

STEPS STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

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Ministry Mandate and Goals:

The Ministry of Skills Training, Employment, and Post-Secondary Education (STEPS) is focused on increasing Métis representation in both the labour market and post-secondary systems through culturally relevant, community-informed programs and services. STEPS works closely with provincial and federal partners, post-secondary institutions, employers, and Métis Chartered Communities to identify and remove barriers to success. Through direct service delivery, policy development, and strategic partnerships, STEPS works to advance Nation priorities and labour-market goals that increase educational attainment and support Métis clients in building sustainable and fulfilling careers.

Ministry Commitments to Serving Métis Clients

STEPS upholds Métis Nation BC's values:



Kwayes'kwât'sowin – Integrity

We hold integrity as a core value. We are honest with ourselves, our colleagues, our communities and our partners. We are reliable and follow through on our word.



Ahtisihcikêwin – Innovation

We draw on the spirit of Métis innovation and bring forward our curiosity and creativity to problem solve and develop new solutions for our people.



Tâpahtiyim'sowin – Humility

We show and practice cultural humility and cultural agility. We are open to new ideas and recognize the wisdom that surrounds us from others who carry experiences different than ours.



Kisiwât'sowin – Kindness

We show and practice lateral kindness in our organization and to everyone with whom we interact on behalf of MNBC. We practice kaa-wiichihitoyaahk: we take care of each other.



Atoskâtowin – Teamwork

We work together and actively seek opportunities to share information, collaborate on initiatives, and practice reciprocity for stronger outcomes. We embrace teamwork to achieve greater potential for success.



Sîpikisôwin – Resilience

We are resilient and do not fear challenges or setbacks but remain courageous and learn from each step of the journey. We channel the courage of our Métis ancestors who faced adversity and remained resilient.



Manâchitowin – Respect

We respect ourselves, others and all Creation.

The **Standards of Practice** are intended to maintain clarity and transparency to delivery of STEPS programs and services. The sections below cover important information for all clients accessing STEPS funding and support.

NO. 1: STEPS FUNDING ELIGIBILITY AND CONDITIONS

1. **To be eligible** to apply for STEPS **financial support**, applicants must be a:
 - a. Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) citizen; **and**
 - b. resident of British Columbia with **one of the following** examples as proof of residency:
 - i. a current B.C. valid government-issued card, such as a B.C. driver's license **or** B.C. Services Card that shows your address, **OR**
 - ii. a copy of a filed income tax return for the most recent calendar year to Canada Revenue Agency as a resident of British Columbia.

In addition, clients must:

 - c. be of a minimum age of 15 years at the start of the course.
Note: There is no maximum age for funding. However, clients under the age of 19 will require a parent or guardian to sign their contract.
 - d. ensure that enrollment in training does not interfere with full-time high-school studies except for dual-credit programs.
2. Clients must apply to access STEPS programs and financial support.
Note: For multiple-year programs, clients must submit a new application for each contract period.
3. Before an application is approved for funding, clients will discuss their career and educational goals with one or more STEPS team members as part of the intake process. This process is aimed at understanding how participation in the education or training program will lead to:
 - a. improved employability in the B.C. labour market and/or career growth; **OR**
 - b. a career change that will offer better prospects in comparison to a current career that is no longer in demand.
4. To be eligible for funding of tuition, mandatory fees, and required books and supplies, applicants must have a **completed application submitted prior to the start date of the training program**.
5. Applications submitted after the training program has commenced will not be eligible for retroactive funding of tuition, mandatory fees, or books/supplies.
6. Funding for wrap-around supports may be approved effective the date the application is fully completed, and can be initiated anytime during the time of the study program, provided all other eligibility criteria are met (See Wrap-around Support section).

7. This policy ensures appropriate eligibility assessment, funding approval, and compliance with program and funding requirements.
8. Successful applicants must **sign and comply with the Client Funding Agreement (CFA)** which includes the STEPS conduct commitments.

NO. 2: STEPS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Métis Nation BC citizens can access a variety of education, skills training, and employment-related funding and supports. Each stream of support is covered in detail below.

