



# New Brunswick's Updated Action Plan for 2021-2022



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# Early

childhood is an incredibly important period in a child's development and I'm extremely proud of the work we've achieved in New Brunswick over the past few years.

By ensuring all families can access quality, affordable child care, we're making sure our youngest learners have the tools they need to succeed right from the start.

That is why we invest more than \$70 million in the sector annually, in addition to \$20 million provided through the federal government, through quality assurance and inclusion grants; training and recruitment and retention efforts of early childhood educators, as well as child care subsidies for parents to ensure their continued participation in the workforce.

Through the Parent Subsidy, roughly 3,500 families with an annual income of less than \$80,000 have better access to quality early learning and childcare. And to help with the recruitment and retention of trained educators, we've met our commitment of raising the wages of early childhood educators to \$19 per hour in April 2021 two years ahead of schedule.

The 2021-22 action plan will allow us to build upon these resounding successes by implementing meaningful actions, including a comprehensive inclusion policy to ensure all early learning and childcare facilities provide children and their families with an environment that is respectful of diversity.

This action plan also includes an innovative workforce strategy to support the professional growth and career development of our early childhood educators, who continue to demonstrate the essential role they play in supporting families and our economy.

Building a world-class education system starts with investments in our youngest learners. Together, we will continue to strengthen our early learning and childcare service model by ensuring every child in the province is able to access the opportunities they deserve.



Honourable Dominic Cardy

Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, New Brunswick’s ability to deliver on the initiatives outlined in the 2021-2022 Action Plan may be affected. As such, the targets may not be achieved, and expenditures may differ.

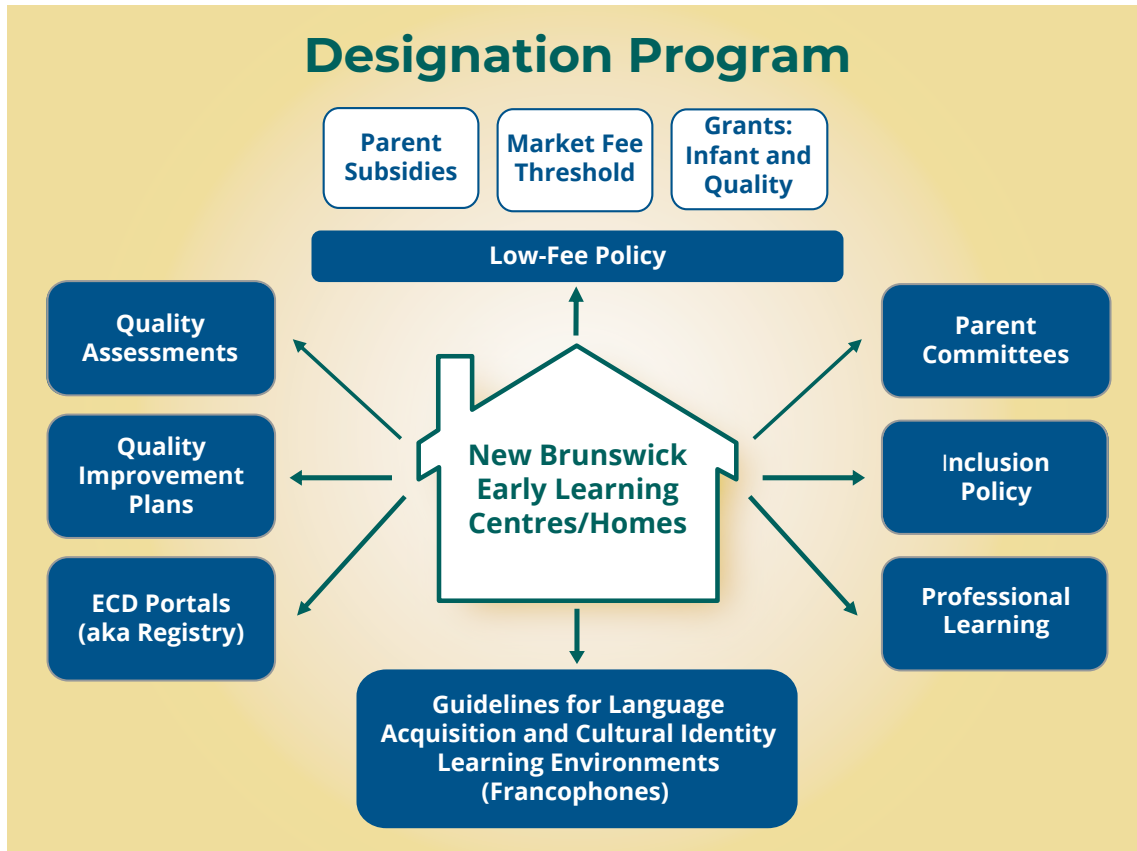
In 2017 New Brunswick set out to transform its early learning and childcare system to become universally accessible and affordable over time, for all families and children, through a robust public policy framework. This ambitious vision was inspired from the extensive consultations with parents, the childcare sector, and stakeholders completed by the Childcare Review Task Force.

