

Roles and Mandates Policy Framework for Alberta's Publicly Funded Advanced Education System

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1 INTRODUCTION

In response to a recommendation by *A Learning Alberta* to more clearly define the roles and responsibilities of Alberta's advanced education system partners, the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology initiated stakeholder discussions in early 2007 to support the development of a roles and mandates policy framework for Alberta's publicly funded advanced education system. While *A Learning Alberta* established a long-term strategic framework and broad outcomes to guide the advanced learning system for the next two decades, it was recognized that to achieve these outcomes, it would be necessary to ensure the system is appropriately aligned – and that alignment is reflected in the planning and funding processes.

It is important to consider how the system can best enable an environment that fosters and supports the development of a knowledge economy and promotes social well-being. Increasingly, it is understood that Alberta's capacity to create prosperity, sustain growth, and foster high quality of life is developed through ideas and creativity, new products, and adoption of new technologies. At the centre of idea generation are people – people with knowledge, skills, and creativity are key to our future prosperity. However, within a global context, we need to consider that Alberta has a relatively small population base. With less than one percent of North America's population, our ability to compete and be recognized as a global leader will depend not only on our ability to harness our people resources, it will also depend on strategic investment, collaboration, and alignment of endeavors.

By more clearly defining the roles and mandates of post-secondary institutions, we can build a strong foundation that can guide the system and more ably harness our people resources and strategic investments in innovation. It is a foundation that can ensure the best program and institutional mix to meet the needs of learners, the economy, and society. This Roles and Mandates Policy Framework also serves as a foundation for ongoing evolution of Alberta's advanced education system. Ultimately, an effective system will be one that meets the needs of learners, promotes access, leverages capacity, and allows resources to be effectively allocated to provide outcomes with the greatest value. This framework also ensures strategic long-term planning for advanced education in Alberta by building a more resilient and responsive system that aligns supply and capacity to the demands of learners, society, and the economy.

There are a number of factors that underlie the importance of this Roles and Mandates Policy Framework for Alberta's publicly-funded advanced education system:

- The need to foster a transition to a knowledge economy through balanced investment and a strategic approach to building Alberta's economic capacity;
- Alberta's future prosperity will depend upon our ability to compete within a global context, and advanced education providers have a key role to play in enhancing our competitiveness provincially and locally;
- A recognition that people are the foundation for idea creation within a knowledge economy;
- There is a recognition that there is a scarcity of people resources and a need to invest in people effectively to allow individuals to realize their full potential;
- Advanced education institutions will play a pivotal role in the engagement of individuals and communities in the advancement of learning outcomes; and
- Differentiated roles combined with a high degree of system collaboration are necessary to achieve excellence.

2 ROLES AND MANDATES POLICY FRAMEWORK

2.1 Vision

Alberta's social, cultural, and economic well-being is enhanced through a globally recognized advanced education system that provides high-quality and efficient programs, is resilient and responsive to learner and economic needs, and unleashes innovation through world-class research and knowledge transfer.

The vision recognizes that an educated society is key to securing both economic prosperity and social well-being. It captures the importance of an advanced education system that is responsive to changes in the economy and society, as well as a driving force of innovation in a knowledge economy.

2.2 Principles

Accountable: Advanced education system partners and stakeholders are accountable to Albertans and government for ensuring system quality, sustainability, and fiscal responsibility.

Collaborative: Advanced education system partners and stakeholders work together to provide a more holistic and supportive environment to help all Albertans achieve their learning objectives.

Global excellence and quality: Renewed roles and mandates ensure Alberta's advanced education system is of the highest quality, recognized globally for its excellence, and a successful participant within the global knowledge economy.

Responsive: Institutional activities will be more responsive to both large-scale and longer-term provincial trends by linking annual business planning processes to information contained in a provincial Alberta Access Plan and Individual Access Plans provided by each institution (*refer to Sections 4.1 and 4.2*).

Seamless transitions: A diverse range of learning pathways are recognized to ensure a broader range of learner transitions are enabled, including movement among institutions as well as work-to-school transitions.

Sustainable/effective use of resources: Resource allocation decisions will consider both learner and labour market demand. Resource allocations will be positioned to ensure long-term system sustainability, cost-effectiveness, and return on investment, including both public and private benefits.

2.3 System Outcomes

2.3.1 Alberta has a Highly Educated Society

- Building a sustainable and value-added knowledge economy will require increasing the educational levels of all Albertans.
- With 70% of new jobs being created requiring a post-secondary education, it will be necessary to ensure that Alberta maintains a high level of access and participation in advanced education. Increasing access goes beyond creating physical spaces in post-secondary institutions. Jurisdictions with high levels of access have programs that raise awareness and aspirations, disseminate information on learning opportunities, correct misperceptions of costs and benefits, and ensure learning is affordable and of high quality.
- Building an educated society means realigning strategic efforts to address critical gaps among Albertans that have not yet accessed learning opportunities.
- Developing innovative and flexible learning opportunities holds the potential to increase access and capacity, particularly among diverse learner groups who require new ways to connect to learning opportunities.

