

New process to create more preschool child-care spaces, increase access to infant care ^[1]

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Source: Government of New Brunswick

Format: Article

Publication Date: 31 Jan 2023

AVAILABILITY

Access Online ^[2]

Excerpts

FREDERICTON (GNB) – The provincial government has launched a call for proposals to create new designated preschool early learning and child-care spaces. The aim is to increase access to high-quality, inclusive early learning and child care for all preschoolers, particularly infants.

“We have heard from New Brunswick families across the province about the challenges they face accessing early learning and child-care services,” said Education and Early Childhood Development Minister Bill Hogan. “A key element of improving these services for families is making sure they are accessible, no matter where they live. This is particularly true when it comes to supporting mothers who are looking to return to the labour force. Through this new call-for-proposals process, we are focusing on increasing access in communities with the greatest needs while also recognizing the high demand for infant spaces.”

Residents, community partners and existing early learning and child-care operators will be invited to submit proposals to open new designated spaces for children aged five and under. A space allocation grid has been created to identify regions with the greatest need.

Proposals for all types of facilities will be considered, however non-profit centres and homes will be prioritized. All proposals must include infant spaces.

The first call for proposals will close on March 15.

Successful proposals will be eligible for three new types of funding:

Designation startup funding: For opening a new designated facility, operators could receive up to \$6,000 for home facilities; up to \$270,000 for for-profit centres; or up to \$270,000 for not-for-profit centres.

New Space Creation Implementation Grant: One-time grants of \$5,000 per infant space and \$500 per preschool space will be available to operators of new designated home facilities, for-profit centres and non-profit centres.

Expansion for Infant Spaces Grant: These grants will support existing operators who increase the number of infant spaces in their current designated facilities. Home facilities could receive \$3,000 for each new infant space and centres (for-profit and non-profit) could receive \$10,000 per space.

To meet its obligations under the Canada-New Brunswick Canada-Wide Child Care Agreement, the provincial government aims to create 3,400 designated preschool early learning and child-care spaces by 2026.

“Every child deserves the best start in life,” said federal Families, Children and Social Development Minister Karina Gould. “This call for proposals is an important step to help create additional licensed child-care spaces across the province and allow for more children and families in New Brunswick to access high-quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive early learning and child care.”

The department has also implemented temporary measures to encourage the creation of infant spaces:

Existing designated not-for-profit early learning and child-care centres and new applicants for early learning and child-care homes may create new infant spaces outside the call-for-proposals process.

To be eligible, existing not-for-profit designated early learning and child-care centres must offer and fill at least three additional infant spaces. New applicants for early learning and child-care homes must offer and fill at least one infant space.

New infant spaces must be accessible to children under 15 months. Approval is contingent on meeting licensing and designation requirements. This measure will be in place until August.

“Consistently, families have told us finding infant care is an obstacle when it comes to returning to the workforce, especially for women,” said Hogan. “These measures have been designed to make it easier and more affordable for facilities that want to add more infant spaces and offer more preschool space where there are gaps.”

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