Employment-Related Programs and Services

STEPS has a dedicated team who delivers a variety of employment-related services and administers the Paid Practicum and Wage Subsidy programs:

1. Culturally grounded and client-centered **Employment Services**:
 - a. **MNBC citizens** can access the full spectrum of employment services, including:
 - i. Intake assessment to identify needs, aptitudes, priorities and goals;
 - ii. Career decision-making support;
 - iii. Training needs assessment and referrals to other supports;
 - iv. Pre-employment supports, such as labour-market research, resume writing, interview skills, and leveraging online presence;
 - v. Post-employment support to ensure job maintenance.
 - b. Individuals self-identifying as Métis, First Nations, or Inuit, but **who are not MNBC citizens**:
 - i. can access **up to 3 hours of career counselling** per request; and
 - ii. will be required to sign a waiver.
2. **Paid Practicum Program**: Career Placement, Paid Practicum, and Apprenticeship Support
 - a. Program Structure and Considerations:
 - i. A client-driven program designed:
 1. as part of a current education or apprenticeship program that includes a mandatory workplace component.
 2. 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.
 3. for clients with or without work experience, recent graduates (6-month window), and clients in precarious situations.

- ii. Financial support received does not count toward a client's lifetime funding limit of \$50,000.
 - iii. Clients are not eligible for wrap-around support, but may be eligible for additional support, such as emergency employment support.
 - iv. The client and employer must express **joint interest** before completing the application.
Note: Prior to applying for funding, the employer and client will work with a STEPS team member to determine suitability and fit for the program.
 - v. Joint application must include a **written plan detailing goals** in terms of experience/skills gained by client during the placement/practicum.
 - vi. An application must be approved and **agreement signed** by the employer and client **prior to the client/employee's start date**.
 - vii. Placement length: **two (2) to six (6) months**
 - viii. Hours per week: **20 to 40 hours per week** with no overtime reimbursement.
Note: Exceptions may be made for clients requiring workplace accommodation, including reduced weekly schedules.
 - ix. Clients could have an agreement with two different employers if the total hours worked does not exceed 40 hours per week.
Note: Employers will not be reimbursed for wages paid out on BC Statutory Holidays.
 - x. Employers are eligible to enter into agreements with more than one Métis client at a time, pending availability of funding.
 - xi. Clients are eligible to enter into agreements with multiple new employers, pending availability of funding.
- b. To partner with STEPS, **employers** must:
- i. be in good standing with WorkSafeBC.
 - ii. have a payroll account attached to their registered business number.
 - iii. follow current labour law provisions for their jurisdiction (federal or provincial).
 - iv. not pay a wage less than the current [provincial minimum wage](#).
 - v. commit to providing hands-on mentoring for all hours the client is at work.
- c. **Clients** must:
- i. be hired in **one** of the categories below:
 - 1. as a "new hire" for the joint applicant employer
new hire definition: the applicant must not be a prior or existing employee of the business but **can be a previous or current volunteer**.
- OR**

2. return to the **same employer in the same position** requiring significant changes to the job description, which will increase the skillset of the client employee; **OR**
 3. return to the **same employer in a different position** requiring a different or higher-level skillset, which will increase the skillset and employability of the employee in their chosen field; **OR**
 4. be in a **registered apprenticeship program** in BC.
- ii. Provide proof of:
 1. recent graduation (within the last 6 months); **OR**
 2. being enrolled in a current education program.
- d. **Agreement Administration:**
- i. Employers will provide:
 1. **a monthly invoice** for regular wages paid, **not including** mandatory employment related costs (**MERCs**¹), with the maximum reimbursement calculated on an hourly wage of no more than \$5 above the current [provincial minimum wage](#).
 2. supporting documentation including **timesheets and paystubs** within 30 days after each month-end for reimbursement from STEPS.
Note: Failure to provide timesheets and paystubs within the above time limit may forfeit the employers' right to reimbursement. **AND**
 3. Monthly and end of program **progress reports**.
 - ii. STEPS will:
 1. reimburse the employer within a reasonable timeframe and/or within the terms outlined on the invoice.
 2. complete final reconciliation and reimbursement within 30 days of the end of the contract.
- e. **Considerations for Métis Chartered Communities**
- i. An advance of estimated funding may be requested, of up to two months including mandatory employment related costs (MERCs). This information must be provided by the Métis Chartered Community before signing the agreement.
 - ii. All the other terms and conditions above continue to apply.
 - iii. Failure to comply with any of the above program requirements may result in a repayment situation and/or ineligibility to apply or participate in STEPS funded

¹ MERCs are payments that the Employer is required by law to make in respect of Participants including, but not restricted to, those required for Employment Insurance premiums, Canada Pension Plan contributions, vacation pay, Workers' Compensation Premiums or equivalent liability insurance (if applicable), Health Services Fund, and Employer Health Tax where applicable.

