

CWELCC Directed Growth Expansion for Windsor-Essex County

Application Overview

Application Checklist

Please use the following checklist to ensure you have completed all the requirements for submission of the Directed Growth Expansion application:

- ☐ Review all details in the Application Overview document
- ☐ Ensure familiarity with all of the following:
 - [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 \(CCEYA\)](#)
 - [Child Care Centre Licensing Manual](#)
 - [Funding Guidelines](#)
- ☐ Review the Instructions tab of the Directed Growth Application workbook
- ☐ Complete all sections of the Directed Growth Application workbook (ensure the top of each section is green and says “Section Complete”)
- ☐ Save completed application workbook with the naming convention *“2026 Directed Growth Application Workbook – [insert licensee name]”*
- ☐ Submit application workbook via email to csapp@citywindsor.ca no later than **September 15, 2025**.

Background Information

In 2021, the Government of Canada identified child care as a national priority to enhance early learning and childhood development, support workforce participation, and contribute to economic recovery. The Federal Government committed to investing in a national child care system called the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) System to:

- Create more affordable, quality licensed child care spaces.
- Support the early childhood workforce through enhanced compensation, training, and professional learning opportunities; and
- Improve accessibility by addressing barriers to providing inclusive and flexible child care.

The CWELCC System is a five-year plan that aims to reach an average fee of \$10/day by 2026 through a phased in fee reduction approach. As the Service System Manager (SSM), The City of Windsor’s role in the CWELCC System is to:

- Implement provincial guidelines,
- Establish local policies, procedures, and funding approaches,
- Develop and implement an application and approval process for the CWELCC System,
- Contract for CWELCC funding through Service Agreements,
- Provide fiscal oversight & funding; and,

- Report to the Ministry of Education and The City of Windsor Council on the CWELCC System.

Under the CWELCC System, Ontario has committed to create new licensed child care spaces in underserved communities. In alignment with Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework, The City of Windsor's CWELCC Directed Growth Expansion plan will prioritize child care expansion to:

1. Increase access equity by supporting child care expansion priority neighbourhoods.
2. Support child care access for low-income children, vulnerable children, children from diverse communities, children with special needs, Francophone, and Indigenous children.
3. Maintain the proportion of not-for profit licensed child care spaces at 70% or higher.

Since 2024, the City of Windsor has been allocated a notional target of 1,781 net new child care spaces by the end of 2026.

Total Space Allocation (1,781)	2024	2025	2026
School Based Spaces	386	195	0
Community Based Spaces	703	291	206
Total Spaces	1,089	486	206

Do you have questions about starting a child care program in Windsor-Essex County?

The [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 \(CCEYA\)](#) establishes rules for child care and early years programs and services in Ontario to support the health and safety of children, provide oversight of providers, and help parents make informed choices about child care options.

The [Child Care Centre Licensing Manual](#) provides information about the legislative and regulatory requirements for licensed child care centres as set out in the [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014\(CCEYA\)](#) and [Ontario Regulation 137/15](#) (hereafter O. Reg. 137/15 or the Regulation).

Overview of Process to Start or Expand a Child Care Program

Determining Governance/Business Structure:

Child care centres in Canada may operate in one of two auspices: for-profit and non-profit. Auspice refers to the financial and administrative operating structure of the child care centre. The auspice also indicates who owns and operates the child care centre.

Non-profit child care centres are either incorporated as a non-profit organization or as part of a larger entity, such as a multi-service provider that is incorporated. All funds are redirected back into the operation of the non-profit program. Non-profit child care centres are required to be governed by a volunteer board of directors.

For-profit child care centres are operated privately as a commercial business. This can be as a franchise of a larger business chain in some cases. For-profit centres are operated directly by the owner.

Ontario remains committed to supporting all licensees regardless of auspice. However, as per the CWELCC agreement, the proportion of non-profit licensed child care spaces for children age 0 to 5 must be maintained at 70% or increased by the end of 2026.

Selecting a Location:

As outlined in The City of Windsor's Early Learning and Child Care Directed Growth Plan there are key priority areas in need of child care across The City of Windsor. Interested operators should consider the priority locations when applying to open or expand a licensed child care centre.

For 2026, the priority neighbourhoods for Windsor-Essex County are:

- Windsor – West
- Windsor – Central
- Windsor – East/Fontainebleau
- Windsor – Forest Glade/Riverside
- Amherstburg
- Leamington

Setting your Rates:

Cap on Fees

In accordance with [O. Reg. 137/15](#), a cap on all base fees and non-base fees in child care for eligible children must be maintained by a licensee at a child care centre it operates or at a home child care premise that it oversees. Licensees are required to set their base fees at or below The City of Windsor's maximum, as set out by age group. Please refer to [O. Reg 236/22](#) of the CCEYA for The City of Windsor's maximum base rate fee for centre-based care and home child care by age group.