2.3.2 Communities Engage in Learning

- Vibrant learning communities exist when there is strong collaboration among advanced education providers and other key players within communities, including K-12 learning providers, community-based learning agents, community organizations, industry and employers, immigration and settlement agencies, and governments of all levels.
- Strong partnerships are key to increasing access to learning opportunities, supporting affordability of learning, and strengthening the link between learning and work. Partnerships and collaboration also provide opportunities for innovative approaches to learning, such as alternative delivery, blending working and learning, and valuing and assessing previously acquired skills and knowledge.
- Currently, Alberta's advanced education system is not well integrated with its community-based learning system. In addition, skills and knowledge gained through informal and workplace learning are not well captured or transferred into the learning environment.
- A strengthened community-based adult learning system working in collaboration with a broad array of partners provides opportunities to raise awareness and aspirations for learning.
- Alberta should strengthen its community-based adult learning system, clarify the role of community-based learning providers, and create a greater degree of alignment with the advanced education system, the K-12 system, and the workplace to achieve our goals for access and affordability.

2.3.3 Albertans Have Strong Learning Foundations

- In general, Albertans tend to delay entry into post-secondary studies. Although a vast majority of high school students indicate a desire to participate in advanced education, only about half make the transition after graduation from high school.
- Alberta's strong economy is encouraging many youth to enter the labour market directly and bypass further education or training. As a result, there is a significant proportion of working-aged Albertans without high school completion, or a post-secondary or trade credential.
- In addition, although Alberta performs well within Canada, a large proportion of Albertans perform below minimum literacy standards, impacting their ability to realize their full potential.
- Engaging Albertans in continuous lifelong learning requires greater emphasis and support for foundational learning, such as literacy, foundational skills development, and high school completion.
- Alberta should achieve a targeted increase in the proportion of Albertans with literacy skills above level 3, as determined by international literacy surveys.

2.3.4 The System Values and Builds on Skills & Knowledge

- Increasing access and educational attainment levels means better facilitating the entry of learners into, as well as transitioning within the learning system, and outwards into the labour market.
- Increasingly, there is recognition that learners do not follow a linear path through learning and into the world of work. An increasing diversity among learners means the system must be more responsive to non-linear pathways preferred by learners.
- With economic shifts, we need to accommodate working-aged adults returning to learning to ensure they are able to adapt to economic changes and take advantage of evolving economic opportunities.
- Capturing the value of previously acquired skills and knowledge gained through work experience and/or community engagement is critical to facilitating access and supporting diverse learner pathways. People are our most important resource, and now, particularly considering our labour market environment, it will be more important than ever to ensure we are investing wisely in skill and knowledge development. For example, we need to ensure that the welders and electricians being created today are at a later time able to build upon their skills, knowledge, and experiences in the most effective way possible by a system that will respond to their and society's needs.
- Building on previously acquired skills and knowledge increases both private and public returns on learning investments.
- There is a clear need to develop and utilize innovative transition strategies, such as Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition, credential laddering, and enhanced credit transfers.

2.3.5 Institutions Foster Regional Economic Development

- Post-secondary institutions have long been recognized as catalysts for economic development and an integral component of a prosperous knowledge economy.
- The Comprehensive Community Institution model identified in this framework recognizes that significant benefits arise from strong linkages between colleges and regional economic drivers, including producing skilled workers in alignment with the needs of the regional labour market.
- Comprehensive Community Institutions also provide infrastructure and expertise to conduct applied research in partnership with private sector and/or community players that contribute to regional economic and community development.
- The framework recognizes the importance of applied research in community and economic development, and the role it plays in increasing productivity.

2.3.6 The System Responds to Economic and Social Needs

- Currently, uneven enrollment growth in Alberta's advanced education system creates capacity issues in some institutions and programs, while others have available space.
- There is a clear need to align system capacity with learner and economic demand, both regionally and in terms of program availability.
- The system must be adaptable and able to respond to changes in population demographics, the economy, and learner demands.
- It is important that the system have flexibility in order to balance between the short-term needs of the labour market and the longer-term needs of a globally competitive and knowledge-based economy.
- There is also a clear need to enhance our diagnostic information and understanding of barriers to learning, and to ensure information is shared in order to develop strategies that enhance access, capacity, and learner demand.
- Leveraging collaborative arrangements for e-learning, such as eCampus Alberta, holds significant potential to increase access to learning opportunities and respond to learning needs across the province.
- It is important to ensure that no qualified Albertan who applies to a program of study will be denied access to a learning opportunity in the province.

2.3.7 Technology is Leveraged to Foster Learning & Research Success

- In a knowledge economy, technology plays a vital role in productivity growth and economic diversification.
- Increasing utilization of technology holds significant potential in terms of increasing quality and access to flexible learning opportunities, including distance and elearning.
- Expanding our technology infrastructure capacity also provides a strong foundation for pure and applied research.
- As a way to improve decision-making capabilities, technology solutions can be used to collect and share diagnostic information – such as regional program supply and demand, demographics, and financial information – with system stakeholders.

