



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

## Program Handbook

*Revised April 2024*

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 (EECD) 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 and relevant work experience.

WSP-ECE Program Eligibility	
Eligible for WSP-ECE	Not Eligible for WSP-ECE
<b>Educators</b> who contribute to the child-to-staff ratio and who work directly with children in an educational capacity for a full-time or part-time early learning and childcare centre or home and who is at least 16 years of age	Owners and shareholders of a "for-profit" business (for hours worked in their facility OR any other facility)  This includes operators of NB Early Learning and Child Care Homes who are owners, shareholders, or Directors of one or more Early Learning and Childcare centre.
Early Learning and Childcare Home Operators	Child Support Workers (funded via the Inclusion Support Worker or Developmental Child Care programs)
<b>Administrators</b> appointed by an operator to provide on-site supervision of the day-to-day activities of a facility (must be recognized as such by EECD and listed as administrator on the licencing documentation)	Office Administrative Officers

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 such as sick leave, appointments, vacation, etc.	Volunteer
Relief Staff working with preschool age children for 44+ hrs/reporting period are required to complete Entry Level training requirement to qualify for WSP-ECE	Board Members

## 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 educators
- Review funding statements for all processed Hours Reports
- 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 1<sup>st</sup>. Operators will receive a reminder notification via the Operator Portal to review and accept the Terms and Conditions of the program annually.

**NOTE: To ensure there are no 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.

Operators must submit Educator Applications through the Operator Portal at least five (5) business days before the Hours Report opens for the reporting period. Applications received later than five (5) business days may only be considered for review for the following reporting period.

Educators will begin to receive the wage top-up after their enrolment has been approved in the Operator Portal. This means that operators **cannot claim hours** worked during any periods **prior** to the reporting period the educator was approved in the Operator Portal.

Changes to the enrolment details of an active educator previously enrolled in the program can only be made via the Operator Portal. Re-activation of educator's profile in an **Inactive** status can be done by submitting a new application for the educator through the Operator Portal. Operator must ensure that the educator provides the same email address associated with inactive educator profile.

Educators previously enrolled in the WSP-ECE program who have an existing Educator Profile will only be required to provide consent for subsequent enrolment process. The educator's information will be accessible via the Educator Portal. **For more information, please refer to the Operator Portal User guide.**

**Only educators working at facilities registered for the WSP-ECE will qualify for funding.** When enrolling educators, operators must select all applicable licences the educator works any hours to ensure that the educators are able to report hours accurately.

## ECE Wage Grid

For information concerning the wage grid, please see the [ECE Wage Grid Guidelines](#)

## Training Levels

### Level 1

Designated facilities (0-5 years old):

Step 1: \$10.04/hour

Step 2: \$11.29/hour

Step 3: \$12.60/hour

School Age:

Step 1: \$7.49/hour

Step 2: \$8.74/hour

Step 3: \$10.05/hour

Non-designated facilities (0-5 years old): \$7.25/hour

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

### Entry Level

Designated facilities (0-5 years old):

Step 1: \$3.72/hour

Step 2: \$4.73/hour

Step 3: \$5.79/hour

School Age:

Step 1: \$1.17/hour

Step 2: \$2.18/hour

Step 3: \$3.24/hour

Non-designated facilities (0-5 years old): \$3.15/hour

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

**Note:** The operator minimum contribution to the salary of an educator working in a designated facility is \$12.75/hour. The wage top-up for designated facilities is inclusive of the province's \$2.55/hour to offset the minimum wage increases. Operators of non-designated (0-5 years old) and school age facilities are responsible for providing the provincial minimum wage to their educators.

## 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 and untrained relief staff are exempt from curriculum training.

### Untrained staff requirements:

- Untrained Relief Staff are not required to complete the 90-hours *Introduction to Early Childhood Education* online training. Untrained Relief Staff working more than 44 hours per reporting period are considered educators and will be required to complete the 90-hour online course to qualify for the WSP-ECE.
- Untrained School Age Educators who work exclusively with school age children are not required to complete the 90-hours training. Any untrained School Age Educators also working with children 0 to 5 years are required to complete the 90-hours online course.

### Conditional Training Levels

- Proof of registration or enrolment in the *Introduction to Early Childhood Education* online course or approved post-secondary training 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:

- 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 Registration Confirmation Notification e-mail as proof of registration. Educators will be conditionally approved for the WSP-ECE at Entry Level until they start the course.

- Two to three weeks before the course start date, the operator will receive a Course Start Date Notification 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 of seven (7) months. This will provide time for the educator to complete the online training.
- Once the educator has completed the course, the operator will receive a Course Completion Notification e-mail confirmation of completion, followed by a second email with the Certificate of Completion in PDF format. This Certificate is to be uploaded 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 approximately 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 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 are required to provide confirmation of enrolment for educators who are currently enrolled in a recognized ECE course. The educator will be conditionally enrolled at the Entry Level until the expected end date of the ECE program. The expected end date must be specified on the Confirmation of Enrolment letter.
- 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.
- Educators who are enrolled in the two-year ECE program from a recognized post-secondary institution in New Brunswick will qualify for the Level 1 top-up after successfully completing their 1st year of the 2-year course. To do so they must submit a letter to WSP-ECE issued by the post-secondary institution clearly indicating:
  - Name of program
  - start date
  - date of successful completion of 1st year of program
  - projected program completion (completion of 2nd year)



**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 successfully 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.

