

# Canada-Saskatchewan Bilateral Early Learning and Child Care Agreement

2021-2022 Annual Report

Funded by the Government of  
Canada through the Early Learning  
and Child Care Agreement

Canada 

Saskatchewan 

## Background

On June 12, 2017, Saskatchewan signed the Multilateral Federal-Provincial/Territorial Early Learning and Child Care Framework with the federal government and the other provinces and territories. The Multilateral Framework provides the overarching principles that guide federal investment into regulated early learning and child care. The three-year, plus one-year *Extension Agreement* from 2017-18 to 2020-21 provided Saskatchewan over \$56 million to support the early learning and child care sector through regulated child care space development including spaces dedicated to Francophone families, implementing programs for children with intensive needs, and supporting Early Childhood Educators and programs to enhance early learning and child care experiences for children. On August 13, 2021, the *Canada-Saskatchewan Bilateral Early Learning and Child Care Agreement* was extended until 2024-25 providing for the continuation of the investment in Saskatchewan for children under the age of six.

Saskatchewan will receive over \$85.7 million between 2021-22 and 2024-25. This includes one-time \$17.2 million workforce development funding in 2021-22. This workforce development investment will support child care centres to address compensation of Early Childhood Educators, enhance qualification levels in the sector and develop professional learning opportunities. Activities related to workforce development funding are not included in this report.

Investments made through the agreements were in addition to provincial investments and worked to build on existing strengths and priorities in Saskatchewan. This included initiatives that support early learning, child care, strong families, healthy children and community planning and alignment.

Over the course of the agreements, Saskatchewan has focused on four main priorities. In 2021-22, Saskatchewan continued to invest in these priority areas ensuring a balanced approach that supports the province's strategic goals and aligns with the federal government's early learning and child care funding criteria outlined through the Agreement:

- 1. Quality** – Enhance the experience of children in regulated child care by investing in training and resources for regulated child care providers to ensure high-quality programming. A total of 173 regulated family child care home providers and assistants and 209 child care centre directors participated in training over the course of the agreements. An additional 897 individuals from the Early Years Sector attended Aboriginal awareness workshops. Training related to non-clinical screening for children in areas such as speech, physical ability, social skills and problem-solving was also provided to 94 participants in Early Years community programs and those in regulated child care. Grants were made available to support active play and the *Play and Exploration* curriculum framework in regulated child care.
- 2. Accessibility** – Over the course of the agreements, Saskatchewan has allocated 1,295 new child care centre spaces, exceeding the regulated centre-based target of 950 spaces and within the regulated home-based sector, 1,032 new regulated child care home spaces were opened in 110 homes. In 2021-22, Saskatchewan invested in the development of three new Early Years Family Resource Centres in the communities of Lloydminster, Swift Current and Weyburn. Early Years Family Resource Centres are places where all families with young children can access reliable information and support and participate in free services like parenting programs and early learning and literacy opportunities. This brings the total number of Early Years Family Resource Centres funded under these agreements to twelve.

3. **Inclusion** – Early learning opportunities for children experiencing disability through innovative pilots continues throughout the province. The Early Learning Intensive Support pilot, the Children Communicating, Connecting and in the Community pilot, the Rural and Northern Inclusive Early Learning pilot and the Enhanced Accessibility Grant in child care continue to support children across the province.

Over the course of the agreements, there have been 772 preschool-aged children, who experience disability, that have benefited from the Early Learning Intensive Support pilot. In addition, through these agreements, there have been 390 children served with the Enhanced Accessibility Grant in child care.

4. **Minority language inclusion** – Saskatchewan continues to support the Francophone community through regulated child care spaces dedicated to Francophone families. Saskatchewan had a target of 65 spaces over the course of the agreements and exceeded the target with a total investment of 75 spaces.

**Activities, Expenditures and Results of the Agreement**

**1. Quality**

Saskatchewan has invested in the quality of the Early Learning and Child Care system across the province over the course of the agreements through a range of initiatives.

**Early Literacy Initiatives**

Language and early literacy development are fundamental to a child’s present and future learning. Over the course of the agreements, Saskatchewan has invested \$2.7 million in early learning and literacy initiatives for children who would not otherwise have access to these opportunities. The exposure of young children to books and reading help prepare them to succeed in their learning and development.

