Edmonton Community Adult Learning Association

Application and Funding Guidelines

2027–2030

ECALA

Alberta Government

Updated: November 2026

What's New

These guidelines reflect the updated CALP Policy Manual (October 2026), which takes effect for the 2027-2030 grant term.

The grant term is for three years, from July 1, 2027 – June 30, 2030.

ECALA funding is conditional until Alberta Advanced Education approves funding allocation.

During the funding year, agencies can now move funds from one category to another as long as the amount being moved is 15% or less of their total allocation.

Applications will be submitted through the Reporting Folder through ECALA's SharePoint. Agencies will receive a unique link and password to access the documents.

Only agencies incorporated for a minimum of two years under one of the following Alberta Statutes: Societies Act, part 9 of the Companies Act, the Libraries Act, or the Post-secondary Learning Act are eligible to apply for ECALA funding.

A. Mandate

The Government of Alberta, through the Ministry of Advanced Education, provides a Community Adult Learning Program (CALP) Grant to ECALA each year to support the delivery of part-time, non-formal literacy and foundational learning opportunities to adults with financial and social barriers in Edmonton.

ECALA is a granting council that distributes over 2 million dollars annually within the CALP Grant mandate to agencies through a competitive granting process. ECALA is limited to allocating a maximum of 15% of the CALP grant to any one agency. The funding year for the CALP Grant is July 1st to June 30th. The overall objective of the funding is to strengthen the ability of non-profit agencies to meet the needs of adult foundational learners in Edmonton. Foundational learning opportunities must focus on literacy and foundational learning, facilitate the development of foundational life and essential skills, and meet the needs of learners (learner-centered approach/practice).

Foundational literacy, numeracy, skills for learning, basic digital skills, and English language proficiency often result in a change in participant life outcomes such as the ability to learn, improved health status, increased civic participation, better social engagement, positive economic performance, and knowledge of the justice system.

B. Eligible Agencies

Agencies interested in applying for ECALA CALP funding must use the **ECALA Online Application** process and meet the following operational requirements:

- Be a legal entity incorporated for a minimum of two years under one of the following Alberta Statutes: Societies Act, part 9 of the Companies Act, the Libraries Act, or the Post-secondary Learning Act.
- Returns are filed yearly with Alberta Corporate Registry and a current Proof of Filing with the Application can be provided.
- Operate as an effective agency with sound practices in governance, and in the planning and management of learning opportunities, finances, and personnel.
- Determine bylaws, structure, and decision-making processes, develop and adhere to operational policies and procedures, including conflict of interest guidelines, and examine and vote on matters in accordance with the written policies and procedures.
- Be able to provide current copies of the agency's bylaws, and financial and personnel policies and procedures when requested.
- Hold regular Board meetings and maintain a record of minutes and financial statements documenting key decisions on personnel, learning opportunities, and funding allocations.
- Have a board of directors or decision-making body of at least five members, or the minimum required by the Act under which the agency is incorporated.
- Have procedures in place to keep ECALA informed of changes to the current board membership and signing authorities.
- Carry general liability insurance of at least $2,000,000 per occurrence, covering bodily injury, personal injury, and property damage, including loss of use.

C. Eligible Learning Opportunities

Eligible learning opportunities **must be delivered in Edmonton**, whether in-person or virtually. Agencies are encouraged to deliver the learning opportunities in collaboration or in partnership with other agencies to enhance access to formal post-secondary learning or to support life-long learning goals. Agencies have the flexibility to choose modes of delivery that will best meet the needs of the learners, including less formal learning activities and tutoring. Grant recipients must provide learning opportunities in one of the categories listed in the Category Table.

Please note: Learning Opportunities should be structured to be in only one of the categories noted below. If you are applying for funding under more than one category you are required to submit one category application for each category so the application can be given to the appropriate review committee.

Category Table
The CALP Policy Manual (2026), Section 3.1, includes additional information on each category.

