PRELIMINARY SURVEY FINDINGS

ACE Alberta Professional Development Funding Survey

Preliminary Educator Feedback on the 2026/27 Funding Framework

ACCESS, SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE

October 2026

Association of Canadian Early Learning Programs (ACE)
www.acenational.ca

EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Executive Brief

Why ACE is sharing this feedback

Professional development funding is an important public investment in Alberta's early childhood educators. Following the 2026/27 changes to PD and release time funding, ACE asked educators whether the framework enables them to access learning that strengthens their competency, confidence, professionalism and daily practice. These preliminary findings are shared to inform the department's understanding of how the framework is working in practice.

What respondents reported

67.7%

want to strengthen their skills or confidence in responding to challenging behaviour and supporting emotional regulation.

Learning needs · Q6

77.4%

said currently eligible training meets their professional learning needs not very well or not at all.

Relevance · Q7

80.6%

said the funding changes made it somewhat or much harder to participate in professional development.

Access · Q15

Percentages of respondents who answered each question. Respondents also identified needs in family communication (61.3%), supporting children with disabilities or additional needs (51.6%) and leadership (51.6%).

Key areas emerging from the feedback

1. **Relevance of eligible learning.** Whether approved opportunities meet the professional learning needs respondents identify.
2. **Access and participation.** Respondents' experiences with training availability, scheduling, delivery formats, release time and upfront costs.
3. **Understanding and navigating funding.** Respondents' experiences with individual eligibility, applications and reimbursement.

Sharing educator feedback

ACE is providing these preliminary findings to help the department understand educators' experiences with the current framework. Additional findings will be shared as the survey continues.

About This Report

ACE is sharing preliminary feedback from Alberta early childhood educators on their experiences with the 2026/27 professional development and release time funding framework.

The report presents respondents' learning needs, experiences accessing eligible training and funding, and suggestions for improvement. It is intended to inform the department's understanding of how the framework is working in practice and support consideration of educator feedback in future program planning.

These findings do not constitute a formal set of ACE policy recommendations. The survey remains open, and ACE will continue gathering feedback.

Continuing professional learning is part of professional practice. Respondents are identifying areas where they want further development; the findings should not be read as evidence about their current competence or the quality of care.

About these findings

Participation was voluntary. These preliminary findings reflect the experiences and perspectives of participating educators and are not necessarily representative of all Alberta educators.

How to read this report

- **Three kinds of content are labelled.** GOVERNMENT PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS summarize official Alberta sources. SURVEY FINDINGS report respondents' experiences and perceptions. Short INTERPRETATION notes describe what the findings show; the report does not set out policy recommendations.
- **Percentages.** Each percentage is of the respondents who answered that question, calculated from the individual survey responses. Where respondents could select more than one answer, percentages may total more than 100%.
- **Charts.** All charts use a 0–100% scale and show every response option. Grey bars show answers outside the rating scale, such as "unable to compare," "do not know" or "have not applied."
- **Written responses.** Sections 8 and 9 summarize the written answers to the four open-ended questions, with short anonymized excerpts.

GOVERNMENT PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The 2026/27 PD Funding Framework

The Early Childhood Educator Workforce Supports Program began on April 1, 2026. The changes concern eligibility, eligible training and the request process. This page summarizes the official sources; it is not a complete statement of program rules.

Requirement	Before (2025/26)	2026/27
Employment-hours requirement	Minimum of 29 hours in at least one month.	Minimum of 720 hours by the date the training is completed, based on wage top-up hours claimed and paid in the last two years.
Workshops and conferences	A broad selection of training types, durations and provider locations.	Only entries on the 2026/27 approved list. Level 1 and 2 ECEs: approved Flight and pedagogy-related workshops and conferences. Level 3 ECEs: approved leadership, Flight and pedagogy-related workshops and conferences.
Post-secondary courses	Broad eligibility for coursework types and institution locations.	ELCC credit courses from recognized Canadian institutions; Alberta institutions must be listed in Appendix D of the Certification Guide for Early Childhood Educators. Level 1 and 2: courses leading to higher certification. Level 3: courses leading to educational credentials. ECE Bursary applicants are not eligible for post-secondary PD or release time funding.
Release time	Available for ECEs and employers.	Intended for ECEs only; release time funding for employers was discontinued.
Request process	Requests submitted after paying or enrolling.	The PD Funding Request form is submitted after the training is completed, with receipt of payment and proof of completion. Release time is requested on the same form.

Other individual criteria also apply, including certification level, employment in a licensed program and residency status; see the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Supports Program page. Sources: PD and Release Time Funding Fact Sheet (April 2026); Approved List of Workshops and Conferences (April 2026).

A possible call for additional workshops

The approved list states: *"A formal call for a broader range of workshops may be considered in 2026/27."* This identifies a possibility, not a confirmed call or commitment.

Source: Approved List of Workshops and Conferences (April 2026), valid April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2027.

Maximum funding per ECE per fiscal year

Funding category	PD maximum	Release time maximum
Approved workshops and conferences	**$500**	$787.50 ($17.50 per hour, up to 45 hours)
Eligible post-secondary courses	**$1,500**	$1,600 ($800 per three-credit course, up to two courses)
Combined maximum	**$2,000**	$2,387.50

- These are separate category maximums, subject to eligibility. The combined amounts cannot all be used for workshops and conferences.
- The maximum funding allocations were maintained for 2026/27. The changes described above concern who is eligible, what training is eligible and how requests are made.
- Approved amounts are paid to the licensed program with its monthly grant deposit. The program passes PD funding to the ECE and pays release time to the ECE as a taxable benefit.
- Deadlines: workshops and conferences, within three calendar months of completion or by March 31, 2027, whichever is sooner. Post-secondary courses, within three calendar months of completion; for courses started January to March 2027, within three months of completion or by June 30, 2027, whichever is sooner.

