



Wage Support Program for Early Childhood Educators (WSP-ECE)

Program Handbook

Education and Early Childhood Development



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Introduction

The Wage Support Program for Early Childhood Educators (WSP-ECE) is a wage enhancement program administered by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to support Operators of Early Learning and Childcare facilities with the recruitment and retention of trained educators.

The WSP-ECE aims to:

- Recognize Early Learning and Childcare as a profession
- Encourage educators to participate in higher level training
- Provide funding to increase the wages of qualified educators and reduce staff turnover

Program Eligibility

All operators of licenced early learning and childcare facilities in New Brunswick will be eligible to register for the WSP-ECE and enrol their qualifying educators. Program eligibility is based on an educator's level of training and qualifications.

WSP-ECE Program Eligibility	
Eligible for WSP-ECE	Not Eligible for WSP-ECE
Educators who contribute to the child-to-staff ratio and work in an educational capacity	Owners and shareholders of for-profit facilities
Early Learning and Childcare Home Operators	Child support workers (funded via the Enhanced Support Worker or Developmental Child Care programs)
Administrators who act as pedagogical leaders (must be recognized as such by EECD and listed as administrator on the licencing documentation)	Board Members
Relief Staff who are employed on a short term, temporary, or on-call basis, who is replacing the hours of an educator who cannot be present due to an authorized short or defined period of time such as, sick leave, appointments, vacation.	Volunteer
Relief Staff working with preschool age children for 10+ days/month (or 88+ hrs/month) are required to complete Entry Level training requirement to qualify for WSP-ECE.	

Program Registration

The WSP-ECE is administered through the Operator Portal. To register, operators must first login to the Operator Portal and consent to the Terms and Conditions for the WSP-ECE.

Once your facilities are enrolled in the program you will have the ability to:

- Enrol your qualifying educators
- Report the actual hours worked by all eligible employees on a monthly basis
- Review funding statements
- Renew program registration annually

Please refer to the Operator Portal User Guide for more information.

Annual Renewal

Operators will be required to renew their registration for the WSP-ECE annually prior to April 1st. In early March each year, operators will receive a reminder notification via the Operator Portal to review and accept the Terms and Conditions for the program.

NOTE: To ensure payment, and avoid any gaps in funding, the renewal process must be completed prior to April 1 each year.

Educator Enrolment

Operators are required to enrol all qualifying educators through the Operator Portal. Program enrolment for educators is a one-time occurrence.

Changes to an educator's enrolment details or re-activation of an educator previously enrolled in the program can be made via the Operator Portal.

Educators previously enrolled in the WSP-ECE program who have an existing Educator Profile, do not require an operator to go through the full enrolment process. The educator's information will be accessible via the Operator portal. **For more information please refer to the Operator Portal User guide.**

Educators will begin to receive the wage top-up after their enrolment has been approved. This means that you cannot claim hours worked for funding periods prior to the month of approval.

Only educators working at facilities registered for the WSP-ECE will qualify for funding.

Training Levels

Level 1: \$7.25/hour wage top-up:

- Certificate or Diploma in Early Childhood Education
- Related degree in Education or Early Childhood Development
- Unrelated degree

Entry Level: \$3.15/hour wage top-up:

- Introduction to Early Childhood Education (90 hours)
- School Age Educators (untrained)
- Relief Staff (untrained)

Mandatory training requirement under both Level 1 and Entry levels:

- New Brunswick Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Childcare, OR
- Curriculum éducatif des Services de garde francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick

Note: School Age educators are exempt from curriculum training. Coursework specific to School Age Educators is in development and will become requirement once available.

Conditional Training Levels

- Educators currently enrolled in the Quality Improvement Funding Support (QIFS) program as of June 1st, 2021 who do not meet the minimum training requirement will be conditionally approved until June 30th, 2022 to provide time to complete the training requirements to remain in the program. Proof of registration or enrolment in the Introduction to Early Childhood Education online course will be required at the time of enrolment into the WSP-ECE.