3. Wage Subsidy Program

a. Program Structure and Considerations:

- i. A client-driven program designed:
 1. to encourage employers to hire qualified Métis talent;
 2. for clients to gain employment in their field of study, or advance their career;
 3. as a low-risk opportunity for employer and employee to assess fit during the placement, while accessing financial incentives in the form of a wage subsidy.
- ii. Financial support: 50 percent of the regular wages paid, **not including** mandatory employment-related costs (**MERCs**²)
 1. the 50 percent is calculated from a client employee's hourly wage, up to a maximum of \$5 above the [provincial minimum hourly wage](#).
- iii. Financial support received does not count toward a client's lifetime funding limit of \$50,000.
- iv. Clients are not eligible for wrap-around support, but may be eligible for additional support, such as emergency employment support.
- v. The client and employer must express **joint interest** before completing the application.

Note: Prior to applying for funding, the employer and client will work with a STEPS team member to determine suitability and fit for the program.
- vi. An application must be approved and agreement signed by the employer and client **prior to the client/employee's start date**.
- vii. Placement length: **three (3) to six (6) months**
- viii. Hours per week: **20 to 40 hours per week** with no overtime reimbursement.

Note: Exceptions may be made for clients requiring workplace accommodation, including reduced weekly schedules.
- ix. Clients could have an agreement with two different employers if the total hours worked does not exceed 40 hours per week.

Note: Employers will not be reimbursed for wages paid out on BC Statutory Holidays

² MERCs are payments that the Employer is required by law to make in respect of Participants including, but not restricted to, those required for Employment Insurance premiums, Canada Pension Plan contributions, vacation pay, Workers' Compensation Premiums or equivalent liability insurance (if applicable), Health Services Fund, and Employer Health Tax where applicable.

- x. Employers are eligible to enter into agreements with more than one Métis client at a time, pending availability of funding.
 - xi. Clients are eligible to enter into agreements with multiple new employers, pending availability of funding.
- b. To partner with STEPS, **employers** must:
- i. be in good standing with WorkSafeBC.
 - ii. have a payroll account attached to their registered business number.
 - iii. follow current labour law provisions for their jurisdiction (federal or provincial).
 - iv. not pay a wage less than the current [provincial minimum wage](#).
- c. **Clients** can:
- i. be a “**new hire**” for the joint applicant employer
new hire definition: the applicant must not be a prior or existing employee of the business but **can be a previous or current volunteer**.
OR
 - ii. return to the **same employer in the same position** requiring significant changes to the job description, which will increase the skillset of the client employee;
OR
 - iii. return to the **same employer in a different position** requiring a different or higher-level skillset, which will increase the skillset and employability of the employee in their chosen field.
- d. **Agreement** Administration:
- i. Employers will provide:
 - 1. **a monthly invoice** for regular wages paid, **not including** mandatory employment related costs (**MERCs**³), with the maximum reimbursement calculated on an hourly wage of no more than \$5 above the current [provincial minimum hourly wage](#).
 - 2. supporting documentation including **timesheets and paystubs** within 30 days after each month-end for reimbursement from STEPS.
Note: Failure to provide timesheets and paystubs within the above time limit may forfeit the employers’ right to reimbursement. **AND**
 - 3. Monthly and end of program **progress reports**.
 - ii. STEPS will:

³ MERCs are payments that the Employer is required by law to make in respect of Participants including, but not restricted to, those required for Employment Insurance premiums, Canada Pension Plan contributions, vacation pay, Workers’ Compensation Premiums or equivalent liability insurance (if applicable), Health Services Fund, and Employer Health Tax where applicable.

