

Child Care Development Assessment and Approval Framework

Child care development decisions in Saskatchewan are guided by an objective, data-driven framework to ensure investments are targeted, equitable and sustainable. Development is prioritized where evidence demonstrates the greatest need and system impact.

1. Demonstrated Community Need and Demand

Development is considered in communities showing clear indicators of need, supported by:

- High utilization rates (sustained operation at or near full capacity).
- Enrolment pressure and patterns of increased applications for new or expanded facilities.
- Population growth among families with young children.
- Demographic shifts, including increased numbers of newcomers, Indigenous families, racialized populations and Francophone minority language speakers.
- Absence or limited availability of regulated child care in the community.

Where spaces are underutilized, approvals for new spaces—particularly family child care homes—may be paused until demand increases.

2. Equity and Inclusion Considerations

Priority is given to development that improves access for underserved populations, including:

- Rural, remote, northern and smaller communities.
- Indigenous children and families, guided by ongoing collaboration with First Nations and Métis partners.
- Francophone communities, schools and families.
- Children with disabilities or developmental vulnerabilities.
- Communities identified through vulnerability indicators, school readiness assessments and community needs assessments.

Expansion planning incorporates culturally appropriate, inclusive and accessible service delivery.

3. Alignment with Population and Labour Market Trends

Development proposals are assessed against:

- Current and projected population growth and migration patterns.
- Labour market activity and workforce participation needs, particularly for parents.
- Regional economic trends that affect family demand for regulated child care.
- Alignment with provincial strategies, including the Saskatchewan Growth Strategy, Poverty Reduction Strategy, Disability Strategy and Child and Youth Strategy.

4. Infrastructure Readiness and Efficiency

Infrastructure-based development considers:

- Availability and readiness of suitable facilities or construction sites which may include.
- Use of standardized child care centre design and construction guidelines to streamline timelines and reduce costs.

5. Existing Investments and System Sustainability

Development decisions prioritize maintaining and protecting progress already achieved by:

- Preserving existing licensed spaces and backfilling capacity where closures occur.
- Identifying replacement or adjustment needs in response to localized demand shifts.
- Avoiding over-expansion in regions with declining or unstable demand.

6. Non-Profit and Public Delivery Priority

Consistent with the *Canada–Saskatchewan Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement*:

- Preference is given to non-profit, public and regulated family-based providers.
- Development supports governance models that demonstrate transparency, accountability and reinvestment into quality.
- Funding eligibility criteria ensure public dollars support providers capable of maintaining quality standards and operational stability.

7. Regulatory Compliance and Licensing

Development of additional spaces is contingent on a demonstrated history of regulatory compliance, including:

- Holds a valid Saskatchewan child care licence in good standing.
- Has not been subject to provisional, suspended or conditional licensing status within a defined period.
- Demonstrates a consistent history of regulatory compliance, including timely response to licensing requirements.
- Has no unresolved, serious or repeated compliance actions related to health, safety, staffing or program quality.

8. Operational Readiness and Efficiency

Development is prioritized for providers demonstrating operational readiness and efficient use of existing capacity, including:

- Efficient utilization of existing licensed spaces, with enrolment aligned to community demand.
- Stable staffing levels supported by appropriate qualifications and workforce planning.
- Effective governance and management practices, including financial oversight and accountability structures.
- Administrative and operational systems in place to support expansion, such as enrolment management, financial controls and regulatory reporting.

9. Quality, Inclusion, and Accessibility

Development prioritizes quality programming and inclusive, accessible service delivery that supports positive outcomes for children and families, including;

- Maintains quality programming and demonstrates positive child development outcomes.
- Has the capacity to support inclusive practices, including children with disabilities or additional support needs.
- Supports or provides French language child care where applicable, in alignment with Francophone minority language needs.

10. Data-Informed Planning and Ongoing Monitoring

All development decisions are informed by integrated data sources, including:

- Enrolment and utilization data.
- Distribution of licensed spaces.
- Community needs assessments and vulnerability profiles.
- Economic and labour market indicators.