

2024 Workforce Innovation Funding Guideline

Peel Region Licensed Child Care Service Providers
Centre-Based Programs

Early Years and Child Care Services

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Highlight of Changes

- Service provider eligibility has been revised to include enrolment in CWELCC by August 31, 2024.
- Eligible expenses for recruitment costs and credential evaluation that were available in 2023 have not been included at this time. We are currently evaluating the impact of WIF activities and may make enhancements to WIF in 2024 based on the outcome of the evaluation.
- Eligible expenses for child care fees/lunch related to a region-wide professional learning day have been removed as we continue to wait for provincial direction on their workforce strategy.

Introduction

This Guideline provides licensed child care centres with information regarding the 2024 Workforce Innovation Funding (WIF) to support eligible activities between January 1, 2024 and December 31, 2024. The activities funded under WIF are part of a pilot to support staff recruitment and retention. We are evaluating the impact of WIF activities to inform future funding opportunities.

Please review this guideline to learn more about the 2024 WIF requirements.

Section 1: Service Provider Eligibility

To qualify for WIF, you must **continuously meet** these conditions:

- Be a licensed child care provider in Peel Region.
- Have a signed EYCCS Funding Agreement with Fee Subsidy and be enrolled into CWELCC on or before August 31, 2024.

- Be open and providing child care services, unless otherwise directed to close by Peel Public Health (PPH) or the Province of Ontario
- Be in compliance with the Region's [Deadlines Compliance Policy](#).

Please refer to the [Early Years and Child Care Service Provider Handbook](#) for more information about program closures, shares transfer, asset sales and amalgamations.

Section 2: Funding Conditions

The following applies to all eligible expenses:

- You must use WIF to support program staff that spend most of their time working in rooms licensed under the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA).
- You cannot use WIF to offset expenses that are included in your 2024 budget. See [Section 4](#) for the important exception related to Paid Planning Time.

By accepting the WIF, you agree to:

- Participate in the evaluation process as requested.
- Share information with staff and families as requested by the Region including inviting them to participate in the evaluation process.

Section 3: Eligible Expenses

Funding Flexibility

WIF includes both mandatory and flexible expenses. You must use WIF to cover the mandatory expenses and requirements for Planning Time, and then you have flexibility to use your remaining funding to address the professional learning needs of your staff.

Your GovGrants Award (2024 WIF) includes allocations under the following budget categories for WIF:

1. Paid Planning Time
2. Other (for Paid Professional Learning Costs and Time)
3. Administration

If you do not use WIF to support the mandatory requirements for Planning Time (e.g., 1 hour per week), or other flexible expenses, we will recover the funding allocated to those expenses.

Section 4: Mandatory Expenses

A: Paid Planning Time (April 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024)

Paid Planning time improves program quality and program staff satisfaction which may lead to increased staff retention. You must use WIF to provide eligible staff with at least **one hour** of paid planning time per week worked between April 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024.

Important Exception: if one hour of paid planning time is already funded through your budget, you may choose to increase the planning time hours you offer or offset your existing planning time costs up to a maximum of one hour per week for staff eligible under this guideline. You may cover planning time expenses from January 1, 2024.

Planning time can be scheduled based on your program's operational needs and available staff for coverage. If scheduling one hour per week is not feasible due to operational considerations (e.g., availability of supply staff), you may choose to provide two paid planning time hours every two weeks or four paid planning time hours every four weeks. Paid planning hours cannot be accumulated for more than four weeks.

Planning activities can be carried out individually or as a program room based on your existing practices.

Who is Eligible?

Program staff who work a minimum of 20 hours supporting ratio requirements as outlined in the [CCEYA](#) in any one-week period (Monday to Sunday) are eligible for the **one hour** of paid planning time for that week.

What Activities Qualify?

Meaningful planning time requires educators to be out of the classroom or care environment. Under WIF, planning time is dedicated time outside of ratio used to:

- Engage in reflective practice, collaborative inquiry around pedagogical approaches (for example: inclusive learning environments and experiences, planning and creating) environments, use of pedagogical documentation). This includes applying learning from courses or training in the classroom.
- Prepare and document ongoing curriculum based on the four foundations of [How Does Learning Happen?](#) and observations of children's interests.
- Review documentation, identify interests and set goals for a group or a child.
- Research and plan goal-oriented activities that support a child's well-being and create the best possible conditions for learning and development.
- Reflect on and document the impact of current practices and approaches on children, families, and others.