- Collaboration among system partners on initiatives such as sharing of administrative services, learner services, curriculum, or delivery opportunities, will be enhanced through the leveraging of technologies. The Alberta Post-secondary Application System (APAS), eCampusAlberta, and the Campus Alberta Digital Library are examples of collaborative initiatives supported by this policy framework.
- Technology also needs to be leveraged to the fullest extent possible as a means to enhance learner understanding and awareness of program opportunities and pathways.

2.3.8 Enhanced Access to Information Supports System Improvement

- Enhanced information sharing and knowledge transfer provides a base for informed decision-making, and effective planning at post-secondary institutions and government.
- The Alberta Post-secondary Application System plays a key role in the provision of applicant and learner demand information. Effective utilization of applicant demand information will allow for a more seamless and effective system response to learner demand, allow for better enrolment management, promote access and transition, and will also help inform the development of the Alberta Access Plan and Individual Access Plans (*refer to Sections 4.1 and 4.2*).

2.3.9 Resources are Effectively Allocated

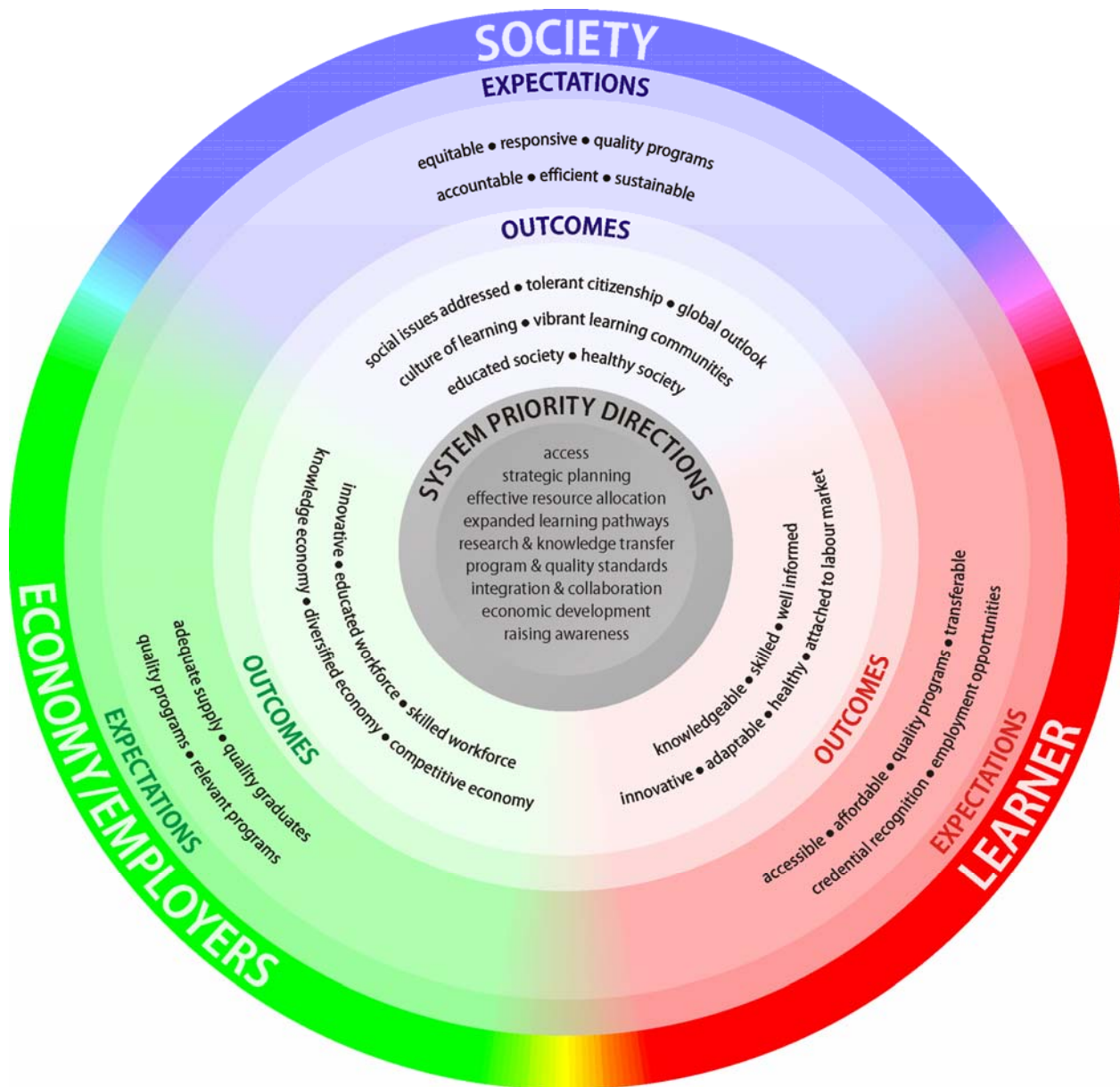
- Increasing access to quality advanced education requires an alignment of funding to meet provincial, regional, and learner priority objectives and respond to emerging needs. There are significant differences across the system in terms of learner demand and participation.
- At the same time, we know that smaller institutions, and particularly those operating outside of the major urban centres, have a reduced ability to achieve economies of scale. Typically, their client base is smaller, their programming is more specific, and they operate with higher fixed costs.
- In some cases, these smaller institutions may operate within a more volatile environment that is influenced more significantly by changing economic conditions. We need to ensure our funding system allows for the effective use and allocation of public resources.
- Funding models should provide incentives for collaboration and allow institutions to respond to provincial and regional needs.
- Similarly, those institutions that have a comprehensive research mandate will have differing cost structures in relation to those whose mandate is to primarily provide quality instruction.
- Our accountability framework needs to align with outcomes as well as provide better provincial, local, and regional information.
- It is clear that the development and maintenance of a system based upon institutional differentiation within the six sectors will require a different model of funding.

