



Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) Start-up Grant Guideline

Peel Region

Community-based child care centres

Participating in Peel's CWELCC program

Released: 2025

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Section 1: Introduction

The governments of Canada and Ontario are implementing the [Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care \(CWELCC\) program](#) to lower child care fees, and build a licensed child care system that is high-quality, easy to access, affordable, and inclusive. To deliver CWELCC access for all families, the Ontario government has committed to a directed growth plan to expand licensed child care in priority communities serving diverse and underrepresented populations. The Province is supporting expansion with Start-up Grants.

The Start-up Grant is an application-based grant available to eligible child care providers who have been approved to expand under CWELCC in Peel. In 2025, in alignment with Peel's [CWELCC expansion plan and application process](#), we are prioritizing the grant for non-profit child care providers.

This grant supports the creation of new community-based, full-day licensed child care spaces for infants, toddlers and preschoolers only in Peel's priority communities (see [Peel's priority communities mapping tool](#)). Approved funding can be used to offset eligible costs required to meet Ministry of Education (EDU) licensing requirements to expand or create spaces, and includes equipment or minor renovation projects, such as retrofits, renovations, expansions, or leasehold improvements.

This guideline outlines Peel Region's Start-up Grant requirements for eligible, centre-based child care providers.

1.1 - General eligibility criteria

To be eligible for a Start-up Grant, you must:

- Be a licensed child care provider or in the process of becoming licensed, with priority given to non-profit agencies.

- Be approved for a CWELCC expansion project in Peel and agree to participate in the system for the remainder of the current federal and provincial CWELCC agreement that ends on March 31, 2026.
- Create **new** community-based, full-day licensed spaces for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers only in Peel's priority communities or within 2km of a priority neighbourhood. See [Peel's priority communities mapping tool](#) for more information.
 - **NOTE:** A change in auspice does not qualify a child care provider for the Start-up Grant. Child care providers who change the auspice of an existing site are not eligible for the Start-up Grant unless expansion beyond the current licensed capacity is planned.
 - We will only assess eligibility if an existing site submits a project plan which demonstrates intent to create net new licensed spaces beyond those listed in the primary capacity of Schedule 1 of the current licence issued by EDU. Only the net new licensed spaces created will be eligible for the grant, and only eligible expenses necessary to meet EDU licensing requirements will be considered.
- Make every effort to expand licensed spaces to serve a maximum group size for each age grouping.
 - Each age grouping has a maximum number of children allowed in a group, based on the [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014](#) (CCEYA):
 - Infants: 10 (staff to children ratio: 1:3)
 - Toddlers: 15 (staff to children ratio: 1:5)
 - Preschoolers: 24 (staff to children ratio: 1:8)
 - Ideally, the Start-up Grant should be used to create new licensed spaces that accommodate up to the maximum number of children allowed in a grouping.
 - However, based on space limitations, it may be necessary to align expansion to the maximum allowable capacity for each age group that is

possible within the available square footage, with consideration to staffing ratios as outlined in the CCEYA. See [Section 16.1\(a\) of the CCEYA](#) for more information on area requirements.

- Spend the grant and open the new licensed spaces by December 31, 2026.
- Have business management practices that align with Peel's priorities identified in the [Early Years and Child Care Service System Plan](#).

1.2 - Key information

- We are accepting Start-up Grant applications, which are submitted as part of CWELCC expansion applications, on an ongoing basis. Eligible child care providers may apply at any time. Please note that this grant is subject to funding availability.
- Applications will be reviewed with consideration to project scope. We will prioritize funding for projects where project scope can be successfully completed by December 31, 2026.
- You must reconcile funding for approved projects and follow the reconciliation requirements provided based on your project scope.
- If you are approved for a Start-up Grant, you may qualify for reimbursement on eligible expenses that you incurred prior to notice of grant approval. Peel will only consider eligible expenses incurred by active expansion projects which have not yet received a new or revised licence for the new spaces by EDU.
 - Expansion projects are considered closed once you receive your new or revised licence from EDU. You will not be eligible for retroactive Start-up Grant funding for a site that is licensed.
- Once your expansion project is complete, the newly-created spaces must appear in the primary capacity of Schedule 1 of your new or revised licence issued by EDU. If there is a discrepancy between the licensed capacity and the spaces Peel originally approved for expansion, we will work with you on the reconciliation process.

