ACFA

Strategic Plan for French-Language Services - Mental Health and Social Services Sector

June 2024



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Introduction

The ACFA is the spokes organization of Alberta's Francophonie community. It is responsible for bringing together key stakeholders to protect the Francophone community's achievements, advance its rights, and strengthen its vitality. Serving both its members and the broader community, the ACFA has been mandated to prioritize the development of French-language mental health and social services in Alberta.

In September 2022, the ACFA hired the reputable consulting firm KPMG to examine and assess the current state of French-language mental health and social services in Alberta. This review provided a clearer understanding of this current state, but also the challenges, needs, and opportunities within the sector.

In response to this work, a long-term strategic plan for the sector was developed to address the existing challenges related to delivery and accessibility of French-language mental health and social services in Alberta. This work was carried out by a working committee made up of community partners, through an environmental scan, a review of best practices, a community forum, and the development of a final strategic plan (this document).

Our Financial Partners

The ACFA would like to thank the *Calgary Foundation*, the *Edmonton Community Foundation,* and the *Fondation franco-albertaine* for their financial support.







Current State

An analysis of the current state of mental health and social services in Alberta has identified the following observations:



The five key observations, along with the data collected during the analysis, have informed the priorities and actions outlined in this strategic plan.

Methodology

This strategic plan was developed in close collaboration with a working committee ("the committee") made up of community partners, which was engaged between October 2023 and January 2024.

The objectives of this collaboration were to (1) establish a vision statement for the sector, (2) identify priority strategic objectives, and (3) develop a long-term implementation plan. This plan aims to address the identified needs related to delivery and accessibility of mental health and social services for Alberta's Francophone population. The working committee consisted of representatives from various organizations, including the following:

- ACFA
- ACFA régionale de Canmore / Banff
- ACFA régionale de Plamondon / Lac La Biche
- ACFA régionale de Wood Buffalo
- Alliance jeunesse-famille de l'Alberta Society (AJFAS)
- Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Alberta (AJEFA)
- Association des universitaires de la Faculté Saint-Jean (AUFSJ)
- Centre d'accueil des nouveaux arrivants francophones (CANAF)
- Centre d'appui familial du Sud de l'Alberta (CAF)
- Centre de bien-être et de prévention pour Afro-Canadien de l'Alberta (CBEP)
- Coalition des femmes de l'Alberta
- Comité FrancoQueer de l'Ouest (CFQO)
- Centre de bien-être et de prévention pour Afro-Canadien de l'Alberta (CBEP)
- Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord
- Conseil scolaire FrancoSud
- Fédération des aînés franco-albertains (FAFA)
- Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta (FPFA)
- Fondation franco-albertaine
- Francophonie albertaine plurielle (FRAP)
- Institut Guy-Lacombe de la famille (IGLF)
- Portail de l'Immigrant Association (PIA)
- Réseau en immigration francophone de l'Alberta (RIFA)
- Réseau santé Alberta
- Société des manoirs Saint-Joachim et Saint-Thomas

Vision

All Francophones in Alberta have access to and use inclusive, high-quality mental health and social services.



Our Targets

To achieve our vision, the following targets have been identified as essential:

1. Collaboration among key community stakeholders
2. Service models adapted to rural areas
3. Culturally appropriate service models
4. Competent and qualified French-speaking healthcare professionals
5. French-language services accessible to all Francophones across the province
6. Effective coordination of services and supports
7. Easy knowledge-sharing and increased awareness of existing resources

ACFA's Role

The ACFA has a long-standing history of uniting the vital forces of Alberta's Francophonie to protect the community's achievements, advance its rights, and strengthen its vitality.



During the Community Forum on Mental Health and Social Services held on April 18, 2024, it became clear that the **ACFA is seen as a well-positioned leader to organize and unite Alberta's Francophonie in implementing this strategic plan.**

The major challenges facing the mental health and social services sector require an integrated, cross-sectoral, and collaborative approach. In this regard, **the ACFA will be responsible for coordinating and executing this plan, supported by a committee made up of key partners** and other stakeholders. These key partners are identified in the action plan for each strategic objective.

Strategic Objectives

The five objectives below summarize the long-term strategic plan identified by the working committee to address the needs of Francophones in Alberta regarding mental health and social services. Further details on each strategic objective and its implementation plan are presented in the following pages.

