNINGS CAN BE USED TO INFORM PROGRAM DESIGN, DELIVERY, EFFECTIVENESS AND FUTURE INVESTMENTS GOING FORWARD?

ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators and ELCC Centre partners identified learnings from three key areas that can be used to inform program design, delivery, effectiveness and future investment going forward. These included:

- The application process (e.g. ensure applicants have a clearly outlined, step by step process by which to achieve ELCC Centre Initiative expectations);
- Implementation and design (e.g. ensure ELCC Centres have an implementation plan, have qualified accounting and administrative staff/support in place); and
- ELCC Curriculum Framework and ASaP Continuum project training (e.g. provide training to all ELCC educators, at a level all can understand; provide more application examples for younger children [i.e. infants]).

Across the ELCC Centre supervisor, ELCC educator and ELCC Centre partner interviews, participants identified a number of common ‘lessons learned’ that could be used to inform program design, delivery, effectiveness and future investment going forward. These related to staffing and staff training (including points relating to how the ELCC Curriculum Framework and ASaP Continuum project were shared), as well as the need to have adequate planning, time, processes and administrative support in place to implement the ELCC Centre Initiative.

Staffing

Many ELCC Centre supervisors identified staffing as a key factor that could support, increase or improve the ELCC Centre’s capacity across program design, efficiency, effectiveness and future investment. Having the ‘right’ staff on their team was important, including those who were experienced in early childhood development and therefore could provide supports to other ELCC educators who might be less experienced, anxious or nervous about learning and implementing new practice techniques.

Creating and investing in a positive team environment was also identified as important by some ELCC Centre supervisors, as in so doing ELCC educators would be more engaged and would feel like they are

part of a whole that is contributing to the efficient and effective running of the ELCC Centre.

At the management level, a few ELCC Centre supervisors stated that ELCC Centre leaders needed to be strong advocates for child care, meaning that they needed to have the background to understand what works and what does not, and how to implement curriculum changes within their ELCC Centre.

Training

Providing consistent training for all ELCC educators was noted by some ELCC Centre supervisors as promoting efficiency. By ensuring that all ELCC educators are provided with the same basic training and professional development, the team would be reassured that there was centre-wide basic understanding of practices, because ‘everyone is on the same page’. Some ELCC educators stated that having more trained educators would make the programs more effective, and that using professional development funding to increase staff levels would benefit both staff and children. A few ELCC Centre partners also noted that training and professional development is a very important piece for future investment because ‘you can never have too much education.’

Some ELCC Centre supervisors also noted that training and professional development opportunities needed to be provided in a way that ELCC educators at all levels could understand. Encouraging and supporting ELCC educators to upgrade was considered to be a key component of future investment ‘infrastructure’, because it encouraged ELCC educators to conceptualize early child care as a lifelong career rather than just a job. As one ELCC Centre supervisor stated: *“If you are not investing in the [ELCC educators] that are going to build the program, it won’t work.”*

ELCC Curriculum Framework and ASaP Continuum Project Training

Although ELCC Centre supervisors spoke positively about the move towards embracing the ELCC Curriculum Framework and the ASaP Continuum Project in ELCC Centres, some noted that ELCC educators might benefit more from the training if it were implemented differently. Suggestions for how the ELCC Curriculum Framework or ASaP Continuum Project training could be provided included (each response was provided by a few interviewees):

- Providing the ELCC Curriculum Framework in ‘small doses’ by having someone come to the ELCC Centre once a quarter, to talk about specific elements of the ELCC Curriculum Framework would be helpful in guiding staff.
- Taking more time to learn from and understand the ELCC Curriculum Framework and to break down the training into ‘smaller parts’ so that ELCC educators would be more comfortable with it. ELCC educators suggested that this could be supported through holding more local workshops or by having a mentorship program.
- Providing the ELCC Curriculum Framework in the same way that the ASaP Continuum Project training had been offered (through different in-person workshops and sessions, rather than as an online course).
- Offering ASaP Continuum Project training to all ELCC educators at once, rather than just to one ELCC educator member who was then expected to disseminate it through the ELCC Centre.
- Presenting the ELCC Curriculum Framework and the requirements of accreditation together as a unit, so that they could be understood together (i.e. how the practices from each are complementary) rather than thinking of them as two different things that needed to be administered separately.
- ELCC educators noted that it would also be useful to gear learnings from the ASaP Continuum Project and the ELCC Curriculum Framework towards younger children (particularly infants), not

just preschool aged children, so that the learnings could be implemented in different rooms.

Please refer to Section 4.2.6.2 for additional information on the ELCC Curriculum Framework and Section 4.2.6.3 for additional information the ASaP Continuum Project.

Implementation Planning

Many ELCC Centre supervisors were unclear on the ELCC Centre Initiative requirements at the start of the implementation phase of the ELCC Centre grant. Specifically, they were unclear on which elements of the ELCC Centre Initiative must be implemented and which elements were optional. Further, although the Expression of Interest for funding outlined the processes by which ELCC Centres were to achieve the required outcomes, some ELCC Centre supervisors did not fully understand the processes they were to follow. To offset the confusion, a few ELCC Centre supervisors suggested that the expectations of the ELCC Centre Initiative should be more clearly outlined at the start of the application process. The application process could then enable Centres to develop a step-by-step plan of how they could implement the ELCC Centre grant effectively, ensuring that the processes, expectations and goals were clearly laid out for the Centre, ELCC educators, parents/caregivers and ELCC Centre partners.

Some ELCC educators emphasized the importance of ensuring that the fundamentals, such as staffing, were in place prior to increasing a Centre's enrollment or implementing curriculum changes. This was echoed by a few ELCC Centre partners who observed that setting up all aspects of the ELCC Centre Initiative was a lot of work for ELCC educators. Introducing curriculum changes slowly would therefore help ELCC educators to feel less overwhelmed. As described by one ELCC Centre educator: *"There are things you have to learn and figure out and decide 'on the fly'. All of these other programs [the PPP Curriculum Framework and the ASaP Continuum Project] coming in on top of it so fast, at one time, is very overwhelming. We need to make sure families are okay before we can start implementing [the ELCC Centre Initiative's] expectations and having [the GRIT coach and pedagogical partner] come in."*

Implementation Timelines

As noted by some ELCC Centre supervisors it is important to have a clear, delineated implementation plan. The plan should also include a realistic understanding of the amount of time required for implementation. For both new and existing ELCC Centres, there were high levels of stress associated with 'growing too big too fast'. Having new children (including children who had never attended child care before), ELCC educators who were new to the ELCC Centre or early childhood education, new families, new partners, new space, new equipment, new learnings (e.g. the ASaP Continuum Project and the ELCC Curriculum Framework) and new policies was a lot to manage all at once. Following the award of the ELCC Centre grant, more time was needed by ELCC Centres to meet the requirements of their agreement.

A few ELCC Centre supervisors suggested engaging ELCC educators prior to opening the new ELCC Centre/new rooms/new spaces, where ELCC educators could work on team-building, skills development and ensuring that the spaces would meet the Centre's needs in anticipation of increased enrollment. Another suggestion was that new ELCC Centres should have a 'settling in' period prior to beginning to participate in ELCC Curriculum Framework and the ASaP Continuum Project training, so that ELCC educators could engage in this training with more focus, rather than trying to juggle all new elements at once.

Administrative and Accounting Support

Many of the ELCC Centre supervisors emphasized the importance of engaging qualified administrative support prior to implementation of the ELCC Centre grant. They noted that the paperwork and associated administrative tasks that formed part of implementing the ELCC Centre grant were overwhelming, and that having dedicated administrative support in place from the beginning would help ELCC Centre supervisors to avoid getting ‘bogged down’ in paperwork.

The same applied to having dedicated and qualified accounting support. Many of the ELCC Centre supervisors described the accounting requirements as unclear and overwhelming; having accounting support in place from the start would be extremely beneficial. One ELCC Centre supervisor advised: *“Bring in an accountant earlier, to save yourself a month of tears and sleepless nights”*. ELCC Centre supervisors noted that it was also important to have good processes in place from the start (e.g. accounting practices), and to anticipate costs realistically (e.g. the increase in food and janitorial costs that inevitably accompany increased children attending the ELCC Centre).

4.4 Sustainability

**SUMMARY RESPONSE TO EVALUATION QUESTION 14:
WHAT FACTORS SUPPORT OR HINDER THE ELCC CENTRE INITIATIVE SUSTAINABILITY?**

Interviews with ELCC Centre supervisors found that:

- The ELCC Centre grants are covering the shortfall between the child care fees collected and the costs associated with running the ELCC Centres. However, without the ELCC Centre grants, the \$25 per day maximum parent fees would not be sustainable for ELCC Centres.
- ELCC Centres are managing shortfalls by carefully managing their budgets and, in some cases, seeking financial support from other funders.
- Providing ELCC educators with competitive wages is critical to attracting and retaining qualified staff.
- The flat fee of \$25 per day for parents/caregivers is believed to be a reasonable rate for parents/caregivers to pay for child care.

The majority of ELCC Centre supervisors reported that, although there was a shortfall between the fees collected and the costs associated with running their ELCC Centre, the shortfall was covered by the ELCC Centre grant. The scope of the reported shortfall varied by ELCC Centre.

To manage the shortfall, some ELCC Centre supervisors indicated that they now had to manage their budgets very closely and be ‘creative’ about sourcing in-kind supports (e.g. seeking out donations of materials or supplies). However, one issue with this was that the time required to find such supports took them away from focusing on other priorities. A few ELCC Centre supervisors also reported that they received financial support for their ELCC Centres from other funders.

Additionally, the majority of ELCC Centre supervisors stated that their ELCC Centre is engaged in fundraising activities. Activities included (each response was mentioned by one or a few interviewees):

- Organizing and/or hosting activities (BBQs, Wine Survivor, story night, silent auction, baby bazaar, corn maze);

- Selling things (cinnamon buns, Purdy's chocolates, tacos, Little Caesar's pizza kits, beef jerky, steeped tea, M&M Meats products, potted plants at local greenhouse, magazines, Tupperware, tuques, Thirty One products, gift cards);
- Working bingos and casinos (including several Centres that are in the process of applying to work casinos); and
- Holding raffles.

Some ELCC Centre supervisors mentioned that, in order for quality child care to be sustainable, they needed to pay child care workers higher wages. They noted that the ELCC Centre Initiative placed high expectations on staff and that ELCC educators should be compensated accordingly. A few ELCC Centre partners also believed that there was a need to ensure that ELCC educators are appropriately compensated for their work; they pointed out that most child care staff receive few to no benefits, nor do they have a matching retirement savings program or pension.

Although staff compensation was noted by some ELCC Centre supervisors and ELCC Centre partners as being an important factor in the delivery of quality child care, a few ELCC Centre supervisors expressed concern about their ELCC Centre's ability to cover its costs when the minimum wage increases in October 2018.

Generally, most ELCC Centre supervisors and ELCC Centre partners believed that the flat fee of \$25 was reasonable for child care. Although a few stated that this rate was still too high for some families, particularly if they earned too much to qualify for subsidy (e.g. middle-income families), interviewees believed that if the rates were any lower, it would compromise the quality of care. Several interviewees also believed that it was important that families paid something, to ensure that the value of child care was not undermined, and to support ELCC Centres: *"It's a responsible amount. We still have to take responsibility as parents/caregivers to pay child care fees; this helps the daycares to be sustainable. We should not expect the government to do more than what they are already doing. It's a great start but we have to be reasonable too."* Some interviewees believed that the flat fee helps ensure all Albertans have equal access to affordable, quality child care; however, they cautioned that this rate is only reasonable for centres if they are government funded. A few ELCC Centre supervisors also expressed concern over how sustainable the government funding is and wondered what would happen if Alberta had a different government.

ELCC Centre supervisors provided the following general comments about the affordability of daycare:

- With \$25 per day parent fees, they don't know how much more affordable daycare could be made (a few).
- \$25 per day parent fees are reasonable (most). However, with the ELCC Centre Initiative, ELCC Centres had to remove fees that were intended to keep families accountable (e.g. late payment fees). Additionally, one ELCC Centre supervisor expressed concern about the commitment of parents who are receiving the full child care subsidy and therefore do not have to pay any out-of-pocket parent fees.
- \$25 per day parent fees should be retained into the future (most). However, one ELCC Centre supervisor suggested that some parents/caregivers may abuse the use of day care if the fees were any lower (e.g. not show up of day care, leave children in care for 11 hours or more per day). Additionally, one ELCC Centre supervisor suggested that parents/caregivers would withdraw their children from day care if parent fees reverted back to the rates that ELCC Centres were charging prior to the launch of the ELCC Centre Initiative.

- There is a need for subsidies for parents/caregivers falling in the middle income bracket, especially as the cost of living varies across the province (some).
- There should be lower fees for parents/caregivers with multiple children attending day care (a few).

Most ELCC Centre supervisors tended to believe that all Albertans should have access to affordable, quality care at the same rate. They also said a flat fee is simple to administer. The majority of interviewees did not have suggestions for other funding models, with the exception of one who suggested that child care, like grade school, be fully-funded by the government. Most ELCC Centre partners did not know if the flat fee was the right model and did not know what alternate models could or should be used. While one interviewee suggested that a sliding scale may be more affordable for government, this individual cautioned that would be a lot of work to implement.

Overall, the majority of ELCC Centre supervisors indicated that they would not be able to provide \$25 per child care without the ELCC Centre grant. For example, one ELCC Centre supervisor described how, without the ELCC Centre grant, their current operations would be comprehensively impacted: *“We would be \$6,000 in the hole each month without the ELCC Centre grant. We wouldn’t be able to afford the staff we have, provide coverage or offer professional development.”* Other impacts reported by ELCC Centre supervisors included (each response was provided by one or a few interviewees):

- Children would be vulnerable;
- ELCC Centres would not be able to implement the family engagement components of the ELCC Centre Initiative (e.g. ELCC Curriculum Framework, parent/caregiver involvement in quality assurance, parenting supports, supports for vulnerable families);
- Parent fees would increase;
- ELCC Centres would have re-evaluate what services they provide and cut-back on the ‘extras’ that they offer;
- ELCC Centres would not be able to afford as many Level 3 ELCC educators;
- ELCC Centres would have to lower wages and cut-back on resources; and
- ELCC Centres would have to reduce staff-child ratios to that required under the Child Care Licensing Regulation.

The views expressed by most ELCC Centre partners aligned with those expressed by the ELCC Centre supervisors: namely, that \$25 per day per child fees is not sustainable without the ELCC Centre grant, and that \$25 per day per child fees could only be maintained if ELCC Centres received heavily subsidized rent/facilities maintenance or if they received funding from elsewhere (for example, another grant). In order to maintain the \$25 per day per child fee structure without the ELCC Centre grant, ELCC Centres would have to (each response was mentioned by a few or some interviewees):

- Decrease operational costs;
- Stop paying educators a fair wage;
- Lay staff off;
- Put professional development ‘on the back burner’; and
- Look for alternative funding sources;

One ELCC Centre partner explained that multiple factors, such as quality, location, overhead and operational costs and number of employees, would be impacted and that ELCC Centres would need to

charge a minimum of \$50 per child per day in order to continue to provide child care without changing its operations.

Table 4.66 provides a summary the facilitating factors identified by ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators and partners.

Table 4.66: Factors Facilitating the Sustainability of the ELCC Centre Initiative (Interviews with ELCC Centre Supervisors, n=18; ELCC Educators, n=45; and ELCC Centre Partners, n=24)

Facilitating Factor	Identified by ELCC Centre...		
	Supervisors	Educators	Partners
Continued funding – ELCC Centre Grant	✓	✓	✓
Continued government support – Subsidy and Accreditation funding	✓	✓	✓
Continued education/professional development opportunities for educators	✓	✓	✓
Access to/employment of certified/qualified educators	✓	✓	✓
Increased/ongoing community cooperation and support	✓	✓	✓
Offering fair wages for ELCC Centre staff	✓	✓	
ELCC Curriculum Framework/ASaP Continuum Project/quality of child care	✓		
Ongoing support from pedagogical partners and GRIT coaches	✓		
Financial support for administration costs	✓		
Time	✓		
More funded daycares/more spaces		✓	
Ongoing promotion/awareness campaigns highlighting the supports and services being provided			✓
Good organizational leadership			✓
Decreasing the ‘red tape’ relating to building codes for child care centres			✓

ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators and ELCC Centre partners also identified a range of factors that they believed might hinder the sustainability of the ELCC Centre Initiative. Aside from the opposite of the factors presented in the table above (for example, just as ‘ongoing funding’ was identified as a facilitating factor, the ‘lack of funding’ was identified as a hindering factor), the following were identified as factors that might hinder the sustainability of the ELCC Centre Initiative (each response was provided by a one or a few interviewees):

- If demand/enrollment declined in the future;
- If parents/caregivers perceive ELCC Centres as being located in ‘undesirable’ areas;
- Lack of good-quality physical spaces (e.g. playgrounds);
- A downturn in the economy; and
- Changes in personnel (either within the ELCC Centre or within partner organizations).

As shown in Table 4.67, pedagogical partners and GRIT coaches identified the following factors that they believe may facilitate or hinder the sustainability of ELCC Curriculum Framework and inclusion practices in ELCC Centres:

**Table 4.67: Factors Facilitating the Sustainability of the ELCC Curriculum Framework and Inclusion Practices in ELCC Centres
(Interviews with Pedagogical Partners and GRIT Coaches, n=26)**

Facilitating Factors	Hindering Factors
Increased or continued funding	Decreased funding
Staff retention	Staff turnover (e.g. having to bring people in to start all over again)
Time	A lack of time
Infrastructure (e.g. staff training; protected planning time)	A lack of infrastructure (e.g. no buy-in from leadership team)
Communication	A lack of communication
Increased knowledge/understanding (e.g. ensuring knowledge and education is Centre-wide)	Decreased knowledge/understanding (e.g. a lack of understanding from decision-makers who oversee/govern the Centre)

Comparison Centres

Comparison Centre supervisors identified a wider breadth of sources of financial support than did the ELCC Centre supervisors. Comparison Centre supervisors identified financial support has or does come from the following sources (each response was mentioned by one or a few interviewees): AB Works, Family and Community Social Services, local church, municipality, Parent Link Centre, United Way, Alliance Club, Lions Club, Canadian Union of Postal Workers (subsidy for giving workers priority), Boys and Girls Club, oilfields, Sears, reduced fees on rental space and other cash donations.

Comparison Centre supervisors also identified the following sources of in-kind supports (each response was mentioned by a few or some interviewees):

- Infrastructure supports (e.g. use of space at local library, community centre, college campus);
- Knowledge supports (e.g. staff education, translation/culture/language, parenting workshops);
- Referral supports (e.g. to housing supports, jobs supports);
- Volunteer supports (e.g. United Way providing labour, volunteer groups offering services);
- Donation supports (e.g. library donating overstocked books);
- Food supports (e.g. sponsored lunches, food bank).

Like ELCC Centres, almost all of the Comparison Centre supervisors stated that their Centre engages in fundraising activities. The activities these interviewees described align directly with those identified by ELCC Centre supervisors, and include (each response was mentioned by a few or some interviewees):

- Organizing and/or hosting activities (e.g. bottle drives, Tin Man marathon; dinners, concerts, auctions, Chase Ace, county clean-up);
- Selling things (e.g. Purdy's chocolates, Bake sales, greeting cards, cookie dough, Scholastic books, cookbooks, Little Caesar's pizza kits, tea);
- Working casinos and rodeo concession;
- Holding raffles and 50/50 draws.

Table 4.68 presents the factors that Comparison Centre supervisors identified as supporting the sustainability of their child care Centre.

**Table 4.68: Factors Facilitating the Sustainability of Comparison Centres
(Comparison Centre Supervisor Interviews, n=20)**

Facilitating Factor	Description
Parents	• Having a volunteer program in place
	• Having a parent board in place
	• Participating in fundraising activities
	• Having trust in the parents/caregivers
	• Ongoing commitment from parents/caregivers
Operational practices	• Offering 'good' child care fees
	• Having a good business model, to ensure Centre self-sufficiency
	• Offering extended hours
	• Maintaining 'good' or 'excellent' budget management practices
Quality	• Offering a 'good' child care program
	• Being licensed and accredited
	• Having core values, standards, policies and procedures in place
	• There is Centre oversight
Funding	• Receiving core funding from municipality, if provided
	• Receiving government subsidy (child care subsidy and accreditation grant funding)
	• Aspiring to provide affordable parent fees
Reputation	• Parents/caregivers at the Centre are happy
	• Parents/caregivers recommend the Centre to others
	• Centre has a good name and good reputation
	• Word of mouth: <i>"We're quite well known in the city as a good quality centre, so that's why we do have a waiting list as well. We don't actually need to do advertisements because parents [pass messages] to their friends, family members, so we never had advertising in our centre. That's what is helping us."</i>
Community need	• Centre is the only daycare in community, so Centre is generally always full
	• Centre fills a need within the community
	• Having a full waiting list means they can plan operationally
Staff	• Educators are 'good', 'friendly', 'excellent'
	• Educators feel supported
	• Centre is run by experienced leadership/management
	• Educators are educated (important for sustained quality)
	• Educators stay at the Centre long-term

The two main hindering factors identified by some Comparison Centre supervisors were attendance (including low and inconsistent enrollment) and finances. In terms of the latter, cost of living increases and minimum wage increases were both identified as putting strain on Comparison Centres' financial resources. One Comparison Centre supervisor expressed some frustration when discussing how Centre management allocated funds: *"They are not fully aware of what is involved in a day care because a daycare isn't a babysitting service. People don't understand the difference and get it mixed up. That is one of the biggest hurdles I seem to face right now. I don't want second-hand toys; a day care should have better-quality toys and more toys in [their] playroom."*

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Relevance

Evaluation participants overwhelmingly stated that there is an ongoing need for the ELCC Centre Initiative. For example, the main reason parents/caregivers chose to enroll their child in their Centre rather than another one was because it was affordable or accessible.