1. reimburse the employer within a reasonable timeframe and/or within the terms outlined on the invoice.
2. complete final reconciliation and reimbursement within 30 days of the end of the contract.

e. **Considerations for Métis Chartered Communities**

- i. May be eligible for 100 percent reimbursement of an hourly wage of no more than \$5 above the current [provincial minimum hourly wage](#).
- ii. An advance of estimated funding may be requested, of up to two months including mandatory employment related costs (MERCs). This information must be provided by the Métis Chartered Community before signing the agreement.
- iii. All the other terms and conditions above continue to apply.
- iv. Failure to comply with any of the above program requirements may result in a repayment situation and/or ineligibility to apply or participate in STEPS funded programs in the future.

Education and Skills Training Programs and Services

4. MNBC Offered and Priority Education and Skills Training Program

- a. MNBC offers foundational and in-demand skills training and education upgrades.
 - i. Many of these courses are ongoing, scheduled, and/or specially curated to regional labour-market demands.
 - ii. Training is often organized in Métis-specific cohorts, but individual seat enrollments are used to address availability and capacity challenges, as well as ensure fair pricing.
- b. Offered training programs are **fully funded** and include the cost of:
 - i. Training (tuition) costs;
 - ii. Mandatory fees; **and**
 - iii. Required tools and equipment as outlined in training curriculum.

Note: Funding for offered training programs **does not accrue** toward a client's lifetime support limit and is based on availability of funding.

- c. All MNBC clients are welcome to participate if they have not received this training in the past.
- d. Wrap-around support may also be requested (see **Wrap-around Support** section).
Note: All wrap-around support **accrues** towards a client's lifetime limit of \$50,000.
- e. Further wrap-around support may be available, contingent on funder initiatives or priorities.

- f. Offered and priority programs will be subject to a **\$20,000 annual funding limit**.
- This limit will include support for the cost of training (tuition, mandatory fees, and books, tools, and equipment) and applicable and approved wrap-around support.
 - MNBC reserves the right to extend the annual funding limit to high-priority training programs in line with significant labour-market demand and/or provincial priorities.

Note: MNBC determines priority programs on a **two-year cycle** in alignment with provincial and federal funding partners, and labour-market and [SkilledTradesBC](#) information.

5. Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training Program

- a. **Definition:** Client-initiated and requested funding for full-time or part-time enrollment in:
- academic and other speciality education and skill training programs** offered by [designated educational institutions](#) or [private training institutions](#); **OR**
 - foundational and in-demand skills training and education upgrade programs** in Canada, **not offered** by MNBC through partnerships with its training partners.
- b. Financial support is available for:
- Training (tuition) costs;
 - Mandatory post-secondary institute program fees; professional designation fees; and tutoring;
 - \$250 per semester or \$500 per funding contract for clients to purchase required books, materials, tools and equipment as outlined in program or course curriculum.

Note: Funding received for these programs accrues towards a client's lifetime support limit and is based on availability of funding.

- c. Wrap-around support may also be requested (see **Wrap-Around Support** section)
Note: Wrap-around support accrues towards a client's lifetime support limit of \$50,000 and is based on availability of funding.
- d. Client-initiated education and skills training programs will be subject to a **\$12,500 annual funding limit**. This limit will include support for the cost of training (tuition, mandatory fees, and books, materials, supplies) as well as applicable and appropriate wrap-around support.

6. Wrap-Around Support

- a. Designed to help with living expenses, such as rent, childcare, food, and transportation for clients actively attending an education or training program.
- b. Due to limited funding, and to ensure accessibility to as many clients as possible, wrap-around support is **not designed to replace income**, and it cannot be expected to meet all unmet financial need.
Note: STEPS team members are knowledgeable and may be able to assist clients with identifying alternative/additional sources of funding.
- c. All wrap-around support accrues toward both the annual and lifetime funding limits for each client.
- d. Wrap-around support may only be requested while actively engaged in an education or training program.
- e. May only be accessed in conjunction with:
 - i. MNBC's client-initiated post-secondary education and skills training support program.
 - ii. MNBC-offered skills training or education upgrade programs.
 - iii. Self-funded or third party-funded skills/education upgrade programs.
 - iv. **Exception:** Clients may be able to access Emergency Employment Support or Emergency Student Support, as long as requirements are met and pending availability of funding at the time of the request. (Please see **Emergency Financial Support** section)
- f. **Full-time students:**
 - i. **Full-time status** will only be determined based on:
 1. the full-time definition provided by [designated educational institutions](#) or [private training institutions](#); **OR**
 2. being in at least 30 weekly hours spanning a seven-day week and including classroom time and/or in-person hands-on training **or** more than 6 hours per training day of scheduled classroom time.
 - ii. A per diem stipend of up to \$50 per day can be requested to a maximum of **\$250 per week or \$1000 per month**.
Note: less than the maximum may be requested to manage a client's annual and lifetime funding limit.
- g. **Part-time students:**
 - i. **Part-time status** will only be determined based on:
 1. the part-time definition provided by [designated educational institutions](#) or [private training institutions](#); **OR**