1. Integrate Alberta's Francophonie into existing decision-making structures and maintain a collaborative approach.

2. Create a directory of available mental health and social services professionals in Alberta that allows for self-identification of French-language services.

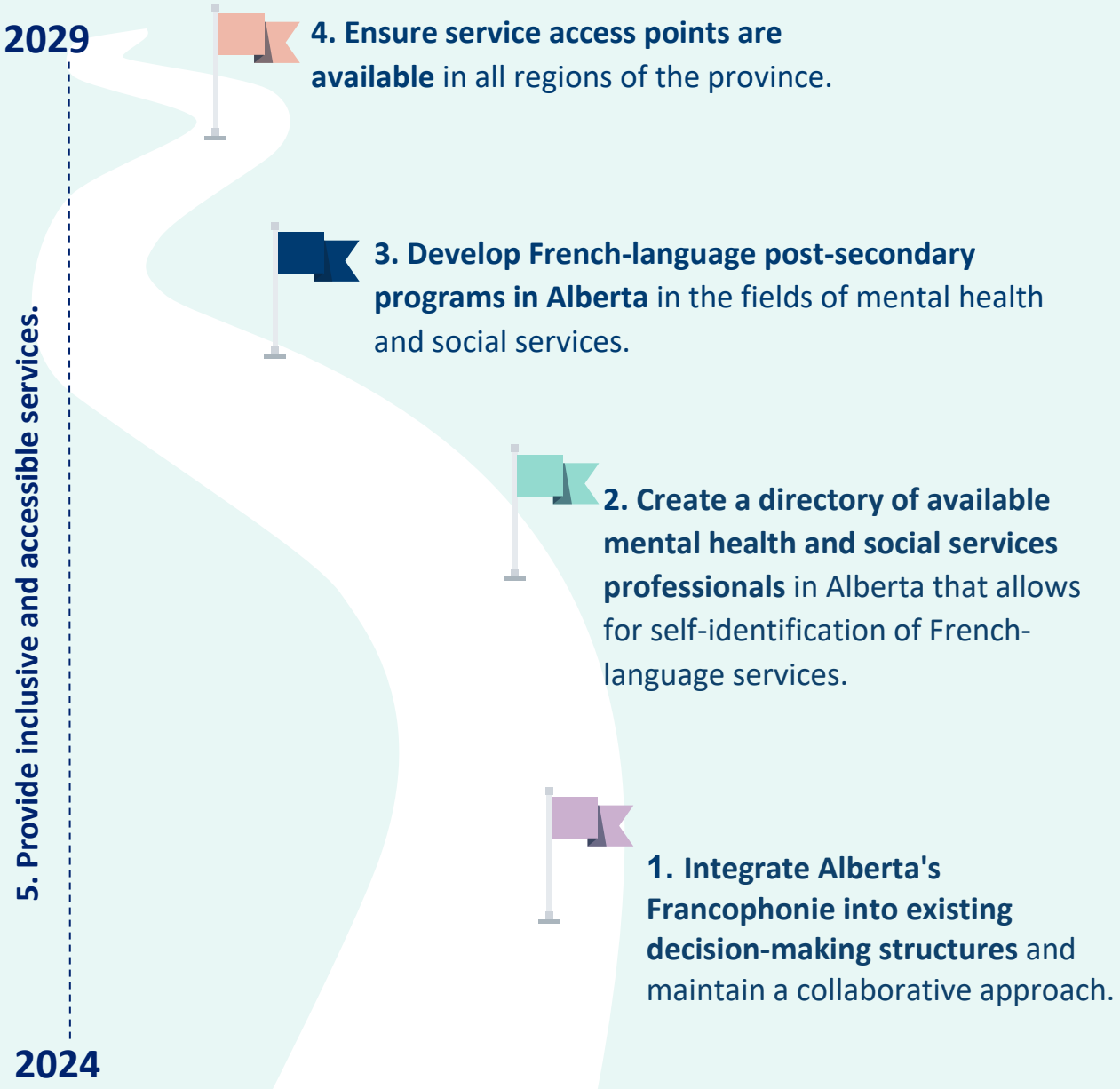
3. Develop French-language post-secondary programs in Alberta in the fields of mental health and social services.

4. Ensure service access points are available in all regions of the province.

5. Provide inclusive and accessible services.

Timeline Overview

The roadmap below summarizes the timeline for the strategic objectives that guide this strategic plan. Detailed timeline estimates for each action are provided in the following pages.