At the heart of this transformation is the new designation of New Brunswick Early Learning Centres and Homes for regulated childcare facilities (see diagram) which has made strides in ensuring equitable access to quality licensed childcare for all families. New Brunswick is proud of its resounding success and is proudly standing at 508 designated facilities, a 20% increase

in designated facilities and a 25% increase in designated spaces since the completion of the provincial roll out in 2018. Designated facilities have seen an uptake of spaces by 10% pre-pandemic as a result of being a designated facility.

The pandemic has impacted occupancy rates in designated facilities; however, facilities are slowly returning to pre-pandemic rates. The occupancy rate in February 2020 was at 75% declining to 68% during the winter months. The occupancy rate at July 2021 now stands at 76.4%. The recovery is on the upswing and demand for spaces is expected to continue climbing.

The 2021-2022 action plan aims to maintain the success of the past four years solidifying the vision that by 2030, New Brunswick’s early learning and childcare system will be transformed to offer higher quality services that are universally accessible and affordable for all families and children through a robust public policy framework.



# Action Plan 2021-2022

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The New Brunswick early learning and childcare system has been transformed through investments from both federal and provincial governments. Since the investments in 2017 through the [Canada-New Brunswick Early Learning and Childcare Bilateral Agreement](#), the province of New Brunswick has continued to invest in its wage enhancement for early childhood educators and in the Low-Fee-Policy implemented in 2017.

Within this Action Plan, the total of the federal funds allocated for 2021-2022 have already been allocated to support the designated facilities as was determined

in the Canada-New Brunswick Early Learning and Childcare Bilateral Agreement 2017-2020 and the subsequent 2020-2021 Agreement. New-Brunswick will continue to provide in kind contributions within existing provincial resources, both human and financial, unless otherwise specified, to support the initiatives described in this Action Plan. These are not additional investments from the province, rather it is part of the department's efforts toward continuous improvements of programs and services.

## Initiative 1: Grow New Brunswick Early Learning Centres and Homes – Designation

The New Brunswick Early Learning Centres and Homes designation showcases higher quality early learning and greater access for all families with children under the age of five. It is a key initiative that supports parents' workforce participation, particularly that of women and provides quality early learning experiences for young children. The expansion of designated facilities is critical for young families returning to the workforce as the focus turns to the economic recovery of the province.

In 2017, New Brunswick set a target of designating a minimum of 300 early learning and childcare centres. This target has been considerably surpassed with 508 facilities designated as of March 2021. The Designated Centre — Parent Subsidy Program aims to increase families' access to financially affordable, quality child care in designated

New Brunswick Early Learning Centres. Families can register through the New Brunswick provincial registry to facilitate the search for early learning and childcare centres and also register for the Designated Centre—Parent Subsidy Program. The focus of 2021-2022 is to maintain the gains and grow the designation to ensure more families can benefit from affordable quality care. [Designated Centre—Parent Subsidy Program \(gnb.ca\)](#)

Federal funding will primarily be used to support the creation of new designated centres and the Low-Fee-Policy. Under the Low-Fee-Policy there are two funding envelopes: parent subsidies and operational grants to designated centres. These initiatives will be jointly funded by the Governments of Canada and New Brunswick.

## Actions

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### 1.1 Implement a revised Market Fee Threshold, effective in May 2021.

The Market Fee Threshold provides the limits allowed for fee increases for Designated Facilities. This fee grid is based on the average fees charged by facilities. The Market Fee Threshold provides a predictable fee grid for families and greater consistency across the province in the management of childcare fees. The

Market Fee Threshold is a tool to determine fees charged to parents.

