

SKILLS TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT, AND POST-SECONDARY (STEPS)

No. 1: ELIGIBILITY

Procedures:

To be *eligible* to apply for STEPS programs and supports, applicants must:

1. Demonstrate proof of Métis Identity by being a registered Citizen of Métis Nation BC¹.
2. Be a resident of British Columbia with ONE of the following examples as proof of residency:
 - 2.1. A current BC valid government-issued card, such as a BC Services Card or BC driver's license that shows your address; OR
 - 2.2. A copy of a filed income tax return for the most recent calendar year to Canada Revenue Agency as a resident of British Columbia;
3. Ensure that enrollment in training does not interfere with full-time high-school studies except for dual-credit programs.
4. Be of a minimum age of 15 years at the start of the course. There is no maximum age for funding.

To apply for support, an applicant must complete an application. For multiple year programs, applicants must submit a new application for each contract year.

Successful applicants must sign and comply with the Client Training Agreement (CTA) which includes the STEPS conduct commitments.

¹ *In exceptional circumstances, such as contribution agreements that are Pan-Indigenous, funding may be available that is open to all Indigenous persons. In these situations, appropriate proof of Indigenous ancestry will be required.*



SKILLS TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT, AND POST-SECONDARY (STEPS) No. 2: PROGRAMS AND SUPPORTS CURRENTLY OFFERED

1. Career decision-making supports
 - 1.1. This may include an initial assessment of the client's skills and education and job search support, including résumé and cover letter writing.
2. MNBC-offered skills training or education upgrade
 - 2.1. Offered training programs are fully funded and include the cost of training (tuition), mandatory fees, required tools and equipment per training curriculum. These offered training programs do not count towards a client's lifetime support limit.
 - 2.2. MNBC offers foundational and in-demand skills training and education upgrades.
 - 2.3. Many of these courses are ongoing, scheduled or specially curated specific to regional labour market demands.
 - 2.4. Training is often organized in Métis-specific cohorts, but individual seat enrollments are used to address availability, ensure fair pricing and capacity challenges.
 - 2.5. All Métis in BC are welcome to participate if they have not received this training in the past.
 - 2.6. Wrap-around support may be requested in conjunction (see application and eligibility for wrap-around support).
 - 2.7. Further cohort-specific wrap-around support may be available. This support only applies to the specific cohort and cannot be extended beyond the prescribed cohort and may be provided dependent upon available funding.
 - 2.8. All offered programs will be subject to a \$20,000 annual funding limit. This limit will include support for the cost of training as well as applicable and appropriate wrap-around support.
 - 2.9. MNBC reserves the right to extend this \$20,000 annual funding limit to high-priority training programs in line with significant demand or provincial government priorities.
3. Client-initiated skills training support
 - 3.1. Client-driven and requested, individually designed training is not offered by MNBC through partnerships with its training partners.
 - 3.2. Client must demonstrate how the requested support would lead to the following, upon completion of the proposed support, including:
 - 3.2.1. Improved employability within an in-demand sector of the local labour market.
 - 3.2.2. Career growth.

- 3.3. Clients must demonstrate that, if the requested support is in support of a career change, the new career will offer better prospects and/or the current career is no longer in demand.
- 3.4. Eligible financial support includes the cost of training (tuition), books, tools, and other mandatory costs – which accrue towards the lifetime funding threshold of each client.
- 3.5. Wrap-around support may be requested in conjunction (see application and eligibility of wrap-around support) and may be provided dependent upon available funding.
- 3.6. Client-initiated training programs will be subject to a \$12,500 annual funding limit. This limit will include support for the cost of training as well as applicable and appropriate wrap-around support.