2. being in less than 30 weekly hours spanning a seven-day week of classroom time and/or in-person hands-on training **or** less than or equal to 6 hours per training day of scheduled classroom time.
 - ii. A per diem stipend of up to \$20 per day can be requested to a **maximum of \$100 per week or \$400 per month.**

Note: less than the maximum may be requested to manage a client's annual and lifetime funding limit.
- h. Clients participating in MNBC-offered skills training or education upgrade programs that are **less than 15 training hours** per week **are not eligible** for wrap-around supports unless there is a financial need and will be subject to the above maximums for full-time or part-time studies

Emergency Financial Support

7. Emergency Employment Support

- a. Clients are eligible for up to \$2000 in emergency employment support in their lifetime.
- b. The amount provided to clients:
 - i. May be provided dependent on availability of funding.
 - ii. Does not accrue towards the annual funding limit of \$12,500;
 - iii. Accrues towards the lifetime funding limit of \$50,000.
- c. The client must:
 - i. be a new hire for the employer;
 - ii. provide written and accepted employment offer with start date.
- d. Eligible costs include, but are not limited to the following:
 - i. cost of relocation to start a new position;
 - ii. tools and equipment required by the employer prior to client starting work;
 - iii. seasonal business wear/attire deemed necessary by the employer;
 - iv. licensing, graduation, and/or professional certification fees that are necessary prior to starting employment;
 - v. any other items that prevent the client from starting the position on the predetermined start date.

8. Emergency Student Support

- a. Clients are eligible for up to \$2000 in emergency student support in their lifetime.
- b. The amount provided to clients:
 - i. May be provided dependent on availability of funding.
 - ii. Does not accrue towards the annual funding limit of \$12,500;
 - iii. Accrues towards the lifetime funding limit of \$50,000.

- c. Clients must submit documentation supporting the request and discuss with staff to determine eligibility.
- d. Eligible costs include, but are not limited to the following:
 - i. Tutoring fees;
 - ii. Medical or family emergency preventing or inhibiting a student from continuing their studies;
 - iii. Assistance with temporary accommodations, access to food or transportation required to attend and complete education or training.

Other Financial Support Available

9. Laptop Support Program

- a. MNBC may offer support towards the purchase of a laptop, depending on availability of funding.
- b. Available for access every four (4) years, from the date of last access;
- c. The recipient may be eligible for up to \$800, including purchase of hardware and shipping costs;

Note: The amount can be increased to up to \$1000 based on specific training hardware requirements.

- d. Clients will be reimbursed for their purchase, according to the following guidelines:
 - i. Clients must have a current Client Funding Agreement (CFA).
 - ii. Purchase must be within 30 days of the start of the education or skills training program.

Note: In exceptional or emergency circumstances, purchases required after the 30 days of the start of the program may be considered, subject to documented need.
 - iii. Clients must provide receipt within 30 days of a purchase.
 - iv. Should clients have a financial barrier to purchasing a laptop, a MNBC-issued laptop will be supplied, and the \$800 value will be applied to the lifetime limit.
- e. Amount received **accrues** towards a client's lifetime limit of \$50,000.
- f. Amount **does not count** towards a client's \$12,500 annual funding limit.