New child care centres and family child care homes were provided with a **one-time Literacy Grant** to purchase books to support children’s early literacy development. The grant was provided to a total of 621 regulated child care facilities over the course of the agreements. The grants were available for regulated child care centres and family child care homes in the following amounts:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child Care Centres</li> </ul>	- \$800 per centre with 30 or fewer spaces
	- \$1,300 per centre with 31-60 spaces
	- \$1,700 per centre with 61-90 spaces
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family Child Care Homes</li> </ul>	- \$600/home
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group Family Child Care Homes</li> </ul>	- \$600/home

KidsFirst Regional and Targeted Programs received grants to work with literacy partners in their communities to deliver Early Language and Literacy Programming to families with children under the age of six who have limited opportunities to access high-quality early learning opportunities. The timeline of events was extended due to disruptions related to the pandemic and programming was offered from winter 2019 to spring 2021. In-person events provided opportunities for families to experience activities they could take home to support their children’s literacy. They also provided early language and literacy focused activity kits that provided information to support parent and caregiver understandings of how children develop early language and literacy skills. 421 sessions were held in 261 communities. Almost 10,000 children and

caregivers participated in in-person events. Approximately 9,200 early literacy and language kits were distributed. Caregivers were asked to respond to evaluation questions about programming. They responded that programming had a positive impact on their knowledge of language and early literacy. Caregivers also reported that following programming involvement, they intended to read to their children more often, that they intended to use what they learned at home and that the information grew their skills as caregivers.

### **Training**

Funding through the *Canada-Saskatchewan Bilateral Early Learning and Child Care Agreement* was provided for training Early Childhood Educators (ECE), Regulated Family Child Care Home Providers, Child Care Centre Directors and Community-based Early Learning service providers on inclusion, leadership, child assessment, aboriginal awareness, and quality programming. This investment enhances the capacity of the early learning sector to provide quality and inclusive play-based early learning environments for children.

Over the course of the agreements, Saskatchewan has invested \$1.41 million in training initiatives for the early learning sector.

Play and Exploration Workshops for Family Child Care Homes Providers – Young children experience learning through play and exploration in a variety of ways. Therefore, child care providers must develop and deliver programs that are safe, healthy, culturally sensitive and stimulate the abilities and interests of children in regulated child care homes. The goal of the workshops is to support family child care home providers in the creation and implementation of high-quality, age-appropriate, play-based learning experiences for young children in a variety of settings.

The one day, in-person workshops for regulated family child care home providers were centered on implementation of the *Play and Exploration: Early Learning Guide* with a focus on the benefits of using Play and Exploration; practical strategies for implementing Play and Exploration in a home environment; and implementation of Play and Exploration in a multi-age setting.

Over the course of the agreements, the target for training was 115 participants (2018-19 and 2019-20 combined). In total, 173 family child care home providers and assistants, participated in training from eight Play & Exploration workshops specific to the child care home sector exceeding our target.

Aboriginal Awareness Training - In support of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*, training regarding Aboriginal awareness was offered to the Early Years Sector. Aboriginal Consulting Services delivered training for a diverse Early Years Sector audience, including child care centre directors and staff, family child care home providers, Early Childhood Intervention Program executive directors and interventionists, and KidsFirst community developers, program managers and home visitors. In total, 897 individuals from the Early Years Sector have attended 15-in person Aboriginal Awareness workshops held across the province. In addition, 100 registrations were accepted for a three-hour online Aboriginal Awareness session.

Leadership Training – The management of regulated child care facilities is critical. It can impact the quality of programs, the health and well-being of staff and children and the overall operation of facilities. The goal of the leadership training is to provide the skills child care directors need to effectively manage their staff and facilities.

A series of five in-person leadership training modules were offered to support child care centre directors to enhance their array of leadership knowledge and skills in effective employee supervision; communication; coaching; developing high performing teams and change management.

In total (2018-19 and 2019-2020 combined), 209 child care directors, over and above the target of 188, participated in training related to their leadership roles. There were 29 leadership workshops held across the province in this timeframe.