- You must return your approved Start-up Grant allocation (spent and unspent) if you:
 - Do not complete your approved expansion project by December 31, 2026.
 - Opt out of CWELCC.
 - Close your centre.

Section 2: Eligible and ineligible expenses

NOTE: For complete details on eligible and ineligible expenses, see Schedule “B” of the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Start-up Grant Funding Agreement and [EDU's CWELCC Funding Guidelines](#).

2.1 - Eligible expenses

The Start-up Grant is intended to support eligible expenses necessary for child care providers to meet the licensing and operational requirements to open new licensed child care spaces.

Equipment and furnishing expenses

- Play materials, equipment, and furnishings (both indoors and outdoors) as outlined in [Section 19 of O. Reg. 137/15](#) under the CCEYA.
- Non-consumable supplies and equipment to support the ongoing regular operation of the child care program such as appliances, IT, supplies to support learning environments while following health and safety requirements.

Minor renovation expenses

- Renovations, additions or repairs to licensed full-day child care centres or potential child care centres as approved by Peel Region.

- Changes to outdoor play space that are required as a result of the expansion of child care spaces in the centre so that the child care provider continues to comply with [Section 24 of O. Reg. 137/15](#) under the CCEYA.
- Leasehold improvements.
 - A leasehold improvement is a change made to the interior space of a leased property to meet the operational needs of the child care provider.
 - For example, partitioning a large space to create smaller program rooms.
- Other costs which are reasonable for the purposes of creating, retrofitting, renovating, or expanding a licensed child care space as approved by Peel Region. These may include consultant fees for certified architect or engineering services, municipal permitting costs, or other skilled trade costs.

2.2 - Ineligible expenses

Examples of ineligible expenses for Start-up Grant projects include:

- Capital costs of construction for a newly-built site.
- Purchase of land or buildings.
- Debt costs including principal and interest payments related to capital loans, mortgage financing, and operating loans.
- Lease costs.
- Property taxes.
- Equipment, furniture and/or minor renovation expenses related to routine maintenance, repairs and/or replacement at an existing site which is not completing an approved expansion project that will create net new spaces.
- School-based licensed child care spaces (in other words, licensed child care spaces located in publicly-funded schools).

- Costs to expand or create licensed child care spaces for programs that run before and/or after school or during school hours for kindergarten or school-age children.
- All other ineligible expenses, as outlined in the Start-up Grant Funding Agreement.

2.3 - Funding allocation

We will determine your allocation at the time of project approval in alignment with EDU guidelines and available funding.

While EDU has established maximum funding benchmarks, you are not guaranteed to receive these amounts. Start-up Grant allocations are based on available funding and project demand. We intend to fund as many applications as possible to support our focused expansion efforts in Peel.

Peel is prioritizing the Start-up Grant for the creation of new, community-based full-day spaces that serve infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. We calculate Start-up Grant allocations based on net new spaces for these eligible age groups only.

Section 3: Project phases

3.1 - Phase 1 - Project application and review

Application requirements

Eligible child care providers interested in the Start-up Grant must apply using the [CWELCC Expansion Application](#). The application, along with all required supporting documentation as outlined in the application, must be submitted to Peel Region by email to EarlyYearsSystemDivision@peelregion.ca. We are accepting applications on an ongoing basis.

Please note that your CWELCC Expansion Application must be approved by Peel Region before we can review the associated Start-up Grant Application. For more information on CWELCC application requirements, see the [CWELCC expansion plan and application process](#).

The CWELCC Expansion Application and relevant information is also available on [Peel's website](#).

Application review

We will verify that your application form is complete and that all supporting documentation has been submitted.

We will assess if the proposed project scope aligns with EDU's requirements for the Start-up Grant and with Peel's local priorities for expansion. We will also assess the complexity of the proposed project scope to determine the required level of project oversight and documentation.

