



Policy Wise
for Children & Families



STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN

2017-2020

A Message From Leadership

Since 2003, our organization has worked to improve child, family and community well-being in Alberta by leading, creating and mobilizing research and evaluation for evidence-informed policy and practice.

As a result of a strategic communications review in 2015, we changed our name to be more memorable and meaningful. PolicyWise for Children & Families (PolicyWise) emphasizes and refreshes our original commitment to children and families and takes us into the future.

This strategic business plan will help us write the next chapter of this story together. It builds on our successes to date and incorporates our Theory

of Change, Impact Assessment Framework and collaborative approach with government, community and academia. We will continue to play a unique role in analyzing and interpreting linked administrative data across ministries serving children and youth. And our role as funder of policy-relevant research will remain a key strategy to grow the body of knowledge needed to ensure policies and programs make the most difference for children, families

and communities. In addition, our expertise in conducting evaluations to support strategic initiatives will flourish and remain focused on seizing opportunities that will have the most impact on decisions.

To our board members, supporters, stakeholders and PolicyWise team, we thank you for your continued support and dedication. None of this would be possible without you.



Ms. Robyn Blackadar
PRESIDENT & CEO



Mr. James Talbot
BOARD CHAIR



› **Board of Directors (Front Row, Left to Right):** Dr. Gayla Rogers, Ms. Denise Lightning, Ms. Tanya McLeod, Dr. Sandra Davidge.
(Back Row, Left to Right): Mr. Brian Callaghan, Ms. Robyn Blackadar, Mr. Martin Coutts, Dr. James Talbot.
(Absent): Dr. Dawne Clark, Dr. Dwayne Donald, Dr. David Elton, Ms. Brenda Rebman, Dr. Brent Scott
(New Appointments after April 2017, Not Pictured): Ms. Belinda Boleantu, Dr. Jackie Sieppert

Lead Create Mobilize

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■ Vision, Mission and Values

“We remain committed to the heart of the vision, mission and values that have guided us since 2003.”

~ PolicyWise Team

Vision

Alberta is a leader in creating and mobilizing evidence to ensure the well-being of children, families and communities.

Values

We are guided by our values and commit to being:

- Impactful
- Innovative
- Transparent
- Ethical
- Quality focused

Mission

To develop and integrate evidence to inform, identify and promote effective public policy and service delivery to improve the well-being of children, families and communities.

Our Foundation

- Trusted relationships
- Trusted approaches
- Trusted evidence

Who We Are Who We Serve

In an ever-changing world, research, evaluation and analysis of data becomes an essential component to informing and measuring the effectiveness of public policy and service delivery. Assessing the well-being of society is no exception.

As a not-for-profit organization that exists to improve the well-being of children, families and communities, we strive to make a positive impact by conducting, funding and mobilizing research for the purpose of generating evidence-based knowledge to inform policy and practice.

We measure well-being through a variety of means including secondary analysis of data, policy-relevant research, provincial program evaluations, and deliberate dialogue with government, academic and community stakeholders and collaborators. Such measures are conducted in alignment with key system indicators that matter to policy-makers.

We have a long-term agreement with Alberta Children's Services, multi-year affiliation agreements with all major universities in Alberta, and work collaboratively with government ministries, foundations, the community and service delivery organizations.

“Healthy, thriving children living in supportive families and safe communities are critical to ensuring a skilled productive workforce for the future.”

~ Alberta Government



LEAD

Inspire shared vision and action for change.



70+

research and evaluation projects completed and underway



44+

active partnerships with government, community, and academic/universities across the province, Canada and the world

CREATE

Generate new evidence.



2,000,000+

Albertans included in the Child and Youth Data Laboratory's longitudinal, cross-ministry study of Experiences of Alberta Children and Youth over Time, 2005/06 to 2010/11



250+

projects funded through PolicyWise grants

PolicyWise “has certainly grown in strength, deepened its roots and expanded its knowledge and strong connections here in Calgary and Southern Alberta. [They] are so well respected.”

