

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE CIRCULAR

Date: March 26, 2026

CIRCULAR NUMBER: ELCC-2026-01

To: All funded child care centres and nursery schools

Subject: 2026/27 ELCC Wage Grid and Rate Increases for Wage Grid Supplement / Base Operating Grant - CENTRES

Effective Date: April 1, 2026

Type:	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy	<input type="checkbox"/> All Facilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action Required
	<input type="checkbox"/> Procedure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Centres	<input type="checkbox"/> Information Only
	<input type="checkbox"/> Licensing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nursery Schools	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Financial	<input type="checkbox"/> Family/Group Homes	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Subsidy		

This circular is to advise all funded early learning and child care (ELCC) centres (including nursery schools) about:

- 1) The 2026/27 ELCC Wage Grid (see Appendix A)
- 2) An increase to Wage Grid Supplement that will be applied to the operating grant amount effective April 1, 2026, and the next steps for implementing the 2026/27 ELCC Wage Grid.
- 3) An increase to the base operating grant rates effective April 1, 2026.

Manitoba and Canada recognize investing in the growth and stability of the ELCC workforce is critical to increasing access to more affordable, high-quality child care across the province.

Effective April 1, 2026, the Wage Grid Supplement is being increased by \$14.3 million (\$13.4 million from Canada and nearly 1 million from Manitoba) to support facilities with increasing wages to at least the Target Wages on the 2026/27 ELCC Wage Grid. Base operating grants will also increase by one per cent for an increase of \$4.7 million (\$2.5 million from Canada and \$2.2 million from Manitoba) in operating funding for all licensed and funded early learning and child-care facilities.

The Wage Grid is a key initiative of the [Higher Wages, Good Jobs, More Child Care Early Learning and Child Care Workforce Strategy](#). The increases to the ELCC Wage Grid are designed to improve recruitment and retention efforts for a qualified child care workforce, supporting our commitment to expand the child care system in Manitoba.

The annual operating grant rates are made up of the base operating grant amount and the Wage Grid Supplement amount.

1) Base Operating Grant Rate

A one per cent increase to the base operating grant rates will be provided effective April 1, 2026. It is targeted for use towards operational expenses, administrative costs and programming support, and will help support the board of directors of non-profit centres in their efforts to balance their facility's budget.

2) Wage Grid Supplement to the Operating Grant

Funded facilities receive a Wage Grid Supplement as additional funding included in their operating grant to support increased wages. This supplement increase will be provided effective April 1, 2026. It was calculated based on the unit funding model to provide a 2 per cent increase to the overall revenue generated per space (base operating grant, Wage Grid Supplement, Reduced Parent Fee Revenue Grant and parent fees).

Maximum Annual Operating Grant Rates by Space Type in Centres

(Base Operating Grant + Wage Grid Supplement = Total Operating Grant)

Annual Amount per Approved Funded Space *		
Type of Space	As of April 1, 2025	Effective April 1, 2026
Centres		
Infant	\$19,916	\$20,644
Preschool	\$8,260	\$8,597
School Age	\$3,767	\$3,936
Nursery School		
1 to 5 sessions per week	\$2,566	\$2,687
Each additional session up to 10/week	\$513	\$537

* Amounts based on 12 months of operation

Operating Grant Payments

- The new operating grant rates will be used to calculate grant funding for centre operating budgets submitted and assessed after the mass re-assessment of grants has been implemented.

Reporting Requirements

The revenue from the increases to the base operating and the wage grid supplement amounts and the increased expenditure for staff wages must be demonstrated in your next annual operating budget submission and your annual financial statements.

ELCC Wage Grid Overview

Since 2022, a wage grid supplement has been provided and applied to the operating grant for funded facilities to support increases to wages. Each subsequent year the wage grid supplement and the target wages have been increased.

In response to sector feedback and to provide greater clarity, the structure of the Wage Grid underwent several key changes for the 2025/26 iteration, and included the largest increase to front-line ECE wages in Manitoba's history:

- The *Starting Point* hourly wage column was removed.
- The *Target Hourly Wage* became the expected amount to be paid to staff based on their position/classification.
- The categories for *Position/Classification* under Frontline Staff were modified to include only one category for an ECE II and a new category for a "CCA-in-ECE II Training" to acknowledge and support CCAs who are actively pursuing education leading to an ECE classification.

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning recognize the critical importance of continuing to improve wages for the sector to support recruitment and retention. The increases to the *Target* wages in the 2026/27 Wage Grid support the ELCC workforce at all classification levels and positions and provide greater incentives to engage in education and career development opportunities.

