



## **Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care: Terms of Reference**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care is to build on existing capacities and provide leadership in managing, planning, and supporting the development of a system of high-quality early learning and care services in Edmonton, with an emphasis on meeting the needs of low-income and vulnerable families.

### **VISION**

Early learning and care for all children that is high in quality, universally available, accessible, affordable, and responsive to the diversity of individual children and their families.

### **MISSION**

To design, promote, and build an integrated system of early learning and care that:

- is publicly managed;
- is supported by public funding;
- has a workforce that is appropriately educated and well supported;
- coordinates the range of services needed to support young children and their families; and
- contributes to eliminating poverty.

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

1. Work toward developing an integrated system of early learning and care must be informed by, and conform to, human rights principles.
2. Indigenous perspectives and guidance are required because of the structural conditions created by our long history of discrimination.
3. Individuals and families from diverse cultures must be engaged in advisory, planning, service delivery, and regulatory roles.
4. Special efforts are required to identify, engage with, and respond to families who may be in need of and entitled to services but who, for whatever reason, are not accessing services.
5. Supports that optimize early child development must be easily accessible as needed on a universal basis.
6. Supports must be adapted, as necessary, for the specific needs of children and their families.
7. Supports must be high in quality.
8. Access to social, health, and educational systems must be equitable and timely.
9. Design, promotion, policy development, and implementation should be guided, where possible, by research-based evidence.
10. Eliminating childhood poverty requires the elimination of family poverty.
11. Eliminating the experience of poverty from childhood requires structural change and long-term commitments.
12. Edmonton can lead by example.



For details about these guiding principles, refer to Appendix.

## **ROLES**

Guided by the Council's vision, mission, and principles, the Council will

1. Describe the state of early learning and care in Edmonton, including resources, supports, needs, barriers to improvement, and opportunities.
2. Identify specific problems at system, community, or program levels that need to be addressed.
3. Establish priorities for addressing problems that need to be addressed, with priority given to improving, in order, system, community, and program functioning.
4. Identify and develop partnerships and resources necessary for making improvements.
5. Develop and propose solution options that can be implemented by institutional and community partners.
6. Assist institutional and community partners in implementing solutions.
7. Endorse, inform, and advocate for initiatives by other organizations or governments that advance the Council's vision and mission.
8. Build community support, including public education, for a system of early learning and care that accommodates the vision, mission, and principles of the Council.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Community members are organizations or individuals with expertise and experience in areas related to managing, planning, and promoting early learning and care. Representative memberships may be drawn from but not limited to: child care operators, which including operators from programs that support children who are First Nation, Metis, Inuit, newcomers, and or who may require additional support; postsecondary institutions; groups that represent the child care workforce; libraries; charities; foundations; and advocacy and professional organizations. Through its membership the Council is committed to understanding the intersectional perspectives of those who have been marginalized and to specifically meet the needs of low-income and vulnerable families.

Community organizations each select a person to serve as a member of Council who can contribute to the work of the Council.

Institutional liaisons are governments (e.g., municipal, provincial), associated agencies, contracted organizations, elected boards, and publicly governed services that have legislative and/or regulatory responsibilities for functions that are relevant for managing and planning early learning and care. Institutional organizations each appoint a liaison to the Council who brings the perspective of the institution and facilitates clear and open communication between the institution and the Council. Institutional liaisons are non-voting members.

The Council may add members to ensure that its composition aligns with its vision, mission, and guiding principles. Considerations for adding new members include connection, knowledge, and experience in early learning and/or child care.



The Council may also wish to consult with other early learning and care experts, community representatives, stakeholder groups, and government units as necessary. The Council may also establish working groups that include individuals representing other organizations not named in this Terms of Reference.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### Co-Chairs

Two community members of the Council, will be appointed by the Council to serve as co-chairs for two-year (staggered) terms. The co-chairs will have equal leadership responsibility for the Council. The co-chairs will, in consultation with one another, work to ensure a fair division of work, including:

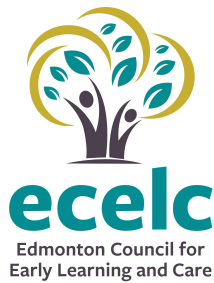
- Chair Council meetings.
- Set the agenda for monthly meetings of the Council in consultation with the Coordinator for the Council
- Appoint the chairperson of committees, in consultation with other members of the Council.
- Be responsible, in cooperation with members, for identifying and recommending new members to Council; Council must give final approval.
- Prepare and deliver reports to funders, with the Coordinator, on the activities of the Council.
- Serve as signatory for Council documents (i.e., timesheets, annual report to funders, etc.).
- Monitor financial planning and reports prepared by the Coordinator.
- Serve as public spokespersons for the Council when needed.
- Provide support and resources for the Coordinator.
- Discuss issues confronting the Council with the Coordinator.
- Evaluate the performance of the Coordinator annually.

The co-chairs will be elected by a nomination and voting process, held at the annual June meeting of the Council. The co-chairs will have staggered terms to ensure consistency and stability in leadership and to avoid situations where both co-chairs exit at once. Co-chairs must be re-elected in order to continue in that role.