C.1 Literacy and Foundational Learning (LFL) Highest priority for funding	
Adult Literacy	**Definition and Primary Intended Learning Objectives** Adult Literacy is defined as the ability of adults to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, and use printed and written materials associated within varying contexts. The primary intended learning objective of this category should be the development of reading and writing skills. Learning opportunities in literacy may support the development of several skills from Canada's Skills for Success Framework defined below: • Reading includes understanding materials written in sentences or paragraphs, graphs, charts, and/or tables. • Writing includes communicating by arranging words, numbers, and symbols on paper or a computer screen. In addition, literacy may include communication, collaboration, creativity, problem-solving, and adaptability. *This category should not include learning opportunities for English language learners; these should be offered in the English Language Learning category below.*
Numeracy	Numeracy is defined the ability to use, apply, interpret, and communicate mathematical information and ideas. The primary intended learning objective of learning opportunities in this category should be using numbers and thinking in quantitative terms to complete tasks. Learning opportunities in numeracy may support the development of several skills from the Canada's Skills for Success Framework—primarily numeracy but may include problem-solving and adaptability.
Skills for Learning (replaced Foundational Life Skills)	The Skills for Learning category is defined as learning opportunities that support the development of the fundamental skills and habits of learning that support foundational learners to build confidence, develop an identity as a learner, advocate for themselves, and engage in foundational and other learning. While it may involve practicing a range of foundational skills, the primary intended learning objective of learning opportunities in the skills for learning category is to help learners build the following skills and habits needed to set and achieve their learning goals, be successful in further learning, and increase confidence in their ability to be a more self-directed, independent learner. Recognizing oneself as a learner, by supporting the learner to: • Trust that they contribute valuable knowledge and skills, which are essential to their learning.

	• Link new learning to prior knowledge, skills, and/or real-world context to make learning relevant. Taking risks in learning, by supporting the learner to: • Take learning risks and practice bravery without fear of shame or judgment. • Build new knowledge and skill development in support of their goals. • Recognize that all adults have different learning styles and needs, and that, with greater understanding of these, learning is increasingly possible. Actively engaging in the act of learning, by supporting the learner to: • Trust that the more actively they participate in their own learning journey, the more likely they are to achieve their learning goals. • Set clear learning goals and have the confidence to take increasing responsibility for, and control over, those goals. • Strengthen their ability to make informed decisions in learning. Developing learning strategies, by supporting the learner to: • Adopt practical strategies to achieve their goals, including increased organization at home or work, time management, and enhanced memory skills. • Become more confident in their ability to assess their own learning progress, including having the knowledge, skills, and tools to support self-checking for accuracy when completing a task. • Transfer problem-solving strategies between learning and daily life. • Embrace challenges and persevere through setbacks in learning. Building collaboration skills in learning, by supporting the learner to: • Engage effectively and work with others in a learning setting and apply those skills elsewhere. • Develop and nurture positive relationships and a sense of belonging in a learning community. Strengthening communication skills in learning, by supporting the learner to: • Enhance their non-verbal and oral communication skills in a learning setting to support the application of those skills in meeting the demands of their day-to-day tasks and responsibilities. Learning opportunities in the skills for learning category may support the development of several skills for success from the Canada's Skills for Success Framework—primarily collaboration, communication, problem-solving, creativity, and adaptability.

Basic Digital Skills	Basic digital skills are defined as the ability of individuals to understand and use digital systems, tools, applications, and networks in order to access and manage information and thrive in learning, the workplace, and daily life. The primary intended learning objective of this category is the application and understanding of key concepts across a range of contexts, situations, and digital platforms including hardware, software, navigation, settings, safety, and connectivity. Learning opportunities in the basic digital skills category may support the development of several skills for success from the Canada's Skills for Success Framework—primarily digital skills but may include reading, writing, communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and adaptability.
English Language Learning	English language learning is defined as the study and practice of the English language by individuals whose first language is other than English and who are unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English. The primary intended learning objective in this category should be to help learners gain proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English. This category corresponds to the following skills for success from the Canada's Skills for Success Framework— primarily reading, writing and communication but may include collaboration, creativity, problem-solving, and adaptability.https://open.alberta.ca/publications/community-adult-learning-program-policy-manual
C.2 Community Capacity Building (CCB) Supplemental Programming (Maximum 15% of ECALA Allocations)	
Community Capacity Building (CCB)	Community capacity building programming may build on the literacy and foundational skills a learner is trying to achieve, or has achieved, and is an opportunity to attract learners who may not yet recognize the need to improve their literacy and foundational skills. Learners in this supplemental programming area do not have to be current or former participants in required programming to participate. Please see CALP Policy Manual (2026), Section 3.2, for examples of CCB programming. Agencies must charge fees for CCB learning opportunities. Unless a learner has a financial barrier, CCB learning opportunities must be cost-recovery or revenue-generating. CCB is offered primarily as a bridge into literacy and foundational learning, so instructors should regularly let CCB learners know about available literacy and foundational learning opportunities.