Sources: PD and Release Time Funding Fact Sheet (April 2026); Early Childhood Educator Workforce Supports Program; Funding for working ECEs.

The 2026/27 approved list

The counts below are ACE's count of entries on the approved list, not totals published by the government.

Level 1 and 2 ECEs

- Seven Level 1 and 2 workshop entries, including French-language versions of three ARCQE series. All seven are marked eligible for release time funding only.
- Seven conference entries.
- Post-secondary courses are funded separately.

Level 3 ECEs

- All Level 1 and 2 entries.
- 41 additional workshop entries and 12 additional conference entries.
- Post-secondary courses are funded separately.

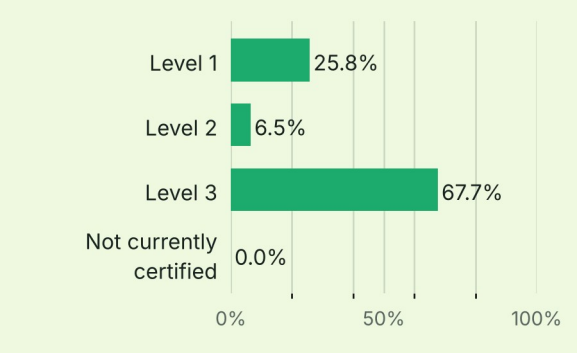
Entry counts do not measure available seats, delivery frequency, geographic access or learning content.

SECTION 1 · SURVEY FINDINGS

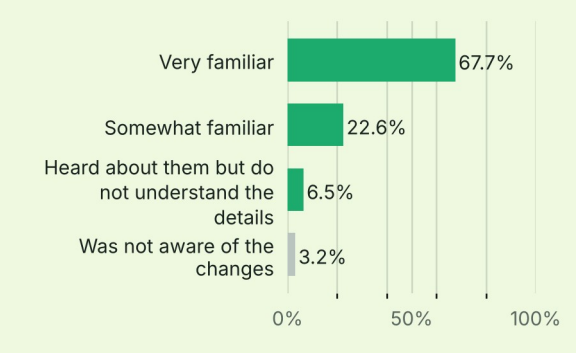
Who Responded and Their Experience With the Program

These questions describe the respondents and how they have engaged with the program since April 1, 2026. They provide context for the results that follow.

Q1. Current Alberta ECE certification level

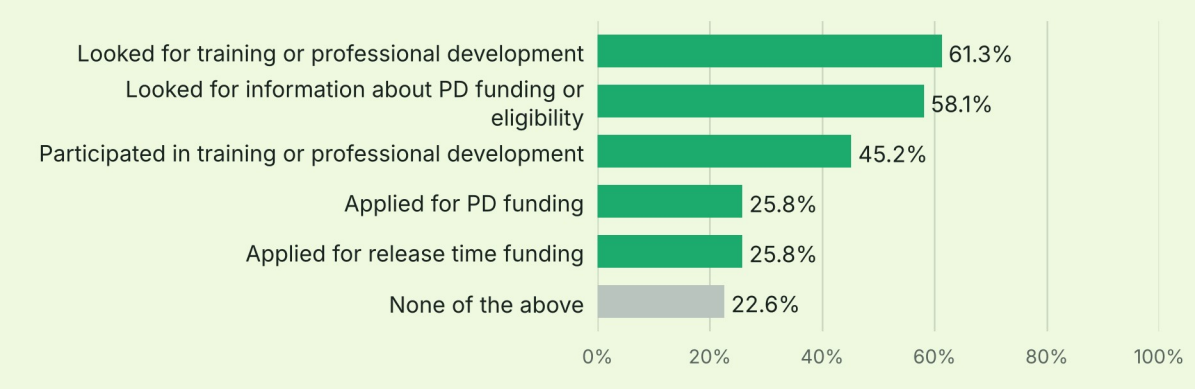


Q2. Familiarity with the April 1, 2026 changes



Percentage of respondents who answered this question.

Q3. Since April 1, 2026, which of the following have you done?



Percentage of respondents who answered this question. Respondents could select more than one answer; percentages may total more than 100%.

What this context means

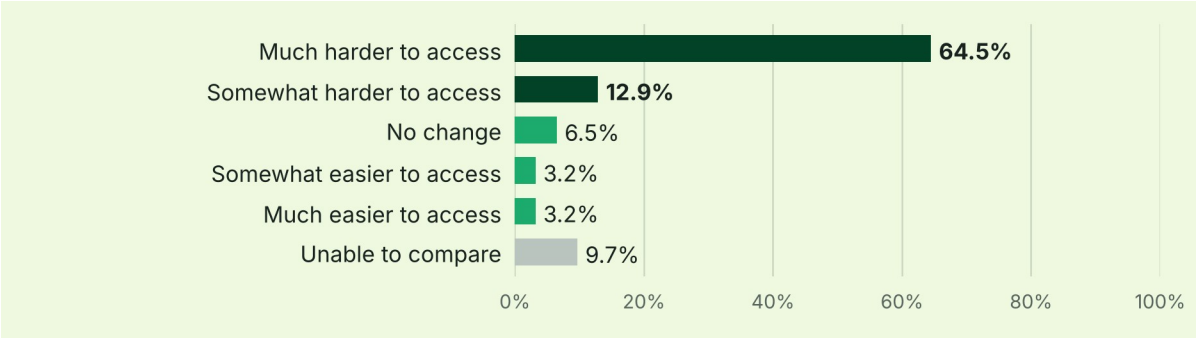
- About two-thirds of respondents hold Level 3 certification. In both the Level 1 and 2 group and the Level 3 group, most respondents said eligible training meets their needs not very well or not at all (Q7) and that the changes made participation harder (Q15). Results are presented for respondents overall; separate certification-level percentages are not shown.
- Most respondents are very or somewhat familiar with the changes.
- Not all respondents applied for funding or completed training: about one in four reported applying for PD funding.