4. Post-Secondary Education Participation

- 4.1. MNBC promotes and encourages Métis scholars and their academic endeavours.
- 4.2. Clients with demonstrable needs who are enrolled in full-time or part-time studies towards a two-year diploma, four-to-five year undergraduate degree, or postgraduate degrees at recognized post-secondary institutions¹ may be qualified for support towards tuition, books and mandatory costs per the requirements set forth by the academic program – which accrue towards the lifetime funding threshold of each client.
- 4.3. Wrap-around support may be requested in conjunction (see application and eligibility of wrap-around support) and may be provided dependent upon available funding.
- 4.4. Post-secondary education will be subject to a \$12,500 annual funding limit. This limit will include support for the cost of tuition, books, student fees, and applicable and appropriate wrap-around support.

5. Career Placement/Practicum Support/Apprenticeship

Designed to encourage employers to offer on-the-job practical experience (mentorship) to Métis trainees and provide financial support to qualified clients while gaining valuable training, this is a “paid practicum” or “paid placement” program.

- 5.1. Designed for citizens with or without work experience, recently graduate students (6-month window) and citizens in precarious situations.
- 5.2. Client and employer must jointly apply – application must include detailed description of the progressive duties.
- 5.3. An approved STEPS contract must be signed by the employer and client prior to the client/employee’s start date.
- 5.4. Clients are not eligible for wrap-around support, save for emergency supports.
- 5.5. **Employer qualifications:**
 - 5.5.1. Employer must be in good standing with WorkSafeBC.
 - 5.5.2. Employer must have a payroll account attached to their registered business number.

- 5.5.3. Employer must follow current labour law provisions for their jurisdiction (federal or provincial).
- 5.5.4. Employer must provide hands-on mentoring for all hours the client is at work.
- 5.5.5. Placement/practicum offered must be no fewer than 20 hours per week and no more than 40 hours per week with no overtime reimbursement.
- 5.5.6. Clients can have an agreement with two different employers with a maximum of 40 hours in total per week.
- 5.5.7. Employer must provide a “placement/practicum” plan detailing goals in terms of experience/skills gained by client during said placement/practicum.
- 5.5.8. Monthly and end of program progress reports must be submitted along with invoicing (see contract requirement section below).
- 5.5.9. Employer may, and is encouraged to, offer placement/practicum to more than one Métis client at a time.
- 5.6. **Client qualifications:**
 - 5.6.1. Client must be a “new hire” for the joint applicant employer – the applicant or client must not be a prior or existing employee of the business.
 - 5.6.2. Previous and current volunteers are eligible to apply.
 - 5.6.3. Clients could be eligible to apply to multiple required practicums in different years with new employers.
- 5.7. **Contract requirements:**
 - 5.7.1. The contract may be for a minimum of two months to a maximum of six months, provided the duties progress during employment.
 - 5.7.2. A letter or proof that states the client is in school or has ended school.
 - 5.7.3. Qualified employers will be reimbursed monthly for regular wages paid, not including mandatory employment related costs (MERCs), with the maximum reimbursement calculated on an hourly wage of no more than \$5 above the current provincial minimum hourly wage (for example, if the provincial minimum hourly wage is \$15/hour, and the practicum’s hourly wage is \$22/hour, the maximum reimbursement is \$20/hour). MERCs refer to vacation, sick days, statutory holidays, CPP, EI, WCB, etc.
 - 5.7.4. Rate of pay must be no less than the provincial minimum hourly wage.
 - 5.7.5. Employers must submit timesheets and paystubs within 30 days after each month-end for reimbursement from STEPS. Final reconciliation of pay and reimbursement will take place within 30 days of the end of the contract. Failure of the employer to provide timesheets and paystubs within the above time limit will forfeit the employers’ right to reimbursement.
 - 5.7.6. Exception: For Métis Chartered Communities wishing to apply, an advance of estimated funding may be provided of up to two months including mandatory employment related costs (MERCs); monthly invoicing may continue to be drawn towards the final contract value (for example, for a six- month contract, an advance of two months may be requested, and monthly invoicing and reporting will be done for the first four months, while only reporting will be required for the last two months, as funding would have been advanced

already).