Inclusion Training – One of the critical roles child care providers play is to ensure children of all abilities have equal access to early learning and development programs. Child care programs must be inclusive and meet the needs of each child. The goal of inclusion training is to provide the skills and resources child care employees need to enhance the experience of children in regulated child care facilities. Inclusion training is focused on four key elements of high quality inclusive early learning and care programs:

- Programs are accessible to all children and their families;
- Programs are designed and carried out with consideration for the unique needs of each child;
- Programs are collaborative including family partnerships, access and collaboration with other agencies and early intervention programs; and,
- Programs monitor and effectively respond to the changing needs of children, their families and communities.

No in-person inclusion training was offered again in 2021-22 due to the COVID-19 pandemic but information continued to be available online through the Early Learning Portal. Over the course of the agreements, a total of 352 early childhood professionals from across the province have attended an in-person, two-day forum focused on fostering inclusive practices within the Early Years. The forums had three primary goals;

- Increase awareness and understanding of relationship-based inclusive practices across the Early Years Sector;
- Gain insight into current challenges in regards to inclusion; and,
- Foster relationships amongst diverse sector stakeholders working to support inclusive practices across Saskatchewan.

In addition to the forums, a video series titled ***5 Key Considerations for Fostering Inclusive Practices in the Early Years*** was created to provide Early Childhood Educators the opportunity to explore, reflect and build understanding of some key considerations for inclusion in the Early Years Sector. The videos provide information and support child care workers need to create an environment in which each child and family, regardless of their unique strengths, needs, and challenges, feels safe, heard, valued, supported and welcomed. The videos also provide information educators need to develop and deliver programs that are inclusive and give each child equal opportunities to learn and develop. The five key considerations for promoting inclusive practices discussed in these videos will enhance the educator-child relationship, and create an avenue for effective programing, learning and development.

## Grants

Funding was provided through the *Canada-Saskatchewan Bilateral Early Learning and Child Care Agreement* for regulated child care centres and family child care homes to purchase equipment, materials and resources to enhance the experience of children in regulated child care facilities.

Play and Exploration Grant – The Play and Exploration Grant supported regulated child care facilities to implement *Play and Exploration: Early Learning Program Guide* which is Saskatchewan’s foundational early learning framework. A total of 660 facilities have received the Play and Exploration grant under the agreements.

The Play and Exploration Grant was available to child care centres and homes regulated and in operation at March 31, 2018. Since then, new centres and homes have also received the grant. Family child care homes could receive up to \$600, group family child care homes up to \$900 and child care centres \$2,500 for the first 30 spaces and \$75 per space for additional spaces.

Active Play Grant – The Active Play Grant is for child care facilities to purchase equipment and materials to encourage active play in regulated child care settings. A total of 682 facilities received the Active Play grant during the agreements.

The Active Play Grant was available to child care centres and homes regulated and operational at March 31, 2018. Family child care homes could receive up to \$500, group family child care homes up to \$750 and child care centres \$1,900 for the first 30 spaces and \$60 per space for additional spaces.

Over the course of the agreements, Saskatchewan has invested \$2.899 million through these specific grants for regulated family child care homes and centres.

## 2. Accessibility

Regulated Child Care Spaces - Saskatchewan exceeded its target of 950 regulated child care centre spaces by allocating 1,295 spaces since 2017-18. Within the regulated home-based sector, 1032 new regulated family child care home spaces were opened in 110 homes over the course of the agreements. Saskatchewan will continue to support the development of regulated family child care in homes and centres.

In 2021-22, Saskatchewan spent \$4.7 million on a variety of both one-time as well as periodic grants that were provided to regulated child care facilities to ease the financial burden and encourage new start-ups and increase the accessibility of child care. In Saskatchewan as a part of becoming a regulated child care provider, the following grants have been available to all eligible funded regulated child care facilities:

- **Start-up Grants** – to assist with the expenses incurred in opening a regulated child care centre or family child care home (e.g. equipment, furnishings, fire inspection).
- **Space Development Capital Grants** – to assist with the costs of developing, renovating or constructing new child care spaces in centres.
- **Fire, Health and Safety Grants** – to assist new family child care homes, group family child care homes and teen student support homes with the costs of meeting fire, health and safety requirements, as part of the initial regulating process.
- **Nutrition Grants** – to assist with the provision of well-balanced, nutritious meals and snacks for children in regulated family child care homes. As a part of the Agreement, the Nutrition grant maximum was increased in 2017-18 from \$40 to \$60 per month per regulated child care space and again in 2021-22 from \$60 to \$80.

