

Child Care in the Kootenays: Webinar

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Overview of Project

This project aims to understand the business needs and challenges of childcare providers in the Kootenay Region* and to contribute to constructive business solutions for the long-term sustainability of childcare providers.

**Includes School Districts 5, 6, 8, 10, 20, and 51*



Identify regional landscape of childcare providers



Identify childcare provider needs and challenges



Match childcare providers with relevant supports and services



Discussion of solutions and supports

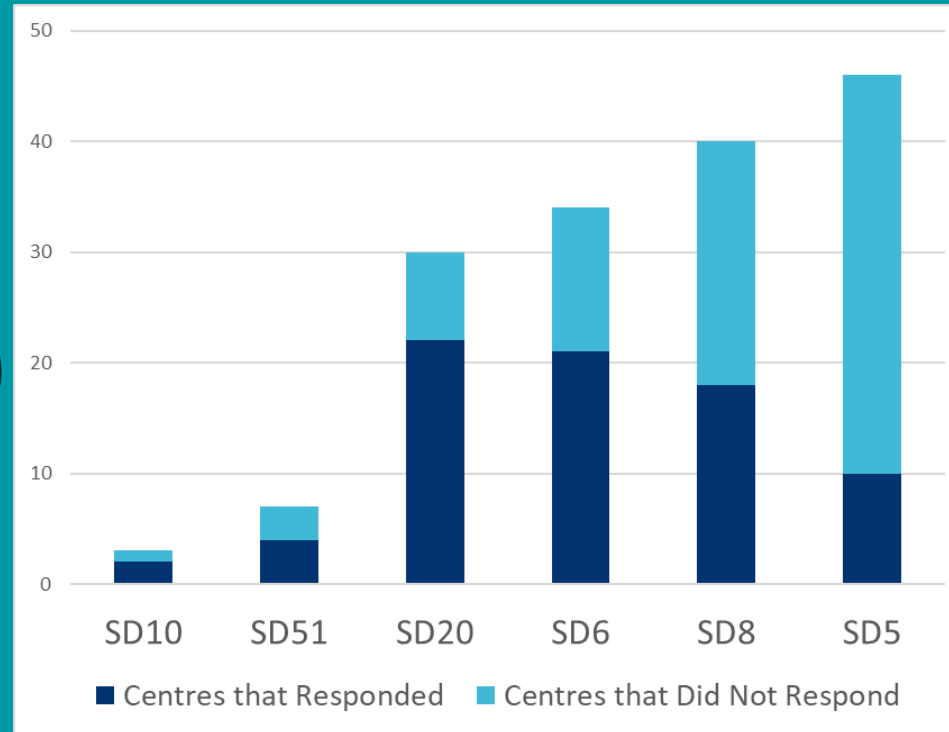


Mobilize knowledge gained and lessons learned

Highlights

- Changing regulatory and policy environment
- Our current rural childcare landscape is small compared to urban but it is diverse (and fairly stable)
- The highest priority challenges are workforce and business administration
- Diverse needs require diverse solutions

Methods



Focus group #1 Large (>5 staff)

Childcare
business "A"



Childcare
business "B"



Focus group #2, Small (<5 staff)

Childcare
business "C"



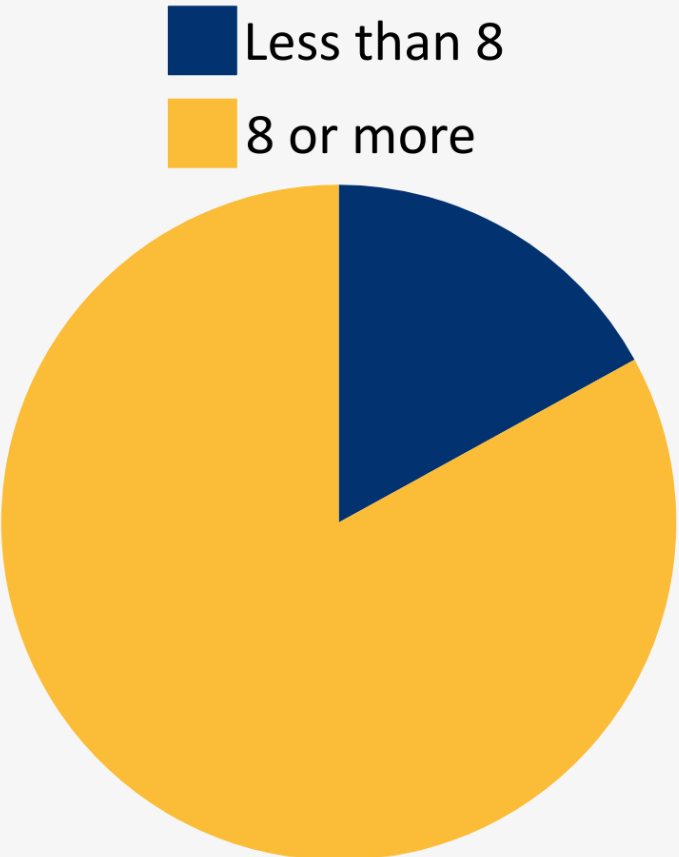
Childcare
business "D"



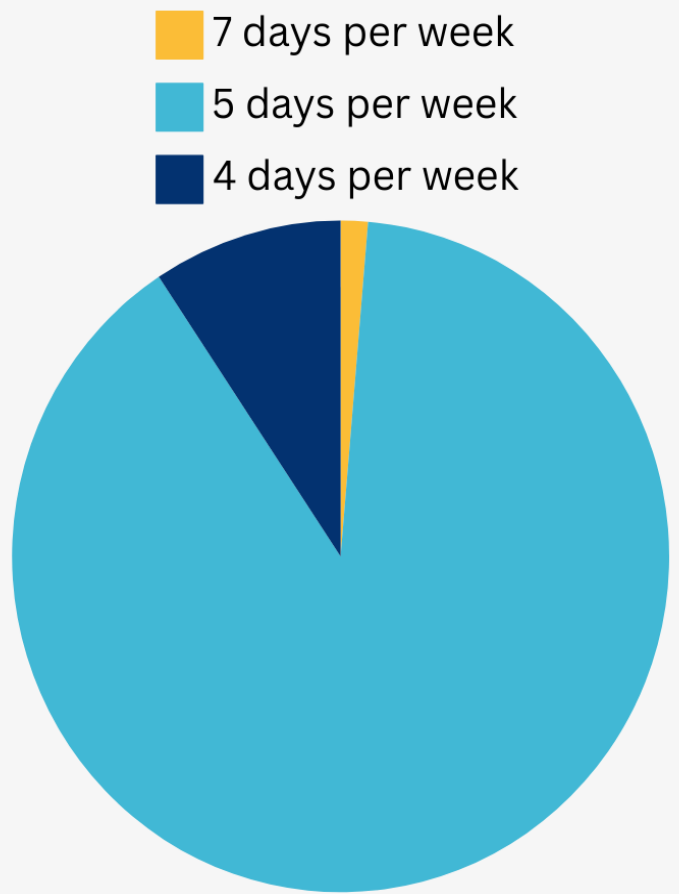
Childcare
business "E"