- 5.7.7. Failure to comply with any program requirement may result in a repayment situation and/or ineligibility to apply or participate in any MNBC programs in the future.

¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/designated-schools.html>

6. Wage subsidy support

- 6.1. Designed to encourage employers to hire qualified Métis talent, this program provides financial incentives in the form of a wage subsidy. Subsidy rate is set at 50% of the regular wages paid, not including mandatory employment related costs (MERCs) up to a maximum subsidy limit – the 50% is calculated based on actual employee/client hourly wage of no more than \$5 above provincial minimum hourly wage (for example, if the wage is at the provincial minimum hourly wage of \$15, the hourly reimbursement rate is \$7.50; if the wage is at \$24/hour, which is \$9 more than the provincial minimum hourly wage of \$15, the maximum reimbursement rate is \$10/hour). MERCs refer to vacation, sick days, statutory holidays, CPP, EI, WCB, etc. **Exception:** Chartered Communities may be eligible with a maximum reimbursement calculated on an hourly wage of no more than \$5 above the current provincial minimum hourly wage.
- 6.2. Minimum eligible subsidy duration is three months
- 6.3. Maximum eligible subsidy duration is six months.
- 6.4. Client and employer must jointly apply.
- 6.5. An approved STEPS and employment contract must be signed by the employer and client prior to the client/employee's start date.
- 6.6. Client is not eligible for wrap-around support save for emergency supports.
- 6.7. Employer qualifications:
 - 6.7.1. Employer must be in good standing with WorkSafeBC.
 - 6.7.2. Employer must have a payroll account attached to their registered business number.
 - 6.7.3. Employer must follow current labour law provisions for their jurisdiction (federal or provincial).
 - 6.7.4. Employer may, and is encouraged to, offer employment to more than one Métis client at a time.
 - 6.7.5. Wage subsidy offered must be no fewer than 20 hours per week and no more than 40 hours per week with no overtime reimbursement.
- 6.8. Client Qualifications:
 - 6.8.1. Client must be a "new hire" for the joint applicant employer – the applicant or client must not be a prior or existing employee of the business.

- 6.8.2. Previous and current volunteers are eligible to apply.
- 6.8.3. Clients are eligible to apply to multiple new employers in different years.

6.9. Contract Requirements

- 6.9.1. Employers must submit timesheets and paystubs within 30 days after month- end for reimbursement from STEPS. Final reconciliation of pay and reimbursement will take place within 30 days of the end of the contract. Failure of the employer to provide timesheets and paystubs within the above time limit will forfeit the employers' right to reimbursement.
- 6.9.2. Exception: For Métis Chartered Communities wishing to apply, an advance of estimated funding may be provided of up to two months including mandatory employment related costs (MERCs); monthly invoicing may continue to be drawn towards the final contract value.
- 6.9.3. Failure to comply with any program requirement may result in a repayment situation and/or ineligibility to apply or participate in any MNBC programs in the future.

7. Wrap-around support

- 7.1. Designed to provide a subsidy to help “bridge the gap” while a client is actively engaged in training or pursuit of academic endeavours, this subsidy offers financial support towards a client’s cost of living. Due to limited funding, and to ensure accessibility to all Métis residing in BC, wrap- around support is not designed to replace income, and it cannot be expected to meet all unmet financial need
- 7.2. All wrap-around support listed below accrues toward both the annual and lifetime funding threshold of each client.
- 7.3. Wrap-around support is available only during active training/schooling as defined by training/school program and is not available for support described in sections 5 or 6.
- 7.4. May only be accessed in conjunction with:
 - 7.4.1. MNBC’s client-initiated skills training support program.
 - 7.4.2. MNBC-offered skills training or education upgrade programs.
 - 7.4.3. MNBC’s Post-Secondary Education Participation program.
 - 7.4.4. Self-funded or third party-funded skills/education upgrade programs.
 - 7.4.5. Exception – Emergency Employment Support (See below).
- 7.5. Full-time students/trainees wrap-around support eligibility:
 - 7.5.1. Full-time status is determined by the training/recognized education institutions, or
 - 7.5.2. at least 30 weekly hours, spanning a seven-day week of classroom time or in-person hands-on training.