1.

Integrate Alberta's Francophonie into existing decision-making structures and maintain a collaborative approach.

This means there will be:

1. Active participation in political advocacy and the inclusion and integration of Alberta’s Francophonie within the sector's decision-making structures and advisory committees.
2. Agreements with government bodies that ensure stable and sustainable funding.
3. The implementation of an effective referral approach between organizations.
4. A collaborative network that allows us to offer clients a range of services to address their complex needs.

Action Plan

Priority Area	**Develop Strategic Partnerships**
Key Partners	Réseau santé Alberta, Alberta Health, Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social services

Key Actions
 	
Starting: Summer/Fall 2024
	1. *Identify and establish strategic partnerships with key organizations* ***(Duration: 3 to 5 years and ongoing)***
	This includes:
	• Identifying existing structures that can support priority service areas. This may include:
	  • Integration into the decision-making structures of sectoral representation organizations (e.g. Alberta Council of Disability Services, College of Alberta Psychologists, Association of Counselling Therapy of Alberta, etc.)
	  • Representation in governance structures of academic and professional institutions

Fall 2024	2. *Strengthen the community network (**Duration: 6 months**)* This may include: • Formalizing the objectives of existing structures with a particular focus on collaboration • Identifying opportunities to create strategic partnerships between organizations.
Spring 2025	3. *Develop a referral system between organizations* ***(Duration: 1 to 3 years)*** This may include: • Establishing a protocol • Developing a tracking system • Training workers

Priority Area	Institutional Integration
Key Partners	Réseau santé Alberta, Alberta Health, Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social services
Key Actions Starting: Summer/Fall 2024	1. *Establish new collaborative structures designed for key priority actions.* ***(Duration: 6 months)*** For example: ▪ A multi-stakeholder health committee ▪ A multi-stakeholder social services committee ▪ A working group for the expansion and establishment of regional service access points ▪ Identify key members for each collaborative structure. This should include representatives from community organizations and government bodies from the priority sectors.
Fall 2024	2. *Develop and implement advocacy strategies directed at government bodies.* ***(Duration: 6 months)***
Fall 2024	3. *Identify opportunities for integration into existing government bodies.* ***(Duration: 1 year)*** This may include: • Premier's Council on Multiculturalism • Premier's Council on Charitable Organizations and Civil Societies (Charities and Civil Society) • Building Communities Cabinet Policy Committee

Priority Area	Evaluation
Key Partners	Réseau santé Alberta, Alberta Health, Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social services
Key Actions Starting: Summer/Fall 2025	1. *Evaluate the impact of implemented interventions, initiatives, or strategies.* ***(Duration: 1 year and ongoing)*** This may include: • A regular evaluation cycle that analyzes the impact of interventions, initiatives, and strategies, and their effectiveness in integrating Francophone priorities and contributing to the achievement of sector-related objectives.

2.

Create a directory of available mental health and social services professionals in Alberta that allows for self-identification of French-language services.

This means there will be:

1. A multi-format directory, easy to use and tailored to the needs of everyone.
2. Proactive efforts to ensure the directory is kept up-to-date, well-known to all, and that organizations offering services are registering.
3. Identification of services available in clinical settings and within the community.
4. Incentives for sector professionals to self-identify as French-speaking.

Action Plan

Priority Area	Collect and Document Existing Resources and Services
Key Partners	Réseau santé Alberta, Alberta Health, Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services, ACFA regional chapters, Francophonie albertaine plurielle, Portail de l'Immigrant Association, Coalition des femmes de l'Alberta, Comité FrancoQueer de l'Ouest.
Key Actions Starting: Spring 2023	1. *Conduct research and gather data on available services.* * ***(Duration: Completed)*** This includes identifying services in the following areas: • Mental health • Child and family well-being • Domestic and family violence • Services for persons with disabilities • Social assistance services • Housing and homelessness • Settlement and integration services • Services for seniors • Services for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities • Youth services **Note: This work was completed in May 2023.*