Findings - *What does childcare look like in our region?*

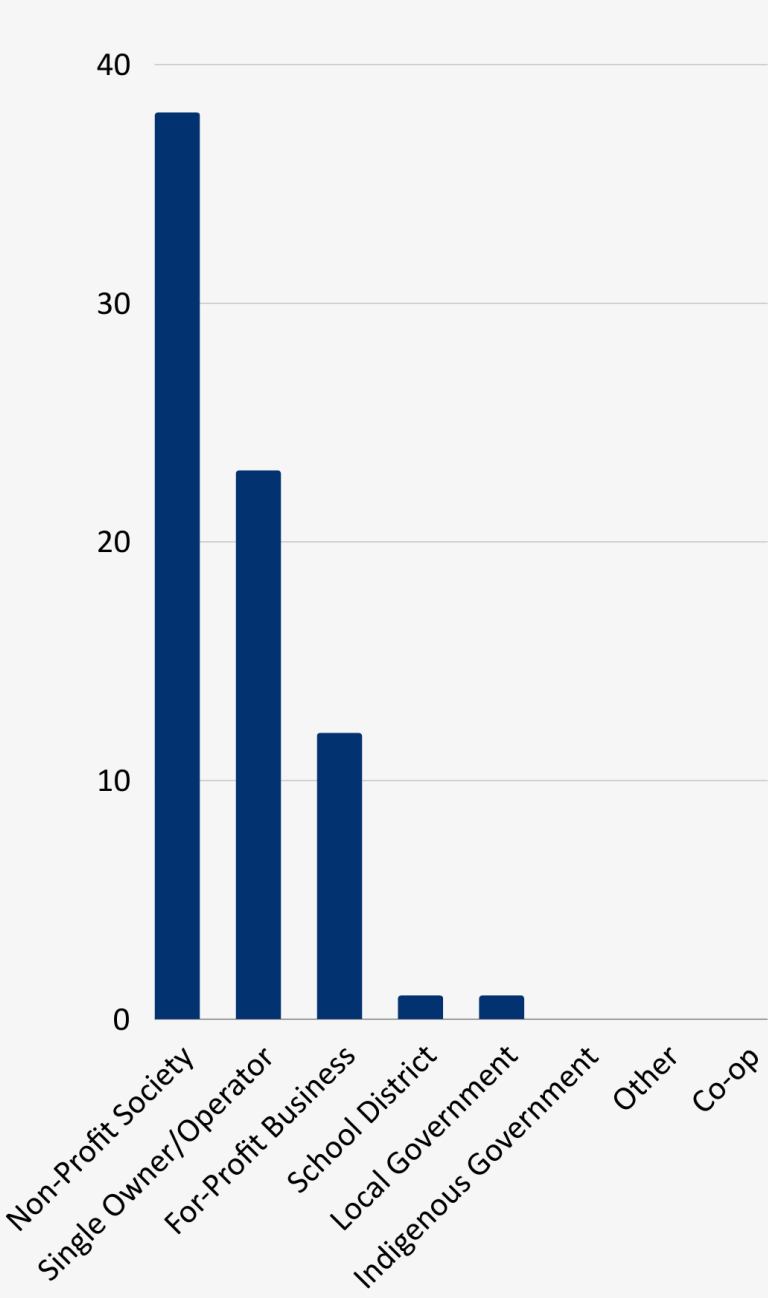


Average Hours Open Per Day

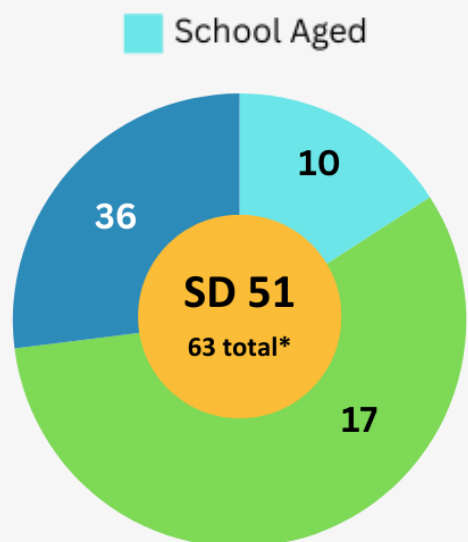


Number of days open per week

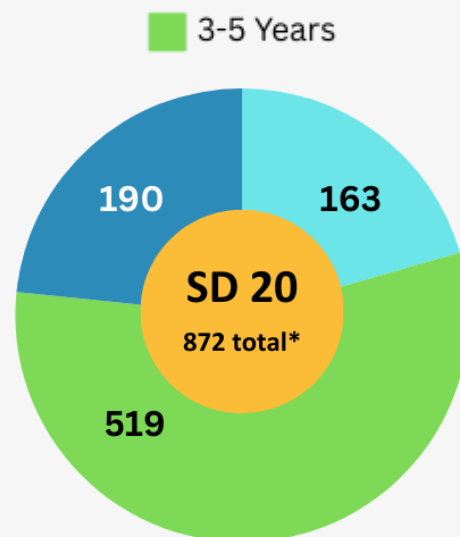
Number of Respondents by Ownership Structure



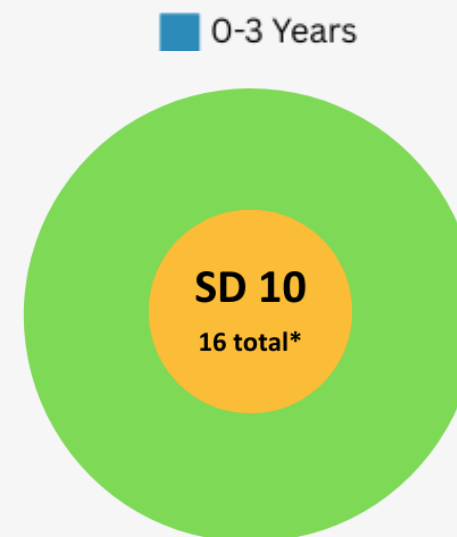
Licensed Spots by Region, by Type of Care



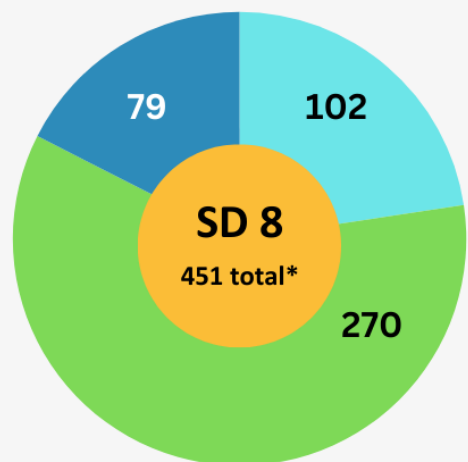
Grand Forks, Midway, Greenwood



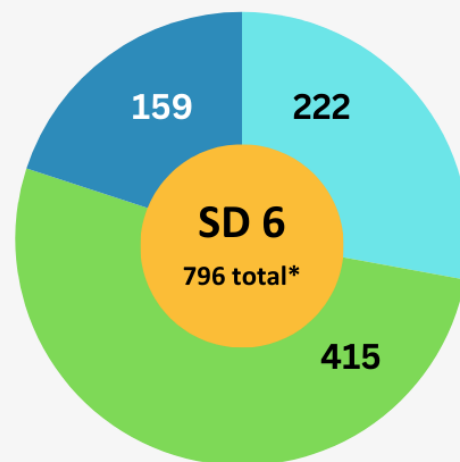
Castlegar, Rossland, Trail



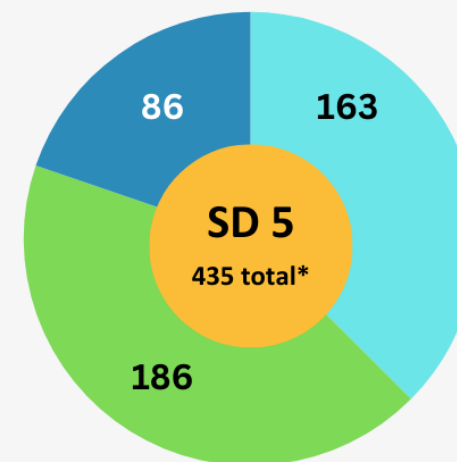
Nakusp, Burton, Edgewood, New Denver



Nelson, Creston, Salmo, Kaslo



Kimberley, Invermere, Golden



Cranbrook, Fernie, Sparwood

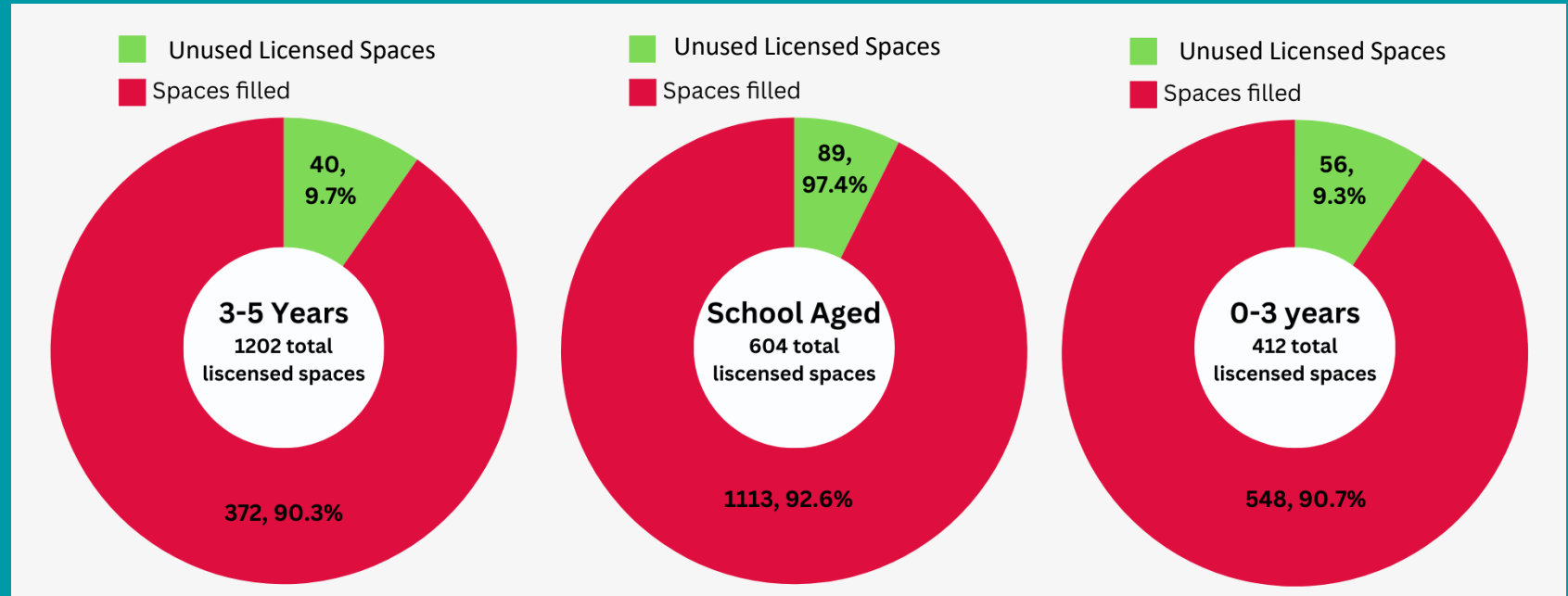
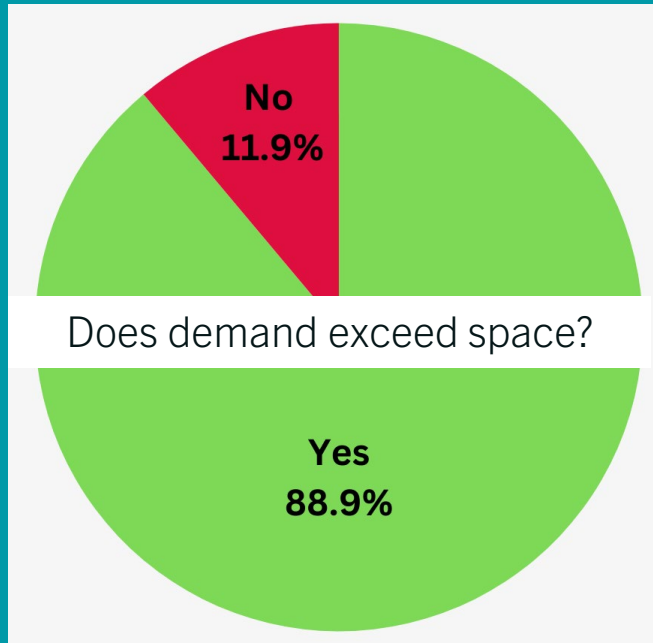
**As reported by survey respondents*

