

2026/2027 ELCC Wage Grid and Operating Grant Increases

Thursday, April 9th

00:05

Jason Booth

Hi, good afternoon, everyone. My name is Jason Booth with Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Division. Thank you for joining us for this afternoon's webinar, 2026, 2027 ELCC Wage Grid and operating grant increases.

This webinar will be presented by Mario Gordon, Director, Workforce Development, and Seamus Finnerty, Program Coordinator, also with Workforce Development.

00:30

Jason Booth

Following the formal presentation, we'll have time for questions, which you're welcome to submit via the chat throughout today's presentation.

We will try to answer as many questions as we can, which will be read out by our team of Carmen Zubin, licensing and compliance supervisor and Jessica Brosh, Child Care Coordinator.

ELCC will be documenting all the questions sent in 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.

01:01

Jason Booth

We'll begin today with a brief land acknowledgement, and then I'll turn things over to Seamus for today's agenda.

We recognize that Manitoba is on treaties 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10 territories and the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabe, Anishininewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline, Ininwak, and Nehethowuk peoples.

We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the traditional lands of the Red River Metis. We acknowledge Northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit.

We respect the spirit and intent of treaty 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 over to you Seamus.

Just sorry, bare with us one second, we may be having some audio difficulty.

02:26

Jason Booth

So, we're getting a couple of notes that we may be getting an echo effect happening. We apologize for that.

We're not sure why that would be. If it's continuing to echo, please let us know in the chat.

But for now, we'll carry on with formal presentation

02:44

Seamus Finnerty

Hi, everyone. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Seamus Finnerty. So, for those of you that joined us last year, we're going to follow a very similar format this year and for those joining us for the first time, we're going to cover quite a lot of ground

So, I want to start today by talking about some recent announcements where the wage grid comes from, the wage grid supplement increases for this year, what the new wage grid for this year looks like, the base operating grant increase. What the reporting requirements are, and some next steps and frequently asked questions.

03:26

Seamus Finnerty

So, most recently, and on March 24th, Manitoba released Budget 2026.

The budget included increases to wages and operating funding for the early childhood sector Effective April 1, 2026, there was an increase to the wage grid supplement and an increase to the base operating grant rate.

A new wage grid was also shared, which includes an increase to all wages of approximately 2.9%

The increase to the wage grid is a key pillar in Manitoba's higher wages, good jobs, more childcare workforce strategy, and aims to improve recruitment and retention efforts across the sector.

04:13

Seamus Finnerty

On November 5th, 2025, we launched the Higher Wages, Good Jobs, More Child Care Workforce Strategy, like I mentioned on the last slide, to recruit and support the child care workforce in Manitoba.

Some of the strategies' key highlights included the ECE recruit back incentive, the annual Manitoba Early Childhood Educator Awards of Excellence.

Increasing the number of professional development days to 5 by 2028 and extending the tuition reimbursement program until the end of the 2027-28 academic year.

04:51

Seamus Finnerty

So, a bit of background on our wage grid.

In August 2021, Manitoba signed a \$ 1.2 billion Canada-wide agreement for early learning and childcare with Canada and as part of the terms for the Manitoba government under this agreement a wage grid was to be implemented within the first two years of this agreement.

In addition to parent fees, funded facilities rely on their operating grants and the reduced parent fee revenue grant from the province as a primary source of revenue to support operational expenses.

So, as you know, the first wage grid was released back in July 2022 with the goal of developing a more equitable compensation structure for every classification and position across the province, but also to deliver more consistent wages throughout the entire sector.

05:46

Seamus Finnerty

The wage grid supplement is provided and applied to the operating grant that funded facilities receive to help them pay the wages on the wage grid.

And I'll get into some more details about that later on.

06:00

Seamus Finnerty

So, this year we're investing \$4.3 million to support a 2% increase to the wage grid supplement and an additional \$4.7 million to support a 1% increase to base operating grants for licensed and funded child care facilities.

These are joint investments in partnership with Canada.

All facilities are expected to use the increase in funding to increase wages for staff.