Without the ELCC Centre Initiative, low income families would have reduced access to affordable child care leading to less labour force attachment and economic and mental wellbeing. ELCC Centres required the ELCC Centre Initiative's support to improve the quality of child care provision, increase the number of qualified ELCC educators and increase the professionalization of ELCC educators.

Additionally, the ELCC Centre Initiative is directly aligned with the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care, signed by federal/provincial/territorial Ministers in June 2017.

Performance: Outcomes

Impact on Family and Child Well-Being

The ELCC Centre Initiative has impacted family and child well-being in a wide variety of ways. The accessibility, affordability and quality of care have all contributed to reducing parents/caregivers' stress and providing them with peace of mind. The ELCC Centre has also contributed to reducing the financial burdens that families' face and enabled them to make ends meet, pay off debts, save for the future and afford to do fun activities with their children. Additionally, the ELCC Centre Initiative has enabled parents/caregivers to return to school or work and to exercise more freedom of choice regarding their career and work arrangements.

While both ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and Comparison Centre parents/caregivers reported that licensed child care has improved their quality of life, increased their labour force attachment and increased their children's skills/abilities/confidence/socialization, the parent survey results suggest that the ELCC Centre Initiative potentially has a larger impact on these elements of well-being than licensed child care in a Comparison Centre. Parents/caregivers who had children enrolled in an ELCC Centre and parents/caregivers who had children enrolled in a Comparison Centre both indicated that the quality of child care was the main contributor to the impacts on their family and children's well-being.

Progress towards Improved Accessibility

ELCC Centres have implemented several improvements to enhance the accessibility of child care. As of March 31, 2018:

- The ELCC Centre Initiative contributed to creation of 362⁴⁷ net new child care spaces in 19 ELCC Centres (which is below the proposed target of 636 net new child care spaces based on 22 ELCC Centres) and 293 additional enrollments in 'existing' ELCC Centres (which exceeds the proposed target of 78 additional enrollments in 'existing' ELCC Centres);
- 11 of 13 ELCC Centres are offering flexible child care to support parents (including 10 of the 13 that proposed to do so);

⁴⁷ While this report identifies changes in licensed spaces from March 2017 to March 2018 (n=362 net new spaces), there were two ELCC Centres (Kids Campus Day Care Society and Willow Lake Tiny Tots Daycare) that expanded the number of licensed spaces from 71 to 98 (n=27 net new spaces) in February 2017 and from 0 to 14 (n=14 net new spaces) in March 2017.

- 18 of 16 ELCC Centres are collaborating with other service organizations for co-location or new partnerships for delivering the ELCC Centre Initiative (including 16 of the 16 that proposed to do so); and
- 10 of 10 ELCC Centres that proposed to do so are supporting child care in rural communities.

Generally, it took parents/caregivers who responded to the parent/caregiver survey one to three months to secure a space at their child care centre. However, ELCC Centres are beginning to face significantly increased waiting lists.

One-quarter of parent/caregiver survey respondents whose children are enrolled in an ELCC Centre that offers extended hours had taken advantage of this option at least once per month.

Progress towards Improved Affordability

As of March 2018, the average daily fee for day care programs in Alberta was \$40.69. For parents/caregivers receiving full subsidy, the average daily amount they received was \$25.46, which makes their parent portion of child care fees \$15.23 per day.

The proportion of parents/caregivers at ELCC Centres who were receiving the child care subsidy (35%) was slightly higher than the proportion of parents/caregivers receiving the child care subsidy for all day care programs in Alberta (34%). With the \$25 per day child care at ELCC Centres, parents/caregivers at these centres who receive the full subsidy (\$25.46 per day on average) do not have to pay any monthly parent fees.

Almost all (91%) ELCC Centre parents/caregivers who responded to the survey stated that they were paying \$550 or less per month for one child's enrollment in an ELCC Centre. The average parent fees to enroll one child in an ELCC Centre was \$474 per month (standard deviation \$235) compared to \$782 per month (standard deviation \$346) for licensed child care in a Comparison Centre.

The parent/caregiver survey found that almost one-third of responding ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (30%) are spending 10.00% or less of their monthly income on child care fees; this compares to 10% of responding Comparison Centre parents/caregivers. Almost one-quarter of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (23%) are spending between 10.01% and 20.00% of their monthly income on child care fees; this compares to 26% of Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (differences are statistically significant).

Almost all ELCC Centre parents/caregivers who responded to the survey (98%) were very satisfied (83%) or satisfied (15%) with the cost of child care at the ELCC Centre their children attended. Only half of the Comparison Centre parents/caregivers who responded to the survey (52%) were very satisfied (25%) or satisfied (27%) with the cost of child care at the ELCC Centre their children attended.

Progress towards Improved Quality

As of March 2018, 13 of the 19 opened ELCC Centres were accredited and the six remaining ELCC Centres were pre-accredited. However, ELCC Centres have up to 18 months to apply for an accreditation site visit.

Most ELCC educators had been introduced to the ELCC Curriculum Framework; however, the depth to which they had been exposed to the ELCC Curriculum Framework varied. The pedagogical resources and

supports that ELCC educators are receiving to implement the ELCC Curriculum Framework is improving their knowledge, skills and practices, although the rate at which these improvements are occurring vary across sites.

The aspects of the ELCC Curriculum Framework that ELCC educators seemed to understand best included holistic goals, the image of the child, the value of play, documentation (e.g. making learning visible) and learning stories. Aspects of the ELCC Curriculum Framework that they found the most challenging included understanding the terminology used in the ELCC Curriculum Framework; understanding the role of the educator and how to support that within the classroom; reflective practice, including having time to be reflective; how documentation connects to planning; and connecting the ELCC Curriculum Framework philosophies with different cultural backgrounds. ELCC Centres differ in the extent to which they have started to use the ELCC Curriculum Framework in their child care practices; however, at the majority ELCC Centres, ELCC educators are beginning to reflect the principles of the ELCC Curriculum Framework in their practice. For example, ELCC educators are beginning to use the ELCC Curriculum Framework language and terminology; creating more responsive environments; providing natural materials and loose parts for children to interact with; planning and organizing activities in relation to holistic goals, the children's interests and learning stories; being more responsive to children; providing children with more opportunity to explore and freedom of choice; documenting learning; and building stronger relationships with families.

ELCC educators have taken workshops related to the ASaP Continuum Project and GRIT coaches are coming to the ELCC centres to support ELCC educators. However, it appears that fewer ELCC educators have been exposed to the ASaP Continuum Project than the ELCC Curriculum Framework. In part, this may reflect the support model for ASaP Continuum Project, which involves GRIT coaches providing one-on-one support to one or two ELCC educators in the centre.

ELCC educators are being advised to incorporate the ASaP Continuum Project into their daily child care practices and interactions with children by using universal principles; observing children to see what is contributing to the way they are feeling and behaving; helping children to understand and express their emotions; creating boundaries and room expectations for the children; assisting children with transitions; and helping children develop problem-solving skills.

The same proportion of respondents to the parent/caregiver survey from ELCC Centres and Comparison Centres were very satisfied or satisfied with:

- The quality of care provided at the Centre their children attend (97% of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 95% of Comparison Centre parents/caregivers); and
- The degree to which their child is meaningfully engaged in Centre activities (97% of ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 95% of Comparison Centre parents/caregivers).

This finding is not surprising as it is highly unlikely that a parent/caregiver would choose to keep their children enrolled in a child care centre that they did not perceive as providing high quality child care. However, based on the wording of the survey questions, it is not possible to determine how these parents/caregivers define 'quality care' or 'meaningful engagement in Centre activities'.

Impact on Labour Force and School Opportunities

According to CS administrative data, as of March 2018, the ELCC Centre Initiative contributed to 328 Albertans entering or re-entering the workforce (19 of 22 ELCC Centres), which is just below the proposed target of 357 Albertans entering or re-entering the workforce (based on 22 ELCC Centres). Respondents to the parent/caregiver survey indicated that their children's enrollment at a child care centre enabled them to:

- Return to work full-time (194 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (66%), including 164 females and 161 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (71%), including 129 females);
- Return to work part-time (41 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (14%), including 38 females and 28 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (12%), including 26 females);
- Return to school full-time (33 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers, including 30 females and 29 for Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (13%), including 29 females);
- Return to school part-time (nine ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (3%), all of whom were female and 14 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (6%), all of whom were female); and
- Take more classes in school (three ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (1%), all of whom were female and one Comparison Centre parent/caregiver (<1%), who was female).

Less than 1 in 10 parents/caregivers who responded to the survey said that their children's enrollment at a child care centre did not enable them to return to work or school (22 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers (8%), including nine who were female and 13 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers (6%), including one who was female). Based on the wording of the survey question, it is not possible to determine whether these respondents were already working or attending school and therefore using an alternative child care arrangement for their children.

Additionally, some respondents to the parent/caregiver survey indicated that their children's enrollment at a child care centre had enabled someone else in their household who provided child care duties for the child to:

- Return to work full-time (63 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 42 Comparison Centre parents/caregivers);
- Return to work part-time (10 ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and seven Comparison Centre parents/caregivers);
- Return to school full-time (one ELCC Centre parent/caregiver and two Comparison Centre parents/caregivers);
- Return to school part-time (three ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and no Comparison Centre parents/caregivers); and
- Take more classes in school (no ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and no Comparison Centre parents/caregivers).

Based on the wording of this survey question, it is not possible to determine the gender of the other individuals who were enabled to return to work or school as a result of the child's enrollment in a child care centre.

When asked a series of statements about the impact of their children's enrollment at a child care centre on their career, parents/caregivers who responded to the survey reported that 'yes', it enabled them to:

- Focus more on work (86% for ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 83% for Comparison Centre parents/caregivers);

- Work more hours (67% for ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 62% for Comparison Centre parents/caregivers); and
- Accept more work responsibility (61% for ELCC Centre parents/caregivers and 56% for Comparison Centre parents/caregivers; no statistically significant differences).

Unmet Needs

Most interviewees did not identify any gaps in the ongoing accessibility, affordability or quality of child care at ELCC Centres. However, a few cautioned that the ELCC Centre Initiative is still new and will take time to fully implement.

The few interviewees who identified gaps indicated the need for:

- More spaces for children;
- More extended hours child care (e.g. late night care);
- Expansion of the ELCC Centre Initiative to other child care centres;
- More highly trained, qualified staff;
- More staff training and coaching to help them understand and implement the new child care practices; and
- Reduced ELCC educator-to-child ratios to continue to improve quality of care.

Summary of Parent/Caregiver Survey Findings

The following table provides a summary of the parent/caregiver survey findings across all ELCC Centres.

	Overall (n=294)
Reasons for Choosing ELCC Centre	
Agreement that the most important factor in decision to enroll child in this Centre was...	
a. accessibility	21%#
b. affordability	36%#
c. quality	39%#
Accessibility	
Satisfaction with the location of this Centre	96%*
Satisfaction with this Centre's hours of operation	95%*
Affordability	
Average cost per month	\$474/month
Satisfaction with the cost of child care at this Centre	98%*
Quality Processes for Parents/Caregivers	
Proportion of parents aware of quality improvement processes	71%#
Proportion of parents that have participated in quality improvement processes	55%#
Inclusiveness	
Agreement that 'Staff make me feel welcome and accepted'	98%+
Proportion of parents who believe that this 'Centre provides learning activities that celebrate different cultures'	75%#
Parenting Supports	
Proportion of parents aware of parenting supports available through this Centre	63%#
Quality	
Agreement that staff at the Centre are professionals	94%+
Agreement that staff regularly communicate with parents about their child's day so that they can incorporate their child's interests into activities at home	86%+
Satisfaction that their child is meaningfully engaged in Centre activities	97%*
Satisfaction with the quality of care provided at this Centre	97%*
Outcomes	
Agreement that the quality of care has positively impacted their child	97%+
Agreement that child's enrollment has enabled them/another caregiver to...	
a. accept a promotion	26%#
b. switch to a new job	29%#
c. study more for a better position or job	34%#
d. work more hours	67%#

Source: ELCC Parent/Caregiver Survey

Percent 'yes'; * Percent 'very satisfied' and 'satisfied'; + Percent 'strongly agree' and 'agree'

Summary of ELCC Educator Survey Findings

The following table provides a summary of the ELCC educator survey findings across all ELCC Centres.

	Overall (n=198)
Professional Development	
Satisfaction with professional development opportunities	81%*
Proportion of staff who feel they have been provided with the necessary training and resources to complete work effectively	89%#
Proportion of staff who feel they have more professional development opportunities than at other child care centres	79%# (n=113)
ELCC Curriculum Framework	
Proportion of staff who feel that the Curriculum Framework has supported them to...	
a. develop responsive curriculum	87%#
b. provide responsive and interesting activities and experiences to the children	92%#
c. provide responsive and interesting environments to the children	93%#
Inclusion Training	
Satisfaction that inclusion training has...	
a. increased staff competency (generally and specifically)	31%**
b. improved staff interactions with parents and children	26%**
c. resulted in operational changes at this Centre	13%**
Staff Workload and Retention	
Proportion of staff able to manage workload effectively	89%#
Proportion of staff intending to stay at this Centre over the next 12 months	87%#
ELCC Initiative Outcomes	
Proportion of staff that feel they are treated as a professional in this Centre	88%#
Proportion of staff that have more confidence in the quality of care provided (compared to other child care Centres they have worked at)	83%# (n=113) ⁵
Proportion of staff that feel there is an ongoing need for the ELCC Initiative	81%#

Source: ELCC Educator Survey

Percent 'yes'; * Percent 'very satisfied' and 'satisfied'; ** Provided top of mind in open-ended response (multiple responses allowed)

⁵ The n-size represents the number of ELCC educator survey respondents who answered 'yes' when asked 'aside from where you currently work, have you worked at other child care centres?'

Performance: Implementation

Across ELCC Centres the ELCC Centre Initiative has been implemented as intended. Specifically, the ELCC Centres are providing affordable child care to families at \$25 per day, have increased accessibility through new spaces (9 of the 22 ELCC Centres are new and as of March 31, 2018, 362⁴⁸ net new child care spaces have been established in ELCC Centres) and are in the process of implementing the ELCC Curriculum Framework and the ASaP Continuum Project to increase child care quality. Additionally, all of the ELCC Centres are in the process of implementing one or more of the six improvements. According to the ELCC Centre Initiative Fourth Quarter Report Update as of March 31, 2018, ELCC Centres are implementing the following improvements:

⁴⁸ While this report identifies changes in licensed spaces from March 2017 to March 2018 (n=362 net new spaces), there were two ELCC Centres (Kids Campus Day Care Society and Willow Lake Tiny Tots Daycare) that expanded the number of licensed spaces from 71 to 98 (n=27 net new spaces) in February 2017 and from 0 to 14 (n=14 net new spaces) in March 2017.

- 11 of 13 ELCC Centres are offering flexible child care to support parents (including 10 of the 13 that proposed to do so and one that did not propose the improvement but implemented it);
- 18 of 16 ELCC Centres are collaborating with other service organizations for co-location or new partnerships for delivering the ELCC Centre Initiative (including 16 of the 16 that proposed to do so and two that did not propose the improvement but implemented it);
- 19 of 18 ELCC Centres are collaborating with other service organizations that support knowledge about cultural diversity and learning as it relates to Indigenous, immigrant and refugee children (including 18 of the 18 that proposed to do so and one that did not propose the improvement but implemented it);
- 19 of 18 ELCC Centres that proposed to do so are collaborating with other service organizations to support the provision of parenting resources and supports (including 18 of the 18 that proposed to do so and one that did not propose the improvement but implemented it);
- 18 of 19 ELCC Centres that proposed to do so are collaborating with other service organizations to support vulnerable families; and
- 10 of 10 ELCC Centres that proposed to do so are supporting child care in rural communities.

The main factor facilitating the ELCC Centre Initiative implementation was the partnerships that ELCC Centres had with other organizations. ELCC Centres collaborated with a broad range of community partners including those that provided supports and services for parent and families, early childhood, health, special needs, literacy, mental health, crisis, emergency, culture and government, as well as other community supports.

The key factors hindering the ELCC Centre Initiative implementation included staffing challenges, time constraints, growing waiting lists for child care spaces and administrative requirements.

Lessons learned to inform future programming include:

- Having the 'right' staff who are educated and knowledgeable in early child care;
- Creating and investing in a positive team environment is critical to ensuring ELCC educators are engaged and feel like they are contributing to the efficient and effective operation of ELCC Centres;
- Providing consistent training for all ELCC educators to help promote efficiency and facilitate centre-wide understanding of child care practices;
- Changing practices takes time and can be daunting for some ELCC educators; introducing new child care practices to ELCC educators in small doses can help staff improve their understanding of, and comfort with, the material that is being presented;
- Providing ELCC educators with ongoing support to translate theory into practices can help facilitate successful implementation of new child care practices; and
- Ensuring grant agreement requirements and expectations are clearly articulated and well-understood can help ELCC Centre supervisors establish detailed implementation plans for their ELCC Centre.

Sustainability

The majority of ELCC Centre supervisors reported that, although there was a shortfall between the fees collected and the costs associated with running their ELCC Centre, the shortfall was covered by the ELCC Centre grant. To manage the shortfall, some ELCC Centre supervisors indicated that they now had to manage their budgets very closely and be 'creative' about sourcing in-kind supports (e.g. seeking out

donations of materials or supplies).

ELCC Centre supervisors mentioned that, in order for quality child care to be sustainable, they needed to pay child care workers higher wages. Although staff compensation was noted by ELCC Centre supervisors and ELCC Centre partners as being an important factor in the delivery of quality child care, a few ELCC Centre supervisors expressed concern about their ELCC Centre's ability to cover its costs when the minimum wage increases in October 2018.

Overall, ELCC Centre supervisors said the \$25 per day maximum was not sustainable for ELCC Centres without the ELCC Centre grant. Outside of the ELCC Centre grant, they would need to increase their parent fees to cover costs. ELCC Centre supervisors expressed concern over how sustainable the government funding is and wondered what would happen if Alberta had a different government.

Recommendations

1. CS should continue to support ELCC Centres to implement the ELCC Curriculum Framework.

ELCC Centres are in the initial stages of implementing the ELCC Curriculum Framework. ELCC educators are being introduced to the terminology and concepts being used in the ELCC Curriculum Framework and are just beginning the process of understanding how to translate the new knowledge into practice. ELCC educators have found working with pedagogical partners an invaluable support to helping them change their approach to planning and interacting with children and parents/caregivers. ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators and pedagogical partners all indicated that it will take several years for the ELCC Curriculum Framework to become engrained in the day-to-day ELCC Centre operations and child care practices.

2. ELCC Centres should continue to develop and strengthen partnerships with other organizations to support implementation of the improvements included in their ELCC Centre grant agreements.

In the first year of operation, ELCC Centres have focused on implementing the foundation elements of the ELCC Centre grant agreements (e.g. \$25 per day child care, ELCC Curriculum Framework, inclusive child care practices) and are therefore in the early stages of developing and strengthening partnerships. Over the next year of the ELCC Centre grants, ELCC Centres should place emphasis on continuing to implement the ELCC Centre improvements identified in their ELCC Centre grant agreements. This includes clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of the partners, indicating the range of supports/services that each partner will provide, determining how to raise families' awareness and use of the available supports and examining the impact of the supports on children and families.

3. ELCC Centres should continue to build and strengthen relationships with parents and raise their awareness and understanding of child care practices and available supports.

ELCC Centre supervisors, ELCC educators and pedagogical partners all noted that ELCC Centres need to continue to build and strengthen relationships with parents/caregivers. Furthermore, they all emphasized the importance of these relationships in supporting child development, improving parenting skills and supporting vulnerable families. ELCC Centres should monitor and

examine the impact of improved relationships with parents/caregivers on child and family well-being.

APPENDIX A: PROFILE OF ELCC CENTRES

For each ELCC Centre, Table A.1 contains the following information related to **day care spaces**:

- Number of new licensed day care spaces the centre proposed to create using the ELCC Centre grant funding;
- Number of existing licensed day care spaces at the centre as of March 31, 2017 (pre-ELCC Centre Initiative);
- Number of licensed day care spaces at the centre as of March 31, 2018, which is the sum of the number of licensed day care spaces that existed prior to the ELCC Centre Initiative and the number of new licensed day care spaces that were created using the ELCC Centre grant funding;
- Net increase in licensed day care spaces resulting from the ELCC Centre grant funding; and
- Extent to which the centre was able to create new licensed day care spaces as intended.

For each ELCC Centre, Table A.1 contains the following information related to **child enrollments** in licensed day care spaces:

- Number of new child enrollments in pre-existing licensed day care spaces (pre-ELCC Centre Initiative) that the centre proposed to secure as a result of the ELCC Centre Initiative;
- Number of existing child enrollments in licensed day care spaces at the centre as of March 31, 2017 (pre-ELCC Centre Initiative);
- Number of child enrollments in licensed day care spaces at the centre as of March 31, 2018, which is the sum of the number of child enrollments in licensed day care spaces that existed prior to the ELCC Centre Initiative and the number of new child enrollments resulting from the ELCC Centre Initiative;
- Net increase in child enrollments in licensed day care spaces resulting from the ELCC Centre Initiative; and
- Extent to which the centre was able to increase child enrollments in licensed day care spaces as intended.