10. Scholarships, Grants, and Bursary Program

- a. MNBC may offer scholarships, grants, and bursaries from time to time, depending on availability of funding;
- b. Clients may be eligible for multiple scholarships, grants, and bursaries;
- c. Amount of each scholarship, grant, or bursary will vary;

- d. The priority program areas of each scholarship, grant, or bursary can be updated based on funder initiatives and priorities; **and**
 - e. Amounts received by clients **do not accrue** towards the lifetime funding limit of \$50,000.
11. Special programs or other support may be offered from time to time with their specific guidelines in conjunction with STEPS Standards of Practice.
12. These programs may be discontinued without advance notice and are based on availability of funding.
- 13. Special Consideration for Clients with Disabilities**
- a. 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.
 - b. Additional support consideration may be requested in writing and may be approved dependent on availability of funding, if they are consistent with the STEPS Standards of Practice.

NO. 3: STEPS CONSIDERATIONS & FINANCIAL STANDARDS

STEPS offers a variety of programs, services, and supports based on availability of funding and requirements outlined in federal and provincial funding agreements. The following standards apply to all programs and supports. Program-specific details and eligibilities are provided in **Section No. 2: STEPS Programs and Services**.

1. The lifetime limit of funding-related support combined across all STEPS programs and services is \$50,000 per client.

Exception: Financial support in the programs below does not accrue towards the lifetime limit:

- a. Tuition and mandatory costs of **MNBC Offered and Priority Education and Skills Training** program;
 - b. Wage-subsidy Program;
 - c. Paid Practicum Program.
2. STEPS applications open February 1st of each year for programs that start on or after April 1st of that year.

Note: For currently funded clients, applications will not be accepted earlier than 30 days before the end date specified in current Client Funding Agreement (CFA).

3. STEPS support commitment may be up to one calendar year in duration. Applicants are required to apply for each period of study up to one calendar year.
4. For reporting purposes, STEPS requires outcome information to indicate whether, upon completion of current study period, the client:
 - a. Plans to return to school for further training and education; **OR**
 - b. Gains employment, including the following:
 - i. Name of Employer
 - ii. Job Title
 - iii. Start Date
 - iv. Current wage (hourly or yearly)
 - v. Employment status (full-time, part-time, temporary full-time, temporary part-time)
5. All STEPS applications will be reviewed in chronological order, based on:
 - a. the date when an application is considered complete; **AND**
 - b. client's eligibility to apply.

Exception: Requests for Emergency Student or Emergency Employment Support will be prioritized.

6. An application is considered complete when all required information is provided as it relates to STEPS program requirements and eligibility criteria.
7. The STEPS team will engage in financial management conversations that assist clients in creating a plan for funding their education, depending on their short and long-term goals.

8. MNBC is only committed to pay or reimburse the documented costs for approved contracts, unless otherwise specified. Where the exact cost of an expense is not available during application review, an estimate based on market value may be used.
9. 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.
10. Only expenses incurred after the date of receipt of a completed application are eligible for reimbursement.
11. To be eligible for funding of **tuition, mandatory fees, and required books and supplies**, applicants must have a **completed application submitted prior to the start date of the education/training program**.
12. Applications submitted after the education/training program has commenced will **not** be eligible for retroactive funding of tuition, mandatory fees, or books/supplies.
13. Funding for **wrap-around supports** may be approved **effective the date the application is fully completed**, provided all other eligibility criteria are met.
14. This policy ensures appropriate eligibility assessment, funding approval, and compliance with program and funding requirements.
15. Servicing of any form of loan or debt is not eligible for STEPS support.
16. A client cannot participate in multiple programs concurrently, except for:
 - a. **MNBC Offered and Priority Education and Skills Training programs with:**
 - i. MNBC Client-Initiated Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training program.
 - ii. other MNBC Offered and Priority Education and Skills Training programs if scheduling permits and total student training hours does not exceed 40 hours per week.
 - b. **Wrap-around support in conjunction with:**
 - i. MNBC client-initiated post-secondary education and skills training program;
 - ii. MNBC Offered and Priority Education and Skills Training programs;
 - iii. self-funded or third party-funded post-secondary education and skills training programs.
17. Where possible, payment(s) will be made directly to the institution or source of expense (rather than reimbursing the client) to reduce the financial burden on individuals.
 - a. Where direct payment is not feasible, reimbursement may be made directly to clients.
 - b. To be considered, all client reimbursement requests must be accompanied by original receipts or invoices.
 - c. Additionally, proof of payment via bank or credit card statement may be requested if required to meet financial laws and regulations.