Findings - Supply vs. Demand

*“Our waitlist is multiple years long”
“waitlists of 200+” “under 3
waitlists is very long” “waitlists are
long, and we have actually closed
them in an attempts to manage the
sheer length of them”*

Top Reasons for Differences Between Licensed Spaces and Filled Spaces

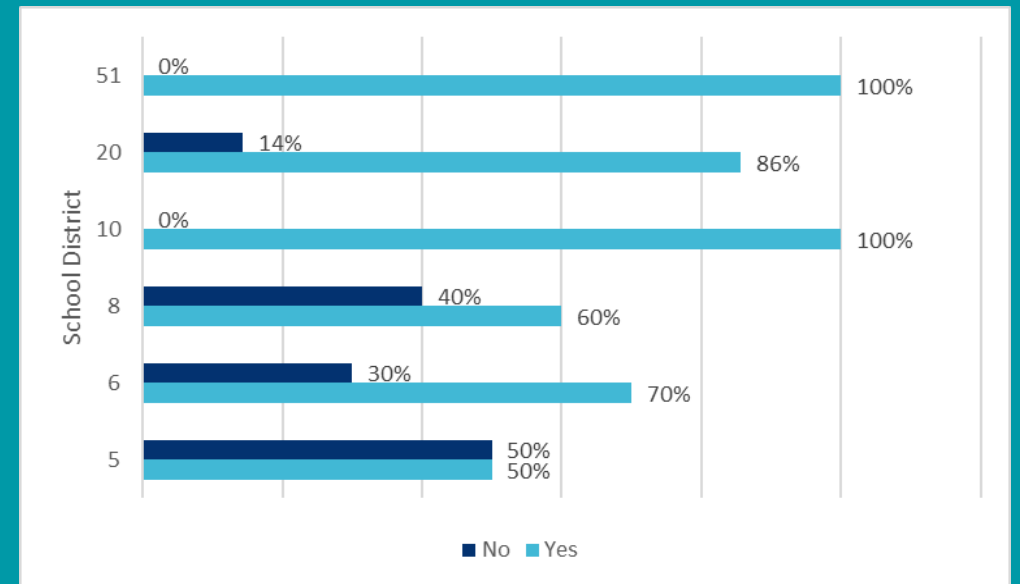
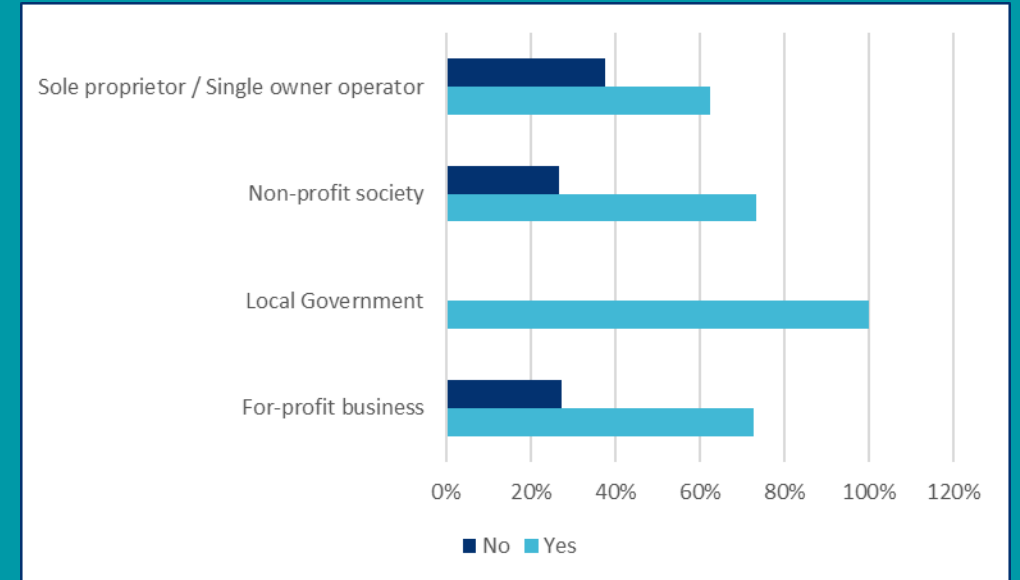
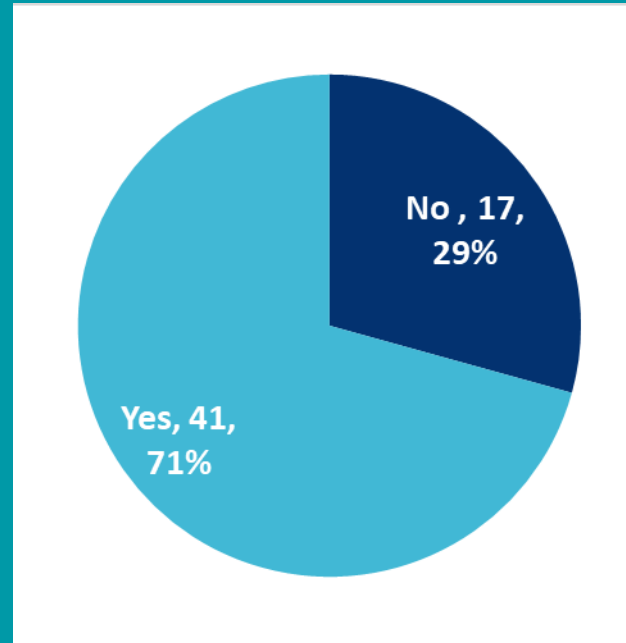
1. Staffing
2. Ratios
3. Temporary Issues



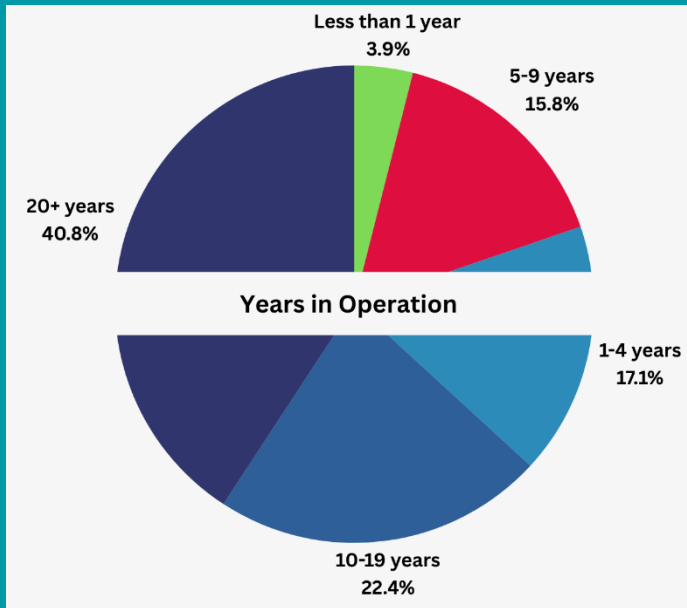
Findings - Sector Stability

Under current operating conditions, is your organization financially sustainable in the long term?

- “The funding model at \$ 10 a day programs does not allow for several costs like Audit fees and wage increases. This means we run programs at a deficit and will not be sustainable long term.”
- “The base costs of running a child care Centre continue to increase and so do the wages. Wages have continued to increase in order to keep staff and gain new staff. At the same time we are unable to increase our revenue because of government funding restrictions.”



Findings - Sector Stability Continued



"The constant turn over of staff and the licensing regulation are not realistic to be able to operate without constant concern over staff qualifications and their expectations that make it almost impossible to run a center."