As shown in Table A.1, as of March 31, 2018:

- Four ELCC Centres had increased the number of licensed day care spaces as planned with one of the four ELCC Centres creating seven more new licensed day care spaces than planned.
- Eleven ELCC Centres had not yet increased the number licensed day care spaces as planned.⁴⁹
- Four ELCC Centres did not have any plans to increase the number of day care spaces.
- Five ELCC Centres met or exceeded their proposed increases in child enrollments in licensed day care spaces.
- One ELCC Centre had not achieved its proposed increases in child enrollments.
- Thirteen ELCC Centres (including six new ELCC Centres) did not propose increases in child enrollments.⁵⁰

Table A.2 lists the improvements that each ELCC Centre proposed to implement and the improvements they have implemented as of March 31, 2018.⁵¹

⁴⁹ While this report identifies changes in licensed spaces from March 2017 to March 2018, the new program, Willow Lake Tiny Tots Daycare, was licensed in February 2017 for 14 spaces and by March 2018 met its target of 30 licensed spaces. Thus, 10 ELCC Centres, instead of 11, had not yet met their target by March 2018.

⁵⁰ Information on proposed increases in licensed day care spaces and child enrollments is drawn from CS administrative data. Proposed improvements is drawn from the ELCC Centre grant agreements. Information on actual licensed day care spaces and child enrollments is based on data contained in CS' Child Care Information System (CCIS). Please note that when an ELCC Centre has children enrolled on a part-time basis, the number of enrollments may exceed the number of licensed day care spaces.

⁵¹ Information on improvements that have been implemented was drawn from Fourth Quarter ELCC Grant Reports submitted by the ELCC Centers; however, Fourth Quarter ELCC Grant Reports were not available for five ELCC Centres so Second Quarter or Third Quarter ELCC Grant Reports were used in their place.

Table A.1: ELCC Centres Summary of Changes in Spaces and Enrollments as of March, 2018

Program		Spaces					Enrollments				
Name of Program	Location	Proposed New Spaces	Actual Spaces (Mar 2017) ¹	Actual Spaces (Mar 2018)	Increase in Spaces (Mar 2017 vs Mar 2018)	Created Planned Spaces	Proposed New Enrollments in Pre-Existing Spaces	Actual Enrollment (Mar 2017) ⁵²	Actual Enrollment (Mar 2018)	Increase in Enrollment (Mar 2017 vs Mar 2018)	Achieved Planned Enrollments (N/A for New. N/A if program did not specify)
Northwest Region											
Child's World Day Care Centre	Fairview	10	51	59	8	No (-2)	0	76	83	7	N/A
Sugar Plum Tree Day Care Centre	Peace River	32	64	90	26	No (-6)	0	76	112	36	N/A
Children's Centre Demonstration Daycare	Grande Prairie	28	0	28	28	Yes (+0)	0	0	28	28	N/A
Northeast Region											
Willow Lake Tiny Tots Daycare	Anzac	30	14	30	16	No (-14)	0	0	31	31	N/A
Edmonton Region											
Bissell Centre Early Childhood Education Program ⁵³	Edmonton	30	41	41	0	No (-30)	0	24	18	-6	N/A
Rotary Early Learning Program Childcare	Edmonton	40		29	29	No (-11)	0		13	13	N/A
Intercultural Daycare	Edmonton	20	43	63	20	Yes (+0)	0	43	64	21	N/A
Central Region											
Kids Campus Day Care	Camrose	4	98	109	11	Yes (+7)	10	116	156	40	Yes (+30)
Provost Daycare Society	Provost	0	34	69	35	N/A	9	34	59	25	Yes (+16)
Calgary Region											
The CFS - Dr. Clara Christie Learning Centre	Calgary	0	60	60	0	N/A	6	54	60	6	Yes (+0)
Thornhill Child Care - Lumino Centre	Calgary	88	0	84	84	No (-4)	0		82	82	N/A
Imagine Early Learning and Childcare Centre	Calgary	100	0	45	45	No (-55)	0		40	40	N/A

⁵² Includes numbers for Bissell Centre Early Childhood Education Program in March 2017.

⁵³ Bissell Centre Early Childhood Education Program became an ELCC Centre on March 2018.

Program		Spaces					Enrollments				
Name of Program	Location	Proposed New Spaces	Actual Spaces (Mar 2017)	Actual Spaces (Mar 2018)	Increase in Spaces (Mar 2017 vs Mar 2018)	Created Planned Spaces	Proposed New Enrollments in Pre-Existing Spaces	Actual Enrollment (Mar 2017)	Actual Enrollment (Mar 2018)	Increase in Enrollment (Mar 2017 vs Mar 2018)	Achieved Planned Enrollments (N/A for New. N/A if program did not specify)
Hillhurst Sunnyside Daycare/Out Of School Care	Calgary	18	64	80	16	No (-2)	0	59	71	12	N/A
Puzzles – Banff	Banff	40	0	24	24	No (-16)	0		35	35	N/A
South Region											
Opokaa'Sin Childcare Centre	Lethbridge	20	33	53	20	Yes (+0)	0	24	49	25	N/A
North Central											
Wildflowers Childcare	Jasper	0	83	83	0	N/A	12	83	93	10	No (-2)
Westlock Community Day Care Centre	Westlock	0	77	77	0	N/A	25	50	90	40	Yes (+15)
Bonnyville And District Daycare	Bonnyville	16	52	52	0	No (-16)	16	47	97	50	Yes (+34)
Lac La Biche Little Sprouts Child Care	Lac La Biche	24	57	57	0	No (-24)	0	43	70	27	N/A
Total		500	771	1,133	362*	Four Centres created their planned spaces	78	729	1,251	522	Five Centres achieved their planned enrollments

*While this report identifies changes in licensed spaces from March 2017 to March 2018 (n=362 net new spaces), there were two ELCC Centres (Kids Campus Day Care Society and Willow Lake Tiny Tots Daycare) that expanded the number of licensed spaces from 71 to 98 (n=27 net new spaces) in February 2017 and from 0 to 14 (n=14 net new spaces) in March 2017.

Table A.2: ELCC Centres Summary of Changes in Proposed Improvement Matrix as of March, 2018

Program		Proposed Improvements						Improvements Implemented (Mar 2018) ⁵⁴					
Name of Program	Location	Flexible Child Care	Collaborate - co-location or new partnerships	Collaborate - support Indigenous, immigrant and refugee children	Collaborate - parenting resources and supports to families	Collaborate -support vulnerable families	Support child care in rural communities	Flexible Child Care	Collaborate - co-location or new partnerships	Collaborate - support Indigenous, immigrant and refugee children	Collaborate - parenting resources and supports to families	Collaborate -support vulnerable families	Support child care in rural communities
Northwest Region													
Child's World Day Care Centre	Fairview	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sugar Plum Tree Day Care Centre	Peace River			x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x
Children's Centre Demonstration Daycare	Grande Prairie	x		x	x	x	x	x	x ^a	x	x	x	x
Northeast Region													
Willow Lake Tiny Tots Daycare	Anzac		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
Edmonton Region													
Bissell Centre Early Childhood Program	Edmonton	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	
Rotary Early Learning Program Childcare	Edmonton	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		
Intercultural Daycare	Edmonton	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	
Central Region													
Kids Campus Day Care	Camrose	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	
Provost Daycare Society	Provost	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Calgary Region													
The CFS - Dr. Clara Christie Learning Centre	Calgary		x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	
Thornhill Child Care - Lumino Centre	Calgary		x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	

^a Identifies ELCC Centres that had not originally proposed the respective improvement but yet implemented it as of March 2018.

⁵⁴ Third Quarter reports were used for the following ELCC Centres: Child's World Day Care Centre, Sugar Plum Tree Day Care Centre, Opokaa'Sin Childcare Centre, and Rotary Early Learning Program Childcare. Second Quarter reports were used for: Children's Centre Demonstration Daycare

Program		Proposed Improvements						Improvements Implemented (Dec 2017) ⁵⁵					
Name of Program	Location	Flexible Child Care	Collaborate - co-location or new partnerships	Collaborate - support Indigenous, immigrant and refugee children	Collaborate - parenting resources and supports to families	Collaborate -support vulnerable families	Support child care in rural communities	Flexible Child Care	Collaborate - co-location or new partnerships	Collaborate - support Indigenous, immigrant and refugee children	Collaborate - parenting resources and supports to families	Collaborate -support vulnerable families	Support child care in rural communities
Imagine Early Learning and Childcare Centre	Calgary			x	x	x			x ^a	x	x	x	
Hillhurst Sunnyside Daycare/Out Of School Care	Calgary		x	x		x		x ^a	x	x	x ^a	x	
Puzzles - Banff	Banff	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x ^a	x	x	x
South Region													
Opokaa'Sin Childcare Centre	Lethbridge	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	
North Central													
Wildflowers Childcare	Jasper	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
Westlock Community Day Care Centre	Westlock	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Bonnyville And District Daycare	Bonnyville	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Lac La Biche Little Sprouts Child Care	Lac La Biche	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Total		13	16	18	18	19	10	11	18	19	19	18	10

^a Identifies ELCC Centres that had not originally proposed the respective improvement but yet implemented it as of March 2018.

⁵⁵ Third Quarter reports were used for the following ELCC Centres: Child's World Day Care Centre, Sugar Plum Tree Day Care Centre, Opokaa'Sin Childcare Centre, and Rotary Early Learning Program Childcare. Second Quarter reports were used for: Children's Centre Demonstration Daycare

APPENDIX B: EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This section presents the evaluation tools (logic model, evaluation questions and matrix) developed to guide the evaluation of the ELCC Centre Initiative. It also describes the methodology, including limitations and mitigation strategies, used to gather the evidence required to answer the evaluation questions.

ELCC Centre Initiative Logic Model

The logic model underpinning the ELCC Centre Initiative is based upon the premise that accessible, affordable and quality child care can contribute to job creation, economic growth, poverty reduction, women's equality, social integration and positive child development.⁵⁶ The logic model demonstrates how accessible, affordable and quality child care can lead to the following outcomes:

- Children: increased participation in safe, caring and responsive environments as well as improved child well-being; and
- Women: increased workforce participation and reduced women's unemployment/underemployment;
- Parents/caregivers: increased use of regulated child care (through increased accessibility and affordability of licensed child care) and improved parenting skills;
- ELCC educators:⁵⁷ increased professionalization, improved morale and increased child care workforce retention.

The ELCC Centre Initiative logic model (along with a Gender-Based Analysis+ [GBA+] logic model for the ELCC Centre Initiative) appears in Appendix B.

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation has been designed to answer the following questions, which are organized according to the themes of relevance, performance (implementation and outcomes) and sustainability:

Relevance

1. What is the nature and level of continued need for the ELCC Centre Initiative and associated elements?
2. How is the ELCC Centre Initiative aligned with the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Agreement?

Performance: Implementation

3. Is the ELCC Centre Initiative being implemented as intended?
 - a. What factors facilitated or hindered implementation of the ELCC Centre Initiative?
4. Based on the ELCC Centre Initiative implementation, what learnings can be used to inform program design, delivery, effectiveness and future investments going forward?
5. How do collaborations/partnerships support implementation of the ELCC Centre Initiative?

⁵⁶ GoA (2016). "Alberta Early Learning and Child Care Centres: Expression of Interest."

⁵⁷ Throughout this report, ELCC Centre staff are referred to as ELCC educators. However, in the evaluation data collection instruments, the term staff is used.

Performance: Outcomes

6. What level of progress has been made towards improved child care accessibility in Alberta (including new spaces, enrollment, co-location, flexibility and rural communities)?
7. What level of progress has been made towards improved child care affordability in Alberta?
8. How has the quality of child care improved in Alberta?
 - a. How are parents/caregivers meaningfully engaged in quality assurance processes at ELCC Centres?
 - b. How have the ELCC Curriculum Framework and inclusion resources and supports been adopted throughout the ELCC Centres?
 - c. How have ELCC educators' practices changed as a result of adopting ELCC Curriculum Framework supports and inclusion practices?
9. What level of progress has been made towards implementation of improvements?
 - a. How have professional development opportunities improved ELCC educators' skills, practices and retention (other than ELCC Curriculum Framework and inclusion resources)?
 - b. How have ELCC Centre partnerships and collaborations improved parenting skills and understanding of the community resources available for parents/caregivers?
 - c. How have ELCC Centre partnerships and collaborations with other service-providing organizations improved the ELCC Centre's cultural diversity (in particular: Indigenous, immigrant, refugee)?
 - d. How have ELCC Centre partnerships and collaborations increased support to vulnerable families?
10. How has child care accessibility, affordability and quality impacted parents'/caregivers' labour force opportunities?
11. Do the programs adequately meet the child care accessibility, affordability and quality needs of the target group(s)? Are there groups whose needs remain unmet?
12. Have there been any unintended (positive or negative) outcomes resulting from the ELCC Centre Initiative?
13. How has the ELCC Centre Initiative impacted family/child well-being?

Sustainability

14. What factors support or hinder the ELCC Centre Initiative sustainability?

ELCC Centre Initiative Evaluation Matrix

The evaluation matrix provides a 'roadmap' of indicators and data sources that will be used to address each evaluation question. A copy of the evaluation matrix is provided in Appendix C.

Potential Social Impacts of the ELCC Centre Initiative

As depicted in the logic model, the ELCC Centre Initiative has been identified as having the following potential social impacts:

- job creation;
- expanded and skilled workforce for employers;
- economic growth;
- poverty reduction;
- gender equality/economic security;
- social integration;
- positive child development; and
- increased family capacity to access supports.

Although measuring these social impacts falls outside the scope of this evaluation, appropriate measures for some of the aforementioned social impacts have been included in the evaluation matrix and the data collection instruments. These include:

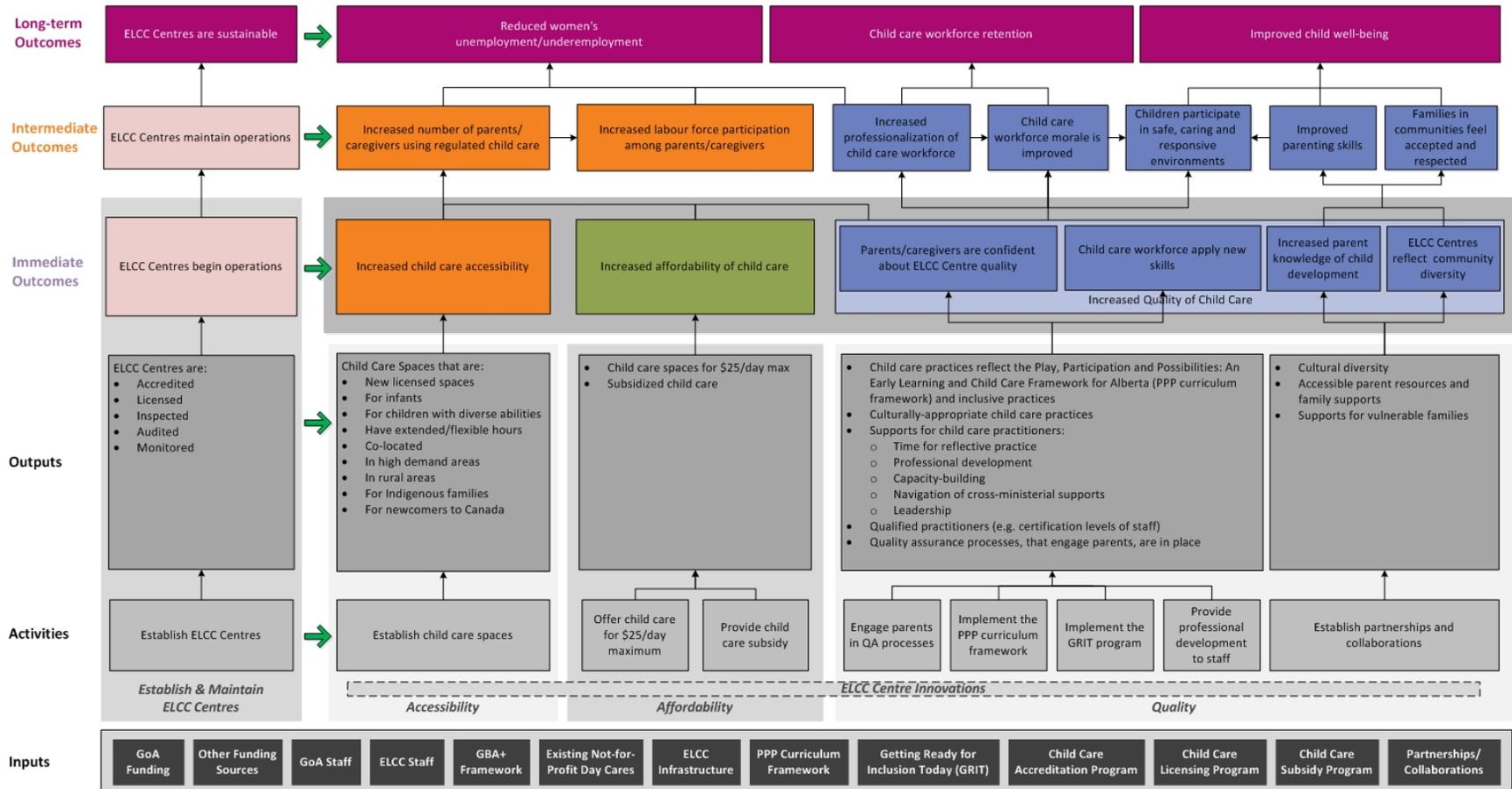
- impact of accessibility on family well-being;
- impact of affordability on family well-being;
- parent/caregiver and ELCC educators' perceptions of ELCC child care space affordability (including satisfaction);
- percent of ELCC parents/caregivers in school or working as a result of child care;
- percent of ELCC parents/caregivers taking promotion or new job opportunities as a result of child care;
- percent of ELCC parents/caregivers with change in household income as a result of child care;
- parents/caregivers are satisfied that their cultural background is reflected in the child care centre and/or incorporated into learning activities; and
- impact of quality child care on family well-being.

Further, the evaluation has been designed to consider the intersectionalities addressed in the GBA+ logic model for the ELCC Centre Initiative (see Appendix B).

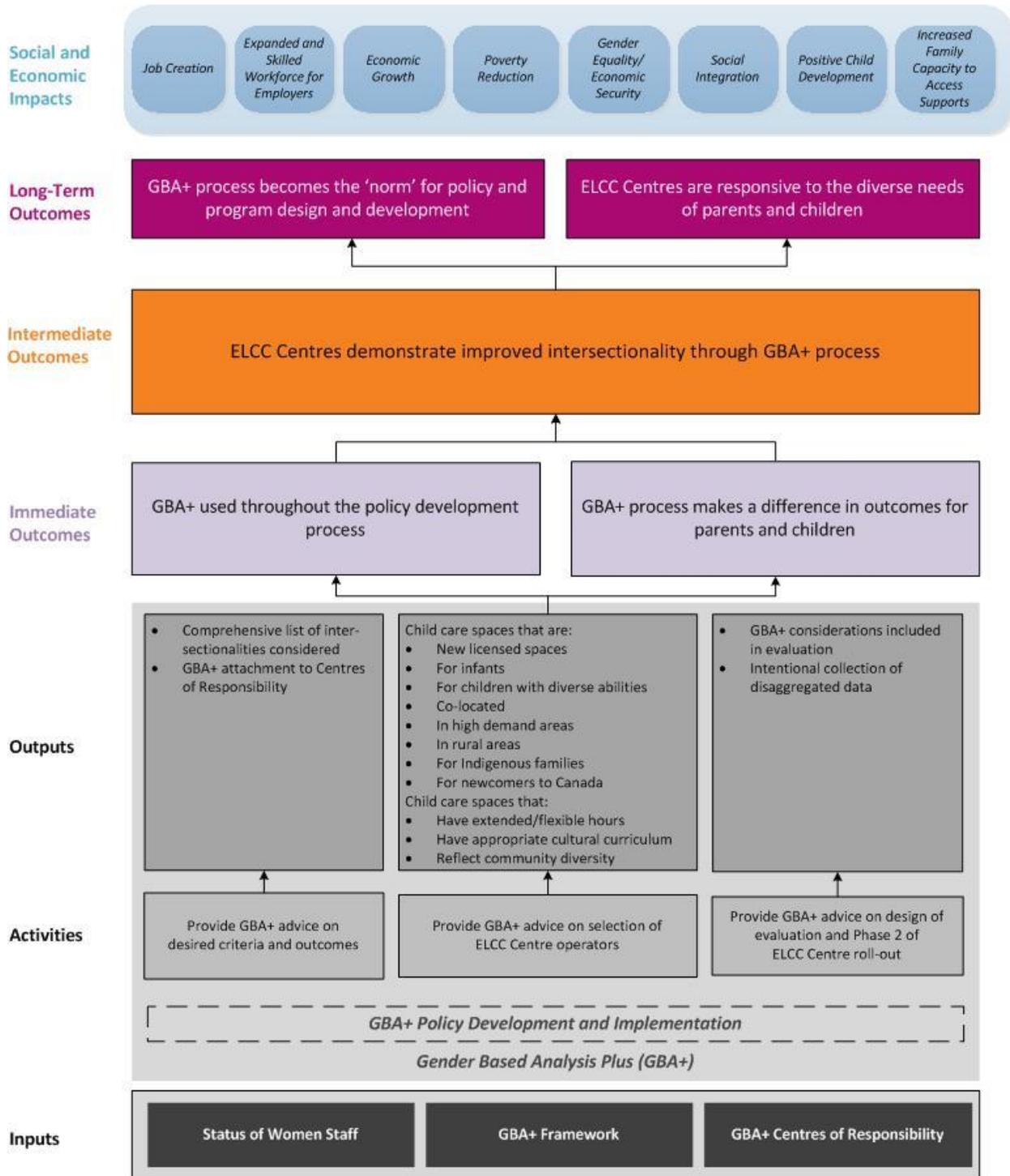
APPENDIX C: LOGIC MODELS

Logic Model: Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Centre Initiative

Social and Economic Impacts



Logic Model: Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+)



APPENDIX D: ELCC INITIATIVE EVALUATION MATRIX

Issue/Question	Key Indicators	Document Review	Literature Review	Admin Data Review	External Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	Internal Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	ELCC/ Control Centre Supervisor Interview	Centre Staff Survey	Centre Staff Interview	Parent/ Caregiver Survey	ELCC Centre Parent/ Caregiver Focus Groups	Quality Initiative Partner Discussions ⁵⁸
What is the nature and level of continued need for the ELCC Initiative Model and associated elements?	• Available licensed day care spaces, enrollment and percent of children enrolled in Alberta pre and post ELCC Initiative (overall and by region)	X	X	X								
	• Average daily cost of licensed day care for children in Alberta	X	X	X								
	• Proportion of children in Alberta enrolled in child care who receive subsidies			X								
	• Labour force participation rate of women 0-5) with young children (aged in Alberta compared to national average (full time and part time)	X	X									
	• Perceived need for the Initiative				E3	E3	G8	B8a-b				
	• Decreased staff turnover			X			C4	A1a-b, D2a-b	E1			
How is the Initiative aligned with the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Agreement?	• Alignment between ELCC Initiative and the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Agreement and Action Plan	X			F6							
Is the Initiative being implemented as intended? What factors facilitated or hindered Initiative implementation?	• ELCC Centre staff perceptions of the Initiative application, approval and funding process						B1c					

⁵⁸ Quality Initiative partner discussions refer to interviews with pedagogical partners and GRIT coaches.

