



Early  
Childhood  
Education Lab

# Peer Support Cohort for ECE Directors

New Brunswick Anglophone Team Prototype  
Atlantic Canada ECE Lab Round 2



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## Introduction

As part of the second round of the ECE lab, the New Brunswick Anglophone team focused on addressing the limited opportunities and spaces for directors to meet, connect and support one another. At the time, there was no provincial ECE sector association in the province, and operators often relied on informal relationships with one another to learn more about how to get updates and navigate changes in the sector.

### Director's Peer Support Cohort

**Are you an owner, operator, director or supervisor of an ELCC in New Brunswick?**

- ✓ Do you work in the region of the **Anglophone South** school district?
- ✓ Do you want an opportunity to **meet other directors** working in the sector?
- ✓ Are you looking for **knowledge to improve** your center?




### Join the Director's Peer Support Cohort

This cohort will bring together directors who want to meet one another and share their experiences of managing Early Learning and Childcare Centres in New Brunswick.

It will be a **safe space** to share challenges, successes and to feel connected to one another. Most importantly, it acts as a space **where directors can support each other.**

There will be a total of **six sessions**, which will be managed by a **trained facilitator**, according to an **agenda** set by the attendees. The conversation will be **solution-oriented.**

The first meeting will take place in the ECE Living Lab at NBCC's Saint John campus



### Next steps

- Registration is open until May 15, 2023
- The introductory meeting will take place in-person on May 25
- The following meetings will take place monthly and in-person, at a time that best suits the needs of the participants
- Participation is free, but space is limited, so please register below only if you can attend all six sessions

### To register, complete [this form.](#)

### Timeline\*

Sessions will take place on weekdays in the evenings from 6pm - 9pm

*\*dates will be flexible to the needs of the group as necessary*

May 25th	Oct 26th
June 29th	Dec 7th,
Sept 28th	Jan 25th, 2024

If you have any questions, please reach out to [amanda@noulab.org](mailto:amanda@noulab.org)

This initiative is a prototype of the ECE Lab. More information on the Lab and prototyping process is available [on the website at this link.](#)




Image: Flyer design to recruit directors to the cohort.

## When to use this prototype

### Use this prototype pack if you want to:

- Promote relationship-building between directors in a given region.
- Create a safe space for directors to share their experiences and learn from one another to improve their leadership capabilities.
- Facilitate peer-to-peer support between directors with varying levels of experience.
- Enable directors to discuss the latest issues affecting the sector and brainstorm steps for collective action.

[Example: Prototype Learning Goals](#) ↗



# How To Prototype a Peer Support Cohort for Leaders

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## Step 0 Read the Short Report about this prototype in the ECE Lab

[Read the Short Report ↗](#)

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## Step 1 Recruit facilitator and set meeting schedules

- **Recruit a facilitator** - ideally someone from outside of the sector. As it may be difficult to find a volunteer to take on this role, finding funding for this position is strongly recommended. Potential funding sources can come from the Government Department responsible for early childhood education or non-profit organisations working in education.

[Example facilitator RfP ↗](#)

- **Set a schedule for the meetings** - including defining a venue for the first meeting. This includes defining the frequency and duration of the meetings, and whether they take place during evenings or weekends. This schedule should be created with flexibility in mind to further define it with participants. For our prototype, the meetings took place in the evenings, and we included dinner and refreshments to help host directors coming straight from their centres to the meeting.

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## Step 2 Identify and recruit directors

- **Define the geographic scope of the cohort.** Keeping the scope local will shorten the distances directors need to travel to meet, and allow for more context-driven discussions. For our prototype, the geographic scope was the administrative school district, which covered both urban and rural centres.
- **Promote the cohort through trusted communication channels.** This provides credibility to the initiative as the first steps in the trust-building process. For our prototype, we shared the recruitment materials (a detailed brochure) through the school district manager.
- **Share a link to a sign up sheet.** This can be done through any free online webforms, such as Google Forms. The sign up sheet should ask for participants':
  - Name of participant and name of centre
  - Contact information (email and phone number)
  - Type of centre (if the initiative is focused on specific types of centres, such as home centres, full time centres, after-school programs, etc.)
  - What they would like to get out of the cohort
  - If they are willing to host a meeting at their centre

[Example registration form ↗](#)



- **Reach out to registered participants by phone or email.** Confirm their participation in the cohort meetings, and share the details of the schedule and first meetings. Carry out a pre-prototype interview to learn about participants' needs and expectations, in order to set the agenda of the meetings.

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### Step 3 **Roll out the meetings**

- **The first meeting is an opportunity to break the ice,** allow participants to get to know each other and set expectations. You will find that while the initial atmosphere may be uncertain, directors will get into the groove of discussion quite easily with the help of the facilitator.
- **Confirm the meeting schedule, time and locations** during the first meeting to ensure that it is comfortable for most participants. As directors to volunteer their centres as a meeting space and an opportunity for centre visits.
- **Agree on a communication mechanism** to stay in touch between meetings, such as a Facebook group, WhatsApp group chat, or any other method that is suitable for participants.

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### Step 4 **Analyze the impact of the cohort**

- **Conduct post-prototype surveys** once the meetings are complete, to gauge the impact of the cohort, and collect recommendations to improve the process.
- **Directors will continue to organise and meet** with one another if the cohort is successful, and continue to stay in touch with the network they have created.



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## Pre and Post Interview Question Samples

### Pre-interview questions:

1. To start, can you tell me about your previous experience of connecting to other directors?
2. Have you taken part in previous initiatives such as Director to Director, or informal meetings with directors in your region?
3. Have you ever reached out to other directors to ask questions or learn more about what is happening in the sector?
4. What motivated you to register for the Directors Peer Support Cohort?
5. What do you hope to gain from the experience?
6. From your perspective, what are the biggest challenges you face in meeting and connecting to other directors?
7. Can you tell me briefly about your centre and staff? Are there aspects of running your centre that you would like to share and discuss with other directors?
8. How do you currently experience trying to balance admin and supporting staff with pedagogical practice? (follow up to go deeper on challenges etc)
9. What impact are you hoping this prototype will have on your work?

### Post-interview questions:

1. Did you attend both sessions? If not, why not?
2. Did the sessions meet your expectations? If not, why?
3. What did you talk about with other directors? Is there anything you wanted to talk about that you couldn't?
4. Prompt: Discussing challenges, learning about successes or solutions)
5. Did you discuss the topics that you wanted? Is there anything that is missing?
6. Topics to discuss in upcoming sessions?
7. Has this prototype allowed you to create more time and capacity to balance your admin and pedagogical leadership workload?
8. What impact, if any, has this prototype had on your work?
9. (Prompts: feeling connected to other operators, job satisfaction, motivation, learning about others' success)
10. How have you been in touch with other directors since the session? If not, why?
11. Have you joined the Facebook group? If not, why?