Priority Area	Establish and Socialize the Directory
Key Partners	Réseau santé Alberta, Alberta Health, Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services, ACFA regional chapters
Key Actions Starting: Fall 2024	1. *Identify an organization responsible for establishing and maintaining the directory.* ***(Duration: 3 months)*** This may include: • Adapting RSA's existing directory and/or creating a new directory focused on social services
Fall 2024	2. *Define the format and identify the appropriate platform for the directory.* ***(Duration: 1 year)*** This may involve: • Engagement sessions with stakeholders to identify the directory's priority features • For example, consulting employment organizations to identify best practices in attraction and retention strategies • Identifying a platform or web service provider with database expertise. • Identifying and implementing accessibility features • Producing formats tailored to the needs of different users (e.g., catalog, alternative text for images, inclusive language) • Ensuring integration with government platforms
Spring 2025	3. *Promote the directory* ***(Duration: ongoing)*** This may include: • Creating an inclusive communications plan with targeted approaches for various stakeholders (e.g., users, service providers, healthcare professionals)

Summer 2025	4. *Define a process for updating and validating data* ***(Duration: 6 months)*** This include: • Ensuring a process for validating information. • Developing a system to update the data, including reminder cycles and communications with service providers. • Collaborating with other initiatives, such as 211 Alberta, to maintain up-to-date information.

Priority Area	Create Incentives for Sector Professionals to Self-Identify as French-Speaking
Key Partners	Réseau santé Alberta, Alberta Health, Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services, Regulatory bodies (ex: College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta, College of Alberta Psychologists, College of Social Workers of Alberta)
Key Actions Starting: Winter 2025	1. *Identify current barriers preventing professionals from self-identifying as French-speaking. (**Duration: 1 month**)*
Winter 2025	2. *Identify tools that can support professionals and service providers in identifying and promoting French-language services. (**Duration: 3 months)***
Spring / Summer 2025	3. *Develop a proposal for incentives to encourage professionals to self-identify as French-speaking. **(Duration: 1 year)*** This may include: • Position premiums • Signing bonuses • Differential pay • Access to professional development opportunities • Community involvement programs • Flexible work arrangements
Fall 2025	1. *Engage with government and regulatory bodies. (**Duration: 1 to 2 years**).* In order to: • Advocate for priority needs • Identify key partners • Implement an action plan

3.

Develop French-language post-secondary programs in Alberta the fields of mental health and social services.

This means there will be:

1. Partnerships with post-secondary institutions to ensure the delivery of services that meet the linguistic and cultural needs of Francophones in Alberta.
2. Proactive recruitment of new students.
3. Support programs to facilitate foreign credentials recognition.
4. Support for students throughout their post-secondary journey that encourage community involvement and eases their transition into the job market.
5. Existing programs are strengthened and promoted.

Priority Area	Forming Partnerships
Key Partners	Réseau santé Alberta, Campus Saint-Jean, Ministry of Advanced Education
Key Actions Starting: Fall 2025	1. *Identify key partners.* ***(Duration: 3 months)*** This may include: • Campus Saint-Jean at the University of Alberta, including the Centre collegial de l'Alberta (CCA) • Faculty of Nursing - University of Alberta • University of Calgary • MacEwan University • NAIT / SAIT • Ministry of Advanced Education • Alberta Health Services • Covenant Health • Regulatory bodies • Institutions offering micro-credential programs • Key community organizations • Réseau santé Alberta (RSA)

Fall 2025	2. *Define and communicate partnership objectives.* ***(Duration: 3 months)***
	
	This may include:
	• Ensure that the following programs are maintained and expanded:
	  • College-level programs: Early Childhood Education, Health Care Aide, Bachelor of Science in Nursing (bilingual), Psychological First Aid Certification Course (Canadian Red Cross)
	  • Expanding online training offerings

	• Identifying and developing post-secondary programs, such as:
	  • Francophone or bilingual training programs in psychology and counseling
	  • Support programs for foreign credentials recognition
	  • Internships in Francophone settings for students in psychology and social work
	  • Mentorship program and support groups

Fall 2025	3. *Identify lead organizations for priority initiatives (e.g., RSA for training programs for mental health workers, FPFA for training programs for early childhood workers, etc.) (**Duration: 3 months**)*
Fall 2025	4. *Establish timelines for key milestones for each priority initiative, including programs to be prioritized and target dates for expanding existing programs and launching new ones. (**Duration: 3 months**)*

Fall 2026	5. *Maintain, strengthen, and adapt partnerships based on the evolving community needs. (**Duration: 1 year and ongoing**)*
	This means:
	• Implementing a system to monitor and evaluate the progress and outcomes of the initiatives.
	This may include:
	  • Key performance indicators
	  • Regular stakeholder consultations
	Adjusting the partnerships as needed to enhance effectiveness, based on evaluation results.