SECTION 2 · SURVEY FINDINGS

Changes in Access and Choice

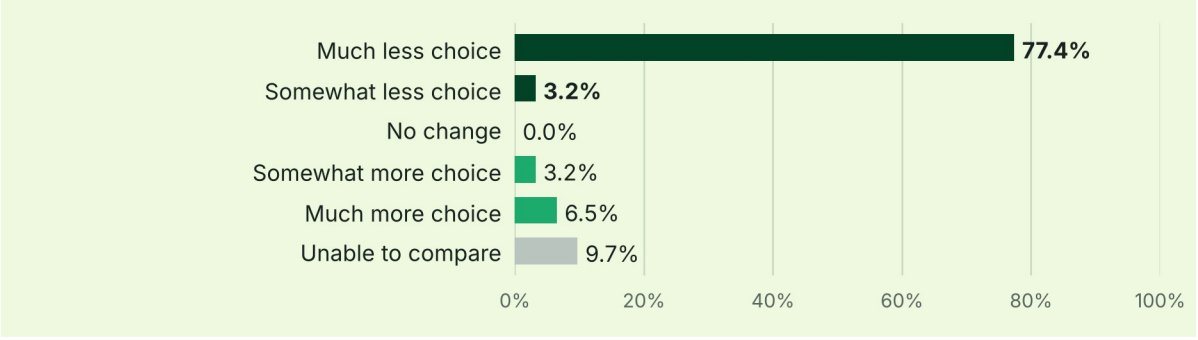
Respondents were asked to compare their experience with the period before April 1, 2026. Preliminary findings indicate that most respondents find training on needed topics harder to access, and that most see less choice of funded courses and providers.

Q4. Compared with before April 1, 2026, how has your ability to access training on the topics you need changed?



Percentage of respondents who answered this question. 77.4% selected much or somewhat harder; 6.5% selected somewhat or much easier.

Q5. Compared with before April 1, 2026, how has the range of training providers and courses you can choose from with PD funding changed?



Percentage of respondents who answered this question. 80.6% selected much or somewhat less choice; 9.7% selected somewhat or much more choice.

Interpretation: what these responses describe

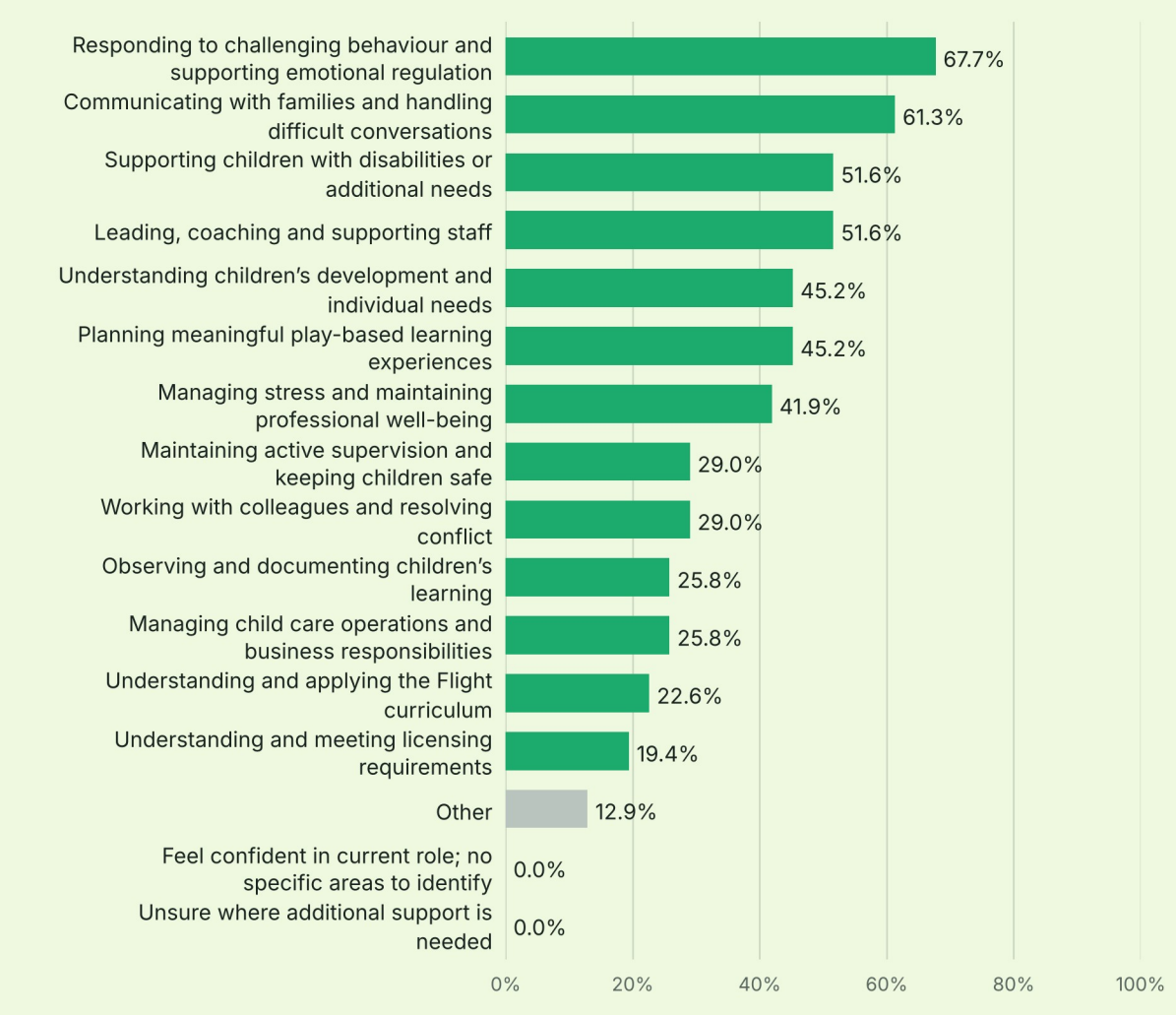
Educators work with children of different ages, abilities and needs, and with families and colleagues. Respondents report that finding funded training on the topics they need has become harder. Some respondents reported easier access or more choice, while others were unable to compare; these responses are included in the charts.

