



**The Consortium**

Alberta Professional Learning Consortium

# PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NEEDS ASSESSMENT RESULTS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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For Career Education  
June, 2025

Completed in collaboration with the College of Alberta School Superintendents

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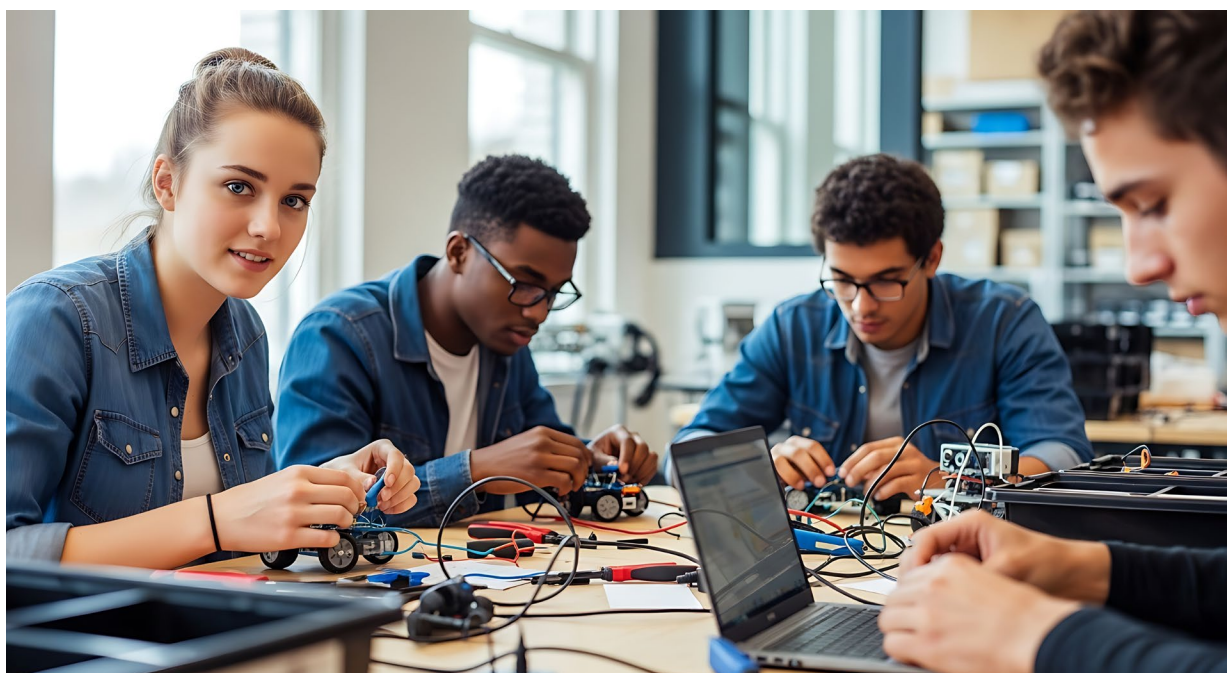
## Purpose of the Report

In Spring 2025, The Consortium and the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) received a conditional grant from Alberta Education to expand professional learning opportunities for teachers and system education leaders in the areas of career education and Career and Technology Studies (CTS). The initiative is scheduled to run from March 2025 to August 2026 and is designed to:

- expand access to professional learning that strengthens Career and Technology Foundations (CTF) and CTS programs.
- support the integration of career education into new curriculum.
- build teacher and leader capacity to guide students in exploring career pathways.
- improve student readiness for post-secondary education and careers.
- enhance the availability and sustainability of career education programming for students in Grades 7–12.

A key deliverable of the grant is a province-wide professional learning needs assessment to identify current strengths, gaps, and priorities in career education. This executive summary synthesizes the findings of the English-language survey conducted in June 2025.

Results from the French-language survey will be reported separately by the Consortium Provincial Francophone (CPFPP).



## Methodology

The Professional Learning Needs Assessment for Career Education survey was conducted in June 2025 and was made available in both English and French. A total of 125 educators responded, including 93 who completed the English version and 32 who completed the French version. Participants represented three distinct groups: career education teachers and career counsellors, school leaders such as principals and vice-principals, and system education leaders, including superintendents.