- **Equipment and Program Grants** – to assist with the expense of purchasing children’s toys, equipment, furnishings, craft supplies and children’s activities. As a part of the Agreement, the Equipment and Program grant maximum was increased in 2017-18 from \$100 to \$150 per year per regulated child care space and again in 2021-22 from \$150 to \$300.

Early Years Family Resource Centres – The operation of seven Early Years Family Resource Centres (FRCs) began in 2019-20 and continued in 2020-21 in the communities of the Battlefords, Meadow Lake, Moose Jaw, Nipawin, Prince Albert, Saskatoon and La Ronge. In 2020-21, Saskatchewan also invested in the development of two new Early Years FRCs in the communities of Estevan and Humboldt. Early Years FRCs bring services to one location and provide no cost programming for all families with young children prenatal to age five. These resources will help families access reliable information and allow them to participate in services like early learning and literacy opportunities and parenting programs that might be hard to find in their community. Beyond the pandemic, Early Years FRCs continued to provide service in unique ways that would benefit their families and communities. This included offering online programs, take home learning kits, posting original videos and content that supported child development and play at home, and information about self-care and coping with stress. From April 2021 to March 2022, the nine federally funded centres distributed 12,000 learning activity kits and received 870,000 social media and web page views. They were also able to safely welcome 14,000 children and adults in-person while adhering to evolving public health guidelines. In 2021-22, Saskatchewan invested \$3.036 million in the development and operation of these nine centres.

### 3. Inclusive

Supporting inclusive early learning and child care opportunities for young children experiencing disability is a priority for Saskatchewan. The *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth* laid out the goal that Saskatchewan will be the best place in Canada to live for persons with disabilities. This goal is affirmed in The *Saskatchewan Disability Strategy* which aims to improve programs and services for people with disabilities.

In 2021-22, Saskatchewan invested \$4.22 million in inclusivity initiatives to support children who are experiencing disability through the Children Communicating, Connecting and in the Community pilot, the Early Learning Intensive Support Pilot, the Enhanced Accessibility grant and the Rural and Northern Inclusive Early Learning pilot.

Saskatchewan has invested \$20.01 million to support inclusive early learning and child care initiatives over the course of the agreements.

The Children Communicating, Connecting and in the Community (4C) Pilot provides access to early educational intervention for children who are deaf and hard of hearing to reduce communication barriers when communicating with their families, other children and within their community. Children’s development is supported through inclusive environments with trained staff and appropriate technology. The pilot was launched in fall 2018 with a program in each of Regina and Saskatoon for preschool-aged children who are deaf or hard of hearing or who are connected to the deaf or hard of hearing communities. The program is based on the Ministry of Education’s Early Learning principles of children as competent learners, holistic development and learning and strong positive relationships. In 2021-22, 16 children were served through the program. Operating funding will continue for the two programs for preschool-aged Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing children in Regina and Saskatoon.

Early Learning Intensive Support Pilot (ELIS) allows additional children to attend existing school division selected Prekindergarten programs. These spaces provide children with intensive needs access to the program and additional supports are put in place to ensure the needs of all students are being met.

ELIS was launched in Regina and Saskatoon at the end of the 2017-18 school year and in 2018-19, the 120 spaces became fully operational. By the end of 2018-19, the program was expanded by 46 spaces, allocated to the communities of Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Swift Current, Yorkton and North Battleford. In early 2020, an additional expansion of 76 spaces occurred, bringing the provincial total to 242 spaces. In 2021-22, there were 247 children enrolled in ELIS. Support will continue for the ongoing operating of programs across the province for preschool-aged children with intensive needs.

