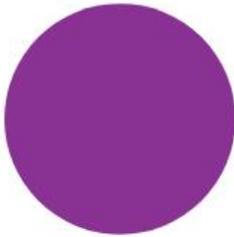
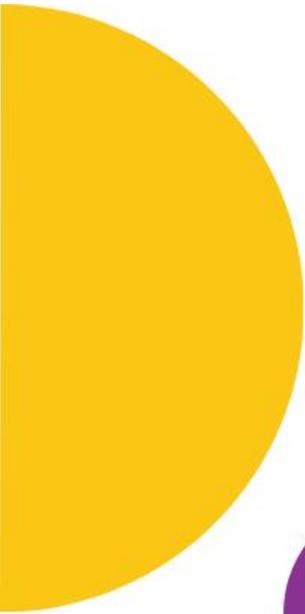


# Alberta Living Wage Network

Report

July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022



## Background

The **Alberta Living Wage Network** (Network) is made up of community organizations and municipalities with the goal of advancing a coordinated living wage movement in Alberta. The Network assists communities in their annual living wage calculation and provides certification to qualifying living wage employers.

## Impact

### Intended Results

*Increase knowledge and awareness of benefits through building a network, website, and communication materials*

- Since July 1, 2021, the Network has expanded considerably. The number of communities with representation in the Network has **increased by 67%** from 9 communities to 15 communities. The number of member organizations has **increased by 57%** from 14 members to 22 members. See a list of members [on our website](#).
- Network staff have redesigned the website, updated it with new living wage rates, added the new Living Wage Employer Program to it, and have regularly published blog posts. These activities were done in preparation for the launch of the Living Wage Employer Program on November 1, 2021.
  - In the 30 days following the launch, the website received **3,626 hits**. It is now receiving **more than 1,000 visits per week**.
  - Since July 1, 2021, Network staff published **20 blog posts** highlighting Living Wage Employers and improving public awareness and knowledge by discussing relevant issues related to living wage and poverty.
- Since July 1, 2021, Network staff have designed communications materials for Network members to use. Network staff created social media accounts and posted regularly.
  - In the 30 days following the November 1<sup>st</sup> launch, the Network's social media accounts gained **336 new followers**, with posts reaching **7,242 people**.
  - To date, the Network's social following has organically grown to **361** followers on Instagram, **242** followers on Twitter, **83** followers on LinkedIn, and **69** Facebook page likes.
- The Network has received a considerable amount of media coverage, with dozens of appearances and articles on TV, online, and on the radio. The following selection is just a fraction of the coverage received:
  - [“Growing number of Alberta businesses commit to living wage for employees.”](#) *Global News*, February 15, 2022.
  - [“Edmonton's living wage jumped by \\$1.54 an hour in 2 years: report.”](#) *CTV Edmonton*, November 2, 2021.
  - [“Alberta's minimum wage not a living wage: Vibrant Communities Calgary.”](#) *CTV Calgary*, November 1, 2021.
  - [“Red Deer closer to providing a living wage compared to other Alberta communities.”](#) *Red Deer Advocate*, December 22, 2021.
  - [“Paying a living wage key to Canada's post-COVID economic recovery.”](#) *Policy Note*, November 10, 2021.

*Increase buy-in through establishing a Living Wage Employer certification program with 50 employers certified in the first year after launch*

- Launched the Living Wage Employer Program on November 1, 2021. The program includes employer recognition through use of the Network's logo, window decals, social media posts, blog posts, and news releases.
- As of the end of June 2022, 8 months after launching, the Network has already **certified 63 employers** from across the province, far exceeding the goal of 50 in the first year. Staff from both Ontario's and BC's living wage programs advised the Network to set the goal no higher than 50 in the first year based on their own experience launching their employer programs, so the program uptake has surpassed expectations.
- The 63 certified Living Wage Employers have collectively committed to paying **more than 2,500 workers** a living wage, as well as requiring external service providers they have contracts with to pay a living wage.
- **Almost half** of certified Living Wage Employers are in industries known for having low-paid jobs. Of the 63 certified Living Wage Employers, 4 are cleaning companies, 6 are retail, 12 are nonprofits, and we have others in food service, grocery, home care, dog training, landscaping, and more. Many employers have committed to raising their workers' wages above their industry's standard.

*Facilitate calculations across the province*

- Calculated a living wage rate for **13 communities** across Alberta.
  - Collaborated with multiple communities to develop a standardized methodology to determine community expenses.
  - Hired a programmer to develop a web-based calculator to determine taxes and government benefits and calculate the living wage rate; it also calculates how much to credit an employer for the benefits they provide to determine if they're eligible for the Living Wage Employer Program.

*Coordinate with other networks across Canada*

- Network staff met with counterparts from BC and Ontario monthly to coordinate programs and collaborate on certifying nationwide employers.
- Network staff participated in a national Living Wage Community of Practice to discuss issues, support each other, and to keep the rest of the country updated on the Network's activities.

## Unexpected Results

- The Network did not expect to take less than 6 months to exceed the goal of certifying 50 employers in the first year after launch. This rapid growth means staff have been putting in more hours than expected to process applications and spotlight employers on social media. It also means staff will have to look at updating the [list of employers on the website](#) to allow for filtering by industry and/or community sooner than expected.