The first Market Fee Threshold was introduced in 2017 with a commitment to review the fee grid by 2020.

## Market Fee Threshold December 2017 to May 2021

	Market Fee Threshold		Maximum Market Fee	
	Infant	Preschool	Infant	Preschool
<b>Large Urban</b>	<b>\$39.00</b>	<b>\$33.00</b>	<b>\$42.90</b>	<b>\$36.30</b>
<b>Small Urban</b>	<b>\$35.00</b>	<b>\$29.50</b>	<b>\$38.50</b>	<b>\$32.45</b>
<b>Rural</b>	<b>\$34.00</b>	<b>\$29.00</b>	<b>\$37.40</b>	<b>\$31.90</b>

The 2021 fee grid reflects the new provincial fee averages, the increase to the cost of living since 2017, and has been amended to better reflect the reality within the childcare sector. As such, the new fee grid includes a new fee category for two-year-olds and the

combination of rural and small urban communities. These adjustments ensure greater viability for designated facilities so that they can focus their efforts on providing quality care.

## Market Fee Threshold May 2021- April 2024:

		Infant	Two-years-old	Preschool
	<b>Large Urban</b>	<b>Full Day</b>	<b>\$41.30</b>	<b>\$36.70</b>
<b>Part Day</b>		<b>\$31.00</b>	<b>\$27.50</b>	<b>\$26.30</b>
<b>Small Urban and Rural</b>	<b>Full Day</b>	<b>\$37.10</b>	<b>\$32.60</b>	<b>\$31.30</b>
	<b>Part Day</b>	<b>\$27.80</b>	<b>\$24.50</b>	<b>\$23.50</b>

Following the changes to the Market Fee Threshold, the province made additional investments to the parent subsidy program to ensure that low-and-middle-income

families benefiting from this program will not have to pay more for their childcare fees. This represents approximately 3,360 children.

## 1.2 Implement the Operator and Parent Portals (aka Childcare Registry)

The Operator and Parent Portals are designed as a “one-stop-shop” that facilitate communication and the exchange of information between parents, New Brunswick Early Learning Centres and Homes, and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD).

Operators will have the capacity to conduct their business with government for their funding grants through the Operator Portal. This will considerably reduce the administrative burden. They will also be able to manage their enrollment and wait list using this technology.

In the coming year, the department will work with operators and parents to facilitate their registration to the Portals to access the many new functionalities. Major improvements have been made to the search functions for licensed childcare such as mapping and routes. In addition, parents will be able to enroll their children in their selected early learning and childcare facility, and view availability and wait lists.

# Targets

Initiative	Baseline	2021-2022 Target	Funding
<b>Grow New Brunswick Early Learning Centres and Homes – Designation</b>	508 designated facilities	Increase to 518 with an additional 10 new facilities designated. (4 francophone and 6 Anglophone) (funded through both provincial and federal investments)	Federal Funding: \$8,709,206
	14,517 designated licensed spaces of which 2,283 are infant spaces	Through the creation of additional facilities, an additional 300 licensed spaces will be designated, of which 10 will be infant spaces for total of 14,817. (funded through both provincial and federal investments)  Breakdown of 300 spaces: Francophone: 125 spaces of which 3 are infant spaces Anglophone: 175 spaces of which 7 are infant spaces	Provincial Funding: \$22M
	3,548 children benefit from the parent subsidy, of which 2,103 access free childcare	An additional 90 children benefit from the parent subsidy, of which 50 will access free childcare (funded through both provincial and federal investments)	
	Operator and Parent Portals in development	One Operator and Parent Portals to facilitate management of Designation and be increase administrative efficiency (provincially funded)	

## Initiative 2: Inclusion Policy – Moving from Policy to Practice

In 2021, the *Early Childhood Services Act* was amended to enshrine inclusion within legislation. To that end, requirements have been put in place to ensure all early learning and childcare facilities provide all children and families with an inclusive environment that is respectful of diversity in regard to race, colour, religion, national origin, ancestry, place of origin, age, disability, real or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity, sex, social condition or political belief or activity.

The principles of inclusion and diversity in early learning and childcare are embedded within the province's two distinct early learning and child care curriculum frameworks as described in the following paragraphs.

