



Major Projects Application Guide

Early Childhood Infrastructure Fund

April 2026

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Introduction

The Early Childhood Infrastructure Fund (ECIF) is for projects that expand existing infrastructure of licensed centre-based child care spaces or create new licensed centre-based child care spaces in NWT communities. ECIF is available for both multi-year and single-year projects.

ECIF features three distinct funding streams, *Minor Projects*, *Major Projects*, and *Developmental (Needs Assessment)* Funds, each with its own application process.

This application guide is for Major Projects funding stream.

Under the *Major Projects stream*, eligible organizations can submit applications for projects that cost over \$250,000 in total value. This stream will fund costs for new builds, renovations and retrofits that create spaces for licensed centre-based early learning and child care in NWT.

Under this stream:

- Projects do not have an established maximum ECIF funding amount. ECE will provide reasonable funding based on how much funding is available each year;
- Project funds can be used to support construction project management, actual construction, and the procurement of materials and supplies;
- Projects must be shovel-ready or at the construction stage, and must have received development and/or building permit approvals;
- Project funds **cannot** be used for planning and design development, obtaining permits and approvals, business planning, or needs assessments.

Priority for ECIF Major Projects funding will be given to projects that demonstrate the greatest impact on reducing child care shortages, which include:

- a) Communities where no licensed early learning and child care programs currently exist;
- b) Underserved communities where the licensed early learning and child care programs available do not meet expressed demand;
- c) Programs for families who identify as vulnerable or equity seeking families, including those with children with specific developmental needs; and
- d) Existing licensed programs that have extensive waitlists and wish to expand their capacity.

Who can apply

To be eligible for the ECIF Major Projects funding, applicants must be:

- organizations who are registered and in good standing under the [NWT Societies Act](#) or be a recognized Indigenous government and/or community government.
- Indigenous organizations
- Non-profit organizations
- Education bodies.

All applicants must meet one or more of the following conditions:

- currently operate a licensed early learning and child care program; or
- intend to apply for a license to operate a licensed child care centre.

All applicants must demonstrate how they will meet regulatory requirements 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 infrastructure projects, and which are incurred and paid by the applicant that increase access to child care, help to maintain existing child care spaces, and advance inclusion in early learning and child care programs.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) is **not** responsible for any eligible project costs incurred by the applicant prior to approval of funding and the signing of a Contribution Agreement specific to the project and the identified costs.

Eligible project costs include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Leasehold improvements where a minimum five-year lease agreement is in place and the lessor is arm's length from the applicant and/or the project.
- 2) Professional fees to support construction project management, actual construction, and the procurement of materials and supplies, including those associated with construction administration.
- 3) Site preparation
 - Demolition
 - Remediation
 - Blasting (to level site, clear vegetation, etc.)
 - Civil work (water, sewer, electrical connections)

- 4) Construction and renovation:
 - Construction materials and supplies
 - Construction labour and skilled trades
 - Purchase and installation of modular structures
 - Building assembly and installation
 - Transportation of modulars to the community site (if applicable)
 - Construction project management
 - Decks
 - Fences
 - Driveways (paving)
 - Sod installation/landscaping (subject to design)
 - Signage

- 5) Other costs which are reasonable for the purposes of retrofits, renovation or construction and completion of the project, as approved by ECE.
 - Flooring
 - Roof
 - Water pump
 - Boiler repairs

Ineligible project costs include, but are not limited to:

1. Pre-construction costs
 - Permitting and approvals (development and building permits)
 - Engineering and design
 - Architectural drawings
 - Site pre-preparation 1
 - Environmental Assessments
 - Geotechnical Assessments
 - Survey
2. Costs related to property acquisition or purchase of land
3. Expenditures made prior to the project being approved for funding
4. Costs of leasing land, and equipment
5. Financing charges, including interest costs, and loan interest payments
6. Furniture, fixtures and equipment (these items may be eligible for funding under [New Child Care Spaces Fund](#))
7. Third Party's legal fees
8. Business plan development
9. Website development
10. Feasibility studies
11. Proponent contingency fund (it is standard for quotations to include a contingency factor)

12. Operational costs (rent, mortgage, utilities, insurance, staff wages, travel, lease payments or mortgages.)
13. Advertising
14. Leasing equipment other than equipment directly related to the project
15. Operation and maintenance costs
16. Real estate fees and related costs
17. Expenditures for equipment that is readily movable and suitable for personal use such as: computers, furniture, toys/equipment, musical instruments, etc.