Funded Planning Time **cannot** be used for:

- Staff Meetings (individual or group)
- Performance reviews and other human resources activities
- Communications with parents
- Newsletters and social stories
- Activities that can be done during quiet time

- Offsetting or replacing existing planning hours (unless you meet the exception requirement noted above)

How Do I Use Funding?

You must provide one additional hour of paid planning time per week for eligible staff and fund it as follows:

- If planning time happens **outside of a staff's regular hours**, then use WIF to pay for Staff's regular base salary for one additional hour per week and increased mandatory benefits where applicable. Overtime pay is not eligible.
- If planning time happens **during staff's regular hours** (where other staff must temporarily take their place to meet ratios) then use WIF to pay for base wages and mandatory benefits of individuals covering planning time. Planning time coverage can be provided by supply staff, float staff, or part-time program staff who may benefit from increased number of hours.

Section 5: Flexible Expenses

A. Professional Learning Costs (January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024)

You can use WIF to reimburse staff (or cover the cost of registering eligible staff) to attend eligible professional learning sessions, courses, and training opportunities.

Professional learning activities organized by your agency qualify if they are not part of your agency's budget and/or regular operations. WIF cannot be used to offset already budgeted professional learning expenses.

Professional learning sessions must be attended and completed between January 1 and December 31, 2024. Graded courses must be passed to be completed. Courses must not be eligible for other bursaries or financial supports, with the exception of professional learning offered through Child Development Resource Connection Peel (CDRCP). You must use WIF first to cover the costs for professional learning that may also qualify for [Professional learning reimbursements](#) taken through Child Development Resource Connection Peel (CDRCP).

Who is Eligible?

Regular full-time or part-time staff including:

- Program supervisors;
- Program staff, such as RECEs and director approved staff in the place of a RECE, Early Childhood Assistants; and
- Non-program staff enrolled in an ECE Diploma or a Child Development Practitioner Apprenticeship program.

What Courses or Training Qualify?

Training, courses, and professional learning sessions on the following topics qualify:

- Early years and child care pedagogical practices aligned with [How Does Learning Happen?](#)
- Supporting children with special needs in an inclusive class-wide model and strategies that support the inclusion of all children.
- Health, safety, and well-being of children (nutrition, first aid, environmental health, communicable diseases, duty to report).
- Mental health and well-being of staff (e.g., Compassion Fatigue, Personal Resilience, Addressing Burnout, Emotional Intelligence).
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- The [CCEYA](#) its regulations and ministry policy.

- Business administration such as budgeting, leadership, human resource management, policy development and business software skills.
- Training requirements under the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#).
- **Newly hired staff:** certification in standard first aid, including infant and child CPR, issued by a training agency recognized by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board **only if** the new staff is not certified and courses offered by CDRCPC are not available at the time of hiring.

Examples of Eligible Courses/Training:

- Training recommended by your Early Years Specialist (EYS), Quality Initiatives Mentor and/or Resource Consultant feedback.
- Training aligned with your Raising the Bar goals.
- Courses offered through specialized organizations, such as the [Geneva Centre for Autism](#) and the [Hanan Centre](#).
- ECE diploma, Child Development Practitioner Apprenticeship, or Micro-Credential college courses (if paid out of pocket and not eligible for other grants such as the [Qualification Upgrade Program](#)).

Important! Access Other Supports:

You must require staff to exhaust any other bursaries and financial supports before accessing WIF. Some of these may include:

- ECE diploma and Leadership Certification courses may qualify for the provincial [Qualifications Upgrade Program](#). This program provides financial support to individuals who work in early years settings to obtain an ECE diploma (and become a member of the College of ECEs) and/or Leadership Certification.
- [Canada-Ontario Job Grant](#) - contact the Employment Ontario contact [Centre](#) to learn more.

- The [Ontario's Small Business Health and Safety Training Program](#) may reimburse eligible employers for a health and safety representative training.