SECTION 3 · SURVEY FINDINGS

Where Educators Want to Strengthen Their Practice

Continuing professional learning supports competent practice. Question 6 asks where educators want to strengthen their skills, confidence and support; Question 8 asks what training they would find helpful. The questions are related but different, and respondents could select several areas in each.

Q6. Where do you feel you need more support? In which areas of your current role would you most like to strengthen your skills or confidence?



Percentage of respondents who answered this question. Respondents could select more than one answer; percentages may total more than 100%.

Q8. What types of training or professional development would be most helpful to you in your current role? (The question asked respondents to "select up to five.")



Percentage of respondents who answered this question. Respondents could select more than one answer; percentages may total more than 100%. The question asked respondents to select up to five options, but the limit was not enforced: the individual responses show that more than half selected more than five. Results are therefore presented as respondents' identified learning interests, not a ranked list of top-five priorities.

What Question 6 shows

- **Daily work with children.** Responding to challenging behaviour and supporting emotional regulation was the most-selected area. Supporting children with disabilities or additional needs and understanding children's development were also selected often. These shape how safe, settled and included children feel each day.
- **Relationships with families matter.** Communicating with families and handling difficult conversations was the second most-selected area.
- **Leadership and well-being are part of practice.** About half want stronger skills in leading, coaching and supporting staff (51.6%), and 41.9% identified managing stress and professional well-being.
- **Every respondent identified at least one area.** No respondent selected "I feel confident in my current role and do not have specific areas to identify" or "I am unsure where I need additional support." This reflects educators seeking further development, not a lack of competence.

What Question 8 shows

- **Behaviour guidance again.** Behaviour guidance and emotional regulation was selected most often (71.0%), followed by family relationships and difficult conversations (64.5%) and leadership, teamwork and staff management (64.5%).
- **Inclusion and communication development are frequently identified learning interests.** Inclusion, disabilities and neurodiversity, and speech, language and communication development were each selected by 61.3% of respondents.
- **Needs extend to operations, well-being and mental health.** Child care operations and business management (51.6%), educator well-being (48.4%), licensing and professionalism (41.9%), child safety (38.7%) and trauma-informed care (38.7%) were also selected.
- **Flight-related learning is part of the picture.** 25.8% selected Flight curriculum and documenting children's learning. The findings do not question the value of Flight; they show that respondents also want learning across a wider range of practice.

Reading Questions 6 and 8 together

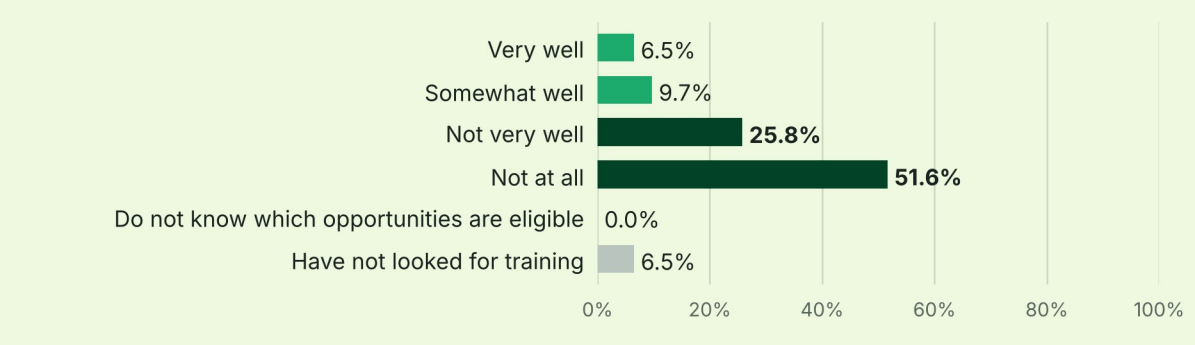
Both questions point to the same broad pattern: respondents want learning that helps with behaviour, inclusion, families, leadership and well-being, as well as curriculum. Because results are reported in total, they cannot show how an individual's answers to one question relate to their answers to the other.

SECTION 4 · SURVEY FINDINGS

Does Eligible Training Meet Those Needs?

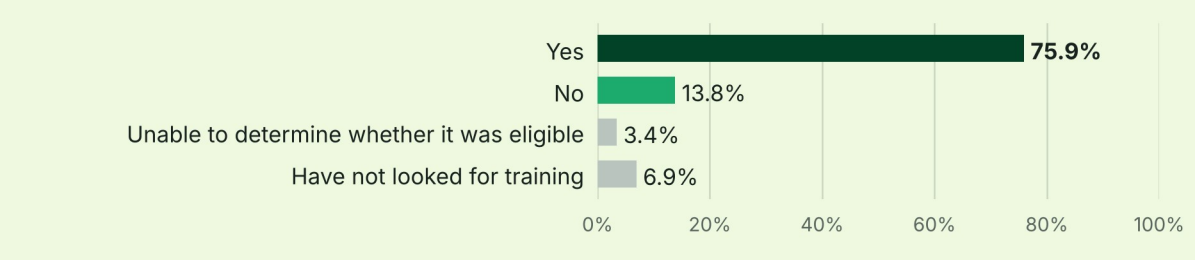
Respondents reported a gap between the learning they identified in Questions 6 and 8 and the training they can access with funding. These are respondents' experiences and understanding of the rules, not funding determinations.

Q7. How well do the training opportunities currently eligible for PD funding meet your professional learning needs?