2.3.10 The System Fosters World Class Research and Innovation

- Sponsored research revenue at Alberta universities has increased 45% in five years. Alberta now ranks third in Canada for sponsored research revenue on a per capita basis.
- However, Alberta's Gross Expenditure on Research and Development as a proportion of our gross domestic product is below the national average, and private sector research and development lags behind other provinces.
- Enhancing research capacity and performance is necessary to build a diversified and sustainable knowledge economy.
- As a key player in the innovation system, there is a clear need to expand research capacity within the system, as well as ensuring that the benefits of research are transferred for the benefit of learners, society, and economy/industry.
- Targeting investments in strategic research priorities will expand research capacity.
- Clarifying research mandates among post-secondary institutions will foster coherence and coordination of research activities and create greater alignment to meet research priorities. It will encourage the development of a system of collaboration rather than competition.
- Collaboration between post-secondary institutions, outside boards, Provincial Centres of Excellence, agencies and institutes is essential to the achievement of a world class innovation system.
- It is also important to ensure that the system work toward development of a consistent policy for intellectual property.
- Within Canada, Alberta should work towards a target of having the highest sponsored research revenue, while at the same time, ensuring that the research benefits are transferred to learners, society, and economy/industry.

2.4 Roles and Mandates Policy Framework Diagram

The following diagram illustrates the need for priority system directions to achieve desired outcomes and meet the expectations of learners, society, and economy and employers. Institutional differentiation is a critical component to meet the differing expectations and desired outcomes held by learners, society, and the economy and employers. At the same time, the system must be integrated, collaborative, and supported by strategic planning and investment to address key issues and meet a broad range of expectations.



3 SYSTEM CONFIGURATION

3.1 *Institutional Differentiation – A Six Sector Model*

This Roles and Mandates Policy Framework includes a model of system configuration based on institutional differentiation. Institutional differentiation is largely based on credentials offered, type and intensity of research activity, as well as geographic focus. The following describes the classification of institutions into six different sectors and provides a brief description of the sector mandates. The classification labels are not intended to convey a system of nomenclature for institutions, for example, the use of the term ‘university’ or the use of the term ‘college’. There are two institutions within the system that will be included within a sixth sector given their specialized nature. Their uniqueness within the system is determined by their program base in relation to the breadth of other institutions within the system, geography served, and client base.

1. ***Comprehensive Academic and Research Institutions*** will provide baccalaureate and graduate degrees, and will undertake comprehensive research activity (both pure and applied). It is recognized that instructional excellence will remain the core business of the Comprehensive Academic and Research Institution, but that research activity within the overall system will primarily be conducted in this sector.
2. ***Baccalaureate and Applied Studies Institutions*** will provide baccalaureate degrees in specified areas, certificate, diploma, and applied degree programs. With respect to degree programs, Baccalaureate and Applied Studies Institutions will be limited to undergraduate programming. Applied research may be conducted to foster innovation, and scholarly research activity may be conducted as a basis to enhance the instructional mandate of these institutions within degree program disciplines.
3. ***Polytechnical Institutions*** will provide apprenticeship, certificate, and diploma programs geared predominantly to technical careers, and some applied and baccalaureate degrees in specified areas. With respect to degree programs, Polytechnical Institutions will be limited to undergraduate programming. Applied research may be conducted to foster innovation, and scholarly research activity may be conducted as a basis to enhance the instructional mandate of these institutions within baccalaureate degree program disciplines.
4. ***Comprehensive Community Institutions*** will provide broad programming, including apprenticeship where demand warrants, certificate, diploma, foundational learning, and upgrading. They may provide university transfer (years one and two) and applied degrees. Baccalaureate degrees will only be provided if feasible, in alignment with areas of specializations, and primarily in collaboration with a degree-granting institution. While the priority for baccalaureate programming will be on collaborative approaches, in some circumstances, degree granting will be considered, subject to a Campus Alberta system review (i.e. a review demonstrating demand, capacity, economic, learner and societal need) that supports demonstrated need (see section 3.2 of the paper) and overall consistency with the Alberta Access Plan. Applied research may be conducted to foster innovation, and scholarly research activity may be conducted as a basis to enhance the instructional mandate of these institutions within collaborative degree program disciplines. Alignment to geographical service areas is intended as a basis to facilitate regional planning, and in no way would it restrict student choice.

5. ***Independent Academic Institutions*** will provide primarily liberal arts, science, and education baccalaureate programs. They may offer graduate programming in niche areas where demand warrants, and in areas that do not duplicate existing graduate program offerings. Applied research and scholarly research activity may be conducted as a basis to enhance the instructional mandate of these institutions within degree program disciplines.
6. ***Specialized Arts and Culture Institutions*** are unique institutions considering the program breadth of these institutions, concentration on the fine arts, cultural programming, and professional development, and considering the geographic reach and client base. The client base is Alberta and beyond.