B: Paid Professional Learning Time, Release Time and Extra Hours

You can use WIF to encourage staff participation in professional learning activities by using WIF to pay for:

- Release time: pay supply staff base wages and mandatory benefits for hours worked covering eligible staff while they participate in eligible professional learning activities **during** their regular hours.
- Base wages and mandatory benefits: for extra hours worked to participate in eligible professional learning activities **outside** of a staff's regular working hours. For example, a course from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm for staff who work between 7:00 am to 6:00 pm.
- Travel time: up to one hour of travel time (round-trip) for each in-person professional learning opportunity outside of regular working hours.

Who is Eligible?

Full-time or part-time staff including:

- Program supervisors;
- Program staff, such as RECEs and director approved staff in the place of a RECE, Early Childhood Assistants; and
- Non-program staff enrolled in an ECE Diploma or a Child Development Practitioner Apprenticeship program.

What Activities Qualify?

Funding for release time/extra hours worked may be used if eligible staff participate in:

- The professional learning opportunities listed above in [Section A \(Professional Learning Costs\)](#).

- Completing the [Continuous Professional Learning \(CPL\)](#) program of the College of Early Childhood Educators Ontario (CECE) for RECEs only.
- [CDRCP professional learning](#) opportunities.
- Completing field placements required to complete an ECE diploma. You may use WIF to pay supply staff's wages and mandatory benefits.
- Meeting with PIRS staff on Individual Program Plans (IPP).
- Adapting activities and materials to support goals or strategies outlined in a child's PIRS Individual Program Plan (IPP).

C. Administration Costs

You may use **up to a maximum of 10%** of your WIF (unless the Region notifies you otherwise) for increased costs associated with implementing the funding. Unspent administration funding can be used to support other WIF eligible expenses.

Section 6: Funding Distribution, Payments, and Budget

You will get your WIF for January to December through monthly payments starting on March 6, 2024. You must spend your 2024 WIF by **December 31, 2024**. WIF cannot be carried over from one year to another.

Distribution and Payment to Staff:

You **must provide staff with equitable access** to WIF supports with your funding, which means that all eligible staff must have the same opportunity to access WIF supports. You could meet this requirement by developing a written policy or communication to staff about how they can access the funding. We may ask for proof of equitable access at any time.

We encourage you to develop a transparent distribution approach that meets your operational priorities and share it with staff. You may include your approach in your staff training and development policy ([Child Care Centre Licensing Manual](#) page 117).

In addition:

- You must pay staff their regular wage when completing program related functions such as paid planning time and professional learning activities and applicable grants (i.e., Wage Enhancement Grant, General Operating Fund and Workforce Compensation Fund).
- You must pay staff wages for paid planning time and paid professional learning with each applicable pay (e.g., you cannot wait until year-end to pay it out).
- We recommend that a “WIF” notation be included on paystubs for transparency in distribution and for reconciliation/audit purposes.
- You must maintain monthly logs for WIF activity expenses, which include: activity/expense, when it was used (date), name of staff, indicate their position and type of staff (e.g., program staff or supply) and if the activity is completed during or after regular hours and amount. The expectation will be that monthly logs will support the Reconciliation amounts and KPIs. These logs will be subject to audits.
- Cash payments or gift cards are not permitted.

Owner/Operator Eligibility

Owner/operators employed by the child care agency in an eligible position and who receive a T4 for this work are eligible to receive WIF supports up to an amount equal to the average supports provided to eligible staff.

For example: The average amount of professional learning paid to eligible staff at agency “A” is 12 hours. The owner at Agency “A” is employed as a centre supervisor. In this case, the owner of agency “A” qualifies for up to 12 hours of paid professional learning.