This does not necessarily mean that everyone will receive an increase to their wage. It will vary depending on what current wages are, and if the facility budgets allow and if possible, facilities can pay staff above the target wage.

06:44

Seamus Finnerty

The wage grid supplement may be used to support other salary related costs that have increased due to higher wages, such as employment insurance, the Canada Pension Plan, workers' compensation and benefits.

It is not to be used for other operating expenses.

The exception would be the employer's pension plan contributions, as these continue to be funded separately under the pension plan contribution reimbursement application.

The increase this year as it was in previous years, is based on the unit funding model, which is based on the regulated child to staff ratio.

A unit is either 4 infants, 8 preschool or 15 school age spaces.

Each type of unit generates similar revenue. So, for example, a four infant space generates the same revenue as 8 preschool spaces or 15 school age spaces.

07:47

Seamus Finnerty

Some of you who were on the call who joined us last year may remember that last year's wage grid removed the starting point and altered a few positions and classifications

This year, we're not structurally changing the wage grid, but we are increasing each wage by 2.9% thanks to the investments that I mentioned earlier.

This wage increase continues to go toward supporting our workforce, recognizing the importance of staff across the sector, providing greater incentive to engage in education and career development and respond to concerns raised by the early learning and child care sector.

08:29

Seamus Finnerty

So, this slide and the next slide demonstrate the increase that all wages are receiving, which equates to 2.9%.

The first column shows last year wage grid.

The green column shows the wage grid for 26-27.

And lastly, the third column shows you the dollar increase year over year. So, this is the first half of the wage grid, and then the next slide will show you the bottom half here.

09:06

Seamus Finnerty

So apart from the wage grid supplement, we're also increasing the base operating grant rate. This is a joint investment again between Manitoba and Canada, of approximately \$4.7 million.

The base operating grant is generally used towards operational expenses, such as wages, administration costs, programming support, and is meant to help support the board of directors of nonprofit centers and nursery schools in their efforts to balance their facilities budget.

09:40

Seamus Finnerty

As it was in previous years, centers are required to submit annual financial statements to confirm the use of public funds, which they receive and make sure they go towards the intended purposes, which includes all operating costs and detailed wage information.

The increase in revenue that is received from operating grant increases and increased expenditures for staff wages must be listed in the facility's next annual operating budget submission and annual financial statement.

10:18

Seamus Finnerty

So, this table here shows the new maximum annual operating grant rates based off centers, nursery schools, as well as for family childcare homes.

The annual operating grant rate is your base operating grant plus the wage grid supplement. Please note that these are effective April 1st, 2026

10:45

Seamus Finnerty

This table here more clearly demonstrates the actual breakdown between the base operating grant and the wage grid supplement, which again, like I mentioned, equals the total operating grant that was shown in the previous slide.

11:05

Seamus Finnerty

The next few slides are some next steps for board of directors.

Some of you may recall a burgundy printed book that facilities used to receive called the roles, Responsibilities, and Functions of a Board.

It included valuable information including resources on various topics, such as establishing bylaws, role of the board and board executive director.

It also includes practical worksheets for board development, such who does what board member checklists, bylaw checklists, financial management assessment worksheet, legal checklists, and policy development processes.

11:45

Seamus Finnerty

This information is available on our website, and we're also working to update our website to include the wage grid implementation toolkit for boards and anticipate that this will be made live shortly.

11:59

Seamus Finnerty

Now, no two centers are alike and depending on the size and circumstances, there is a variety of ways that different jobs and responsibilities are structured in a center.

For examples, directors and frontline staff at the CCA, ECEII and or ECEIII level can be varied throughout the province.

Larger facilities may have an assistant director, supervisors, room leaders, housekeepers, and or a cook, administrative assistant and or bookkeepers.

It is up to the board of directors to determine what may best suit their facility in terms of developing a salary scale for employees from frontline staff to directors.

This means developing position descriptions, the classification, and experience required for each position and the tasks assigned to each physician.

12:54

Seamus Finnerty

For any assistance on those items that I listed in the previous slide, please connect with your child care coordinator.