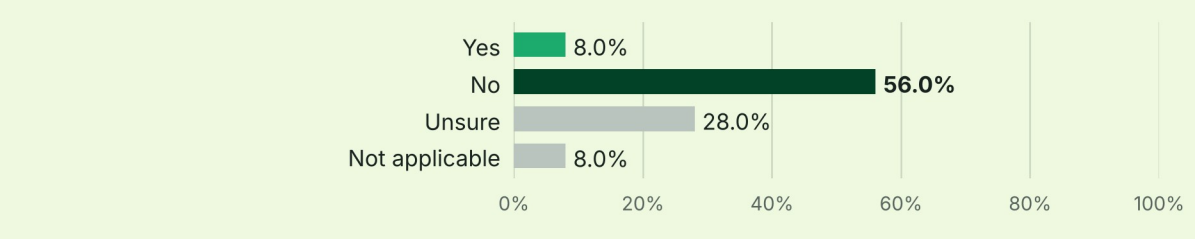
Percentage of respondents who answered this question. 77.4% selected not very well or not at all; 16.1% selected very or somewhat well.

Q9. Since April 1, 2026, have you found training you wanted to take that was not eligible for PD funding?



Percentage of respondents who answered this question.

Q18. To your knowledge, would the professional learning experience you described as most valuable qualify for funding under the current rules?



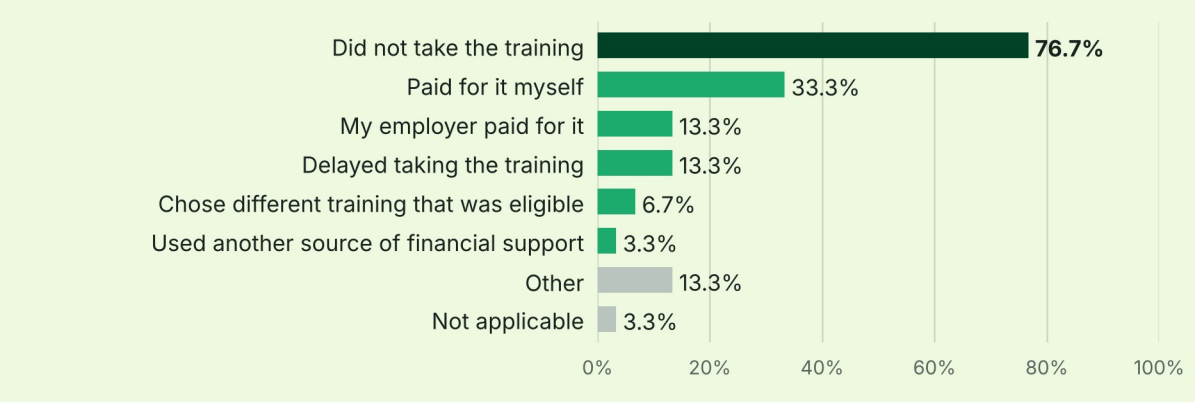
Percentage of respondents who answered this question. Responses reflect respondents' understanding of the rules, not an independent eligibility determination.

SECTION 5 · SURVEY FINDINGS

When Learning Is Out of Reach

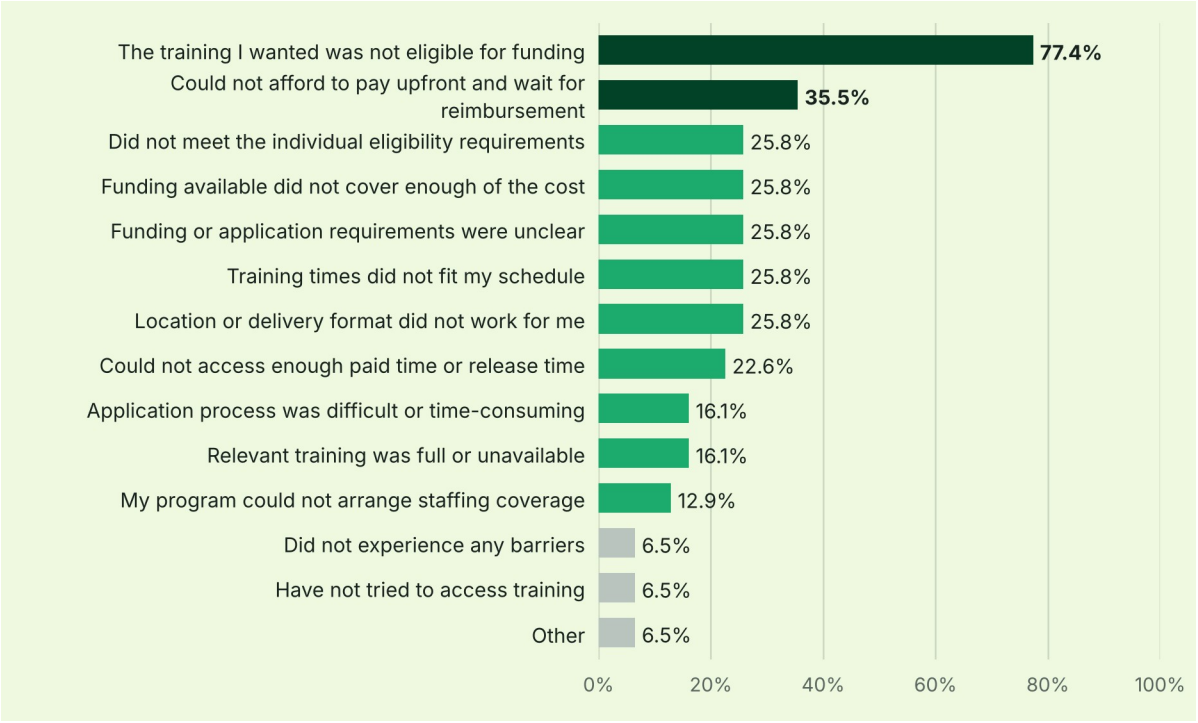
Course eligibility is the most-reported barrier, followed by being unable to pay upfront and wait for reimbursement. When training was ineligible, some respondents paid themselves or their employer paid, and few switched to eligible training. Experiences can overlap. “Ineligible” reflects what respondents reported, not a confirmed funding decision.