Top 3 Reasons for Plans to Close

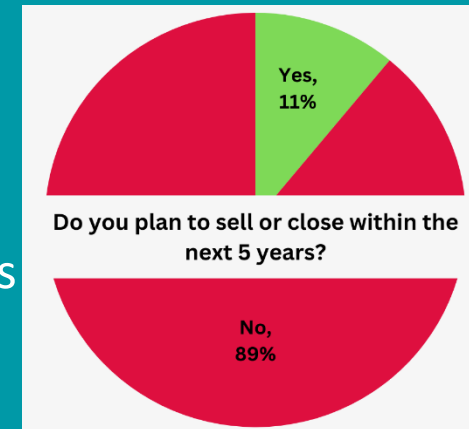
1. Retirement or Personal Reasons
2. Challenges with licensing and government requirements
3. Challenges with financial sustainability

"We focus on quality programs with low ratios. The current funding model does not support this. It is not possible to function financially without 50+ children and that's not a system I'm interested in."

Top 3 Barriers to Expansion

1. Lack of qualified staff
2. Financial constraints
3. Availability of buildings for lease or purchase

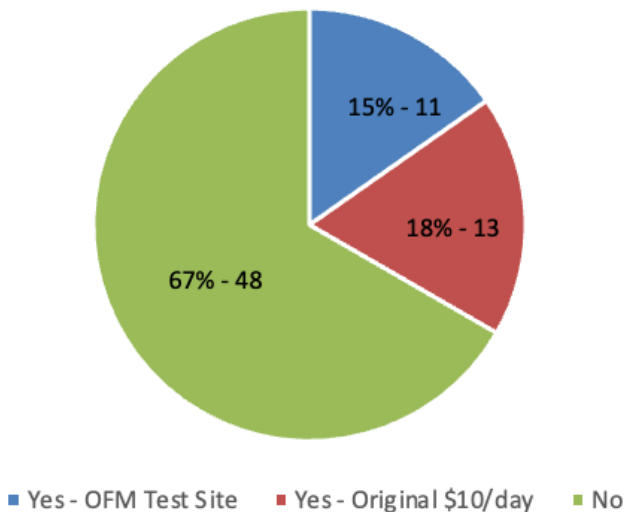
"The size of my center is already too large for me to handle now, expanding would be too much stress"



"Government will not fund new spaces that are not non-for-profit."

Findings - Financials

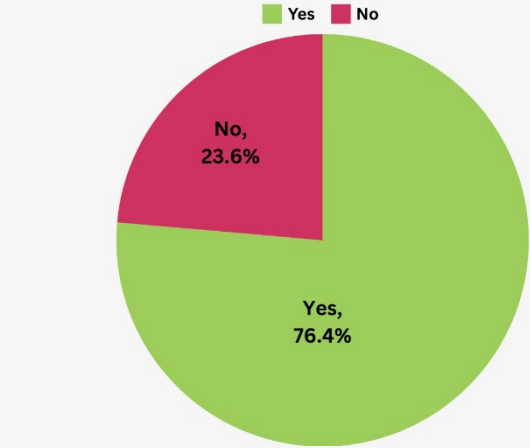
Is your organization a \$10/day site?



Does the financial support you receive through the BC Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative allow you to meet the program requirements while also covering expenses?

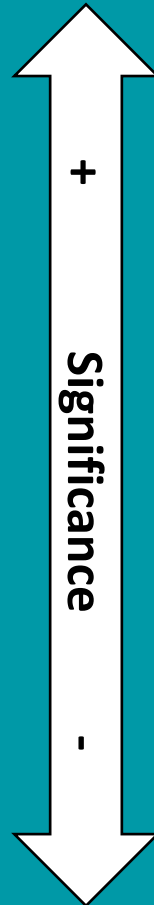
"It does with no or limited opportunity with cost unexpected increase rise. The uncertainty around the cost here and there. current fees limitation does not allow to pay staff adequately. Ex: rent, living expenses, supply costs, groceries."

% of respondents for whom the CCFRI does not allow for meeting program requirements while also covering expenses, by organizational structure



Does your organization take part in the BC Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative (CCFRI)?

Findings - *Challenges to Business Operations*

- 
1. **Balancing income and workload (covering cost of quality care)**
2. **Human resources (attraction, retention, etc.)**
3. **Administration (record keeping, licensing, reporting)**
4. Financial management
5. Workload
6. Physical Space
7. Policy and regulatory knowledge
8. Workforce subject matter knowledge

Findings - Challenges to Business Operations

Why is #1 the most significant challenge for your organization?



“Everything to do with quality staff has everything to do with how your child care centre runs, how they attend to children. It is always about the staff ... good staff is needed to support those children, and to assist in other staff to prevent burn out. As well as keeping up with current educational frameworks, ELF, ECPN, and other current practices.”

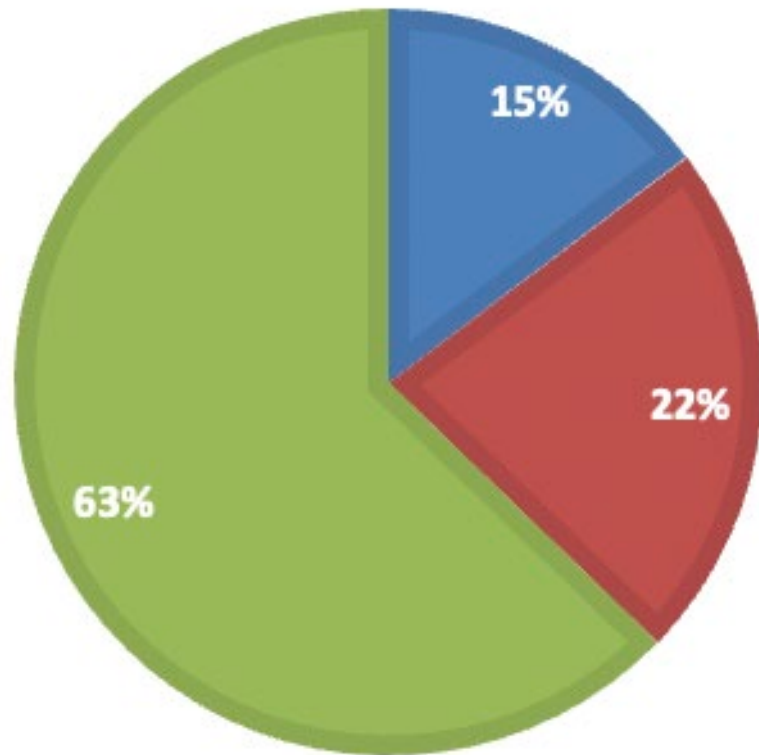
“The level of knowledge/expectations of the job when compared to the wages is often a deterring factor for people. Why work in a high burnout, under appreciated field when you can go work elsewhere for the same (or sometimes more if we're talking service industry tips) wages?”

“Due to being \$10 a day funding model we have, it is hard to keep qualified staff. They feel underpaid and undervalued. There is no career progression. We are limited in what we can offer staff for wages and extra incentives to stay for staff retention.”

Findings - *Workforce*

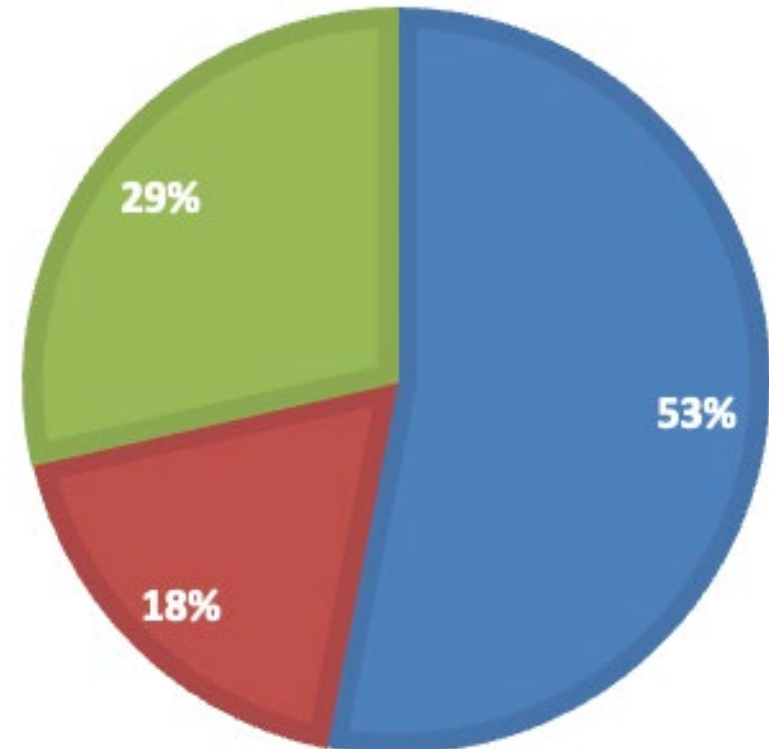
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

■ On call / Casual: ■ Part time: ■ Full time:



NUMBER OF VACANCIES

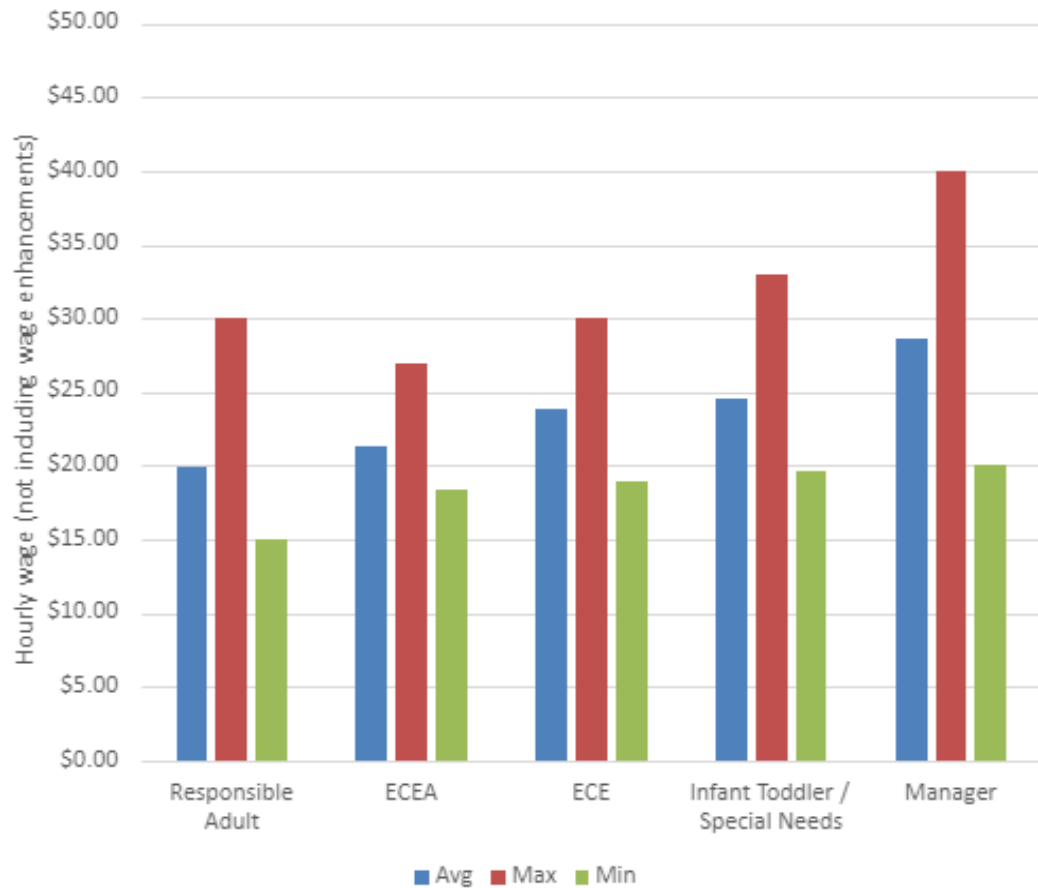
■ On call/Casual ■ Part time ■ Full time



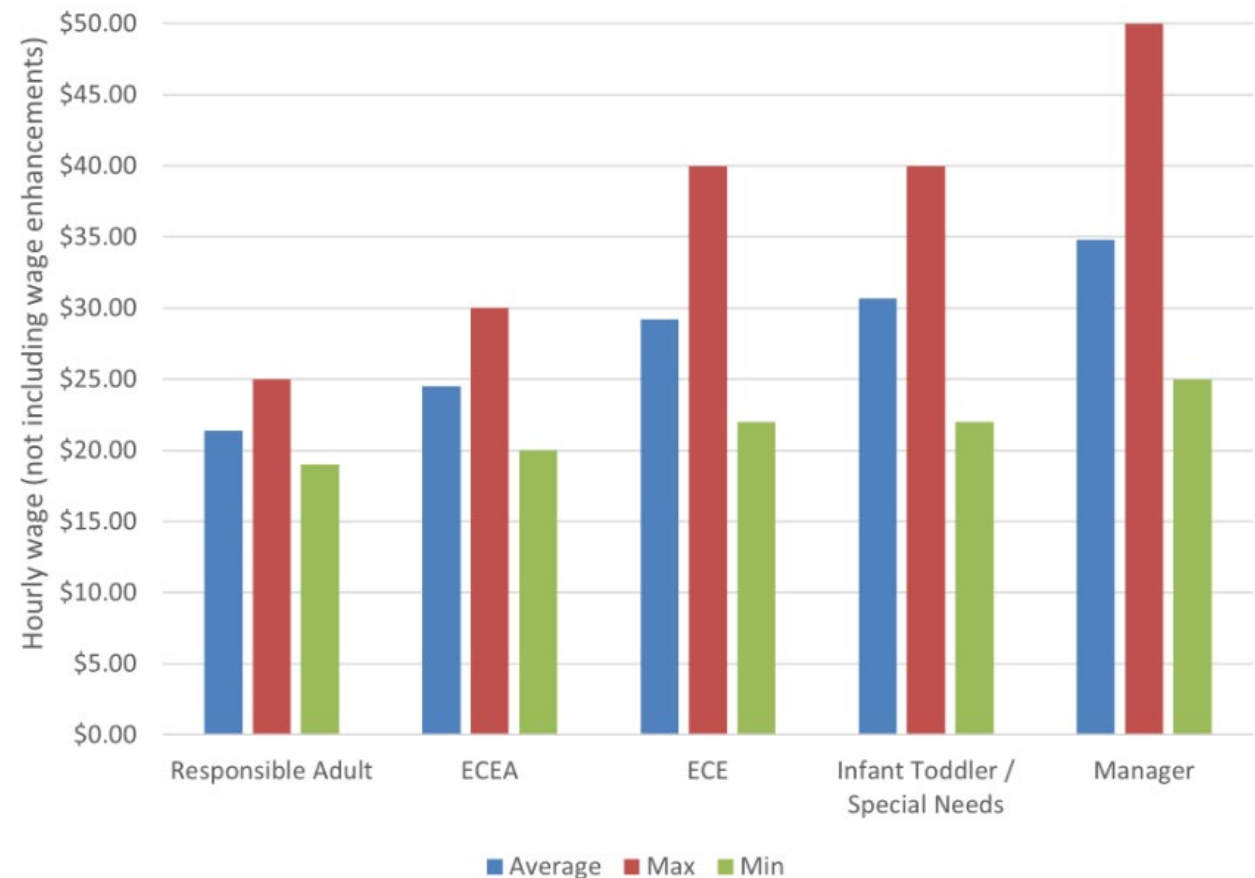
Real hourly wage vs. What organizations would like to pay staff

- Range of responding organization's annual revenue - \$32,000 - \$1.1 million.
- There is no correlation between annual revenue and the wages that staff receive.

Real Wages

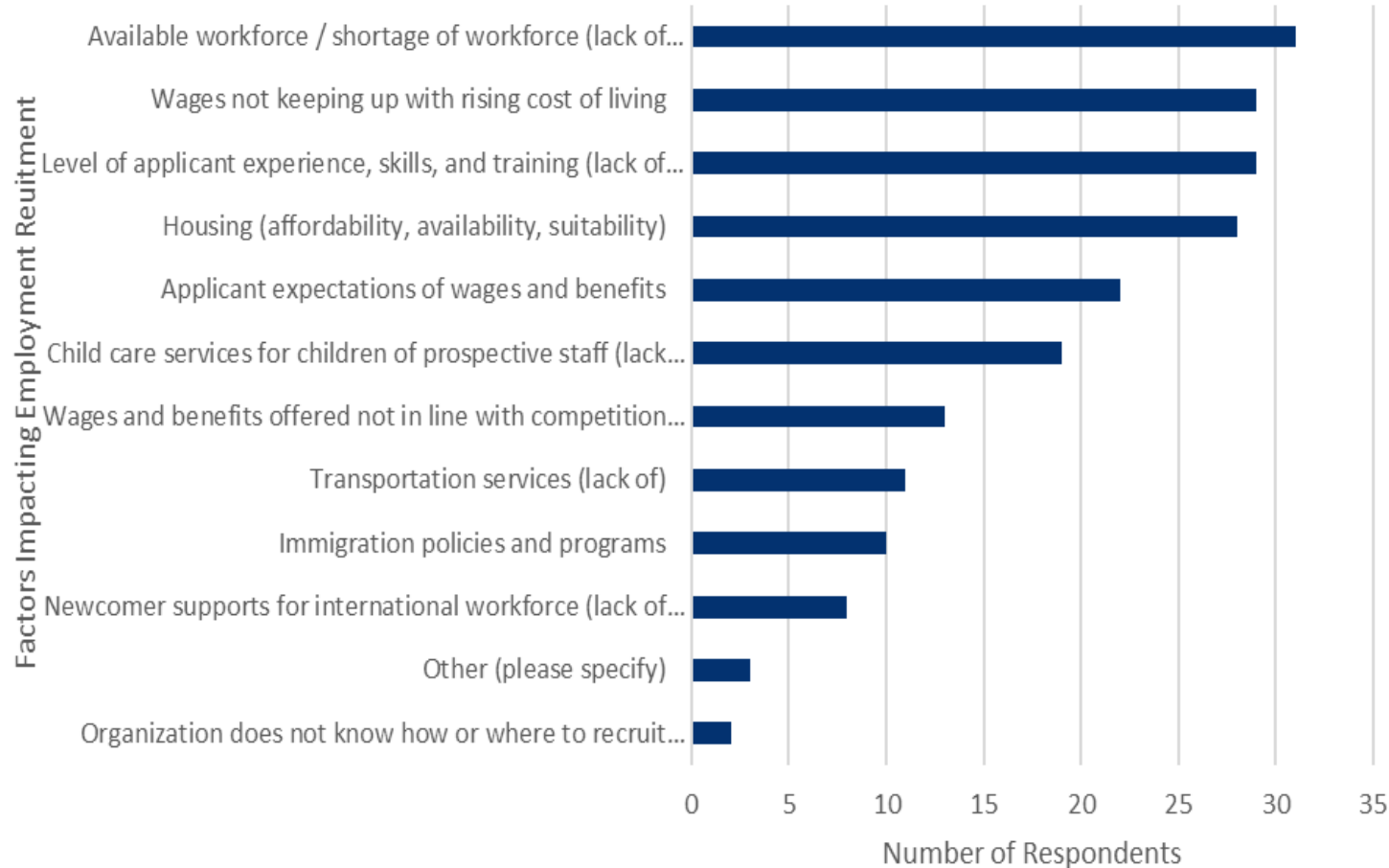


What employers would like to pay



Findings - *Recruitment Challenges*

Recruitment has been a challenge for 70% of respondents.