The Wage Grid provides guidance to the non-profit ELCC sector in developing equitable and competitive salary scales across employee positions/classifications. As the legal entity and authority for a non-profit child care centre, the board of directors is responsible for establishing wages.

The increased Wage Grid Supplement will assist facilities in meeting or exceeding the increased *Target* wages for all classification/position levels on a facility's salary scale. This approach preserves the authority of boards of directors while ensuring consistent and better wages for the ELCC workforce.

Next Steps for Boards of Directors

As the employer, the board of directors is responsible for the development of the facility's salary scale for employees, from frontline staff to directors. The 2026/27 ELCC Wage Grid provides the *Target* wage an employee of that position/classification should receive in a funded facility, while providing the board of directors the flexibility to implement their own salary scale, with higher wages as revenues allow.

To implement the Wage Grid increase, boards of directors should:

- Review position descriptions, roles and responsibilities to account for and include positions not specified on the ELCC Wage Grid, e.g. administrative roles.
- Review and compare your facility's current salary scale to the hourly wages listed on the 2026/27 Wage Grid.
- Review the increased Wage Grid Supplement being provided as part of the Operating Grant effective April 1, 2026 to confirm the increased amount of funding that is to be applied to increasing wages in your facility.
- Adjust your salary scale accordingly.

- Adjust your budget to reflect the increased operating grant revenue and increased costs for proposed staff wages.
- Review and approve your revised salary scale and budget according to your facility's bylaws, policies and procedures.
- Provide payment to employees at your facility's new salary levels effective April 1, 2026.

Implementation Resources

- For additional information, see [2026/27 ELCC Wage Grid and Rate Increases for Wage Grid Supplement / Base Operating Grant - Frequently Asked Questions](#).
- Register for one of the following webinars. Registration links are provided in the cover email for this circular:
 - 1:30p.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 9, 2026
 - 6:00p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 9, 2026
- The 2026/27 Wage Grid, effective April 1, 2026 is available at: www.manitoba.ca/education/childcare/students_workforce/wage_grid.html.
- Online Tool-Kit for Board of Directors - Wage Grid Implementation: www.manitoba.ca/education/childcare/centres_homeproviders/centrebased_childcare/financial_management.html#toolkit.
- For a copy of circulars, FAQs or to view past webinar sessions, visit: www.manitoba.ca/education/childcare/childcare_news/current_circulars.html.
- Learn more about Manitoba's early learning and child care action plans under the agreements with Canada at: www.manitoba.ca/education/childcare/actionplan.html.

If you have any further questions regarding the information in this circular, please email Child Care Information Services at cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca with the subject line "Increased Rates for Base Operating Grant and Wage Grid Supplement" or call 204-945-0776 (toll free:1-888-213-4754).

Appendix A

2026/27 Early Learning and Child Care Wage Grid*	
Position/Classification	Target Hourly Wage
Director ECE III	
151-200 Spaces	\$40.56
51-150 Spaces	\$37.99
50 Spaces or Less	\$35.67
Director ECE II	
151-200 Spaces	\$38.65
51-150 Spaces	\$36.08
50 Spaces or Less	\$33.77
Assistant Director	
ECE III	\$33.61
ECE II	\$31.71
Supervisor	
ECE III	\$31.87
ECE II	\$29.91
Frontline Staff	
ECE III	\$30.27
ECE II	\$28.36
CCA-in-ECE II Training	\$23.02
CCA (with 40-hour course)	\$19.97

* Effective April 1, 2026

Definitions:

To view the sections of the Child Care Regulation referred to below, visit https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/regs/current/_pdf-regs.php?reg=62/86

CCA (with 40-hour course): a person who has been issued a certificate as a Child Care Assistant under Categories of Certificates Section 3.1 and has completed a 40-hour course related to early childhood education, as required under Staff Qualifications Section 7(11.1) for centre employees or under Licence Application Section 22(1)(g) for family child care homes and Licence Application 35(2)(m) for group child care homes.

CCA-in-ECE II Training: a person who has been issued a certificate as a Child Care Assistant under Categories of Certificates Section 3.1 and is completing approximately six courses/18 credit hours per year in a recognized ECE program or is a participant in the ELCC ECE II Assessment Program (formerly called Competency Based Assessment/Prior Learning Assessment).

ECE II: a person who has been issued a certificate as an Early Childhood Educator (ECE) II under Categories of Certificates Section 3.1.

ECE III: a person who has been issued a certificate as an ECE III under Categories of Certificates Section 3.1.