Issue/Question	Key Indicators	Document Review	Literature Review	Admin Data Review	External Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	Internal Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	ELCC/ Control Centre Supervisor Interview	Centre Staff Survey	Centre Staff Interview	Parent/ Caregiver Survey	ELCC Centre Parent/ Caregiver Focus Groups	Quality Initiative Partner Discussions ⁵⁸
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ELCC Centres were able to implement the Initiative within planned timeframes 			X								
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of staff at each certification level 			X				A1e				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ELCC Centre staff perceptions of facilitators and barriers to implementation 						B1a-b		B3			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of programs accredited 			X								
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percent of ELCC Centres that have completed the accreditation process (accredited vs. pre-accredited) 			X								
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements for each program (as specified in the individual grant agreements, including partnerships) are implemented 						F2-F4					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of jobs for early learning and child care providers 			X								
Based on Initiative implementation, what learnings can be used to improve program design, delivery, effectiveness and future investments going forward?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perception of ways to support, increase or improve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program design Efficiency Effectiveness Future investment 				B5a-d	B5a-d	B5a-d		B4a-d			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percent parents/caregivers indicating affordability, accessibility or quality as the driving factor in selecting ELCC Centre child care 									E8	B2	

Issue/Question	Key Indicators	Document Review	Literature Review	Admin Data Review	External Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	Internal Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	ELCC/ Control Centre Supervisor Interview	Centre Staff Survey	Centre Staff Interview	Parent/ Caregiver Survey	ELCC Centre Parent/ Caregiver Focus Groups	Quality Initiative Partner Discussions ⁵⁸
How do collaborations/ partnerships support Initiative implementation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Centres where collaboration improvements are identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roles and responsibilities of partners are clearly documented 				B1a	B1a	B2a					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication processes for partnerships are documented and implemented 				B1b-c	B1b-c	B2b					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships supporting the implementation of improvements are documented 				B1c		Baa					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships secured due to participation in Initiative 				B3		B3					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of improvements delivered as a result of partnerships 						B2c					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of improvements delivered as a result of partnerships 				B2		B2d		E3, E5			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perception of key stakeholders about successes/challenges of partnerships 				B4a-b		B4a-b	C2- C3a, C3c	E2, E4			
What level of progress has been made towards improved child care <u>accessibility</u> in Alberta (including new spaces, enrollment, co-location, flexibility,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spaces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in the number of licensed ELCC and Comparison Centre spaces 			X			E1					

Issue/Question	Key Indicators	Document Review	Literature Review	Admin Data Review	External Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	Internal Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	ELCC/ Control Centre Supervisor Interview	Centre Staff Survey	Centre Staff Interview	Parent/ Caregiver Survey	ELCC Centre Parent/ Caregiver Focus Groups	Quality Initiative Partner Discussions ⁵⁸
rural communities, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Percent change in the number of regulated child care spaces in ELCC and Comparison Centres vs. provincial average (non-profit programs) over the same time period 			X								
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Percent of ELCC and Comparison Centers offering inclusive child care vs. provincial average 	X										
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enrollment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Change in percent of children enrolled in ELCC Centres (spaces vs enrollment) 				X			E2				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Location: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Percent of ELCC and Comparison Centers located within Parent Link Centre (PLC) or PLC outreach program 				X							
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Percent of ELCC and Comparison Centers co-located with other child care programs 				X			F1b				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Percent of ELCC and Comparison Centers co-located with schools 				X			F1b				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Percent of ELCC and Comparison Centers located in rural areas 				X			F1f				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percent of ELCC and Comparison Centres offering variable or extended hours 				X			F1a		B3a-b, B4a-b		

Issue/Question	Key Indicators	Document Review	Literature Review	Admin Data Review	External Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	Internal Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	ELCC/ Control Centre Supervisor Interview	Centre Staff Survey	Centre Staff Interview	Parent/ Caregiver Survey	ELCC Centre Parent/ Caregiver Focus Groups	Quality Initiative Partner Discussions ⁵⁸
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent/caregiver perceptions of ELCC and Comparison Centre accessibility, including satisfaction 									B1a-b, B2a-c, B4a-b	B1	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner and ELCC Centre staff perceptions of Center accessibility 				C1, C2	C1, C2		B7d		A1-4		
What level of progress has been made towards improved child care <u>affordability</u> in Alberta?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents/caregivers do not pay more than \$25 a day 	X								C1a-d		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ELCC Centres do not charge add-on fees (including fees for food/snacks and field trips) 									C3a-d, C4a-b,		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percent of children enrolled receiving subsidy in ELCC Centres vs. provincial average (non-profit/profit/all day care centres) 			X						C2		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents/caregiver perceptions of ELCC child care space affordability 									C5	B1	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner and Centre staff perceptions of ELCC child care space affordability 					C1, C2, F4c	C1, C2, F4c	E3, E4	C1, C2			
How has the <u>quality</u> of child care improved in Alberta?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-compliances: average number of non-compliances issued by licensing staff by ELCC Centres vs. provincial average in day care programs. 			X								

Issue/Question	Key Indicators	Document Review	Literature Review	Admin Data Review	External Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	Internal Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	ELCC/ Control Centre Supervisor Interview	Centre Staff Survey	Centre Staff Interview	Parent/ Caregiver Survey	ELCC Centre Parent/ Caregiver Focus Groups	Quality Initiative Partner Discussions ⁵⁸
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percent of parents/caregivers who are satisfied with the quality of child care provided by Centre staff 									D1a-g, D12	D2	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability and type of support provided by Centres to offer professional development 						C1, C2, C3a-b					
How are parents/caregivers meaningfully engaged in quality assurance processes at ELCC Centre?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality assurance processes, in which parents/caregivers can engage, are in place at ELCC Centres 						D8					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percent of parents/caregivers who are aware of quality assurance opportunities at ELCC Centers 									D2a, D3a, D4a	C1	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percent of parents/caregivers who participate in quality assurance opportunities at ELCC Centres 									D2b, D3b, D4b, D4c		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percent of parents/caregivers who feel their input in quality assurance processes are incorporated into the ELCC Centres' quality assurance practices 										C2	

Issue/Question	Key Indicators	Document Review	Literature Review	Admin Data Review	External Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	Internal Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	ELCC/ Control Centre Supervisor Interview	Centre Staff Survey	Centre Staff Interview	Parent/ Caregiver Survey	ELCC Centre Parent/ Caregiver Focus Groups	Quality Initiative Partner Discussions ⁵⁸	
How have the curriculum and inclusion resources and supports been adopted throughout the ELCC Centres?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play, Participation and Possibilities: An early learning and child care curriculum framework for Alberta (PPP) curriculum framework and inclusive child care Program (ASaP) are implemented and demonstrated at ELCC Centres 						D2, D3, D4, D5a-d	B3a B4, B6	D1, D2, D4, D6			B2, B4-B6 B8a-d, B10, B11, B13, B14	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percent of parents/Caregivers who are satisfied with the level of cultural diversity at ELCC Centres 									D5, D1f	D1		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percent of parents/caregivers who are satisfied that their cultural background is reflected in the child care centre and/or incorporated into learning activities (SEI) 									D7, D8	D1		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children are not asked to leave ELCC Centres 							D7b					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families are not being excluded 									D6			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child inclusiveness has increased 							D6, D7a					B10a, C2a
How have staff practices changed as a result of adopting curriculum supports and inclusion practices?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff reported changes in curriculum 							B3a-c, B5	D3, D5				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning opportunities specific to the PPP curriculum framework and ASaP principles are available to ELCC Centre staff 						D1, D5	B1, B3c, B4	B1a, B2a			A2a-b, B1, B7	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ELCC Centre staff have gained additional knowledge on how to develop and deliver 						D2-D4	B2	B1b, B2b			B3, B9, C1	

Issue/Question	Key Indicators	Document Review	Literature Review	Admin Data Review	External Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	Internal Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	ELCC/ Control Centre Supervisor Interview	Centre Staff Survey	Centre Staff Interview	Parent/ Caregiver Survey	ELCC Centre Parent/ Caregiver Focus Groups	Quality Initiative Partner Discussions ⁵⁸
	curriculum and include all children											
What level of progress has been made towards implementation of improvements?: How have professional development (PD) opportunities improved staff skills, practices, and retention (other than curriculum and inclusion resources)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ELCC Centre staff are satisfied with the availability of professional development opportunities 							A5a-b				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ELCC Centre staff are satisfied with the quality of professional development opportunities 							A6				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ELCC Centre staff participate in professional development opportunities 			X			C3a-b	A3a-c				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ELCC Centre staff actively use new skills in their child care practice and interactions with children 							B3b-c	D1-D6			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of ELCC Centre staff at each certification level 			X				A1e				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of professional development staff have participated in 							A4				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall ELCC Centre staff satisfaction with their employment at the Centre 							D1-D8				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ELCC Centres' staff retention (staff program and category turnover) 			X			C4	A1a-b, A2a-c	E1			B12
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents/caregivers and ELCC management 						C5a-b	D6a-c		D1h		

Issue/Question	Key Indicators	Document Review	Literature Review	Admin Data Review	External Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	Internal Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	ELCC/ Control Centre Supervisor Interview	Centre Staff Survey	Centre Staff Interview	Parent/ Caregiver Survey	ELCC Centre Parent/ Caregiver Focus Groups	Quality Initiative Partner Discussions ⁵⁸
	recognize Centre staff as professionals											
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff wages are higher than minimum wage 			X								
What level of progress has been made towards implementation of improvements?: How have ELCC Centre partnerships and collaborations improved parenting skills and understanding of the community resources available for parents/caregivers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents/caregivers are aware of how to access parenting resources and family supports from ELCC Centres 				D2a-b			C1a-b	D7a	D9	C4	C2c
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents/caregivers are accessing parenting resources and family supports from ELCC Centres 								D7b	D10a-b, E7	C4	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents/caregivers are implementing skills gained from ELCC parenting resources and family supports (self-reported) 				D3		F1d		D10a-c	D11	C3	C3b
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percent of ELCC programs that offer specific supports for vulnerable families: (i.e. low socio-economic status, lone parent families, parenting teens and women facing additional barriers) 				D1		F1e		D8, D9			C2b
What level of progress has been made towards implementation of improvements?: How have ELCC Centre partnerships and collaborations with other service-providing organizations improved the Centre's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of partnerships/collaborations with Indigenous organizations 	X					F1c					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of partnerships/collaborations with immigrant-serving organizations 	X										
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of partnerships/collaborations with refugee-serving organizations 	X										

Issue/Question	Key Indicators	Document Review	Literature Review	Admin Data Review	External Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	Internal Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	ELCC/ Control Centre Supervisor Interview	Centre Staff Survey	Centre Staff Interview	Parent/ Caregiver Survey	ELCC Centre Parent/ Caregiver Focus Groups	Quality Initiative Partner Discussions ⁵⁸
cultural diversity (in particular: Indigenous, immigrant, refugee)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceptions of key stakeholders around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased provision for cultural diversity (e.g. ELCC Centre staff that speak relevant languages) Collaborating with cultural leaders (e.g. community Elders) 				D4, D5		F1c	B7b	D8, D9, E2, E3			
What level of progress has been made towards implementation of improvements?: How have ELCC Centre partnerships and collaborations increased support to vulnerable families?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of partnerships/ collaborations with organizations that support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lone parents/ caregivers Low socio-economic families Teen parents 				D1-D3			B7c				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceptions of key stakeholders about the degree to which partnerships and collaborations have increased support to vulnerable families 				D4, D5		F1e	C2	D8, D9			
How has child care accessibility, affordability, and quality impacted parents'/caregivers' labour force opportunities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percent of ELCC parents/caregivers in school or working as a result of child care (SEI) 									E1, E2a-c	B1	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percent of ELCC parents/caregivers taking promotion or new job opportunities as a result of child care (SEI) 									E4a-b	B1	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percent of ELCC parents/caregivers with change in household 									E3	B1	

Issue/Question	Key Indicators	Document Review	Literature Review	Admin Data Review	External Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	Internal Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	ELCC/ Control Centre Supervisor Interview	Centre Staff Survey	Centre Staff Interview	Parent/ Caregiver Survey	ELCC Centre Parent/ Caregiver Focus Groups	Quality Initiative Partner Discussions ⁵⁸
	income as a result of child care (SEI)											
Do the programs adequately meet the child care accessibility, affordability and quality needs of the target group(s)? Are there groups whose needs remain unmet?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceptions of key stakeholders about the degree to which programs adequately meet the child care accessibility, affordability and quality needs of the target groups 				D5	D5	D10	C4a-b, B7a-e				C3a
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percent of parents/ caregivers who feel that their accessibility, affordability and quality expectations have been met 				D5					E5	D3	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing gaps in child care accessibility, affordability and quality 	X				E1	E1	D9, E5	C3c	E6		
Have there been any unintended (positive or negative) outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceptions of unintended positive outcomes (including additional improvements) Perceptions of unintended negative outcomes 				E2	E2	G7		E7			C5
How has the Initiative impacted family/child well-being?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ways in which the Initiative has impacted family well-being (SEI)⁵⁹ 				F5	F5	D11		D11	E6, E9a-b	B1	C4
What factors support or hinder Initiative sustainability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceptions of factors that support Initiative sustainability by key stakeholders 				F1, F2	F1, F2	G2, G3, G5		F1, F2			C6

⁵⁹ Key indicators marked “(SEI)” refer to indicators that may be used to speak to measures of Social and Economic Impacts, as identified in the logic model.

Issue/Question	Key Indicators	Document Review	Literature Review	Admin Data Review	External Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	Internal Stakeholder/ Partner Interview	ELCC/ Control Centre Supervisor Interview	Centre Staff Survey	Centre Staff Interview	Parent/ Caregiver Survey	ELCC Centre Parent/ Caregiver Focus Groups	Quality Initiative Partner Discussions ⁵⁸
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceptions of factors that hinder Initiative sustainability by key stakeholders 				F3	F3	G6					C6
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceptions of ELCC Centre fee structure sustainability 				F4a-c	F4a-c	G1, G4a-b					

APPENDIX E: CS LETTER TO REGIONAL MANAGERS

Dear <<ELCC/Comparison Centre Supervisor>>,

As you may be aware, the Government of Alberta has started an Initiative to offer accessible and affordable quality child care in Alberta. To understand the impact of the Initiative, the Ministry of Children's Services has commissioned an evaluation of the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Initiative over the next three years. The results of this evaluation will be used to determine areas for improvement and future direction of the ELCC Initiative.

Planning for the evaluation is now complete and data collection will begin soon.

This letter was developed to clarify the roles of the Ministry of Children's Services staff and the independent evaluators. The Ministry of Children's Services has contracted Malatest, an independent Canadian research firm, to conduct the evaluation. The evaluators worked with Children's Services to develop the evaluation approach that is now being implemented, and Malatest will be collecting all data over the next three years, as well as reporting their findings to the Ministry of Children's Services.

The Malatest team working on the ELCC Initiative evaluation is based in Edmonton. Key team members include:

Eleanor Hamaluk
Project Manager
780-448-9042 (ext 223)
e.hamaluk@malatest.com

Sheila Harper
Senior Evaluator
780-448-9042 (ext 224)
s.harper@malatest.com

For more information about Malatest, please visit their website (www.malatest.com).

A member of the Malatest evaluation team will be contacting you shortly to discuss your involvement in the evaluation. They can answer all of your questions about the evaluation.

I would also like to take this opportunity, on behalf of Children's Services, to thank you in advance for your participation in the ELCC Initiative evaluation. We believe that the findings of this three-year evaluation will positively contribute to the early learning and child care environment in Alberta, and that it will positively impact day care centres, ELCC staff, parents and children.

If you would like to speak to with the Ministry's Evaluation Analyst overseeing the evaluation, please contact

Keesa Elicksen
Evaluation Analyst
Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement
Community and Social Services
780 638-1249
keesa.elicksen@gov.ab.ca

APPENDIX F: COMMUNICATION AND CONSENT MATERIALS

Centre Supervisor - Introductory Email and Information

As you are aware, the Government of Alberta has started an Initiative to offer accessible and affordable quality child care in Alberta. Malatest, an independent research firm, has been contracted by the Ministry of Children's Services to conduct an evaluation of the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Initiative over the next three years. The results of this evaluation will be used to determine areas for improvement and future direction of ELCC initiative.

As part of this evaluation, various data collection activities are being completed with ELCC Centres. These activities include:

- Survey with Centre staff;
- Survey with parents/caregivers;
- Interviews with Centre staff;
- Interviews with community partners;
- Interviews with Centre supervisor;
- Focus groups with parents/caregivers; and
- Program site visits to ELCC centres.

To ensure the most comprehensive and least intrusive data collection, Centre supervisors are being asked to provide input about how best to conduct these activities at their individual ELCC Centres.

We would like to set up a meeting with you to discuss how best to engage these activities at your ELCC Centre. This meeting should take approximately 30 minutes and can be completed over the telephone. During this meeting, we would like to discuss the following with you:

- Possible program site visit dates;
- Preferred method for notifying Centre staff about the evaluation;
- Preferred method for notifying parents/caregivers about the evaluation;
- Preferred method for recruiting Centre staff participation in the survey;
- Preferred method for recruiting parent/caregiver participation in the survey;
- Preferred method for recruiting parent participation in the focus group;
- Preferred method for recruiting community partner participation in interviews; and
- Any other questions related to the evaluation.

To set up a meeting time to discuss the ELCC Initiative evaluation, you can respond to this email, call Malatest at 1-866-247-6465, or wait for Malatest to contact you by phone within the next two weeks.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to talking with you about the ELCC Initiative soon.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact:

<ELCC Initiative Contact information>

Dr. Sheila Harper, R.A. Malatest & Associates, 1-877-665-6252 ext. 224, s.harper@malatest.com

CONSENT TO TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS WITHIN THE CHILD CARE CENTRE

As you are aware, the Government of Alberta has started an Initiative to offer accessible and affordable quality child care in Alberta. Malatest, an independent research firm, has been contracted by the Ministry of Children’s Services to conduct an evaluation of the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Initiative over the next three years. The results of this evaluation will be used to determine areas for improvement and future direction of ELCC initiative.

As part of this evaluation, a member of the Malatest team will be visiting your centre in person, to conduct various data collection activities. While at your site, the Malatest team member may ask to take photographs. The aim of these photographs is to provide a visual representation of new, innovative and/or interesting practices at your centre.

These might include:

- Signs, posters or other visual displays
- Physical layout of the Centre
- Other aspects of the centre that promote accessibility, affordability or quality

These will not include:

- Taking photographs of any child, parent/caregiver or staff member
- Taking photographs of anything that could identify any children, parents/caregivers or staff member

-
- I, THE UNDERSIGNED, GIVE PERMISSION FOR PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE CENTRE TO BE TAKEN AS PART OF THE ELCC INITIATIVE EVALUATION.
- I UNDERSTAND THAT THESE PHOTOGRAPHS MAY BE USED WITHIN EVALUATION REPORTING, AND MAY IDENTIFY THE CENTRE.
- I UNDERSTAND THAT THESE PHOTOGRAPHS WILL NOT BE USED FOR ANY PURPOSE OUTSIDE OF THE ELCC INITIATIVE EVALUATION.
- I UNDERSTAND THAT NO CHILD, PARENT/CAREGIVER OR STAFF MEMBER WILL BE PHOTOGRAPHED.
- I UNDERSTAND THAT NOTHING THAT CAN IDENTIFY ANY CHILD, PARENT/CAREGIVER OR STAFF MEMBER WILL BE PHOTOGRAPHED.