Areas of Instructional Excellence and Provincial Centres of Excellence

- While institutional differentiation among sectors is based on credentials offered and type of research activity, it is also clearly recognized that differentiation within sectors arises from program or field of study specializations based on institutional strength, strategic priority, client group served (i.e. Aboriginal), delivery modes utilized, or where there are opportunities to enhance Alberta's strategic advantage.
- The model allow for the identification of provincial centres of excellence based on research and instructional areas of excellence based on institutional strength or areas of strategic importance. The provincial centres of excellence do not necessarily have to be institutional based, and may include collaborative arrangement among a broad array of institutions focusing on a common area of strength or focus in support of provincial priorities.

Engagement in Research

- To support research and discovery of new knowledge that continues to build Alberta's innovation capacity, the model will ensure the expansion of the number of graduate programs and students. The priority for development of Alberta's research capacity will rest with the Comprehensive Academic and Research Institutions.
- It is recognized that applied research activities within other sectors contribute to the economic prosperity and social well-being of the province. This framework supports continued efforts to build capacity for applied research at Polytechnical, Baccalaureate and Applied Studies, and Comprehensive Community Institutions.
- The model proposes clarification of research activities in alignment with the *Post-secondary Learning Act*, and delineates engagement in research among the different sectors.
 - **Pure research** – involves the generation of new knowledge, must pass peer review, generally includes the involvement of graduate students, and may or may not have immediate application.
 - **Applied research** – is conducted to discover new knowledge with a more identifiable and immediate practical application. This form of research tends to be more focused on the identification of practical solutions or applications. In general, applied research lends itself more readily to third-party support, including financing from the private sector, granting councils, and communities.
 - **Scholarly activity** – is developmental research that is conducted in support of faculty professional development. It is supplemental to the instructional function and geared to faculty enhancement and maintenance of their knowledge base to support instruction. It is aligned with degree programs offered, and may or may not involve

- peer review, but does not require the support of graduate students. It may or may not involve the support of external research funding. Where appropriate, scholarly activity may be conducted in collaboration with Comprehensive Academic and Research Institutions.
- While research takes many forms, there are key differences between pure and applied research. Applied research is more focused on the identification of solutions to specific or targeted problem areas, whereas pure research is more exploratory. Often, applied research lends itself more readily to third-party engagement and/or funding. While pure research is conducted by the Comprehensive Academic and Research Institutions, it is also understood that there is a need for faculty within other institutions providing degree program opportunities to engage in scholarly research activity that is supplemental to the instructional mandate.

Other Considerations

- It is important to ensure Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfers and activities of the Campus Alberta Quality Council are closely aligned with departmental system planning activities.
- System collaboration requires institutions work together to ensure a high degree of transferability of programs and credentials to support learner pathways.
- Implementing Regional Access Advisory Councils comprised of institutional, K-12, community learning partners, and other regional stakeholders will guide institutional development of Individual Access Plans.
- A Minister's Strategy Board Chair Committee on Access will be established, comprised of the Minister and Chairs of the Boards of Governors of the publicly-funded post-secondary institutions.

3.2 System Expansion and Transitions

- The Roles and Mandates Policy Framework is a guide for Alberta's advanced education system, ensuring the best program and institutional mix to meet the needs of learners, the economy, and society. It also serves as a foundation for ongoing evolution of Alberta's advanced education system, in recognition that the system will need to respond to changes provincially, nationally, and internationally.
- To accommodate system evolution and alignment with emerging needs and the Alberta Access Plan, the Roles and Mandates Policy Framework allows for institutional transitions among the six sectors. Future development of the system will be determined on the basis of need, alignment with Government of Alberta priorities, and be reflected in the Alberta Access Plan. The directions of individual institutions will be reflected in the Individual Access Plans, approved by the Minister, and through Minister-approved mandates. In making decisions on future system direction, including access and program expansions, a number of factors will be considered.

Key Considerations for System Transition and Development

- Assuming there is adequate demand, it is important to consider issues of quality, relative impacts on access, economies of scale, and critical mass. Could enrolments be expanded at an institution already offering the program (one that is demonstrating successful learner outcomes)? Is there adequate capacity within the requesting institution, or at alternative delivery locations?
- What are the relative operating and capital costs? Are there other institutions that can provide the program at a lower cost to Albertans, while not reducing quality? Consideration will also be given to institutions with an Area of Instructional Excellence or Provincial Centres of Excellence.
- Does a particular program need to be integrated with other fields or within a Comprehensive Academic and Research Institution to be successful? Are there geographic considerations that would allow for better outcomes?
- In summary, whether considering the expansion of new opportunities within the system, the evolution of individual institutions, or transition of the system as a whole, it is important to take into consideration a number of factors, including:
 - Program quality;
 - Learner and labour market demand from both a regional and provincial perspective;
 - Impact on learners, including access, transitions, and future transfer opportunities;
 - Program and infrastructure cost, including relative cost of delivery within the system;
 - Existing utilization and available capacity;
 - Integrated and collaborative approaches to delivery;
 - Program synergies, including the existence of Areas of Instructional Excellence; and
 - Synergies with research function, including the presence of Provincial Centres of Excellence.