~ Alberta Health Services

Our Core Functions:

- Engage in research, evaluation, communication and knowledge mobilization
- Conduct, fund, and build capacity in policy-relevant research
- Link, analyze and manage data
- Manage resources and strategic relationships
- Measure and communicate our impact and value



“PolicyWise is well known and respected within its sphere of influence as being open and transparent, collaborative, and influential.”

~ Stakeholder, Strategic Communications Review

■ Our Approach

Our approach is collaborative. We pride ourselves on building long term relationships with our funders, stakeholders and the research community. Together, we generate evidence which is defined as “information derived from a range of sources [e.g., experience, evaluation, research, context] that has been subjected to testing and is found to be credible.”ⁱ

What we learn informs and is informed by policy and practice change: transforming data into information, information into evidence, evidence into knowledge and knowledge into wisdom.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of our work not only allows PolicyWise to learn from its activities, progress markers and outcomes, and to support ongoing adaptation and improvement, but it also supports knowledge mobilization and communication with stakeholders.

i. Higgs, J. & Jones, M., Will evidence-based practice take the reasoning out of practice? (Butterworth Heineman, Oxford, 2000) 307-315.

Our Impact

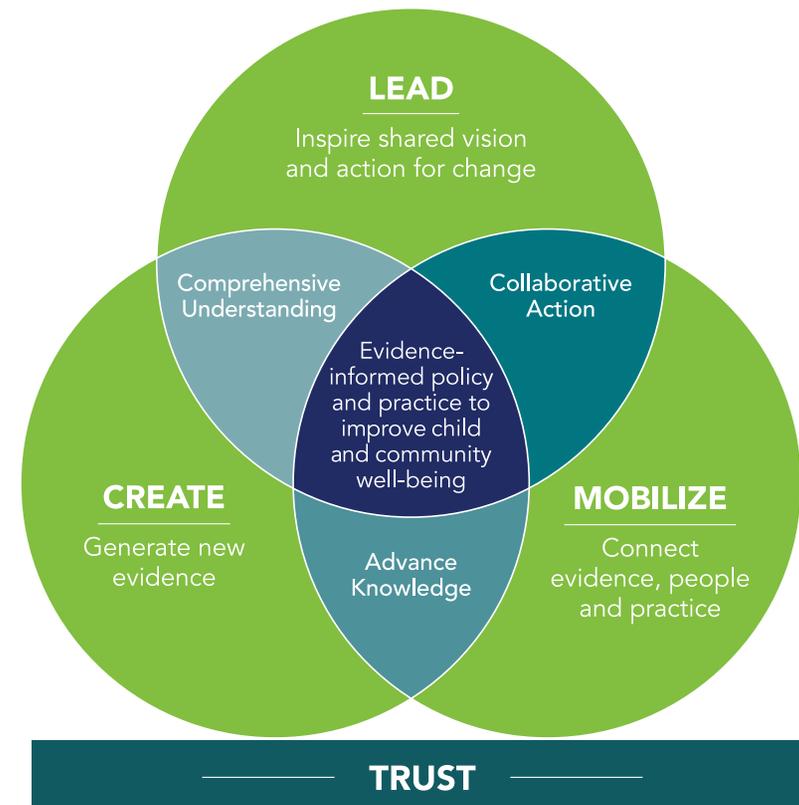
Evidence-informed policy and practice aimed at improving child and community well-being is at the heart of our model. It is embedded in the theory of change, a concept that challenges organizations to look closely at how their actions produce the intended impact.

At PolicyWise, our intended impact lies in developing and integrating evidence that informs, identifies and promotes effective public policy and service delivery. Our comprehensive understanding, collaborative action and our drive to advance knowledge informs the work we do to achieve the impact.

We **lead** to inspire a shared vision and action for change. We help **create** new evidence. We **mobilize** by connecting evidence, people and practice.

Finally, our model is based on a foundation of trust. Trust in the wisdom of the children, families, communities and others we work with; trust in our funders; and trust in the knowledge that our work will improve the well-being of children, families and communities.