C.3 Modes of Delivery (refer to CALP Policy Manual (2026), Section 3.3)

Modes of delivery are the ways in which learning opportunities may be delivered in order to achieve specific learning objectives. Agencies may deliver learning opportunities through one or more of the following modes of delivery:

Tutoring facilitates an adult's learning through specialized, additional, or basic instruction, either individually or in a small group. Tutoring may be delivered by paid staff or volunteers; in both cases, ongoing professional development is recommended for tutors. The practice of tutoring is learner-centred and learner-driven and is a two-way learning experience based on mutual respect from which the tutor and the adult learner(s) benefit.

Courses are instructor-led educational experiences that focus on addressing participants' learning goals through relevant, structured curriculum. The content of each individual session builds on the content of each previous session to ensure learners make steady progress towards the learning goals of the course. Therefore, it is important that learners attend each session. Course instructors measure learner skill development by assessing the extent to which learners meet the goals of the course. Courses should involve a pre-arranged time for instruction and may not be offered on a drop-in basis.

Family Literacy Programs prioritize the delivery of intentional activities that build adults' skills and promote the values and benefits of literacy for the entire family. Family literacy programs provide adult learners with opportunities to increase their own literacy and foundational skills that also strengthen daily literacy activities for all family members. Programs must respond to the needs and goals of adult learners and cannot be designed around the purchase and passive distribution of children's books or materials. One-time drop-in events may be used for recruitment or awareness-raising, but participants in these events should not be included in reporting.

Learning Activities are instructor-led and scheduled with set times for learners to improve their skills or knowledge on a particular topic through a participatory or hands-on approach. Unlike courses, learning activities generally do not involve a highly structured curriculum. Therefore, the content of individual sessions may or may not build on the content of previous sessions, learner success does not require attending every session. Instead, each session is designed to respond to the specific needs of learners in the room, allowing learners to build on the skills they bring with them.

C.4 Application Requirements

Agencies must include sufficient information in their application so reviewers can determine a good understanding of the alignment of the request with the CALP Policy Manual (2026) and a reasonable allocation.

Application forms are found in ECALA Reporting folders sent to the applying agency, or by expressing interest to grants@ecala.org. The following forms must be completed:

1. Agency Application
2. Category Application(s) - fill out each category (See section C.1 of these guidelines for more information on categories) in which you are applying for funds. Only fill out necessary information.
3. Financial Template – Fill out one page in the workbook for each funding category. The overall request will automatically populate.
4. Staff Table – Include names and information for all staff involved in the oversight and delivery of ECALA programs.
5. Declaration & Authorization – To be signed by board chair or treasurer and agency staff with signing authority. May be uploaded as PDF document.
6. Other attachments as required: Board list, audited financial statements, proof of filing with Alberta registries, etc.