- 7.5.3. A per diem stipend of up to \$50 per day can be requested to a maximum \$250 per week or \$1000 per month; less than the maximum may be requested to best manage individual's lifetime funding threshold.
- 7.6. Part-time students'/trainees' wrap-around support eligibility:
 - 7.6.1. Part-time status is not full-time.
 - 7.6.2. A per diem stipend of up to \$20 per day can be requested to a maximum \$100 per week or \$400 per month; less than the maximum may be requested to best manage an individual's lifetime funding threshold.
 - 7.6.3. 7.6.3 MNBC-offered skills training or education upgrade programs that are less than 15 training hours per week will not be provided wrap-around supports unless requested for financial need and will be subject to the above maximums for full-time or part time studies.
- 7.7. Emergency Employment Support
 - 7.7.1. Applicants are eligible for up to \$2000 in emergency employment support, in two lifetime \$1000 payments and may be provided dependent on available funding
 - Applicant or client must provide confirmed employment offer with start date
 - Eligible costs include, but not limited to the following:
 - Cost of relocation of the new position
 - Tools & equipment
 - Seasonal business wear/attire deemed necessary by the employer
 - Any other items that prevent the client from starting the position on the predetermined start date
 - Licensing fees, graduation fees and professional certification fees that are necessary for employment
- 7.8. Emergency Student Support
 - 7.8.1. Applicants are eligible for up to \$2000 in emergency student support, in two lifetime \$1000 payments and may be provided such dependent on available funding
 - Applicant or client must have a current signed CTA with MNBC and will need to submit documentation regarding the request for support and discuss with staff to determine eligibility
 - Eligible costs include, but not limited to the following:
 - Tutoring
 - Medical or family emergency preventing or inhibiting a student from continuing their studies
 - Assistance with temporary accommodations, access to food or transportation required to attend and complete education or training
- 7.9. Other wrap-around support may be offered by MNBC as requirements and needs for training/schooling continue to evolve.
 - 7.9.1. Special programs may be offered from time to time with their specific guidelines in conjunction with overall wrap-around support guidelines.

7.9.2. These programs may be offered or discontinued without advance notice:

- E.g., laptop support
 - Available for access every two years
 - Clients may have the option to receive a pre-determined laptop or a value-equivalent cash transfer.

8. Special consideration for clients with disabilities

8.1. On most occasions, applications by clients with documented disabilities may lead to accommodations to full-time training/enrollment status as defined by training/education institutes, along with their eligibility to STEPS programs.

8.2. Additional support consideration may be requested through a written appeal to the Senior Director and the Associate Director of STEPS per published STEPS Appeal Standards.

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MÉTIS NATION BRITISH COLUMBIA (MNBC)

SKILLS TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT, AND POST-SECONDARY (STEPS)

NO. 3: CONSIDERATIONS & FINANCIAL STANDARDS

Procedures:

Based on current agreements with funding partners including, but not limited to, the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia, and the availability of funding, STEPS offers a variety of programs, services and supports. The following standards apply to all programs and supports. Program-specific qualifications and eligibilities for STEPS programs and supports are provided in the “Programs and Supports currently offered” section.

