

Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Quality Enhancement Program Policy and Standards Manual

Record of Updates for ELCC Quality Enhancement Program Policy Guide

Version	Date	Updates
1.0	July 2021	Initial Launch
1.1	June 2022	Policy Guide

Program Overview

The intent of the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Quality Enhancement Program is to enhance quality in regulated child care services through consultation regarding program design, learning processes, interactions with children and their families, children's community engagement and enhancements to physical environments.

Participation in the ELCC Quality Enhancement Program is open to all regulated child care services. This program offers dedicated Child Care Consultants (Quality) who work with, and provide consultation to, all regulated child care services that wish to participate. This includes, but is not limited to, access to tools for self-reflection, program quality, facilitating access to services, mentorship and dialogue with the quality consultant. Other areas for consideration are professional learning opportunities and structural aspects of the learning environment that enhance the quality of learning and child care. Evidence-based curricular enhancements and professional learning opportunities strengthen the sector's capacity to enhance the quality of early learning and child care for all children participating in the regulated child care services sector.

Child care services are welcome to participate in the quality enhancement program when they indicate interest in writing to the program email. A Quality Enhancement Grant is available to participating child care services, in consultation with the ELCC Quality Enhancement Program consultants.

Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Quality Enhancement Program

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Policy Cross References: n/a

Legislative References: n/a

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

1.0 Definitions:

- 1.1 Child Care Consultant (Quality): A person who provides collaborative, professional learning and advisory services pertaining to early learning and child care quality, as stated within this policy.
- 1.2 Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Quality Enhancement Program: A consultation program designed for participation by staff at a regulated child care service, to enhance early learning and child care quality in terms of program design, learning processes, interactions with children and their families, and structural aspects of learning environments.
- 1.3 ELCC Quality Enhancement Grant: Pre-approved funding provided by the ELCC Quality Enhancement Program to reimburse costs (as described within this policy) relating to quality enhancement initiatives identified jointly by the administrator or licensee and the Child Care Consultant (Quality). Cost sharing is required as per section 5.3.
- 1.4 ELCC Quality Enhancement Grant Application: An application to access pre-approved funds, as defined in policy, required to attend professional learning sessions, to host professional learning or mentoring sessions, or to implement enhancements to materials, equipment, and/or programming resources under the advisement of a consultant and as stated within this policy. Cost sharing is required as per section 5.3.

- 1.5 ELCC Quality Enhancement Program Components:
- 1.5.1 Consultation with a Child Care Consultant (Quality).
 - 1.5.2 Quality Enhancement Grant
 - 1.5.3 Child Care Resource Program (formerly Equipment Grant Program)
- 1.6 ELCC Quality Enhancement Program Registration: The formal process of registering a child care service to participate in the ELCC Quality Enhancement Program consists of the completion of the Initial Consultation Form by the Licensee or their Authorized Delegate together with the Child Care Consultant (Quality). Quality Enhancement Program registration is not an application process. All regulated child care services are welcome to register and participate. Services may inquire about the program by emailing ELCCQEP@gov.nl.ca.
- 1.7 Child Care Resource Program: The Child Care Resource Program will be offered once per fiscal year by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to support regulated child care services with greater access to quality equipment and materials to enhance their program. NOTE: Details of the program will be forthcoming.
- 1.8 Extenuating Circumstances: Extenuating circumstances are unforeseen situations that impact the timeline or conditions of ELCC Quality Enhancement Program plans, and fall outside of the control of a child care service or a Quality consultant.
- 1.9 Materials and/or Equipment: Materials and equipment are particulars of the physical learning environment used directly by children and/or educators specifically for early learning and child care.
- 1.10 Learning Process Quality: Everyday experiences of children and all staff at the child care service that involve the social, emotional, relationship, learning and care aspects of all interactions during arrivals, departures, field trips, play, rest, meals, routines, responsibilities, transitions and other activities.
- 1.11 Mentoring: A professional relationship between colleagues that facilitates the sharing of knowledge and expertise. Within the context of ELCC, mentoring may occur as professional learning embedded within daily early learning and child care practices.