Agencies must also use the application forms provided and attachments to demonstrate that their learning opportunities:

- Reflect the results of the agency's needs assessment.
- Do not unnecessarily replicate locally available learning opportunities and courses currently funded in Edmonton.
- Integrate literacy and Skills for Success development into learning opportunities in areas of high interest to adults.
- Are accessible, safe, and welcoming for adult foundational learners.
- Have trained staff and volunteers who understand why a learner might go to them for learning and support, and how they might approach setting goals and creating a learning plan with that learner.
- Recognize that working with adults is different than working with children: Adults have a wealth of life experiences as well as immediate needs and goals.
- Incorporate recognized adult learning principles including the enhancement of learner confidence and self-advocacy skills.
- Use appropriate learner assessment tools and understand why and when to use them.
- Provide pathways for learners to transition successfully from and to related programs or next steps (i.e., to employment or to further learning).
- Are non-credit, part-time, and not more than 20 hours per week.
- Leverage collaborations and partnerships with other organizations in Edmonton to deliver the learning opportunities.
- Are delivered by a qualified (experience and education) instructor, tutor, or volunteer who has completed all required training or will complete training within the funding year
- Will be delivered between July 1, 2027 and June 30, 2030 by an agency located within Edmonton's city limits.

D. Eligible Learners

CALP funds Adult Foundational Learning. Foundational learning is "learning opportunities that support the development of adult literacy, numeracy, skills for learning, basic digital skills, and/or proficiency in the English language. Foundational learning opportunities help individuals to pursue further learning, have satisfying and meaningful employment, and fully participate in society. While the CALP Policy Manual does not identify or mandate a specific "cut-off level" for foundational learning, in general terms, it can be thought of as up to and including approximately Grade 9 levels in the formal kindergarten to grade 12 system, or, in the case of adult literacy and numeracy, up to and including Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) level 2." (CALP Policy Manual (2026), Appendix 8.1)

Eligible learners include:

- Adults 18 years of age and older who reside in Edmonton. Youth may be served on an exception basis only with ministry approval, where community need is identified, a more appropriate youth-serving organization is not available, and the grant recipient has taken the necessary precautions (e.g., security clearances, vulnerable sector check, consent from legal guardian).

E. Successful Applicants

E.1 Grant Requirements

Grant Recipients (successful applicants) must:

- Develop and submit annual reports by the specified deadline, including financial statements and outcome, evaluation, and demographic data, using ECALA forms and adhere to the CALP Policy Manual (2026).
- Submit audited financial statements approved by the decision-making body (including a statement listing the CALP Grant income and expenses) that reflect the fiscal year of the agency as stated in the agency's bylaws.
- Identify all other funding sources and dollar amounts, In-kind (non-cash) in the application, that contribute to the successful delivery of the learning opportunities.
- Keep an electronic copy of the submitted application package to use for review during the funding year. Relevant sections of the documents should be shared with staff responsible for the delivery of the learning opportunities and used to complete Agency updates Annual Reports. Grant Recipients should refer to the documents monthly and complete sections of the Interim and Annual Reports during the year to ensure they collect all the mandatory information.
- Ensure allocated funding is accounted for separately from other funds received and track all income and expenses, including in-kind contributions. Use funding for expenses outlined in the Application Package or reports and non-capital purchases only.
- Ensure the learning opportunities, supports and services are provided in a cost-effective manner to maximize the use of public funds and are provided in collaboration with other related service organizations in the community.

- Ensure criteria and processes are in place to reduce social and economic barriers facing learners.
- Have a policy to reduce or waive fees for learners with financial barriers, and state in advertising (websites and other media) that fees can be waived or reduced for learners with financial need.
- Facilitate opportunities for ECALA staff to observe a class or tutor session and interview learners, instructors, and agency staff.
- Keep ECALA informed of changes to the current board membership and current liability insurance, bylaws, procedures, or policy changes. ECALA may, at any time during the funding year, request copies of current documents.
- Contact ECALA to request approval for changes to the learning opportunities and discuss any challenges in delivering the learning opportunities as they arise.
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers who work with or may have unsupervised access to children or vulnerable individuals have a valid police information check, criminal record check, vulnerable sector check, or other such security screening protocol on file.
- Comply with Alberta's Personal Information Protection Act, Digital Privacy Act and Workers' Compensation Act, if applicable.
- Acknowledge that learning opportunities were made possible by funding from the Government of Alberta and ECALA on all materials that are printed, produced, or created, such as reports, advertising, signage, brochures, websites, and videos. Download the ECALA logo from our website.
- Make available when requested annual records pertaining to the learning opportunities including staff qualifications, promotional and instructional materials, registration, attendance, evaluation, and financial tracking.
- Keep annual records for an additional 5 years in the event of a records audit.