Untrained Educators Not Enrolled in a Post-Secondary Early Childhood Education (ECE) Program

The following steps will be required for all untrained educators not enrolled in a post-secondary ECE program to enrol in the WSP-ECE, including both new educators and those currently enrolled in the Quality Improvement Funding Support (QIFS) program:

- Operators must register all untrained educators for the Introduction to Early Childhood Education online course upon employment.
- Operators will receive a confirmation e-mail that the educator is registered for the online course, as well as the start date.
- Operators will enrol the educator into the WSP-ECE, uploading the confirmation e-mail as proof of registration. Educators will be conditionally approved for the WSP-ECE at the entry level rate of \$3.15/hr until they start the course.
- Once the Introduction to Early Childhood Education online course starts, the operator will receive a confirmation e-mail of enrolment and will upload it into the Operator Portal so the educator can remain in the WSP-ECE. The educator will be conditionally approved for a period 6 months. This will provide time for the educator to complete the online training.
- Once the educator has completed the course, the operator will receive an e-mail confirmation of completion and will upload it to the Operator Portal so that the educator can be permanently enrolled in the WSP-ECE.
- The educator will receive their certificate of completion within approx. 30 days and must provide it to the operator to upload into the Operator Portal.

NOTE: If the educator withdraws from the course or doesn't complete the required online course, the WSP-ECE funding will end immediately. The educator will be able to register again but will only receive the WSP-ECE funding upon receiving the completion certificate.

Educators Enrolled in a Post-Secondary ECE Program

For educators that are currently enrolled in the QIFS program and also enrolled in the one year or two-year ECE program in a post-secondary institution, the following will be required for conditional enrolment into the WSP-ECE:

- Operators must be required to provide proof of registration for educators who are currently enrolled in a recognized ECE course. The educator will be conditionally enrolled at the entry level rate of \$3.15/hr until June 30, 2022.
- If the educator isn't expected to complete their ECE training by June 30, 2022, documentation attesting to progress (such as completion of course credits, transcripts, etc) will be required to apply for a conditional extension of 6 months.
- Upon course completion, operators must submit a copy of the ECE Certificate or Diploma to permanently register the educator at the WSP-ECE Level 1 funding amount of \$7.25/hr.

NOTE: If the educator withdraws from the course or does not demonstrate progress in the completion of their ECE certificate/diploma, their WSP-ECE funding will end immediately. To continue to receive conditional entry level funding, the educator must register and complete the Introduction to Early Childhood Education online course.

Untrained School Age Only Educators

Untrained educators who work exclusively with school age children will receive WSP-ECE at the entry level top up amount. Specific training for this group of educators is in development.

Relief Staff

Untrained Relief Staff will be eligible for the WSP-ECE at the entry level wage top up, provided that their employment meets the following criteria:

- A relief educator is a person employed on a short term, temporary, or on-call basis, who is replacing the hours of an educator who cannot be present due to an authorized short or defined period of time such as, sick leave, appointments, or vacation.
- Relief Staff working with preschool age children for 10 days or more per month (for a maximum of 88 hours per month) are required to complete the Introduction to Early Childhood Course in order to maintain the Entry Level wage enhancement.

Note: Participation in the Introduction to Early Childhood Education Online course is encouraged for all untrained relief staff.

Training Documents

ECE certificates and diplomas completed **in or after June 2009**, at the following New Brunswick post-secondary institutions included curriculum training as part of their ECE course:

- NBCC
 - CCNB
 - Academy of Learning
 - Atlantic Business College (ABC)
 - Oulton College
 - The union of New Brunswick Indian Training Institute
 - Horizon College (closed September 2009)
- Untrained School Age Educators who work exclusively with School Age children qualify for Entry Level until specific training becomes available.
 - School Age educators are exempt from curriculum training (30-hour training).
 - A combination of training equivalency for the 90 hours course, such as 60 hours course + 30 hours curriculum training, is accepted.
 - All qualifying training documents must be issued from a recognized Canadian Post-Secondary institution.
 - International credentials must be accompanied by an International assessment of credentials provided by a recognized assessment agency. The following website has a list of recognized agencies: www.CICIC.ca
 - The WSP-ECE is not responsible for the expense incurred in obtaining the International Assessment of credentials and does not guaranty enrolment in WSP-ECE program should assessment not provide proof that program eligibility criteria are met.
 - The WSP-ECE program funding levels are determined based on proof of completion documents, such as certificates, diplomas and degrees, or official copies of these documents if the original document cannot be provided. Transcripts, certification from other jurisdictions and letters of course completion cannot be used as substitution for these required documents.
 - The documents must be submitted electronically through the Operator Portal.
 - Documents must be good quality, legible, and all four corners of the document must be visible.
 - Each documents must be submitted in its entirety (all pages included).
 - One digital upload per document (documents cannot be combined in one upload)
 - EECD reserves the right to request new documents if those presented are deemed of poor integrity or quality.