You may also wish to review MCCA's market competitive salary guideline scale for centers and review detailed job descriptions which are included in MCCA's Human Resource Management Guide for Early Childhood Programs.

13:20

Seamus Finnerty

Board of Directors must be fiscally responsible and determine the degree to which they are able to increase wages on the facility salary scale based on the facility's financial position.

And we do understand that facility budgets across the province, sorry, can vary.

13:46

Seamus Finnerty

The toolkit includes an Excel spreadsheet that reflects the operating budget and childcare online and includes formulas to calculate facility revenue and expenditures to develop a budget.

Once a revised salary scale is created. These can be approved and budgeted accordingly based on the facility's bylaws, policies, and procedures.

14:20

Seamus Finnerty

To access MCCA's online board training. It continues to be available at no cost for the boards of directors and management of nonprofit centers and nursery schools in Manitoba through funding under the Canada Manitoba bilateral agreement.

Management Guide in the edition includes two new chapters and revisions and updates to all existing chapters.

A flash drive is included with all the sample forms that will allow boards to customize much of the information to the needs of the facility.

14:58

Seamus Finnerty

More information can be found at the links shown here and now we'll proceed to some frequently asked questions.

15:13

Seamus Finnerty

So how is the target wage for an ECEII determined?

To determine ECEII wages. How was the target wage for an ECE2 determined?

To determine ECEII wages as well as all the wages on our wage grid, we factored in many variables such as looking at other jurisdictions, as well as similar professions. Our goal is to provide competitive wages to help recruit and retain staff.

15:54

Seamus Finnerty

If the target wage has increased, can all employees expect their wages to increase?

While we expect all centers to pay the wages listed on our wage grid, we do understand that not all facilities are equal.

It is up to the board of directors to determine the financial feasibility of applying respective wages at their own centers

16:20

Seamus Finnerty

Staff at our facility are already being paid more than the target wage on the 26-27 wage grid. Do we have to increase hourly wages effective April 1st, 2026, or can the wage grid supplement be used to support future wage increases?

The wage grid supplement can be used to support other salary related costs such as employment insurance, Canada Pension Plan, and workers' compensation and benefits. We are supportive of any facility that chooses to or are in a position and would like to increase their wages above and beyond the wage grid.

17:02

Seamus Finnerty

Our facility has many long-term staff. How can we recognize them for their years of service?

Boards of directors can consider implementing a long service step if financially viable for the centre. Again, this is facility dependent, and each facility may choose to implement different ways to recognize long-term staff.

17:29

Seamus Finnerty

What if a center exceeds the regulated trained staff requirement and staff-to-child ratios? Will the wage grid operating supplement cover these additional costs?

The important factor here is that we expect all facilities to pay at least the target wage and ensure that the wage grid operating supplement is used to cover the cost in those increased wages.

A center's board of directors is responsible for decisions regarding staff complement and wages and should be taking into account the unit funding model.

18:06

Seamus Finnerty

CCAs who have not yet completed their required 40-hour ECE-related training course are not included on the wage grid. What do we pay them?

Wages for CCAs without their 40-hour training course are at the discretion of the boards of directors.

Facilities may pay more than provincial minimum wage if operating budget permits.

18:33

Seamus Finnerty

Many university students hire full time under the summer job grant program meet the 40-hour course requirement should they be paid at the target wage for CCA with 40-hour course?

So, any staff that's hired under the summer grant program should be paid by the wage that was included on their approved grant application.

If they were to become a regular employee afterwards, they should be placed on your new revised salary scale and paid accordingly.

19:09

Seamus Finnerty

Is there going to be an increase to the salaries supported by the staff replacement grant for staff hired to replace an employee enrolled in a workplace training program?

Substitute staff should be paid at the CCA level on the center salary scale.

To increase their wage to align with the revision on the 26-27 wage grid, facilities must submit a new staff replacement grant application.

19:41

Jason Booth

Thanks so much, Seamus.

That concludes the formal part of our presentation. We've had a number of great questions come in the chat over the last 20 minutes or so, and Carmen and Jessica will be reading some of those out and Seamus and Mario will be doing their best to answer as many questions as we can.