Note that the cap on fees does not apply to fees charged to parents for children who are not eligible (i.e., school age children over 6 years), as these children are not eligible for funding under CWELCC.

Base Fees & Non-Base Fees may be charged by licensees. Please see Section 1. (1) Definitions of [O. Reg. 137/15](#) for description of these two types of fees.

Fee Reduction

Licensees will be required to directly reduce base fees by the incremental fee reduction amount as outlined in the applicable [funding guidelines](#).

The licensee is required to maintain its new base fee until they are either required to reduce them again, or they are no longer participating in CWELCC. Anything that a parent is required to pay (i.e., mandatory fees) must be included in the base fee.

Non-base fees are not eligible for CWELCC funding and are not subject to the parameters set out above; however, they must meet the definition of non-base fee set out in [O. Reg. 137/15](#).

Cost-Based Funding

CWELCC participating licensees will receive cost-based funding, which provides funding to licensees/centres based on the typical (representative) costs of providing high-quality child care to eligible children in Ontario. Cost-based funding is calculated by the City of Windsor per eligible centre, and is the sum of funding for program costs (eligible costs of providing child care) and the associated amount in lieu of profit/surplus (to recognize the risk of operating a business while safe-guarding public funds), offset by base fee revenue (fees collected from families and available to apply towards program costs or profit/surplus).

The cost-based funding approach replaces the previous, “revenue replacement” approach, which—until December 31, 2024—provided funding based on the revenue “lost” due to mandatory caps and reductions of parent fees pursuant to O. Reg. 137/15.

To ensure accountability over public funds, Cost-Based Funding Allocations set the maximum amounts that could be claimed in eligible costs in respect of eligible centres/agencies upon reconciliation. In other words, this cost-based approach is not a pure “cost reimbursement” model.

Staffing:

The value of early years educators cannot be overstated. The training, knowledge, and competencies of early childhood educators are distinct and unique from other professions. The [ECE \(Early Childhood Educator\) Act](#) defines the practice of early childhood education as “the planning and delivery of inclusive play-based learning and care programs for children to promote the well-being and holistic development of children.

Only members of the College of Early Childhood Educators can practice the profession of early childhood education and use the protected titles “Early Childhood Educator” and “Registered Early Childhood Educator” along with the professional designations ECE, RECE and their French equivalents.

The purpose of a protected title is to assure the public that any person who uses it has met the education and other requirements for entry into the profession. The protected title also assures the public that any person who uses it is accountable to practise the profession of early childhood education in accordance with the ethical and professional standards set by the College.

See the [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 \(CCEYA\)](#) for summaries of requirements for ratios or employees to children, maximum group sizes, and proportion of employees that must be qualified.

For more information, visit [College of Early Childhood Educators](#)

Participation and Accountability Requirements:

Participation Requirements

Licensed child care operators participating in CWELCC must have a CWELCC service agreement with The City of Windsor and are required to keep a copy of their service agreement, in electronic or hard copy format, on the child care premises, and available for ministry inspection.

Licensees must complete the annual data collection exercise, currently referred to as the Licensed Child Care Operations Survey, which may be amended from time to time, as required by the ministry. If information has not been submitted, The City of Windsor will withhold funding to licensees until the ministry has confirmed the information has been submitted.

Accountability

All child care licensees in receipt of CWELCC funding must submit financial information, as well as audited financial statements to The City of Windsor to verify that the funding provided was used for the purpose intended.

The City of Windsor will undertake compliance audits on a random sample of licensees in receipt of CWELCC funding on an annual basis to confirm that funding has been used for its intended purpose and meets the terms and conditions set out in the CWELCC service agreement. The City of Windsor may recover funding and the licensee may be deemed ineligible to receive future funding if found to be not in compliance.

Start-Up Grants:

Start-up Grants support the creation of new licensed full day spaces for children under age six in targeted regions for underserved communities and populations. High need populations include:

- Vulnerable children,
- Children from diverse populations,
- Children with special needs, and
- Indigenous and Francophone communities.

Applications for Start-up Grants are assessed against the The City of Windsor Early Learning and Child Care Directed Growth Plan by enabling space creation in neighbourhoods that have had historically lower rates of space availability that may not be accommodated through natural growth.

Start-up Grants can be used to offset the initial costs required to expand or create spaces such as equipment and leasehold improvements. The grants support community-based space expansion projects and prioritize the creation of new licenced full-day spaces for children aged 0-4. Start-up Grants may be used for retrofits, renovations, or expansion projects, but cannot be used to purchase land or buildings. Space expansion projects for child care programs that run during school hours for kindergarten and school-aged children are ineligible for Start-up Grants.

Eligible expenses for licensed child care centres include:

- 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 \(CCEYA\)](#).
- Non-consumable supplies/equipment to support the ongoing regular operation of the child care program (e.g. appliances, IT, supplies to support learning environments while adhering to health and safety requirements).
- Renovations, additions, or repairs to licensed full day child care facilities or potential child care facilities as approved by The City of Windsor.
- 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 \(CCEYA\)](#).
- Leasehold improvements.