Program Responsibilities:

- Educators who enter the workforce after June 30th, 2021 are required to meet the minimum training requirements to be eligible for the program or provide proof of registration to obtain the minimum requirements. (This excludes educators working exclusively with School age children and Relief Staff).
- Educators are not eligible for hours worked outside of the eligibility criteria (For example: performing tasks outside of the child-to-staff ratio or in a non-educational capacity)
- Qualified educators who leave or are terminated are entitled to any wage top up earned for all hours worked, including severance pay, if eligible under the Employment Standards Act.
- The WSP-ECE funding must be provided over and above an educator's base salary and cannot be used to meet the New Brunswick minimum wage threshold.
- Operators must distribute the WSP-ECE funding to all qualified educators as an hourly wage increase and NOT as a bonus or lump sum payment.
- The funding cannot be used to replace an educator's mandatory increases due to minimum wage increases.
- Base salary can be no less than the absolute base salary prescribed under the Employment Standard Act, which, as of April 1, 2021, is \$11.75 per hour.
- Home Operators cannot claim hours for any period of time when the only children attending their facility are their own children.

Reporting

The WSP-ECE will provide funding based on actual hours worked as reported in the Operator Portal. Operators are responsible to report actual hours worked after the month is ended.

The following guidelines will apply:

- The regular reporting period will be open during the first 7 calendar days of the month, ending at midnight on the 7th day for operators to report the actual hours work for the previous month. This will ensure payment in a timely manner.
- A late submission reporting period will be open during the next 7 calendar days, ending at midnight on the 14th day of the month to be processed as a late payment.
- After the late submission period, reporting for the previous month will close.
- Hours submitted by Operators can only be applied to the educators who have been approved in the WSP-ECE during the month for which hours are being reported.

Note: Once the Reporting period is closed you are no longer able to report hours for that period and WSP-ECE will not process any claims for closed funding periods.

Operators must:

- Only submit actual hours worked for the current month of reporting, not estimated hours.
- Only submit hours worked for educators who were active during the month being reported for.
- When an employee works as an educator for part of the time, but otherwise has other tasks that do not qualify for WSP-ECE, you can only claim the hours worked performing educator duties (meeting child to staff ratio).

- Claim hours for paid public holidays, as stipulated in the New Brunswick Employment Standards: <https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/petlepft/PDF/es/FactSheets/PublicHolidaysVacation.pdf>
- Claim hours worked for individual educators working at full-time facilities to a maximum of 44 hours per week as stipulated in the New Brunswick Employment Standards. Any hours worked above the regular allowable work week is at the discretion of the operator and does not qualify for WSP-ECE funds.
- Claim hours worked for individual educators working exclusively at school age programs to a maximum of 30 hours per week.
- Claim hours worked to a maximum of 44 hours per week for Individual educators who share their time working under 2 or more facilities under one ownership if one of those facilities offers full-time care provided the educator meets minimum training eligibility.
- Claim hours worked to a maximum of 44 hours per week for individual educators working exclusively at school age programs during the summer break (end of June to End of August) if those facilities are approved for full-day operation during the summer months.

Operators must not claim hours for an educator's paid vacations or leaves as these are included in the 14% administrative funding provided for your essential Employer contributions (see Administrative funding section for more information).

WSP-ECE Funding Statements

Operators will have the ability to review monthly funding statements for previous and current months via the Operator Portal.

Funding Statement will provide the following information:

- A list of educators enrolled in the program
- Approved funding level for each educator
- Total number of hours reported for each educator
- Adjustments amounts and reasons
- Administrative funds provided (14%)
- Total payment amount

Educators will also be able to view their personal funding statements and payment history for current and past periods via the Educator Portal.

Administrative Funding

The department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) includes 14% of the total WSP-ECE funding amount to account for an operator's administrative responsibilities associated with the wage top-up. This funding is provided to cover all mandatory employer contributions for legislated benefits; as noted below:

- Employment Insurance (E.I.)
- Canada Pension Plan (C.P.P.)