## Citizen Engagement

- The Network has engaged a volunteer who is passionate about the cause to support Network staff in advancing the Network's goals. The Network's chair is also a volunteer, and he is leading the coordinated living wage movement across the province.
- The Network and its staff have presented to interested citizens about how they can be living wage champions in their communities. This includes presenting to the Junior League of Calgary, participating in a panel discussion hosted by the Lethbridge Public Library (in partnership with SHENLA), speaking at the Canadian Rural and Remote Housing and Homelessness Symposium, and being guests on local radio stations.
- The Living Wage Employer Program is a program for employers to join, so in the design phase, the Network interviewed 6 employers and a business association to make sure the program was designed based on their perspectives.
- Engaging businesses, volunteers, and other interested citizens improves the community by helping to build a sustainable local economy. As these engaged citizens champion a living wage and influence more employers to pay a living wage, more low-income workers will see an increase in their pay. When low-income workers see an increase in pay, they tend to spend it in their communities (as opposed to high-income workers who get an increase in pay and are more likely to save/invest it or travel and spend it abroad). The increased spending in the community is good for local businesses. So engaging citizens in the living wage movement lifts the local economy and is an important part of a healthy, sustainable community.

## New Partnerships

- [B Lab](#): B Corp is a certification conferred by B Lab for businesses. It certifies a business's social and environmental performance, and one of the criteria is a living wage. The Network has partnered with B Lab so that they recognize Living Wage Employers certified by the Network as automatically fulfilling the living wage criteria in their accreditation.
- [NorQuest College](#): The Network has partnered with NorQuest College in their RFP for custodial services. For this contract, Network staff reviewed the payment schedules of the RFP applicants and confirmed to NorQuest College that they comply with the Network's living wage standards.
- [Be Local](#): The Network and Be Local are in talks to partner on a pilot project to provide business consulting support to help businesses figure out a way to pay a living wage.

## Impact of Grants

- The Network has existed for several year but without staff to move the work forward. Grants from Alberta Federation of Labour, Calgary Foundation, and Edmonton Community Foundation enabled the Network to hire a Coordinator to execute the Network's vision and a Social Media & Admin Contractor for support. These staff led the development of a standardized methodology for living wage, calculated the rates for communities across the province, and developed and launched the Living Wage Employer Program.

## Sustainability

### Sustained Impact

- The Network will calculate the living wage rates every year. To maintain their certification, employers will need to comply with the updated living wage rates within 6 months, making sure that their workers will continue to make a living wage. The Network will continue to recruit more employers to sustain and grow the impact.
- The Network is moving toward financial sustainability by charging the following fees:
  - Certified Living Wage Employers have agreed to pay an annual fee after their first year (see page 3 of the [Employer Guide](#) for the fee schedule).
  - Member organizations (nonprofits, municipalities, and individuals) who join the Network pay what they can afford for the first year, after which there is a set membership fee to be determined by the Network.

### Funding Sources (2021–2022)

- Calgary Foundation: \$40,000
- Edmonton Community Foundation: \$20,000
- Contributions from Network members: \$20,000

## Learning

### If We Could Do It Again...

- The Network's staff turnover was higher than expected. An Administrative Support Contractor left after 5 months, and a Communications Contractor left after 3 months. The Network has since hired one contractor to provide both administrative support and communications/social media support starting in February 2022. If we could do it again, we would have started with the one combined position with more hours rather than multiple positions with fewer hours each.
- Citizens have often contacted the Network to provide feedback. A common comment is that basing the living wage calculations on a family of four leaves out many other common household types. If we could do it again, we would have based our calculations on multiple family types rather than primarily a family of four.

### Most Significant Learning

- Each person, community, and employer is on their own journey, facing their own unique circumstances. We need to meet them where they are and provide support specific to their needs. This means basing the living wage calculations on more than just the family of four, providing communities with customized support (some need to focus on awareness while others on recruiting Living Wage Employers), and establishing a process for exceptions to eligibility criteria for employers seeking certification (e.g., they might not be able to pay the full living wage rate when their workers are on sleep shifts or on call).

## Financial Accounting

### Current Year and Budget for Next Year

	<u>Current Year Actuals</u> July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022	<u>Next Year Budget</u> July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023
	Actuals	Budget
<b>Revenue</b>		
Network Council Contribution	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 21,000.00
Calgary Foundation	40,000.00	40,000.00
Edmonton Community Foundation	20,000.00	40,000.00
Living Wage Employers		5,000.00
Surplus Carried Over		6,112.38
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 80,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 112,112.38</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Coordinator	\$ 48,546.57	\$ 60,000.00
Communications	17,231.63	25,000.00
Admin Support	4,612.50	8,000.00
Communications Support	2,345.20	2,000.00
Evaluation		5,000
Website Design	332.84	500.00
Calculator Ongoing Support	615.00	4,000.00
Employer Recognition		4,000.00
Out of Pocket		500.00
Social Media	84.95	1,000.00
Misc.	118.93	500.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 73,887.62</b>	<b>\$ 110,500.00</b>
<b>Surplus/Deficit</b>	<b>\$ 6,112.38</b>	<b>\$ 1,612.38</b>

- The Network covered all its expenses for the current year.
- Calgary Foundation’s grant and Edmonton Community Foundation’s grant were instrumental for the Network’s operation. They helped fund the hiring of staff to assist each community in calculating their living wage and to design, launch, and administer the Living Wage Employer Program.
- The Network’s growth and the greater-than-expected uptake of the Living Wage Employer Program will require more staff hours next year.
- The Network is moving toward financial sustainability by charging employers a nominal annual fee after their first year.

## Current Funders

- [Calgary Foundation](#)
- [Edmonton Community Foundation](#)
- [Member contributions](#)