

Early Childhood Educator Recruit-Back Incentive Webinar

Wednesday, December 10, 2025

00:03

Jason Booth

Hi, good afternoon. My name is Jason Booth with Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Division. Thank you for joining us for this afternoon's webinar, Early Childhood Educator Recruit-Back Incentive.

This webinar will be presented by Andrew Dvorak, Senior Policy Analyst with ELCC's Workforce Development Unit.

Following the formal presentation, we will have time for questions, which you are welcome to submit via the chat throughout the presentation. We will try to answer as many questions as we can, which will be read out by Jessica Brosch, Child Care Coordinator with ELCC.

We will be documenting all of the questions that are sent to ensure that even questions that are not answered live will be reviewed and considered. And as a reminder, please limit your questions to the matter at hand.

00:53

Jason Booth

I will read a brief land acknowledgement and then turn things over to Andrew for this afternoon's agenda.

We recognize that Manitoba is on Treaty 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10 territories, and the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabe, the Anishinaewuck, Dakota Ayote, Denisuline, the Ninawak, and Nahotawoc peoples. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the homeland of the Red River Metis.

We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are ancestral lands of the Inuit.

We respect the spirit and intent of treaties and treaty-making, and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit, and Metis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation, and collaboration.

And I will turn things over to Andrew for this afternoon's agenda.

01:45

Andrew Dvorak

ELCC Host: Great, thank you, Jason, for introing that. So the agenda for today's webinar will cover some background about the recruitment incentive, a broad overview, incentive guidelines, information for directors and license holders with employees that are incentive applicants, some frequently asked questions and contact information, and then, as Jason said, we will open up the floor for some questions from chat.

02:11

Andrew Dvorak

Under the Canada-Manitoba Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, Manitoba is committed to improving access to affordable, quality early learning and childcare, and supporting the recruitment and retention and growth of the ELCC workforce.

The ECE Recruit Back Incentive is part of Manitoba's broader workforce strategy to support the growth of the sector and respond to current workforce shortages.

02:39

Andrew Dvorak

On November 25th, 2025, Early Learning and Child Care announced the launch of the ECE Recruit-Back Incentive. The incentive provides \$5,000 paid in two installments to trained individuals who return to work in a licensed, non-profit center or licensed home-based setting.

The incentive will be applied retroactively to June 1st, 2025. This means that individuals who meet all eligibility criteria, which we'll outline in the next slides, and begin working on or after June 1st, are eligible to receive funding through the incentive.

The application window for the ECE Recruit-Back Incentive will remain open until January 1st, 2027.

And funding for the Recruit-Back Incentive is provided under the Canada-Manitoba Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement.

03:27

Andrew Dvorak

As per the eligibility criteria, the incentive is available for ECE IIs and ECE IIIs that have not worked in a licensed non-profit curricular learning and childcare center, or licensed home-based setting in Manitoba for at least two consecutive years.

And are committed to returning, or have returned, to a full-time position at a licensed nonprofit center or licensed home in Manitoba on or after June 1st, 2025.

Applicants must be currently classified as an ECE II or ECE III in good standing in Manitoba, they must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident, and they must be committed to working at least two consecutive years in a licensed nonprofit center or licensed home.

04:12

Andrew Dvorak

Individuals must have their eligibility determined by completing the ECE Recruit-Back incentive application e-form available at the ECE Recruit-Back website. If they aren't sure about their eligibility, they can also email the ECE Incentive Inbox to inquire about their eligibility prior to applying.

Early Learning and Child Care staff will review the information provided to determine eligibility, utilizing records in Child Care Online and the record of childcare employment.

All applicants will be informed of their eligibility status, whether they are eligible or not, and next steps in the process through the ECE incentive email.

04:55

Andrew Dvorak

After an applicant's eligibility is confirmed, they will be asked to notify Early Learning and Child Care through the ECE Incentive inbox once they have secured employment in a licensed, non-profit child care center or licensed home in Manitoba.

Applicants are encouraged to inform their employer that they have applied for the incentive during the hiring process.

05:17

Andrew Dvorak

Individuals who begin working in a licensed non-profit center or licensed home-based setting on or after June 1st, 2025, are asked to inform early learning and child care staff of their employment immediately after being notified of their eligibility.