If your application package is incomplete, we will send you an email detailing the outstanding documentation and the timeline for submitting the required information. If we do not receive the information on time, the application may be considered invalid.

3.2 - Phase 2 - Project approval and funding allocation

We will determine if your project can be approved after we review your application. The amount of funding is limited, so we are not able to guarantee that funding will be available for all applications.

Depending on application volume, it may take us up to four weeks to complete our review and get back to you with the results. We will email you to let you know if your project has been approved or declined.

Once a project is approved, we will send you a conditional approval letter which will show the maximum funding allocation available for the project and outline any additional documentation requirements. Depending on the project scope and complexity, Peel Region may assign a Project Monitor to your project. You will be notified in your conditional approval letter if this is the case.

If a Project Monitor is assigned, we will schedule a mandatory project kick-off meeting to review the Start-up Grant Funding Agreement and your roles and responsibilities. This meeting will provide your project team with an opportunity to meet Peel's Project Monitor and Early Years and Child Care Services (EYCCS) Capital Team. See [Section 3.3](#) for more details.

If a Project Monitor is not assigned, you will receive the Start-up Grant Funding Agreement for review and signature. Once all parties sign the agreement, the project will formally begin.

3.3 - Phase 3 - Project execution

For all minor renovation projects, you and your professional team will be accountable for all planning, execution, and oversight of the project.

Minor renovation projects require an assigned Project Manager. The Project Manager will be the main point of contact for us to request any project updates or documentation. As the child care provider, you may choose to take on the role of the Project Manager, or you may hire someone for the role.

In most cases, based on project scope, minor renovation projects require an architect and/or engineer certified in the province of Ontario, serving as the Project Consultant.

Start-up Grant payments

All projects that have been assigned a Peel Project Monitor will receive progress payments. For projects that are not assigned a Project Monitor, you will receive your approved allocation once you have signed the Start-up Grant Funding Agreement.

First payment

To receive your first payment, you must:

- Sign the Start-up Grant Funding Agreement.
- Submit all required documents to your Project Monitor.
- Arrange a site visit with your Project Monitor.

Once these steps have been completed, your Project Monitor will work with you to plan your first payment based on the needs of your project. You will have the option to receive an advance payment of up to 10% of your approved allocation to support project initiation costs, such as permitting expenses. You will work with your Project Monitor to reconcile the advance payment once you begin to receive regular progress payments.

Progress Payments

Once your project begins to incur regular expenses, you will request progress payments.

It is important to note that progress payments are:

- **Reimbursements** for completed work, supported by valid invoices and receipts.
- **Pro-rated** against the total project budget, and not the approved allocation, to ensure payments are proportional to the percentage of project scope completed.
- **Certified pre-tax** (GST and HST). Some child care providers may receive a reimbursement from the federal and/or provincial governments for a portion

of their tax. To maintain an equitable approach for all providers, Peel certifies payments before tax.

- Note: You will not be provided with additional funding to cover tax.
 - Your approved allocation represents the maximum funding you will receive for your project. You will be responsible for any project costs incurred beyond the maximum approved funding allocation.

If you received an advance payment, you must report how you used the advance when you make a request for your first progress payment. The request for your first progress payment must be greater than the value of the advance. If applicable, you must also provide the building permit and all associated documents (such as drawings) before you can receive progress payments.

To request a progress payment, you must submit a billing package for your Project Monitor's review (also see [Appendix 1](#)). The billing package must include your:

- Completed budget template (provided by Peel), which shows your total project budget, the expenses incurred for which payment is requested, and supporting invoices.
- Completed schedule template (provided by Peel), which shows the project scope completed to date and a current project schedule.
- Consultant's payment certification, where applicable.

Your Project Monitor will review the billing package and may set up a meeting and/or site visit with your Project Manager. Your Project Monitor will then approve your progress payment, which you will receive in the next payment period. You will continue to make requests for progress payments until you reach substantial completion.

You are accountable throughout the project life cycle to meet all contractual financial obligations to your contractor, consultants or other vendors, including your obligations as defined in the [Construction Act, 1990](#).

