

**Toronto Children's Services  
Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC)  
Expansion Guide - Child Care Centres**

**July 2025**

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## Background

The [Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care \(CWELCC\) system](#) aims to make licensed child care more affordable, accessible, inclusive and high-quality for families. This includes reducing fees to an average of \$10 per day for children under the age of 6 in participating licensed child care programs, by March 2026.

The CWELCC program also makes investments in the early years workforce to increase wages and enhance training and professional development opportunities for Registered Early Childhood Educators.

The **Toronto Children Services' (TCS) CWELCC Expansion Guide Child Care Centres, July 2025** is designed to inform Child Care Centre about the process for enrolling and expanding within the CWELCC System in 2025. This guide outlines the City of Toronto's CWELCC expansion priorities, eligibility requirements, and the steps involved in the application process.

## Priorities

In line with the [Ministry of Education's Access and Inclusion Framework](#) along with Toronto's Child Care Growth Strategy, the goal is to create new child care spaces in priority areas to increase access for families.

## Auspice Ratio & Priority Groups

The Ministry of Education sets guidelines on the proportion of not-for-profit spaces each service system manager must maintain.

In order to meet Toronto's auspice target, **Toronto Children's Services will be prioritizing applications from not-for-profit agencies, as well as Indigenous-led, Francophone, and Black-Led, Black-Mandated, and Black-Serving organizations.**

At this time, we have paused on accepting applications from Commercial Agencies based on our current auspice goals.

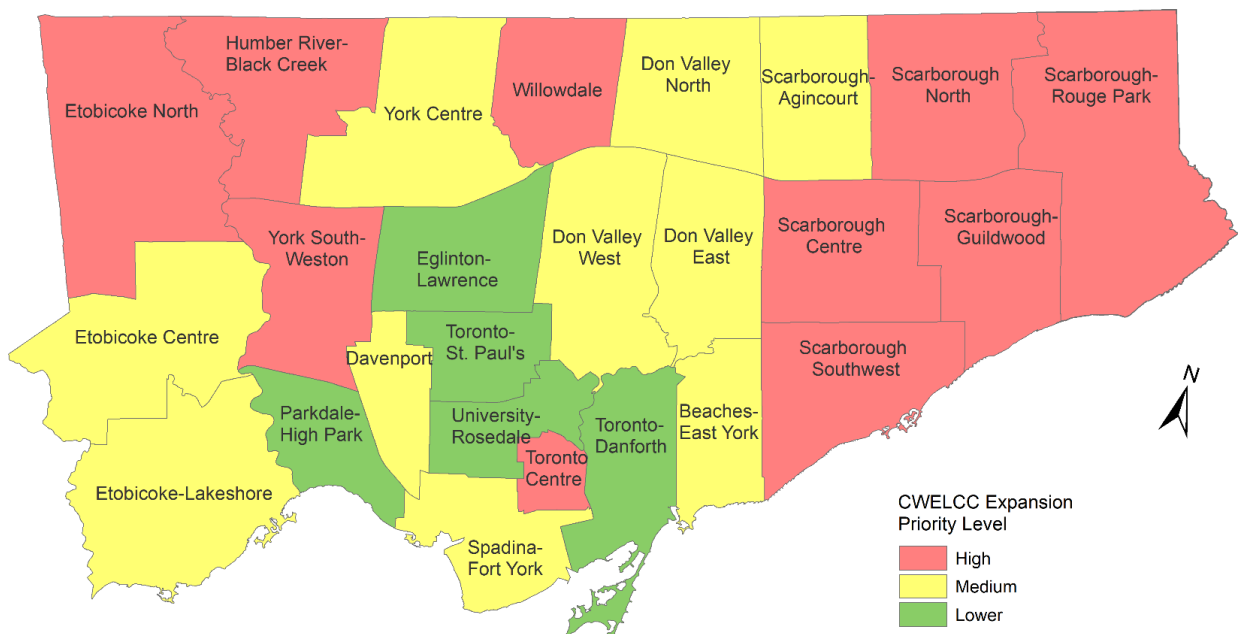
## Priority Neighbourhoods

The Ministry of Education's *Access and Inclusion Framework* requires System Service Managers responsible for child care in Ontario, including the City of Toronto, to develop priority neighbourhoods. The Ministry requires new CWELCC spaces to be prioritized in these neighbourhoods. For more information on the Toronto Children's Services' approach to enhance access and inclusion for priority areas and target populations see the [June 14, 2023 City of Toronto Council approved Supplementary Report](#).