Early Learning and Child Care staff will contact the center director or home-based license holder after the applicant has secured employment to confirm details through the employment verification form, including start date and employment type, to ensure the applicant is working full-time

Information provided will be verified through Child Care Online and the record of childcare employment.

05:55

Andrew Dvorak

Incentive funds will be provided to eligible applicants in two installments, as the length of employment requirements are met. The first installment will be paid after 3 months of full-time employment in a licensed nonprofit center or licensed home.

The second installment will be paid 1 year after the first installment, or 1 year and three months after the first day of employment.

Applicants do not need to apply for the second installment, as this will be monitored internally by Early Learning and Child Care staff.

However, applicants must notify the department if they move to a new place of employment during the two-year window.

06:32

Andrew Dvorak

Funding will be distributed to the applicant's employer, either the center director or home-based license holder, who will provide the funds to the eligible applicant within 3 weeks.

And just as a quick note, while the application window closes on January 1st, 2027, applicants may still receive incentive funding after that window closes, provided the application was completed prior to that date.

06:57

Andrew Dvorak

Incentive recipients are not required to remain at the same place of employment for the full 2 years, and may change employer while receiving the incentive, provided they continue to work in a licensed non-profit center or licensed home-based setting in Manitoba for at least 2 years.

If a recipient moves to a new place of employment, they must inform Early Learning and Child Care of the change. Early Learning and Child Care will contact the new employer to complete the employment confirmation process once again, but a new recruit-back incentive application e-form does not need to be submitted.

Early Learning and Child Care may withhold funds if the recipient was not employed during the process of seeking a new position to ensure length of employment requirements are met.

And as a final note on guidelines, home-based providers are eligible for the incentive as both employees of an established licensed home-based setting and as the license holder of a home-based setting that is yet to be opened or opened on or after June 1st, 2025.

08:00

Andrew Dvorak

The first installment of the incentive will be provided 3 months after the licensing process has been completed.

To summarize information that we've gone over for directors and license holders, the director or license holder will be sent a PDF form with the employment information of the employee that applied for the incentive and are asked to review the information and sign off if it is correct. To support this process, we ask that the record of child care employment and childcare online is kept up to date with correct information.

08:34

Andrew Dvorak

So, we're gonna get into some frequently asked questions. These are available on our website, and then we'll open up to questions from the chat after this.

So, do applicants need to be employed in a center or home to apply? No, applicants can submit an application or inquiry prior to seeking employment in a licensed nonprofit facility or licensed home to determine whether they are eligible.

Are applicants eligible if they previously worked full part-time? Yes, applicants that previously worked part-time are eligible as long as they meet all other eligibility criteria.

Can they work part-time while receiving the incentive? No. Recipients must work full-time for the two years in a licensed nonprofit center or licensed home to receive the incentive.

09:27

Andrew Dvorak

How many hours does a recipient need to work to be considered full-time? For the purpose of the incentive, the recipient must work at least 30 hours per week to account for flexible work arrangements and variations in facility operating hours.

Are recipients required to return funds received if they go on leave prior to completing the two years? The Employment Standards Code outlines a number of different leaves of absences that allow employees to deal with certain events in their lives without the loss of their employment. If an incentive recipient is to go on leave for one of these reasons, they

will not be required to return the funding. We just ask that they inform department staff of their leave of absence. A specific reason is not... does not need to be provided, just that it is a leave of absence that is covered in the Employment Standards Code.

Do recipients need to work in the same facility for 2 years? No. Incentive recipients are not required to work in the same licensed nonprofit center or licensed home for 2 years.

Approved applicants may continue to receive funding under this incentive if they change employers as long as they continue to fill the requirements as outlined under the eligibility section. And once again, early learning and childcare may withhold funds to ensure the length of employment requirements are met.

10:58

Andrew Dvorak

So, what steps need to be followed? An application for center directors or home-based license holders. An application verification form... I'm sorry, employment verification form will be issued to the center director or home-based license holder through the ECE Incentive inbox. After the eligible applicant informs Early Learning and Child Care of their employment status. The center director or home-based license holder must ensure the applicant's information and employment status is up to date in the childcare online, and the record of child care employees and sign off on the form provided and send it back to the ECE Incentive inbox.

