

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

NO. 1: 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. MNBC offers foundational and in-demand skills training and education upgrades.
 - 2.2. Many of these courses are ongoing, scheduled or specially curated specific to regional labour market demands.
 - 2.3. Training is often organized in Métis-specific cohorts, but individual seat enrollments are used to address availability and capacity hurdles.
 - 2.4. All Métis in BC are welcome to participate if they have not received this training in the past.
 - 2.5. Offered training programs are fully funded and include the cost of training (tuition), mandatory fees, required tools and equipment per training curriculum.
 - 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. Such cohort-specific support only applies to the specific cohort and cannot be extended beyond the prescribed cohort.
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 intervention would lead to the following, upon completion of the proposed intervention, 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 intervention 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), mandatory fees, required tools and equipment per training institution – 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).
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).
5. Career placement/practicum support
 - 5.1. Designed to encourage employers to offer on-the-job practical experience to Métis trainees and provide financial support to qualified clients while gaining valuable training, this is a “paid practicum” or “paid placement” program.
 - 5.2. Client and employer must jointly apply – application must include detailed description of the progressive duties.
 - 5.3. An approved contract must be signed by the employer and client prior to the client/employee’s start date.
 - 5.4. Employer qualifications:
 - 5.4.1. Employer must be in good standing with WorkSafeBC.
 - 5.4.2. Employer must have a payroll account attached to their registered business number.
 - 5.4.3. Employer must follow current labour law provisions for their jurisdiction (federal or provincial).
 - 5.4.4. Employer must provide hands-on mentoring for all hours the client is at work.
 - 5.4.5. Placement/practicum offered must be no fewer than 20 hours per week.
 - 5.4.6. Employer must provide a “placement/practicum” plan detailing goals in terms of experience/skills gained by client during said placement/practicum.
 - 5.4.7. Monthly and end of program progress reports must be submitted along with invoicing (see contract requirement section below).

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

- 5.4.8. Employer may, and is encouraged to, offer placement/practicum to more than one Métis client at a time.
- 5.5. Client qualifications:
 - 5.5.1. Client must be a “new hire” for the joint applicant employer – the applicant client must not be a prior or existing employee of the business.
- 5.6. Contract requirements:
 - 5.6.1. The contract may be for a minimum of three to a maximum of six months, provided the duties progress during employment.
 - 5.6.2. 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).
 - 5.6.3. Rate of pay must be no less than the provincial minimum hourly wage.
 - 5.6.4. 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 contract. Failure of the employer to provide timesheets and paystubs within the above time limit will forfeit the employers’ right to reimbursement.
 - 5.6.5. For Métis Chartered Communities wishing to apply, an advance of estimated funding may be provided of up to two months; 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).
 - 5.6.6. 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.
- 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.
 - 6.2. 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).

- 6.3. Maximum eligible subsidy duration is six months.
 - 6.4. Client and employer must jointly apply.
 - 6.5. An approved contract must be signed by the employer and client prior to the client/employee's start date.
 - 6.6. Employer qualifications:
 - 6.6.1. Employer must be in good standing with WorkSafeBC.
 - 6.6.2. Employer must have a payroll account attached to their registered business number.
 - 6.6.3. Employer must follow current labour law provisions for their jurisdiction (federal or provincial).
 - 6.6.4. Employer may, and is encouraged to, offer employment to more than one Métis client at a time.
 - 6.7. Client qualifications:
 - 6.7.1. Client must be a "new hire" for the joint applicant employer – the applicant client must not be a prior or existing employee of the business.
 - 6.8. Contract requirements:
 - 6.8.1. 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 contract. Failure of the employer to provide timesheets and paystubs within the above time limit will forfeit the employers' right to reimbursement.
 - 6.8.2. 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.
 - 7.2. Wrap-around support accrues toward the lifetime funding threshold of each client.
 - 7.3. Wrap-around support is available only during active training/schooling as defined by training/school program.
 - 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 weekday/workday (non-holiday) can be requested to a maximum \$250 per week; 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 weekday/workday (non-holiday) can be requested to a maximum \$100 per week; less than the maximum may be requested to best manage an individual's lifetime funding threshold.
- 7.7. Additional subsidies may be provided based on unmet financial need:
 - 7.7.1. Unmet financial need is defined as the difference between the combined total of all the applicant client's household accessible income sources and their individual cost of living budget for the household.
 - 7.7.2. Clients are required to pursue, accept, and use all possible income and other means of support before wrap-around support beyond the daily per diem limit may be issued.
 - 7.7.3. Eligible Employment Insurance (EI) claimants must apply, report and include their EI support as part of their total accessible income in accordance with STEPS eligibility guidelines – STEPS staff may assist in coordination.
 - 7.7.4. Eligible income assistance applicants must apply, report and include their social assistance support as part of their total accessible income in accordance with STEPS eligibility guidelines – STEPS staff may assist in coordination.
 - 7.7.5. Eligible applicants to other accessible support such as child benefits must apply, report and include such support as their total accessible income in accordance with STEPS eligibility guidelines – STEPS staff may assist in coordination.
 - 7.7.6. Calculation of unmet need must be accompanied with documents of support where it can be reasonably expected, including statements or denial of eligibility by other support sources listed in 7.7.2, 7.7.3, and 7.7.4