In 2009, New Brunswick launched its world class early learning and childcare curriculum frameworks anchored in the vision that “all children will grow to their fullest potential with dignity, a sense of self-worth, and a zest for living and learning.” The holistic vision of diversity and social responsibility embedded in the

Anglophone curriculum honors the right of every child to participate fully regardless of language, culture, race, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, or ability. It is a natural step to expand inclusion to our youngest citizens so that it becomes inherent in how they see the world and building a stronger, more inclusive province, for all our children.

The francophone curriculum framework promotes the holistic, dynamic and harmonious development of children from birth to five years of age, taking into account both their needs as unique beings and as social beings. The use of an eclectic pedagogical approach is designed to meet the needs of all children from birth to age five, including children with disabilities and children needing enhanced or individual supports. This approach includes five main components: an environment that is conducive to the holistic, dynamic and harmonious development of young children, the role of the educator, supportive strategies, cultural and linguistic identity building, and respect and diversity.

# Actions

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## 2.1 Implement a provincial early years inclusion policy

New Brunswick Early Learning Centres had until March 2020 to create their inclusion policy as part of the designation program. Building upon the progress of the past three years, a provincial Early Years Inclusion Policy will be implemented that will require all 840 licensed early learning and childcare facilities to have an inclusion policy and demonstrate inclusive practices.

The province's objective will be expanded to place priority on moving from policy to practice by fully supporting all licensed early learning and childcare facilities to implement inclusion practices with a particular focus on the designated New Brunswick Early Learning Centres and Homes.

## 2.2 Support designated centres to incorporate inclusive practices into their early learning environments

Operators and educators of at least 170/508 designated facilities will complete the Inclusion Program Support Guide (IPSG) to inform and guide the development of inclusion policies that promote access, meaningful participation and support of all children.

EECD will introduce inclusion assessment criteria designed to support designated centres in the implementation of their inclusive practices.

## 2.3 Hire Early Learning Consultants as coaches

To support high quality inclusive early learning and childcare, EECD will increase its internal capacity to provide leadership, coaching and mentoring focused on building systems of support and enhancing educator practices. Thirteen (13) Early Learning Consultants have been hired to provide early childhood educators with training and coaching support in creating high quality

inclusive early learning and childcare services. Support is offered through on-site consultation, communities of practice, and the development of responsive and ongoing professional learning opportunities, including supporting social emotional learning and addressing challenging behaviours.

## 2.4 Expand the L'Nu, Tell me a Story project

In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendation to Honor and Commemorate Indigenous culture, the L'Nu Tell me a Story project was initiated to support non-Indigenous educators become stronger allies to Indigenous neighbours.

Working in collaboration with an Indigenous elder, educators, children and their families learn the philosophy of Etuaptmumk through their own inquiries and reflections into Indigenous culture. The approach

incorporates the provision of culturally appropriate materials and equipment with a series of professional learning conversations focused on cultural security and awareness, including experiencing the Blanket Exercise, plus a variety of Indigenous picture book studies. Children are directly engaged with an elder where, over a 12 weeks period, music, songs, food and items of culture significance to the Wabanaki people are shared.



# Targets

Initiative	Baseline	2021-2022 Target	Funding
Inclusion Policy – Moving from Policy to Practice	0/240 Support Workers have completed the required training modules	60% (144/240) of Support Workers (Anglophone and francophone) have completed the required training modules	
	31/508 Designated centres received support	80% (406/508) Designated centres have a provincial early years inclusion policy Additional 10 new designated centres would have an inclusion policy and demonstrate inclusive practices (requirement for designation).  35% (181/508) Designated centres have received support (on site consultation, communities of practice, and the development of responsive and ongoing professional learning from the Early Learning Consultants).	
	L'NU Tell Me A Story Baseline 3 Designated centres	L'NU Tell Me A Story initiative is implemented in 7 additional Designated centres	Federal funding: \$10,000 (In kind provincial contribution)

The actions described below under Initiatives 3, 4 and 5 are funded through provincial allocations within the Department's annual fiscal framework and given the

official bilingual status of New Brunswick, both linguistic communities benefit from the actions described in this action plan.

## Initiative 3: Drive a culture of continuous quality improvement

Early learning and childcare services at home and around the world are in rapid expansion and are quickly becoming part of social infrastructures. Moreover, in the last decades, research in brain development has provided greater insight on how children develop and learn. It has exposed the incredible potential of the human brain and sheds light on how we can leverage the innumerable possibilities to affect children's learning in a positive and holistic way. These are windows of opportunity for the greatest impact on children's overall development and capacity building with the least effort. The development of the brain in the early years shapes who the child will become as an adult.