To support equity planning principles of age and geographic equity, TCS will consider where the Child Care Centre application is providing service in relation to the priority areas for expansion.

TCS Priority Levels for CWELCC Expansion by Toronto Wards are illustrated in the map below. To lookup your location's ward, please visit the [Ward Profiles – City of Toronto webpage](#).

Figure 1: TCS Priority Levels for CWELCC Expansion by Toronto Wards map



## Age Groups

TCS is currently prioritizing and approving new full-time spaces for infant, toddler and preschool age groups. The expansion of kindergarten before and after school spaces is processed in coordination with the Toronto school boards.

## Eligibility

Child Care Agencies that meet the following criteria are eligible to apply:

- Not-for-Profit Agency
- Indigenous-led, Francophone or Black-Led, Black-Mandated, and Black-Serving organizations.

*Note: At this this time, we have paused on accepting applications from Commercial Agencies based on current auspice goals.*

## Types of Requests

The 2025 CWELCC Application process is for the following types of Child Care Centre requests:

- Agency requesting to enroll a child care centre into the CWELCC program.
- Agency with a child care centre currently enrolled in the CWELCC program and requesting to revise their current Provincial license and receive CWELCC funding for the proposed capacity changes.
- In addition, the Agency is requesting one or more of the following: Start-up Grant Funding, Infrastructure Fund, an agreement for Fee Subsidy.

**The following types of requests are not required to submit an application form:**

- Applications for new or expansion of Kindergarten and School Age programs in publicly funded schools.
- TCS [Expression of Interest to Operate a Child Care](#) or School Board Based RFPs.

Existing CWELCC enrolled child care centres interested in making changes to alternate capacities only or school age capacity only. Please contact your TCS Consultant for further information

## Child Care Centre Requirements:

### Expansion Plan:

- Expansion is creating spaces for Infants, Toddlers and/or Preschoolers
- The child care program meets TCS' [Full-time Access to Service](#) requirements that include:
  - *Full-time access refers to both the number of hours throughout the day and number of days throughout the year that a program is available to families.*
  - *Infant, Toddler and Preschool Groups: Provides a minimum of 7 hours continuous service per day for a minimum of 11 months/239 operating days per calendar year.*
- The proposed expansion plan has efficient room size(s), adequate next age-group room sizes, and sustainable planned enrollment.
  - *The plan makes every effort to create licensed spaces that serve a maximum group size for each age group in accordance with the [Child Care and Early Years Act \(CCEYA\)](#), O. Reg [137/15](#), Schedule 1. For example, the maximum group size for a Toddler group is 15 and the staff to child ratio is 1:5.*
- The new child care spaces must be licensed by December 31, 2026.
- The license revision or new license application has been submitted on the Child Care Licensing System (CCLS). *Not applicable for existing locations requesting to enroll in CWELCC only.*

### Financial and Supporting Documentation:

*Please refer to Section 5 of the application form for a complete list of required documentation to be submitted with your application.*