18. All applications will be assessed independently and consistently by STEPS staff per STEPS Standards of Practice.
19. Appeals can be made in accordance with the STEPS Appeal Guidelines and Process.
20. All the above is subject to revision in the event of any STEPS funding changes.
21. 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. Those seeking funding verification should **allocate up to 15 business days** for such a request.

NO. 4: STEPS COMMITMENTS TO CLIENTS

STEPS team members:

1. are expected to provide the best customer service possible, in a culturally-sensitive way.
2. treat everyone respectfully without regard to Indigenous identity, age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, disability, language proficiency or social or economic status.
3. are empowered to make decisions that will ensure the best experience for each client, while balancing the needs of the individual with the overall needs of Métis in B.C..
4. provide supports for employment within the funding parameters, including career exploration and decision making, skills and education enhancements, job search and job maintenance.
5. support clients to achieve their individual career goals, including developing action plans to best utilize their lifetime funding limit to achieve these goals.

To help reach our customer-service goals, we are committed to:

1. Timely and clear communication:
 - a. Staff will acknowledge receipt of an application within 2 business days.
 - b. Staff will respond to clients' email and phone inquiries within 2 business days.
 - c. Staff will attempt to contact a client twice for outstanding application information (by email or phone).
 - d. Staff will clearly communicate client responsibilities and expectations, including STEPS Client Conduct Commitments during intake, application assessment, and the contract period, to enhance client success.
2. Maintenance of confidentiality and privacy:
 - a. staff can only discuss details of any submitted applications with the client that has submitted and signed the application.
 - b. any other person writing on behalf of the client will only be provided information on STEPS programs/services and standards of practice.
Exception 1: if the client is under 19, a parent or guardian can request information specific to the application.
Exception 2: In the event a client has a specific need, such as a disability or other impairment, they may request a letter to confirm a proxy point of contact.
3. Timely assessment of a **complete** application:
 - a. **“Complete” definition:** all required information is provided.
 - b. notify applicants of the results within 15 business days from the date when application is considered complete.
4. Timely **complaint** resolution:

- a. any client with service concerns or complaints shall be referred to a Regional or Senior Program Manager first and then to the Director of Programs and Operations and/or the Executive Director as needed.

5. Timely **appeal** resolution:

Denial of funding is considered 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. Therefore, the following guidelines govern appeals:

1. An applicant **may not appeal** a decision if their application was denied due to:
 - a. insufficient STEPS funding (i.e. there is a waitlist in place);
 - b. applicant and/or application not meeting STEPS eligibility criteria;
 - c. applicant reaching or exceeding the lifetime funding limit.
2. **Appeals** pertaining to STEPS funding determinations outside of the above will be handled by the STEPS Director, Programs and Operations, in consultation with STEPS Executive Director.
3. Appeal procedures:
 - a. Applicant submits written request
 - b. Director, Programs and Operations reviews the rationale and documentation provided by the applicant.
 - c. Director, Programs and Operations, provides written response to the applicant within 10 business days of receiving the appeal request, indicating:
 - i. Support of the original decision to deny funding **OR**
 - ii. overturning of the original decision and approval of funding:
 1. as presented in the applicant's request
 2. with limitations or conditions
4. **Appeal decisions** are considered **final**.

NO. 5: CLIENT CONDUCT COMMITMENTS

To maintain a positive and constructive relationship with STEPS staff, all clients/applicants must:

1. treat STEPS staff respectfully without regard to Indigenous identity, age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, disability, language proficiency or social or economic status.
2. provide required documentation, as requested by a STEPS team member, for the purposes of:
 - a. completing application;
 - b. processing and reviewing of application; **and**
 - c. compliance with reporting requirements of funding partnerships and agreements.
3. return signed Client Funding Agreement (CFA) within 10 business days. **AND**
4. notify STEPS:
 - a. **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. **or**
 - b. **within 10 business days** of any changes to financial situations that may impact the calculation of their approved support.
5. Failure to comply with these commitments may result in one or more of the following:
 - a. Termination of the Client Funding Agreement (CFA);
 - b. Forfeiture of any support remaining in their current contract;
 - c. Requirement to repay portions of, or all, approved contract funding support; **and/or**
 - d. Ineligibility for any future MNBC program support.