### Members

The following section outlines the different roles and responsibilities required in the collaborative approach of the Council. Each member will bring a unique perspective, resources, skills, and expertise. Not every member will play a role in each of the categories described below.

- **Leadership and Coordination:** Members may participate as co-chairs and/or provide leadership to subcommittees or initiatives and activities of the Council.
- **Financial Stewardship:** Members may provide financial resources, funding expertise, or fiscal duties to ensure that the Council will remain in good financial standing.
- **Capacity Building:** Members may contribute their experience or expertise to build the capacity and knowledge of the Council, its members, other stakeholders, and the public.
- **Personnel:** Members may contribute staff resources to support the work of the Council.
- **Community Engagement:** Members may support access for the Council to members of the public, children and/or families in order to advance the goals of the Council.
- **Research and Data Analysis:** Members may undertake or bring relevant research to the Council.



- **Awareness and Communication:** Members may undertake awareness and communication activities to enhance the profile of the Council.
- **Liaison/Navigator:** Members may provide access to networks, including within their respective organizations, to inform, influence, and advance the goals of the Council.

All members of the Council will commit to implementing these Terms of Reference and to developing memoranda of understanding and/or other formal agreements, as required, to ensure that decisions made by the Council can be implemented.

### **PRINCIPLES FOR WORKING TOGETHER**

The Council members agree to interact and operate with each other with the following expectations:

- Enable Progress - Make a decision and move on
- Understand Long-Term Impact - Consider future generations
- Be Solution-Focused - Make decisions based on evidence
- Share the Air - Treat each other as equals and ensure all perspectives are voiced
- Respect Perspectives - Assume that everyone is acting in good faith
- Show Up - Be prepared and be present
- Radical Openness - Be curious and respectful with a willingness to try
- What Happens Here Doesn't End Here - Be accountable to the Council and to your organization

### **MEASURES OF SUCCESS**

Measures of success will be reviewed and updated annually, and may include:

- Progress made on activities identified as priorities.
- Number and quality of initiatives and collaborations identified
- Member satisfaction (as assessed through annual reviews of partnership health)
- Number and diversity of active members
- Communicate about the Council's progress with the early learning and care community in Edmonton, other stakeholders, and the broad public.

### **COMMITMENT TO COMMUNICATION**

The Council intends to sustain positive relationships by actively keeping members informed and making an ongoing commitment to keep communication a priority. If there are any misunderstandings or questions, each member must bring these to the attention of the other member(s) as soon as possible to gain clarity before additional steps are taken.

Members recognize that they work in a complex and dynamic environment and that factors beyond their control may sometimes interfere with their best intentions. This recognition will ensure that everyone is informed with the goal of not surprising each other in a public forum. If members are not in agreement, they will advise each other in advance of their stance on an issue.

When required, the members agree to jointly develop a communication package that will outline a set of key messages for internal and external communications. Such communication activities shall recognize the contributions of all members.

## **TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually. It may be amended, varied or modified in writing after consultation and agreement from the Council members.

## **MEETINGS**

Normally the Council meets monthly to establish effective, consistent, and aligned collaborative structures and practices, as well as to undertake work to advance initiatives related to managing, planning, and supporting the development of high-quality early learning and care services in Edmonton.

Attendance at meetings is crucial to the functioning and effectiveness of the Council. If a member fails to demonstrate a commitment to attend meetings or meet their obligations, they may be asked to resign their position.

## **DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

The Council intends to use a collaborative and participatory decision-making process, where consensus is defined as a decision everyone actively supports and is in the best interest of the whole group. The process is described below:

1. Introduce and clarify the issue, including
  - Gathering and presenting relevant information
  - Identifying what question(s) need to be answered or what decision(s) needs to be made, and when
2. Explore the issue and look for ideas, including
  - Identifying priorities, concerns, and questions
  - Collecting a range of ideas
  - Considering the pros and cons of potential ideas
3. Look for potential solutions, including
  - Considering elements of different ideas discussed
  - Developing solutions that addresses members' key concerns
4. Test for agreement, using the three-finger method
  - Opposition (three fingers): existence of any fundamental disagreements with solution; requires a return to step 3. Members that have expressed a block must suggest amendments or new solutions.
  - Reservations (two fingers): lack of support and/or concerns about the solution, but willingness for the group to proceed with a decision. If the majority of members expressed reservations, this will be taken as a signal that further discussion should be undertaken. Members that have expressed a reservation will suggest amendments or new solutions.
  - Agreement (one finger): support of solution and willingness to contribute to implementation



Unanimous consensus occurs when everyone supports a decision (everyone present raises one finger).

General consensus occurs when everyone present raises either one or two fingers, with the majority showing one. A majority showing of two fingers indicates lukewarm support and is a signal that further discussion may be required.

No consensus occurs when one or more members oppose the decision (raising three fingers); further discussion is then required.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Members will self-identify actual, possible, or perceived conflicts of interest to the co-chairs. At the discretion of the co-chairs, members with a conflict may still participate in related discussions but shall abstain from decision-making.