To ensure relevance and accuracy, the survey questions were tailored to each respondent group while maintaining a consistent structure to enable comparison across roles. The questions were organized into five thematic sections: (A) Background Information, (B) Current Career Education Opportunities, (C) Career Education Professional Learning Needs, (D) Career Education Contextual Considerations, and (E) Career Education Vision and Future Direction.

The link to the survey was distributed electronically to educators across Alberta through *CASS Connects*, a weekly newsletter with a consistent high readership rate. The Consortium also distributed the link to the survey through their regularly distributed provincial newsletter. Participation was voluntary, and respondents could choose to complete the survey in either English or French. Responses were anonymous, and no personally identifying information was collected, allowing participants to share their perspectives openly. While the findings provide valuable insights into the professional learning needs and priorities of educators in career education, they represent the views of those who chose to respond and may not capture the full range of perspectives across the province.

## Definition of Career Education Across Respondent Groups

Each respondent group was asked to identify key characteristics to describe career education. A synthesized definition of career education based on the perspectives of teachers, career counsellors, school leaders, and system education leaders reflected in the survey results is as follows:

*Career education is a student-centered and lifelong process that helps learners understand themselves, explore diverse career options, and develop the skills, experiences, and plans needed for future success. It integrates self-awareness, hands-*

*on learning, and transferable skill development with strong community and industry partnerships, ensuring relevance and equity across contexts. Ultimately, career education empowers students to make informed choices, adapt to change, and confidently transition into adulthood with purpose and readiness.*

Ultimately, career education supports students in discovering who they are, exploring possibilities, and building the skills and confidence to navigate their future with purpose.

## Common Priorities Across Respondent Groups

The *Career Education Professional Learning Needs Assessment* revealed several priorities consistently identified by career education teachers and career counsellors, school leaders, and system education leaders. While each group provided unique perspectives based on their roles and contexts, their responses highlighted shared concerns and aspirations for the future of career education in Alberta. The following paragraphs outline these common priorities, which together form a foundation for system-level improvement and targeted support.

- **Timely Access to Curriculum-Aligned Resources**

Across all respondent groups, there was a strong call for access to curriculum-aligned resources well in advance of implementation deadlines. Educators emphasized that having access to sample lesson plans, assessment tools, and program guides ahead of time would allow them to prepare thoughtfully, adapt materials to their contexts, and ensure alignment with curriculum outcomes. System leaders, in particular, stressed the importance of early access to facilitate planning across multiple schools and to coordinate resource distribution effectively. Teachers and school leaders echoed this need, highlighting that timely resources reduce last-minute preparation pressures and improve instructional quality.

- **Role-Specific, Embedded Professional Learning**

Respondents agreed that professional learning must be relevant to their specific roles and embedded within ongoing practice. Rather than one-time workshops, respondents preferred sustained learning opportunities that included coaching, mentorship, and collaborative planning. Career education teachers and counsellors requested targeted training that deepened their technical expertise and connected them with industry standards. One CTS teacher stated, "*Generic PD doesn't cut it, what we need is hands-on training that reflects the realities of our classrooms and connects us to industry best practices.*" School leaders emphasized leadership-focused PD on implementation

planning and resource allocation, while system leaders sought training on strategic oversight and program integration. This role-specific approach was seen as essential for building lasting capacity and fostering system-wide coherence.

- **Stronger Partnerships with Industry, Post-Secondary, and Community Organizations**

Partnerships emerged as a critical driver of high-quality career education. Respondents described the value of connecting students with authentic, real-world experiences through industry

tours, work placements, mentorship programs, and collaborative projects. One school leader stated, *"Without strong local and provincial partnerships, students' exposure to real-world opportunities is*



*limited, especially in rural and small schools."* Industry partners offer insights into current labour market needs, while post-secondary institutions provide pathways for continued learning and credentialing. However, respondents noted that building and sustaining these partnerships requires time, coordination, and system-level support. They recommended that professional associations and school authorities develop centralized tools and templates to help educators establish and maintain these relationships.

- **Dedicated Funding, Release Time, and Staffing**

Insufficient funding, lack of dedicated time for planning, and staffing shortages were consistent concerns across all roles. Career education programs, particularly those involving trades, CTS, or work-integrated learning, often require specialized equipment, consumable materials, and transportation, all of which add financial pressure. One system education leader noted, *"The quality of our programs shouldn't depend on whether a teacher can fundraise or find community donations."* Respondents pointed out that without dedicated budgets, programs risk becoming



unsustainable or inequitable, particularly in rural and remote areas. Additionally, limited release time for educators constrains their ability to develop new programming, engage with partners, and attend professional learning. Addressing these challenges will require both increased investment and structural changes to staffing and scheduling.