NAME (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact:

Dr. Sheila Harper
Malatest

Centre Staff Information and Consent Form – ELCC Centre Survey

The Government of Alberta has started an Initiative to offer accessible and affordable quality child care in Alberta. Malatest, an independent research firm, has been contracted by the Ministry of Children’s Services to conduct an evaluation of the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Initiative over the next three years. As part of this evaluation, we are conducting a survey with Centre staff, to better understand the impacts of the Initiative on child care providers, parents/caregivers and children. As an early learning and child care provider at an ELCC Centre, this is your opportunity to provide feedback that will help to improve the Initiative.

The survey asks about your experiences in child care, including:

- Work experience, training (skill upgrading);
- Centre programming; and
- Perceptions of the work environment.

This survey should take approximately 15 minutes of your time and can be completed online, over the telephone or on paper.

All findings from the survey will be kept private and confidential; no individual will be identified or linked to their responses. All information you provide will be protected under the provisions of the *Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

There are three ways you can participate in this survey:

- 1) You can complete the survey online. Please fill out the consent form on the next page and give it to the Centre supervisor of your child care Centre. Malatest will email you the details of how to complete the survey online.
- 2) You can complete the survey over the telephone. Please fill out the consent form on the next page and give it to the Centre supervisor of your child care Centre. Malatest will contact you to arrange to complete the survey over the telephone.
- 3) You can complete a paper survey. The Centre supervisor of your child care Centre can provide you with a copy of the paper survey. Please return the completed paper survey to the Centre supervisor in the sealed envelope provided.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact:

<ELCC Initiative Contact information>

Dr. Sheila Harper, R.A. Malatest & Associates, 1-877-665-6252 ext. 224, s.harper@malatest.com

If you would like to complete this survey online or over the telephone, please fill out and sign the consent form below. Any contact information you provide will be used only for the purposes of this survey.

I would like to complete the survey online. *Please provide your email address below. Malatest will send you an email with details about how to complete the survey online.*

I would like to complete the survey over the phone. *Please provide your telephone number below. Malatest will telephone you to arrange a convenient time to complete the survey over the phone.*

Name (please print): _____

Email address: _____

Telephone number: _____

I consent to allow Malatest to contact me, through the method(s) noted above, to participate in this survey.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact:

<ELCC Initiative Contact information>

Dr. Sheila Harper, R.A. Malatest & Associates, 1-877-665-6252 ext. 224, s.harper@malatest.com

Parent/Caregiver Information and Consent Form – ELCC Centre Survey

The Government of Alberta has started an Initiative to offer accessible and affordable quality child care in Alberta. The government wishes to better understand the impacts of the Initiative on child care providers, parents/caregivers and children. As a parent/caregiver who has at least one child enrolled in a licensed child care centre, your feedback is critical to the success of this evaluation.

Malatest, an independent research firm, has been contracted by the Ministry of Children’s Services to conduct a survey with parents/caregivers who have children enrolled in licensed child care. The survey asks about your experiences with child care in Alberta, including:

- Child care accessibility;
- Child care affordability;
- Child care quality; and
- Perceived benefits of child care.

The survey will take approximately 20 minutes of your time and can be completed online, over the telephone or on paper.

All findings from the survey will be kept private and confidential; no individual will be identified or linked to their responses. All information you provide will be protected under the provisions of the *Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

There are three ways you can participate in this survey:

- 4) You can complete the survey online. Please fill out the consent form on the next page and give it to the Centre supervisor of your child care Centre. Malatest will email you the details of how to complete the survey online.
- 5) You can complete the survey over the telephone. Please fill out the consent form on the next page and give it to the Centre supervisor of your child care Centre. Malatest will contact you to arrange to complete the survey over the telephone.
- 6) You can complete a paper survey. The Centre supervisor of your child care Centre can provide you with a copy of the paper survey. Please return the completed paper survey to the Centre supervisor in the sealed envelope provided.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact:

<ELCC Initiative Contact information>

Dr. Sheila Harper, R.A. Malatest & Associates, 1-877-665-6252 ext. 224, s.harper@malatest.com

If you would like to complete this survey online or over the telephone, please fill out and sign the consent form below. Any contact information you provide will be used only for the purposes of this survey.

I would like to complete the survey online. Please provide your email address below. Malatest will send you an email with details about how to complete the survey online.

I would like to complete the survey over the phone. Please provide your telephone number below. Malatest will telephone you to arrange a convenient time to complete the survey over the phone.

Name (please print): _____

Email address: _____

Telephone number: _____

I consent to allow Malatest to contact me, through the method(s) noted above, to participate in this survey.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact:

<ELCC Initiative Contact information>

Dr. Sheila Harper, R.A. Malatest & Associates, 1-877-665-6252 ext. 224, s.harper@malatest.com

ELCC INITIATIVE PARENTS/CAREGIVERS – SURVEY INVITATION EMAIL

Dear <consent form name>:

You recently completed a consent form at your child care Centre indicating that you would participate in a survey about your experiences with child care in Alberta. This email contains the web link to the online survey form.

It should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. If you need to complete the survey over multiple sessions, you can return to where you left off with the Access Code below; your previous answers will be saved.

You can begin the survey by clicking **[here]**.

The survey will be closed on <date>. Please take the time to provide your feedback before then.

If you would prefer to complete the survey over the phone, please call: 1-866-247-6465 (toll-free). Please provide your access code, located below, when calling.

ACCESS CODE:

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact:

Ministry of Children’s Services: <ELCC Initiative Contact information>

Malatest: Dr. Sheila Harper, Research Analyst; 1-877-665-6252 ext. 224; s.harper@malatest.com

If you have any technical problems accessing the survey, call 1-866-247-6465. You will need to provide your Access Code, noted above.

TELEPHONE SCRIPTS

Respondents who indicate on the consent form that they would like to complete the survey over the phone, and provide a telephone number will be contacted by a trained surveyor to recruit their participation in the survey.

INITIAL TELEPHONE CONTACT SCRIPT

Hello, my name is _____. I am calling from Malatest on behalf of Alberta's Children Services. May I please speak to <consent form name>?

YES: Go to **INTRODUCTION**

NO: When would be a better time to call back to reach <consent form name>?

RECORD INFORMATION.

THANK RESPONDENT AND TERMINATE CALL.

INTRODUCTION

You recently completed a consent form at your child care Centre indicating that you would participate in a survey about your experiences with child care in Alberta. Do you recall completing this consent form?

YES: Go to **CONSENT**

NO: This form would have been provided to you at your child's care Centre and collected by the Centre staff. It referred to an Initiative started by the Government of Alberta to offer accessible and affordable quality child care in Alberta and invited you to participate in a survey about child care. Did you complete this consent form?

YES: Go to **CONSENT**

NO: THANK RESPONDENT AND TERMINATE CALL. CODE AS NON-QUALIFIER.

CONSENT

We are calling to complete the survey with you. The survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Would you be able to complete the survey now?

We are calling to complete the survey with you. The survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Would you be able to complete the survey now?

YES: Go to **SURVEY**

NO: When would be a better time to call back to complete the survey?

RECORD APPOINTMENT TIME IF PROVIDED. THANK RESPONDENT AND TERMINATE CALL.

IF NO TIME IS OFFERED: Would you prefer to complete the survey online?

YES: If you provide me with your email address, I can email you a link to the survey?

RESPONDENT PROVIDES EMAIL: RECORD EMAIL ADDRESS AND SEND LINK TO SURVEY. THANK RESPONDENT AND TERMINATE CALL.

RESPONDENT DOES NOT PROVIDE EMAIL: I can provide you with the web address. You will need an access code to enter the survey.

PROVIDE URL AND RESPONDENT ACCESS CODE. THANK RESPONDENT AND TERMINATE CALL.

NO: THANK RESPONDENT AND TERMINATE CALL.

Respondents who, during initial phone contact, state that they would prefer to complete the survey online will be phoned no sooner than 7 days after initial contact to remind them to complete the survey, if they have not completed by then.

TELEPHONE REMINDER SCRIPT

Hello, my name is _____. I am calling from Malatest on behalf of the Government of Alberta's Ministry of Children's Services. We recently contacted you about completing a survey related to child care in Alberta. You indicated that you wanted to complete the survey online, are you still planning to complete the survey online?

YES: Thank you for your interest in the survey. We would like to remind you that the deadline to complete the survey online is <date> and encourage you to take the time to complete the questionnaire. The information you provide will help the Ministry of Children's Services to improve the Early Learning and Child Care Initiative.

NO: Would you prefer to complete the survey over the phone?

YES: Do you have time to complete the survey over the phone now? It will take approximately 20 minutes.

YES: Go to **SURVEY**

NO: When would be a better time to call back to complete the survey?

RECORD APPOINTMENT TIME. THANK RESPONDENT AND TERMINATE CALL.

NO: THANK RESPONDENT AND TERMINATE CALL. CODE AS REFUSAL.

PPP Developers, Trainers, Coaches Interview Recruitment

Potential interviewees would be sent an initial email inviting their participation in the evaluation. Appointments would be arranged with respondents to the initial email, and a final confirmation email would be sent detailing the interview time and location as well as including the interview guide.

INITIAL EMAIL

Dear <sample name>:

As you may be aware, the Government of Alberta has started an Initiative to offer accessible and affordable quality child care in Alberta. Malatest, an independent research firm, has been contracted by the Ministry of Children's Services to conduct an evaluation of the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Initiative over the next three years. The results of this evaluation will be used to determine areas for improvement and future direction of ELCC initiative.

As part of this evaluation, developers of the *Play, Participation and Possibilities: An early learning and child care curriculum framework for Alberta* (PPP) curriculum framework trainers and coaches are being interviewed. These interviews will provide greater context and understanding of the PPP curriculum framework and its implementation in child care centres in Alberta.

We would like to invite you to participate in an interview to discuss your experiences with the PPP curriculum framework and its implementation in Alberta child care centres. Your name was provided to us by <sample source> as someone with experience working with the PPP curriculum framework.

The interview will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes to complete and will be conducted over the telephone at a time convenient to you. The questions will be provided to you in advance, so you can review them prior to the interview. All of your responses during the interview will be treated as confidential and will only be reported in aggregate.

If you are available for an interview, please respond with times that are convenient for you.

If you have any questions about the interview, or would like more information about the evaluation, please contact :

Dr. Sheila Harper at Malatest
780-448-9042 (toll free: 1-877-665-6252) extension 224
s.harper@malatest.com

Thank you for your time. We look forward to hearing from you.

If the target number of interviews is not reached through the initial email, telephone follow-up would begin. Individuals who have not refused participation would be contacted. Telephone follow-up would continue until the target number of interviews was booked, or until all remaining individuals in the sample has refused an interview.

TELEPHONE FOLLOW-UP

Hello, my name is _____. I am calling from Malatest on behalf of the Government of Alberta's Ministry of Children Services. May I please speak to < **sample name** >?

YES: Go to **RECALL**

NO: When would be a better time to call back to reach < **sample name** >?

RECORD INFORMATION.

THANK RESPONDENT AND TERMINATE CALL.

RECALL

We recently sent you an email about participating in an interview related to the *Play, Participation and Possibilities: An early learning and child care curriculum framework for Alberta (PPP)* and its implementation in child care centres in Alberta. Do you recall receiving this email?

YES: Go to **RECRUITMENT**

NO: We can re-send the email with the interview details. Before we do, we would like to confirm your email address.

EMAIL ADDRESS CONFIRMED: RESEND INITIAL EMAIL. THANK RESPONDENT AND TERMINATE CALL.

RESPONDENT DOES NOT WANT EMAIL: THANK RESPONDENT AND TERMINATE CALL. CODE AS REFUSAL.

RECRUITMENT

Are you available to participate in an interview about the PPP curriculum framework and its implementation in Alberta child care centres?

YES: RECORD APPOINTMENT TIME. Thank you for your interest in this evaluation. We will send you a confirmation email with the interview details as well as a copy of the interview guide shortly. **CONFIRM RESPONDENT CONTACT DETAILS. THANK RESPONDENT AND TERMINATE CALL.**

NO: THANK RESPONDENT AND TERMINATE CALL. CODE AS REFUSAL.

APPENDIX G: ELCC CENTRE SUPERVISOR INTERVIEW GUIDE

Name and Position/Role:

Date and Time:

Telephone:

Introduction

The Government of Alberta has contracted R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (Malatest) to conduct an evaluation of Alberta's Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Initiative. The results of this evaluation will be used to determine areas for improvement and future direction of the ELCC Initiative.

As part of the evaluation, Malatest is conducting interviews with child care centre supervisors in order to understand the implementation of the ELCC Initiative at each individual centre. The goal of this conversation is to learn about the impacts of the Initiative on Centre staff, parents/caregivers, children and the community. The interview is expected to take approximately 60 minutes of your time.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. You are not obligated to answer any questions, you may skip any question that you cannot or do not wish to answer, and you may end the interview at any point without any negative consequences.

Malatest will adhere to the regulations set out in Part 1 of the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* (PIPEDA). We are also compliant with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (Alberta). The information gathered through this interview is considered confidential by R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. Interview notes may be shared with the Alberta Children's Services for quality control purposes, but will not contain any personal information. For reporting purposes, your responses will be aggregated with information received from other key informants. With your permission, we would like to digitally record the interview to ensure the accuracy of our notes. All data collected as part of this Evaluation will be securely stored for three (3) years following the end of this Evaluation (estimated end date: June 2020), at which point it will be destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Sheila Harper of Malatest at:

780-448-9042 (extension 224)

toll free: 1-877-665-6252

s.harper@malatest.com

Do you have any questions or require additional information before we begin?

Section A: Involvement

A1. Please tell me about your role here at the ELCC Centre, including how long you have been in this role.

Section B: Implementation

This section asks questions about the implementation of the ELCC Initiative within your Centre, which may involve the activities listed in the table below.

ELCC Centre Implementation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the number of new day care spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capping parent fees at \$25 per day
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing <i>Play, Participation, and Possibilities: An Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum Framework for Alberta</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting on-site professional development that enables full participation of all children in the program including children with diverse needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging parents/caregivers in a quality assurance process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating in the Child Care Accreditation program Demonstrating compliance with Alberta's Child Care Licensing Act and Child Care Licensing Regulation;
Implementing one or more of the following improvements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer flexible child care to support parents/caregivers who are working or attending school outside operations and/or who work on a part-time basis; Identify opportunities to collaborate with other service organizations for co- location delivering ELCC; Ensure collaboration with other service organizations that support knowledge about cultural learning as it relates to Indigenous, immigrant and refugee children; Ensure collaboration with other service organizations to support the provision of parenting supports to families attending the child care program; Collaborate to support vulnerable families (e.g. families with low socio-economic status, lone parent families, parenting teens, and women facing additional barriers); and/or Support child care in rural communities. 	

B1. When setting up your Centre to meet the requirements of the ELCC Initiative:

a. What factors facilitated the establishment of your Centre as an ELCC Centre?

Prompt: What lessons did your Centre learn?

b. What challenges did your Centre experience?

Prompt: How did your Centre address these challenges?

c. How easy was it to apply to, get approval and receive funding as part of, the ELCC Initiative?

B2. What community partners or other stakeholder groups is your centre collaborating with (such as cultural organization or Parent Link Centres)? Are there formal processes or documents in place that clearly outline:

a. The roles and responsibilities of all partners?

b. Communication processes between your Centre and partner organizations?

Prompt: Are these processes effective?

c. The number and type of improvements delivered as a result of partnerships?

B3. Do you think any of these partnerships were secured as a direct result of your involvement in the Initiative? *If yes, which ones?*

Prompt: Why do you believe this to be the case?

B4a. What has made these partnerships successful?

B4b. Have there been any challenges associated with your Centre's engagement in these partnerships? *If yes, please describe.*

Prompt: How have these challenges been overcome?

Section C: Staffing

This section of the interview collects information about the Centre's approaches to providing professional development to Centre staff.

C1. What support does the Centre provide staff to access professional development?

C2. What challenges, if any, does the Centre face in providing professional development to staff?

C3a. Has your Centre's involvement in the ELCC Initiative improved its capacity to provide professional development to staff?

Prompt: Do you have examples of professional development opportunities that Centre staff have participated in over the last year?

C3b. How do you encourage staff to participate in professional development opportunities (e.g. by making it mandatory, by offering time off in lieu)?

C4. Have you noticed a change in retention of Centre staff since your Centre became an ELCC Centre?

C5. As a result of their participation in the ELCC Initiative, has there been an increase in professionalism among [By professionalism, we mean that staff have greater competency or skills to complete their job.]

a. Centre staff generally?

b. Centre management specifically?

Section D: Quality

The process of adapting child care practices as a result of exposure to the *Play, Participation, and Possibilities: An Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum Framework for Alberta* (PPP curriculum framework) may take considerable time. We would now like to discuss where your Centre and staff are at in the process of adapting child care practices as a result of PPP curriculum framework.

D1. Have all Centre staff been introduced to the PPP curriculum framework or only those attending the training sessions?

a. How have/will other Centre staff been introduced?

- D2. In what ways are Centre staff reflecting the principles of the PPP curriculum framework in their practice (i.e. making curriculum decision and learning visible, creating a responsive environment and having responsive relationships with children, increasing dialogue and engagement of parents/caregivers in the children's daily experiences, and the role of the educator)?
- D3. Are there any challenges Centre staff have noted in using the PPP curriculum framework to guide...
- their interactions with children?
 - curriculum decisions?
 - their role as an educator?
- D4. What additions or adaptations to curriculum materials, equipment, or other resources have occurred at the Centre?
Prompt: If no additions have been made, are program materials, equipment, and resources being used differently?

The next questions ask about how your Centre is working towards providing high quality child care, utilizing the *Getting Ready for Inclusion Today* (GRIT) principles, which includes the Access, Support and Participation (ASaP) Continuum Project.

- D5. Please describe where your Centre is at in delivering the ASaP Continuum Project. Specifically, what has the Centre done in the areas of:
- Adult Capacity Building (*Skills and confidence for Centre staff and parents/caregivers to support the social and emotional development of children*)
 - Navigation (*Improve access to a continuum of support for all children, at the right time, in the right place*)
 - Sustainability through Leadership (*A program leadership team commits to the implementation of Pyramid Model practices, the development of inclusive policies and zero rejection of our youngest citizens*)
 - Family Engagement (*Increasing family involvement and awareness of social and emotional development and Pyramid Model practices*)

The next questions ask about how your Centre creates inclusive environments.

- D6. How does your Centre create inclusive environments?
- D7a. How does your Centre meet the care requirements of children with diverse needs?
- D7b. Since becoming an ELCC Centre, have you been unable to accept a child, or have you been required to ask a child to go to a different Centre, because your Centre was unable to meet that child's unique needs?

The next questions ask about quality assurance processes in your Centre.

D8. What roles are available in your Centre for parents/caregivers to provide feedback and participate in quality assurance?

D9. Are there any aspects of child care quality that your Centre would like to improve?
Prompt: If yes, how might these be addressed?

The next question asks about the target groups that were identified by this Centre for the Initiative, including.

D10. What target groups is this Centre trying to reach? How successful has your Centre been in reaching these groups?
Prompt: Are there any target groups that your Centre would like to reach but are unable to? Please describe.

D11. How do you think the Initiative impacts the well-being of families/children in your Centre?

Section E: Affordability and Accessibility

This section asks about the affordability and accessibility of child care at your Centre.

E1. Has your Centre been able to increase the number of child care spaces as planned?
Prompt: What has facilitated or hindered the expansion?

E2. Has the expansion in the number of spaces allowed additional children to be enrolled in the ELCC Centre?
Prompt: For example, has the number of children enrolled in the program increased?

E3. Do you think that the spaces in your Centre are now more affordable for parents/caregivers than they used to be? *Why or why not? Has the change in affordability impacted different families in different ways?*

E4. Has the Centre had to change its operation(s) in order to ensure affordability for parents/caregivers? *If yes, how? If no, how have you managed to offset costs?*

E5. In your Centre, are there any ways in which you would like to improve:
a. Accessibility? *Prompt: If yes, how? For which families, and why?*
b. Affordability? *Prompt: If yes, how? For which families, and why?*

Section F: Improvements

In the next section, I will ask you some questions about the improvements your Centre is making, or has made, as stated in your grant agreement. ELCC Centre's may have implemented one or more of the improvements:

Improvement
a. Offering flexible child care to support parents/caregivers who require child care outside of typical child care centre hours of operation.
b. Working to identify collaboration opportunities with other service organizations for co-location or new partnerships.
c. Collaborating with other service organizations to support cultural diversity as it relates to Indigenous, immigrant, and refugee children.
d. Collaborating with other service organizations to provide parenting supports and resources.
e. Collaborating with other service organizations to support vulnerable families.
f. Supporting child care in rural communities.

[Ask the following three questions for each improvement listed in the Centre's grant agreement]

For each improvement that has been implemented to date, I will now ask three questions.

- F1. Has the improvement been implemented differently than originally intended (e.g. have partners, Centre location or resources changed)?
Prompt: [If the improvement has not yet been implemented] Why has the improvement not yet been implemented?
- F2. What successes and challenges has your Centre experienced in implementing the improvement?
- F3. What strategies have you used to address the challenges?

Section G: Sustainability

These questions ask about issues related to the sustainability of the ELCC Initiative within your Centre.

- G1. The ELCC Initiative caps child care fees at \$25 a day per child. Does your Centre have a shortfall between the fees collected and the cost to run the Centre?
Prompt: How has your Centre covered the shortfall in fees?
Prompt: If yes, how has your centre adjusted operations to cover the shortfall? (i.e. charging families for snacks and meals or fieldtrips)?
- G2. What financial and in-kind supports do partners provide that assist in delivering affordable child care? In-kind supports may include goods or services that are provided at no-cost (e.g. time, materials, equipment, etc).
- G3. Does your Centre engage in fund-raising activities? *If yes, please describe these activities.*
- G4a. If the grant money from the Initiative were no longer available, is \$25 a day child care a sustainable model for your Centre? *Why or why not?*
Prompt: If no, how much per day would need to be charged to maintain the continued operation of your ELCC Centre?
Prompt: What would be required to cover the non-parent fee portion of service delivery costs?

- G4b. Is the flat fee (i.e. \$25 per day maximum) reasonable for sustainable child care in Alberta?
Prompt: Are you aware of a better model, or of any ways to improve affordability of child care (e.g. sliding scale fees based on household income)?
- G5. Aside from ongoing funding, are there any factors that support the sustainability of the ELCC Initiative (as a whole, component parts)?
- G6. Aside from the loss of funding, are there any factors that you think might hinder the sustainability of the ELCC Initiative?
- G7. What unintended outcomes, if any, have resulted from the ELCC Initiative?
Prompt: These might be positive or negative.
- G8. In your opinion, is there an ongoing need for the ELCC Initiative?

Section H: Conclusion

- H1. Were there any lessons learned, during Initiative implementation, that can support, increase or improve the Centre's:
- program design?
 - efficiency?
 - effectiveness?
 - future investment?
- H2. Were there any lessons learned, during Initiative implementation, that can support, increase or improve the ELCC Initiative's:
- program design?
 - efficiency?
 - effectiveness?
 - future investment?
- H3. Are there any other comments that you would like to make about the ELCC Initiative?

Thank you for your participation in this interview!

APPENDIX H: ELCC CENTRE STAFF INTERVIEW GUIDE

Name and Position/Role:

Date and Time:

Telephone:

Introduction

The Government of Alberta has contracted R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (Malatest) to conduct an evaluation of Alberta's Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Initiative. The results of this evaluation will be used to determine areas for improvement and future direction of child care in Alberta.

As part of the evaluation, Malatest is conducting interviews with Centre staff in order to understand the implementation of the ELCC Initiative at each individual centre. The goal of this conversation is to learn about the impacts of the Initiative on child care providers, parents/caregivers, children and the community. The interview is expected to take approximately 45 to 60 minutes of your time.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. You are not obligated to answer any questions, you may skip any question that you cannot or do not wish to answer, and you may end the interview at any point without any negative consequences.

Malatest will adhere to the regulations set out in Part 1 of the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA)*. We are also compliant with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (Alberta)*. The information gathered through this interview is considered confidential by R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. Interview notes may be shared with the Alberta Children's Services for quality control purposes, but will not contain any personal information. For reporting purposes, your responses will be aggregated with information received from other key informants. With your permission, we would like to digitally record the interview to ensure the accuracy of our notes. All data collected as part of this Evaluation will be securely stored for three (3) years following the end of this Evaluation (estimated end date: June 2020), at which point it will be destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Sheila Harper of Malatest at:

780-448-9042 (extension 224)

toll free: 1-877-665-6252

s.harper@malatest.com

Do you have any questions or require any additional information before we begin?

Section A: Involvement

This section focuses on your role in the child care industry and at the ELCC Centre.

A1. Please tell me your history in the child care industry generally, and at this Centre specifically.

Section B: Implementation

This section asks questions about the implementation of the ELCC Initiative at your Centre, which may involve the activities listed in the table below.

ELCC Centre Implementation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the number of new day care spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capping parent fees at \$25 per day
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing <i>Play, Participation, and Possibilities: An Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum Framework for Alberta</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting on-site professional development that enables full participation of all children in the program including children with diverse needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging parents/caregivers in a quality assurance process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating in the Child Care Accreditation program Demonstrating compliance with Alberta’s Child Care Licensing Act and Child Care Licensing Regulation;
Implementing one or more of the following improvements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer flexible child care to support parents/caregivers who are working or attending school outside operations and/or who work on a part-time basis; Identify opportunities to collaborate with other service organizations for co- location delivering ELCC; Ensure collaboration with other service organizations that support knowledge about cultural learning as it relates to Indigenous, immigrant and refugee children; Ensure collaboration with other service organizations to support the provision of parenting supports to families attending the child care program; Collaborate to support vulnerable families (e.g. families with low socio-economic status, lone parent families, parenting teens, and women facing additional barriers); and/or Support child care in rural communities. 	

B1. Overall, how do you think implementation of the ELCC Initiative is going at your Centre?

Play, Participation, and Possibilities: An Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum Framework for Alberta

B2. What learning opportunities, specific to the PPP curriculum framework, have been made available to you and the Centre staff? *How many have you participated in?*

B3. How have Centre staff incorporated the additional knowledge and/or skills gained through the PPP curriculum framework into their daily child care practice and interactions with children?

Prompt: How has the PPP curriculum framework been translated and applied in your Centre?

Prompt: How is the PPP curriculum framework impacting your Centre’s work practices?

B4. Has your Centre experienced any problems with applying the PPP curriculum framework into day-to-day care? *If yes, what are some of the problems that have been encountered? How have these problems been overcome?*

Access, Support and Participation (ASaP) Continuum Project

B5. What learning opportunities, specific to the ASaP program, have been made available to you and the Centre staff? *How many have you participated in?*

B6. How have Centre staff incorporated the additional knowledge and/or skills gained through the ASaP program into their daily child care practice and interactions with children?

Prompt: How has the ASaP program been translated and applied in your Centre?

Prompt: How is the ASaP program impacting your Centre's work practices?

B7. Has your Centre experienced any problems with applying the ASaP program into day-to-day care? *If yes, what are some of the problems that have been encountered? How have these problems been overcome?*

Partnerships and Collaborations

B8. How has your Centre collaborated with other organizations to promote and improve its cultural diversity / support vulnerable families / enhance parenting skills?

B9. How have the collaborations your Centre has with organizations that promote/improve cultural diversity improved your knowledge of cultural diversity?

B10. Do you think that cultural diversity has increased in your Centre? *How/Why not? If yes: have you noticed whether this has had an effect (positive or negative) on the children enrolled in your Centre?*

B11. How have the collaborations with other organizations that serve vulnerable families improved Centre staffs' interactions with the children enrolled in your Centre?

B12. Do you think that support for vulnerable families has increased in the Centre? *Why/why not? If yes: have you noticed whether this has had an effect (positive or negative) on the children enrolled in your Centre?*

B12. As a result of your Centre's partnerships and collaborations with other organizations, do you think that:

a. there is an increased awareness among parents/caregivers and families about the resources and supports offered through other community organizations? *Why/why not?*

b. a greater number of parents/caregivers or families have accessed the supports offered through community partner organizations? *Why/why not?*

B13. Based on your interactions with parents/caregivers who have accessed other community resources and supports, do you think that these partnerships are:

a. increasing parents'/caregivers' confidence? *Why/why not?*

b. increasing parents'/caregivers' skills? *Why/why not?*

c. increasing parents'/caregivers' autonomy?

B14. Has your Centre experienced any challenges in promoting cultural diversity / working with vulnerable families / providing parenting supports within the Centre? *If yes, how have these challenges been overcome?*

B15. How do you think collaborations should be supported to ensure sustainability (best practices)?

Section C: Affordability and Accessibility

This section asks about the affordability and accessibility of child care at your Centre.

C1. Do you think that the spaces in your Centre are now more affordable for parents/caregivers than they used to be? *Why?*

C2. Has the Centre had to change its operation(s) in order to ensure affordability for parents/caregivers? *If yes, how?*

C3. What would facilitate or hinder the sustainability of low-cost, high quality child care delivery in your Centre?

Section D: Impacts

These questions ask about the impact of the ELCC Initiative at your Centre.

D1. Have you noticed a change in the rate of retention of Centre staff since the ELCC Initiative began? *If yes: what do you think has contributed to increased/decreased Centre staff retention?*

D2. How do you think the ELCC Initiative impacts the well-being of families/children in your Centre?

D3. What unintended outcomes, if any, have resulted from the ELCC Initiative? *Prompt: These might be positive or negative.*

D4. Based on the day-to-day care Centre staff provide, do you think there are any ongoing gaps in the accessibility, affordability or quality of child care? *If yes, are there processes or protocols in place within the Centre, that allow Centre staff to discuss these gaps with Centre management?*

Section E: Conclusion

E1. Were there any lessons learned, during Initiative implementation, that can support, increase or improve the Centre's:

- a. program design?
- b. efficiency?
- c. effectiveness?
- d. future investment?

E2. Were there any lessons learned, during Initiative implementation, that can support, increase or improve the ELCC Initiative's:

- a. program design?
- b. efficiency?
- c. effectiveness?
- d. future investment?

E3. Are there any other comments that you would like to make?

Thank you for your participation in this interview!

APPENDIX I: ELCC CENTRE STAFF SURVEY

Staff Survey

Introduction

The Government of Alberta has implemented a pilot to offer accessible and affordable quality child care in Alberta. Malatest, an independent research firm, has been contracted by the Government of Alberta's Ministry of Children's Services to conduct an evaluation of the Early Learning Child Care (ELCC) Initiative over the next three years.

As part of this evaluation, we are conducting a survey with Centre staff, to better understand the impacts of the Initiative on child care providers, parents/caregivers and children. As an ELCC Centre staff member, this is your opportunity to provide feedback that will help to improve the Initiative.

Notes on Completing the Survey

This survey should take approximately 15 minutes of your time.

Returning the Survey

Please place your completed survey into the stamped-self addressed envelope and either hand it to a member of the evaluation team either (in person), or send it back through the mail.

Privacy and Confidentiality

All findings from the survey will be kept private and confidential, meaning that no individual will be identified or linked to their responses.

All information you provide will be protected under the provisions of the *Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Data collected through this survey will be included in evaluation reports prepared for the Initiative in 2018, 2019 and 2020. Data collected as part of this evaluation will be included as part of the evaluation reports for the Initiative in 2018, 2019 and 2020. All data will be securely stored for three (3) years following the end of this Evaluation (estimated end date: June 2020), at which point it will be destroyed.

Questions

If you have any further questions about the Initiative or the survey, please contact:

Carrie Bibik
Research Manager at Malatest
Tel (local): 780-448-9042 extension 223
Toll free: 1-877-665-6252 extension 223
Email: c.bibik@malatest.com

SECTION A WORK EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING

In this section, we will ask you some questions about your work experience and training. We are asking these questions so that we can develop a better understanding of the experiences and training needs of Centre staff across child care centres.

How long have you worked in child care?

- Less than one month
 _____ months _____ years
 Don't know

Aside from where you currently work (this Centre), have you worked at other child care centres?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

Now thinking about where you currently work, how long have you been working at this Centre?

- Less than one month
 _____ months _____ years
 Don't know

Did you come to work here because this Centre received ELCC funding?

- Yes – *please explain:* _____

 No
 Don't know

What is your current position at this child care Centre? *For example, are you a child care worker in the infant room?*

What age group do you care for in the Centre? *Select all that apply.*

- 0 to 12 months
 13 to 18 months
 19 months to less than three years
 Three years to less than 4.5 years
 4.5 years and older

What is your current level of certification?

- Child Development Assistant (formerly Level One)
 Child Development Worker (formerly Level Two)
 Child Development Supervisor (formerly Level Three)
 Other (please specify) _____
 None Don't know

The following questions pertain to the professional development opportunities being offered through this ELCC Centre. By 'professional development' we mean opportunities for education and training to improve the capabilities and skills of Centre staff.

Professional development opportunities are offered... *(Please select one response only)*

- During work time
- During personal time
- During a combination of work and personal time
- Professional development opportunities are not offered

Please answer the remaining questions in this section.

Please proceed directly to Section B (page 6).

Please only answer this question if you selected 'During work time' in the question above.

When professional development is offered during work time, how does it impact the use of your off-the-floor time? *(Please select one response only)*

- It has no impact on my off-the-floor time
- It slightly reduces my ability to use off-the-floor time for planning
- It significantly reduces my ability to use off-the-floor time for planning
- It eliminates my ability to use off-the-floor time for planning
- Don't know

Please only answer this question if professional development opportunities are offered.

Professional development fees are paid... *(Select all that apply)*

- Entirely by me Entirely by the Centre
- Partly the Centre, partly by me
- Through an accreditation professional development grant
- Other – please specify:

-

How many professional development opportunities have you participated in since this Centre opened or began receiving ELCC funding? _____ opportunities

Please only complete the table if professional development opportunities are offered.

Please identify the professional development opportunities you have participated in since this Centre opened or began receiving ELCC funding, and whether you received any form of credit or credential for this course. By professional development we mean opportunities for education and training to improve capabilities and skills of Centre staff.

Name of professional development (PD) opportunity <i>NOTE: PD development can include opportunities relating to the Play, Participation and Possibilities curriculum framework, inclusion opportunities such as the Getting Ready for Inclusion Today program, and other PD activities.</i>	Opportunity resulted in a credit			Opportunity was relevant to my work			Opportunity contributes to an increase in my certification			Participation in this opportunity was mandatory		
	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

******If you have completed more than seven (7) PD opportunities and require more space, please photocopy this page and affix it to the survey.******

Please only answer this question if professional development opportunities are offered.

How satisfied are you that the professional development opportunities offered by the Centre have enhanced your ability to meet the care needs of the children at the Centre?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied
- Unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied
- Don't know

Please only answer this question if professional development opportunities are offered.

Overall, how satisfied are you with the professional development opportunities offered to you at this Centre?

- Very satisfied

Why? _____

- Satisfied

Why? _____

- Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied

Why? _____

- Unsatisfied

Why? _____

- Very unsatisfied

Why? _____

- Don't know

Why? _____

SECTION B: PROGRAMMING

Now we are going to ask you some questions about the *Play, Participation and Possibilities: An early learning child care* curriculum framework (PPP curriculum framework).

Have you received training on the **curriculum** supports and resources made available to your Centre to improve the quality of child care provided at the Centre?

Yes → Please answer the rest of the questions on this page.

No

Don't know

} Please proceed to the next page (page 7).

As a result of the PPP curriculum framework training you received, are you better able to ...	Yes	No	Don't Know
Develop responsive curriculum?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide responsive and interesting activities or experiences to the children?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide responsive and interesting environments for the children?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How has the PPP curriculum framework training you received changed the way you interact with the children and parents/caregivers?

Don't know

How has the PPP curriculum framework training changed the way the Centre operates?

Don't know

Now we are going to ask you some questions about the inclusion practices and supports made available to your Centre. This may include the Getting Ready for Inclusion Today (GRIT) program and the Access, Support and Participation (ASaP) program.

Have you received training on the **inclusion** supports and resources made available to your Centre to improve child inclusion?

- Yes → *Please answer the rest of the questions on this page.*
 - No
 - Don't know
- } *Please proceed to the next page (page 8).*

How has the inclusion training you received changed the way you interact with the children and parents/caregivers?

Don't know

How has the inclusion training changed the way the Centre operates?

Don't know

Now we are going to ask you some questions about the improvements that your Centre is implementing.

As part of the ELCC Initiative, each Centre that received funding is implementing one or more of the following improvements:

- ❖ **Offer flexible child care** to support parents/caregivers who are working or attending school outside of typical operational hours;
- ❖ Offer child care **in rural communities**;
- ❖ Collaborate with other organizations to **provide families with access to multiple services in the same physical space**;
- ❖ Collaborate with other organizations that:
 - **support cultural diversity**, particularly as it relates to Indigenous, immigrant and refugee children;
 - **provide parenting resources**; or
 - **support vulnerable families**, such as those with low socio-economic status, lone parent families, parenting teens, and women facing additional barriers.

To what extent do you think the improvement(s) that your Centre has implemented helped Centre staff meet the needs of children and families? *Please note: if an improvement has not been implemented at your Centre, please select 'Not applicable'.*

Offering flexible child care helped Centre staff to...	Has helped a lot	Has helped somewhat	Has not helped at all	Don't know	Not applicable
Support parents/caregivers in the development of their child(ren).	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Create a more culturally-inclusive learning environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Create a learning environment that recognizes different family types.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Support parents/caregivers who work or study outside of typical business hours.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Provide families with quality care in their community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

To what extent do you think the improvement(s) that your Centre has implemented helped Centre staff meet the needs of children and families? *Please note: if an improvement has not been implemented at your Centre, please select 'Not applicable'.*

Offering child care in rural communities helped Centre staff to...	Has helped a lot	Has helped somewhat	Has not helped at all	Don't know	Not applicable
Support parents/caregivers in the development of their child(ren).	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Create a more culturally-inclusive learning environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Create a learning environment that recognizes different family types.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Support parents/caregivers who work or study outside of typical business hours.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Provide families with quality care in their community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Collaborating with other organizations to provide families with access to multiple services in the same space helped Centre staff to...	Has helped a lot	Has helped somewhat	Has not helped at all	Don't know	Not applicable
Support parents/caregivers in the development of their child(ren).	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Create a more culturally-inclusive learning environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Create a learning environment that recognizes different family types.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Support parents/caregivers who work or study outside of typical business hours.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Provide families with quality care in their community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Collaborating with other organizations that support or provide cultural diversity helped Centre staff to...	Has helped a lot	Has helped somewhat	Has not helped at all	Don't know	Not applicable
Support parents/caregivers in the development of their child(ren).	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Create a more culturally-inclusive learning environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Create a learning environment that recognizes different family types.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Support parents/caregivers who work or study outside of typical business hours.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Provide families with quality care in their community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

To what extent do you think the improvement(s) that your Centre has implemented helped Centre staff meet the needs of children and families? *Please note: if an improvement has not been implemented at your Centre, please select 'Not applicable'.*

Collaborating with other organizations that support or provide parenting resources helped Centre staff to...	Has helped a lot	Has helped somewhat	Has not helped at all	Don't know	Not applicable
Support parents/caregivers in the development of their child(ren).	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Create a more culturally-inclusive learning environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Create a learning environment that recognizes different family types.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Support parents/caregivers who work or study outside of typical business hours.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Provide families with quality care in their community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Collaborating with other organizations that support vulnerable families helped Centre staff to...	Has helped a lot	Has helped somewhat	Has not helped at all	Don't know	Not applicable
Support parents/caregivers in the development of their child(ren).	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Create a more culturally-inclusive learning environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Create a learning environment that recognizes different family types.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Support parents/caregivers who work or study outside of typical business hours.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Provide families with quality care in their community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

In your opinion, is there an ongoing need for the ELCC Initiative?

Yes *Why?* _____

No *Why not?* _____

Don't know *Why are you unsure?*

SECTION C REFERRAL AND RESOURCES

In this section, we will ask you some questions about other resources available to families enrolled at the Centre.

Does your Centre make families aware of other community resources to help meet their needs?
'Community resources' might include food baskets, parent support groups, children's play groups, etc..

Yes →

What community resources does your Centre tell families about?

No

Don't know

Are there any additional community resources that families need access to?

Yes →

What additional community resources do you think families need access to?

No

Don't know

Does your Centre partner with other community services to meet the needs of families?

Yes →

Which community services does your Centre partner with?

No

Don't know

SECTION D CENTRE STAFF PERCEPTIONS

In the following section, we will ask you some questions about your work environment. We are asking these questions so that we can develop an understanding of workplace satisfaction among Centre staff.

All findings from the survey will be kept private and confidential, and will only be reported in combination with other responses. This means that you will not be identified, nor will you be linked to your responses.

Do you feel that your work meaningfully contributes to the goals of the Centre?

Yes

No

Don't know

Do you intend to stay at this Centre over the next 12 months?

Yes

No — *Why not?* _____

Don't know — *Why are you unsure?* _____

	Yes	No	Don't know
Have you had the necessary training and resources to complete your work effectively?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do your co-workers support you when something unexpected comes up in your work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you able to manage your workload effectively?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In general, do you feel that you are treated as a professional in this Centre?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you feel the staff you work with have the necessary qualifications to support the team in providing child care?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you feel that your direct supervisor has the necessary skills or knowledge to support the team in providing child care?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Overall, how satisfied are you with working at this Centre?					
Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<i>Please answer this question only if you have worked in other child care centres.</i>	Compared to other child care centres you have worked at, do you feel that, at your current Centre:	Yes	No	Don't know
	You have more opportunity for professional development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	You have more input in the operation of the Centre.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	You have more room for personal growth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	You have more confidence in the quality of child care provided at the Centre.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>I haven't worked in other child care centres.</i>				

APPENDIX J: ELCC CENTRE PARTNER INTERVIEW GUIDE

Name and Position/Role:
Date and Time:
Telephone:
Introduction
<p>The Government of Alberta has contracted R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (Malatest) to conduct an evaluation of Alberta’s Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Initiative. The results of this evaluation will be used to determine areas for improvement and future direction of ELCC Initiative.</p> <p>As part of the evaluation, Malatest is conducting interviews with community partners and stakeholders in order to glean their perspective. The goal of this conversation is to better understand the impacts of the Initiative on child care providers, parents/caregivers, children and the community. The interview is expected to take approximately 45 to 60 minutes of your time.</p>
Confidentiality and Privacy
<p>Your participation in this interview is voluntary. You are not obligated to answer any questions, you may skip any question that you cannot or do not wish to answer, and you may end the interview at any point without any negative consequences.</p> <p>Malatest will adhere to the regulations set out in Part 1 of the <i>Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA)</i>. We are also compliant with the <i>Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (Alberta)</i>. The information gathered through this interview is considered confidential by R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. Interview notes may be shared with the Alberta Children’s Services for quality control purposes, but will not contain any personal information. For reporting purposes, your responses will be aggregated with information received from other key informants. With your permission, we would like to digitally record the interview to ensure the accuracy of our notes. All data collected as part of this Evaluation will be securely stored for three (3) years following the end of this Evaluation (estimated end date: June 2020), at which point it will be destroyed.</p> <p>If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Sheila Harper of Malatest at: 780-448-9042 (extension 224) toll free: 1-877-665-6252 s.harper@malatest.com</p>
Do you have any questions or require additional information before we begin?