Why has it been a challenge?

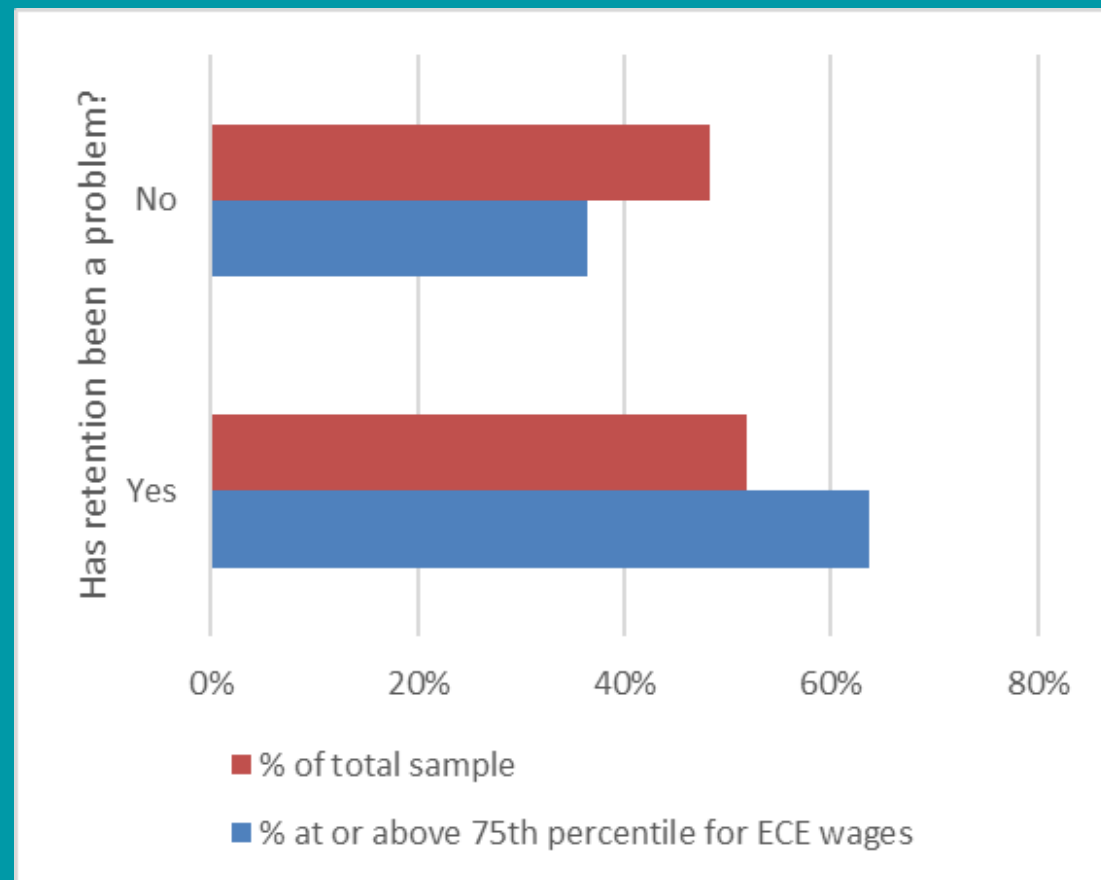
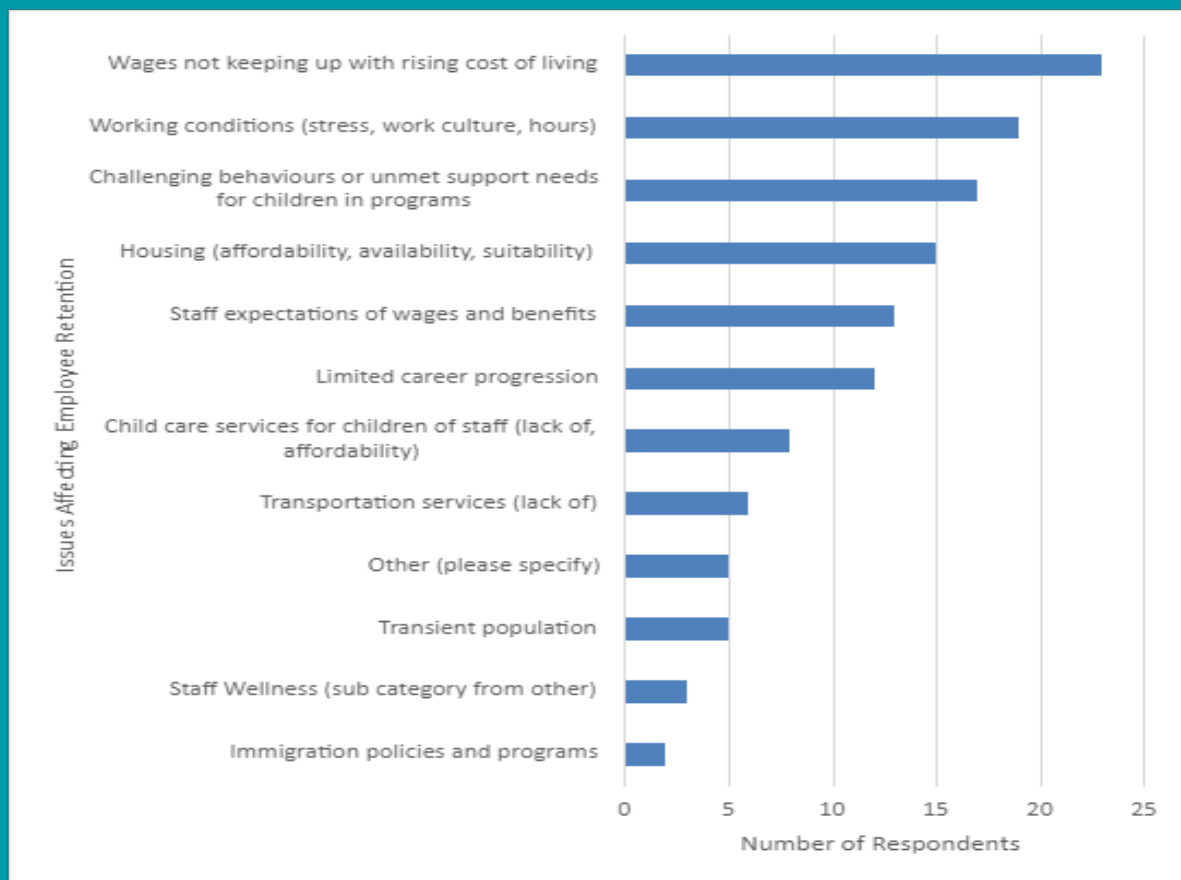
“The tricky thing for our organization is finding enough casual/support/part time staff. Due to low wages most child care workers want/need stability/full-time hours. Due to the limited funding under ccfri we cannot hire an additional full time person to cover breaks which makes it very difficult to continue to keep a casual staff engaged”

“Lack of pension and benefits and people don't want to work full time or times when their own kids aren't in school.”

Why has it not been a challenge?