- 4% or 6% for Vacation Pay
- Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission (WHSCC).

Accountability

Operators are accountable for all the funding provided as part of the WSP-ECE. As such, EECD reserves the right to audit the financial operations of an operator at any time to ensure that funds provided from the program are spent in accordance with the instructions outlined in this guide.

By agreeing to the terms and conditions of WSP-ECE, operators agree to participate and make records available in the event of any auditing of funding provided by WSP-ECE. If facilities do not cooperate, EECD may withhold or discontinue WSP-ECE funding. Funding not distributed in accordance with program criteria must be reimbursed when requested by EECD.

For accountability purposes, each Operators must have access to:

- Detailed financial records. (Bookkeeping, financial statements, bank records, etc.)
- Financial records must be filed separately by funding year. In accordance with Canada Revenue Agency requirements, maintain seven (7) years of records.

All operators have a responsibility to report to EECD any and all monies owed to the Receiver General of Canada Revenue Agency. The funds provided are not intended to relieve tax debt incurred by the operator but are also not safeguarded from Federal Revenue Agency garnish. Should WSP-ECE funding provided be impacted by a Federal Revenue Agency garnish, the operator is responsible to provide the portion of funding owed to educators in lieu of WSP-ECE.

Closing of an Operation

Upon closing all operations, incorporating under a new name, or selling all ELC licences under one operator, the operator will be able to request funding for hours completed during the last period of operations. The maximum total hours claimed will be pro-rated to the date of closure and cannot exceed the maximum allowable hours as prescribed under the Employment Standards Act.

When only some of the licences attached under an operator are being closed or sold, operators can claim hours for educators who are attached exclusively to those facilities for the last period of operation.

When an educator working at a closed facility is transferred to another “active” licence under the same ownership, the facility information under which the educator is actively working will need to be updated in the educator profile to allow the educator to continue qualifying for the WSP-ECE.

WSP-ECE Contact Information

For further information, please contact the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development:

- By phone at: 1-866-727-7437 (toll-free)
- By e-mail at: WSPECE-PSSPEG@gnb.ca

Appendix 1 - Transition to the WSP-ECE

Transitional Funding

Transition Funding is provided to support operators in the transition from advanced payments based on estimates to payments based on actuals.

- The last payment made from the QIFS program will be for the month of July 2021 and this will be the **Transitional Funding amount**. This amount will be based on estimated hours, without any quarterly adjustments.
- The Transitional Funding amount will then be divided in equal parts and applied as an adjustment to the WSP-ECE payments from August 2021 to April 2022.

QIFS Quarterly Adjustments

Actual hours as reported in the Quarterly Hours Report- 4 (February and March 2021) and the Quarterly Hours Report- 1 (April, May and June 2021) and will be adjusted as such:

- In late May 2021, operators will receive a Quarterly Hours Summary from the QIFS program for Q4. The summary will list:
 - the portion of the Quarter-4 adjustment being applied to their June QIFS funding (1/3 of the total adjustment value)
 - the remaining amount (2/3 of the total adjustment value)
- The remaining adjustment amount from the Quarterly Hours Report- 4 (Feb and March) will be applied to the August WSP-ECE funding amount.
- The adjustment amount from the Quarterly Hours Report- 1 (April to June) will be applied in its entirety to the September WSP-ECE funding amount.
- Should the monthly funding amount provided be of lesser value than the adjustment amount, the balance will be carried over until the adjustments are fully recovered.
- Operators who want to pay Quarterly Adjustment values in advance can contact EECD.

Other considerations:

- Any Operators who closes or sells their Early Learning and Childcare licence will be held accountable to refund any balance of Transitional and QIFS Quarterly Adjustment they may have accrued.
- Within 5 business days following the closing of operations, WSP-ECE will contact the operator to confirm the value of any outstanding adjustments.
- Operators are required to refund any outstanding balance to WSP-ECE within 30 days following confirmation by EECD.

Refunds can be returned to EECD by mailing a cheque or Money order to:

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Place 2000,
PO Box 6000, 250 Kings Street
Fredericton, NB, E3B 9M9

Cheques should be made payable to: Minister of Finance