Enhanced Accessibility Grant is issued to regulated facilities monthly to support the actual cost (up to \$2,000 per month) of the additional staff required to care for a child with particularly challenging needs and/or behaviours. Needs of the children vary and are confirmed through a referring professional. The grant supported 58 children in 2021-22 and 390 children over the course of the agreements. There will be ongoing grant support continued through 2022-23.

Rural and Northern Inclusive Early Learning Pilot was implemented in select child care centres in the province in 2019-20. The Rural and Northern Inclusive Early Learning Pilot offers four-year old children experiencing disability who live in communities with limited group-based early learning opportunities access to part-time early learning in a regulated preschool child care space. In 2021-22, three children were supported as well as seven children from the previous year. Over the agreements, 10 children have been supported in the pilot. Due to low participation in the program, it was discontinued as of June 30, 2021.

#### **4. Francophone Minority Language Inclusion**

Saskatchewan had a target of 65 additional child care spaces for Francophone families over the course of the agreements, based on consultations with the Fransaskoises parent boards and the Conseil des écoles fransaskoises, but exceeded the target with a total investment of 75 spaces.

The agreements provided grants totalling \$1.694 million to support start-up costs for new Francophone child care centres, monthly overhead and operating costs and to assist with the costs of developing, renovating or constructing new child care spaces in a centre. Continued operating funding was provided for the regulated centre-based spaces for Francophone families in 2021-22.

In 2020-21, **translation of resources** was done to facilitate implementation of Play and Exploration in regulated child care facilities and to familiarize families with Play and Exploration to help parents support their child's learning at home.

#### **5. Other**

Differential Monitoring – Saskatchewan has invested a total of \$330,000 to help modernize its current generalized approach to regulating child care and create a more strategic approach to monitoring. This approach will allow for a greater focus on centres that struggle with compliance and in turn, enhance the quality of programs in those centres. The province has been collaborating with experts in the field of risk-based assessment so that the new system will reflect current research and best practice. Along with policy and procedures, key indicators and weighted risk factors were developed. Initial testing and training sessions took place as well as the start of the program quality indicator portion of the project. Piloting of the quality assessment tool with facilities was put on hold in the spring of 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This change in approach to regulating will provide the opportunity to develop innovation and quality

measures for child care in Saskatchewan in a more systemic way. Implementation of the key indicators portion of the Differential Monitoring model began in the spring of 2021.

Public Awareness – Saskatchewan has invested \$182,000 in 2021-22 in initiatives that emphasize the importance of the early years and supports parents in navigating programs and services.

In 2020-21, a new series of videos was added to the public awareness campaign *Play. Learn. Grow. Together!* which was launched in 2019-20 as a way to reach out to parents of newborn and pre-school aged children with tips and information on how to help them learn at home. The new series called *Together We're Learning*, promoted early learning through basic everyday activities. The campaign used multiple media options, including videos, social media and experiential marketing.

Saskatchewan worked with the United Way to build a specific portal on the 211 site to support parents and caregivers to navigate the early learning and child care sector. This Early Years portal serves as a one-stop location for parents, caregivers or anyone looking for information, programming or services for children zero to six in Saskatchewan.

Supplementary Grant (COVID-19 support) – In response to the widespread impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the child care sector, starting in March 2020, supplementary grant funding was made available to 47 school-based centres providing services to essential workers associated with the response to the pandemic. Supplementary grant funding was based on actual costs less income (parent fees, ministry grants, COVID related benefits). These supports ensured these facilities were able to continue operations, mainly related to their need to continue to employ staff despite lower than usual enrolment. During 2020-21, \$2.282 million was spent on supplementary grant funding.

## Financial Expenditures

In 2021-22, Saskatchewan expended a total of \$12.829 million through the Agreement to support the early learning and child care sector in the province.