1. Positive work environment
2. Benefits offered
3. Staff retention and referrals

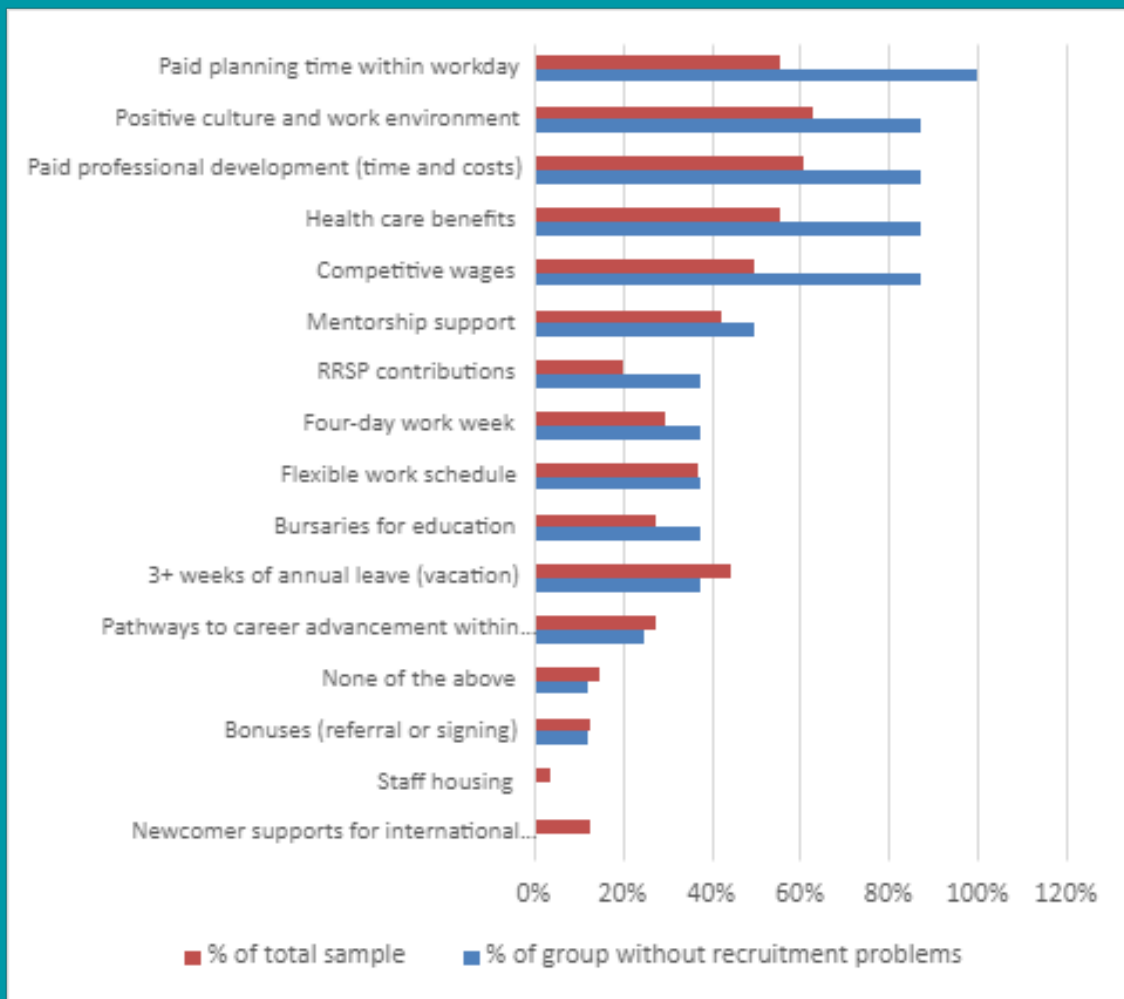
Findings - *Retention Challenges*



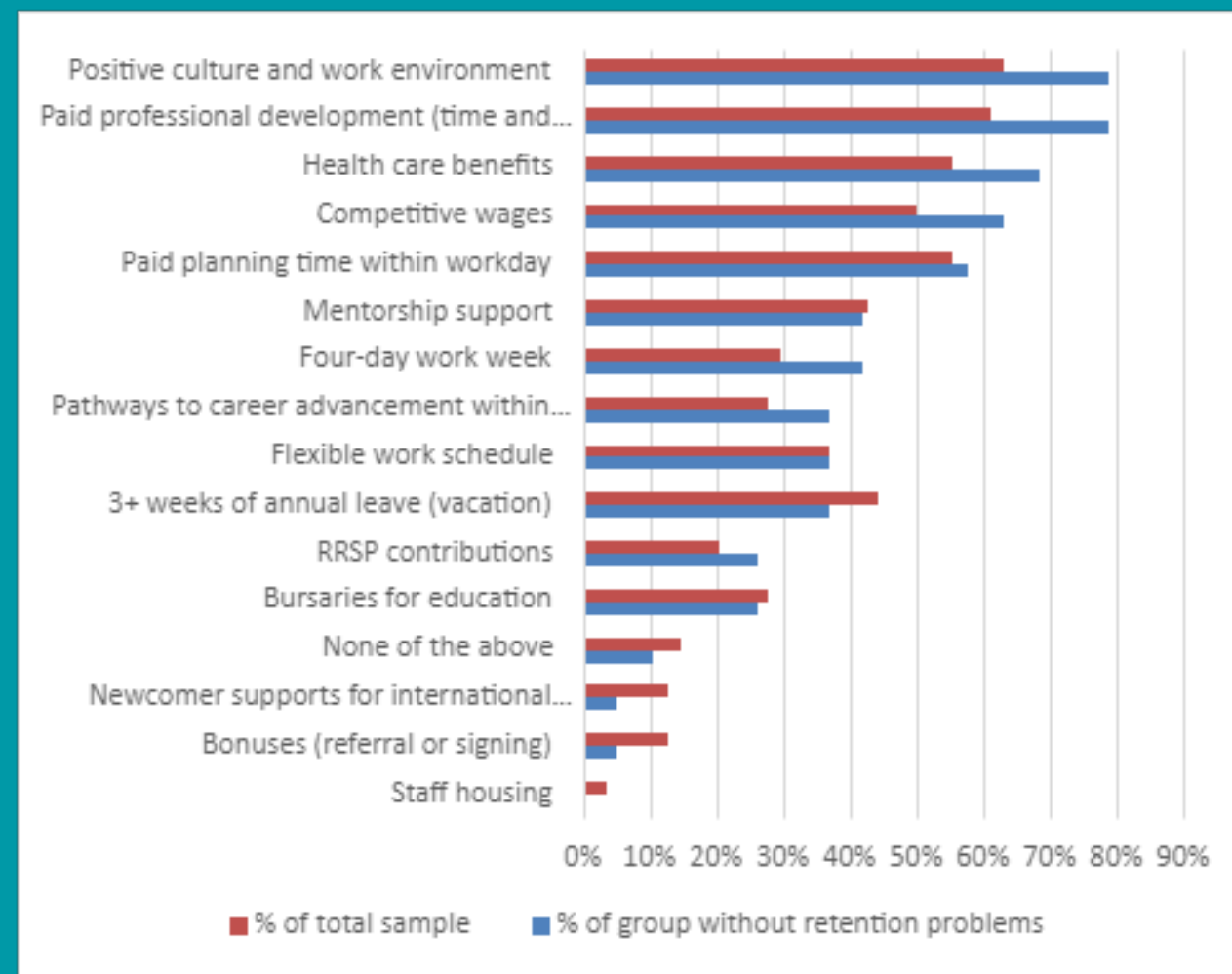
Why has it not been a challenge?

1. Positive work environment
2. Wages & Benefits

Findings - *Strategies Used to Address Recruitment & Retention*



Strategies to Address Recruitment



Strategies to Address Retention

Focus Group Findings - *Workforce*

- Substantiated workforce is a critical issue
 - Overlap between workforce and business administration challenges
- Significant differences between large and small centres, including:
 - Ability for large centres to attract and retain staff through incentives
 - Small centres lacking access to coverage for illness, vacation, etc.
 - Small centres not considered for hosting practicum students beyond initial observation
- Recruitment and retention
 - Heavy use of personal networks for recruitment and retention
 - Housing as an underlying barrier
 - In the survey, housing was the #4 challenge for recruitment and retention

Focus Group Findings - *Business Administration*

- All focus group participants expressed a lack of time to fulfill all requirements of their businesses
 - For smaller centres this issue was worse
 - Strategies centres used in response to lack of time
 - Overlapping shifts
 - Building in flexibility with ratios and staffing
 - Hosting a practicum student
 - The issue of time is exacerbated by few or no staff
- Required skills were identified, but were second to the issue of time
 - Desired training topics included:
 - Office administration – applications like Excel and Google Docs
 - Using new technology
 - Payroll, scheduling, floor plan design
 - Navigating grants and funding

Findings - Existing Support Programs

Support Provider	Program	Brief Program Description
Chambers of Commerce	Workshops and Resources	Each Chamber is an independent member-based organization but most provide training opportunities and all will give access to benefits for staff through their Chamber Benefits Plan.
Child Care Resource & Referral (CCRR)	Resources	Resources and supports for both child care providers and child care workforce. Training & professional development, information and support for applying for grants, networking, peer mentoring, community child care planning, etc.
College of the Rockies	Workshops	A range of community education and workplace training including payroll, book keeping, conflict resolution and leadership
Columbia Basin Trust	Basin Business Advisors - Business Coaching	One-on-one general business advice for for-profit businesses only. Support can include financial management and literacy, sales and marketing, and people management and HR.
Columbia Basin Trust	Basin Business Advisors - Workshops	On-demand online sessions covering a range of topics, including: - Recruitment and hiring, employee retention, policy and procedures manuals, and managing and leading for success - Financial statements, reading financial reports, using financial statements to manage a business, and important ratios
Columbia Basin Trust	Child Care Grants	Funding to support the purchase of specialized equipment to improve the quality and safety of child care operations (New Equipment Fund) and upgrades, improvements and renovations to improve and sustain the quality and safety of the operations (Small Improvements)
Columbia Basin Trust	Child Care Support Advisor	Connecting childcare providers with supports including grant funding opportunities and capital project guidance
Columbia Basin Trust	ECE Training Wage Program	A training wage to ECEAs and certified ECEs, employed by licensed child care facilities in the Basin, to support them to complete and/or upgrade their ECE qualifications.
Columbia Basin Trust	ECE Wage Subsidy Program	A \$2 per hour wage subsidy to enhance the wages of eligible ECEs employed by licensed child care facilities. This is in addition to the provincial government wage enhancement
Columbia Basin Trust	New Spaces Grant	Funding supports proposal development and capital grant funding for new childcare spaces
Columbia Basin Trust	Non-Profit Advisors Program - Coaching	One-on-one advisory services for nonprofit organizations in areas such as board governance, financial management, HR and planning.
Columbia Basin Trust	Non-Profit Advisors Program - Webinars	Online webinars to enhance knowledge and skill development of nonprofit organizations.
Columbia Basin Trust	Non-Profit Advisors Program - Workshops	In-person workshops delivered through College of the Rockies and Selkirk