11:40

Andrew Dvorak

Why do recruit back incentive funds need to be distributed to the facility and not the applicant? Current legislation, the Section 373.10 of the child care regulation, allows a grant to be distributed to a license holder to assist with the recruitment and retention of child care workers. The Recruit-Back Incentive is being provided utilizing this regulation.

I've previously received the retirement benefit after retiring from the sector. Can I receive funding through the recruit back incentive? Yes, individuals that have received the retirement benefit can receive the Recruit-Back Incentive funding, as long as all other eligibility criteria are met.

12:23

Andrew Dvorak

And finally, we have some contact information, the ECE Recruit-Back website, which has further information, the FAQs and the application e-form, and then the ECE Incentive email, where all inquiries can be sent.

12:53

Jason Booth

Okay, thanks very much, Andrew. We're gonna open that up to questions. We're starting to get some questions in the chat. You're welcome to type your important questions in the chat, and we will get to as many as we can today.

13:05

Jessica Brosch

ELCC Host: Okay, so we have a question from Jaspreet, asking if the person was licensed a couple months ago, would they be eligible for the funding?

13:14

Andrew Dvorak

As long as they were, licensed and operating on or after June 1st, 2025, they would be eligible for Recruit-Back Incentive funding. But if they're unsure about the timelines, they can email the inbox and we'll verify it.

13:31

Jessica Brosch

Thank you. Colleen's asking, if an individual left child care as a child care assistant and came back, as a graduate, would they be eligible for the incentive?

13:41

Andrew Dvorak

No, they must have worked as an ECE II or ECE III prior, in that sort of two-year window prior.

13:51

Jessica Brosch

And Krista's asking if operating grants will be increased to help support, the, hiring of ECE IIs and IIIs with this incentive to be able to pay the target wages.

14:03

Andrew Dvorak

That is something that they can send an email to the ECE Recruit-Back inbox, and we can look into that further for them.

14:12

Jessica Brosch

Thank you. We have a question from Kristen. When the funds are distributed from the center to the applicant, does this go through payroll? Is it a taxable benefit?

14:24

Andrew Dvorak

Yeah, so, funds provided through the Recruit-Back Incentive are considered taxable as income. This is considered under the common tax base in Canada. In terms of going through payroll, I... that would be a question to forward to the inbox as well.

14:44

Jessica Brosch

Thank you. Natasha's asking if there's anything being done to acknowledge frontline staff and management that have stayed in the sector for the last 10 to 40 years.

14:55

Andrew Dvorak

Yeah, you know, and we recognize the hard work that these folks are putting in and are very appreciative of this, for the professionals that have stuck through and stayed in the sector. This is a time-limited recruitment initiative. You know, specific to supporting the growth of the workforce, as there's a clear need to continue to grow the profession.

15:16

Jessica Brosch

Thank you. Dana's asking, would this include ECEs from other provinces?

15:23

Andrew Dvorak

So, part of the... one of the eligibility requirements is that they work in Manitoba. Prior to being that two-year prior, so...if that other... if the person that is working in a different province previously worked in Manitoba, that would be applicable, but if they've only worked in a different province, then they wouldn't be eligible for the incentive.

15:45

Jessica Brosch

Thank you. Melanie's asking if there will be any incentives for management, as the last grant was for frontline staff.

15:56

Andrew Dvorak

That would be something to inquire about with the ECE Tuition inbox, I... or, sorry, incentive inbox, not a... not something that I'm familiar with, but something to ask.

16:08

Jessica Brosch

Thank you. We have a question. Sorry, question...

16:24

Jason Booth

Just as a reminder, this webinar is being recorded, and we will provide it, the recording on our website over the next couple of business days, along with the copy of the slide deck and a transcript.

16:39

Jessica Brosch

Thank you. We have a question from Andy. Is this funding going to be available for people that were recognized as ECII or IIIs? If employees have completed 2 years and worked in child care service, but they're not holding the ECE classification, would they... would they be eligible to apply if they're not classified as an ECE II or III?