Q10. If you found training that was not eligible for PD funding, what did you do?



Percentage of respondents who answered this question. Respondents could select more than one answer; percentages may total more than 100%. “Did not take the training” refers to the specific training respondents had identified; it does not mean they stopped all professional development.

Q11. Since April 1, 2026, what has made it difficult to access the training you need?



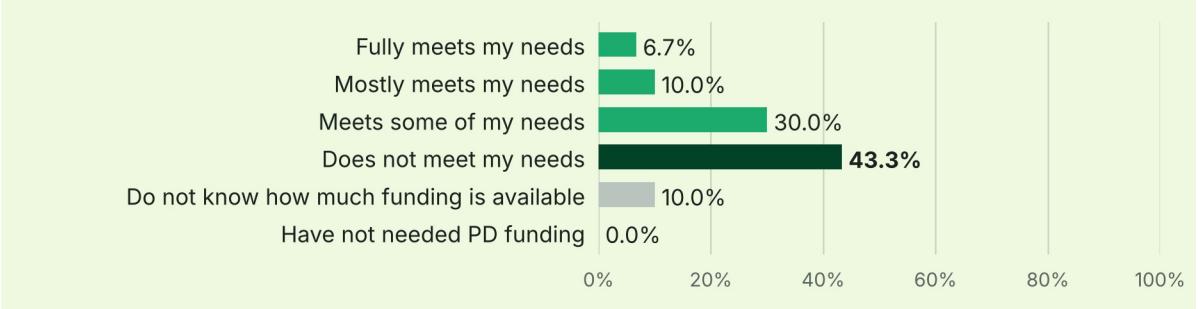
Percentage of respondents who answered this question. Respondents could select more than one answer; percentages may total more than 100%.

SECTION 6 · SURVEY FINDINGS

Funding, Release Time and Applying

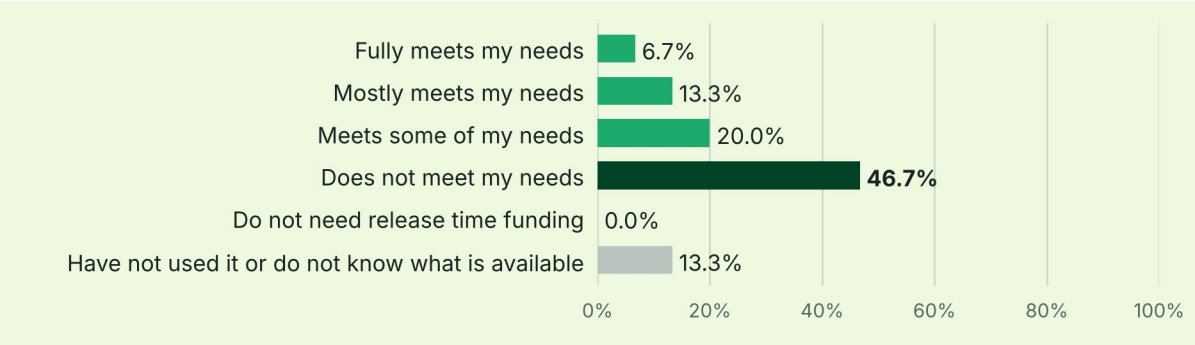
Answers such as “do not know” or “have not tried to apply” are shown in grey. They may point to an information or participation gap, but they are not evidence of a rejected application or inadequate funding.

Q12. How well does the amount of PD funding available meet your training needs?



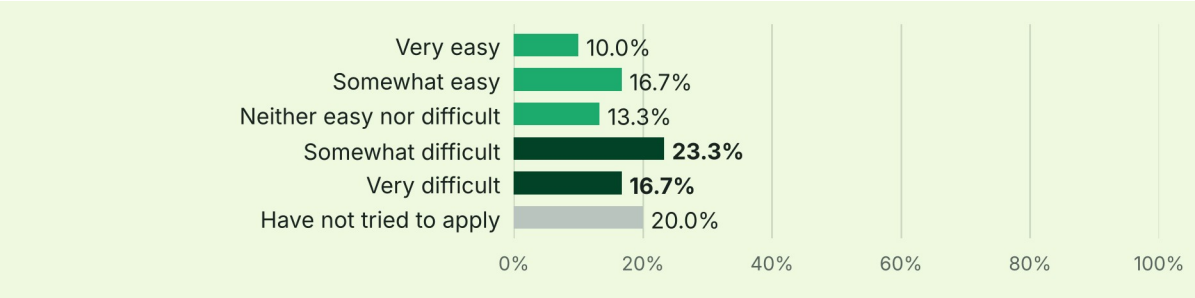
Percentage of respondents who answered this question. 16.7% selected fully or mostly meets; 10.0% do not know how much funding is available.

Q13. How well does the current release time funding meet your needs for participating in professional development?



Percentage of respondents who answered this question. 20.0% selected fully or mostly meets; 13.3% have not used it or do not know what is available.

Q14. Based on your experience since April 1, 2026, how easy or difficult is it to apply for PD funding?