PolicyWise Theory of Change



“Make sure all research has a relevant purpose with potential for tangible, useful outcomes.”

~ Participant, Honouring Our Knowledge Gifts:
Aboriginal Research Forum

MOBILIZE

Connect evidence, people and practice.



100,000+

webcast viewers from around the world
have participated in PolicyWise events



395+

evidence-based resources are available
online via the PolicyWise website

“I am blown away by the
dashboards...I am really impressed
by how accessible the information
and your findings are.”

~ Canadian Research Institute for Law and the Family

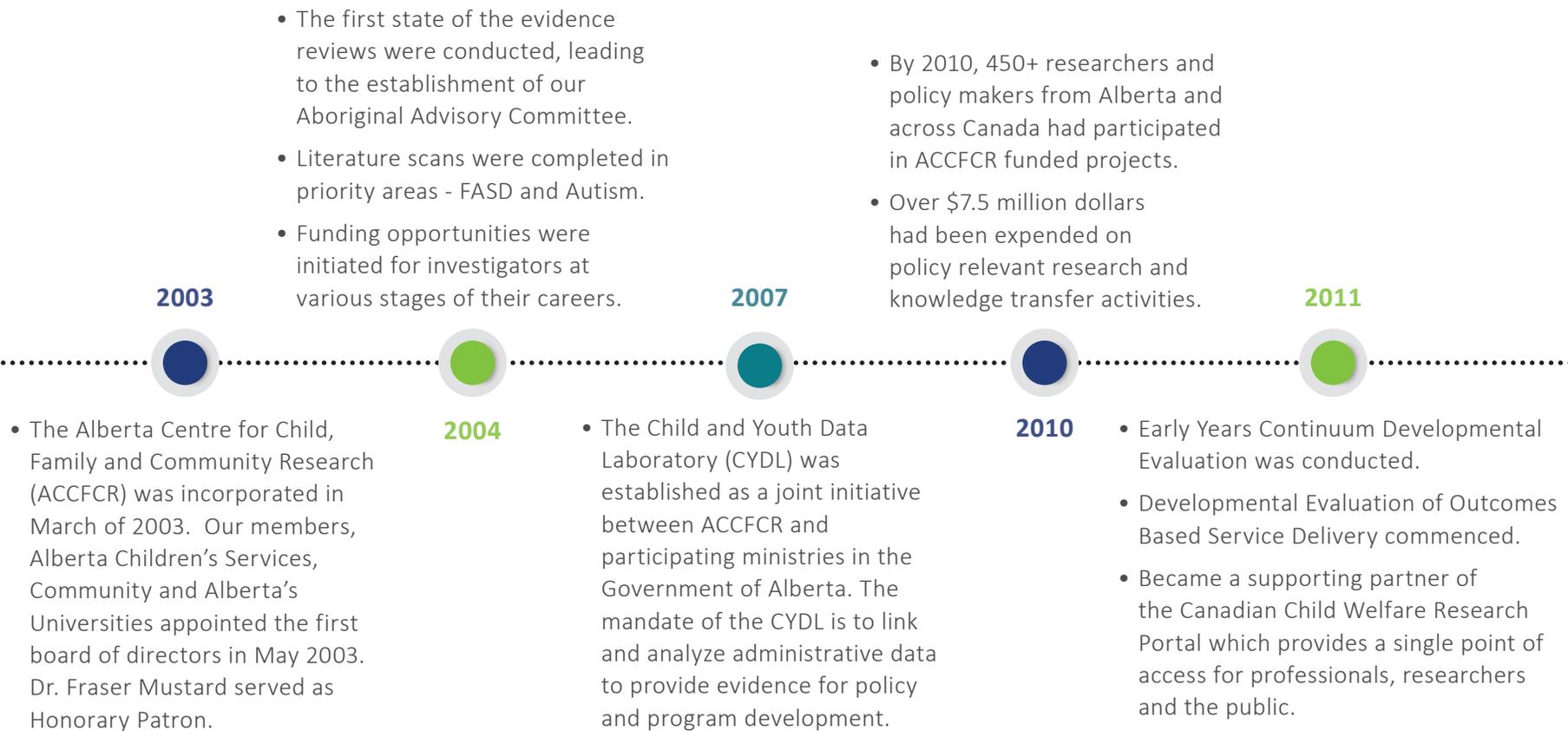


“So what are you
going to be when
you grow up?”

