

# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR TRAINING WAGE 2026 PROGRAM GUIDE

## What is the Early Childhood Educator Training Wage Program?

The Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Training Wage Program (Program) is a Columbia Basin Trust (Trust) initiative administered by the College of The Rockies that supports ECEs, ECE Assistants (ECEAs) and Responsible Adults (RAs), employed by licensed child care facilities in the Columbia Basin Trust [region](#) (Basin) to complete and/or upgrade their qualifications by providing a training wage for in-class/ online instructional course credit hours.

The program supports Basin child care facilities to recruit and retain qualified ECEs to help address staff shortages and improve access to safe and affordable child care.

## Who can apply?

Licensed non-profit and for-profit child care providers in the Columbia Basin Trust region ([ourtrust.org/map](http://ourtrust.org/map)) with the following licensing designations (Employer) can apply on behalf of eligible RAs, ECEAs and ECEs that they employ.

Eligible licensing designations include:

- Group Child Care
- Multi-Aged Child Care
- Preschools
- Family Child Care\*
- In-Home Multi-Age Child Care

\* providers operating Family Child Care must be intending to transition their license to In-Home Multi-Age Child Care when their training is complete to be eligible.

RA's, ECEAs and ECEs employed at facilities designated as Occasional Child Care, Registered License-Not-Required Care, License-Not-Required Care and In-Child's-Own-Home Care **are not eligible**.

Please refer to the [Childcare BC Webpage](#) for clarification on licensing designations.

## How much will the Trust fund?

ECEAs/RAs	ECEs
<p><b>Hourly training wage grant = \$18.25/ hour + 16% MERCS</b> towards in-class / online instructional hours.</p> <p><b>Education:</b> support for RAs and ECEAs to <b>complete their ECEA and/or ECE credentials part-time</b> at a recognized post-secondary institute of their choice.</p>	<p><b>Hourly training wage grant = \$21.25/hour + 16% MERCS</b> towards in class / online instructional hours.</p> <p><b>Education:</b> support for ECEs to <b>complete a diploma/certificate part-time</b>, qualifying them to work with <b>infants and toddlers and/or children with diverse abilities</b> at a recognized post-secondary institute of their choice.</p>

**Facilities licensed for under 32 child care spaces can apply on behalf of up to two eligible staff, and facilities licensed for 32 or more spaces can apply on behalf of up to four eligible staff to complete their studies part time.**

Education must occur part time at a recognized post-secondary institution of their choice while they continue to work a minimum of 15 hours a week at the eligible child care facility.

## How are in-class/online instructional hours calculated?

In-class/online instructional hours are calculated based on course credits (1 credit: 1 hour/week x 15 weeks = 15 hours), unless otherwise defined by the post-secondary institute. For example:

- 2 credit course (2 hours/week x 15 weeks) = 30 hours
- 3 credit course (3 hours/week x 15 weeks) = 45 hours
- 4 credit course (4 hours/week x 15 weeks) = 60 hours

Practicum hours, courses not successfully completed, or courses already started/completed prior to grant approval are not eligible.

## When is the application deadline and what is the application process?

There is no deadline for applications, but applications must be received and approved prior to the start of the course to be considered for support. We will consider applications on a first-received, first-served basis until all funds for the program are committed.

To apply:

1. Review the Program Guide and contact the College of the Rockies if you have questions by calling 250-420-3233 or toll free 1-877-489-2687 or emailing [ecetrainingwage@ourtrust.org](mailto:ecetrainingwage@ourtrust.org).
2. Use the [worksheet](#) to develop your application offline if you so choose.
3. Complete the online application at [ourtrust.org/ece-training-wage-program/](http://ourtrust.org/ece-training-wage-program/).