1. The lifetime limit of funding-related support combined across all STEPS programs is \$50,000 per client – financial support in the programs below does NOT accrue towards the lifetime limit:
 - 1.1. Tuition and mandatory costs of MNBC offered skills training or education upgrade.
 - 1.2. Wage-subsidy support.
 - 1.3. Career placement/practicum support.
2. Maximum STEPS support commitment may be up to one calendar year in duration. Applicants are required to submit an application for each period of study up to one calendar year. For current clients, applications will not be accepted earlier than 30 days before the end date specified in current Client Training Agreement. Upon completion of this Client Training Agreement, the client will provide STEPS, written/verbal verification of:
 - 1-Employer
 - 2-Job title
 - 3-Start date
 - 4-Wages/Salary
 - 5-Employment status (full-time, part-time, seasonal etc.)
3. All STEPS applications will be reviewed in chronological order, based on the date when an application is considered complete and client’s eligibility to apply. An exception is for Emergency Employment Support or Emergency Student Support – completed applications will be prioritized.
4. An application is considered complete when all information is provided to determine program qualifications and eligibility, as well as total amount of requested support.
5. All calculations of support and reimbursement must be based on MNBC finance policies,

and every effort must be made to ensure the most economic cost option.

6. Where the exact cost of an expense is not available during application review, an estimate based on market value may be used. MNBC is only committed to pay or reimburse the actual documented costs for approved contracts, unless otherwise specified.
8. MNBC actively seeks group discounts or preferred costs for items including, but not limited to, subscriptions, services plans, tools, equipment or technology items. If they are available, their market values will serve as the maximums eligible for consideration. Approved clients may be reimbursed to the eligible maximum only.
9. Only expenses incurred after the date of receipt of a completed application are eligible for reimbursement.
10. Servicing of any form of loan or debt is not eligible for STEPS support.
11. A client cannot participate in multiple programs concurrently, with the exception of:
 - 11.1. Offered Skills Training or Education Upgrade programs with:
 - a. MNBC's Client-Initiated Skills Training Support program.
 - b. MNBC's Post-Secondary Education Participation program.
 - c. Other MNBC's Offered Skills Training or Education Upgrade programs as long as scheduling permits and total student training hours does not exceed 40 hours per week .
 - 11.2. Wrap-around support in conjunction with:
 - a. MNBC's Offered Skills Training or Education Upgrade programs.
 - b. MNBC's Post-Secondary Education Participation program.
 - 11.3. Career placement/practicum support required to complete a skills training or post-secondary program.
12. Where possible, payment will be made directly to the institution or source of expense (rather than reimbursing the client) in a timely manner.
13. Where direct payment is not feasible, reimbursement may be made directly to clients – all client reimbursement must be accompanied by proof of payment.
14. All applications will be assessed independently and consistently by STEPS staff per STEPS overall and program-specific guidelines.
15. Appeals can be made in accordance with the STEPS Appeal Standards.
16. All the above is subject to revision in the event of any STEPS funding changes.

17. MNBC cannot provide letters of support for applications to gain access to post-secondary institutions, bursaries or scholarships. We can provide verification of amount of funding being provided and can confirm MNBC citizenship. Those seeking funding verification or citizenship confirmation letters must allow for at least 10 business days for such a request.

Adopted: February 1, 2022

Amended:

SKILLS TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT, AND POST-SECONDARY (STEPS)

No. 4: CUSTOMER SERVICE

Procedures:

1. All applicants and clients will be treated promptly and respectfully without regard to age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, disability, language proficiency, or social/economic status.
2. STEPS staff is responsible for providing the best customer service possible and is empowered to make decisions that will ensure the best experience for each applicant/client, while balancing the needs of the individual with the overall needs of Métis throughout BC.
 - 2.1. Provide supports for employment within the funding parameters, including career exploration and decision making, skills and education enhancements, job search and job maintenance.
 - 2.2. Support clients to achieve their individual career goals, including developing an “Invest in your future” plan to best utilize their lifetime funding threshold to achieve these goals.
3. Staff will provide timely client communication/contact:
 - 3.1. Staff will acknowledge receipt of application within 48 business or working hours.
 - 3.2. Staff will respond to clients' email and phone inquiries within 48 business or working hours.
 - 3.3. Staff will attempt to contact a client twice for outstanding application information (by email or phone).
 - 3.4. Staff will process applications on a timely basis while maintaining a high level of due diligence.
 - 3.5. Staff are only able to discuss details of any submitted applications with the client that has submitted and signed the application. Due to privacy and confidentiality any other person writing on behalf of the client will only be provided information on STEPS programs/services and standards of practice. The client must request any information regarding their application themselves
4. Staff will strive to provide timely assessment of a completed application – aiming to notify applicants of the results within 15 business days from receipt of a completed application. Completed application is defined as all questions answered and all supporting documents submitted.
5. An applicant/client with service complaints shall be referred to a Regional or Senior Program Manager first and then to the Director and/or Senior Director as needed.

