

School District Child Care: Single Application Point Engagement Summary

In response to feedback from the child care sector and to the December 2022 Mandate letters to the Minister of Education and Child Care and the Minister of State for Child Care, the Ministry of Education and Child Care (the ministry) explored a process change to how school districts access funding for new child care spaces. Until recently, school districts accessed capital funding for K-12 projects through one process and capital funding for child care through another. The intention of the proposed process change was to create a single application point for districts to request child care capital funding through the ministry's Capital Management Branch.

The ministry engaged with school districts representatives and child care operators to gather feedback on the proposed process. During the engagement sessions, attendees were given a high-level presentation on the proposed process with pauses for opportunities to provide feedback on specific topics. The feedback received through these engagements was used to ensure that:

- unintended gaps or challenges within the new process were identified and addressed before it was launched;
- the process for school age care on school grounds applications remained simple and accessible; and
- the single point of application simplified access to capital funding for the creation of child care on school grounds across the province.



ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

3 sessions for school district representatives on December 6 and 7, 2023
118 total participants from 52 school districts

1 session for child care operators on December 13, 2023
6 total participants

Participants

School Districts: invitations were sent directly to Superintendents, Secretary-Treasurers, Early Learning and Child Care Leads and Facilities Leads for each district.

Child Care Operators: invitations were sent directly to select child care operators with known experience or interest in creating child care on school grounds.

Engagement Format

Available options for engagement:

- Multiple choice question via Zoom poll
- Open-ended question via Zoom poll
- Open discussion verbally on Zoom camera
- Anonymous comment(s) or question(s) submitted through Zoom chat function

For school districts, there was a mixture of all engagement options in each session.

For child care providers, all questions had open, verbal discussions via Zoom camera with one written comment submitted via Zoom chat.

A Note About the Feedback Questions

In order to speak to each audience's perspective, the feedback questions for child care operators were different than those for school district representatives, except for one common question related to small equipment ownership in both the school district and child care operator sessions. In this report, feedback from school district representatives and child care operators are presented separately.

What We Heard – Results and Key Themes

SCHOOL DISTRICT SESSIONS

Support for the Proposed New Single Application Point Process:

- The proposed process is more streamlined, helps to define timelines and process steps, and allows for integration with other capital planning. The use of the Capital Asset Planning System (CAPS) provides familiarity, which is helpful.
- This change places more importance on how school district staff see child care, which prompts increased consideration and planning for child care, and could potentially increase the number of child care spaces.
- Strong support for the phased process and the potential future inclusion of an up-front grant that helps allow funding to be received sooner, thereby reducing out-of-pocket costs, while also helping to generate more confidence in planning and design.

Gaps, Barriers or Concerns with the Proposed New Single Application Point Process:

- Full integration of the K-12 and child care process is needed, as well as alignment of timelines with the current capital planning process.
- Concern noted about a lack of process, funding and defined responsibility for ongoing repairs and maintenance for child care, as well as for upgrading, relocating, or expanding existing child care programs.
- Spending funds on project planning before knowing if the project is approved presents challenges.
- Any challenges in the process are compounded for small and rural or remote districts due to limited availability of resources.

Additional General Comments:

- Child care planning is often done 'off of the side of the desk' by school district staff. Process improvements and funding to address this would be helpful.
- Strong desire for standardization within the process, with the ministry providing building options, building plans, design standards and examples to aid in planning.
- Strong support for multiple or continuous intakes.

Major Projects:

- With regard to the potential timing of calls for submission for major projects, there was support for two calls for submission (intakes), with a preference for the second submission in fall (September to November).
- When exploring the possibility of receiving a funding advance to support the planning and design phase, there was support for the idea, because it could reduce risks and long lead times,

increase confidence in funding and projected costs, allow for dedicated support in project planning, and help with various up-front costs.

Minor Projects:

- Strong need for providing as much lead time as possible.
- Anecdotal support for flexible timing and continuous intakes.

Furniture and Small Equipment Ownership:

- Preference for child care operators to have ownership of furniture and small equipment as they know what they want and need, and what aligns with their programming. They also have preferences around suppliers and the type and quality of furniture and equipment.
- An alternative perspective is that school districts should own these items to create a standard across the district, as well as to help manage and share resources within the district.
- Significant concern over determining who would be responsible for ongoing maintenance, repair, and replacement of furniture and small equipment.

Out of Scope Feedback:

Though not directly related to the proposed Single Application Point process, it was noted that beyond this process, there is a need to address the steep cost of operating child care. This feedback was recorded and shared with the appropriate areas within the ministry for consideration for future program and policy changes.

What We Heard – Key Themes

CHILD CARE OPERATOR SESSION

Working with School Districts:

- Consensus that it is important for child care operators to be involved at the beginning of a project, as early as possible. By being involved early, child care operators can support appropriate design, which reduces the need for changes, and therefore provides cost savings.
- Support for increased collaboration and information sharing with school districts to further improve their understanding of the operations and needs of child care on school grounds.
- Partnership between child care operators and school districts is key. It is essential to have regular consultation and work through challenges together.

Timing to Start New Child Care Program:

- Child care on school grounds is impacted by the school calendar. As such, timing for opening a child care program is very important, as it impacts families, operators and schools. The construction work creates disruptions. Proper planning and sufficient time are needed to minimize negative impacts.
- It works best for child care programs to open following scheduled school closures (for example, spring, winter or summer breaks), as construction, licensing and set-up can be completed during the closures.

Licensing:

- There are many considerations for licensing, for example the licensing process cannot begin until the facility has an occupancy permit and there is also a need to consider municipal or city level approvals (i.e., where permit approvals fit in the overall process).
- A suggestion was to include municipal and licensing inspections in timelines.

Furniture and Small Equipment Ownership:

- The strong preference is for child care operators to have ownership of, and be involved in, the procurement of furniture and equipment. It is very important for child care operators to be involved to ensure that good quality items are purchased, items align with programming needs, items can be shared across spaces, and timelines are followed.
 - There is a need to consider what would happen in terms of ownership if a child care operator moved.
 - Preference for the ministry to look at dedicated funding for starting-up child care operations.
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Outcomes

- The feedback gathered in this process was evaluated and incorporated as appropriate into the new process for accessing capital funding for child care on school grounds.
- School districts were able to start preparing their 2024-25 and 2025-26 [capital plans for child care](#) using the expanded Capital Asset Planning System (CAPS) beginning on April 8, 2024. Submissions for 2024-25 were accepted until May 15, 2024, and submissions for 2025-26 will align with the capital planning cycle for K-12.
- All other eligible applicants can apply to the [ChildCareBC New Spaces Fund](#) through the existing application process.
- To help ensure fair and equitable access to major capital funding, school district requests will be considered alongside other applications to the New Spaces Fund.
- This process will be reviewed regularly and adapted as needed, which may include additional consultation with interest-holders.