## What are the eligibility requirements?

### Employer Criteria

To be eligible to apply, child care providers must be located in the Columbia Basin Trust [region](#) and:

- be a licensed child care facility (eligible designations listed above) in good standing with the Ministry of Education and Child Care and provincial licensing and regulations;
- continue to employ the ECEA, ECE or RA (Employee) for the duration of the training on a part- or full-time basis (minimum 15 hours per week);
- be committed to providing permanent employment after completion of the training;
- work with the Employee to develop a mutually agreed upon education plan and timeline;
- be in good standing with the BC Corporate Registry (if the Employer is a non-profit society or registered company); and
- have a WorkSafeBC account in good standing and provide a clearance letter (get the form [here](#)). WorkSafeBC coverage is required for all Employers with employees and is recommended for Employers that do not have employees. You can start the process to obtain WorkSafeBC coverage [here](#).

### Employee Criteria

To be eligible for the training wage, the RA/ECEA/ECE must be a resident of the Columbia Basin Trust [region](#) and:

- hold a valid Early Childhood Educator Assistant certificate or Early Childhood Educator certificate issued by the BC ECE Registry or hold a “Responsible Adult” designation as defined under the Childcare Licensing Regulations;
- be directly employed or self-employed on a full- or part-time basis by an eligible licenced child care facility;
- be enrolled part-time in an ECE program at a recognized post-secondary institute with the intention to complete the ECEA/ECE certification or upgrades within a mutually agreed upon timeline with their Employer (up to a maximum of three years); and
- submit evidence of successful course completion to their Employer at the end of each course/semester.

## Post-secondary Institute Requirements

To be eligible for the Training Wage, Employees must be enrolled in a recognized post-secondary institute that:

- is approved by the Province of BC as a recognized program and institute; and
- meets provincial standards and ECE certification requirements.

## When will I know when my application is approved?

The review process usually takes two to three weeks. If your application requires clarification or further information, it may take longer to evaluate.

You will be contacted by email at the address you provided in your application if your application has been approved for funding. If you have questions or concerns related to your application please contact [ecetrainingwage@ourtrust.org](mailto:ecetrainingwage@ourtrust.org) within six weeks from the date you apply to discuss.

To finalize funding, approved Employers will sign a Contribution Agreement with College of the Rockies in which they will commit to maintaining proof of the Employee’s successful course completion and submit this information to the College if requested.

## What else to keep in mind?

Even if an application meets eligibility criteria, it may not be selected for funding as we often receive more requests for funding than what is available, and applications are assessed as they come in. The Trust retains the right to determine eligibility and the amount of funding allocated.

## Questions?

For more information, call 250-420-3233 (1-877-489-2687 toll free) or email [ecetrainingwage@ourtrust.org](mailto:ecetrainingwage@ourtrust.org). This program is administered by College of the Rockies.

## Frequently Asked Questions:

### Are other tuition supports available for ECEs?

To learn about supports available for ECE tuition, other course expenses and practicum costs, visit [www.ecebc.ca](http://www.ecebc.ca). Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC), in partnership with the Province of British Columbia, delivers the ECE Education Support Fund.

### When are training wage payments issued and what documentation will I need to provide?

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- Successful applicants (Employers) will enter into a Contribution Agreement with College of the Rockies.
- Employers will be issued the Training Wage amount for approved Employees in two installments annually.
- Employers will distribute the training wage to approved Employees according to the course credit hours submitted on their timesheets. Employees are not expected to work for the Training Wage hours submitted, rather the Training Wage is to support their time to attend virtual/in class instruction.
- Reports will be required according to the reporting schedule in your Contribution Agreement.
- Employers must maintain accurate payroll records which clearly indicate disbursement of the Training Wage to the Employee and evidence of the Employee's successful course completion for submission to the College of the Rockies, if requested.

### **When should the training start and what is the maximum length of the training?**

Courses should start after you receive an email from the Program letting you know your application for funding has been approved. The application will require submission of an education plan, timeline, and confirmation of enrollment into a recognized ECE program. All courses required for certification must be completed within three years of being approved for funding and entering into a Contribution Agreement with the College of the Rockies.

### **Mandatory Employment Related Costs Requirements**

Employers must pay MERCs as part of the hourly Training Wage, including Employment Insurance, Canada Pension Plan, WorkSafeBC and other mandatory benefits. MERCs will be calculated using a flat rate of 16 per cent and included in the total Training Wage provided to Employers.