Also, just take a moment to apologize once again for that echo that some folks were reporting. It sounds like this was just an issue for some folks, where both the website and the Zoom app were opening at the same time.

Hopefully that's all been resolved and turn things over to Carmen and Jessica for the first questions.

20:28

Carmen Zubin

Thank you, Jay. Before we start, just a reminder that any specific questions related to your center or your home, can be directed to Child Care Information Services or your coordinator.

We will only ask questions specific to the presentation at hand right now.

20:48

Carmen Zubin

So, our first question comes from Brenda.

And Seamus, you did answer this, but if you could please clarify the increases that family child care homes will be receiving.

21:12

Seamus Finnerty

Sorry, just to clarify, it was the breakdown of the base operating grant and wage supplement that family child care homes will receive?

21:22

Carmen Zubin

Yes, please.

21:23

Seamus Finnerty

So last year, family group and child care homes would have received a total operating grant of just under \$6,200 for infant. They would have received just over \$4,800 for preschool and just under \$2,600 for school age.

This year family group childcare homes for infant spaces will receive just around \$6,450 just under \$5,100 for preschool and just over \$2,700 for school spaces.

22:04

Jessica Brosh

Thank you.

22:05

Jessica Brosh

So in regards to summer grant, Canadian summer jobs grant participants, what will the employers pay with this wage increase?

22:18

Mario Gordon

I think that was also a question that was answered on the frequently asked questions. We can put that one on the screen again.

22:48

Mario Gordon

Uh, no, this is the ground. I think regardless, uh, the expectation is that the wages that are paid to those individuals who are on a kind of summer job grant program is based on the amount that was included in the application form that was submitted for that grant program.

23:14

Jessica Brosh

Thank you. And we have a question from Linda regarding ECAIII pay. So, are centers obligated to pay ECEIIIs at the level 3 scale? Depending on what their duties are in the center.

23:32

Mario Gordon

Uh, yes, uh, as we have mentioned, the expectations are that all facilities are using the increases in funding to increase the wages for their staff.

23:46

Jessica Brosh

Thank you.

23:57

Carmen Zubin

Our next question is from Pam and Pam is asking, who is monitoring these wage increases to the centers?

In essence, asking who is making sure that centers are actually paying the minimum requirements.

24:15

Mario Gordon

Uh, so the department does monitor these requirements, so childcare coordinators as well as finance, reviews the budgets and submitted documents.

Monitor what payments are being made, but it does ultimately come down to the facilities budget in terms of what is being paid.

24:40

Jessica Brosh

Thank you.

We have a question from Patricia asking about clarification for CCs and training. But, Patricia, can you put a little more information in the chat about your question?

24:55

I'm so completing 6 courses. But can you give us a little more information on your question, please and then we'll go back, we'll circle back to that question after.

25:09

Carmen Zubin

Okay, we'll wait for that and in the meantime, there's a question from Brenda.

Do we know if the operating grant payment that was received on April 1st included the 2.9% increase?

25:25

Mario Gordon

Uh, yes, the payment does include that increase.

25:31

Carmen Zubin

Thank you.

Next, we have a question from Trisha specific to the inclusion support program. So, will the inclusion support program staffing rate be increased to the new wage grid?

25:48

Mario Gordon

Yes, the inclusion support enhanced staffing grant, uh, will be increased to the new wage.

So, facilities are not expected to submit a new staffing grant application. The changes are being made internally this year for those grants.

26:12

Jessica Brosh

Thank you.

26:12

Mario Gordon

Sorry, just I'll clarify that as well. So, for the staff replacement grant, a new application is required.

26:22

Jessica Brosh

Okay, thank you.

26:23

Carmen Zubin

Can we just add on to that question? Just to clarify, Allison is asking when centers can expect to receive the increase. So, you're saying the April payment should have included the increase.

26:35

Mario Gordon

The April payment should have already included that increase, but, um... We can clarify that as well after the call if needed, but that payment should have already been included.

