

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE CIRCULAR

Date: January 20, 2025

CIRCULAR NUMBER: ELCC-2025-01

To: All licensed non-profit centres and nursery schools and licensed family/group child care homes

Subject: Outdoor Early Childhood Education Grant

Effective Date: January 20, 2025

Type:	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All Facilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Action Required
	<input type="checkbox"/> Procedure	<input type="checkbox"/> Centres	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Only
	<input type="checkbox"/> Licensing	<input type="checkbox"/> Nursery Schools	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Financial	<input type="checkbox"/> Family/Group Homes	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Subsidy		

This circular is to provide information about a one-time Outdoor Early Education Grant for licensed non-profit child care centres and nursery schools and licensed home-based facilities that offer care to infant and/or preschool children.

Manitoba and Canada recognize value of incorporating nature education into the daily curriculum for young children. Investing in quality outdoor play experiences fosters healthy child development that benefits children, families, educators and communities.

Under the 2021-2025 [Canada-Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care \(Bilateral\) Agreement](#), Manitoba and Canada are providing a total funding contribution of \$2M to support a one-time Outdoor Early Childhood Education Grant. This grant will provide an opportunity for non-profit early learning and child care (ELCC) facilities to promote high quality outdoor play experiences for young children aged 0 to 6.

The main goals of the grant are to:

- Incorporate outdoor education into children's daily curriculum
- Provide increased opportunity to enhance children's learning and develop a deeper understanding of self through outdoor education
- Foster authentic connection with the land by incorporating First Nations, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, traditional values, and knowledge

To achieve these goals, the Outdoor Early Childhood Education Grant aims to fund projects under three streams. These streams support components that feedback from the ELCC sector and current research had identified as critical to promoting outdoor learning:

- 1. Professional Learning** – To support participation in professional learning and training opportunities with a pedagogical focus on outdoor and land-based approaches.

Funding includes registration fees for conferences, courses, seminars, and workshops and the cost of substitute/s, allowing educators/providers to attend said training.

Potential learning opportunities may be available from, but are not limited to, the following organizations:

- [Forest and Nature School Practitioners Course - Child and Nature Alliance of Canada](#)
- [Fort Whyte Alive](#)
- [Outdoor Play Canada](#)
- [Take Me Outside](#)

2. Outdoor Space Enhancement – To improve the facility’s outdoor space and/or infrastructure, to encourage outdoor exploration, support young children’s development and engagement, increase accessibility, and incorporate the unique benefits that playing outdoors could offer. Enhancements and renovations should continue to align with existing codes, regulations, child care design guidelines, and leasehold agreements.

Funding includes, but is not limited to:

- Installation of outdoor play equipment or infrastructure
- Major repairs or maintenance for aging outdoor play facilities
- Renovations to improve or increase accessibility

NOTE: *For home-based providers, only 50 per cent of individual project costs can be claimed for investments to the home that improve shared spaces, which are spaces used by the home when the children are not present. This includes, but is not limited to, fencing, paving, walls, gates, patios and sod.*

3. Materials and Equipment – To provide the necessary materials and equipment to enable children and staff to participate in regular and repeated outdoor play, across the seasons, in all weather, and for extended periods of time. Funding may also be used to encourage family and community involvement in enriching outdoor play practices and pedagogies.

Examples of eligible purchases/projects include, but are not limited to:

- Outdoor gear lending library for children and staff – e.g. sets of outdoor clothing and footwear readily available to individuals who may need them
- Nature backpacks
- Wagons
- Pop-up greenery or community gardens

Grant Amount

The maximum available per facility is up to **\$2,500** for licensed family/group child care homes and up to **\$25,000** for licensed non-profit child care centres and nursery schools that provide services, whether exclusively or partially, to infant and preschool children.

Eligibility and Selection Criteria

Mandatory technical requirements for facilities include:

- Provision of care to infant and/or preschool children – Licensed family/group child care homes and licensed non-profit centres and nursery schools
- An average minimum utilization rate of 80% of licensed spaces
- Good standing with respect to other granting programs (e.g. Quality Enhancement Grants, Child Care Sustainability Trust, etc.)

Prioritization criteria include:

- Projects supporting one or more of the initiative's main goals of:
 - Incorporating outdoor education into children's daily curriculum
 - Provide increased opportunity to enhance children's learning and develop a deeper understanding of self through outdoor education
 - Foster authentic connection with the land by incorporating First Nations, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, traditional values, and knowledge
- Projects that address health and safety concerns
- Program and community impact (e.g. number of educators to receive training, number of infant/preschool children benefitting from the project, barriers to outdoor play being addressed, etc.)

Proposed projects should only include expenditures not previously covered under other grants. Eligible costs must be purchased or procured between **April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026**.

This grant funding is merit and application-based and dependent on availability of funding. Eligibility, prioritization criteria and project outcomes will be considered in the application review process.

Application Instructions and Assessment

Child care facilities must submit:

- A completed application form. Incomplete and late applications will not be considered.
- A clear description of the project and the facility
- A breakdown of estimated costs and/or quotations (if applicable/feasible)

Child care facilities may submit one application per facility number and may include more than one project stream in the application.

Application deadline: February 14, 2025

Apply online at: [Outdoor Early Childhood Education Grant Application](#)

** Expected processing time is 4-6 weeks from the closing date.*

Terms and Conditions

In accepting the Outdoor Early Childhood Education Grant, the Board of Directors and management of the child care facility or the license holder/s agree to spend the funding according to the grant's main goals and criteria. Facilities are also expected to adhere to

their organizational policies, bylaws, and exercise due diligence with any capital or leasehold improvements.

All grant funding must be used toward eligible expenses by March 31, 2026.

With the [Bilateral Agreement](#) serving as a mechanism to support initiatives that have long term impacts on the workforce and the development of programs and services, facilities receiving the grant must be committed to remaining open and operational for at least two years following the grant's eligibility period of March 31, 2026 (i.e. until March 31, 2028).

Recipients unable to meet the above-mentioned terms and conditions may be asked to repay the funds received under the Outdoor Early Childhood Education Grant.

Reporting Requirements

Grant recipients will be required to:

- Spend all funds by March 31, 2026.
- Provide regular project status updates—frequency to be stipulated by the department.
- Submit a final report outlining grant expenditure and project impact and activity by April 30, 2026. The reporting template will be provided by the department to successful grant applicants.
- Agree to keep a record of what was purchased along with all receipts.
- Authorize the Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning to collect information and documentation considered necessary:
 - To ensure projects are progressing in a timely manner,
 - To verify funds have been used to support its intended purpose and ensure accountability for provincial and federal funding, and
 - For maintaining and analyzing statistical information as may be required by Manitoba and/or Canada.

For additional information review the ELCC2025-01- Frequently Asked Questions- Outdoor Early Childhood Education Grant or visit the department website at www.manitoba.ca/education/childcare/centres_homeproviders/providers_resources/grants.html.

If you have further questions about the Outdoor Early Childhood Education Grant, email ELCC-Quality@gov.mb.ca with the subject line “**Outdoor Early Childhood Education Grant**”