E.2 Reporting Requirements

All grant recipients **must** notify ECALA of any changes to the proposed learning opportunities. In addition, Grant Recipients agree to submit the following reports using ECALA forms or format on or before their deadlines:

- Documents listed in conditions outlined in the agency allocation letter. (i.e., Calendar of learning opportunities, revised financial templates, etc.)
- Complete Agency Update
- Complete Annual Report
- Complete Outcome, Measurement and Evaluation Table (including demographic data)

E.3 Evaluation Requirements

ECALA's Outcomes, Measurement and Evaluation (OME) Table is based on the CALP Performance Measurement Framework (CALP Policy Manual (2026), Section 2.1), which replaces the CALP Logic Model. The framework measures three strategic outcomes:

- Adult learners persist in learning foundational skills that they use in their everyday lives.

- Adult learners have access to relevant and engaging learning opportunities.
- Adult learners benefit from CALPs that are well-connected in their communities.

To report on these outcomes, agencies collect data on: the number of learners using foundational skills in their everyday lives; learners making progress as a result of the learning opportunity; learners who felt the learning opportunity was relevant to their needs and goals; paid instructor hours (learner-facing time only); volunteer hours; organizations that referred learners; and learners who joined a literacy and foundational learning opportunity after attending a Community Capacity Building program (if applicable).

https://www.ecala.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CALP-Data-Collection-Guide-October-2021.pdfWorkshops and small group coaching and mentoring are available to support the collection of OME (Outcomes, Measurement and Evaluation) data. **Agencies that do not provide evaluation and demographic data on all learning opportunities may risk future or ongoing grants.**

Agencies must allow ECALA to observe a class and interview learners and instructors during learning opportunity visits. The information from the visit is used to provide any coaching and mentoring support required, to suggest professional development opportunities, to clarify funding expectations, and to inform ECALA Impact Reports, Strategic Directions and Advanced Education reports. Observing a class also provides an opportunity for adult foundational learners to share information directly with ECALA on their further learning needs or positive outcomes due to their participation in the learning opportunity.

E.4 Professional Development Requirements

Grant recipients are expected to support staff, volunteers (those who work with learners as well as board members) and contracted instructors/facilitators/tutors to access professional development.

All staff involved in the oversight and delivery of literacy and foundational learning programming must complete the Introduction to Adult Foundational Learning (IAFL) training within the grant term, unless they have already completed it. New staff must take the training in their first year of employment unless they have previously completed it or have an equivalent or higher qualification, as determined by ECALA.

Contracted instructors, facilitators, tutors, and volunteers who work with adult foundational learners must be highly familiar with the central themes of IAFL, including adult learning principles and the practical application of the CALP Policy.

https://open.alberta.ca/publications/community-adult-learning-program-policy-manualAll staff responsible for the oversight or delivery of family literacy programs, including contracted facilitators, instructors, and volunteers, must complete CALP Essentials for Family Literacy Programs within the grant term, preferably before the program starts.

Grant recipients must respond to surveys from Advanced Education and ECALA PD surveys. Government and ECALA use survey data to evaluate the impact of professional development investments and make improvements to enhance quality and effectiveness.

F. Grant Timeline and Payment Schedule

Pre-Grant Term

- October 2026: Application documents released
- December 11, 2026: Application Deadline
- Mid to late June 2027: Notification of funding decisions

2027-2028 Funding Year

- Mid-Late July 2027: Allocation of **60% annual advance** available
- Mid February 2028: Allocation of **30% interim payment** available by request
- March 2028: Agency Update Due (plan for 2028-2029 funding year)
- Friday, July 7, 2028: Annual Report Due and **remaining 10% allocation** available if all reporting requirements are met

Agency Updates and Annual Reports will be due in Spring/Summer 2029 & 2030. Exact dates will be announced.

G. Application Scoring Rubric

All applications are evaluated by an Application Review Committee (ARC) made up of experts in the funding category. Each Category Application receives a score out of 30:

Part	What is scored	Points
Part 1: Agency Application	Once per agency	18
Part 2: Category Application and Financial Template	Each category applied for	12
	Total for each Category Application	**30**

An agency applying in more than one category receives the same Part 1 score on each of its Category Applications.