Priority Area	Engaging, Supporting, and Guiding Students
Key Partners	Fédération des conseils scolaires francophones de l'Alberta, Canadian Parents for French Alberta, Réseau santé Alberta, Ministry of Advanced Education, Alberta Education, Association des universitaires de la Faculté Saint-Jean, Société des manoirs Saint-Joachim et Saint-Thomas, Centre de bien-être et de prévention pour Afro-Canadiens de l'Alberta
Key Actions Starting: Fall 2026	1. *Promote programs to prospective students and high schools (Francophone and French Immersion), and implement incentives. (**Duration: 3 to 5 years and ongoing**)* This may include: • Open house sessions • In-class information sessions • Scholarships
Fall 2026	2. *Identify and recruit bilingual professionals and service providers to create opportunities for students to connect with the sector. (**Duration: 1 year**)* This may include: • Collaborations with professional associations • Post-secondary institutions • Practitioners in rural areas

Spring 2026	3. *Ensure students have access to the necessary supports and accreditations for their careers. (**Duration: 3 to 5 years**)*
	This may include:
	• Identifying French-language educational resources to support these programs. This may require partnerships with:
	  ○ Publishers, online content providers, and government agencies for funding
	  ○ National Consortium for the Development of French-Language Educational Resources at the College Level (CNDRPFC)

- Work with regulatory bodies to ensure that these programs are recognized and meet professional standards.

4.

Ensure service access points are available in all regions of the province.

This means there will be:

1. Services tailored to the realities of each region, including approaches targeting populations in Edmonton, Calgary, and rural areas.
2. Identification of regions where opportunities exist to establish French-language services.
3. Incentives to recruit and retain sector professionals in Alberta that are adapted to local realities, particularly in rural regions.
4. A reduction or elimination of financial and geographical barriers.

Action Plan

Priority Area	**Analyze Regional Contexts**
Key Partners	ACFA regional chapters, Réseau santé Alberta, Réseau en immigration francophone de l'Alberta, Fédération des aînés franco-albertains
Key Actions Starting: Fall 2024	1. *Conduct a priority needs assessment by region. (**Duration: 1 year**)* This include: • Validating the results of the study completed in May 2023, which identifies priority needs by region.
Fall 2024	2. *Identify existing services and their current capacities. (**Duration: 1 year**)* This include: • Identifying services that could be strengthened • Identifying key partners in each region
Fall 2024	3. *Identify priority regions and establish an intervention timeline. (**Duration: 1 year**)*
Priority Area	**Strengthening and Developing Service Models**
Key Partners	Conseil scolaire FrancoSud, Conseil scolaire Centre Nord, Portail de l'Immigrant Association, Réseau santé Alberta, ACFA regional chapters
Key Actions Starting: Fall 2025	1. *Develop approaches tailored to the needs of target regions. (**Duration: 1 to 2 years**)* This includes: • Determining the level of intervention needed • Identifying possible models and best practices (e.g. telemedicine, mixed community-based approaches, mobile or itinerant services) • Identifying the approach strategies required for each region (e.g. strengthening existing services or developing new ones)

Fall 2026

2. *Work to strengthen existing services. (**Duration: 3 to 5 years, ongoing**)*
   This includes:

   - Identifying partners (e.g., service providers, workers, organizations, government representatives) who can support the process.
   - Collaborating with partners to reduce barriers and implement targeted approaches.

     This may include:

     - Supporting recruitment efforts and promoting open positions
     - Raising awareness among Francophones about requesting services in French
     - Advocating for incentives for French-speaking workers
     - Advocating for dedicated funding for French-language services (e.g., funding for community navigators)
     - Creating collaborations between Francophone organizations and service providers to ensure the sustainability and expansion of services, for example:
       - 211 Alberta
       - 811 Alberta Health Link
     - Offering training and support to professionals to strengthen their capacities
     - Providing training that equips professionals with cultural competency to offer adapted services
     - Collaborating with the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) program to increase French-language services (including hiring more bilingual staff) and exploring the creation of a Francophone FCSS.