- **Equitable Access for Rural, Remote, and Underserved Communities**

Ensuring equitable access to career education was a priority shared by all groups. Respondents from rural and remote areas noted significant barriers, including transportation challenges, limited program offerings, and fewer opportunities for industry engagement. One school leader shared, "*We have students with incredible potential, but they can't participate in career fairs or work placements because the nearest opportunity is hours away.*" Indigenous students, newcomers, and other underserved groups were also identified as populations requiring targeted supports to ensure they have access to meaningful career exploration and skill development. Strategies to address these disparities include virtual programming options, regional hubs for specialized courses, culturally responsive curriculum materials, and dedicated funding to offset the additional costs of delivering programs in geographically or demographically challenging contexts.

In conclusion, these common priorities provide a collective voice of educators and leaders who are committed to equipping students with the skills, knowledge, and experiences necessary for success in an evolving world of work. As one system education leader summarized, "*We have the vision. What we need now are the resources, the time, and the coordinated leadership to make it happen.*" By addressing these shared priorities through coordinated leadership, sustained investment, and targeted professional learning, stakeholders can create a more equitable, future-ready career education system. Detailed findings, including role-specific perspectives and data analysis, can be found in the *Career Education Professional Learning Needs Assessment –Results Report*.

## Summary of Findings by Respondent Group

### Teachers and Career Counsellors

#### A. Key Needs & Priorities

- **Practical, ready-to-use teaching resources** – Respondents stressed the importance of resources that can be implemented immediately in the classroom, including lesson plans, project templates, and assessment tools that are curriculum-aligned and adaptable to different contexts.
- **Early access to curriculum documents** – Respondents emphasized the need to receive curriculum materials well in advance of implementation so they can prepare lessons, adapt content, and ensure alignment with program outcomes.
- **Sustainable funding for equipment, consumables, and program delivery** – Respondents noted that many CTS programs require ongoing investment in specialized tools, materials, and consumables, and that funding stability is essential to maintain program quality and equity.
- **Opportunities for collaboration with industry professionals, experienced CTS educators, and post-secondary partners** – Respondents highlighted the value of partnerships that bring real-world perspectives into classrooms and support student engagement in authentic career pathways.

#### B. Professional Learning Preferences

- **Role-specific, timely, and embedded in practice** – Respondents prefer professional learning that is directly relevant to their roles, delivered when it is most applicable, and integrated into their day-to-day practice.
- **Hands-on training in emerging trends such as AI and evolving labour market demands** – Respondents expressed strong interest in training that equips them with up-to-date knowledge and skills to prepare students for future workforce realities.



- **Participation in collaborative learning communities to share strategies and problem-solve** – Many respondents valued opportunities to engage with peers in sustained, collaborative settings where they can exchange ideas, address challenges, and co-develop innovative approaches to career education.

### C. Noted Barriers

- **Limited time for planning and collaboration** – A lack of dedicated time during the week often prevents the respondents from engaging in meaningful program development or professional learning activities.
- **Uneven access to professional learning, especially in rural areas** – Respondents reported disparities in the availability and accessibility of PD, with rural educators facing additional challenges related to travel, cost, and scheduling.



## School Leaders

### A. Key Needs & Priorities

- **Targeted professional learning in CTF, CTS, and CALM programming** – School leaders identified a pressing need for specialized PD that equips teachers with the skills and knowledge to deliver high-quality career education, particularly in these subject areas.
- **Capacity-building for educators** – School leaders emphasized the importance of building teacher expertise and confidence in career education, noting that well-prepared staff are critical to program success.
- **Access to current, curriculum-aligned resources** – Respondents stressed that high-quality, up-to-date resources are essential to ensure instruction remains relevant, engaging, and aligned with provincial expectations.
- **Support for Grades 7–9 career planning and financial literacy** – School leaders recognized these grades as a pivotal stage for career exploration and life skills, highlighting the need for structured programming and resources to guide students effectively.

### B. Systemic Challenges

- **Staffing shortages, scheduling conflicts, and transportation issues—particularly acute in rural and small schools** – Many schools leaders described facing logistical and human resource challenges that limit their ability to offer diverse and consistent career education opportunities.
- **Equity gaps for Indigenous students and diverse learners** – School leaders called for culturally responsive approaches and differentiated supports to ensure all students have equitable access to career education.

