

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Early Learning and Child Care Major Infrastructure Program

Program Guidelines

2024-25

Table of Contents

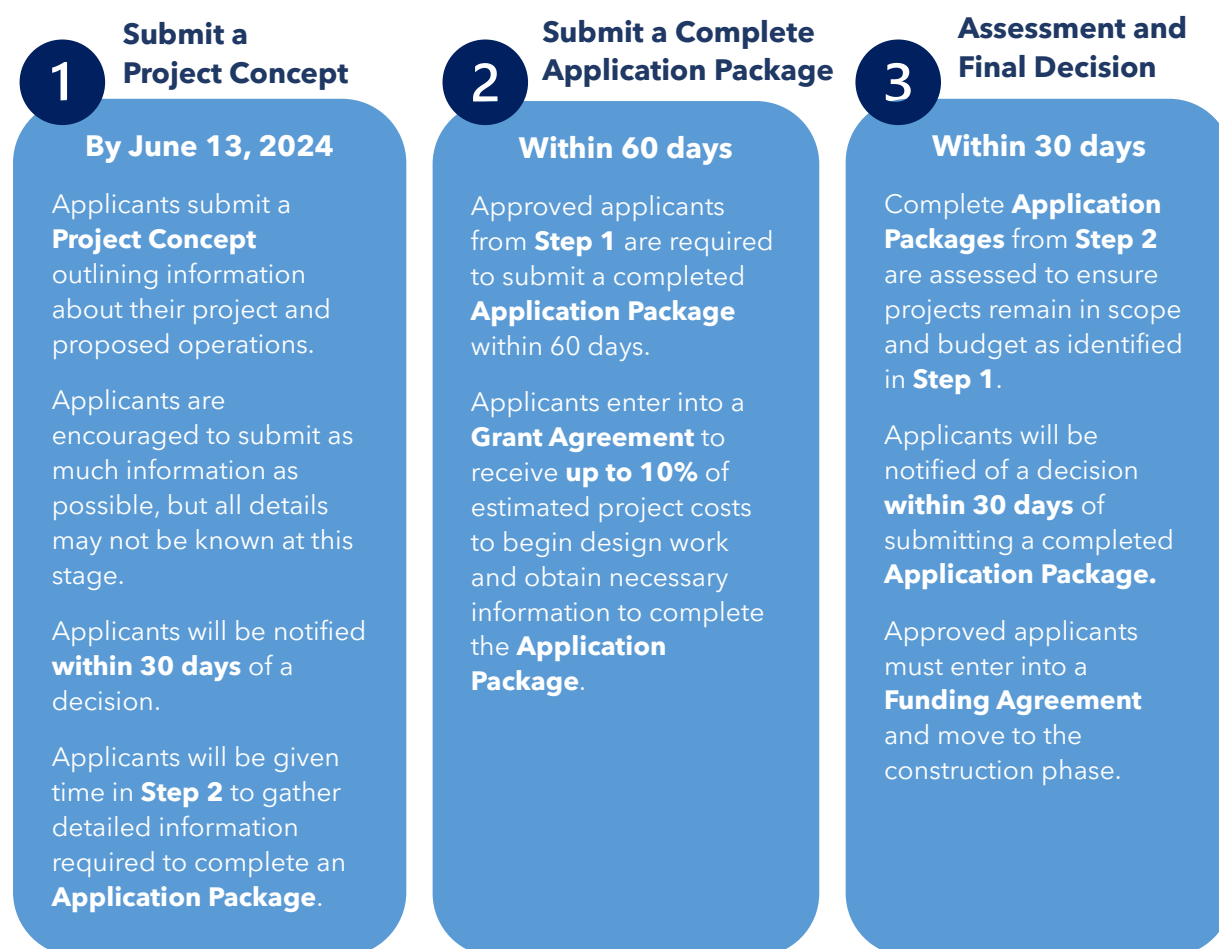
Overview	3
Eligible Entities.....	4
Eligible Project Costs.....	4
Funding	5
Assessment Considerations.....	6
A. Location and Populations Served	6
B. Size.....	6
C. Financial Feasibility	6
D. Operational Viability	7
E. Timeline.....	7
Application, Assessment and Approval Process.....	7
Step 1: Submit a Project Concept.....	7
Step 2: Submit a Completed Application Package	7
Step 3: Final Review and Decision.....	8
Project Execution.....	9
Facility Licensing Process.....	9
Project Close Out.....	10
Contact Us	10

Overview

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) **Major Infrastructure Program** provides grant funding for the development of new early learning and child care spaces in licensed and provincially funded child care centres. New spaces will serve children 0 to 5 years of age in communities with the highest need for child care, prioritizing diverse and/or vulnerable populations.

