



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Early Learning and Child Care Minor Infrastructure Program

Program Guidelines
2024-25




NOVA SCOTIA

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Overview

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) Minor Infrastructure Program provides funding for the creation of not-for-profit child care spaces. Entities with projects approved are eligible for up to \$1M (based on a maximum of \$20,000 per space towards eligible project costs, including expenses related to project design, project management, and legal fees.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible, applicants must fully demonstrate that their proposed project meets the following criteria:

- A. **Eligible entities:** The following entities are eligible to apply under the Minor Infrastructure Program:
- The 13 First Nation communities in Nova Scotia
 - Registered non-profit or charitable organizations
 - Municipalities or organizations wholly owned by a municipality
 - Universities or Nova Scotia Community College

Applications will be accepted from entities who intend to become not-for-profit and operate licensed child care. Projects may be approved on the condition that the entity becomes a not-for-profit organization and has been approved to operate licensed child care. Contact ECDSInfrastructure@novascotia.ca for more information on the process to become a licensed child care provider.

- B. **Financial feasibility:** Applicants must be able to demonstrate their project will be completed within the total available funding amount of \$1M (based on a maximum of \$20,000 per space) including expenses related to project design, project management, and legal fees. Projects must include quotes from reputable contractors and/or suppliers. The application package must include a completed **Schedule A and Proposed Operating Budget** to demonstrate financial soundness.

EECD may consider projects above the \$1M funding cap on a case-by-case basis, subject to budget availability. Project must still be within the \$20,000/space threshold and meet all other program requirements (such as one year time frame).

- C. **Community need:** Applications must be for projects located in Nova Scotia communities with a demonstrated lack of child care to create full-time, infant, toddler, and pre-school spaces, with a priority for projects serving diverse and/or marginalized populations.

- D. **Readiness to proceed:** Approved projects must be completed within one (1) year of approval. Applications must include a timeline for project completion. Projects will be assessed based on their timeline relative to the number of spaces created.
- E. **Operational viability:** Projects must demonstrate a plan for ongoing operational viability with funding provided by fees collected from parents/guardians with children enrolled in the program, and regular grant funding provided by the province. The application package must include a completed **Proposed Operating Budget** to demonstrate the proposed operating budget for whole centre operations. Existing providers must provide two (2) years of financial statements (including the statement of financial position/balance sheet and statement of operations/income statement) for the site and any satellite sites.
- F. Grant recipients for approved projects will be required to enter into a formal agreement with EECD committing to operate the facility as a child care centre for the minimum commitment of ten (10) years. If the child care centre ceases to operate within the commitment period, EECD may require, in its sole discretion, full or partial repayment of the original grant by the original applicant. For leasehold properties, grant recipients are responsible for ensuring that their commercial lease protects their tenancy for the duration of the commitment period.

Eligible Project Costs

Eligible project costs are reasonable direct costs which are necessary for the construction and completion of the project, and which are incurred and paid by the applicant, including design fees, site surveys and assessments.

Eligible project costs include:

- Construction materials and labour costs
- Fixtures, fittings, equipment and fit-up costs (ex., tables, chairs, cupboards, appliances, cots)
- Project design costs (ex., architecture, floor plans, project management, legal fees secured from third party contractors) not to exceed 10 % of project value.
- Operating costs relating to creation of child care spaces such as deposit, lease agreement during construction, and staffing costs required for the child care space set up.

Eligible project costs **do not** include costs related to:

- Property acquisition or construction work undertaken prior to notice of grant approval;
- Portable rental costs, or other temporary location costs that do not create stable child care spaces;
- Staffing costs of existing child care centre operations;
- Project financing, including interest.

Application and Approval Process

Applications will be reviewed as received and those that meet all eligibility criteria may be approved for funding.

EECD staff are available to answer questions and provide assistance to anyone interested in submitting a project for consideration under the Minor Infrastructure Program. Existing licensed child care providers are encouraged to discuss their projects with their Licensing Officer and Early Childhood Development Consultant prior to submitting an application.

Financial support is available to assist applicants with the completion of **Schedule A and Proposed Operating Budget**. For more information, please contact ECDSInfrastructure@novascotia.ca.

Step 1: Completing the Minor Infrastructure Program Application Package

An application package must include:

1. **Minor Infrastructure Program Application:** A complete application must be submitted which demonstrates how the project proponent meets program eligibility criteria.
2. **Schedule A**
 - **Appendix A - Project Description**
 - **Appendix B - Part A: Cost Estimate**
 - **Appendix C - Project Status Update**
3. **Proposed Operating Budget**
 - An operating budget form including sign off from the Board of Directors (or appropriate signing authority) authorizing the budget.
4. **Supporting documentation** as referenced in the Application and Appendices, including but not limited to:
 - Written confirmation of funding sources, including private donations or services in kind.
 - Quotes/estimates relating to the work to be completed.
 - Zoning permit(s) (where applicable).
 - Building designs/floor plans
 - Written approval from property owner (landlord, municipality, RCE/CSAP)

Step 2: Submitting your Application Package

Applications must be completed electronically and submitted with all supporting documentation via Minor Infrastructure Program Application Form.

Application Link: <https://surveys.novascotia.ca/MIP#>

Incomplete applications **will be returned** with instructions on what information is required to be provided within 30 business days. If the required information is not supplied within 30 business days, the application will be considered withdrawn.

Step 3: EECD Review and Assessment

An assessment team will review applications as received. Projects that meet program eligibility criteria may be recommended for approval.

Funding for this program is made possible through the *Canada-Nova Scotia Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement*, is provided at the discretion of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and is subject to budget availability.

Step 4: Decision

Applicants will be notified regarding decision/next steps for their projects **within 30 business days** from submission of the complete application package. Applicants who are not approved will be notified of the reasons why and may choose to submit an application for a new project.

A signed **Minor Infrastructure Program Agreement** and **Complete Schedule A** will be required before a project can commence.

Reporting Requirements and Funding Disbursements Process

Upon agreement signing, the applicant will be advanced up to 20% of the total approved amount to support required cashflow.

Subsequent disbursements will be based on the accomplishment of associated milestones identified in **Appendix C**.

Applicants are required to submit **Appendix D - Claim Form**, along with all supporting documentation, monthly for the duration of their project. Funds for eligible project costs will be disbursed within 10 business days of receiving **Appendix D**.

The Project Manager must meet monthly with the EECD Program Lead to provide progress updates.

Facility Licensing Process

EECD Licensing Services will inform applicants of all required licensing documentation. Applicants will be provided with the **Guidelines for Licensees Approved for Space Expansion** by the licensing services team which details licensing and program requirements. Once the project reaches substantial completion, a Licensing Officer will complete the licensing process.

A license may be issued after the facility receives its final occupancy permit, has met Fire and Public Health inspections, and has met all regulated licensing requirements for child care.

Project Close-Out

Within 30 business days of project completion, all outstanding claims and reports must be provided to EECD. EECD will complete a reconciliation of all funding and invoices and advise in writing if any amounts are outstanding. As per the Minor Infrastructure Program Agreement, the applicant is required to retain all records for future auditing purposes.