Section A: Involvement

This section focuses on your organization's role in collaborating with the ELCC Centre.

- A1. Please tell me a bit about the services or supports offered by your organization.
- A2. Please tell me a bit about the partnership/collaboration you have with the Centre.
- a. How long have you been partners with the ELCC Centre?
 - b. Was your partnership with the Centre established directly as a result of their involvement in the Initiative?
Prompt: If yes, why do you believe this to be the case?
Prompt: If the partnership was pre-existing, did it change as a result of the Centre's involvement in the ELCC Initiative?

Section B: Implementation

This section asks questions about the implementation of the ELCC Initiative at the Centre you are collaborating with.

- B1. Are there formal processes or documents in place that clearly outline:
- a. The roles and responsibilities of all partners? *If yes, how has this been documented?*
 - b. Communication processes between partner organizations? *If yes, how has this been documented? Are the communication processes effective?*
 - c. How partnerships are used to support the implementation of improvements within the Centre? *If yes, how has this been documented? If yes, how effective are those improvements?*
- B2. Does your organization provide financial and/or in-kind supports to the Centre you collaborate with? In-kind supports may include goods or services that are provided at no-cost (e.g. time, materials, equipment, etc). *If yes, what types of in-kind support does your organization provide?*
- B3. What has made your partnership with the Centre successful?
- B4. Have there been any challenges associated with your engagement in this partnership? *If yes, please describe.*
Prompt: How have these challenges been overcome?

Section C: Affordability and Accessibility

As part of the Initiative, ELCC Centres are to improve child care affordability and accessibility for Alberta families. This section asks about your perception of the affordability and accessibility of child care at the Centre you have collaborated with.

- C1. Does your organization provide any support to the ELCC Centre(s) that would help improve child care affordability or accessibility (e.g. the Centre shares your facilities thereby reducing its operating costs; your organization provides in-kind support to the Centre)? *If yes, how?*
- C2. Based on your organization's involvement with the Centre, are you aware of any ways the Centre(s) has/have had to change or modify its/their operations in order to optimize affordability or accessibility? *If yes, how?*

Section D: Quality

The following questions focus on how the quality of child care at the ELCC Centre has been impacted as a result of your collaboration.

- D1. How has your collaboration with the Centre assisted in promoting and improving its cultural diversity / supporting vulnerable families / parenting skills?
- D2. [Ask if promoting cultural diversity / working with vulnerable families] Through your collaboration with the Centre, has the Centre been able to reach and serve the target groups they intended to reach? *Why/why not? Are there any target groups that the Centre and your organization would like to serve (in collaboration), but are unable to access/engage?*
- D3. Has your organization experienced any challenges in promoting cultural diversity / working with vulnerable families / providing parenting supports within the Centre? *If yes, how have these challenges been overcome?*
- D4. As a result of your collaboration with the Centre, do you think that:
 - a. there is an increased awareness among parents/caregivers and families about the resources and supports offered through your organization? *Why/why not?*
 - b. a greater number of parents/caregivers or families have accessed the supports offered through your organization? *Why/why not?*
- D5. Based on your interactions with parents/caregivers who have accessed your organization's resources and supports, do you think that your collaboration with the Centre is:
 - a. increasing parents'/caregivers' confidence? *Why/why not?*
 - b. increasing parents'/caregivers' skills? *Why/why not?*
 - c. increasing parents'/caregivers' autonomy (e.g. going forward, they will feel more confident seeking out and accessing needed supports)? *Why/why not?*

- D6. How do you think the ELCC Initiative impacts the well-being of families/children in your Centre?
- D7. What unintended outcomes, if any, have resulted from the ELCC Initiative? *Prompt: These might be positive or negative.*
- D8. Based on your interactions with the Centre(s), what gaps, if any, have you seen in child care, in terms of accessibility, affordability or quality?

Section E: Sustainability

These questions ask about issues related to the sustainability of the ELCC Initiative within the Centre you have collaborated with.

- E1. How can collaboration between partners be supported to ensure sustainability (best practices)?
- E2. Aside from ongoing funding, are there any factors that you think might support the sustainability of the ELCC Initiative?
- E3. Aside from the loss of funding, are there any factors that you think might hinder the sustainability of the ELCC Initiative?
- E4. If the grant money from the ELCC Initiative were no longer available, do you think \$25/day parent fees is sustainable for the continued operation of the Centre/Initiative? *Why/why not?*
Prompt: If no, how much per day would need to be charged to maintain the continued operation of your ELCC Centre?
Prompt: What would be required to cover the non-parent fee portion of service delivery costs?
- E5. Is the flat fee (i.e. \$25 per day maximum) a reasonable rate for sustainable child care in Alberta?
Prompt: Are you aware of a better model, or of any ways to improve affordability of child care (e.g. sliding scale fees based on household income)?
- E6. Does the capped fee of \$25 per day represent a valid cost point threshold for families in Alberta?
If no, would amending the capped fee (either by decreasing or increasing it) make it more appropriate?

Section F: Conclusion

- F1. In your opinion, is there an ongoing need for the ELCC Initiative?
- F2. Were there any lessons learned, during Initiative implementation, that can support, increase or improve the Centre's:
 - a. program design?
 - b. efficiency?
 - c. effectiveness?
 - d. future investment?
- F3. Were there any lessons learned, during Initiative implementation, that can support, increase or improve the ELCC Initiative's:
 - a. program design?
 - b. efficiency?
 - c. effectiveness?
 - d. future investment?
- F4. Are there any other comments that you would like to make?

Thank you for your participation in this interview!

APPENDIX K: ELCC CENTRE/COMPARISON CENTRE PARENT/CAREGIVER SURVEY

Parent/Caregiver Survey

Introduction

The Government of Alberta has implemented an Initiative to offer accessible and affordable quality child care in Alberta. Malatest, an independent research firm, has been contracted by the Government of Alberta's Ministry of Children's Services to conduct a survey with parents/caregivers who have children enrolled in licensed child care.

The government wishes to better understand the impacts of the Initiative on child care providers, parents/caregivers and children. As a parent/caregiver who has at least one child enrolled in a licensed care centre, your feedback is critical to the success of this evaluation.

Notes on Completing the Survey

This survey should take approximately 15 minutes of your time.

Returning the Survey

Please place your completed survey into the stamped-self addressed envelope and either hand it to a member of the evaluation team either (in person), or send it back through the mail.

Privacy and Confidentiality

All findings from the survey will be kept private and confidential; no individual will be identified or linked to their responses.

All information you provide will be protected under the provisions of the *Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Data collected through this survey will be included in evaluation reports prepared for the Initiative in 2018, 2019 and 2020. All data will be securely stored for three (3) years following the end of this evaluation (estimated end date: June 2020), at which point it will be destroyed.

To Thank You

To thank you for taking the time to participate in the survey, we would like to give you a five dollar e-gift card to Starbucks.

At the end of the survey you will be asked to provide your name and email address. This is so that we can send you the link to redeem the e-gift card online. Your information will not be added to any other database, nor will it be provided to any other party.

Questions

If you have any questions about the Initiative or the survey, please contact:

Carrie Bibik
Research Manager at Malatest
Tel (local): 780-448-9042, extension 223
Toll free: 1-877-665-6252, extension 223
Email: c.bibik@malatest.com

SECTION A FAMILY PROFILE

In order to develop an understanding of who accesses child care, we would like to start by asking you some questions about your family. The information you provide will be grouped with other responses and will not be reported individually.

In total, how many children do you have in your care? By 'in your care', we mean children for whom you have primary or shared custody.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> One | <input type="checkbox"/> Four | <input type="checkbox"/> More than six |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Two | <input type="checkbox"/> Five | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Three | <input type="checkbox"/> Six | |
-

How many of the children you have in your care are **under the age of 5 years**?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> One | <input type="checkbox"/> Four | <input type="checkbox"/> More than six |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Two | <input type="checkbox"/> Five | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Three | <input type="checkbox"/> Six | |
-

For each of the children in your care who is under the age of 5, please indicate their age and whether they are attending school, a licensed child care centre, another form of child care, or at home with a parent or guardian. *Please answer only for their care during the day (working hours) rather than during the evenings. If they are attending a licensed child care centre part time, please indicate where they spend the rest of the day.*

Child 1	
Age _____ years _____ months	
Attending school? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Attending a licensed child care centre? <input type="checkbox"/> Full time <input type="checkbox"/> Part time	
Enrollment date Month: _____ Year: _____	
Attending another form of child care? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
At home with parent, guardian or family member? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

Child 2	
Age _____ years _____ months	
Attending school? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Attending a licensed child care centre? <input type="checkbox"/> Full time <input type="checkbox"/> Part time	
Enrollment date Month: _____ Year: _____	
Attending another form of child care? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
At home with parent, guardian or family member? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

Child 3	
Age _____ years _____ months	
Attending school? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Attending a licensed child care centre? <input type="checkbox"/> Full time <input type="checkbox"/> Part time	
Enrollment date Month: _____ Year: _____	
Attending another form of child care? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
At home with parent, guardian or family member? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

Child 4	
Age _____ years _____ months	
Attending school? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Attending a licensed child care centre? <input type="checkbox"/> Full time <input type="checkbox"/> Part time	
Enrollment date Month: _____ Year: _____	
Attending another form of child care? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
At home with parent, guardian or family member? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

Child 5	
Age _____ years _____ months	
Attending school? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Attending a licensed child care centre? <input type="checkbox"/> Full time <input type="checkbox"/> Part time	
Enrollment date Month: _____ Year: _____	
Attending another form of child care? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
At home with parent, guardian or family member? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

Child 6	
Age _____ years _____ months	
Attending school? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Attending a licensed child care centre? <input type="checkbox"/> Full time <input type="checkbox"/> Part time	
Enrollment date Month: _____ Year: _____	
Attending another form of child care? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
At home with parent, guardian or family member? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

For the two following questions, **we will only be asking about your children, under the age of 5, who are attending a licensed child care centre.**

Prior to enrollment, who provided care for the children currently attending this Centre? **Please select the single best response.** *If the children’s care was split 50% of the time between two options, please select those two options.*

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stay-at-home parent/caregiver | <input type="checkbox"/> Different child care centre |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extended family | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friends/neighbours | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day home | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know |

How many of your children attending this Centre have special needs? By ‘special needs’ we mean particular educational or care requirements resulting from learning difficulties, physical disabilities or emotional and behavioral difficulties.

None

- One
- Two
- Three
- Four or more

If you answered ‘none’ to this question, and have no children with special needs, we will be asking you to answer the questions in the following sections based on the last child you enrolled in child care.

For example, if you enrolled a child two years ago, and you enrolled a different child one year ago, please report on the child you enrolled one year ago.

If you answered ‘one’, ‘two’, ‘three’, ‘four’ or ‘more than four’ to this question, and have at least one child with special needs, we will be asking you to answer the questions in the following sections based on the last child you enrolled in child care who has special needs.

For example, if you enrolled a child with special needs two years ago, and you enrolled a different child with special needs one year ago, please report on the child you enrolled one year ago.

What is the **main** child care arrangement you are currently using for the children attending this Centre? Is it...?
Please select only one.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> In the child's home | <input type="checkbox"/> A before- or after-school program |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A home day care | <input type="checkbox"/> Another type of child care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A preschool centre or nursery school | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A day care | |

What is the **main** reason you chose this child care centre, rather than a different one?
Please select only one.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Location (close to home or work, school, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> It is safe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Affordable cost | <input type="checkbox"/> Only option available |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hours of operation | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning program |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My other children go (have gone) there | <input type="checkbox"/> For the child's socialization |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Care by someone trustworthy (family member, friend) | <input type="checkbox"/> Low child-adult ratio / More employees / One-on-one time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Was recommended by someone | <input type="checkbox"/> Other <i>please specify</i> _____
_____ |

SECTION B ACCESSIBILITY

In this section, you will be asked some questions about child care accessibility. Please select one:

- Unless otherwise indicated, I will be answering these questions based on the last child, under the age of 5, who I enrolled in child care.
- Unless otherwise indicated, I will be answering these questions based on the last child, under the age of 5, who I enrolled in child care **and who has special needs.**

How long did it take you to secure space at this Centre for your child?

_____ years and _____ months
 Don't know

NOTE: When answering this question, please consider the period of time from the point you identified a need for child care by contacting the centre, to the point at which your child was enrolled at this Centre. For some people, this might have been when they found out they were pregnant; for other people, this might have been when one or both parents/caregivers decided to return to work.

How long was your child on a waiting list to enroll in this Centre?

_____ years and _____ months
 My child was not put on a waiting list
 There was no waiting list Don't know

How satisfied are you with the location of this Centre?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied
- Unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied
- Don't know

Please proceed directly to the next page (page 7).

Please proceed to the next question on this page.

Please proceed directly to the next page (page 7).

Please answer this question only if you answered 'unsatisfied' or 'very unsatisfied' to the question above.

Why are you unsatisfied? Select all that apply.

- Too far from work or home
- It is in a high traffic area
- It is in a residential area
- Too far from local transit
- Other please specify _____

Don't know

Please answer this question only if you have identified that you have a child/children with special needs.

In terms of the Centre's layout, does it meet the physical needs of your child? *For example, if your child has limited mobility, she or he can still access all areas of the Centre.*

Yes

No

Don't know

Does this Centre provide child care outside of the normal business hours of 7 am to 6 pm?

Yes → Please answer the remaining questions on this page.

No } Please proceed to the next page (page 8).

Don't know } Please proceed to the next page (page 8).

Please answer these questions only if you answered 'yes' to the question above.

Are there additional fees to have your child in care during extended hours?

Yes

No

Don't know

How often to you use the extended hours offered by your child care centre?

At least once a week

At least once a month

Once every few months

Never

Don't know

How satisfied are you with the hours of operation of this Centre?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor
unsatisfied
- Unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied
- Don't know

Please proceed directly to the next page (page 9).

Please proceed to the next question on this page.

Please proceed directly to the next page (page 9).

Please answer this question only if you answered 'unsatisfied' or 'very unsatisfied' to the question above.

Why are you unsatisfied? Select all that apply.

- Opens too late
- Closes too early
- Closed for too many holidays/stats
- Other *please specify* _____
- Don't know

SECTION C AFFORDABILITY

In this section, you will be asked some questions about child care affordability. Please select one:

- Unless otherwise indicated, I will be answering these questions based on the last child, under the age of 5, who I enrolled in child care.
- Unless otherwise indicated, I will be answering these questions based on the last child, under the age of 5, who I enrolled in child care **and who has special needs.**

	Please report the cost by either day or month.	
	Per day	Per month
How much do you pay to have your child enrolled in this Centre?	\$ _____	OR \$ _____
What is your family's total cost for child care? Please include all forms of child care that you access <u>for all of your children.</u>	\$ _____	OR \$ _____

In order to understand how much you spend on child care in a month in relation to you income, please tell us what your monthly household income is after taxes.

- Household income after taxes
\$ _____ per month
- Don't know

If you are not comfortable providing your monthly household income, please tell us approximately what percentage of your monthly household income is used to cover child care costs for all of your children?

- _____% per month
- Don't know

Do you receive child care subsidies to help pay for your child's enrollment at this Centre?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

At child care centres, meals and snacks may be covered by regular child care fees, or may only be provided when parents/caregivers bring food from home or pay additional fees. For your child enrolled in this Centre, please indicate how the following meals or snacks are provided. *Select all that apply.*

	Included in my child care fees	I bring food from home	I pay an additional fee	How much do you pay for this, per day?	Don't know
Morning snack	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lunch	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Afternoon snack	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other snacks/meals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

Some field trips, like walking to the local park, have no fees or costs associated with them. Other field trips, like going to the zoo, have fees or costs associated with them. To answer the following two questions, please think about field trips **that have fees or costs associated with them**.

Does this Centre charge you fees for your child to attend field trips?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | If yes, what fees are charged for field trips? <i>Select all that apply.</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> This Centre does not provide field trips | <input type="checkbox"/> Admission to attraction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> Additional staffing needs |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Food |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): |
| | _____ |
| | _____ |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know |

Overall, how satisfied are you with the cost of child care at this Centre?

Very satisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsatisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	Very unsatisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
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SECTION D: QUALITY AND PROGRAMMING

In this section, you will be asked some questions about child care quality. Please select one:

- Unless otherwise indicated, I will be answering these questions based on the last child, under the age of 5, who I enrolled in child care.*
- Unless otherwise indicated, I will be answering these questions based on the last child, under the age of 5, who I enrolled in child care **and who has special needs.***

How much do you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable	Don't know
Centre staff encourage my child to participate in activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child care centre activities help my child understand other cultures.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child care centre activities evolve out of the interest of my child.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My children is provided with opportunities to play and explore.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Centre staff change activities in response to the needs of my child.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child care centre activities help connect my child to our family.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child care centre activities help connect my child to our community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Centre staff regularly communicate with me about my child's day so that I can incorporate my child's interests into activities at home.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I consider the staff at this Centre to be professionals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The next set of questions ask about how the Centre includes parent/caregiver input in its operation and recognizes diverse cultures.

Does this Centre have a Parent Advisory Board that provides oversight and direction to the management of the Centre?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	→	<i>Have you participated in this?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know			<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know

Does this Centre have regular meetings for parents/caregivers to provide feedback concerning the Centre?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	→	<i>Have you participated in this?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know			<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know

Does this Centre involve parents and caregivers in processes to improve the quality of child care in the Centre? *Examples of these processes include completing surveys, participating in a committee, providing written feedback online or having a suggestion box.*

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	→	<i>Have you participated in this?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know			<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know

If you responded 'yes' above, please identify what you have participated in.

How satisfied are you that this Centre reflects the diversity of the community in which it is located?

Very satisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsatisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	Very unsatisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
--	---------------------------------------	---	---	--	--

To what extent do you agree that the staff at this Centre make you, as a parent/caregiver, feel welcome and accepted?

Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
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	Yes	No	Don't know
Does this Centre provide your child(ren) with food/snacks that accommodate your family's <u>dietary preferences or restrictions</u> ? <i>Examples include halal or kosher food, vegetarian food, food that omits allergens such as nuts or shellfish, etc.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does this Centre provide <u>learning activities</u> that celebrate different cultures? <i>For example, discussing and observing special days or celebrations of different faiths.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Don't know
Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of care provided at this Centre.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall, how satisfied are you with the degree to which your child is meaningfully engaged in Centre activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

In the following questions, you will be asked about parenting supports that may be available to you through this Centre. 'Parenting supports' might include educational materials, resources or referrals to other community organizations that help you to care for your child(ren).

Are you aware of any parenting supports available through this Centre? *Examples of 'parenting supports' include educational materials, access to other community resources such as Parent Link Centres or visits to the Centre by a community nurse.*

- Yes → *Please only answer the rest of the questions on this page if you respond 'yes' here.*
 - No
 - Don't know
- } *Please proceed to the next page (page 15).*

Have you ever accessed any of the parenting supports available through the Centre?

- Yes →
- No
- Don't know

What parenting supports have you accessed through the Centre?

Have any of the parenting supports provided to you by the Centre increased your parenting skills? For example, have they broadened your understanding of your child(ren)'s development or provided you with new parenting techniques or strategies?

- Yes →
- No
- Don't know

How have these parenting supports increased your skills?

SECTION E BENEFITS OF CHILD CARE

In this section, you will be asked some questions about how you feel child care has benefited you, your child(ren) and/or your household.

Has your child(ren)'s enrollment at this Centre enabled **you** to return to work or school?

(Select all that apply)

- Yes, I have returned to work full time
- Yes, I have returned to work part time
- Yes, I have returned to school full time
- Yes, I have returned to school part time
- Yes, I was in school but now I can take more classes
- No
- Don't know

Has your child(ren)'s enrollment in this Centre enabled **someone else in your household** (e.g. another family member) to return to work or school?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Not applicable (*no other adults live in my household*)

Did this individual provide child care duties for your child(en) prior to their enrollment in the Centre?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

How has your child(ren)'s enrollment in this Centre enabled this individual to return to work or school?

(Select all that apply)

- Not applicable (*no other adults live in my household*)

- They have returned to work full time
- They have returned to work part time
- They have returned to school full time
- They have returned to school part time
- They were in school but now they can take more classes
- There has been no impact for them
- Don't know

Has your household income changed since your child(ren) started attending this Centre?

- It has increased
- It has decreased
- It has stayed the same
- Don't know

Has your child(ren)'s enrollment at this Centre had any of the following impacts on your career, or the career of any other adult in your household (if applicable):

	Your career?			The career of any other adult in your household? <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Not applicable – there is no other adult in my household</i>		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
It has enabled me/them to focus more on work	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
It has enabled me/them to work more hours	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
It has enabled me/them to work less hours	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
It has enabled me/them to work fewer jobs (i.e. I had two jobs and now I have one job)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
It has enabled me/them to accept more work responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
It has enabled me/them to accept a promotion	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
It has enabled me/them to switch to a new job	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
It has enabled me/them to study more for a better position or job	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
It has had a negative impact on my/their career	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
It has had no impact on my/their career	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
Other (please specify):	_____			_____		

Overall, to what extent do you agree that the quality of care provided at this Centre has positively impacted your child(ren)?