Fall 2027	3. *Establish new services.* ***(Duration: 3 to 5 years)***

This may include:

- Selecting service models tailored for each region, for example:
  - Community-based initiatives such as *Communities for Children* in Australia and *Mixed Methods Community Approach* in British Columbia
  - Francophone FCSS (inspired by models used by Métis settlements)
  - A community information centre for mental health and social services that refers clients to appropriate supports
- Identifying required resources (e.g. funding, qualified staff, infrastructure)
- Identifying partners (e.g., service providers, workers, organizations, government representatives) who can support the process
- Developing an action plan and implementation timeline for the identified service models.

5.

Provide inclusive and accessible services.

This means that there will be:

1. The integration of inclusive approaches at all levels of care (e.g. forms that include all gender identifiers).
2. The removal of geographical barriers and access to available services immediately when the need arises.
3. Data-driven decision-making and adaptation of approaches to meet the evolving needs of Francophone communities.

Action Plan

Priority Area	Ensuring Inclusive Services
Key Partners	Réseau santé Alberta, Francophone school boards, Portail de l'Immigrant Association, Francophonie albertaine plurielle, Comité FrancoQueer de l'Ouest, Alliance jeunesse-famille de l'Alberta Society
Key Actions Starting: Fall 2024	1. *Develop an evaluation framework. (**Duration: 1 to 2 years and ongoing**)* • Establish a structured approach that incorporates diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in the design and implementation of services. This should include: • Principles, guidelines, and tools to help identify and resolve potential barriers to access and participation for different groups within Alberta's Francophonie. • Approaches that encourage the active participation of underrepresented groups in the development and evaluation process to ensure that priority services and actions meet their needs. • Integrating the demographic, cultural, and linguistic characteristics of Alberta's Francophonie. • Leveraging the knowledge and expertise of organizations that implement culturally safe approaches. This could be inspired by the Métis Nation of Alberta's community-based services for children and families. • Regular review and updates of the model to ensure its relevance and effectiveness in meeting needs.
Spring 2025	2. *Promote and encourage adoption of the framework by the community and service providers to ensure that both existing and future services integrate an inclusive perspective. (**Duration: ongoing**)*

Priority Area	Continuing Education
Key Partners	Réseau santé Alberta, Campus Saint-Jean, Fédération des aînés franco-albertains
Key Actions Starting: Fall 2024	1. *Develop continuing education opportunities for workers in the sector to equip them with the necessary skills to provide inclusive services.* ***(Duration: 1 to 3 years)*** This may include: • Cultural competencies: Understanding, respecting, and valuing cultural diversity, becoming aware of one's own cultural perspective, and adapting services to meet diverse cultural needs. • Communication skills: Effective verbal and non-verbal communication is key inclusive service delivery. • Knowledge of inclusion principles: Understanding and applying inclusion principles in service delivery, including identifying and resolving potential barriers to access and participation. • Flexibility and adaptability: Being responsive to the diverse needs of different communities, including modifying methods or service approaches when needed. • Respect for diversity: Recognizing and valuing diversity within communities, and treating all individuals with respect and dignity.

Priority area	Accessibility and Visibility
Key Partners	Alberta Health Services, Alberta Health, Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services, Ministry of Children and Family Services

Key actions
 	
Starting: Fall 2024
	1. *Improve accessibility of available services.* ***(Duration: 3 years)***
	
	This may include:
	• Implementing measures to enhance service accessibility, including:
	  • Programs aimed at reducing financial barriers,
	  • Offering remote services (e.g., telehealth),
	  • Adapting facilities for people with reduced mobility

Priority area	Evaluation and Data Collection
Key Partners	Alberta Health Services, Alberta Health, Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services, Ministry of Children and Family Services
Key actions Starting: Fall 2025	1. *Develop a data collection and analysis strategy* ***(Duration: 3 to 6 months)*** This may include: • Defining data collection objectives • Identifying required data • Identifying collection methods (e.g., interviews, observation, survey, etc.) • Identifying analysis methods (e.g. statistical techniques, exploratory data analysis, predictive modeling) • Interpreting and communicating results • Evaluating and improving the effectiveness of the strategy

Fall 2026	2. *Leverage data to inform priorities and targeted approaches.* ***(Duration: 1 to 3 years and ongoing)***

This includes:

- Regularly collecting data to identify lived experiences, service gaps, and usage trends in order to assess the impact, effectiveness, and accessibility of the services.
- Identifying strategies to address emerging needs and service gaps.

Fall 2026	3. *Share data analysis results with key stakeholders.*