- Provide a Parent/Family Handbook that includes all CWELCC requirements. Parent/Family Handbook must be dated, on Agency letterhead, list all closure days and if families are charged for these days, hours of operation, and base and non-base fees per age groups as per license/proposed. Please refer to the [Child Care and Early Years Act \(CCEYA\)](#), O. Reg [137/15](#), and [Provincial Child Care Centre Licensing Manual](#) for complete fee and handbook requirements.
- The Agency is required to submit the financial documentation specified in the application form. This documentation will be reviewed to assess the Agency's financial viability.
- [Complete the Provincial CWELCC Cost-Based Child Care Funding Estimator](#) and submit a copy with your application.
- Provide clear documentation indicating that the property or space has been leased/procured for a new child care centre or a Letter of Intent for Accommodation from the building owner.
- Provide a letter of support /no objection from landlord (if leased) or building owner to proceed with proposed renovations/alterations (if applicable).
- Confirmation of Zoning Approval permitted use for Child Care (if applicable). *Please visit the [City of Toronto Zoning Use Review](#) website for information and to apply.*
- Additional requirements apply if the Agency is requesting Start-up Grant and/or Infrastructure Fund. Please see Start-up Grant and Infrastructure Fund section below for complete details.
- If requesting an agreement for Fee Subsidy, a [Not-for-Profit Declaration Form](#) is required with your application package. The form can be found on the [Service Agreements for Early Years Programs](#) website.

### Compliance:

- If the Agency currently holds a Service Agreement with the City of Toronto, it has fulfilled all financial reporting obligations on time and has no outstanding financial compliance or other agreement-related issues.
- If the Agency currently holds a Service Agreement(s) with other CMSM/DSSABs, they must be in compliance with all contract requirements.
- If the child care centre is currently licensed, the license is in good standing with the Ministry of Education.
- All programs are subject to the Provincial Cap on Fees as outlined in the [Child Care and Early Years Act \(CCEYA\), O. Reg 137/15](#), and the fees must be at, or below the “Regional Maximum”. Child care base fees are capped at \$22 per day effective January 1, 2025.
- The Agency and expansion plan meets all CWELCC requirements as outlined in the [Ministry of Education CWELCC Guidelines \(Updated March 2025\)](#).

Note: Other eligibility requirements may be developed and applied by the City of Toronto related to Directed Growth.

## Start-Up Grant and Infrastructure Funding

The Start-up Grant and Infrastructure Fund support the creation of new licensed full day child care spaces for children 0-4 in targeted regions for underserved communities and populations. High need populations include vulnerable children, including those living in low income, children with extra support needs, and Indigenous, Francophone, and Black and racialized communities.

Requests for Start-up Grant and/or Infrastructure Fund must be submitted through the 2025 CWELCC application process and are subject to the expansion criteria outlined above. Please refer to the [Ministry of Education CWELCC Guidelines \(Updated March 2025\)](#) for complete details about the Start-up Grant and Infrastructure Fund, eligible and ineligible expenses.

*Note: School-based programs, facilities owned by school boards, kindergarten and before and after school programs are ineligible for the Start-up Grant and Infrastructure Fund.*

### Start-up Grant Criteria:

- Available to not-for-profit and commercial Agencies. **We are only accepting applications from not-for-profit, Indigenous-led, Francophone or Black-Led, Black-Mandated, and Black-Serving organizations at this time.**
- Supports the creation of full day child care for infant, toddler and preschool age groups in a community setting.
- Agencies may be eligible for up to \$350,000 for every new 20 child care spaces created. The remaining number of new spaces above 20 will be calculated using a prorated amount of \$17,500 per space.

### Infrastructure Fund Criteria:

- Available to not-for-profit child care Agencies only.
- Agencies are required to have a service agreement for fee subsidy with the City of Toronto.
- TCS will prioritize projects that are submitted by Indigenous-led, Black-Led, Black-Mandated, and Black-Serving organizations, that are located in City of Toronto high priority wards, and include the creation of new infant and toddler spaces.

- There is limited funding available for the Infrastructure Fund and TCS will determine the maximum amount of funding awarded to each project.

#### **Start-up Grant and Infrastructure Fund Eligible Expenses:**

Funding can be used to offset the initial costs required to expand or create spaces, such as:

- *Play materials, equipment, and furnishings (both indoors and outdoors) as outlined in [Section 19 of O. Reg. 137/15 under the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014](#).*
- *Non-consumable supplies/equipment to support the ongoing regular operation of the child care program (for example, appliances, IT, supplies to support learning environments while adhering to health and safety requirements).*
- *Renovations, additions or repairs to licensed child care facilities or potential child care facilities as approved by CMSMs/DSSABs.*
- *Changes to outdoor play space that are required as a result of the expansion of child care spaces in the centre so that the licensee continues to comply with section 24 of O. Reg. 137/15 under the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014.*
- *Leasehold improvements.*
- *Purchase of land, buildings is applicable for Infrastructure Fund requests.*
- *Expenses incurred through the planning and design stages of a space creation project.*