- 1.12 Professional Learning: Learning opportunities designed to improve professional knowledge and practices related to quality early learning and child care.
- 1.13 Quarter: A quarter is a three month period, each covering one quarter of the government fiscal year – April 1st to June 30th (1st Quarter), July 1st to September 30th (2nd Quarter), October 1st to December 31st (3rd Quarter) and January 1st to March 31st (4th Quarter).
- 1.14 Regulated Child Care Service: A child care service (child care centre or family child care home) which has been issued a valid child care Licence, or an Approval certificate from a licensed family child care agency.
- 1.15 Structural Quality: Implementation of standards of learning and the quality of the physical learning environment. For example, scheduling, planning, curriculum, program enhancement, educator qualifications, and the learning environment.
- 1.16 Affirmative and Reflective Interactions: Consultation between Child Care Consultants (Quality) and child care services during participation in the Quality Enhancement Program is intended as collegial and professionally nourishing. By focusing on positive interactions and paying close attention to what is happening, children's interests, and the flow of play, projects and routines at the service, collaborative conversation will lead to opportunities to enhance learning processes.

2.0 Child Care Consultant (Quality):

- 2.1 Works with participating ELCC administrators, early childhood educators and all staff at the child care service to facilitate quality enhancements in programming, interactions with children and families, learning processes, and structural aspects of the learning environment.
- 2.2 Collaborates and consults with regulated early learning and child care services to identify opportunities to enhance children's engagement with/in their learning environments.
- 2.3 The consultant reviews, processes and recommends or denies eligible ELCC Quality Enhancement Grant Applications and the Child Care Resource Program (in development).

- 2.4 Advises on ELCC Quality Enhancement initiatives and oversees funding implementation, this may include a review during site visits to services to ensure appropriate use of program resources.
- 2.5 Holds a minimum of Level II Child Care Services Certification plus three years of experience working in regulated child care services (or equivalent).

3.0 ELCC Quality Enhancement Program – Consultation

- 3.1 All regulated child care services are eligible to participate in ELCC Quality Enhancement consultation.
- 3.2 Participation in consultation processes is voluntary and non-adversarial.
- 3.3 If a Quality Consultant observes potential legislative non-compliance while visiting a service, it will be followed up with the licensing inspector(s).
- 3.4 Those who wish to register to participate in the ELCC Quality Enhancement Program must participate in an initial consultation with a Child Care Consultant (Quality) during which the Initial Consultation Form will be started and/or completed. The Initial Consultation Form is submitted by email to the consultant. It includes:
 - 3.4.1 A signed Initial Consultation Form.
 - 3.4.2 A description of the service's own evaluation and/or enhancement plan/s;
 - 3.4.3 A rationale for how consultation supports the service's evaluation and/or enhancement plans and how the plans are linked to the policy, legislation, Early Learning Framework, or other recognized ECE literature / research.
 - 3.4.4 A Child Care Consultant (Quality) will contact the service within 15 working days of receiving an initial email inquiry to the program, to set up a time for the first consultation and to answer any questions.
 - 3.4.5 Contact will continue minimally once per quarter or as needed, as mutually determined by the child care service provider and the Child Care Consultant (Quality).
 - 3.4.6 If a service is non-responsive to communication with the Child Care Consultant (Quality) during a quarter they are considered to be inactive in the program. Consultation may be re-activated in a subsequent quarter at the request of the child care service.
- 3.5 There is no charge for quality consultation.

- 3.6 The ELCC Quality Enhancement consultation is intended as
- early learning and child care service-based;
 - co-constructed;
 - affirmative;
 - reflective;
 - relationship-based; and
 - is informed by current, evidence-based early learning and child care innovations.
- 3.7 Consultation addresses two primary domains:
- 3.7.1 Learning Process Quality and
- 3.7.2 Structural Quality.
- 3.8 Consultation aims to improve the abilities of all staff at the child care service to create the conditions for all children within their care to thrive.
- 3.8.1 Consultation (Quality) is a strengths-based, asset-focused, and capacity-building initiative.
- 3.8.2 Consultation (Quality) is affirmative and collaborative; aggressive or abusive behaviors towards Child Care Consultants (Quality) will not be tolerated and may result in the termination of consultation processes.