Initiative	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
<b>Quality</b>	\$2,494,610	\$2,225,557	\$2,207,124	\$88,765	-
Play and Exploration	\$ 1,400,700	\$153,600	\$44,725	\$26,900	-
Active Play	\$ 1,093,910	\$121,650	\$35,800	\$22,050	-
Training	-	\$98,483	\$1,281,120	\$30,865	-
Literacy Initiatives	-	\$1,851,825	\$845,479	\$8,950	-
<b>Accessible</b>	\$4,211,585	\$953,563	\$6,178,501	\$6,783,901	\$7,686,737
Early Childhood Services Operating Grant	-	\$303,233	\$1,592,304	\$3,140,545	\$3,952,437
Start-up	\$ 89,776	\$1,063,692	\$195,557	\$51,241	-
Space Development Capital	\$ 3,402,000	\$4,932,154	\$1,322,200	\$508,000	-
Fire, Health, Safety	\$ 37,700	\$47,899	\$40,400	-	-
Nutrition	\$ 583,909	\$583,321	\$726,565	\$719,290	\$622,775
Equipment and Program Grants - Homes	\$ 98,200	\$96,775	\$126,475	\$140,200	\$122,250
Family Resource Centres	-	\$1,505,000	\$2,175,000	\$2,224,625	\$2,989,275
Infrastructure	-	\$1,003,560	-	-	-
<b>Minority Language Inclusion</b>	\$180,000	\$578,620	\$300,897	\$312,432	\$322,196
<b>Inclusive</b>	\$ 2,192,236	\$4,454,420	\$4,673,682	\$4,466,289	\$4,221,574
Early Learning and Intensive Support pilots, Children Communicating, Connecting and in the Community pilots and Enhanced Accessibility grants	\$ 2,192,236	\$4,454,420	\$4,673,682	\$4,466,289	\$4,221,574
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	\$9,135	\$564,187	\$766,986	\$2,572,755	\$598,957
Differential Monitoring	-	\$161,254	\$163,035	-	-
Public Awareness Campaign	-	\$193,545	\$430,014	\$87,265	\$181,761
Administration	\$ 9,135	\$209,388	\$173,937	\$203,766	\$417,196
Supplementary Grant (COVID-19 support)	-	-	-	\$2,281,724	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$9,087,566</b>	<b>\$17,358,419</b>	<b>\$14,127,191</b>	<b>\$14,224,142</b>	<b>\$12,829,464</b>

### Results Achieved: Indicators and Targets

Over the course of the agreements, Saskatchewan exceeded most of the targets set as displayed in the table below.

Objectives/programs	Outputs/outcomes	Indicators	Targets by 2022	Actual Results in 2021-22
<b>High Quality</b>	Enhance the quality of child care facility programming	Regulated family child care home providers participating in training	50 per cent or 115 of child care home providers	173 child care home providers (2018-19 – 98) (2019-20 – 75) (2020-21 – n/a) (2021-22 – n/a)
		Child care directors participating in training	60 per cent or 188 of child care centre directors	209 child care centre directors (2018-19 – 85) (2019-20 – 124) (2020-21 – n/a) (2021-22 – n/a)
<b>Accessible and flexible</b>	Increase access to regulated child care	Regulated child care centre spaces	Increase of 950	1,295 spaces (2017-18 – 571) (2018-19 – 724) (2019-20 – 0) (2020-21 – 0) (2021-22 – 0)
		Regulated group or family child care home spaces	Increase of 1,500	1032 spaces (2017-18 - 317) (2018-19 - 350) (2019-20 - 365) (2020-21 – 0) (2021-22 – 0)
<b>Inclusive</b>	Increase access for minority groups	Preschool-aged children served who are experiencing disability	Increase of 280	324 preschool-aged children served in 2021-22
		Regulated child care spaces that support French language minority communities	Increase of 65	75 spaces (2017-18 – 30) (2018-19 – 45) (2019-20 – 0) (2020-21 – 0) (2021-22 – 0)

## Impact on Families

Humboldt Early Years Family Resource Centre – Early Years Family Resource Centres are having a significant impact on children and young families in local communities. Following a renovation to an existing building in the community, Humboldt’s Early Years Family Resource Centre (Early Years FRC) celebrated its Grand Opening in March 2022.



The need to bring together services was identified through joint work on an early years priority carried out by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education and the Horizon School Division under the province’s Education Sector Strategic Plan. The work under this plan identified a greater need to offer coordinated, consistent services and supports available for all families with children aged zero up to the age of six. This approach aligns with the aims of Saskatchewan’s Early Years FRCs, which bring together a range of services for young children in the community under one roof.