Interested applicants must submit their project concept by **June 13, 2024**. Applicants are encouraged to submit project concepts even if all details are not yet known.

Application Process



If you have any questions regarding these guidelines or the application process, please email ECDSInfrastructure@novascotia.ca

Eligible Entities

The following entities **are eligible** to apply:

- Municipal governments or organizations wholly owned by a municipality;
- Universities or the Nova Scotia Community College;
- Mi'kmaw/Indigenous communities/organizations in Nova Scotia; and
- Registered not-for-profit organizations.

The following entities **are not** eligible to apply:

- For-profit/commercial entities, including partnerships, sole proprietors, benefit companies, community contribution companies, limited companies, and other incorporated companies; and
- Existing child care service providers not in good standing with EECD and with a history of non-compliance under the *Early Learning and Child Care Act and Regulations*.

Eligible Project Costs

Eligible project costs are reasonable direct costs which are necessary for the construction and completion of the project. They are incurred and paid by the applicant.

Eligible project costs include:

1. Construction costs related to building or renovating a child care facility;
2. Purchase of a building or land for the specific purpose of child care (including downpayment, if finance options are available);
3. Purchase and installation of a modular building for use as a child care facility;
4. Site development costs (ex., water, sewer, road, sidewalk) and landscaping for outdoor play area/environments;
5. Purchase of fixtures, fittings and equipment required for [licensing a child care facility](#);
6. Costs related to meeting physical requirements that support accessibility;
7. Professional service fees including construction project management, design/engineering costs, site evaluations, project-related architectural, accounting, legal and business-case planning;
8. Mortgage, rent or lease payments during the construction phase only;
9. Start-up costs, including some consumables (up to a maximum of 1% of the total budget); and
10. Mandatory construction insurance.

Eligible project costs **do not** include costs incurred before a funding agreement with the EECD is signed, nor any of the following:

- Mortgage, rent or lease payments before or after construction;
- Any/all ongoing operating costs (ex., staff salaries, software, consumables, content insurance); and
- Project-related costs payable to the applicant (or the applicant's Directors or Officers) and/or fees payable to a third party not at arm's length from the project or applicant (including the applicant's Directors or Officers).

Funding

The Major Infrastructure Program will provide funding as follows:

- a) **Leasehold or Rental Properties:** A maximum of **\$20,000 per space** up to a total project value of **\$1.5M**.
- b) **Operator Owned or Public Properties:** A maximum of **\$40,000 per space** up to a total project value of **\$3.5M**.

In exceptional circumstances, EECD may increase project maximums and/or per-space amounts to address the needs of diverse and/or vulnerable populations or communities requiring exceptionally large projects.

Funding for this program is made possible through the *Canada-Nova Scotia Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement* and will be provided at the sole discretion of EECD. Funding is subject to budget availability.

Organizational Contribution

Applicants are required to contribute a minimum of 10% toward the overall project costs and must provide supporting documentation to demonstrate this commitment at Step 2 of the application process. Contributions may include funding from other sources (ex., loans, donations, alternate funders) or in-kind contributions, including land and/or buildings and project management services.

Funding Award Commitment

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 period outlined in the table below:

EECD Funding	Minimum Commitment Period
\$3.1M or more	25 years
\$2.1-3M	20 years
\$1.6-\$2M	15 years
Up to \$1.5M	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.

Assessment Considerations

EECD will consider and prioritize the following when assessing applications under the Major Infrastructure Program:

A. Location and Populations Served

- i. Projects located in communities with low child care coverage.
- ii. Projects with spaces meant to serve diverse and/or vulnerable populations, including:
 - Mi'kmaw / Indigenous children;
 - African Nova Scotian children;
 - Acadian / Francophone children;
 - Newcomers to Canada;
 - Lower income families; and
 - Children living with disabilities.
- iii. Projects located in publicly owned facilities such as post-secondary institutions, municipal buildings, or provincially owned buildings.

B. Size

Priority will be given to projects that result in **at least 50 new spaces** and include a combination of infant, toddler and pre-school age groups. Consideration will be given to rural communities where 50 spaces may not be required but where the applicant can demonstrate the centre would be operationally viable.

C. Financial Feasibility

Applicants must demonstrate that their project will be completed within the proposed budget. The proposed project budget must include a minimum 10% contingency amount to mitigate potential project risks. Applicants should seek quotes from reputable contractors and/or suppliers.

Applicants are encouraged to submit **Appendix A - Project Description and Cost Estimate** with their project concept to demonstrate financial feasibility at Step 1 of the application process. If you are not able to do so at Step 1, you have the option of submitting it at Step 2.