Legislation for early learning and childcare sets the minimum requirement to ensure children are in safe, secure and healthy learning environments while in non-parental care. The Organization for Economic Collaboration and Development's (OECD) research project "Quality beyond Regulations", in which New Brunswick is an active participant, showcases

that quality goes above and beyond the legislative framework. There is structural quality which is often well established in legislation and then there is process quality that is about the learning environments, children's physical, social and emotional well-being, instructional interactions and all interactions between children, educators and parents.

The "Engaging Young Children report" (OECD, 2018) describes some common structural quality indicators, such as child-staff ratios, pre-service qualifications, staff participation in in-service training, and the existence of quality monitoring and rating improvement systems as influences for staff-child interactions. Structural features have indirect effects on children's development, learning and well-being (Pianta et al., 2005; Vandell et al., 2010). Structural quality may be considered a precursor for process quality, which is the primary mechanism for children's development and learning (OECD, 2018).

The “OECD Early Childhood Education and Care Policy Review: Quality beyond Regulations” suggests that only high-quality early learning and childcare is effective in having a positive impact on children’s development and research is showing that this is more evident for disadvantaged children.

Therefore, driving a culture of continuous quality improvement for process quality is, in essence, embracing quality and promoting it. It is about engaging

and encouraging everyone to do more, to be innovative, setting goals for improvement and maintaining the gains over time.

Driving a culture of continuous improvement is good for business and good for the children. It in fact serves to address the health quality of the service by focusing on the right things, providing strong leadership and delivering value to the customer.

## Actions

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### 3.1 Develop a Curriculum Validation Tool for the Anglophone Sector

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will develop a quality assessment tool aligned with the New Brunswick Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care- English to replace the previously used quality assessment tools (ITERS and ECERS).

The Curriculum Validation Tool (CVT) will be designed to be an extension of the Curriculum Assessment

Tool-Reflective Guide which aims to support educators in reflecting on their practice and to strengthen their pedagogical practices and will include assessment of inclusion and diversity practices. This new assessment tool will provide an understanding of quality and curriculum implementation, while supporting educators and operators to meaningfully connect their Quality Improvement Plans with the curriculum framework focused on improving process quality.

### 3.2 Roll out the “Outil d’évaluation de l’application du curriculum éducatif” for francophone designated facilities

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is rolling out provincially the new quality assessment tool, “outil d’évaluation de l’application du curriculum éducatif (ÉACÉ)”, which is aligned with the “Curriculum éducatif des services de garde francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick”. This new tool will replace the previously used quality assessments (ITERS and ECERS).

Francophone New Brunswick Early Learning Centres and Homes will be evaluated on the quality of the

implementation of the “Curriculum éducatif des services de garde francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick”. This new quality assessment tool will be key in guiding Operators/Administrators in the development of their Annual Quality Improvement Plans.

During the year, a review of the “outil d’évaluation de l’application du curriculum éducatif” will be completed to add measures of inclusion and diversity practices.

### 3.3 Provide Operators/Administrators and Educators with coaching and support in the development of their Annual Quality Improvement Plans

Through the first year of the pandemic, the focus in early learning and childcare facilities was ensuring that children were in healthy and safe environments. During the next year, efforts will aim at relaunching and continuing to advance the skills and comfort level of Operators/Administrators and Educators as they develop SMART goals to elevate process quality within their facility.

## Targets

Initiative	Baseline	Target
Drive a culture of continuous quality improvement	Anglophone facilities: 0/313	100% (518) of designated centres for both linguistic sectors have an annual Quality Improvement Plan with SMART goals
	Francophone facilities: 0/195	80% (255/313) of anglophone facilities have implemented the Collaborative Assessment Tool-Reflective Guide.
		80% (159/195) of francophone facilities have been assessed with the “outil d'évaluation de l'application du curriculum éducatif”

### Initiative 4: Continue to offer Professional Development to Early Childhood Educators and Administrators

On-going opportunities for professional learning and growth are key in ensuring high quality early learning. Educators who are supported in their professional growth and career development are better equipped to meet the needs of children.

