
Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Professional Development (PD) and Release Time (RT) Funding

- The Government of Alberta recognizes the essential role early childhood educators (ECEs) play in delivering high-quality early learning and childcare (ELCC).
- A well-qualified ECE workforce is critical to supporting children, families, and licensed childcare programs and family day home (FDH) agencies across the province.
- Alberta is committed to strengthening the ECE workforce by supporting educators to pursue further education, advance their certification levels, and grow their careers.
- The new **Early Childhood Educator Workforce Supports Program** beginning April 1, 2026, reflects this commitment by focusing professional development (PD) and release time (RT) funding on certification advancement, leadership development, and building pedagogical competencies aligned with *Flight*, Alberta's ELCC curriculum framework.
- Changes also improve transparency by updating the approval criteria and the funding request process.

Frequently Asked Questions:

General Questions

Why is the program changing?

The program is being updated to support long-term sustainability while providing more targeted learning opportunities for early childhood educators (ECEs).

Professional development (PD) and release time (RT) funding focuses on helping ECEs advance their certification levels, develop leadership skills, and build the pedagogical competencies needed to implement *Flight*, Alberta's early learning and childcare (ELCC) curriculum framework.

What is changing?

Eligibility requirements, approval criteria, and funding request processes for PD and RT funding are changing.

The PD and RT funding amounts and rates for ECEs are not changing.

Further details can be found in the Fact Sheet and the Funding Guide for Early Childhood Educator Workforce Supports available on April 1, 2026.

How will these changes improve the program?

The changes focus funding on training that strengthens skills, supports career growth, and improves quality in licensed childcare.

- Level 1 and Level 2 ECEs are supported to advance to higher certification levels.
- Level 3 ECEs are supported to build leadership skills.
- All ECEs can access training to build the pedagogical competencies needed to implement *Flight*, Alberta's ELCC curriculum framework.

Were stakeholders consulted before making these changes?

Yes. Stakeholder conversations took place with organizations representing key ELCC sector groups in Alberta.

This stakeholder input was considered and incorporated into the design of the new Early Childhood Educator Workforce Supports Program.

Overall, feedback supported a more focused and targeted approach to ECE PD and RT funding to strengthen workforce capacity and ensure program sustainability.

When will the updated program take effect?

The updated program will come into effect on April 1, 2026.

Are wage top-ups and mandatory employer contribution funding changing?

No. Wage top-ups and the associated mandatory employer contribution funding remain unchanged.

Wage top-ups will continue to be paid to certified ECEs or contracted family day home (FDH) educators based on certification level and eligible hours worked up to 181 hours per month.

The associated mandatory employer contribution funding will continue to be paid to offset the required payroll expenditures to administer the wage top-up funding.

How will the changes support recruitment and retention of ECEs?

The PD and RT funding changes support the ECE workforce with access to targeted professional development opportunities that increase ECE skills, competencies and certification levels, supporting career growth in the ELCC sector.

Funding Allocations

Will ECEs still have access to the same amount of PD and RT funding as before?

Yes, a combined total of up to \$4,387.50 per ECE per fiscal year in PD and RT funding is still available to eligible ECEs, including:

PD funding (up to \$2,000):

- up to \$1,500 for post-secondary tuition and textbooks, and
- up to \$500 for workshops and conferences.

RT funding (up to \$2,387.50):

- up to \$1,600 for post-secondary coursework (\$800 per 3-credit course up to two courses), and
- up to \$787.50 for workshops and conferences (\$17.50 per hour up to 45 hours).

Can ECEs move funding between the PD and RT categories?

No. Funding amounts must only be used for the designated category.

For example, ECEs cannot apply the \$500 designated for workshops and conferences towards post-secondary tuition or textbook costs.

Funding Eligibility and Approval Criteria

Are funding eligibility requirements for ECEs changing?

Yes, new funding eligibility criteria have been introduced.

ECEs must now work a minimum of 720 hours in licensed childcare in Alberta over the past two years. This is an increase from 29 hours.

Hours worked are based on eligible wage top-up hours claimed and paid in the last 2 years by the date of completion of the post-secondary course, workshop or conference.

Eligible training options now vary by certification level.

For more information, please refer to the Fact Sheet and the [draft Funding Guide for Early Childhood Educator Workforce Supports](#).

Are there other changes to approval criteria?

Yes.

Post-secondary PD and RT funding is limited to ELCC credit courses from Canadian institutions for Level 1, 2 and 3 ECEs.

- For institutions licensed in Alberta: An ELCC credit course must be from an approved institution listed in Appendix D of the [Certification Guide for Early Childhood Educators](#).
- For institutions licensed outside of Alberta and within Canada: An ELCC credit course must be from a recognized institution in Canada.
- ECE Bursary applicants are not eligible for post-secondary PD or RT funding.

Workshops and conferences must be selected from the 2026/27 Approved List of Workshops and Conferences. Workshop and conference funding will support:

- Level 1, 2 and 3 ECEs to improve their pedagogical competencies for implementing the *Flight* curriculum, and
- Level 3 ECEs to enhance their leadership skills.

For more information, please refer to the Fact Sheet, Approved List of Workshops and Conferences, and the [draft Funding Guide for Early Childhood Educator Workforce Supports](#).

How do these changes support professional growth?