### **DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

In the event of a dispute arising from the interpretation or operation of this Terms of Reference, the Council intends to use the following process for resolution:

- Initial flagging of the issue and initiation of a face to face conversation.
- Explore the challenge using open-ended questions to gain an understanding of the root cause of the issue and to answer the question, "What is the issue?"
- Agree on the root cause of the issue and work together to generate solutions using the consensus decision-making process.
- Choose an appropriate solution and decide on how it will be implemented/resolved.
- Implement the solution and monitor progress.

If such negotiations fail, the issue will be referred to the co-chairs, who will use their best efforts to resolve the matter amicably.

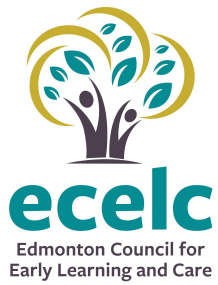
### **CONFIDENTIALITY AND ETHICAL CONDUCT**

All records and materials of the Council are subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Members shall not:

- use confidential information for the personal profit of themselves or any other person;
- communicate confidential information to anyone not entitled to receive it; and
- use their position to secure special privileges, favours, or exemptions for themselves or any other person

All members shall preserve the integrity of the Council and govern themselves accordingly. If in doubt about any actions or conduct, members are encouraged to seek advice from the co-chairs.

### **NO "LEGAL" PARTNERSHIP**



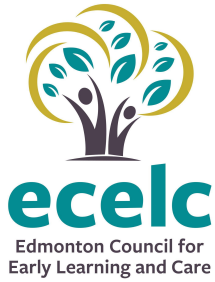
Notwithstanding any references to “partner” or “partnership” contained in this Terms of Reference, the partners acknowledge and agree that no legal partnership is created by this Terms of Reference. Nothing contained in this Terms of Reference shall or shall be deemed to constitute the members either as partners or as agents of the other partners or any other relationship whereby one partner could be held liable for any act or omission of others. Partners shall not have any authority to act for other partners or to incur any obligation on behalf of other partners.

## Appendix

### Guiding Principles

1. *Work toward developing an integrated system of early learning and care must be informed by, and conform to, human rights principles.* These principles are articulated in international agreements such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
2. *Indigenous perspectives and guidance are required because of the structural conditions created by our long history of discrimination.* Efforts to meet the unique and distinct needs of Indigenous children and their families must be grounded in the right to self-determination. Ensuring this right is upheld in all phases of the development of a system of early learning and care in the City of Edmonton is foundational to redressing the legacy of Indian Residential Schools, advancing the process of reconciliation, and building and rebuilding Indigenous communities that establish and control their educational systems in their own languages and cultural methods of teaching and learning.
3. *Individuals and families from diverse cultures must be engaged in advisory, planning, service delivery, and regulatory roles.* Dominant cultures inevitably influence the organization and delivery of services and can be a significant barrier to culturally diverse families and children.
4. *Special efforts are required to identify, engage, and respond to families who may be in need of and entitled to services but who, for whatever reason, are not accessing services.* Responsive supports are critical so that all children can be successful at home, in school, and in their communities.
5. *Supports that optimize early child development must be easily accessible as needed on a universal basis.* Young children who can benefit from early learning and care are not limited to certain geographic areas of the city or to particular economic or ethnic groups.
6. *Supports must be adapted as necessary for the specific needs of children and their families.* As examples, First Nations, Inuit, and Metis children and families have distinctive needs as a function of residential schooling, newcomer families have some characteristics that are specific to their ethnic communities, foster children have needs that arise from disruptive family histories, and children with differential abilities often require services designed to accommodate their specific needs.
7. *Supports must be high in quality.* Low-quality supports are not acceptable and do not contribute to meaningful long-term outcomes for children and families.
8. *Access to social, health, and educational systems must be equitable and timely.* These systems often are complex and unwelcoming. Barriers include language, culture, confidence, experience, discrimination, and inequitable levels of social and institutional capital and referent power that contribute





to an imbalance of power. Although partners in early learning and care are working to reduce barriers, equitable and early access to early learning and care services often requires advocates, navigators, and/or companion workers who play an essential role in linking children and families to the supports they need to be successful at home, in school, and in their communities.

*9. Design, promotion, policy development, and implementation should be guided*

*where possible by research-based evidence.* Expertise and research should be sought as necessary to guide this work.

*10. Eliminating childhood poverty requires the elimination of family poverty.* Stable and sufficient income is essential for ensuring quality of life and necessities such as adequate nutrition and housing. Stable, safe, and family-appropriate housing is essential for participating in communities, for succeeding in school, and for accessing supportive services. Early learning and care adds an important element to broad efforts by EndPovertyEdmonton and its partners toward eliminating poverty.

*11. Eliminating the experience of poverty from childhood requires structural*

*change and long-term commitments.* A truly integrated system of early learning and care requires systemic changes and productive cooperation, coordination, and collaboration among levels of government and communities.

*12. Edmonton can lead by example.* Significant changes in early learning and care require cooperation, coordination, and collaboration from several levels of government and from other sectors. Municipalities can and must effect some changes and promote others. The City of Edmonton and other partners must take a leadership role in supporting early child development and eliminating poverty.