~ Fraser Mustard, Honorary Patron

Reflecting on Our Milestones

Before we look ahead, it is important to recognize how PolicyWise has grown and what has been achieved. While there are many ongoing projects and events that mark significant contributions to the well-being of children, families, and communities, here is a small sampling of certain milestones that stand out for us.



- CYDL completed and released Experiences of Albertan Youth 2008/09.
- Longitudinal Project (The Experiences of Albertan Children and Youth over Time, 2005/06 to 2010/11) was initiated.

2013

- Completion of FASD Year 7 Evaluation.
- Launched large-scale, longitudinal projects in the areas of disaster-related psychosocial support and prevention and early intervention.

2015

- In September, the Board approved our new name **PolicyWise for Children & Families**, as a refresh of our commitment to ensuring policies aimed at well-being are informed by evidence.
- Released deliverables from the longitudinal project, including the program overlap matrix and dashboards.

2012

- Children First Act: Names ACCFCR as the organization that can receive data for the development of effective programs and services for children.
- Completion of FASD Year 5 Evaluation.

2014

- Secondary Analysis to Generate Evidence (SAGE) was established. SAGE is a data and research platform that enables sharing of research data, administrative and service delivery data related to child and youth development, health and well-being.

2016

Strategic Directions Plans for the Future

Through the development of our Impact Assessment we are committed to a set of long-term outcomes:

- Alberta is a policy and practice leader for child, family and community well-being.
- There will be an increasingly receptive and integrated environment for the use of data, information and evidence.
- Alberta policy makers, researchers, and practitioners will further build a contextual, credible and comprehensive picture of the state of child, family and community well-being.

“PolicyWise serves as an important model to other provinces on how government and community can work together to use data to improve social outcomes.”

~ Michael Lenczner, CEO of Ajah & Director of Powered by Data,
a Tides Canada Initiative





Strategic Priority 1:

Lead in the management, linkage and analysis of administrative data and research to identify opportunities for improvement.

We will work to advance this by:

1. Implementing priority data initiatives and projects to build data and analytics infrastructure for the Province.
2. Contributing to a sustainable data sharing and linkage model through strategic initiatives such as Secondary Analysis to Generate Evidence and Child and Youth Data Laboratory.
3. Promoting leading practices in data governance, information privacy protection, and responsible and ethical use of data to improve the environment for evidence-informed decision making.
4. Increasing collaboration with community-based organizations in support of stronger data capacity and secondary use of data.
5. Identifying new opportunities to maximize the potential of data, including new connections to researchers and communities who could benefit from working with the data and evidence.
6. Strengthening the role of PolicyWise in supporting the integration of data, information and services across Alberta, Canada and internationally.
7. Embedding learning and improvement in all research and evaluation conducted by PolicyWise to ensure that we continuously demonstrate leading practices in research; knowledge mobilization; and management, linkage and analysis of administrative data.



Strategic Priority 2:

Build and mobilize capacity for the generation and use of policy-relevant, interdisciplinary research in the domains of child, family and community well-being.

We will work to advance this by:

1. Ensuring research and evaluation funded and conducted by PolicyWise is policy-relevant and addresses priority areas.
2. Seeking new sources of funding and funding models that can be directed towards research and evaluation to address long-standing social policy challenges.
3. Supporting evidence-informed policy and practice training, internship and educational opportunities.
4. Strengthening our networks and funding base to enhance sustainability and build capacity to inform evidence-informed programming and policy.
5. Generating policy-relevant analytics through the Child and Youth Data Laboratory's Longitudinal Project in various formats to meet the information needs of our partners, stakeholders and the public.
6. Applying advanced methodologies, techniques and data visualization processes to gain new insights on complex issues in linked data.
7. Supporting creation of new knowledge from existing research, community and administrative data through sharing from the Secondary Analysis to Generate Evidence collaborative platform.



Strategic Priority 3:

Mobilize knowledge built on evidence to support cross-sectoral policy and service delivery.

We will work to advance this by:

1. Fostering close working relationships with government, academic and community stakeholders to adopt and use results from PolicyWise funded research and from the Child and Youth Data Lab.
2. Engaging with stakeholders throughout the research and evaluation process to ensure alignment of projects and results with evolving priority areas.
3. Facilitating deliberative dialogues and knowledge forums with government, academic and community stakeholders to foster co-development of research and knowledge priorities.
4. Mobilizing high quality evidence from linked data, research, and evaluation in five focus areas – early childhood development, middle childhood and youth development, family capacity building, community capacity building and strengthening and tracking long-term outcomes.
5. Synthesizing evidence generated across priority areas and creating information products that are accessible to government, academic and community stakeholders.
6. Managing content on multiple platforms (i.e., web, Twitter, repositories) to ensure information and evidence generated from research and evaluation is easily accessible to internal and external stakeholders.

■ Our Research and Evaluation Focus Areas

1. Early Childhood Development

Evidence from neuroscience, developmental psychology, social sciences, anthropology, health and other disciplines has demonstrated that an investment in early childhood development (0 to 5 years) establishes a foundation for well-being.

2. Middle Childhood and Youth Development

Building on early years, middle childhood (6 to 12 years) and youth development continues to be heavily influenced by factors associated with families and communities. Entering the education system and participating in community activities (e.g. sports, art, music, etc.) marks the beginning of formal and informal education. At this stage children gain knowledge, learn skills, strengthen independence, and reach greater maturity in physical, social, emotional and cognitive development. Youth that are resilient to mental health challenges tend to have strong learning abilities, good social skills, long term support from one or more adults, feelings of competency, cohesive families and communities and positive beliefs about their purpose in the world.

3. Family Capacity Building

Stable and nurturing relationships are critical to healthy child development and well-being. Families balance the demands of raising children with the demands of work outside of the home; drawing support from the communities to which they belong.

ⁱⁱ Promoting positive parenting and supporting healthy, safe environments enhances family capacity.

4. Community Capacity Building and Strengthening

Children and families are nested within communities. Community capacity building supports child and family well-being by promoting the ‘capacity’ of local communities to develop, implement and sustain their own solutions to problems in a way that helps them shape and exercise control over their physical, social, economic and cultural environments. ⁱⁱⁱ

“We believe that beings thrive when there is a web of interconnectedness between the individual and the community, and between the community and nature. Everything we do, every decision we make, affects our family, our community, it affects the air we breathe, the animals, the plants, the water in some way. Each of us is totally dependent on everything else.”– Evelyn Steinhauer ^{iv}

5. Tracking Long-Term Outcomes

Tracking long term outcomes of public policies, programs and services is critical to understanding and improving effectiveness and increasing of accountability. The process requires long term planning and building of outcome tracking capacities so that relevant data and information can be collected and monitored at program, system and population level.

ii. In the Best Interests of Children and Families: A Discussion of Early Childhood Education and Care in Alberta. <https://www.muttart.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/> (November 2010)

iii. Western Australian Department of Community Development (2006)

iv. Alberta. Alberta Education. Aboriginal Services Branch and Learning and Teaching Resources Branch. “Our words, our ways: teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners,” (Edmonton, Alberta, 2005) 16.

■ The Story Behind Our Logo



The Circle - a symbol representing inclusivity, wholeness, safety, interconnectedness, equality and completion. The circle brings important meaning to the people we strive to support through our work.

The Kite - a symbol representing child and family well being through health and happiness. Kite flying is a common family activity that resonates across cultures.

Children and Families - our mission is to improve the lives of children, youth and families in Alberta communities by mobilizing evidence to inform policy.

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