You will need to track funding for the approved project separately from any other business matters. To ensure accountability, you must establish a separate and dedicated interest-bearing account at a Canadian financial institution to deposit the project funding. You may also establish another method of safekeeping of the funding satisfactory to Peel so that it is possible to readily identify and track the funding.

Second-last Payment

Your second last payment will be issued once you have achieved substantial completion. You must:

- Have your Project Consultant complete the certificate of substantial completion.
- Submit a copy of Form 9, confirming your substantial completion to your Project Monitor.
- Submit the final inspection report, if applicable.

Once these steps have been completed, you will receive 97% of your approved allocation, less 10% holdbacks for construction costs.

Note: This calculation assumes that your total eligible expenses are equal to or greater than your approved allocation. If they were less than your approved allocation, we will determine your payment accordingly.

Final Payment

You will receive your final payment once you have received your licence for the new child care spaces from EDU and you have demonstrated that you spent your allocation on eligible expenses. Your final payment will be the remaining 3% of your allocation and the release of the 10% holdbacks for construction costs.

Notes:

- This calculation assumes that your total eligible expenses are equal to or greater than your approved allocation. If they were less than your approved allocation, we will determine your final payment accordingly.
- Your final payment and total allocation may be adjusted based on the number of net new spaces created, as reflected in Schedule 1 of your newly-issued licence. If you are licensed for fewer spaces than you were originally approved for, we may recover the difference in funding.

Payment Schedule

Peel Region operates on a monthly payment schedule. Start-up Grant payments are sent to child care providers in the first few days of each month (for example, February 3, March 3, April 1, May 1, etc.).

To receive a payment, submit your request and all required documentation to your Project Monitor as early in each month as possible. The deadline for Project Monitors to approve progress payment requests is mid-month. Your Project Monitor must be provided with enough time to review and approve your request. Otherwise, you may experience a delay until the next payment period to receive your progress payment.

Project monitoring and status reporting

For all approved projects, we will require routine reporting to monitor successful completion within the designated timeframe.

We will confirm required reporting with you based on the project scope, which may include:

- **Project status reporting** to document project progress, such as completed milestones and outstanding scope, budget status, identified risks and mitigation strategies.
- **Site visits** by Peel's Project Monitor (or alternate) at various project milestones to confirm project status and the use of funding for approved purpose(s).

- **Routine meetings** before, during and at the end of the project.
- Keeping all **original receipts** and other **supporting documentation** for a minimum of seven years.

You must inform Peel Region of any risks that will impact the approved project's progress and/or schedule, quality or budget.

3.4 - Phase 4 - Project close-out and reconciliation

Once the project is complete, you are responsible for:

- Completing all required inspections and close-out of building permits and any other local requirements with the applicable municipality.
- Completing all EDU licensing requirements for the new space.
- Submitting a final funding reconciliation to your Project Monitor for review along with any requested supporting documentation.
- Completing two reports on GovGrants. See [Section 5.1](#) of this guideline for more details.

Once you complete these steps, we will issue a Project Close-out Letter.

Section 4: Mandatory child care provider requirements

Section 4 provides information relevant if you are completing minor renovation projects. These requirements should be scaled accordingly based on the approved project scope in consultation with EDU, local municipalities and your professional team.

You are accountable to meet all legislative requirements applicable to the scope of the project, including the CCEYA and the [Construction Act, 1990](#).

4.1 - EDU requirements

You are responsible to contact EDU for advice on your minor renovation project and the licensing requirements outlined under the CCEYA:

- New child care providers - email EDU at childcare_ontario@ontario.ca or call the central inquiry line at 416-325-2929 or 1-800-387-5514.
- Child care providers currently operating - contact your EDU Program Advisor for more information on licensing.

For information on planning your child care space, please refer to EDU's guide: [Planning and Design Guidelines for Licensed Child Care Centres, 2022](#). You can also find helpful information in Peel's [CWELCC expansion plan and application process](#).

For minor renovation projects to existing licensed child care centres that impact licensed capacity, rooms, and / or outdoor space (such as play structures), you will need to contact your EDU Program Advisor. Please notify your Program Advisor if there will be any disruption of service or if the work will take place during regular hours where children would need to be displaced or moved.