Building on the efforts of the last four years, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will continue to offer training opportunities that support educators to reflect on their practices through communities of practice with the aim to improve the quality of early learning activities offered to children.

## Actions

### 4.1 Develop annual strategic provincial and school district plans for professional learning

Develop collaborative annual professional development opportunities plans across the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (provincial and regional) to ensure well-coordinated offerings for educators/administrators. This will ensure equitable level of professional learning that will promote an efficient use of resources and reduce overlaps with other priorities.

Offer professional learning opportunities related to the early learning curriculum frameworks using multi-dimensional approaches to strengthen skills and knowledge of high-quality pedagogical practices including inclusion and diversity, quality environment, language acquisition and cultural identity learning environments.

## Targets

Initiative	Baseline	Target
Continue to offer Professional Development to Early Childhood Educators	Anglophone Designated: 0/313 Francophone Designated: 0/195	75% Anglophone and francophone Designated facilities have at least 60% of their educators who are eligible to accumulate professional development hours have participated in professional learning opportunities for educators. ✓ 234/313 (75%) Anglophone facilities ✓ 146/195 (75%) francophone facilities

# Initiative 5: Implement the Language Acquisition and Cultural Identity Learning Environment Guidelines

Language acquisition and cultural identity for the francophone community in a minority setting is vital to sustain its vitality. The early years of a child’s life play a critical role in language development and in the construction of their own identity both personal and social and for a lifelong impact. That is why the protection of the French language and culture begins at birth and why it must be promoted and celebrated in the francophone New Brunswick Early Learning Centres and Homes.

The Language Acquisition and Cultural Identity Learning Environments Guidelines were developed in partnership with the «Association francophone des parents du Nouveau-Brunswick » and are designed to provide a framework for the designated facilities to support each child in the process of acquiring the French language or updating their language skills, as well as in the construction of his/her personal and social identity. It further aims at fostering inclusion and diversity with parents and to support the implementation of a learning continuum in French from birth to contribute to the vitality of Acadian and Francophone communities.

## Actions

### 5.1 Provide training to the pedagogical leaders of the francophone facilities

Deliver training to all Administrators and pedagogical leaders of francophone New Brunswick's Early Learning Centres and Homes as a first step in the provincial roll out of the “Guidelines for Language Acquisition and Cultural Identity Learning Environments”. The purpose of the training is to help individuals familiarize

themselves with the guidelines and to plan the implementation within each of their facilities. The Early Learning Consultants associated with the Francophone school districts will provide pedagogical support and coaching during site visits.

### 5.2 Develop an evaluation grid for the Guidelines

Work in collaboration with early learning consultants and representatives of francophone New Brunswick Early Learning Centres and Homes to develop an evaluation grid for the Guidelines. This will serve as a tool to identify areas of focus for quality improvements. This evaluation will take place at the same time as other quality assessments.

All designated facilities will be assessed in their implementation of the new guidelines and will be provided coaching support to ensure continuous improvements. Elements for improvement in implementation may be included in the quality improvement plan.

## Target

Initiative	Baseline	Target
Implement the Guidelines for “Language Acquisition and Cultural Identity Learning Environments”	0/195 facilities	90% (176/195) of administrators of francophone designated facilities have completed the “Guidelines for Language Acquisition and Cultural Identity Learning Environments” training

# Federal Contribution and Proposed Allocations

The 2021-2022 federal contribution will be allocated to the following priorities:

Initiatives	(federal funding) 2021-2022
<b>Initiative 1: Grow New Brunswick Early Learning Centres and Homes – Designation</b>	\$8,709,206 (federal funding) (\$22 M provincial funding)
<b>Initiative 2: Inclusion Policy – Moving from Policy to Practice -L’Nu, Tell me a story</b>	\$10,000 (federal funding) (In kind provincial contribution)
<b>Initiative 3: Drive a culture of continuous quality improvement</b>	\$0 (federal funding) (Operational provincial funding)
<b>Initiative 4: Continue to offer Professional Development to Early Childhood Educators and Administrators</b>	\$0 (federal funding) (Operational provincial funding)
<b>Initiative 5: Implement the Language Acquisition and Cultural Identity Learning Environment Guidelines</b>	\$0 (federal funding) (Operational provincial funding)
<b>Administrative costs (personnel, reporting, evaluation, etc.)</b>	\$957,690 (federal funding)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$9,676,896</b>