Completeness check

Before applications go to the ARC, ECALA staff confirm the following. These items are not scored.

- All required forms submitted: Agency Application, Category Application(s), Financial Template, Staff Table, signed Declaration and Authorization
- Required attachments uploaded: insurance certificate, Proof of Filing, audited financial statements, bylaws, Board list (if different from Proof of Filing)
- Agency is located in Edmonton and incorporated for at least two years under an eligible Alberta statute (or has an ECALA-approved Legal Host)
- Learning opportunities are non-credit, part-time (not more than 20 hours per week) and delivered in Edmonton
- Security screening confirmed (Agency Application A2) and PD survey agreement checked (A4)
- Total request on the Agency Application matches the Financial Template
- Community Capacity Building applicants contacted ECALA before applying

How reviewers score

Reviewers score each criterion from 0 to 3: **3 = Strong, 2 = Meets expectations, 1 = Limited, 0 = Not evident**. Half points (2.5, 1.5, 0.5) may be given when an application falls between two levels. Reviewers may draw on evidence from anywhere in the application package.

Part 1: Agency Application (18 points)

Scored once per agency. The same Part 1 score is used for each of the agency's Category Applications.

Criterion	What reviewers look for	Where to look
1.1 Agency foundations	A safe and welcoming learning environment, a mission and strategic direction that support foundational learning, and support for staff professional development (including IAFL).	Agency Application A1–A4; Strategic Directions document; Staff Table
1.2 Needs assessment	Evidence that the learning needs are real and currently unmet in Edmonton, using both outside research and the agency's own data.	Agency Application B1, B2, B3
1.3 Reaching and supporting learners	How the agency confirms learners are adult foundational learners before enrolling, and how it reduces financial and social barriers.	Agency Application B4, B5
1.4 Learner-centred practice	How instructors, facilitators and tutors plan for each learner's goals and needs and adjust as those change, using adult learning principles.	Agency Application B6
1.5 Measurement and evaluation	Tools and methods for collecting each measure in the OME Table and demographic data, and how instructors are supported to collect it consistently.	Agency Application C1, C2; OME Table indicators
1.6 Connected communities	How the agency maps, shares and keeps track of services in Edmonton and connects learners to them, including next steps in learning or employment.	Agency Application D1 (D2 may add context)
		Part 1 total: 18 points

Part 2: Category Application and Financial Template (12 points)

Scored separately for each Category Application, by the Application Review Committee for that category.

Criterion	What reviewers look for	Where to look
2.1 Need and category fit	The specific need each learning opportunity addresses, its link to the needs assessment, whether it duplicates what is already available in Edmonton, and whether it fits the category at a foundational level.	Category Application D2, E2; Guidelines C.1 Category Table
2.2 Learning opportunity design	Whether the outline and sample lesson or tutoring plan are organized, suit the mode of delivery (course, learning activity, family literacy, tutoring), and reflect adult learning principles.	Category Application D5, E4; attached outline and sample lesson plan
2.3 Delivery and staffing	Whether schedule, location and format work for the intended learners, the reasons for any online delivery, learner-friendly descriptions, instructor qualifications, and tutor training.	Category Application D (days, times, location), D3, D4, E3, C1, E5; Staff Table
2.4 Budget	Whether the budget matches the planned hours, learners and staffing, costs are reasonable, every line has a calculation, totals match, and operations are 20% or less.	Financial Template category sheet; Category Application A, B2

Criterion	What reviewers look for	Where to look
		Part 2 total: 12 points

Other considerations in funding decisions

Scores guide the ARC's recommendations. Allocations also take into account:

- Literacy and Foundational Learning categories are the highest priority for funding.
- Community Capacity Building is limited to a maximum of 15% of ECALA allocations.
- ECALA may allocate no more than 15% of the CALP Grant to any one agency.
- Allocations depend on available funds and on Alberta Advanced Education's approval of ECALA's funding.