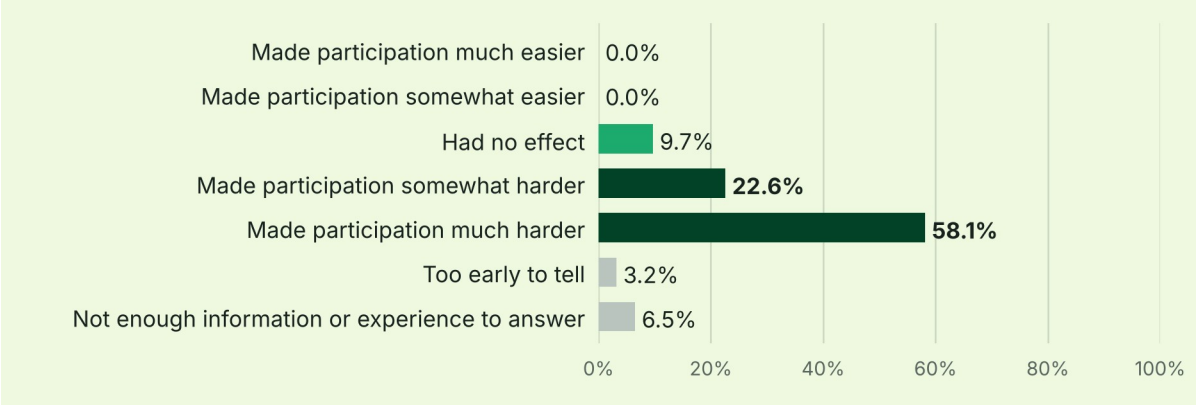


Percentage of respondents who answered this question. 40.0% selected somewhat or very difficult; 26.7% selected very or somewhat easy; 20.0% had not tried to apply.

SECTION 7 · SURVEY FINDINGS

Overall Effect on Participation

Q15. Overall, what effect have the funding changes had on your ability to participate in professional development?



Percentage of respondents who answered this question.

80.6% of respondents said the funding changes made participation in professional development somewhat or much harder. More than half said much harder. No respondent said the changes made participation easier; 9.7% said they had no effect, and some said it was too early to tell or they did not have enough information.

SECTION 8 · SURVEY FINDINGS

Educators' Experiences in Their Own Words

Four open-ended questions asked educators what learning they find hard to access (Q16), what learning has been most valuable (Q17), what should be kept, changed or added (Q19) and what else government should know (Q20). This section describes respondents' experiences; Section 9 presents their suggestions. ACE grouped the written answers into themes.

Quotations are short verbatim excerpts, with identifying details removed. Statements about eligibility reflect what respondents reported, not confirmed funding decisions. Themes are not ranked by frequency.

Learning for the whole team

Some respondents described wanting educators at different certification levels to train together, and reported that level-based eligibility makes shared team training difficult to arrange. These comments describe respondents' experiences and understanding of the rules.

> *"I would like my staff to all be able to take the same training and learn as a team, not my level 1's and 2's can take this but my level 3's don't get coverage or vice versa."*
> Level 3 respondent (Q16)

> *"It is difficult to find a workshop that all three levels (I, II, III) can access funding for."*
> Level 3 respondent (Q16)

Program information: the approved list includes the Level 1 and 2 entries for Level 3 educators as well. The comments do not show whether the difficulties described relate to course eligibility, individual eligibility, availability or understanding of the rules. Source: Approved List of Workshops and Conferences (April 2026).

Level 3 educators in classroom roles

Some Level 3 respondents work directly with children rather than in leadership roles, and reported that Level 3 options focus on leadership and do not match their needs. This is qualitative feedback from some respondents, not a finding about all Level 3 educators.

> *"Level 3s who do not want to be in leadership cannot access workshops to support their desire to continue working in the classroom. We need more frontline sessions."*
> Level 3 respondent (Q16)

Availability, location and time

Respondents reported approved sessions that were full, waiting lists, difficulty finding where and when eligible training is offered, and difficulty releasing staff during the day.

> *"I found it very difficult to find urls for the workshops I am eligible for and spent many hours searching but they were all full or not in Edm."*
> Level 1 respondent (Q16)

> *"I do not have enough staff to allow them to be out of ratio for the classes during the day."*
> Level 3 respondent (Q16)

Practical learning for daily practice

Respondents described wanting practical learning on behaviour, inclusion, communication and educator well-being, consistent with the patterns in Questions 6 and 8.

> *"On practical and relatable solutions to meeting challenging behaviors in children."*
> Level 3 respondent, describing training needed (Q16)

> *"Flight may be a wonderful framework but it does not meet the immediate needs of myself or my team- does not support behaviours, communication or reduce the stress and burnout facing ece's."*
> Level 3 respondent (Q20)

Specific program types and educator needs

Respondents from Montessori, Reggio-inspired and nature-based programs, and from family day homes, reported that eligible options do not fit their program approach. A respondent described the need for English-language support for educators whose first language is not English.

> *"There are no approved English courses that would focus on reading, writing, and comprehension for ECE's specifically."*
> Level 3 respondent (Q16)

> *"Level 3 focuses on leadership which is not useful for an individual running a Dayhome."*
> Level 3 respondent (Q16)

Costs and the request process

Respondents described upfront costs, the time needed to submit requests for several staff, respondent concerns about submission deadlines and waiting times for payment. Some respondents in executive roles reported that they can no longer access funding because of the hours requirement. Official submission deadlines are generally measured from training completion, with specific fiscal-year cutoffs. The applicable requirements are summarized on page 5.

> *"It is also time consuming to apply for multiple staff who took the same workshop/course."*
> Level 3 respondent (Q20)

> *"I get the most out of in person conferences, however, they are expensive and I can not afford the up front costs."*
> Level 3 respondent (Q17)

Learning respondents found most valuable

Respondents described in-person conferences, Montessori conferences, a trauma-informed practice diploma, infant and toddler workshops, a leadership series, the ECE diploma, and training on de-escalation and the skills a child may be missing. Where respondents explained why the learning mattered, they described its value for daily practice with children and families. Most responses did not say whether this learning took place before or after April 1, 2026.

> *"examples of how to implement in our daily life and ways to support the children and families"*
> Level 3 respondent (Q17)

> *"Managing challenging behaviours and communication are two topics that I seek out because those are things that affect me on a daily basis."*
> Level 1 respondent (Q17)

SECTION 9 · SURVEY FINDINGS

What Respondents Would Like to See

Questions 19 and 20 asked what should be kept, changed or added, and what else respondents would like the Government of Alberta to know. Respondents suggested changes and also identified features they value. These are respondents' suggestions, not ACE recommendations.