### **Untrained 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 Staff 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 such as sick leave, appointments, or vacation.
- Relief Staff working with preschool age children for 5 days or more per reporting period (for a maximum of 44 hours per reporting period) are required to complete the *Introduction to Early Childhood Education* online course to maintain the Entry Level wage enhancement.

**Note:** Participation in the *Introduction to Early Childhood Education* online course is encouraged for all School Age Only and 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
- Eastern College (eligible from December 2023)
- Academy of Learning

- Atlantic Business College (ABC) (eligible from April 2009)
  - Oulton College (eligible from April 2009)
  - The New Brunswick Indigenous Community College (formerly, The Union of New Brunswick Indian Training Institute)
  - Horizon College (closed September 2009)
- 
- A combination of training equivalency for the 90-hours course, such as 60-hours course and 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](http://www.CICIC.ca)
  - The WSP-ECE is not responsible for the expenses incurred in obtaining the international assessment of credentials and does not guarantee enrolment in WSP-ECE program should the 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 letter of completion 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 document 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 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, if eligible under the *Employment Standards Act*.
- The operator minimum contribution to the salary of Early Childhood Educators working with children 0-5 years within a Designated Facility is currently set at \$12,75 per hour, equivalent to the amount of the minimum wage before April 1, 2023.
- The WSP-ECE funding provided to operators must be provided over and above an educator's base salary.
- WSP-ECE funding cannot be used to meet the New Brunswick minimum wage threshold, with exception of the \$2.55/hour provided to designated facilities to offset the minimum wage of April 1, 2024..
- 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.
- Only the base hourly wage is to be reported in the portal and should not include the WSP hourly wage top-up.
- Home operators cannot claim hours for any period when the only children attending their facility are their own children.
- WSP-ECE funding is not provided for an educator prior to approval in the WSP-ECE. The operator is solely responsible for all WSP-ECE funding paid before an educator is approved in the Operator Portal. EECD will not provide reimbursement to operators for WSP-ECE funding provided to educators prior to approval in the program.

## Reporting

**The WSP-ECE funding is provided based on actual hours worked as reported in the Operator Portal. Operators are responsible to report actual hours worked twice monthly.**

The following guidelines will apply:

- Operators must report actual hours worked twice monthly in two reporting periods
  - The first reporting period is from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month

- The second reporting period is from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the last day of the month
- Each **Reporting Period** will be opened for seven (7) calendar days (including weekends and holidays).
  - The first **Reporting Period** will be open in the portal from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> of each month.
  - The second reporting period will be open in the portal from the last day of the month to the 6<sup>th</sup> day of the following month.
- Once the reporting period ends, the **Hours Reports** for that period will be closed and the operator will no longer be able to submit hours for that period.
- The payment process will begin within one business day following the report submission. This ensures payments are received within 3-4 business days.
- Educators must be approved in WSP-ECE prior to the last day of a reporting period to qualify for wage top-up for hours submitted by the operator. There will be no retroactive payment for WSP-ECE hours not claimed during the reporting period. For example, to be eligible for hours for the first reporting period (1-15<sup>th</sup> of the month), educators must be approved in the Portal by the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month.
- Operators must ensure that all educators' profile are up to date before the 15<sup>th</sup> and the last day of every month to ensure they are included in the hours report. Requests for changes to educators' profiles approved after the Hours Reports opens will not apply to prior funding periods.

**Note:** Once the Reporting period is closed Operators are no longer able to report hours for that period. Payments will not be processed after a funding period has closed.

Operators must:

- Only submit actual hours worked for the current reporting period, not estimated hours.
- Only submit hours worked for educators who were active during the reporting period.
- 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 by New Brunswick's Employment Standards: <https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/petl-epft/PDF/es/FactSheets/PublicHolidaysVacation.pdf>

The eight paid public holidays in New Brunswick are:

- |                  |                     |
|------------------|---------------------|
| ○ New Year's Day | ○ New Brunswick Day |
| ○ Family Day     | ○ Labour Day        |
| ○ Good Friday    | ○ Remembrance Day   |
| ○ Canada Day     | ○ Christmas Day     |

- Claim hours worked for individual educators working at full-time facilities to a maximum of 44 hours per week (8.8 hours per day) as stipulated by New Brunswick's 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. For example, if there are 11 working days in a reporting period, the operator of a full-time facility can only claim up to the maximum of 96.8 hours (11 working days x 8.8 hours/day) for that period.
- Claim hours worked for individual educators working exclusively at school age programs to a maximum of 30 hours per week (6 hours per day). For example, if there are 11 working days in a reporting period, the operator of a part-time facility can only claim up to the maximum of 66 hours (11 working days x 6 hours/day) for that period.
- Operators may claim the minimum number of hours required to pay an employee who has been asked to report to work as per the *Employment Standards Act*.
- 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.
- Claim hours worked to a maximum of 30 hours per week for individual educators working exclusively at school age programs during school closures including March Break and December holiday period.
- Operators cannot claim hours throughout the period when the facility is on hold.

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 funding statements for previous and current periods via the Operator Portal.

Funding Statements 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
- Adjustment 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
- WorkSafeNB

## 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 operator 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 also are 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 by 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: 1-833-221-9339 (toll-free)
- By e-mail at: [WSPECE-PSSPEG@gnb.ca](mailto:WSPECE-PSSPEG@gnb.ca)