

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE
Outdoor Early Childhood Education Grant
Frequently Asked Questions for Facilities (FAQs)
Circular # ELCC-2025-01

1. What is the Outdoor Early Childhood Education Grant?

The Outdoor Early Childhood Education Grant is a \$2M initiative under the [Canada-Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care \(Bilateral\) Agreement](#). The Outdoor Early Childhood Education Grant provides a one-time funding opportunity for early learning and child care (ELCC) facilities to promote high quality outdoor play experiences for young children aged 0 to 6.

The main goals of the grant are to:

- Incorporate outdoor education into children's daily curriculum
- Provide increased opportunity to enhance children's learning and develop a deeper understanding of self through outdoor education
- Foster authentic connection with the land by incorporating First Nations, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, traditional values, and knowledge

2. What types of projects are eligible under the Outdoor Early Childhood Education Grant?

The Outdoor Early Childhood Education Grant aims to fund projects under three streams. These streams support components that sector feedback and current research had identified as critical to promoting outdoor learning:

- a. **Professional Learning** – Intended to support participation in professional learning and training opportunities with a pedagogical focus on outdoor and land-based approaches.

Funding includes registration fees for conferences, courses, seminars and workshops and the cost of substitute/s, allowing educators/providers to attend said training. Out-of-province travel expenses and accommodations are **not** supported under this grant.

Potential learning opportunities may be available from, but are not limited to, the following organizations:

- [Forest and Nature School Practitioners Course - Child and Nature Alliance of Canada](#)
- [Fort Whyte Alive](#)
- [Outdoor Play Canada](#)
- [Take Me Outside](#)

- b. **Outdoor Space Enhancement** – Intended to improve the facility’s outdoor space and/or infrastructure, to encourage outdoor exploration, support young children’s development and engagement, increase accessibility, and incorporate the unique benefits that playing outdoors could offer. Enhancements and renovations should continue to align with existing codes, regulations, child care design guidelines, and leasehold agreements.

Funding includes, but is not limited to:

- Installation of outdoor play equipment or infrastructure
- Major repairs or maintenance for aging outdoor play facilities
- Renovations to improve or increase accessibility
- Outdoor shade or protection from the elements

NOTE: *For home-based providers, only 50 per cent of individual project costs can be claimed for investments to the home that improve shared spaces, which are spaces used by the home when the children are not present. This includes, but is not limited to, fencing, paving, walls, gates, patios and sod.*

- c. **Materials and Equipment** – Intended to provide the necessary materials and equipment to enable children and staff to participate in regular and repeated outdoor play, across the seasons, in all weather, and for extended periods of time. Funding may also be used to encourage family and community involvement in enriching outdoor play practices and pedagogies.

Examples of eligible purchases/projects include, but are not limited to:

- Outdoor gear lending library for children and staff – e.g. sets of outdoor clothing and footwear readily available to individuals who may need them
- Nature backpacks
- Wagons
- Pop-up greenery or community gardens

Eligible costs must be purchased or procured between **April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026.**

3. **What expenses are not eligible under the Outdoor Early Childhood Education Grant?**

- Elements of projects that do not support the grant’s goals and intentions
- Expenses incurred prior to April 1, 2025
- Expenses incurred after March 31, 2026
- Expenses covered by another grant funding source
- Out-of-province travel expenses and accommodations
- Gift cards, gifts, prizes, and/or incentives for participation
- Staff salaries, bonuses or compensation apart from wages for substitutes to allow staff to attend eligible outdoor ECE training

- Individual or centre professional memberships
- Purchasing land and/or buildings
- Projects or activities that generate a profit
- Direct fundraising activities or events
- Alcohol or cannabis related products
- Regular program expenses, such as the cost of food
- Ongoing expenses such as subscription costs of software for accounting, child care management software, internet, etc.
- Purchases that do not provide benefit to staff or children

4. Who can apply for the grant?

Licensed family/group child care homes and licensed non-profit child care centres and nursery schools that provide services to infant or preschool children, whether exclusively or partially, can apply for the grant.

5. We are a licensed non-profit centre that offers care to kindergarten and school age children. Can we apply for the grant?

Yes, since kindergarten children are considered preschool children, your facility would be able to apply for the grant.

6. Are facilities that only have school-age spaces eligible to apply?

As per the [Bilateral Agreement](#), federal investments offer support for children under the age of 7. Therefore, licensed facilities that offer care exclusively to school-age children, with no infant or preschool spaces, would not be eligible for this grant.

7. I am a licensed unfunded home-based provider. Can I apply for the grant?

Yes, both funded and unfunded licensed home-based facilities are eligible to apply.

8. How much grant funding is available per facility?

The maximum available per facility is up to **\$2,500** for licensed family/group child care homes and up to **\$25,000** for licensed non-profit child care centres and nursery schools that provide services to infant and preschool children.

9. How do I apply?

Child care facilities must submit:

- A completed application form. The electronic form is [available here](#).
- A clear description of the project and the facility
- A breakdown of costs and/or quotations (if applicable/feasible)

Child care facilities may submit one application per facility number and may include more than one project stream in the application.

10. What is the Outdoor Early Childhood Education Grant Application deadline?

The application deadline is at 11:59 PM on **February 14, 2025**.

11. How are child care facilities selected for the grant?

Selection of successful applicants is based on a combination of factors and criteria.

Mandatory technical requirements include:

- Provision of care to infant and/or preschool children – Licensed family/group child care homes and licensed non-profit centres and nursery schools
- An average minimum utilization rate of 80% of licensed spaces
- Good standing with respect to other granting programs (e.g. Quality Enhancement Grants, Child Care Sustainability Trust, etc.)

Prioritization criteria include:

- Projects supporting one or more of the initiative's main goals of:
 - Incorporating outdoor education into children's daily curriculum
 - Providing increased opportunity to enhance children's learning and develop a deeper understanding of self through outdoor education
 - Fostering authentic connection with the land by incorporating First Nations, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, traditional values, and knowledge
- Projects that address health and safety concerns
- Program and community impact (e.g. number of educators to receive training, number of infant/preschool children benefitting from the project, barriers to outdoor play being addressed, etc.)

This grant funding is merit and application-based and dependent on availability of funding. Eligibility, prioritization criteria and project outcomes will be considered in the application review process.

12. We are a multi-site organization. Can we pool funds from multiple sites to fund a larger project at one site?

Yes. Each site, with its own facility number, is eligible for the maximum grant amount available per facility. The Department recognizes that early learning and child care facilities in Manitoba offer outdoor programming in varying capacities, as it is impacted by a range of factors, including physical location (rural, urban), availability of a designated outdoor space and financial resources. To help improve quality for all children, families and staff, you are encouraged to use the grant to support site-specific projects that meet your organization's needs.

Funding may be combined to support larger purchases or to fully fund a larger project. Your financial report must clearly indicate the expenses that are attributed to each facility.

13. Our facility has a long-term outdoor project for which we are currently fundraising; can we reserve some of this grant, past March 31, 2026, towards the realization of our plan?

No, this is a one-time grant that must be expended prior to March 31, 2026.

14. Are second-hand purchases eligible under the Quality Enhancement Grants?

Yes, quality second hand purchases are eligible if the items are included within the eligibility criteria. An itemized receipt must be retained including the item description, cost, seller's name and address (company or individual) and contact information (email or phone number).

15. For home-based providers, are these grants considered as earned income at the end of the tax season?

Please consult with an accountant or an outside financial analyst to consider how receiving these grants may impact your business.

16. If the grant funding is not fully utilized, will it be recovered?

It is expected that all grant funding will be used toward eligible expenses by March 31, 2026. Facilities may be asked to repay funds that have not been used by the deadline.

17. I have plans of closing my facility in the near future, can I still apply for the grant?

Facilities receiving the grant must be committed to remaining open and operational for at least two years following the grant's eligibility period of March 31, 2026 (i.e. until March 31, 2028). Facilities unable to meet this condition may be asked to repay the funds received under the Outdoor Early Childhood Education Grant.

18. What are the terms and conditions for accepting this grant?

In accepting the Outdoor Early Childhood Education Grant, the Board of Directors and management of the child care facility or the licence holder/s agree to spend the funding according to the grant's main goals and criteria. Facilities are also expected to adhere to their organizational policies, bylaws, and exercise due diligence with any capital or leasehold improvements.

All grant funding must be used toward eligible expenses by March 31, 2026.

With the [Bilateral Agreement](#) serving as a mechanism to support initiatives that have long term impacts on the workforce and the development of programs and services, facilities receiving the grant must be committed to remaining open and operational for at least two years following the grant's eligibility period of March 31, 2026 (i.e. until March 31, 2028).

Recipients unable to meet the above-mentioned terms and conditions may be asked to repay the funds received under the Outdoor Early Childhood Education Grant.

19. What kind of reporting is required for the grant(s)?

Grant recipients will be required to:

- Spend all funds by March 31, 2026.
- Provide regular project status updates—frequency to be stipulated by the department.
- Submit a final report outlining grant expenditure and project impact and activity by April 30, 2026. The reporting template will be provided by the department to successful grant applicants.
- Agree to keep a record of what was purchased along with all receipts.

Additionally, grant recipients authorize the Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning to collect information and documentation considered necessary:

- To ensure projects are progressing in a timely manner,
- To verify that funds have been used to support its intended purpose and ensure accountability for provincial and federal funding, and
- For maintaining and analyzing statistical information as may be required by Manitoba and/or Canada.

20. Do I need to submit my receipts with the final report?

Receipts for purchases made with the grant(s) do not need to be submitted with the final report, however they should be retained for review by Canada Revenue Agency, facility auditor/bookkeeper and/or Early Learning and Child Care.

21. Are there any resources that can guide me through planning for this grant?

The following resources may be helpful:

- [Child and Nature Alliance of Canada](https://childnature.ca/) (<https://childnature.ca/>)
- [Thrive Outside](https://childnature.ca/thriveoutside/) (<https://childnature.ca/thriveoutside/>)
- [Outdoor Play Canada](https://www.outdoorplaycanada.ca/resources/) (<https://www.outdoorplaycanada.ca/resources/>)
- [Fort Whyte Alive](https://www.fortwhyte.org/educators/professional-development/) (<https://www.fortwhyte.org/educators/professional-development/>)
- [Outside Play](https://www.outdoorplaycanada.ca/portfolio_page/outsideplay-ca) (https://www.outdoorplaycanada.ca/portfolio_page/outsideplay-ca)
- [The Nature Playbook](https://parks-parcs.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/nature-playbook.pdf) (<https://parks-parcs.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/nature-playbook.pdf>)
- [Risk Benefit Assessment for Outdoor Play: A Canadian Toolkit](https://www.outdoorplaycanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Risk-Benefit-Assessment-Toolkit.pdf) (<https://www.outdoorplaycanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Risk-Benefit-Assessment-Toolkit.pdf>)
- [Seven Cs: an informational guide to young children's outdoor play spaces](https://sala.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/documents/7Cs.pdf) (<https://sala.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/documents/7Cs.pdf>)

22. Who can I contact for more information?

Visit the early learning and child care website at:

www.manitoba.ca/education/childcare/centres_homeproviders/providers_resources/grants.html

For additional inquiries, email ELCC-Quality@gov.mb.ca with the **subject line** ***“Outdoor Early Childhood Education Grant”***.