Eligible expenses for home child care licensees:

- Play materials, equipment, and furnishings (both indoors and outdoors) as outlined in Section 27 of O. Reg. 137/15 under the [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 \(CCEYA\)](#).

The application for Start-up Grant funding is included in the The City of Windsor Directed Growth Expansion Application and will only be available to successful expansion applicants.

Infrastructure Funding:

The Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care Infrastructure Fund (ELCC Infrastructure Fund) supports infrastructure projects with a goal of increasing inclusion in child care for underserved communities through the creation of new, licensed child care spaces.

The proposed project must support the creation of new, licensed child care spaces that are centre-based, community-based, and operated by a not-for-profit licensee. These spaces must serve children aged 0 to 4 years, excluding those eligible for junior kindergarten. They must be approved for enrolment in the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system, hold a purchase of service agreement with the City of Windsor, and be eligible to receive fee subsidy payments. The project must align with the City of Windsor Directed Growth Plan and

address the needs of underserved communities, including care during non-standard hours. Eligible licensees must commit to operating the facility and participating in the CWELCC system for a minimum of seven years from the date the new spaces become operational. All Infrastructure Fund funding must be expended by December 31, 2026.

Eligible Infrastructure Expenses for Licensed Child Care Centres (select all that apply):

The application for Start-up Grant funding is included in the The City of Windsor Directed Growth Expansion Application and will only be available to successful expansion applicants.

Summary of Application Process

Applicants should reviewed all details of the Application Overview document and the Application Workbook before beginning the application. Additionally, they must ensure they are familiar with all of the following:

- [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 \(CCEYA\)](#)
- [Child Care Centre Licensing Manual](#)
- [Funding Guidelines](#)

Applicants are advised to complete only one expansion application, and proposed expansion applications should demonstrate prior business planning and feasibility for implementation (i.e., applicants should not submit multiple applications for several different priority neighbourhoods without prior planning which supports actual expansion in these neighbourhoods).

Applicants can consult with the City of Windsor on any application questions prior to submission by emailing csapp@citywindsor.ca.

Completed applications should be submitted via email to csapp@citywindsor.ca no later than September 15, 2025.

Evaluation of Applications

CWELCC Directed Growth Expansion applications will be reviewed and approved based on criteria, priorities, and space allocations that align with the Ministry of Education's [Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care \(CWELCC\) System Guidelines](#), Access and Inclusion Framework, and the City of Windsor's Directed Growth Expansion plan.

The information collected in the application workbook will be assessed in combination with other key performance metrics that are tracked by the SSM, including but not limited to:

- History over the past three years of meeting all contractual obligations with the City of Windsor, including:
 - Timely submission of reports,
 - Use of required tools such as OneHSN for wait list management,

- Responsiveness to staff requests.
- History over the past three years of funding recovered by the City of Windsor.
- Previous expressions of interest and expansion applications.
- Demonstrated ability over past years to effectively deliver inclusive programming, including serving children with special needs and serving families receiving fee subsidy.

The City of Windsor does not guarantee approval of applications into the CWELCC system. All applications are subject to The City of Windsor's review, as well as space and funding availability.

Timelines

During the Application Period (August 1 to September 15, 2025):

- During the application period, interested operators may apply for consideration to open or expand a licensed child care program.
- The City of Windsor Children's Services department reviews applications for Service System Plan priority alignment and eligibility to make an informed decision regarding submitted application.
- The City of Windsor Children's Services department communicates the decision to applicant in writing through September to October.
- A meeting will be scheduled with a the City of Windsor Children's Services department and the approved applicant(s), to review next steps.

Post-Approval Period (October 1 – December 31, 2025):

- Successful applicant receives confirmation of approval from the SSM and a promissory letter indicating number of spaces approved and amount of Start Up Funding and/or Infrastructure Funding granted if applicable.
- Successful applicant reviews the Start a Child Care Program website to learn how to obtain a child care license in Ontario, including how to apply, information on fees and required approvals.
- New licensee and The City of Windsor enter into a Purchase of Services Agreement.

Preparing for Opening (January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026):

- Licensee builds, renovates, or retrofits new space; licensee submits required documents and status update(s) to the City of Windsor Children's Services department regarding status of project at key milestones as outlined in project plan.
- Applicant submits the signed CWELCC New License Application Service System Manager Confirmation Form found on CCLS.
- Applicant notifies the City of Windsor Children's Services department once licensing is approved by Ministry of Education.
- Licensee adheres to the City of Windsor's required reporting and reconciliation requirements, as prescribed by the purchase of service agreement, the operators

handbook, or as communicated by The City of Windsor Children's Services department staff.

- Applicant begins operating new spaces no later than December 31, 2026.

For Support:

Please reach out to us at csapp@citywindsor.ca for support.