EDU and Peel Region are not responsible for assessing compliance with the Ontario Building Code. It is your responsibility to consult your local municipality for all relevant requirements. In most cases, minor renovation projects must have an architect or engineer certified in the province of Ontario confirm that the space will meet the requirements in the Ontario Building Code for child care centres.

4.2 - Procurement of services

To ensure that costs are aligned with fair market commercial rates, all services must be procured through a fair and transparent process. This includes services for a Project Manager, architect, and contractors. If you have a preferred vendor, you may select them if they are procured, and their rates align with industry standards.

Agreements with the contractor you choose must be documented through a small works construction contract or the applicable Canadian Construction Documents Committee (CCDC) agreement.

Any work procured and/or conducted as a non-arm's length transaction will not be eligible for funding unless you can show that it was done at fair market value. A non-arm's length transaction is a transaction (such as project work) completed between people who are related by blood, marriage, common-law partners, or adoption.

4.3 - Barrier-free design

When designing the floor or site plan, you are encouraged to incorporate barrier-free design elements in cases where it may not be required under the [Ontario Building Code](#). This could include designing the space to include wider doors and washroom spaces to accommodate wheelchairs or including accessible door handles and buttons.

4.4 - Site safety plan

For approved projects at existing licenced child care centres, you will need to develop and implement site safety considerations. This may include:

- Construction noise level during set periods of the day such as nap time.
- Ensuring the health and safety of children (for example make construction materials inaccessible to children).
- Preventing workers from having access to children.

4.5 - Local municipal consultations

Building permit and site plan approvals

You are responsible for contacting the relevant municipality's Planning and Development Services department to understand the guidelines, zoning and drawing

requirements for the building permit and site plan approval processes relevant to your project scope.

To support the Building Permit process, please ensure you have completed working drawings and specifications. These drawings are to be provided by a registered architect and engineer licensed to practise in Ontario in the disciplines of structural, heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC), plumbing, electrical, and civil engineering.

Under [Section 41 of the Planning Act, 1990](#) through the site plan review process, municipalities must review proposed development activities such as new construction, additions, site or building conversions, renovations and other changes to a property. Through the site plan approval process, the relevant municipality obtains comments from all outside agencies that have jurisdiction on the project. Site plan approvals are required before applying for a building permit.

As a first step in the site plan review process, you should contact the Planning and Development Services department in the relevant municipality to discuss your proposed project and consult with your local building division to learn more about other applicable legislation and approvals required.

4.6 - Hiring project manager and certified consultants

Under the Start-up Grant Funding Agreement, you must retain the services of professionals familiar with construction regulations including the [Construction Act, 1990](#).

An assigned Project Manager is required for all projects. Based on project scope, in most cases, a consultant who is an architect or engineer certified in Ontario will be mandatory to oversee the project scope, extent, and schedule of work to be completed and to provide administration of all contractor contracts. The consultant

will be responsible for payment certifying the scope and cost of work completed as part of the progress payment process.

4.7 - Insurance requirements

You must meet all insurance requirements as outlined in the Start-up Grant Funding Agreement. At a minimum, insurance requirements include:

- **Commercial General Liability Insurance:** Limits of not less than \$5,000,000.
- **All Risks Property Insurance:** Including Boiler and Equipment Breakdown coverage, extended to include course of construction/builder's risk coverage for the period of the project of not less than 1.1 times the contract price.
- **Performance Bonds:** May be required and will be assessed with each project, based on project scope.
- **Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)** coverage and all other proper insurance required to be in place for contractor and sub-trades involved in the project.

You will provide us with certificates of insurance or other proof as requested to show the required insurance coverage is in place for the project.

Section 5: Reporting and accountability requirements

You should refer to the Start-up Grant Funding Agreement and the [Service Provider Handbook](#) for further information on reporting and accountability requirements.

5.1 - Reporting requirements

Audited financial statements

You will have until December 31, 2026 to spend the Start-up Grant, and to license and open the approved new licensed child care spaces.