The updated program better aligns PD and RT funding with ECE certification levels and career progression. Funding is focused on training that builds relevant skills, strengthens leadership capacity, and supports certification advancement.

By prioritizing post-secondary courses, workshops, and conferences that align with *Flight* and ELCC practice, the program supports ECEs and FDH educators to deepen their knowledge, improve pedagogy, and apply learning directly in licensed childcare and FDH settings.

These changes also provide clearer expectations about eligible training, helping ECEs and operators make informed decisions about professional learning.

All eligible ECEs continue to have access to the same PD and RT funding rates, while benefiting from a more targeted and transparent approach to workforce development.

What if a workshop or conference is not on the approved list?

If a workshop or conference is not on the approved list, ECEs may still pursue that training opportunity at their own cost.

What if a post-secondary course is not approved?

If a post-secondary course is not approved, ECEs may pursue that training opportunity at their own cost.

To be eligible for post-secondary PD and RT funding, an ECE must complete an ELCC credit course offered by a Canadian institution that contributes to increasing their certification level and/or educational credentials.

What are the leadership skills identified for PD and RT funding for Level 3 ECEs?

ECE leadership skills include pedagogy, program and curriculum design, program management, and program administration.

Leadership courses were determined on a course-by-course basis, by a review of the content and outcomes.

How did you determine Alberta-based training providers?

Alberta-based training providers were identified using information from an organization's official website indicating an Alberta mailing address and/or physical location.

Will there be changes to the approved list of workshops and conferences eligible for PD and RT funding?

No. The ministry is publishing a list of approved workshops and conferences eligible for PD and RT funding on April 1, 2026. This list will be in effect until March 31, 2027.

No new offerings will be approved in 2026/27. Approval of new workshops and conferences for 2027/28 will be considered prior to April 1, 2027, when a process is established.

Transitional Policy

How do these changes affect PD and RT funding before March 31, 2026?

PD and RT funding for training paid for and completed in 2025/26 will continue to follow 2025/26 eligibility criteria until March 31, 2026.

PD Funding Request forms must be submitted by March 31, 2026, to be considered for approval.

I paid for a workshop or conference that will be completed on or before March 31, 2026. What do I do?

PD Funding Request forms received within the 2025/26 fiscal year for workshops and conferences completed by March 31, 2026, will be processed according to the 2025/26 eligibility criteria.

It is important that these PD Funding Request forms are submitted no later than March 31, 2026, to be considered for approval.

I paid for a workshop or conference that will be completed after March 31, 2026. What do I do?

For workshops or conferences completed after March 31, 2026:

- PD Funding Request forms received on or before March 31, 2026, will be assessed under the 2025/26 criteria.
- Funding requests received on or after April 1, 2026, must meet the new 2026/27 requirements and be submitted using the new application form, available after March 31, 2026.

I enrolled in or paid for a post-secondary course on or before March 31, 2026. What do I do?

For post-secondary coursework:

- PD Funding Request forms for courses paid for on or before March 31, 2026, must be submitted by March 31, 2026.
- Funding requests submitted after April 1, 2026, for these courses will not be accepted.

Funding Request Process

Is the funding request process changing?

Yes, there are changes to the funding request process and requirements starting April 1, 2026.

- Applicants must submit acceptable receipt of payment and proof of completion for all eligible post-secondary courses, workshops and conferences before any PD or RT funding can be disbursed. An exception is in place for approved workshops and conferences offered at no cost to the ECE, where only proof of completion is required.
- Applicants are required to request reimbursement after the ECE's completion of the post-secondary course, workshop or conference, using the PD Funding Request form.

Changes have also been made to PD and RT funding to improve transparency and help ease administrative burden.

- A public list of the approved workshops and conferences is available, making it easier for operators and ECEs to determine the training ECEs are eligible to receive funding for.
- Eligibility for post-secondary courses is narrowed, helping operators support ECEs to pursue further education in ELCC that can contribute to increased certification levels and educational credentials.

Do childcare operators still need to administer PD and RT funding for ECEs?

Yes. Operators will continue to apply for reimbursement on behalf of eligible ECEs and transfer PD and RT funds to them as before.

Applicants are now required to apply for reimbursement with acceptable receipt of payment and proof of completion, along with submission of the PD Funding Request form.

Starting April 1, 2026, RT is no longer available for employers.

Are the timelines for submitting funding requests changing?

Yes. Operators and ECEs are now required to apply after post-secondary course, workshop or conference completion, with a completed PD Funding Request Form, receipt of payment and proof of completion within the following timelines:

- For workshops and conferences, applicants must submit a PD Funding Request Form, along with receipt of payment and proof of completion, within three calendar months of completion or by March 31, 2027, whichever is sooner.
- For post-secondary coursework and textbooks, applicants must submit a PD Funding Request Form, along with receipt of payment and proof of completion, within three calendar months of completion, or for courses started between January and March 2027 within three calendar months of completion or by June 30, 2027, whichever is sooner.

Can the assessment decision for my PD and RT funding be changed?

If an ECE disagrees with the outcome of an assessment, they may request an administrative review via email within 30 days from the decision date sent to the program.

Requests submitted after this period will be declined.

All administrative review requests must be submitted via email to the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Supports Program at: childcarefunding@gov.ab.ca.