The need to bring together services was echoed by community engagement conducted by the group when the centre was being developed. Planners hosted an early literacy event at one of the local parks and families came with their children and filled out feedback forms. A community questionnaire was sent out through our community and school partners. The results showed the need for a place for children to play in inclement weather as well as more opportunities for families to connect with one another. Families were also looking for opportunities to address their parenting and child development concerns and to create a space where services in Humboldt could come to parents, rather than parents having to travel to access services.

The creation of the Humboldt Early Years FRC has been an opportunity to bring together community members and human service partners to carry out joint planning and visioning for the community around the program pillars of early learning, parenting education, family wellness and support and information and referrals. The Accountable Partner for the Humboldt Early Years FRC is the Horizon School Division, who holds funding on behalf of the community and ensures the ongoing operation of a Management Committee to collaborate on the centre and issues relating to young children more broadly. Horizon School Division works in partnership with the Staffing Partner, Partners Family Services, who hires staff and oversees the day-to-day operation of the centre. They also work with the Management Committee which is made up of human services partners like the City of Humboldt, Humboldt Newcomers’ Centre, Humboldt Big Brothers Big Sisters, Humboldt and District Community Services, Carlton Trail Regional College, Saskatchewan Health Authority, Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools, two local child care centres, Humboldt Reid-Thompson Library and Regional KidsFirst. This diversity of perspectives helps to inform the direction of the centre and supports the centre to act as a one-stop centre for services for young families.



## **Innovation**

Due to the significant expansion of regulated child care in the province, Saskatchewan is focused on making the Child Care Licensing System, which includes issuing licences and monitoring operators for compliance with legislation and regulations, more efficient. To achieve this, a new licensing and monitoring system is being implemented that is focused on quality of care and programming.

Licensing agencies in Canada and the United States are moving towards targeted measurement, which includes Differential Monitoring, as an effective alternative to traditional licensing methods of completing full reviews during annual and other licensing on-site visits.

In 2018, the Ministry of Education began working with the National Association of Regulatory Administration (NARA) on the development of the Differential Monitoring system for use in licensing and monitoring which includes key indicators, weighted risk indicators and a quality assessment tool. Implementation of the key indicators and weighted risk components of the new Differential Monitoring system for child care began in spring of 2021. A quality assessment tool was also developed as part of the work with NARA.

Saskatchewan has used a generalized approach to licensing in child care where all facilities receive one annual licensing inspection and two additional monitoring visits per year. Once fully implemented, Saskatchewan's new risk-based approach to licensing will modernize its current system and create a more strategic approach to monitoring. The new risk-based assessment will take a variety of factors into consideration in determining the number and scope of inspections that should be conducted at a regulated setting.

Once the new Differential Monitoring system is fully implemented:

- Regulatory oversight will require less time in compliant programs allowing more time for supporting programs that are struggling;
- Child care providers maintaining compliance will have shorter inspections;
- A high degree of health and safety protection will be maintained;
- The public can be assured that strong regulatory practices are occurring; and,
- A quality assessment tool will be available for use in regulated child care facilities.

The province will continue to collaborate with NARA experts in the field of risk-based assessment to complete the work on the quality assessment tool in preparation for implementation. The new system will reflect current research and best practice. This change in approach to licensing will also provide the opportunity to further develop innovation and quality measures for child care in Saskatchewan. This will provide a basis for better data-informed decision making within the regulated system.

## **Engagement Communication**

Ongoing engagement and communication with Early Years provincial organizations and stakeholders such as families and those employed in the Early Years Sector is a priority for Saskatchewan. Engagement and feedback throughout the agreements, have been vital in helping to shape the many initiatives and programs with Parent Central being a great example of that. Saskatchewan Early Childhood Association as voice of the Early Years Sector was heard loud and clear asking for more consultation and subsequent to that, more meetings have occurred.

Saskatchewan is committed to responding to local and provincial early years needs. This supports Saskatchewan's goal of helping all children to be safe, healthy and to develop to their full potential in strong families and supportive communities.