Current Characteristics

- On demand - need to be actively sought
- Non sector specific - lack nuance of child care
- Differences in eligibility and accessibility by organization structure (for profit, non profit)
- Active versus passive outreach
- Accessibility – timing

Findings - Business Support Programs & Organizations

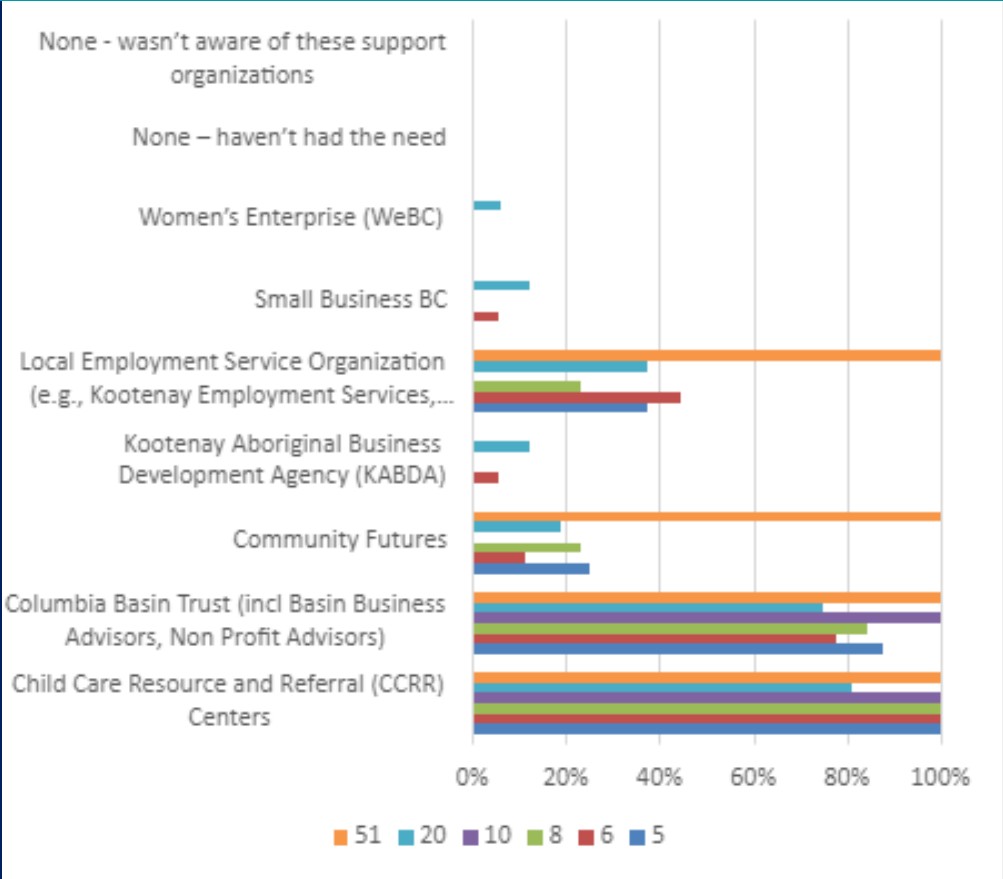
Top Three Organizations Used

- 1. Child Care Resource and Referral Centres
- 2. Columbia Basin Trust
- 3. Local Employment Service Organizations

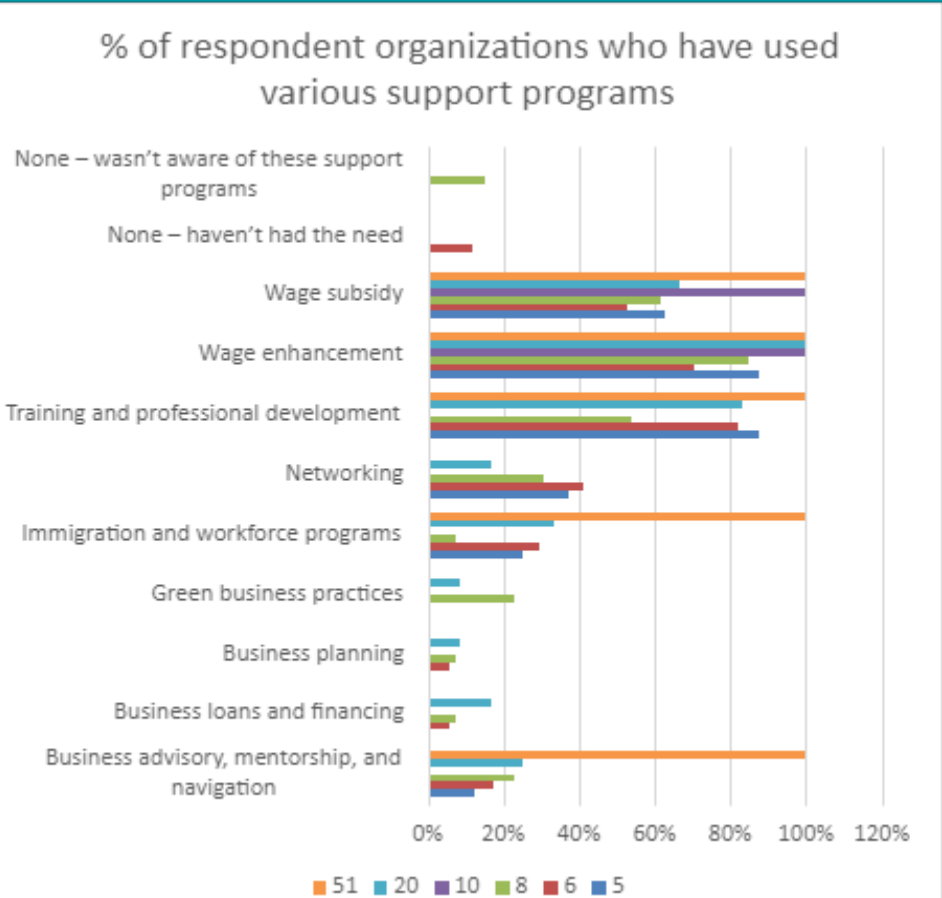
Top Three Programs Used

- 1. Wage Enhancement
- 2. Training and Professional Development
- 3. Wage Subsidy

BY SCHOOL DISTRICT



BY SCHOOL DISTRICT



Findings - *Issues with Business Supports*

Top issues with existing business support organizations

1. Absence of support organizations
2. Three way tie
 - Negative experience
 - Funding gaps
 - Lack of information

Top 3 issues with existing business support programs

1. Eligibility issues
2. Time to participate
3. Availability / timing of programs

“Community Futures workshops/training sessions are held at times that are during child care hours of operation. Hard to find staff to fill the times needed to attend workshops/training sessions.”

“We received no support from CCRR, nor CBTs child care support contract person. They essentially said we would not succeed in opening an organization and were incredibly negative, nor had any tangible supports to offer (business templates etc).”

“The change to school district coverage for ccrr locations we now don’t have anything for sd6”

Findings - *Desired Business Supports*

Ideal business support characteristics

1. In person with one-on-one support
2. Offered outside working hours (evenings and weekends)
3. Flexible
4. Free of charge
5. Hands on

What are the top 3 business supports you feel would benefit your organization?	Number of Responses
Financial Support	26
•Wage enhancement	17
•Grants and loans to support materials, business development and growth	9
Mentorship Support including administrative assistants and access to lawyers and such	14
Workforce	7
•Immigration support	4
•Recruitment and staffing (including benefits for staff)	3
Professional Development	6
Community Support including lists of substitutes and parents looking for care	3
Other including Board of Directors recruitment, toy lending library from CCRR, funding for children with special needs, and specific advocacy and support with government programs	9

Recommendations & Ideas

Diversity of needs requires multiple responses. Ideas identified include:

- **Workforce Recruitment**
 - Create a position that serves the temporary / on call needs of multiple small child care providers
 - Help navigate recruiting from outside region – includes housing, immigration
- **Changes to Support Programs**
 - Proactive engagement and relationship building from support organizations
 - Identify clear pathways to supports based on key eligibility (for profit versus non)
 - Ensure all providers have access to similar supports
 - Offer support programs and services outside standard working hours
 - Create operational funding opportunities
- **Training & Technology**
 - Provide targeted, sector specific training at appropriate times
 - Explore application of AI for reporting efficiency
- **Partnerships**
 - Share business management and other professional services
 - Opportunities for all centres to host practicum placements
- **Mentorship**
 - Peer or one-on-one business mentorship combining business and sector specific knowledge
 - Linking knowledge transfer with succession planning

Highlights

- Changing regulatory and policy environment
- Our current rural childcare landscape is small compared to urban but it is diverse (and fairly stable)
- The highest priority challenges are workforce and business administration
- Diverse needs require diverse solutions

Thank You

A sincere thank you to our advisory committee, as well as to everyone who participated in the survey, interviews, and focus groups.

Special thanks to our co-researcher Lauren Rethoret and our student interns Zoe Oppenheim, Caitlin Quist, and Soda Hadikin.