4.0 ELCC Quality Enhancement Program – Grant:

- 4.1 To qualify for the ELCC Quality Enhancement Grant, eligible applicants must:
- 4.1.1 Submit a complete and signed ELCC Quality Enhancement Grant application with the collaboration of a Child Care Consultant (Quality) at least one month prior to the end of the quarter to allow for purchase/payments and grant processing by the end of that quarter. Grant applications submitted within the last month of a quarter will be eligible for consideration during the next quarter with revisions required to match the date requirements of the new quarter.
- 4.1.2 Regular participation in the consultation process during the quarter is a prerequisite for all Quality Enhancement Grant Applications submitted in the quarter.
- 4.1.3 If a grant is awarded to a child care service that closes within six months of the reimbursement, a prorated repayment of the grant will be required and a credit note will be placed on the service file.

- 4.2 All ELCC Quality Enhancement Grant application packages must:
 - 4.2.1 Include a rationale for how the requested funding supports play, learning processes, the service's evaluation and enhancement plans and how the plans are linked to the policy, legislation, Early Learning Framework, or recognized ECE literature / research.
 - 4.2.2 Be submitted and approved prior to the date of purchase or of the registration date for professional learning.
 - 4.2.3 Include quotes or price estimates and associated costs for professional learning and other items as requested in writing by the Child Care Consultant (Quality).
 - 4.2.4 Include three quotes for materials or equipment, where the total cost of the grant application exceeds \$2000 or is requested in writing by the Child Care Consultant (Quality). Though the lowest quote is typically accepted, a different quote may be accepted if accompanied by a sufficient rationale.
 - 4.2.4.1 Where three quotes are unavailable fewer quotes may be acceptable with approval of the extenuating circumstances.
 - 4.2.5 A complete application package must be submitted to the Child Care Consultant (Quality) by email.
 - 4.2.6 The Department of Education will provide a percentage of the funds (as per section 5.3 of this policy) required by regulated child care service providers within The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador for the purpose of enacting program quality enhancement initiatives described within this policy.
 - 4.2.7 Successful applicants will be notified by email within 10 business days of receipt of a complete application package. The email will include the conditions for the grant and for reimbursement.
 - 4.2.8 A separate email will be sent through the Management File Transfer with the service authorization number to be used on the external invoice.
- 4.3 Grant Application Process
 - 4.3.1 Submission of a grant application is not a guarantee of funding.
 - 4.3.2 Quarterly Deadlines
 - 4.3.2.1 The deadline for pre-approved purchases is the last day of the quarter.
 - 4.3.2.2 The deadline for the submission of receipts and external invoices is ten business days after the

- end of the quarter in which the purchase was made.
- 4.3.2.3 Unresolved grant applications, and/or late submission of receipts, will prohibit future grant application participation by services until resolved.
- 4.3.3 Factors that will be considered in approving funding applications include regular participation in consultation processes, regional representation in previous grant disbursements and amounts allocated to each child care service.
- 4.3.4 If the application is late, incomplete or the required documentation is missing, the application will be deemed ineligible, cancelled by the Child Care Consultant (Quality) and will be returned to the applicant without assessment or approval.
- 4.3.5 Quality Enhancement Grant Applications are not retroactive.
- 4.3.6 Quality Enhancement Grant Applications may be cancelled by the Licensee or Authorized Delegate in writing to the Child Care Consultant (Quality).
- 4.3.7 Quality Enhancement Grants will not be awarded to the same service in two consecutive quarters.
- 4.3.8 Any purchases that are made in consultation with a Child Care Consultant (Quality) may also need to be reviewed and approved by Service Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure safety and legislative compliance. It is the responsibility of the child care service to ensure that they are compliant with regulations at all times.
- 4.4 The Provincial Director of Early Learning and Child Care may permit alterations to, or an extension of, the time to fulfil the terms of an active ELCC Quality Enhancement Grant application. Extenuating circumstances must be communicated in an email to the Director prior to the end of the quarter in which the grant application is current.
- 4.5 Conditions regarding time extensions and alterations to an active ELCC Quality Enhancement grant application will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- 4.6 Extensions to, or alterations of, active application conditions must be requested in writing to the Provincial Director of Child Care outlining the reason(s) for the request. If granted, extensions will not exceed one year to meet the required commitment.

