



Alberta Teachers'
Retirement Fund Board



Business Plan 2014 - 15 to 2016 - 17

June 2014



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Table of Contents

The Corporation.....	1
Mission and Mandate.....	2
Key Corporate Values	3
Customer Service Statement	4
Strategic Directions 2014 to 2017	5
Action Plans	7
Result Measures	11
2014–15 Expenditure Profile	14

The Corporation

The Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund Board (ATRF) is an independent corporation established under the Teachers' Pension Plans Act. From its office in Edmonton, ATRF administers the Teachers' Pension Plan for all Alberta teachers employed in school jurisdictions and charter schools. ATRF also administers the Private School Teachers' Pension Plan for teachers employed by those private schools in Alberta that have elected to join the plan. The plans are defined benefit plans partially indexed to inflation.

ATRF is sponsored by the Government of Alberta and the plan members, who are represented by The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). The members of the Board, which include three nominated by the Government of Alberta and three nominated by the ATA, are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The plan sponsors are responsible for setting benefit and funding policies, which must be enacted through legislation.

The Board is the trustee and administrator of the plans and custodian of their assets. The Board is responsible for the corporate governance of ATRF and oversees the implementation of fiscal, investment and administrative policies by ATRF staff. Pension plan services are customarily provided to employees by their employers. ATRF is one of very few organizations that provides these services directly to employees, and does so for 94 employers.

The Teachers' Pension Plan covers approximately 76,000 members and 81 employers. There are no assets with respect to the Pre-September 1992 benefit period of the plan and all benefit payments are guaranteed, and are being funded on a "pay-as-you-go" basis, by the Government of Alberta. Benefits for service after August 1992 are being fully funded by active members and the Government of Alberta on a current basis. As of August 31, 2013, the Post-August 1992 benefit period of the plan had funding value of assets of \$8.071 billion and an overall shortfall of \$2.859 billion. This deficiency is being funded by additional contributions of active plan members and the Government of Alberta over the period ending in 2027.

The Private School Teachers' Pension Plan covers about 900 members and 12 employers. As of August 31, 2013, this plan had funding value of assets of \$39.5 million and an overall shortfall of \$9.1 million. This deficiency is being funded by additional contributions of active plan members and the private school employers over the period ending in 2027.

Working in partnership to secure your pension income

In pursuit of our mission, ATRF provides services to meet customer needs as they relate to:

- benefit and retirement income information
- pension and other benefit payments
- investment management
- collection and reconciliation of plan member data
- collection and reconciliation of contributions
- benefit, funding and investment policy assessment and development
- management of emerging issues

Key Corporate Values

1. High-Quality Service

- We are dedicated to providing high-quality service in everything we do.
- We listen to customers and request their input on services provided.
- We set measurable results for our services, and evaluate our progress towards achieving those results.

2. Accountability and Responsibility

- We are accountable and responsible for our actions and results.
- We are responsible for cost effective and efficient use of resources.
- We expect our customers to be accountable for clarifying their needs, accepting their responsibilities and providing feedback on service provided.

3. Integrity and Fairness

- We treat individuals and groups equitably and honestly.
- We pursue mutual respect and dignity in our dealings with others.
- We ensure our conduct is ethical and non-partisan.

4. Valuing Employees

- We value and respect employees.
- We value team work.
- We treat employees fairly and consider them for available opportunities.
- We support employee development and expect employees to be responsible for developing their skills and knowledge.
- We foster an environment where employees can balance their work and family responsibilities.