Very satisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsatisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	Very unsatisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
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As a result of your child(ren) attending this Centre, do you feel a part of a community?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Feeling part of a community might be very specific, such as feeling part of the community of parents/caregivers who have children enrolled at this Centre, or more general, such as feeling part of the broader community in which this Centre is located.

As a result of being a parent of children at this Centre, do you feel more comfortable accessing community supports for your children?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Community supports can include other organizations or services, within the community, that provide support to your family generally or to your child specifically. Examples include reading programs through the library, cultural centres, or specialists such as a speech and language therapist.

Throughout this questionnaire, you have been asked questions about the accessibility, affordability and quality of child care at the Centre.

When you made the decision to enroll your child(ren) at this Centre, which of the three – accessibility, affordability or quality – was the most important factor in your decision. Or, was there another factor that was the most important factor? Which was the second most important factor impacting your decision? The third most important factor?

Factor	For example...	Most important	Second most important	Third most important	Don't know	None of these factors informed my decision
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location • Opening hours 	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low parent fees • Minimal additional supports 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive activities • Partnerships with other community organizations 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other please specify:	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

What impact has enrolling your child(ren) in this Centre had **on your family**?

No impact

Thinking about the impact you described, what was the **main** cause that allowed this to occur?
Please select only one.

- The affordability of the child care at this Centre
- The accessibility of the child care at this Centre

- The quality of the child care at this Centre
- Don't know

SECTION F DEMOGRAPHICS

In this final section, you will be asked some questions about yourself and your family.

The reason we are asking these questions is so that we can begin to understand how the topics discussed in this questionnaire affect different groups of people (for example, lone parents/caregivers, women, ethnic minorities, etc.).

As we mentioned at the beginning of the survey, the information you provide will be kept confidential, meaning it will be grouped with other responses and will not be reported individually.

We will only be using this information for analysis purposes.

What is your gender?

- Female Male Other (please specify): _____
 Don't know
-

What is your age?

- | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 17 or younger | <input type="checkbox"/> 35 to 44 | <input type="checkbox"/> 65 to 74 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18 to 24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 45 to 54 | <input type="checkbox"/> 75 or older |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25 to 34 | <input type="checkbox"/> 55 to 64 | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer |
-

What is the highest level of education you have attained?

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than high school | <input type="checkbox"/> Some university | <input type="checkbox"/> Some postgraduate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Graduated high school | <input type="checkbox"/> Completed university | <input type="checkbox"/> Completed postgraduate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Some commercial, technical or vocational college or trade certificate | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Graduated commercial, technical or vocational college or trade certificate | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know | | |
-

What is your ethnic/culture background?

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> White | <input type="checkbox"/> Filipino | <input type="checkbox"/> Latin American |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black | <input type="checkbox"/> Korean | <input type="checkbox"/> Arab |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese | <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese | <input type="checkbox"/> West Asian (e.g. Iranian, Afghan) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> South Asian
(e.g. East Indian,
Pakistani, Sri Lankan) | <input type="checkbox"/> Southeast Asian
(e.g. Vietnamese,
Cambodian, Laotian, Thai) | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ | | |

Do you identify as an Indigenous/Aboriginal person?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes —→ <i>Do you identify as:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> First Nations
	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Métis
	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> Inuk
		<input type="checkbox"/> Other <i>please specify:</i> _____

Are you a Canadian citizen?

- Yes, born in Canada —→ *Please proceed to the next page (page 21).*
- Yes, naturalized citizen
- No
- Don't know
- Please answer the next two questions on this page.*

Please answer these two questions only if you were <u>not</u> born in Canada.	Did you enter Canada as a:
	<input type="checkbox"/> Refugee <input type="checkbox"/> Permanent resident <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary foreign worker <input type="checkbox"/> Other <i>please specify</i> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
	How long have you lived in Canada?
	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 year <input type="checkbox"/> 1 to 2 years <input type="checkbox"/> 3 to 5 years <input type="checkbox"/> 6 to 10 years <input type="checkbox"/> More than 10 years <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know

What is your marital status?

- Married
- Common-law
- Widowed
- Single (never married)
- Separated
- Divorced
- Don't know

Please answer the next two questions on this page.

Please answer these two questions only if you are separated or divorced.

Do you have shared custody of your child(ren)?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Do both of the parents/caregivers, who share custody, require access to child care in order to work or pursue an education?

- Yes
- No

How many adults, including yourself, are in your household?

- One (you)
- Two
- Three
- Four
- Five
- Six
- More than six
- Don't know

What is the relationship of the adults to the child(ren) in the household?

	Parent/Step-parent	Caregiver	Grandparent	Aunt/Uncle	Other family member	Don't know
Adult 1 (you)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Adult 2	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Adult 3	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Adult 4	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Adult 5	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Adult 6	<input type="checkbox"/>					

What is your household income?

Under \$50,000

\$50,000 to \$80,000

\$80,001 to \$120,000

Over \$120,000

Don't know

What is your current main activity?

Employed

Self-employed

In school/training

Unemployed

Retired

Don't know

SECTION G CONCLUSION

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the quality, affordability or accessibility of care at this Centre?

Nothing further to add

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

To thank you for completing the survey, we would like to give you a five dollar e-gift card to Starbucks. In order to provide this e-gift card to you, we need your email address.

Name *please print*: _____

Email *please print*: _____

Please note that your name and email address will be used solely for the purposes of this evaluation and for providing the e-gift card to you. It will not be added to any other database, nor will it be provided to any other party.

APPENDIX L: ELCC CENTRE PARENT/CAREGIVER FOCUS GROUP MODERATOR'S GUIDE

Early Learning and Child Care Centres Evaluation
Alberta Children's Services
Parent/Caregiver Focus Group Guide Draft

Welcome

Welcome! My name is <<name>>, and I am an <<position>> with R.A. Malatest & Associates (Malatest). Thank you for agreeing to take part in this focus group discussion today.

The Government of Alberta's Ministry of Children's Services has contracted Malatest, an independent research firm, to conduct an evaluation of the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Initiative in Alberta. As part of this evaluation, we are interested in your views and experiences of this child care centre.

Our discussion today will take **about an hour**.

The discussion will be audio recorded to make sure that we get an accurate picture of all of the information you give us today. The information gathered through this discussion is considered confidential by Malatest. Summary notes from the discussion may be shared with Alberta Children's Services for quality control purposes, but will not contain any personal information. For reporting purposes, responses provided in this session will be aggregated with information received from other focus groups. All data collected as part of this Evaluation will be securely stored for three (3) years following the end of this Evaluation (estimated end date: June 2020), at which point it will be destroyed.

Remember, there are **no right or wrong answers**. I'd like everyone to have a chance to talk and make any comments that you think are important to the discussion. Some of you might think that you have a comment that you may think doesn't really matter or isn't appropriate – and I want you to know that I need to hear those kinds of things too. I'd just like to ask that you **talk one at a time**, and please **try not to interrupt anyone** when they are speaking - this also makes it easier for me to follow the discussion now and on the video tape afterwards.

My main role is to keep the discussion going. **Are there any questions before we start?**

Note: Italics indicate prompt questions and moderator notes.

Introductions

Let's start with some introductions.

Starting at this end of the table, please introduce yourself with your first name and how long you have had (a) child(ren) enrolled at this Centre.

Part A: Participation

A1. Why did you choose to enroll your child(ren) at this Centre?

Part B: Dotmocracy

B1. What has enrollment of your children in the ELCC Centre Initiative meant for you and your family?

Prompt: Have there been any changes to your involvement in work or school? For example, have you entered (for the first time) or returned the workforce following maternity or paternity leave?

Prompt: Do you feel more confident about the care your child(ren) is/are receiving (compared to what they may have received at another centre or from another care provider)?

Prompt: Do you feel more integrated into the community?

Prompt: How has the introduction of \$25 a day parent fees impacted you and your family?

Prompt: Any other impacts?

B2. There are a number of key elements of early learning child care that this Initiative is trying to address. These include [access, affordability, quality – ready points on sheets and provide definitions]. Each of you have three dots: a red one, a blue one and a yellow one. What I would like you to do is place **the red dot next to what you consider to be the main reason** that you enrolled your child(ren) in this child care centre. Place **the blue dot next to what you consider to be the second-most important** reason that you enrolled your child(ren) here, and place **the yellow dot next to what you consider to be the third-most important reason** that you enrolled your child(ren) here. Remember: there are no right or wrong answers: everyone's reasons for enrolling their child(ren) may be different but equally important.

Why did you rank the three reasons in the way that you did?

Were any of the reasons not an important reason for your decision to enroll your child(ren) in this Centre?

Part C: Parent/Caregiver Engagement and Learning

We are now going to spend some time talking about parent /caregiver engagement in the Centre. This will help us to understand if and how the Centre supports and encourages parents/caregivers to be involved, and what impact this involvement has on families.

C1. How involved are you in Centre activities?

Prompt: What sort of activities are you involved in? (Activities might include attending meetings, volunteering to go on field trips and/or providing written feedback.)

Prompt: If you have not been involved in any Centre activities, were you aware of any activities that you could have participated in? Why did you decide to not participate in these activities?

Prompt: Do you think parents/caregivers are provided enough opportunities to be involved in Centre activities?

- C2. Do you feel like you have been offered opportunities for meaningful participation in the Centre? *If yes, what types of opportunities were you offered that felt meaningful? What made these opportunities meaningful to you? If no, what could the Centre do to make parent/caregiver involvement in the Centre more meaningful?*
Prompt: How have Centre staff tried to engage you in activities? (e.g. they welcome you, they personally invite you, they explain the benefits of participation to you)
Prompt: Are there any other types of Centre activities that parents/caregivers should be provided the opportunity to participate in?
Prompt: Do you think your involvement in these activities has helped improve the quality of care at the Centre? Why/why not?
- C3. Have you learned anything from your participation in Centre activities? (e.g. new parenting skills, what your child(ren) did during the day, new skills that your child(ren) learned, how the Centre operates, etc.) *If yes, what have you done with that knowledge? If no, what sorts of things would you like to be able to learn?*
- C4. Through your involvement in this Centre, have you been put in touch with other supports or resources in the community? *If yes, what supports were you put in touch with? Did you access those supports? How did those supports help you and your family? Are there supports or resources you would like to be put in touch with?*

Part D: Overall Perceptions of the Centre

- D1. Do you feel that this Centre offers inclusive child care? (By inclusive, we mean care that supports children with diverse needs, that recognizes a range of cultures and ethnicities and that recognizes a range of different family types.)
Prompt: What does the Centre do well? What could be improved?
- D2. Do you plan to keep your child(ren) enrolled in this particular Centre? If yes, what makes you want keep your child(ren) enrolled here? If no, why do you want to leave this Centre?
Prompt: What might cause you to move your child(ren) to a different Centre?
Prompt: What other care arrangements would you consider making for your child(ren)?
- D3. Overall, how comfortable are you with the care being provided at this Centre?
Prompt: What is it about this Centre that makes you feel comfortable/uncomfortable with the care they provide?
- D4. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your or your child(ren)'s experience at this Centre?

Thank you for joining us in the focus group!

APPENDIX M: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PEDAGOGICAL PARTNERS AND GRIT COACHES

Name and Position/Role:

Date and Time:

Telephone:

Introduction

The Government of Alberta has contracted R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (Malatest) to conduct an evaluation of Alberta's Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Centre Initiative. The results of this evaluation will be used to determine areas for improvement and future direction of ELCC Initiative.

As part of the evaluation, Malatest is conducting interviews with pedagogical partners and *Getting Ready for Inclusion Today* (GRIT) coaches who are supporting child care providers to implement *Play, Participation and Possibilities: An Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum Framework for Alberta* (PPP curriculum framework) and promote inclusive child care practices. The goal of this conversation is to better understand how the curriculum and inclusion supports and resources contribute to improved child care quality within ELCC Centres. The interview is expected to take approximately 60 minutes of your time.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. You are not obligated to answer any questions, you may skip any question that you cannot or do not wish to answer, and you may end the interview at any point without any negative consequences.

Malatest will adhere to the regulations set out in Part 1 of the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA)*. We are also compliant with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (Alberta)*. The information gathered through this interview is considered confidential by R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. For reporting purposes, your responses will be aggregated with information received from other key informants. With your permission, we would like to digitally record the interview to ensure the accuracy of our notes. All data collected as part of this Evaluation will be securely stored for three (3) years following the end of this Evaluation (estimated end date: June 2020), at which point it will be destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Sheila Harper of Malatest at:

780-448-9042 (extension 224)

toll free: 1-877-665-6252

s.harper@malatest.com

Do we have your permission to record the interview?

Do you have any questions or require additional information before we begin?

Section A: Involvement

- A1. Please tell me your history in the early learning and child care industry generally.
- A2. What involvement have you had with *Play, Participation and Possibilities: An Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum Framework for Alberta* (PPP curriculum framework); the *Getting Ready for Inclusion Today* (GRIT) Program; and/or the Access, Supports and Participation Continuum Project (ASaP)?
- How many ELCC Centres have you worked with? In which areas of the province are these Centres located? How long have you been working with these Centres?
 - Have you been involved in online training, on-site coaching (including observations and supports), and/or Community of Learning (CoL) groups?

Section B: Implementation

For this section, you will only be asked questions related the training/supports with which you have been involved.

PPP curriculum framework

The process of adapting child care practices as a result of exposure to the PPP curriculum framework may take considerable time. We would now like to discuss where ELCC Centres and staff are at in the process of adapting child care practices as a result of PPP curriculum framework.

- B1. What learning opportunities specific to the PPP curriculum framework have been offered to/completed by Centre staff?
Prompt: Have staff completed the online training? How many CoL groups have been held? How many site visits/observations have been completed? What coaching/training supports have staff received?
- B2. To your knowledge, what additions or adaptations to curriculum materials, equipment, or other resources have occurred at the Centres?
Prompt: If no additions have been made, are program materials, equipment, and resources being used differently?
- B3. How would you describe the level of staff awareness and understanding of the PPP curriculum framework...
 - Prior to being offered learning opportunities?
 - After participating in learning opportunities?*Prompt: How have staff awareness and understanding changed? What aspects do they understand best? What aspects are the most challenging for them to understand?*
- B4. Based on your observations and interactions with staff, in what ways are they reflecting the principles of the PPP curriculum framework in their practice?
Prompt: How are they making curriculum decision and learning visible, creating a responsive environment and having responsive relationships with children, increasing dialogue and engagement of parents/caregivers in the children's daily experiences, and portraying the role of the educator?

- B5. What challenges, if any, have staff noted in using the PPP curriculum framework to guide...
- their interactions with children?
 - curriculum decisions?
 - their role as educators?
 - moving from theory to practice?
- B6. What challenges, if any, have ELCC Centres experienced with applying the PPP curriculum framework into day-to-day care?
Prompt: If yes, what are some of the problems that have been encountered? How have/can these problems been/be overcome?

Inclusive Child Care Practices (GRIT / ASaP)

The next questions ask about how ELCC Centres are working toward using inclusive child care practices.

- B7. What learning opportunities, specific to inclusive child care practices, have been offered to/completed by Centre staff?
- B8. Please describe where ELCC Centres are at in delivering the Access, Support and Participation Continuum Project (ASaP). Specifically, what have Centres done in the areas of:
- Adult Capacity Building (*Skills and confidence for Centre staff and parents/caregivers to support the social and emotional development of children*)?
 - Navigation (*Improve access to a continuum of support for all children, at the right time, in the right place*)?
 - Sustainability through Leadership (*A program leadership team commits to the implementation of Pyramid Model practices, the development of inclusive policies and zero rejection of our youngest citizens*)?
 - Family Engagement (*Increasing family involvement and awareness of social and emotional development and Pyramid Model practices*)?
- B9. How would you describe the level of staff awareness and understanding of inclusive child care practices...
- prior to being offered learning opportunities?
 - after participating in learning opportunities?
- Prompt: How have staff awareness and understanding changed? What aspects do they understand best? What aspects are the most challenging to understand?*
- B10. Based on your observations and interactions with staff...
- How are ELCC Centres creating inclusive environments?
 - How are Centre staff incorporating the additional knowledge and/or skills gained through ASaP into their daily child care practices and interactions with children?
 - How are ELCC Centres meeting the care requirements of children with diverse needs?
- B11. In your opinion, have ELCC Centres experienced any problems incorporating inclusive child care practices into day-to-day care?

Prompt: If yes, what are some of the problems that have been encountered? How have/can these problems been/be overcome?

Successes/Challenges/Lessons Learned

- B12. What impacts have occurred for staff retention with the implementation of the PPP curriculum framework and inclusive child care practices?
- B13. Overall, what successes have ELCC Centres had in implementing the PPP curriculum framework and inclusive child care practices? What factors do you think have contributed these successes?
- B14. What lessons learned can support, increase or improve the implementation the PPP curriculum framework and inclusive child care practices in ELCC Centres?

Section C: Impact on Quality of Child Care

The following questions focus on how the quality of child care at ELCC Centres has been impacted as a result of the implementation of the PPP curriculum framework and inclusive child care practices.

- C1. As a result of staff participation in implementing inclusive child care practices and the PPP curriculum framework, has there been an increase in competency or skills to perform their job among...
 - a. Centre staff?
 - b. Centre management?

Prompt: By professionalism, we mean that staff have greater competency or skills to perform their job.
- C2. How have the PPP curriculum framework and inclusive child care practices assisted in...
 - a. promoting and improving cultural diversity?
 - b. supporting vulnerable families?
 - c. increasing parenting skills?

Prompt: Have you noticed whether this has had an effect (positive or negative) on the children enrolled in your Centre?
- C3. Based on your interactions with staff/parents/caregivers, do you think that the PPP curriculum framework and inclusive child care practices are:
 - a. increasing parents'/caregivers' confidence in the quality of care provided? *Why/why not?*
 - b. increasing parents'/caregivers' skills? *Why/why not?*
- C4. How do you think the implementation of the PPP curriculum framework and inclusive child care practices impacts the well-being of families/children?
- C5. What unintended outcomes, if any, have resulted from the implementation of the PPP curriculum framework and inclusive child care practices?

Prompt: These might be positive or negative.

- C6. In your opinion, what factors may facilitate or hinder the sustainability of PPP curriculum framework and inclusion practices in ELCC Centres?

Section D: Conclusion

- D1. Are there any other comments that you would like to make?

Thank you for your participation in this interview!

APPENDIX N: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COMPARISON CENTRE SUPERVISORS

Name and Position/Role:

Date and Time:

Telephone:

Introduction

The Government of Alberta has contracted R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (Malatest) to conduct an evaluation of Alberta's Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Initiative. The results of this evaluation will be used to determine areas for improvement and future direction of the ELCC Initiative.

As part of the evaluation, Malatest is conducting interviews with child care centre Centre supervisors in order to understand the implementation of the ELCC Initiative at each individual centre. The goal of this conversation is to learn about the impacts of the Initiative on Centre staff, parents/caregivers, children and the community. The interview is expected to take approximately 60 minutes of your time.

To thank you for taking the time to participate, you will receive an honorarium of \$50.

Confidentiality and Privacy

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Do you have any questions or require additional information before we begin?

Section A: Involvement

A1. Please tell me about your role here at the Centre, including how long you have been in this role.

Section B: Staffing

This section of the interview collects information about the Centre's approaches to providing professional development to Centre staff.

- B1. What support does the Centre provide Centre staff to access professional development? [Ask P2Y1 only]
- B2. What challenges, if any, does the Centre face in providing professional development to staff? [Ask P2Y1 only]
- B3. Have you experienced any challenges in retaining Centre staff?

Section C: Quality

This sections asks about the factors that support the quality of care provided at your Centre.

- C1. What program materials, equipment or other resources are available to support Centre staff in the development of learning activities?
- C2. What challenges do Centre staff experience when developing learning activities?
- C3. What roles are available in your Centre for parents/caregivers to provide feedback and quality assurance?
- C4. What is your Centre doing to create inclusive environments?
- C5. How does your Centre meet the care requirements of children with diverse needs?
- C6. In your Centre, are there any ongoing gaps in child care quality?
Prompt: *If yes, how are these gaps going to be addressed?*

Section D: Affordability and Accessibility

This section asks about the affordability and accessibility of child care at your Centre.

- D1. When has your Centre last increased the number of child care spaces?
Prompt: *What facilitated or hindered the expansion?*

- D2. Did the expansion in the number of spaces increase accessibility?
Prompt: *Why or why not?*
- D3. [Ask only if clarification on fee structure found in site summary requires clarification] What is your current fee structure?
- D4. Do you think that the spaces in your Centre are affordable? *Why or why not?*
- D5. Has the Centre ever had to change its operation(s) in order to ensure affordability? *If yes, how?*
- D6. In your Centre, are there any ongoing gaps in child care accessibility or affordability?
Prompt: *If yes, how are these gaps going to be addressed?*

Section E: Sustainability

These questions ask about issues related to the sustainability of your Centre.

- E1. Do you have any community partners that provide your Centre with in-kind supports?
- E2. What in-kind supports are your partners providing that assist in delivering affordable child care?
- E3. What fund-raising activities is your Centre engaging in?
- E4. What factors support the sustainability of the your Centre?
- E5. What factors hinder the sustainability of your Centre?

Section F: Conclusion

- F1. Are there any other comments that you would like to make?

Thank you for your participation in this interview!