17:05

Andrew Dvorak

So you have to be classified as an ECE II or III to apply. That's one of the, one of the parts of the eligibility criteria.

17:13

Jessica Brosch

Thank you. So, for centers that are unionized, how does this work? Will unionized centers have specific information? Is there any information for unionized centers?

17:30

Andrew Dvorak

That is a great question. That is one that we will have to go back to and revisit, and if they want to, I think, please, like, send an email to the EC Incentive inbox, and we'll look into that one.

17:44

Jessica Brosch

Thank you. So, if an ECE III has been working in the field for a long time, but recently switched to a home-based license, would they be eligible to apply?

18:00

Andrew Dvorak

So, specific timeline questions would be best served to send those to the inbox, but I think if, you know, in a general sense, the incentive is for individuals that haven't worked in the sector for at least 2 years. So, I don't know the timeline for this individual, but if they left for 2 years, they would be eligible, and if not, if they switched between home-based and center in that 2 years, they may not be eligible. But again, we can... if you send that question to the inbox, we can look into the information and provide you, a clearer picture of whether or not you're eligible.

18:34

Jessica Brosch

Thank you, Andrew. And can you just confirm how much of the funding will be released the first payment and the second?

18:44

Andrew Dvorak

Yeah, so it's two \$2,500 installments, so \$2,500 at the first one, and then \$2,500 at the second.

18:53

Jessica Brosch

Thank you. And do directors reach out, or are ECEs going to contact ELCC directly?

19:05

Andrew Dvorak

We are asking the eligible applicants, the eligible ECEs, to contact us directly when they, when they secure employment, and then we will reach out to the directors and provide the employment verification. The idea is to make... ensure that we're not adding an administrative burden to the director's workload, and just kind of a quick sign-off on the information that we provide.

19:29

Jessica Brosch

Thank you, and can you just confirm how many years they are required to stay employed?

19:35

Andrew Dvorak

Sorry, it's, two years to, to stay employed in the sector, sorry, in a licensed nonprofit center or a licensed home.

19:46

Jessica Brosch

Thank you. We'll just leave it open for a couple minutes for anybody that wants to add any more questions. Again, if, if your question is specific that, has unique questions to it that we can't answer today, please, email the Recruit-Back Incentive inbox with your specific details, so we can get back to those ones.

And then, also, can you, clarify what happens if they leave early, if they don't complete the two years?

20:00

Andrew Dvorak

Yeah, so if they don't complete the two years, they will be asked to return the funds received, to us at Early Learning and Child Care. That's a process that will be discussed with the applicant, if that's the circumstance, but yeah, they'll be asked to return the funds received.

20:40

Jessica Brosch

Thank you. And then Chris is asking if this is a taxable benefit.

20:44

Andrew Dvorak

Yeah, this is... funds provided are considered taxable as income.

20:50

Jessica Brosch

Thank you. And we have a question from Sandy asking how long will processing take once eligibility is determined?

21:04

Andrew Dvorak

Yeah, so that's just based on the volume of applications we receive. Right now, I would expect, you know, around 4 weeks at the maximum. And then after... in terms of the funding timeline, after employment is secured and we verify that individuals will be eligible to receive that first installment after 3 months of employment.

21:26

Jessica Brosch

Thank you. Is there any liability on the center, for releasing the funds for someone who ends the employment early? So, if the ECE leaves the center, is the center, liable for returning the funds to ELCC, or is it up to the applicant?

21:52

Andrew Dvorak

That is up to the... applicant.

22:01

Jason Booth

Right, we're coming up on 1:52 here at, 114 Garry, so we're going to conclude for today's, session.

You are more than welcome to email your additional questions to eeceincentive@gov.mb.ca. You can also visit us at manitoba.ca/ECRecruitback, as you can see on the

screen here, where you can find more information, the FAQ that's been previously discussed and potential updates to that FAQ, along with additional contact information.

So, thank you again for joining us for today's webinar, Early Childhood Educator Recruit-Back Incentive. Thank you to Andrew Dvorak, today's presenter. Thank you to Jessica Brosch for reading out today's questions.

And from all of us at ELCC have a wonderful snowy afternoon.

Ciao!