Budget Surplus and Shortfall

You should continuously review your WIF budget and forecast how much you expect to spend in 2024. A [budget tool](#) is available to help you plan your WIF spending. As you implement your funding, you may be in one of the following situations:

- **Balanced Budget** – if you expect to be fully spent then no action is required.
- **Budget Surplus** – if you expect to have unspent WIF funding by December 31, 2024, then you may increase eligible staff’s weekly paid planning time (more than 1 hour per week) or the paid professional learning opportunities for staff.
- **Budget Shortfall** – if you expect to be overspent on your WIF budget by December 31, 2024, then you must take the following action:
 - **Mandatory Expenses:** if the Planning Time budget provided to you is not enough to cover your minimum Planning Time requirements (one hour per week), then email us at earlyyearssystemdivision@peelregion.ca with the subject line “WIF Funding Request” by July 31, 2024.
 - **Flexible Expenses:** if your WIF is not enough to cover your flexible expenses then you must stop covering them or continue to support them through your own budget. Expenses over and above the approved WIF amount are your sole responsibility.

Section 7: Reporting and Accountability

WIF must be used for its intended purpose and cannot be used to generate revenue. This means that the funding cannot be used (directly or indirectly) for an agency’s

reserves, surplus, profit, and/or retained earnings, etc. WIF must be invested into the program in alignment with the outcomes and requirements in this Guideline and your EYCC Funding Agreement.

- All eligible expenses must be used to support licensed child care spaces / operations in Peel only.
- All expenses should be claimed only once. If you claim the eligible expense through more than one Early Years and Child Care funding stream, we reserve the right to deem all funding categories ineligible and recover funding in whole or in part.
- Additional reporting or audit requirements may be implemented on a case-by-case basis.

Reconciliation Reports

You must submit a final 2024 WIF reconciliation as instructed by the Region. A due date will be shared later this year. You must follow the requirements noted in the Records and Reports section in your EYCCS Funding Agreement and the Accountability Framework sections of the [EYCCS Service Provider Handbook](#).

In your reconciliation, you will report actual expenditures on the following budget categories:

- Planning Time
- Professional Learning Costs
- Paid Professional Learning Time
- Administration

Key Performance Indicators listed in Appendix 1 will be collected through your reconciliation.

Audit and Recoveries

You must meet all requirements and responsibilities as outlined in the [EYCCS Service Provider Handbook](#).

In addition to these requirements, you must **participate in WIF evaluation activities**. As we pilot this program, we need to understand the impact that each WIF initiative had on staff recruitment and retention.

- You may be required to participate in evaluation activities such as in-person visits, staff, and voluntary parent surveys, focus group sessions, etc.
- Knowing the impact of these WIF activities can help us to inform which initiatives should be extended beyond 2024.

Section 8: Contact Us

If you have questions, e-mail your EYS or EarlyYearsSystemDivision@peelregion.ca

Section 9: Key Terms

- **Base Hourly Wage:** Hourly rate paid to the position by the service provider (employer) before regional grants. If the position is paid an annual salary, use an online salary calculator to convert to hourly rate.
- **Mandatory Benefits:** The employer portion of the benefits that you are required to provide to your staff by the law such as up 2 weeks of vacation days, 9 statutory holidays, Canada Pension Plan (CPP), Employment Insurance (EI), Employer Health Tax (EHT) if applicable, Workforce Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) if applicable, etc.
- **Program Staff:** Staff employed in a position counted towards adult child ratios under the [CCEYA](#) and the [O. Reg. 137/15](#). Position titles may change by service provider.

- **Supervisor:** Staff working in a supervisor position as indicated on the Centre's license.
- **Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE):** A member in good standing of the [College of Early Childhood Educators](#) (CECE) as outlined on the [Early Childhood Educators Act](#), 2007. Review this link to [learn more about the use of the title](#).

Appendix 1: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

All KPIs should be reported for January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024.

KPIs	Description
# of individuals supported with planning time	The number of individuals who were supported using WIF funded planning time. Count each individual once.
Total # of actual planning time hours	Total number of planning time hours supported using WIF planning time. Include all hours for all eligible staff. Example: Two eligible individuals are paid 39 planning hours each, you will report 78 (39+39).
# of individuals supported with professional learning costs	The number of individuals whose professional learning costs were supported using WIF. Count each individual once.
# of individuals supported with paid professional learning time	The number of individuals who were supported with professional learning time (staff). Count each individual once.
Total # of actual paid professional learning time hours	Total number of professional learning time hours supported through WIF. Include all hours for all eligible staff. For example, you have two eligible individuals who are paid 19 hours each for professional learning time, you will report 38 (19+19).