- 7.7.7. Where documentation cannot be reasonably expected, currently published federal/provincial equivalent subsidies will be used to serve as eligible maximums.
- 7.7.8. Expense categories ineligible for consideration:
- Debt or loan repayment of any form
- 7.7.9. Expense categories eligible for additional wrap-around support consideration:
- Accommodation
 - Utilities
 - Transportation
 - Food
 - Residential / cellular network access
 - Child and/or adult care supports
 - Personal care and other incidental necessities
- 7.8. 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 – the bi-weekly maximum in wrap-around support is \$1,200 for full-time students/trainees, and \$600 for part-time.
- 7.9. Emergency Employment Support
- 7.9.1. One-time access of up to \$2,000 to assist in securing employment:
- Applicant 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
- 7.10. Other wrap-around support may be offered by MNBC as requirements and needs for training/schooling continue to evolve.
- 7.10.1. Special programs may be offered from time to time with their specific guidelines in conjunction with overall wrap-around support guidelines.
- 7.10.2. These programs may be offered or discontinued without advance notice:
- E.g., laptop support
 - Available for access every two years
 - Clients will have the options 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 maybe requested through a written appeal to the Senior Director and the Associate Director of STEPS per published STEPS Appeal Standards.

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NO. 2: ELIGIBILITY

Procedures:

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

1. Demonstrate proof of Métis Identity* through one of the following:
 - 1.1. A registered citizen of Métis Nation BC; or
 - 1.2. MUST have an active bona fide MNBC citizenship registry application in process.
2. Be a resident of British Columbia with ONE of the following proofs of residency:
 - 2.1. A current BC Personal Health Number and a valid government-issued card, such as a BC Services Card or BC driver's license; 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; or
 - 2.3. For students, documentation of a student loan administered in British Columbia would support proof of residency status.
3. Not currently attending high school full-time 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.

To receive support, a client must sign and comply with the client support contract, which includes the STEPS conduct commitments. *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.*

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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.
3. All STEPS applications will be reviewed in chronological order, based on STEPS’s receipt of completed applications. An exception is for Emergency Employment Support – completed applications will be prioritized based on employment start date.
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. Applicants must apply for and/or exhaust all sources of non-repayable eligible government benefits (employment insurance benefits, income assistance) as part of their application for support.
7. 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 the following combinations:
 - 11.1. Wrap-around support in conjunction with:
 - a. MNBC's Client-Initiated Skills Training Support program.
 - b. MNBC's Offered Skills Training or Education Upgrade programs.
 - c. MNBC's Post-Secondary Education Participation program.
 - 11.2. 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 expense.
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.

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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 or 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 hours.
 - 3.2. Staff will respond to clients within 48 hours.
 - 3.3. Staff will attempt to contact a client twice for outstanding information (by email or phone).
 - 3.4. Staff will process applications on a timely basis while maintaining a high level of due diligence.
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 complete application.
5. An applicant/client with service complaints shall be referred to a senior regional staff member and then to the Associate 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.

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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.
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 of, approved contract funding support; and ineligibility for any future MNBC program support.

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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 having 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 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. An Associate Director's review may occur in situations where the regional staff deny an application.
 - 4.1. Upon acknowledged written request from the applicant, the Associate 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, the Minister of 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.