#### **Start-up Grant and Infrastructure Fund Ineligible Expenses:**

Funding cannot be used for the following:

- *Purchase land or buildings is not applicable to Start-up Grant requests.*
- *Debt cost, including principal and interest payments.*
- *Amortization payments*
- *Property taxes*
- *Operating expenses*
- *Expenditure related to kindergarten and school age expansion*
- *Expenditure related to facilities owned by school board*

#### **Requirements:**

As per the Start-up Grant and Infrastructure Fund requirements, the Agency must commit to the following:

- Use funds to support the creation of new licensed child care spaces not located in a school, for children 0-4 years of age in underserved communities and populations.
- Participate in the CWELCC system for at least 7 years after opening the new child care spaces and continue operating in the facility for at least 7 years after opening the new child care spaces.
- To have the spaces licensed by December 31, 2026.
- Expense the Start-up Grant and/or Infrastructure Fund by December 31, 2026, on eligible expenses only.
- If requesting Infrastructure Fund, an agreement for Fee Subsidy is required.

Agencies must provide the following documentation with their application:

- Drawings: site and floor plans that show the entire new program space indicating **the square footage for each playroom and playground**. You may refer to the [Ministry of Education's Planning and Design Guidelines for Licensed Child Care Centres, Appendix B: Floor, Site and Playground Plan Checklist](#)
- Estimates or invoices from vendors

Applications are reviewed for the following:

- TCS must be reasonably assured that the child care location will meet requirements from the Ministry of Education, [Ontario Building Code](#), applicable by-laws, zoning, and all current legislation.

- Assess the project scope and timelines with successful completion by December 31, 2026.
- Please see section “Application Review and Approval Process” for complete details.

## Application Review Process

**Agencies may submit an application at any time during the 2025 CWELCC expansion and enrollment application window. The deadline to submit applications is October 31, 2025.**

Note: Application review and approval time will be dependent on application volume.

### Stage 1 – Application Submission

- Complete the application form.
- Collect all the supporting documentation listed in the application form to include with your application package.
- Submit application form and supporting documentation via email to [tcsgrowth@toronto.ca](mailto:tcsgrowth@toronto.ca)

### Stage 2 – Review Completeness and Eligibility

We will verify that your application is complete, and that all necessary supporting documentation has been submitted. If your application package is incomplete, you will receive an email outlining the outstanding documentation and the deadline for submission. If we do not receive it on time, your application may be closed.

### Stage 3 – Application Review

Your application will be reviewed against the criteria outlined in this document and in the application form. We will assess if the proposed expansion aligns with CWELCC requirements and TCS priorities for expansion.

For Start-up Grant and Infrastructure Fund, TCS must be reasonably assured that the child care location will meet requirements from the Ministry of Education, Ontario Building Code, applicable by-laws, zoning, and all current legislation. TCS will assess the project scope and timelines to ensure successful completion by December 31, 2026.

Note: Additional documents or information may be required at this stage. If we do not receive the information on time, the application may be closed.

### Stage 4 – Application Results

#### In-Principal Approval

Your Agency will receive an email indicating that your CWELCC application has been approved in principle and if applicable, outline the Start-up Grant and/or Infrastructure Fund approval amount (this amount is inclusive of applicable taxes).

If applicable, Toronto Children’s Services will approve the CWELCC request (license revision or new license application) on the [Ministry of Education CCLS portal](#).

For Start-up Grant and/or Infrastructure Fund approvals, a Toronto Children's Services', Asset Management Unit, Project Manager will be assigned to support your application and will connect with your Agency on next steps. Agencies will also be issued a legal funding agreement that outlines the terms and conditions of the Start-up Grant and/or Infrastructure Fund. Please see Stage 8 – Disbursements of Funding for additional details.



