

New questions and answers have been added to this document since the August 29 Special Deputy Minister's Bulletin. Please see pp. 2-4 for details.

What is the purpose of the fund?

- Government recognizes that British Columbians have been struggling with rising food costs, and costs for a range of goods and services.
- One-time funding of \$60.0 million will go to public school districts and \$3.8 million to independent schools to directly support parents and guardians of K–12 students with costs associated with going back to school that they may be struggling to pay and to improve food security.
- The aim is to make life more affordable for families who are temporarily facing financial challenges and need temporary assistance with the current costs of school supplies, education-related fees, and dealing with food insecurity that impact children's learning.

Who qualifies for this funding?

- School districts already have existing hardship policies, and the fund was created with the aim of working within those policies.
- The Ministry expects the fund will be provided in as flexible, private, and stigma-free manner as possible. In some cases, school districts may need to update their hardship policies accordingly.
- The decision to provide supports through this fund will be made at the local level, reflecting the knowledge that teachers, counsellors, and principals have of their student population and their families.

How do I access this funding?

- School districts are very different with distinct geographies, local communities, and student populations.
- School districts will administer the fund in a manner that best reflects those operational realities, and consult with Indigenous Rightsholders, District Parent Advisory Councils (DPACs), and other equity deserving groups to ensure their hardship process is best able to support students, guardians, and parents.
- The Ministry expects that the funding will be provided in as flexible, private, and stigma-free manner as possible. In many cases, local teachers, principals, and staff will be aware of students and families who may have need and support them accordingly.
- School districts have existing hardship policies and procedures, and we expect that those be utilized where possible.

What can this money be used for?

The funding can be used to:

- Improve students' access to nutritional food / meals, before, during and after the school day; and/or
- Directly off-set costs to parents, guardians, and students, such as school supplies or other cost pressures they are facing using existing mechanisms such as hardship policies.

Spending on Food Security:

- Districts are encouraged to expand their existing food and meal programs to serve more students and funding can be spent to:
 - Increase nutritional opportunities for students throughout the day;
 - Provide nutritional food and meal support to additional students; and
 - Provide additional food and meal supports to students with dependent children where appropriate.

Spending on Family Assistance:

- Spending by the district must directly offset costs for parents, guardians, and students and be **additional** to any planned or budgeted spending for hardship or family supports and to use existing processes where possible.
- Funding use includes, but is not limited to:
 - Goods:
 - Providing basic school supplies that might otherwise be purchased by parents, guardians, and students (e.g., pens, paper); and
 - Supporting with clothing/footwear required for school sports or other school activities.
 - Fees
 - Waiving education-related fees (e.g., additional supplies for shop, culinary and craft classes, workbooks, camps, field trips, relevant cultural events, other student society meetings including those related to equity, diversity, and inclusion, and instrument and equipment fees or other fees charged by school districts); and
 - Fees for school sports and other school activities.

Why are you giving the funding to school districts?

- School districts are already meeting a variety of food security needs in local areas for their local student populations and have existing hardship policies and processes to support families in need potentially facing financial hardship.
- School staff are often connected with those students and families who may need extra support. School districts, schools, local teachers, and staff are best positioned to ensure that supports reach those students most in need within a process that reduces stigma.
- As a result, this is a fast, effective means to meet a range of needs within the time frame.

Why didn't you give parents the money directly?

- The Ministry has no way of determining which students and families are facing financial hardship and so who should be receiving support.
- This fund provides a means of reaching diverse populations needing financial support with the costs of returning to school that may otherwise be missed. It allows for a more targeted approach to reach those students most in need.

Supplemental Questions and Answers - September 2, 2022

Is it a special purpose fund?

- Yes, this is a special purpose grant issued under Section 115.1(a) of the *School Act* and should be treated as a Special Purpose Fund on your financial statements.

When will we know how much we get?

- The Ministry has calculated the amounts and the [online tables](#) with all the special grants was updated on Monday, August 29, 2022.

What strings are attached to the funding?