6. Staff will clearly communicate client responsibilities and expectations, including STEPS conduct commitments during intake, application assessment, and the contract period, to enhance client success.

Policy Reference: Nil

Adopted: February 1, 2022

Amended:

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SKILLS TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT, AND POST-SECONDARY (STEPS)

No. 5: CONDUCT COMMITMENTS

Procedures:

1. Applicants/clients are expected to treat STEPS staff respectfully without regard to age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, disability, language proficiency or social or economic status.
2. Applicants/clients are responsible for providing required documentation when requested for the purposes of:
 - 2.1. Completing application
 - 2.2. Processing and review of application
 - 2.3. Compliance with reporting requirements of funding partnerships and agreements.
 - 2.4. Applicants must return signed agreement within 10 business days.
3. Approved contract holders are expected to:
 - 3.1. Notify STEPS immediately of any reason that may impact their ability to successfully complete their approved contract, and collaborate with STEPS staff as needed to best position the contract holders for a successful outcome
 - 3.2. Notify STEPS within 10 business days of any changes to financial situations that may impact the calculation of their approved support.
4. Failure to comply with these commitments may result in termination of approved contract; forfeiture of any support remaining in their current contract; requirement to repay portions of, or all, approved contract funding support; and ineligibility for any future MNBC program support.

SKILLS TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT, AND POST-SECONDARY (STEPS)

NO. 6: APPEALS

Procedures:

1. Denial of funding is a last resort after a fair, consistent and transparent application review, and best efforts have been made to support clients' education, training and employability goals.
2. An applicant may NOT appeal a decision if their application was denied due to:
 - 2.1. Lack of funding at MNBC's disposal, or
 - 2.2. On the grounds of applicant eligibility, or
 - 2.3. The applicant's lifetime support threshold has been exceeded.
3. An applicant may appeal a decision:
 - 3.1. If there is insufficient labour market information regarding a high probability of employment at the end of training.
 - 3.2. If there are extenuating circumstances where there is sufficient community and labour market need to support a high probability of employment at end of training.
4. A Director review may occur in situations where the regional staff deny an application.
 - 4.1. Upon acknowledged written request from the applicant, the Director will review the rationale and documentation and will provide a written response to the client within 10 business days of receiving the appeal.
5. A Provincial STEPS Review Committee (PSRC) review may occur in situations where the Associate Director denies an application. The PSRC is comprised of STEPS's Senior Director, the Minister of Employment and Skills Training, and Post-Secondary Education, and two Chartered Community Presidents from MNBC region(s) outside of the applicant's home region. The decision is made based on majority vote.
 - 5.1. The PSRC will review appeals and compare with STEPS policies, individual circumstances, and community and labour market priorities to ensure fair and equitable access to funding assistance provided through STEPS. Upon acknowledged written request from the client, the PSRC will review the rationale and documentation and will provide a written response to the client within 15 business days of receiving the appeal.

6. An appeal may result in:
 - 6.1. Support of the original decision of denial.
 - 6.2. Overturning the original decision of denial and approval of the funding:
 - 6.2.1. As in the request as presented, or
 - 6.2.2. With limitations or conditions.
7. A decision resulting from PSRC appeal is considered FINAL.