Note: Final approval will not be granted until all requirements are met, and the new/revised license matches the approved details.

#### Denial

Applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria will be denied. Your Agency will receive notice via email and if applicable, the CWELCC request (license revision or new license application) on the Ministry of Education CCLS portal, will be denied.

#### **Stage 6 – Review of New/Revised License (if applicable)**

Once your expansion project is complete and licensed, TCS will review the new or revised licence issued by the Ministry of Education to ensure it matches the approval. TCS will follow up with your Agency if there is a discrepancy with the original approval.

#### **Stage 7 – Agreement Execution & Final Approval**

At this stage, TCS will begin the process towards entering into a Service Agreement with the City of Toronto. TCS will confirm final CWELCC approval, and the agreement will specify the CWELCC effective date.

Insurance documentation will be required for new child care locations only. The policy is to be issued in the name of the Agency and name the CITY OF TORONTO, 55 John St. as additional insured and shall have inclusive limits of not less than two million dollars (\$2,000,000).

Note: If you are an existing CWELCC Agency in the City of Toronto, you may be issued an amending agreement for your approved expansion.

#### **Stage 8 – Disbursements of Funds**

##### CWELCC Cost-Based Funding:

The CWELCC Cost-Based Funding provides funding to child care centres based on their actual operational costs, with a focus on covering the costs of providing licensed child care for children age 0 to 5. This funding is calculated using benchmark allocations, growth top-up, and amount in lieu of profit or surplus.

For complete details on the Cost-Based Funding approach, its requirements and the Agency's obligations for 2025, please review the following documents:

- [Ministry of Education CWELCC Guidelines \(Updated March 2025\)](#)
- [CWELCC Cost-Based Funding Estimator](#)
- [Toronto Children's Services 2025 Funding Requirements](#)

Once the agreement is fully executed, CWELCC funding will be disbursed as per Toronto Children's Services business cycle.

##### Start-up Grant and/or Infrastructure Fund:

Following the execution of the legal funding agreement, the Agency may qualify for reimbursement on eligible expenses in alignment with the Ministry of Education CWELCC Guidelines. The Agency may be eligible for retroactive expansion funding for a child care that was licensed earlier in 2025.

Start-up Grant and/or Infrastructure funding will be subject to review and approval by Toronto Children's Services (TCS). TCS reserves the right to request additional documentation with the necessary breakdown to support the funding request. Funding will be administered according to the actual cost incurred to support the expansion and not necessarily based on a requested or eligible amount.

### Workforce Funding:

The 2025 Wage Enhancement Grant (WEG), Home Child Care Enhancement Grant (HCCEG) and Workforce Compensation supports the recruitment and retention of Ontario's child care workforce through improved compensation. The Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) guidelines reflect new eligibility criteria and requirements based on three groups

A separate application will be provided by Toronto Children's Services to collect Child Care Workforce Information. For complete details please refer to [Toronto Children's Services 2025 Wage Enhancement Grant \(WEG\), Home Child Care Enhancement Grant \(HCCEG\) and Workforce Compensation Requirements](#)

### **Appeals**

If an Agency wishes to dispute the denial of their CWELCC application, the Agency can draft a formal letter to the General Manager (GM) of Toronto Children's Services and send it to [childcare@toronto.ca](mailto:childcare@toronto.ca), outlining the issues and requesting a review. The GM will then initiate an internal review and communicate the outcome via a formal letter.

Appeal review and decision time will be dependent on application volume. All appeal decisions are final.

### **Resources**

- For questions about the 2025 CWELCC expansion process, please send questions to [TCSgrowth@toronto.ca](mailto:TCSgrowth@toronto.ca)
- Operators already enrolled in CWELCC may contact their assigned Toronto Children's Services, District Consultant.
- For details on the new funding approach, its requirements and the Agency's obligations for 2025, please review the following:
  - [Ministry of Education 2025 CWELCC Guidelines](#)
  - [CWELCC Cost-Based Funding Estimator](#)
  - [Ministry of Education - Information for child care providers](#)
  - [Toronto Children's Services Contract & Financial Information webpage](#)