- 4.7 Extensions to, or alterations of, applications that were previously returned as incomplete, rejected, closed or cancelled is not permitted under this policy. Resubmission in a new quarter is required.
- 4.8 Where costs may be prohibitive to regular operations, an advance on the ELCC Quality Enhancement Grant may be considered by the Provincial Director of Child Care, when requested in writing, and where need is demonstrated before application and reimbursement deadlines.
- 4.9 Only the pre-approved amount on the grant application can be approved for payment. Quality enhancement costs may only be approved retroactively at the discretion of a Regional Manager under extenuating circumstances. For example, if shipping costs change or if the cost of a pre-approved equipment or materials changes, etc.

5.0 Eligible ELCC Quality Enhancement Initiatives

- 5.1 Some quality enhancement initiatives undertaken by child care services, as a part of the improvement of their programs, may be eligible for funding through the ELCC Quality Enhancement Grant.
- 5.2 Quality enhancement categories eligible for consideration for funding through the ELCC Quality Enhancement Grant are, but not limited to, professional learning, equipment / materials, outings, program design and mentorship. Descriptions of eligible initiatives are as follows:
 - 5.2.1 Multi-service professional learning sessions including early childhood educators, staff and/or parents from two or more local child care centres and/or family child care homes are eligible for consideration for funding through the ELCC Quality Enhancement Grant. Two or more ELCC services may partner together to host professional learning and attendance records must be provided. One of the host services is required to be the primary applicant on an ELCC Quality Enhancement Grant Application.
 - 5.2.2 Travel, accommodations and/or registration fees for early childhood educators and staff attendance at professional learning events are eligible for consideration for funding through the ELCC Quality Enhancement Grant. ECEs and administrators who would like to travel to attend professional learning more than 50 km are eligible to have a percentage of their travel, accommodations and professional learning registration fees covered.

- 5.2.3 Professional learning resources are eligible for consideration for funding through the ELCC Quality Enhancement Grant. These are books, audio visual materials and online resources that will be used for in-house professional learning and program enhancement. Some professional learning resource options are available through the Child Care Consultant (Quality).
- 5.2.4 Indoor equipment and materials are eligible for consideration for funding through the ELCC Quality Enhancement Grant. Indoor materials and equipment are particulars of the indoor physical learning environment used directly by children, educators and staff specifically for play, children's projects and initiatives, early learning and child care. Approval is required before purchasing.
- 5.2.5 Outdoor equipment and materials are eligible for consideration for funding through the ELCC Quality Enhancement Grant. Outdoor materials and equipment are particulars of the outdoor physical learning environment used directly by children, educators and staff specifically for play, children's projects and initiatives, early learning and child care. Approval is required before purchasing.
- 5.2.6 Outings and field trips associated with program curricula, that facilitate community engagement and participation in community by children, are eligible for consideration for funding through the ELCC Quality Enhancement Grant. (All activities must be in accordance with current Public Health Guidelines.)
- 5.2.7 Mentorship and affiliated travel, accommodations and professional resource materials are eligible for consideration for funding through the ELCC Quality Enhancement Grant. Mentoring is a professional relationship between colleagues that facilitates the sharing of knowledge and expertise. Within the context of the ELCC Quality Enhancement Program, mentoring may occur as professional development embedded within daily early learning and care practices.
- 5.2.8 Mentorship affiliated substitute coverages are eligible for consideration for funding through the ELCC Quality Enhancement Grant. During mentoring, one early childhood educator (ECE) may require a substitute to enact their responsibilities while visiting another educator, and vice versa. An ECE who is observing the practices of another educator may require coverage for the time that they are observing. Pay stubs and other supporting financial documentation will be required for reimbursement.