Your auditor must include a supplementary schedule or Notes to the Financial Statements when submitting their fiscal year-end Audited Financial Statements. The following information must be included in a table:

- A: Start-up Grant funding received in this fiscal year
- B: Start-up Grant funding spent on eligible expenses (as outlined in the Start-up Grant Funding Agreement and this guideline) by project for the fiscal year
- C: Deferral amount to next fiscal year (if applicable, in accordance with the Start-up Grant Funding Agreement and this guideline)
- A-B-C: Unused amount to be recovered

Reconciliation reporting

Once your expansion project is complete, you will need to submit two final Start-up Grant reports. You will be provided with any relevant direction before the due date of your reconciliation.

On GovGrants, you must submit:

1. Reconciliation report: The total amount of Start-up Grant spent
 - Note: This reported number cannot exceed your total approved allocation, even if your total project costs were greater than this amount.
 - Upon project completion, unspent funding and/or funding not used for the intended purpose will be recovered.
2. Progress report: The number of net new licensed spaces created by age group (infant, toddler, preschool).

NOTE: When a project is complete, there may be a discrepancy between the number of net new spaces originally approved and the actual number licensed. Funding may be adjusted at the time of reconciliation to align with the actual number of net new spaces created for infant, toddler and preschool age groups, as listed on Schedule 1 of the licence issued by EDU.

5.2 - Audit

You may be contacted to complete a review of approved funding through Peel Region's audit selection process, or through mandatory audit procedures from the federal or provincial governments. We also reserve the right to conduct check-ins at any time to assess your actual and projected expenditures.

5.3 - Funding cancellation and recovery

We reserve the right to reduce, revise, and/or cancel approved funding, and, if applicable, recover any payments that have already been provided in cases which include:

- You opt out of CWELCC before the federal/provincial agreement ends.
- A project is delayed for an unreasonable length of time.
- Substantial changes to the scope are made after funding has been approved.
- The approved project is not completed.
- The approved project ceases operation, dissolves, is sold or otherwise disposed of. Projects with documented serious viability concerns could be exempted from this provision at Peel's discretion.
- Funding is not used according to the terms of the Start-up Grant Funding Agreement.
- Funding was used to generate a revenue or contribute (directly or indirectly) to reserves, surplus, profit and/or retained earnings as applicable.
- Funding was used for expenses that were supported by other federal, provincial, or regional programs or grants / discounts.
- You close permanently or your agency's or program's assets are sold in an asset sale within 12 months of receipt of funding.
- Other circumstances as outlined in the Start-up Grant Funding Agreement.

5.4 - Non-compliance

Non-compliance takes place when you do not meet established deadlines for submitting required information , documents, reporting, or do not meet your obligations as outlined in all relevant funding agreements, Peel’s funding guidelines and the [Service Provider Handbook](#).

When non-compliance is identified, Peel Region will take steps as outlined in the Compliance Policy (see the [Service Provider Handbook](#), Appendix D).

Section 6: Contact us

If you have any questions about the Start-up Grant, please contact us at EarlyYearsSystemDivision@peelregion.ca.

Appendix 1: Invoices / receipts

You should be sure to submit paid receipt(s) and/or invoice(s) with each progress payment billing package, and with the final reconciliation upon project completion, as required. We will review this information to approve progress payments, ensure compliance with eligible expenses and determine whether any recovery of funds is required.

You must track the following information for paid invoices and receipt components:

- Name of company or individual providing the service.
- Customer or client name and address.
- Invoice number.
- GST or HST number.
- Description or scope of work involved and amounts.
- Total cost, plus tax amount = total cost after tax.

Please ensure that receipts clearly itemize the item(s) purchased related to the approved project. Receipts containing only receipt codes or item numbers will be returned for clarification.

If you are submitting a paid invoice rather than a receipt, you must document proof of payment on the invoice. For example, the date the invoice was paid, a cancelled cheque, an e-transfer confirmation, a credit card statement, or a bank statement.

NOTE:

- HST amounts will not be paid on invoices that do not provide a GST / HST number from the vendor.
- Funding can only be used for the approved purpose.
- Final payment is subject to Peel Region's approval.

Funding can only be used for eligible expenses for the approved project. Peel Region reserves the right to withhold and/or recover funds that are not used by December 31, 2026 for the approved project purpose.