If you have questions about eligible expenses, please email: elcc_operations@gov.nt.ca

Applying for funding

Applications for the ECIF Major Projects funding are accepted throughout the year. There is no deadline to apply

How to apply

1. Download the [ECIF Major Projects Application Form](#).
2. Gather the required supporting documents, see Appendix A and B.
3. Fill out the application form
4. Submit your completed application form and supporting documents by Secure File Transfer using FileDrop.

To use FileDrop;

- Save the application form to your computer
- Fully complete the application form
- Follow this link <https://sft.gov.nt.ca/filedrop/~5Cyggi> to Filedrop. Authenticate your email and then upload your application to filedrop.

Before submitting your application and supporting documents please read [how to submit files using a secure file transfer \(SFT\) email](#).

You can also submit your completed application form and supporting documents by:

Mail: Early Learning and Child Care
Department of Education, Culture and Employment
Government of Northwest Territories
P.O. Box 1320, Yellowknife, NT X1A 2L9.

If you have questions or need advice in preparing your application, email:
elcc_operations@gov.nt.ca

Required documents

The following documents are required as part of the completed application package:

1. Major Projects Application Form
2. Business Plan (checklist provided), i.e.,
 - environmental scan and analysis,
 - people strategy, including recruitment and retention plans
 - operating plan
 - capital and infrastructure project plan,
 - program viability and financial sustainability plan, etc.
3. Project budget, with detailed information on each budget item.
4. Project schedule (timelines and milestones)
5. Supplementary documentation as referenced in the application, including but not limited to:
 - Site layout, schematic design (based on project), and/or floor plans
 - Development and building permit(s), where applicable.
 - Quotes/estimates supporting project costs
 - Minutes of the governing body or Board of Directors authorizing the application
 - Written confirmation of funding sources, including private donations and services in-kind
 - Written approval from property owner, if in a leased building
 - Documents to support demonstrated need
 - Letters of support from the community in favour of this project (Optional)

Incomplete applications will be returned with instructions on what information is required to be provided within 30 days. If the required information is not supplied within 30 days, the application is considered withdrawn.

Application processing

After submitting an ECIF application, an applicant can expect the following:

- ECE will assess the application for completeness as well as eligibility for major projects funding, assuming sufficient information is available to make that assessment.
- All requests will be reviewed by a team appointed by ECE.
- Applicants will be contacted if additional information is needed.
- ECE will inform the applicant within 30 days if their request for major projects funding is approved, not approved, or is under consideration. Please note that being under consideration does not guarantee funding approval.

Note: If additional information is requested by ECE, the applicant must provide the material within 30 business days, unless an extension has been granted. Failure to submit the required information may result in the proposal being removed from consideration and the applicant may be required to reapply for funding.

Assessment and approval

Review of ECIF Major Project funding requests occur within 30 days of receiving the application. Projects deemed viable by the proposal review team may be recommended for approval.

ECIF Major Projects funding allocations will depend on the overall budget, the number of funding requests received, community needs, and the availability of funds. To support as many projects as possible, the maximum amount of infrastructure funding may vary based on financial hardship, project costs and availability of resources.

ECE will provide a decision to an applicant within 30 days of receiving a complete funding application.

Requests for Major Projects funding may be approved without conditions, approved with conditions, or not approved.

- a. If the request for ECIF Major Projects funding is not approved or the project does not meet the eligibility criteria, the applicant will receive an email explaining the decision along with feedback on their request for funding.
- b. If the funding request is conditionally approved, the applicant will receive a conditional approval letter via email. The letter will outline the specific conditions that must be met to receive ECIF Major Projects funding, as well as the timelines for submitting the required information. If the applicant is unable to meet the conditions within the agreed upon timeline, the conditional funding offer will be withdrawn.
- c. If the funding request is approved without conditions, the applicant will receive an approval letter via email. The letter will outline general funding terms.