5.3 Eligible funding categories and percentage amounts are as follows:

Eligible Quality Enhancement Initiative Categories¹	Eligible Funding Percentage
Local Multi-Service Professional Learning for early childhood educators, staff and parents	90%
Professional Learning Travel (in province), Accommodations and Registration	75%
Local Single Service Professional Learning for early childhood educators, staff and parents	75%
Professional Learning Resources	75%
Indoor Equipment / Materials	80%
Outdoor Equipment / Materials	80%
Program Outing / Community Engagement	90%
Program Design Enhancement, technology, materials	75%
Mentorship and Affiliated Travel (in province) and Materials	90%
Mentorship Affiliated Substitute Staff	90%

5.4 Exclusions from grants awarded by the ELCC Quality Enhancement Program include:

- 5.4.1 Infrastructure such as storage sheds, awnings, greenhouses, permanent buildings, fences
- 5.4.2 Amendments to the footprint of a child care service property that may require applications for building permits to a municipality such as exterior mud rooms, decks, patios, porches, walkways, driveways, additional turf, resurfacing, ditches.
- 5.4.3 Interior and exterior renovations
- 5.4.4 Record-keeping applications or digital programs used to run the business of a child care service.
- 5.4.5 Business expenses.
- 5.4.6 Programs, services, expenses that are covered by any other government program.

5.5 Receipts provided for reimbursement through the ELCC Quality Enhancement Program (EECD-QEP-001) are not eligible for submission to acquire funding from any other government bursary, grant or funding program. If receipts are found to be used for more than one funding program, a credit note will be placed on the service to fully recuperate the overpayment.

5.6 Goods and services may be provided by local small businesses pre-approved for Quality Enhancement programming. A receipt must be provided to the service for reimbursement from the Quality Enhancement

¹ Any in-person events/travel will follow the Public Health protocols in place at the time of the event.

program. Such a receipt contains the applicant's name/service, address, date, itemized goods/services, and name of company or provider, paid payment status, delivery/installation status/date and line items that include appropriate taxes. It is the responsibility of the small business to pay their taxes.

- 5.7 Funding allocations will be released to successful applicants, via direct deposit, after approval has been confirmed and only in exchange for receipts for pre-approved purchases and for invoices that are compliant with the agreed upon schedule and detailed on the grant application. Reimbursements may be issued pending delivery and installation of equipment to meet legislative requirements for safety² at the discretion of the Child Care Consultant (Quality) or the Regional Manager.

6.0 Non-Fulfillment of Grant Application Policy Requirements

- 6.1. Applicants who do not fulfill the policy requirements or who do not notify The Department of Education in writing of a delay in quality enhancements purchasing, back orders, purchase cancelations and automatic refunds, delay in implementation, delay in professional learning participation or non-attendance, change in service delivery must repay the program funding in full. A credit note will be placed on service files of those found to be in violation of ELCC Quality Enhancement Policy.
- 6.2. Items purchased with Quality Enhancement Grant funding may not be sold or given to other services or private individuals. If equipment and materials are found to have been sold or given away, at the discretion of the Regional Manager a credit note will be placed on the file to recuperate the full amount of the grant.
- 6.3. Multi-service professional learning opportunities may not be structured to financially profit the host service. If a host service is found to be hosting for-profit professional learning sessions sponsored by the ELCC Quality Enhancement Grant, a credit note will be placed on the service file to recuperate the full amount of the grant.

² Legislative compliance is always the responsibility of the Child Care Service.

Questions/Inquiries:

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