### C. Preferred Supports

- **Ongoing, embedded professional development (not one-time sessions)** – Respondents advocated for sustained PD models that allow for implementation over time and follow-up support.

- **Implementation planning, coaching, and collaborative networks** – School leaders valued opportunities to work with peers and coaches to troubleshoot issues, share strategies, and coordinate program rollouts.
- **Local and provincial partnerships with industry, post-secondary, and community organizations** – Partnerships were seen as key to expanding student access to authentic career experiences, though school leaders acknowledged that building and sustaining these connections requires dedicated time and resources.

## System Education Leaders

### A. Key Needs & Priorities

- **Early, clear communication from Alberta Education on curriculum expectations, timelines, and resources** – System leaders stressed that advance notice and clarity from the province are essential for strategic planning, budgeting, and staff preparation.
- **Targeted training, mentorship, and communities of practice—especially for teachers new to CTF/CTS** – There is a strong demand for tailored supports that accelerate teacher readiness and competence in delivering career education.
- **System-wide capacity building, including curriculum-aligned resource development and assessment models** – Respondents emphasized that sustainable change requires aligned resources, shared assessment practices, and coordinated planning across the system.

### B. Noted Barriers

- **Staffing shortages, geographic isolation, and timetabling constraints** – These factors were frequently cited as obstacles to implementing and sustaining robust career education programs, especially outside urban centres.

- **Lack of a consistent provincial framework for career education**
  - System education leaders noted that the absence of a unified framework results in inconsistent practices and inequities across school authorities.



### C. Advocacy & Vision

- **A clear, research-informed definition of career education that embeds it as a core system priority** – Respondents want career education recognized as an essential component of K–12 learning, supported by policy and funding commitments.
- **Alignment with the Teaching, Leadership, and Superintendent Leadership Quality Standards (TQS/LQS/SLQS)** – System education leaders stressed the need for career education planning and delivery to be connected to the province’s professional practice standards, ensuring coherence and accountability.

## Summary of Professional Learning Needs across Respondent Groups

The survey findings reveal clear and consistent priorities for professional learning across all respondent groups, underscoring the urgent need to strengthen the capacity of educators and system education leaders to deliver high-quality career education. Respondents identified both immediate and long-term needs, ranging from student-focused initiatives such as career planning and work-integrated learning to systemic supports like industry partnerships, curriculum-aligned resources, and targeted training in CTS/CTF and CALM programming. In addition to identifying priority topics, participants highlighted preferred delivery formats and the essential supports required to ensure professional learning is relevant, accessible, and sustainable. The following subsections outline the most urgent priorities, preferred formats, and necessary supports, providing a roadmap for designing impactful professional learning opportunities.

### Most Urgent (Top Priorities)

- **Student career planning and development** – Respondents consistently ranked career planning as a top priority, emphasizing the need for structured, student-centered approaches that guide learners from exploration to informed decision-making.
- **Industry partnerships** – Building and sustaining partnerships with local and provincial industry leaders was seen as essential to offering authentic, real-world experiences that connect classroom learning to labour market needs.
- **CTS/CTF resources and training** – Respondents expressed a strong demand for updated, curriculum-aligned teaching materials and targeted training to deliver high-quality *Career and Technology Studies* and *Career and Technology Foundations* programming.
- **Work-integrated learning opportunities (e.g., RAP, dual credit)** – There was broad support for expanding hands-on, experiential opportunities that allow students to gain skills, earn credentials, and explore career pathways while in high school.

- **Emerging labour market trends** – Respondents identified a need for ongoing professional learning that helps educators stay current with technological advances, industry changes, and evolving employment patterns, including the role of AI.

## Preferred Formats

- **In-person workshops** – Many respondents valued face-to-face learning for its ability to foster engagement, networking, and collaborative problem-solving.
- **Hands-on learning labs** – Practical, skills-based sessions were identified as an effective way to build teacher confidence and competence in technical areas.
- **Mentorship and coaching** – Respondents expressed strong interest in ongoing support from experienced peers, coaches, and industry professionals to help bridge the gap between theory and practice.
- **On-demand/online modules for flexibility** – Respondents recognized the value of accessible, self-paced learning options that accommodate diverse schedules and geographic locations.
- **Communities of practice** – Respondents saw collaborative learning networks as essential for sharing resources, addressing challenges, and sustaining momentum in program implementation.

## Identified Required Supports

- **Curriculum-aligned, ready-made teaching materials** – Respondents stressed the need for turnkey resources that align directly with learning outcomes and can be adapted for local contexts.
- **Financial investment in resources, technology, and consumables** – Adequate funding was identified as a prerequisite for program quality, especially in resource-intensive CTS disciplines.



- **Structured mentorship for non-CTS teachers** – Respondents recommended targeted support for educators entering CTS or career education roles without formal training in technical fields.
- **Streamlined credentialing pathways for teachers in technical fields** – Simplifying the process for obtaining qualifications in specialized subject areas was viewed as critical for addressing teacher shortages and expanding program offerings.



## Summary of Barriers and Enablers

The survey results point to a combination of systemic, contextual, and operational factors that influence the success of career education across Alberta. While several challenges create barriers to equitable access and implementation, respondents also identified key enabling factors that could help overcome these obstacles and strengthen career programming province-wide.

### Barriers

- **Geographic Isolation** – Rural and remote communities face long travel distances to industry sites, post-secondary institutions, and career events, making it difficult to provide consistent, hands-on career experiences for students. Without additional funding for transportation or alternative delivery models, these geographic constraints continue to limit opportunity.
- **Equity and Inclusion Gaps** – Newcomer, multilingual, Indigenous, and diverse learners often encounter career programming that does not reflect their cultural perspectives or linguistic needs. A lack of tailored resources and inclusive approaches can hinder engagement and limit access to meaningful career pathways.
- **Infrastructure and Equipment Limitations** – In many small or rural schools, outdated facilities and limited access to specialized equipment restrict the scope of *Career and Technology Studies* (CTS) and *Career and Technology Foundations* (CTF) programming. This reduces exposure to emerging fields and hands-on skill development opportunities.
- **Staffing Capacity and Sustainability** – Career education is often championed by a small number of highly committed educators. While effective in the short term, this reliance creates vulnerability when staff members leave or change roles. Without broader capacity-building, programs risk losing momentum or disappearing entirely.
- **Systemic Constraints** – Scheduling conflicts, rigid timetables, and provincial funding structures were identified as persistent challenges. These constraints often make it difficult to integrate career education into the regular timetable or to release teachers for professional learning.

## Enablers

- **Provincial Framework for Career Education** – Respondents called for a clearly defined, research-informed provincial framework that positions career education as a core element of K–12 learning. Such a framework would ensure alignment with the Teaching, Leadership, and Superintendent Leadership Quality Standards (TQS, LQS, SLQS) and provide consistent guidance for implementation across jurisdictions.
- **Industry and Community Partnerships** – Strong relationships with local businesses, industry associations, post-secondary institutions, and community organizations were seen as critical to expanding career-related opportunities for students. These partnerships can provide expertise, resources, and real-world learning experiences that schools cannot offer alone.
- **Shared Resources and Networks** – Collaborative networks of educators, system leaders, and industry partners can help address gaps in staffing, resources, and expertise. Sharing teaching materials, strategies, and implementation tools was identified as a cost-effective way to scale high-quality programming.
- **Flexible Professional Learning Models** – Offering a blend of in-person workshops, online modules, mentorship, and communities of practice increases accessibility for educators in diverse contexts. This flexibility can reduce barriers for rural teachers, new career education instructors, and those with limited release time.
- **Sustainable Funding Models** – Dedicated, predictable funding for equipment, consumables, transportation, and staffing support is essential for scaling and sustaining career education initiatives. Respondents emphasized that without stable funding streams, even the most innovative programs struggle to maintain quality and reach.

## Conclusion

The *2025 Career Education Professional Learning Needs* survey results clearly demonstrate a strong and unified commitment across educators, school leaders, and system education leaders to advancing career education in Alberta.

While each group identified unique priorities, there is a shared recognition that success hinges on timely access to curriculum, targeted and role-specific professional learning, robust partnerships, and sustainable funding and staffing models. Addressing these needs will require coordinated action from both The Consortium and CASS, leveraging their respective strengths to provide practical resources, advocate for systemic change, and foster collaborative networks.

By acting on these findings, Alberta's education community can ensure that all students, regardless of geography, background, or pathway are equipped with the skills, experiences, and confidence to thrive in their chosen futures.