4 PRIORITY DIRECTIONS

4.1 Alberta Access Plan

- Enrolment levels within Alberta's publicly funded post-secondary system are a reflection of various factors, including demographics, high school to post-secondary transition rates, affordability considerations, the strength of the Alberta economy, post-secondary participation rates, existing educational attainment levels, and immigration and inter-provincial migration rates, among others.
- The Alberta Access Plan will provide provincial-level data (and regional data where available) around these key variables, as well as identify priorities for access expansion at a regional and field of study level.
- The Alberta Access Plan will also support access expansion by integrating key access information resources, including enrolment system information, applicant information, and capital and operating funding planning processes and directions.
- As new data become available, the Alberta Access Plan will be updated and shared with post-secondary institutions in order to provide ongoing 10-year forecasts around the key variables, including 5-year operating and capital plans for the province's advanced education system.

4.2 Individual Access Plans

- Based on higher-level trends identified in the Alberta Access Plan, institutions will provide the department with Individual Access Plans identifying how they will meet the Alberta Access Plan's strategic access objectives.
- Individual Access Plans, developed in conjunction with advanced education system partners (schools, private institutions, community learning agencies, and other provincial departments), will be submitted annually, in concert with business plans, and will help to inform decisions around operating and capital allocations.
- Individual Access Plans for Comprehensive Community Institutions will be aligned with geographic service areas to enhance strategic planning activities and will in no way restrict student choice.
- Generally, the Individual Access Plans for the Comprehensive Academic and Research Institutions will be less geographically focused with greater emphasis on achievement of provincial access objectives, including addressing transfers and transitions.
- There will need to be appropriate alignment of activities to address provincial outcomes, transfers, expansion, and program articulation.
- Comprehensive Community Institutions will be provided with a regional profile that identifies (among other characteristics) population projections, high school completion rates, high school to post-secondary transition rates, and the Aboriginal population. The profile will help these institutions better understand their geographic service region to address learning and innovation outcomes.
- Reporting and accountability frameworks will need to be enhanced to better capture enrolment, completion, and learner outcomes.

4.3 Alignment with Community-Based Adult Learning

- Comprehensive Community Institutions will have a broader role in working with community-based adult learning partners to meet literacy and foundational learning needs, and ensuring access to the full spectrum of learning opportunities in rural areas.
- Comprehensive Community Institutions will be aligned with geographic service areas to enhance strategic planning, achieve our goals for access, and meet regional learner and economic demand. Association with a geographic region strengthens regional partnerships and enhances regional collaboration. System collaboration will ensure learner choices, transitions, and pathways are enhanced.
- There is a need to leverage the full potential of community learning partners, such as Community Consortia and Community Adult Learning Councils. It is envisaged that community learning partners would play a key role in the development of Individual Access Plans. Through greater collaboration, community learning partners will help to enable the expansion of access points to a much broader array of learning opportunities than are currently available to Comprehensive Community Institutions operating alone.
- Community Consortia and Community Adult Learning Councils will be identified as Community Adult Learning Centres. Community Adult Learning Centres will be recognized in legislation and will play an integral role in the development of regional access strategies.
- Funding and accountability models will be reconfigured to ensure effective use of resources to meet community learning needs.

- Each institution developing an Individual Access Plan will be required to establish a Regional Access Advisory Council as a basis to develop a comprehensive community access strategy and as a way to enhance linkages among all learning partners and sectors (including K-12). In addition, post-secondary institution board membership would include community adult learning representation.

4.4 Enhance Learning Pathways

- While the system sectors provide for a framework of roles and mandates for each institution, it is also important to ensure that there are mechanisms in place that allow the sectors to function so that the system as a whole is successful. A key consideration is ensuring that learners are able to make transitions within and outside the system. The system should leverage and maximize all options for transferability and enhancement of learner pathways. In this context, strategies need to be considered to enable:
 - recognition of prior learning, knowledge, competencies, and experiences;
 - recognition of international qualifications and credentials;
 - transferability within individual institutions and between fields and programs of study;
 - transferability between institutions within and outside the province; and
 - dual credit opportunities between the K-12 and advanced education system.
- The system must work to ensure that pathways are clearly understood by the learner, there are opportunities for progression from certificate to diploma to degree programs, and there is development of a comprehensive strategic approach to the expansion and integration of on-line programming in the province, including certificate, diploma, degree, and foundational learning.
- The system will also foster an environment in which transferability is established at the time a program begins. Identification of collaboration through negotiated transfer agreements at the program approval and implementation stage is adopted as a best practice, rather than subsequently negotiated.
- The Alberta Post-secondary Application System will serve as a valuable tool to enhance learner pathways, as it will allow learners to make informed choices regarding their program of studies, and it will allow institutions to more effectively manage enrolment.