26:47

Carmen Zubin

Okay, and then to add to that that all retroactive pay must be made to the new wages once they're determined based on the increase to the to the facilities.

26:59

Mario Gordon

Yes.

27:01

Carmen Zubin

Thank you.

27:04

Jessica Brosh

Uh, so we have a question regarding the target wage. So, is it mandatory that centers are paying that target or is it an option?

27:18

Mario Gordon

It is an expectation that facilities are using the funding to increase the wages on the wage grid based on their budget availability, and obviously conversations with their board of directors.

Um, so while right now we do not specifically have any regulations outlining that facilities must pay the wage. It is strongly encouraged, and as we mentioned, we do have childcare coordinators, as well as finance reviewing the budgets and documents that are submitted to ensure that facilities are meeting its obligations when possible.

28:01

Carmen Zubin

Thank you. Uh, question from Irene. Irene is, um, asking... If there is a recommendation on how much of the overall budget should be used towards staffing wages and employment-related costs.

28:19

Seamus Finnerty

So, as a rule of thumb, we generally recommend that approximately 85% of that funding is to cover those specific costs.

28:31

Carmen Zubin

Thank you.

28:39

Jessica Brosh

Okay, we have a question from Emily. So, it's retroactive pay April 1st. How long do they have to work out the new budget, and will this PowerPoint be provided?

28:55

Mario Gordon

Uh, so, yes, this PowerPoint will be uploaded to our website after our next couple of days.

Uh, as, uh, for the first question, we understand that there are a variety of different, facilities of different sizes and different capacities, uh, and so that does require some of the smaller facilities manage retracted payments a bit differently. Um... We encourage you to get the payments out as quickly as possible, but we do not have any firm timelines on when that needs to be done.

29:33

Jessica Brosh

Thank you. We have a couple questions from Amanda and Jennifer regarding staff wages.

So, if they are already meeting proportion train staff or are above the required proportion of trained staff, do they have to pay staff who receive an ECEIII?

Um, even though they weren't needing it for their facility, or in the same sense, if they are meeting for 4-sharing staff, and they have more ECEs getting their training, are they required to pay the wages for the 2s or 3s based on the wage scale.

30:07

Mario Gordon

Uh, yes, facilities are expected to pay the wage scale for their staff based on the amounts that have been included in the wage grant.

30:25

Jessica Brosh

Thank you. And our staff who are doing education by distance, would they be considered a CCA in training?

30:35

Mario Gordon

So, a CCA in training is defined as a person who is, uh, issued a CCA certificate and is completing six courses or 18 credit hours per year in a recognized ECE program or currently rolled in the ECEII assessment program.

Regardless if they are taking courses via correspondence or in person, if they meet that definition, they are considered a CCA in training or CCA-ECEII training.

31:12

Carmen Zubin

Okay, we have a question from Amina. Just to clarify again when family child care providers can expect to receive the updated operating grant payment.

31:25

Mario Gordon

Uh, so the operating ground payment would have been issued on April 1st and so that should be a payment that's already been included in that April 1st payment that you're going to proceed.

32:02

Jason Booth

Just a reminder to everyone that a copy of today's recording, along with a transcript and a copy of the PowerPoint presentation, will be available on our website within the next couple of days; probably tomorrow with French following closely behind early next week.

Uh, we also posted a link in the chat that goes right to our circulars and webinars page.

We're just reviewing some questions.

Thank you very much for all of your important questions. We're trying to address as many as we can this afternoon.

Again, if we didn't get to your question, we do have a log of everything that's been asked and you're always welcome to contact us directly at CDCinfo@gov.mb.ca.

32:55

Jessica Brosh

Thank you. So, can you just clarify for CCA's and training?

Is it when they first enroll into a training program, or is it a certain amount of courses, let's say if they completed six courses in the training? At what point are they considered a CCA in training to get that wage?

33:13

Mario Gordon

So, I guess it's at the point where they have completed those six courses rather than when they are initially enrolled.

For the ECEll assessment program. It is when they are enrolled.