Quotations are short verbatim excerpts. Themes are not ranked by frequency, and an individual comment does not represent all respondents.

More choice in eligible learning

Some educators asked for a broader list of eligible learning, or for educators and programs to choose training that fits their needs.

> *"Funding should be available for educators and they should have the option to choose a workshop, course, training, etc. that works for them and their centre."*
> Level 3 respondent (Q19)

> *"Change the list of eligible courses to be broader and reflective of the needs of specific programs."*
> Level 3 respondent (Q19)

> *"I have already taken Flight so the funding really doesn't support what I need now."*
> Level 3 respondent (Q19)

Access across certification levels

Comments included requests for more overlap between the training available at different certification levels.

> *"Some over lap on what level 1's and 2's and 3's can have training on."*
> Level 3 respondent (Q19)

> *"There are trainings that levels 1 and 2 would like to take but they're only available for level 3s"*
> Level 2 respondent (Q20)

Specific learning and formats

Some educators asked for particular kinds of learning to be added or returned, and for formats that suit whole teams.

> *"Added Back In: Montessori and courses from other degrees that are relevant."*
> Level 3 respondent (Q19)

> *"Many operators prefer bringing in professionals for their entire teams."*
> Level 3 respondent (Q19)

Funding, payment and time

Respondents suggested changes to when payments are made, waiting times and the hours requirement.

> *"Tuition fees to upgrade should be paid upfront to help financially and release time can be paid after completing the course"*
> Level 2 respondent (Q19)

> *"Less barriers for applying. Shorter wait times for payment."*
> Level 3 respondent (Q19)

> *"Add executive administration access and drop the requirement of direct ratio hours."*
> Level 3 respondent (Q19)

Program information: published eligibility applies to certified ECEs who provide direct child care, including program and alternate supervisors, with at least 720 hours based on wage top-up hours claimed and paid in the last two years. See the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Supports Program page and page 4.

Information and the request process

Comments included requests for clearer information about where approved training is offered, and for an easier way to submit requests for several staff.

> *"A list with urls of eligible workshop courses, not just names."*
> Level 1 respondent (Q19)

> *"If something can be created to streamline applying for multiple staff at once, that would be helpful."*
> Level 3 respondent (Q20)

Features to retain and differing views

Not all comments called for broader eligibility. Some respondents valued existing features, supported the current focus or the payment-after-completion approach, or suggested ways to show that learning is applied.

> *"Kept: increasing levels"*
> Level 3 respondent (Q19)

> *"Release time funding is alright"*
> Level 2 respondent (Q19)

> *"The forms are good to submit"*
> Level 3 respondent (Q19)

> *"I appreciate the list but it has limited options"*
> Level 3 respondent (Q20)

> *"Glad the focus seems to be on ECE Education and Flight first."*
> Level 3 respondent (Q20)

> *"Research and evidence shows that workshops alone do not increase learning and change practice effectively."*
> Level 3 respondent (Q20)

> *"Make them pay up front, I agree and only reimbursed if they complete the class."*
> Level 3 respondent (Q19)

> *"we make it mandatory that they complete a reflection form after and show us how they are going to implement what they learned into their practices."*
> Level 3 respondent, suggesting a reflection step (Q19)

Comments about general wage levels fall outside this report's scope. Comments about wage top-up hours are considered where they relate to eligibility for PD and release time funding. The written text of "Other" answers to Questions 6 and 8 was not included in the survey export.

Conclusion

Respondents identify professional learning needs across behaviour guidance, inclusion, communication, relationships with families, leadership and other areas of practice. Their feedback also describes challenges with training eligibility, availability, upfront costs and participation.

ACE is providing these preliminary findings to inform the department's understanding of educators' experiences and support future program planning. Further findings will be shared as additional feedback is collected.

Bringing educators' experiences forward.

Disclaimer & Acknowledgements

This report has been prepared by the Association of Canadian Early Learning Programs (ACE) to present preliminary findings from the Alberta Professional Development Funding Survey. Findings are based on survey responses voluntarily submitted by participating educators and should be considered alongside other relevant research, data and policy information. Program information is summarized from Government of Alberta sources checked on October 27, 2026; readers should consult official sources for current requirements.

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ACE thanks the educators who took the time to share their experiences, and appreciates the opportunity to share their feedback with the Government of Alberta and sector partners.

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Sources

Source	Link	Document date
Government of Alberta, Professional Development and Release Time Funding Fact Sheet, 2026/27 Early Childhood Educator Workforce Supports Program	www.alberta.ca/system/files/ecc-pd-and-rt-funding-fact-sheet.pdf	April 2026
Government of Alberta, Approved List of Workshops and Conferences for Professional Development and Release Time Funding	www.alberta.ca/system/files/ecc-approved-list-of-workshops-and-conferences.pdf	April 2026; valid April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2027
Government of Alberta, Early Childhood Educator Workforce Supports Program (web page)	www.alberta.ca/early-childhood-educator-workforce-supports-program	Web page
Government of Alberta, Funding for working ECEs (web page)	www.alberta.ca/funding-for-working-eces	Web page
Government of Alberta, Funding Guide for Early Childhood Educator Workforce Supports (referenced by the fact sheet; not reviewed for this edition)	open.alberta.ca/publications/funding-guide-for-early-childhood-educator-workforce-supports	Not reviewed
ACE, Alberta Professional Development Funding Survey: individual responses export (SurveyMonkey)	Not published	Responses received October 12–26, 2026

Government sources used in the program summary were checked on October 27, 2026. The Funding Guide is listed for further reference and was not reviewed for this edition. Program summaries are not a complete statement of program rules; readers should consult the official sources for current requirements.