4.5 Resource Allocation and Investment

- Develop a programming and capital funding model that is integrated, and will consider both learner and labour market demand.
- Resource allocation model will be outcomes-focused and better able to respond to learner and economic needs.
- The Performance Envelope will be modified to align more effectively with mandates.

4.6 Accountability

- Develop an accountability system that ensures Alberta's publicly funded post-secondary education system is more responsive to large-scale/longer-term provincial trends by linking annual business planning processes (department and institution) to the Alberta Access Plan and the Individual Access Plans.
- Ensure that measures within these plans are more closely aligned with the Roles and Mandate Policy Framework, as well as the work of the Regional Access Advisory Councils and Minister's Strategy Committee on Access.
- Consider expanding information systems beyond the publicly funded post-secondary education system to obtain greater understanding of the extent of adult learning activities in Alberta and within regions.

4.7 Governance

- As indicated earlier, it is imperative that the various sectors are supporting common objectives to ensure system success. As a basis to allow for this, a provincial Minister's Board Chair Strategy Committee on access will be established to provide feedback and advice to the Minister on the achievement of access objectives, system accountability, collaboration, and provincial and regional access plans.
- Establish a Regional Access Advisory Council to support the development of Individual Access Plans, and to generate input from the community.

4.8 International Education

- Support international education that fosters a broader global outlook, secures relationships with international jurisdictions, develops research and education networks, and supports economic opportunities.
- Develop a province-wide strategy for ensuring that the attraction and retention of international learners is outcomes-focused and geared to the achievement of specific objectives.
- Ensure that we are also maximizing opportunities for international learners to contribute through research and instruction, maximize their employment opportunities, and remain in the province.
- It is also important to ensure that advanced education providers are offering adequate supports and are responding to the needs of a growing immigrant population.
- In tandem with other efforts intended to encourage the recognition and accreditation of overseas credentials, encourage post-secondary institutions to design and deliver programs specifically intended to adapt foreign credentials, either by programs delivered on campuses or, where appropriate, through programs delivered in co-op learning and internship programs.

4.9 Research Directions

- More clearly define research activities conducted by different institutional sectors (*see section 3.1: Institutional Differentiation*).
- Ensure expansion of graduate programs, particularly in priority areas (*see section 4.10, Provincial Centres of Excellence*) at Comprehensive Academic and Research Institutions, and enhance attraction and retention of high quality researchers and faculty in priority areas.
- Expand the capacity of Baccalaureate and Applied Studies Institutions, Polytechnical Institutions, and Comprehensive Community Institutions to engage in applied research.
- Increase and maintain investment in targeted research and innovation areas in public post-secondary institutions.

4.10 Identify and Establish Provincial Centres of Excellence and Areas of Instructional Excellence

- It is envisaged that Provincial Centres of Excellence will be established in alignment with institutional strengths in research, but will also support achievement of excellence in defined areas of research within the province. The identification of Provincial Centres of Excellence is meant to identify and convey provincial strategic priorities and may involve a number of institutions and related organizations.
- It is also recognized that there needs to be a basis to allow for differentiation within sectors and, therefore, the concept of developing Areas of Instructional Excellence also requires consideration. Areas of Instructional Excellence will be established taking into consideration program specialization (such as forestry or water resource management), client group served (Aboriginal, or foundational learners), or delivery models (on-line learning, or prior learning assessment and recognition).
- The identification of Areas of Instructional Excellence does not necessarily mean that institutions have exclusive jurisdiction over a particular program area, but does imply the important role that particular institutions could have in considering future system expansion, or collaborating in the development of related programs. For example, an institution with an Area of Instructional Excellence in Foundational Learning would play a leadership role in the province in the development and expansion of foundational learning within the province. Further development of these concepts will be explored as part of the next steps in implementing the Roles and Mandates Policy Framework.

5 Appendices

Appendix A. Proposed Institutional Arrangement under the Six Sector Model:

| Sector | Institution | Primary Geographic Service Area | Primary Credential Offerings | Research Activity | Primary Clients | Program / Delivery / Research Focus |
|---|--|---------------------------------|---|---|--|---|
| Comprehensive Academic and Research Institution | Athabasca University | Alberta & external | Comprehensive baccalaureate & graduate programs. | Comprehensive research function | Learners interested in open, flexible learning opportunities | Primary focus on distance delivery & related technologies |
| | Universities of Alberta, Calgary, & Lethbridge | Alberta & external | Comprehensive baccalaureate & graduate programs. | Comprehensive research function | Learners interested in a comprehensive, research intensive environment | Broad focus, various centres of excellence |
| Baccalaureate and Applied Studies Institution | Grant MacEwan College | Northern Alberta | Baccalaureate degrees in specified areas, certificate, diploma, and applied degrees | Applied research and scholarly activity | Learners interested in career & academic programming. | Areas of instructional excellence. |
| | Mount Royal College | Southern Alberta | Baccalaureate degrees in specified areas, certificate, diploma, and applied degrees | Applied research and scholarly activity | Learners interested in career & academic programming | Areas of instructional excellence |
| Polytechnical Institution | NAIT | Northern Alberta | Apprenticeship, certificate, & diploma programs for technical vocations, some applied & baccalaureate degrees in specified areas. | Applied research and scholarly activity | Learners interested in career & technical programming | Areas of instructional excellence & specialization |
| | SAIT | Southern Alberta | Apprenticeship, certificate, & diploma programs for technical vocations, some applied & baccalaureate degrees in specified areas. | Applied research and scholarly activity | Learners interested in career & technical programming | Areas of instructional excellence & specialization |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Comprehensive Community Institution | Bow Valley College | Calgary & region | Certificates & diplomas, adult high school completion | Applied research | Learners interested in preparatory & career programming | Areas of instructional excellence in foundational learning |
| | Grande Prairie Regional College | Northwestern Alberta | Certificates & diplomas, adult high school completion, primarily collaborative baccalaureate programming. | Applied research and scholarly activity | Learners interested in preparatory, career, & academic programming | Areas of instructional excellence |
| | Keyano College | Northeastern Alberta | Certificates & diplomas, adult high school completion, apprenticeship, primarily collaborative baccalaureate programming | Applied research and scholarly activity | Learners interested in preparatory, career, & academic programming | Areas of instructional excellence |
| | Lakeland College | Eastcentral Alberta | Certificates & diplomas, adult high school completion, apprenticeship, primarily collaborative baccalaureate programming | Applied research and scholarly activity | Learners interested in preparatory, career, & academic programming | Areas of instructional excellence |
| | Lethbridge College | Southwestern Alberta | Certificates & diplomas, adult high school completion, apprenticeship, primarily collaborative baccalaureate programming | Applied research and scholarly activity | Learners interested in preparatory, career, & academic programming | Areas of instructional excellence |
| | Medicine Hat College | Southeastern Alberta | Certificates & diplomas, adult high school completion, apprenticeship, primarily collaborative baccalaureate programming | Applied research and scholarly activity | Learners interested in preparatory, career, & academic programming | Areas of instructional excellence |
| | NorQuest College | Edmonton & region | Certificates & diplomas, adult high school completion | Applied research | Learners interested in preparatory & career programming | Areas of instructional excellence in foundational learning |
| | Northern Lakes College | Northcentral Alberta | Certificates & diplomas, adult high school completion | Applied research | Learners interested in preparatory, career, & academic programming | Areas of instructional excellence in foundational learning |
| | Olds College | Westcentral Alberta/Alberta | Certificates & diplomas, adult high school completion, apprenticeship, primarily collaborative baccalaureate programming | Applied research and scholarly activity | Learners interested in preparatory, career, & academic programming | Areas of instructional excellence (e.g agricultural, horticultural, & environmental) |
| | Portage College | Eastcentral Alberta | Certificates & diplomas adult high school completion | Applied research | Learners interested in preparatory, career, & academic programming | Areas of instructional excellence & specialization in foundational learning |
| Red Deer College | Central Alberta | Certificates & diplomas, adult high school completion, apprenticeship, primarily collaborative baccalaureate programming | Applied research and scholarly activity | Learners interested in preparatory, career, & academic programming | Areas of instructional excellence & specialization | |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|--------------------|--|---|--|---|
| Independent Academic Institution | Ambrose & St. Mary's University Colleges | Calgary & region | Limited baccalaureate programs, may offer limited graduate programming in niche areas | Applied research and scholarly activity | Learners interested in a faith based environment | Liberal arts, science & education programs |
| | Canadian University College | Central Alberta | Limited baccalaureate programs, may offer limited graduate programming in niche areas | Applied research and scholarly activity | Learners interested in a faith based environment | Liberal arts, science & education programs |
| | Concordia, King's, & Taylor University Colleges | Edmonton & region | Limited baccalaureate programs, may offer limited graduate programming in niche areas | Applied research and scholarly activity | Learners interested in a faith based environment | Liberal arts, science & education programs |
| Specialized Arts and Culture Institution | Alberta College of Art & Design | Alberta & external | Certificate, diploma, applied / baccalaureate, and graduate degrees in specified areas | Applied research and scholarly activity | Learners interested in career & academic programming | Areas of instructional excellence in visual culture & design |
| | Banff Centre | Alberta & external | Non-parchment programs | Applied research | Learners with prior academic & professional experience | Focus on professional development and unique programming in arts and creativity |

Appendix B: Potential Benchmarks

The working group considering Funding and Accountability will consider the following benchmarks, among others.

1. Proportion of the population with post-secondary education (i.e. increase to 70%)
2. Increase in proportion of population with a graduate degree
3. Decreased proportion of Adult Albertans without high school completion
4. Increased literacy levels, based on new diagnostic (increase the proportion of Albertans with literacy skills above level 3, as determined by international literacy surveys).
5. Increase in Aboriginal enrolment
6. Increase in the ratio of qualified Alberta applicants attending to qualified Alberta applicants not attending
7. Overall satisfaction with educational experience
8. Increased employer-support for education and training (AETS) to meet the national average (35%).
9. Enhance system infrastructure utilization
10. Technology transfer – number of patents, licenses, revenue from commercialization
11. Increase the level of applied research in the system.
12. Within Canada, Alberta should work towards a target of having the highest sponsored research revenue on a per capita basis, while at the same time, ensuring that the research benefits are transferred to society, industry, and learners.