Customer Service Statement

We provide what you need the first time

- We listen to understand your needs
- We provide accurate and timely information and benefit payments
- We deliver value-added investment performance

Strategic Directions 2014 to 2017

ATRF will pursue the following strategic directions for the period ending in August 31, 2017:

1. Provide accurate and timely benefit payments and information to plan members in a cost-effective manner.

Strategies:

- accurate plan member and contribution data for timely benefit payments and plan information
- secure systems supporting effective and efficient delivery of benefit payments and information to plan members
- communication initiatives that assist plan members in making informed decisions and create a sense of value for the plans, with a focus on internet-based services

2. Achieve maximum, risk-controlled, cost-effective, long-term investment returns.

Strategies:

- a policy asset mix that maximizes long-term investment returns within the risk tolerance of the plans
- investment returns that meet the funding discount rate of the plans assumed in the funding valuations of the plans net of investment costs over the long term
- investment policies supporting long-term risk parameters and return objectives
- active investment strategies that enhance long-term investment returns
- investment systems supporting effective and efficient investment management, risk management and reporting requirements

3. Proactively manage issues and information to secure the pensions of members and enhance the value of the plan for plan members, plan sponsors and employers.

Strategies:

- effective partnerships and collaboration with the plan sponsors
- proactive provision of information and advice for the plan sponsors to assist them in setting benefit and funding policies
- information to plan sponsors on the current and future impacts of the funding agreement and funding policies under the respective plans
- positive business relationships with employers
- secure, effective and efficient systems supporting accurate and timely plan member and contribution data from employers

4. An organization that maximizes contribution of staff and the Board to meet customer needs.

Strategies:

- a team-oriented work environment that encourages employee involvement
- a work environment where employee learning and development is encouraged
- enhanced staff capability on an ongoing basis
- a compensation philosophy and structure aligned with strategic directions
- effective organizational policies, risk management and internal control processes
- appropriate governance best practices
- enhanced Board/Committee effectiveness on an ongoing basis

Action Plans

To implement the strategic directions outlined in this Business Plan, related strategies for each strategic direction will be pursued. In addition, specific action plans have been developed. These action plans highlight the key initiatives that are to be undertaken by ATRF over the three years commencing September 1, 2014.

1. Provide accurate and timely benefit payments and information to plan members in a cost-effective manner.

2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Through ongoing assessment of plan member services, identify and implement further cost-effective enhancements to member services and operational efficiency.		
Conduct a plan member survey, evaluate results and identify customer service enhancements.	Implement customer service enhancements identified from plan member survey in the prior year.	Conduct plan member and retired member surveys, evaluate results and identify customer service enhancements.
Implement additional web-based plan member information and retirement-income education tools and videos.		
	Review and update the plan member communication plan.	Commence action plans identified in plan member communication plan review.

2. Achieve maximum, risk-controlled, cost-effective, long-term investment returns.

2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
<p>Implement prudent investment management strategies supporting the policy asset mix of the fund and the planned growth in the various asset classes of the fund.</p> <p>Ongoing focus on growth in real estate, infrastructure and private equity asset classes.</p>		
<p>Implement required enhancements/refinements to mid and back-office investment functions, controls and reporting arising from new investments in the various asset classes of the fund.</p>		
<p>Implement enhanced investment risk management and reporting structure.</p>	<p>Ongoing measurement, reporting and management of investment risk.</p>	
		<p>Conduct a detailed asset-liability modelling study, and review and update investment policy and policy asset mix.</p> <p>Develop implementation plan for any changes to policy asset mix.</p>

3. Proactively manage issues and information to secure the pensions of members and enhance the value of the plan for plan members, plan sponsors and employers.

2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Provide plan sponsors proactive support and information regarding the funded status of the plans, and assist them in communicating to their stakeholders on funding and benefit issues.		
Assess impact of changes to pension plan standards legislation with plan sponsors and implement any required changes.	Implement changes related to revised legislation in respect of division of pensions on marriage breakdown and any changes to the plan rules that are agreed to by the plan sponsors.	
Review and update the Enterprise-Wide Risk Management Plan.		
Ongoing testing of the operational effectiveness of internal controls over financial reporting.		
Complete organizational framework for management of information security and privacy, and test related internal controls.		
Commence review and update of non-financial operational risk and control structures.	Ongoing review and update of non-financial operational risk and control structures.	Complete review and update of non-financial operational risk and control structures.
<p>Technology initiatives in support of business plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ develop long-term plans for required changes to support the future requirements of the system components of the benefit and information delivery system; ◆ implement office suite application software upgrade and commence PC server operating software upgrade; ◆ implement accounting/financial software upgrade; and ◆ complete implementation of PC desk top virtualization. 	<p>Technology initiatives in support of business plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ commence 3-year plan for major enhancements to the components of the benefit and information delivery systems; ◆ implement production and hot-site key computer systems upgrade; and ◆ implement PC desk top operating software upgrades and complete PC server operating software upgrade. 	<p>Technology initiatives in support of business plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ second year of major enhancements to the components of the benefit and information delivery systems; ◆ replace and integrate new workflow component of benefit and information delivery systems; and ◆ replace and integrate new plan member electronic document images component of benefit and information delivery systems.
Provide continued support to employers for data submission and information requests.		