Please Note: If the proposed project budget exceeds the eligible funding amount you will be required to confirm your additional funding sources for the remaining amount during Step 2 of the application process.

D. Operational Viability

All projects must demonstrate proof of operational viability of their proposed child care centre.

Applicants are encouraged to submit **Appendix B - Operating Budget** with their project concept to demonstrate operational viability at Step 1 of the application process. If you are not able to do so in Step 1, you have the option of submitting it in Step 2.

Appendix B - Operating Budget collects information regarding:

- i. Operating hours and days
- ii. Spaces by age group (e.g., Infant, Toddler, Pre-school)
- iii. Estimated annual operating budget
- iv. Parent fees by age group (regional averages can be provided to support budget development)

EECD staff are available to answer questions and assist applicants with the development of an operating budget for the proposed location. Please reach out to ECDSInfrastructure@novascotia.ca to connect with our team.

E. Timeline

Proposed projects must be constructed before **March 31, 2026**. Applicants must include a timeline for project completion at Step 1 and will be required to submit a detailed project plan at Step 2 as part of their funding agreement.

Application, Assessment and Approval Process

Applications for the Major Infrastructure Program are assessed and approved as per the process outlined below.

Step 1: Submit a Project Concept

Applicants must provide details of their project concept by completing the [Major Infrastructure Program Application Form electronically](#), by **June 13, 2024**. An assessment team will review all applications and evaluate against the [assessment considerations](#). EECD staff will contact applicants to obtain additional information if required.

Step 2: Submit a Completed Application Package

If approved from Step 1, applicants will be required to submit a complete application package within 60 days. If required documentation is not provided within this timeframe, the project will not proceed.

Approved applicants will be advanced up to 10% of the estimated project budget to engage professionals to obtain necessary information to complete the application package, including schematic designs¹, floor plans and/or site plans, and cost estimates. Funding amounts will be based on total project costs and overall readiness to proceed. Projects that are not fully scoped may not be eligible for the full 10%. The funding provided at this stage must be spent on eligible costs and will not be required to be repaid to EECD if the project proves to be non-viable at Step 2.

The following documents will be required at this step:

1. **Appendix A** - Project Description, Estimated Project Costs, Sources of Funding and Project Timeline and Estimated Cashflow.
2. **Appendix B** - Budget Summary, Revenue & Expenses and Staffing Plan.
3. **Supplementary documentation** as referenced in the Application and Appendices, including but not limited to:
 - a. Site layout, schematic design (project dependent) and/or floor plans.
 - b. Zoning permit(s) (where applicable).
 - c. Quotes and Class C/Class A estimates supporting project costs.
 - d. If project is located on school property/inside a school, written confirmation of approval from the Regional Centre for Education/Conseil scolaire acadien provincial.
 - e. Confirmation of Ownership/leasehold or partnership agreement/commitment.
 - f. Minutes of the Board of Directors/Council authorizing the project application signed by the chair/mayor/warden.
 - g. Documentation to demonstrate the applicant's commitment to contribute a minimum of 10% toward the overall project costs.
 - h. Documents to support community need findings and stakeholder engagement.

Step 3: Final Review and Decision

A final assessment of all information and documentation provided from Step 2 will be completed to ensure the projects remain in scope and budget as identified in Step 1.

Projects that identify significant cost increases or timeline changes from what was estimated in Step 1 may be reconsidered at this stage.

¹ Design Guidelines will be provided to applicants to support schematic and detailed design work and planning.

Note: Design plans will be evaluated to ensure they meet the [Early Learning & Child Care Regulations](#), and the Provincial [Access by Design 2030](#) framework.

Applicants will be notified of a final decision within **30 days** from submission of the complete application package.

Applicants who do not receive approval will be given a rationale and can resubmit their application should additional funding be available.

Project Execution

A signed **Major Infrastructure Program Agreement** and **Appendix C - Project Status Update** will be required before funding is released, and a project can commence.

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

The applicant must engage a Project Manager/General Contractor and begin construction. Subsequent disbursements will be based on the accomplishment of associated milestones identified in Appendix C (and outlined in the Funding Agreement).

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

EECD will not advance funds for the portion of the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) that is recoverable by the applicant from the Canada Revenue Agency.

The Project Manager must meet monthly with the EECD Program coordinator 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 only 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 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 Major Infrastructure Program Funding Agreement, the applicant is required to retain all records for future auditing purposes.

Contact Us

For questions related to the Major Infrastructure Program, please email ECDSInfrastructure@novascotia.ca.