

# ALBERTA EARLY LEARNING AND CARE WORKFORCE STABILITY PROJECT



## ECE Wage Grid Recommendations

A review of the compensation framework for the development of a target values-based wage grid for early childhood educators in Alberta.

Phase 2: Focus Groups with Owners and Operators

Report 2.0 Preliminary findings

## Introduction

Since May 2022, the Alberta Early Learning and Care Workforce Stability research team has partnered with AECEA, ECELC, and the University of Alberta to create a compensation framework and wage grid recommendation for early childhood educators in Alberta. [\*The Alberta Compensation Framework Report: ECE Wage Grid Recommendations\*](#) was released in February 2023.

In July and August 2023, the team conducted eight focus groups with 35 owner-operators to understand their perspectives on the recommended wage grid for ECEs. All regions, program types, and auspices were represented. While the full report is being compiled, here are some preliminary findings.

## Purpose

The purpose of the second phase of the project was to determine:

- what impact the wage grid and non-salaried compensation might have on the sector,
- how implementing the wage grid and a non-salaried compensation package might affect owners/operators, and
- what is needed to implement a provincial wage grid effectively.

We used a workbook and semi-structured interview guide during the conversations and covered the following four topics:

- the compensation philosophy from *The Alberta Compensation Framework Report*,
- the wage grid recommendation,
- non-salaried compensation, and
- five funding models.

## Responses

### Compensation Philosophy

All participants agreed with the philosophy and understood that the statements could move the sector forward toward professionalization and ECEs' feeling valued.

### Wage Grid Recommendation

All participants agreed in principle with the wage grid recommendation and expressed the following thoughts and concerns:

- include competencies to move along the grid,
- create a Level 4 or ECE3+ certification for ECEs who attain higher credentials,
- create additional grids for administration and support staff that encompass additional responsibilities, and
- index the wage grid for regions and inflation and update over time.

### Non-Salaried Compensation

Many owner-operators offered some form of non-salaried compensation. They noted that this is where competition for ECEs can lie. More details of the scope and scale of non-salaried compensation will follow in Report 2.0.

### Funding Models

All owner-operators expressed concern over how they would be able to operate if a wage grid was incorporated. They all wanted quality at the forefront of decision-making while meeting the needs of the children, families, and educators.

The biggest concerns of all owner-operators were:

- loss of autonomy,
- red tape and reporting requirements,
- receiving funds months after submitting claims and having to front the funds, and
- how a wage grid could be implemented while there was a 3% cap on raising fees.

## Food for Thought

It was noted that funding models that deviated from the current top-up model were difficult for some participants to understand fully. Some participants thought the current model worked well, while others believed it fell short of compensating for all hours worked. Some participants also had difficulty trusting other funding models as many have faced difficulties with timely payments in current funding models.

Any new funding approaches must be explained thoroughly with assurances that autonomy would exist for programming, reporting would be meaningful, and payments timely.

As these are preliminary findings, additional details will be released soon.

**AECEA**

Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta



**ecelc**

Edmonton Council for  
Early Learning and Care



**Community-University Partnership**  
for the Study of Children, Youth, and Families



**EVALUATION  
CAPACITY  
NETWORK**