4. An organization that maximizes contribution of the Board and staff to meet customer needs.

2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
<p>Expand the number of staff positions covered by the succession plan and implement related individual staff development plans.</p> <p>Assess effectiveness of enhancements to performance management and related human resource practices implemented in the prior two fiscal years.</p>	<p>Ongoing initiatives to enhance succession planning.</p>	
<p>Implement corporate training initiatives. Assess team and staff development needs and implement supporting plans.</p>		
<p>Implement Board action plans to continue to enhance ATRF corporate governance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ implement CEO transition plan; ◆ transitional activity related to expansion of the size of the Board by two additional members; ◆ continue to enhance the knowledge of the external members of the Investment Committee in key corporate areas related to the responsibilities of the Investment Committee; and ◆ implement identified Board member development plans. 	<p>Assess emerging issues relating to corporate governance and implement Board action plans to continue to enhance ATRF corporate governance.</p>	
<p>Set detailed plans for a bi-annual Board corporate governance and strategic planning session.</p>	<p>Conduct bi-annual Board corporate governance and strategic planning session.</p>	<p>Set detailed plans for a bi-annual Board corporate governance and strategic planning session.</p>

Result Measures

ATRF monitors and evaluates its progress on business plan initiatives to ensure that activities are on track and are meeting identified targets. Regular progress reports assess the status of each initiative. Performance benchmarks have been established for all major initiatives, and are used to determine whether ATRF is meeting its targets.

Results achieved are measured against established benchmarks in the following areas.

1. Response Time to Plan Member Requests

Benchmarks have been established for responding to various plan member service requests. These benchmarks are assessed annually to determine if they can be adjusted to further improve service to plan members. Reporting under the plan member benefit and information system and related workflow processes provides detailed benchmark tracking, and is used to identify areas where service can be enhanced.

Completion of a service process is dependent on the receipt of required information from an employer, another pension plan or the plan member. The following benchmarks are in place for major service processes, where all required documentation is complete.

Service Process	Benchmark
Ongoing pension payments	on the third last business day of the month
Pension options package for new retired members	within 7 days of application
Pension payment for new retired members	within 7 days
Pension estimate	within 7 days
Termination benefit	within 7 days
Death benefit	within 7 days
Purchase of service estimate	within 7 days
Urgent written or email inquiry	within 5 days
Non-urgent written or email inquiry	within 7 days
Telephone inquiry	within 1 day

ATRF also conducts plan member and retired member surveys that are used to evaluate the quality of service and benchmarks set, and to enhance customer service.

2. Rate of Return on Investments

The rate of return on investments is tracked monthly. Results are reported monthly to management, quarterly to the Investment Committee and the Board, and annually to plan members, the ATA and the Government of Alberta. The benchmarks for the current asset classes are listed in the following table.