- The instructions published in the [Deputy Minister's Special Update](#) of Monday August 29, 2022, are clear about the requirements and criteria for the funding.
- If you have specific questions that you need answered, please feel free to send them to us and we will answer them and send out an updated document to address those questions.

When will we get a copy of the reporting tool?

- The Ministry will provide the reporting tool to school districts as soon as possible so it will be easier for staff to gather the necessary information as the funding is used. In the meantime, you can find the high-level reporting requirements in the instructions in Monday's Deputy Minister's Special Update.
- School districts will be required to return completed reports to the Ministry in July 2023.
- A high-level interim report will be required in January 2023.

Can the funding be used over multiple years? For example, if we have \$800,000, can we plan to spend \$200,000 per year on lunches for the next four years?

- No, this is one-time funding for the 2022/23 fiscal year to directly support parents and guardians of K-12 students with costs associated with going back to school that they may be struggling to pay and to improve food security.
- Funding should all be used by June 30, 2023.

How will we be able to sustain these supports in subsequent years?

- This is one-time funding, recognizing the historic levels of inflation across the world.
- Inflation in Canada as a whole has started to drop, and no-one is able to foresee what the needs will be in a year's time.

Can salaries be paid for under this funding? For example, staff to organize and provide food services (food bags etc.)?

- The intent is to directly support students, parents, and guardians with their needs to the greatest extent possible.
- Where there is additional staff required, for instance, kitchen staff to directly make and prepare the additional food and meals, this would be reasonable.
- However, the intent is not to allow for administrative overhead. For instance, the school district using the fund to pay for the reporting costs, HR costs, costs of paperwork, additional insurance, the consultation, engagement costs, etc.

Can capital (fridges) or other equipment be purchased with this funding?

- Where the funding is being spent on enhancing food security, the intent of the funding is that it should be used to expand existing processes and practices where it can have the most impact, rather than in purchasing capital items and equipment.
- However, if a school district can justify that it needs to purchase equipment to allow food programs to be delivered at a school, then this is permissible.

Can we buy computers or provide funds for internet service with this fund?

- As per the previous question, the intent is to expand existing processes and practices at the *school level* where they can have the most impact rather than in purchasing capital items and equipment.

Can we offset school bus fees with this funding?

- School districts should not be using the Student and Family Affordability Fund for this purpose.
- School districts should already have processes in place to support students with transportation costs and should use these avenues to support students with bus fees that the districts are choosing to charge.

Can we pay fees for students to attend community sports and after-school activities?

- The funding is intended to support school-related activities and sports only. Providing support for a student to participate on the school soccer team, for example, is permitted, but paying fees to play on a community soccer team is not.

What about funding for other school district cost pressures, such as the price of fuel for transportation, the Employment Standards Act leave provisions, and the costs related to COVID-19?

- The Ministry is aware of these cost pressures and is monitoring them—at this time government wanted to offset costs for parents, guardians, and families and to enhance food security for students and their families.
- Government recognizes that school districts and schools are uniquely positioned to support the Student and Family Affordability Fund because of the local knowledge they have and the relationships that staff have with students and families.

Could the school district buy gift cards or provide some funding to a local food program via a third party to increase the amount of food provided to families with students in the school district?

- The Ministry recognizes that there is a significant range of supports, services, and providers across the province. Different places, families, and students may require different means to access and receive the necessary support.
- This fund is intended to provide a means of reaching diverse populations needing financial support with the costs of returning to school that may otherwise be missed. It allows for a more targeted approach to reach those students most in need.
- The Ministry encourages school districts to administer the fund in a manner that best reflects those operational realities, and to engage with Indigenous rightsholders, District Parent Advisory Councils (DPACs), and other equity-deserving groups to ensure that school districts can find a range of means that will be effective for local students, families, and communities.
- This may mean a gift card in some cases, innovative new partnerships with local food providers or other community agencies in others, or expanding programs that may already be provided in the local school.

Who do I contact if I have more questions?

- Please contact Tim Jah, Director of Funding and Allocation, at Tim.Jah@gov.bc.ca