33:34

Carmen Zubin

Thank you. Thanks. We have a question from Tracy and Tracy says, it is said that is, it is expected that everyone is paid at the target wage, though that does not make it really sound like it's mandatory. Can you please clarify, Is this a mandatory requirement?

33:56

Mario Gordon

It is right now. an expectation.

The reason why it is not mandatory at this time is we understand that there are a variety of different factors, including facility sizes and so some facilities may have more challenges in meeting, uh, those target wages.

However, as I mentioned, the department does monitor the budgets of the facilities, and the coordinators also obviously monitor with the visits. And so, we want to ensure that facilities are meeting the target.

However, we understand there may be cases where it could be challenging.

When we are identify at times where facilities are not meeting the target. However, they should be able to. We can have those conversations directly with those facilities.

35:01

Jessica Brosh

Thank you. We have a question from Jennifer asking if the wage grid will be updated on a regular annual basis. And is there any discussion about increasing operating grants to support professional development days, planning time, that sort of thing.

35:18

Mario Gordon

So, we have no updates right now as far as if the wage grid is going to be continued or updated annually. Uh, we hope so, but at this time, uh, we have the 26/27 wage rate in front of us.

35:32

Mario Gordon

Uh, as far as, um... The second part of the question was the additional funding for professional development.

We understand the importance of professional development. But right now we are not looking at providing additional funding to support that. So, I think we have the additional professional development days and those being utilized as best as they can.

As of right now, no additional funding is required.

36:05

Jessica Brosh

Thank you. And will there be a look in the future at administrative roles?

The focus has been a lot on the frontline staff. Will there be any look in the future at the admin or other wages on the scale?

36:22

Mario Gordon

That is really good feedback and something that we will take away and consider for future updates to the wage grid.

36:35

Jessica Brosh

Well, we have a question from Tanya. Will there be a letter sent out to facilities regarding their new grant amount for the year?

37:13

Mario Gordon

Yeah, so we will have to confirm whether or not a letter is issued and we can answer that question at a later date.

37:24

Carmen Zubin

We have a question from Chris. Is the target hourly wage step one of a scale?

37:37

Mario Gordon

Sorry the question again.

37:39

Carmen Zubin

Is the target hourly wage step one of a scale?

37:45

Mario Gordon

The target is the current wage. I would not categorize it necessarily as a step. However, that could be determined by individual facilities. So, the target wage is by no means has to be the maximum that a facility pays. So, a facility could utilize the target as step one and there would be additional steps

38:20

Mario Gordon

Thank you.

38:34

Jessica Brosh

We are going to just review all these questions.

38:40

Jason Booth

One moment.

39:23

Carmen Zubin

Uh, question from Leanne.

Leanne indicates that the FAQs indicate that there's an increase to the wage grid supplement, providing a 2% increase to the overall revenue generated for space and support the 2.9% increase to the target wages.

So, can we just clarify? It sounds like they're receiving a 2% increase to raise wages by 2.9%. Can you please clarify the details for that?

39:53

Mario Gordon

Yeah, so that that's correct. So, they are facilities are receiving a 2.9% increase to the wage supplement and a 1% increase to the base operating grant.

40:11

Jessica Brosh

Okay, thank you.

We are going to read one more question from Andrea. First, she says, Thank you for the support, the agreement that's a federal and Manitoba was established for the wage for early childhood, early learning educators.

Do we know an estimate of how long the funding will be supported into the future?

40:33

Mario Gordon

The current agreement with the federal government was renewed until 2031.

40:45

Jessica Brosh

Thank you.

40:47

Jason Booth

Super. Okay. That is all the time we're gonna have for questions today. I believe there were a few that we didn't get to.

So again, we will take those under advisement, and you're always welcome to email us directly at CDCinfo@gov.mb.ca.

Again, our apologies for those early technical difficulties with the echo. We appreciate your patience. Thank you for joining us for this afternoon's webinar, 2026-2027 ELCC Wage Grid and operating grant increases.

Once more a copy of this recording along with the transcript and a copy of the PowerPoint will be posted to our website in the next few business days. So likely tomorrow and French following soon after early next week.

Have a great afternoon.