Asset Category	Benchmark
Fixed Income	
▪ Canadian Universe Bonds	FTSE TMX Canada Universe Bond Index
▪ Canadian Long-Term Bonds	FTSE TMX Canada Long Term Government Bond Index
▪ Money-Market Securities	FTSE TMX Canada 30 Day Treasury Bill Index
Return Enhancing	
▪ Global Equities	Custom Benchmark ¹
▪ Canadian Equities	S&P/TSX Composite Index
▪ Private Equities	<u>Mature Portfolio</u> : Morgan Stanley Capital International World Index (net) plus 2% <u>Non-Mature Portfolio</u> : portfolio return (as the portfolio is in its early stages of implementation)
Inflation Sensitive	
▪ Real Estate	<u>Mature Portfolio</u> : Canadian Consumer Price Index plus 4.25% <u>Non-Mature Portfolio</u> : portfolio return (as the portfolio is in its early stages of implementation)
▪ Infrastructure	<u>Mature Portfolio</u> : Canadian Consumer Price Index plus 4.75% <u>Non-Mature Portfolio</u> : portfolio return (as the portfolio is in its early stages of implementation)
Absolute Return²	DEX 91-Day T-Bill Index plus 4.00%

¹ Global Equities benchmark is a custom benchmark comprised of the following components:

- 30% S&P/TSX Composite Index
- 50% Morgan Stanley Capital International World Index (net of withholding tax)
- 20% Morgan Stanley Capital International Emerging Markets Index (net of withholding tax)

² Absolute Return Assets have return streams that exhibit low or negligible correlations with traditional asset classes, primarily equities.

3. Cost Effectiveness

(a) Expenditures Compared to Budgets

ATRF is committed to cost-effective delivery of client services. Budgets are reviewed by the Finance and Planning Committee and approved by the Board. Results are reported regularly to the Board and annually to plan members, the ATA and the Government of Alberta.

(b) Investment Expenditures

Total investment expenditures for public-market investments are reported annually to the Investment Committee, the Board, plan members, the ATA and the Government of Alberta. These costs are compared annually to the average cost of a Canadian fund with an asset size and public-market asset mix similar to that of ATRF.

Acquisition and management fees for private equity, infrastructure and real estate investments, and commissions when trading securities are deducted in determining net investment returns.

(c) Plan Administration Expenses Compared to Those of Similar Pension Plans

ATRF plan administration costs are compared to those of other public sector pension plan organizations based on the number of active members and retired members. This comparison provides an indication of the relative plan administration costs, recognizing the limitations of comparing administration costs of different plans. These limitations arise due to the unique administrative structure of each plan, and the differing services and service levels adopted by the plans. The 2014-15 ATRF budget estimate represents a plan administration cost of about \$93 for each active plan member and retired member.

ATRF also participates in a benchmarking study with several other public sector pension plans. Under this study, core business functions are costed and service levels compared. This provides a detailed cost comparison for core business functions over time and between plans.

2014-15 Expenditure Profile

Effective September 1, 2009, major changes occurred to the funding and liability structure of the Teachers' Pension Plan. The invested assets of the plan now represent plan liabilities for pensionable service after August 1992, making the plan a very young plan with positive cash flow for the next 15 years. Assets under management have reached \$10 billion and are expected to exceed \$15 billion in five years.

The Board approved a new policy asset mix for the investment of the assets of the pension plan that required the establishment of new infrastructure and real estate asset classes, and an expansion of the private equity asset class. The biggest challenge to success in these illiquid asset classes for many investors has been the high cost associated with funds and fund-of-funds in the form of manager fees and carried interest. ATRF's asset growth and significant total allocation of 35% of fund assets to these asset classes provides it with the scale to reduce, but not eliminate its reliance on high-cost external fund-management structures, by enhancing its internal investment operation.

In 2010, management commenced the implementation of the long-term vision, strategy, process and resource requirements involved in building and maintaining a successful, cost-effective investment program for illiquid asset classes. A significant portion of the subsequent budget increases were related to the additional staff and advisory services required to continue to build and support the investment programs for infrastructure, real estate and private equity.

For the 2014-15 fiscal year, investment-operations-related costs represent approximately 90% of the overall 16% budget increase. Most of the increased investment-operations costs are a result of the significant growth of assets under management.

	2012-13 Actual	2013-14 Budget	2013-14 Forecast	2014-15 Budget
Operating Budget				
	\$38,607,000	\$41,679,000	\$40,680,000	\$48,159,300
Full-Time Equivalents				
	58.6	64.8	60.0	70.0

Note: Full-time equivalents represent the annual number of equivalent full-time staff positions.