Funding decisions will be based on the following criteria:

1. **Funding eligibility** – The application meets all requirements, including applicant and projects eligibility and demonstrates the facility can meet applicable licensing requirements.
2. **Financial feasibility** – The application demonstrates that the project can be completed within the total available funding for their project type.
3. **Strength of the application** – The application form is submitted along with all required information and documentation, meeting the funding criteria and requirements.
4. **Operational viability** - The application demonstrates viability by providing a proposed operational budget and staffing plan.
5. **Project support (if applicable)** – The application demonstrates the availability of additional project support, such as other sources of funding (from other levels of government, organizations, or the applicant) at the time of application or secured during the duration of the project.
6. **Readiness to proceed** – The applicant confirms they are ready to begin the project. The application must include a project schedule, detailing activities, timelines and anticipated completion dates.

All funding decisions are final. There is no appeal process.

Payment claims and reimbursement

Applicants approved for funding will receive a Contribution Agreement by email which will outline the terms of funding, payment schedule, and reporting requirements.

Fund Recipients can claim reimbursement for eligible project expenditures after those costs have been incurred. Claims must include all relevant invoices, supporting documents, and use the template outlined in the Contribution Agreement.

Expense claims are to be required as frequently as quarterly, in accordance with the terms set out in the Contribution Agreement.

A claim will be reviewed upon submission. If additional information is needed to process the claim, program staff will follow-up with the fund recipient.

All funds **must** be spent within the Government of the Northwest Territories' fiscal year in which they are allocated, unless the application has been approved for multi-year funding, or unless

Organizations can only start incurring expenses from the date of signature of the Contribution Agreement and will be reimbursed for eligible and approved project costs ONLY.

written has approval has been granted to carry funds forward to the next fiscal year. Unspent funds may be recovered by the Government of Northwest Territories.

Accountability

Recipients are required to use the funding only for the purposes for which it was approved and to report on the outcomes of the funded project. Specific reporting requirements and timelines will be outlined in the Contribution Agreement and will include but are not limited to a project report and an expenditure report.

Failure to provide the required report may result in the recipient being required to repay the full amount of funding to the Government of Northwest Territories.

Facility licensing

If applicable, applicants receive information on licensing and program requirements as part of the infrastructure project support process.

ECE strongly recommends that applicants contact the [Regional Early Childhood Consultant](#) to discuss floorplans before construction to ensure the new facility will meet ELCC Regulations.

Once the project reaches substantial completion, an Early Childhood Consultant will complete the licensing process.

A license may be issued after all regulated licensing requirements under the *Early Learning and Child Care Act* and Regulations have been met.

Appendix A: Business Plan Checklist

The business plan must contain the following information:

- Executive Summary
- Mission and Vision
- Organization Structure
- Market and competitive environmental scan and analysis, including discussions on the strategic value and positioning of the proposed programming in relation to the wider early learning and child care system in the NWT
- People Strategy, including recruitment and retention
- Operating Plan
- Capital and infrastructure project plan, including capital cost estimates as well as the number of new spaces that will be created
- Program viability and financial sustainability plan
- Financial projections (statements) for first five years of operations, including:
 - Income statement
 - Balance sheet
 - Statement of cashflow
 - Analysis of funding source and capital investment requirement
 - Discussion of assumptions and comments

Appendix B: Major Projects Application Checklist

Prior to submitting an ECIF application form:

- Review this Major Projects Application Guide

Applications must include the following:

- ECIF Major Projects Application Form
- Minutes of the Board of Directors or Governing Body authorizing the application
- Business Plan – see Appendix A: Business Plan Checklist
- Project budget, with detailed information on each budget item
- Architectural plans or designs (site layout, schematic design, and/or floor plans)
- Development and/or building permit(s)
- Confirmation of ownership/leasehold or partnership agreement and written approval from property owner, if in a leased property)
- Quotes/Project estimates supporting project costs
- Written confirmation of funding sources, including private donations or services in-kind. Attach a letter confirming the source and amount of project cost covered (if applicable)
- Project timelines, milestones, and the proposed opening date of the child care facility.
- Results of a needs assessment for the project (if applicable)
- Letters of support from the community in favour of this project (Optional)
- Other supporting documents (if applicable). Please list the documents in the area below:

