


Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) B.C. Temporary Pandemic Pay Program October 2020

*Note this is a general FAQ for the TPP program. Ministry funders and employers' associations may have more specific QAs available.

Eligible Employees

- 1. What criteria need to be met in order to be eligible for Temporary Pandemic Pay?**
 - Employees who worked straight-time hours at any point during the 16-week period starting on March 15, 2020 and ending July 4, 2020.
 - Employees who work in an eligible sector, workplace and role that traditionally deliver in-person, front-line care in health, social services and corrections where social distancing was challenging (link: www.gov.bc.ca/pandemicpay), including those that may have had to transition from an on-site workplace to a remote format.
- 2. Does the employee have to work full-time during this period to qualify?**
 - No, all employees, irrespective, of whether they worked full-time, part-time, casual, or temporary are eligible if they meet the criteria outlined in question one.
 - This includes working during statutory holidays.
- 3. Do overtime hours worked on a statutory holiday count as straight-time?**
 - Yes, but for hours worked only, not at a premium. For example, 8 hours on a Sunday counts as 8 hours only, not time and a half.
- 4.  Do overtime hours worked by employees count as straight-time?**
 - “Straight-time” was used as a way to convey that the TPP was a flat-rate, and would not be grossed up when working overtime or holidays.
- 5. What about employees who are “on-call” – are they eligible to receive pandemic pay for those hours?**
 - No. On-call hours of availability are not considered straight-time hours worked for the purpose of the temporary pandemic pay program.
- 6. Is this funding only for unionized employees?**
 - Bargaining unit and bargaining unit equivalent employees are both eligible for the pandemic pay provided they work in a [qualifying role](#).
- 7. What if an employee was eligible for more than one top-up program, do they still get temporary pandemic pay as well a top-up like the BC Housing Safe Staffing program?**
 - An employee can be eligible for more than one top-up program, but **provincially funded** top-up payments cannot be stacked — they may, however, be paid in relation

to different periods of time. For example, temporary pandemic pay could be payable for hours worked from March 15 to 31, and June 1 to July 4 while the BC Housing Safe Staffing pay could be payable for hours worked from April 1 to April 30.

8. Do management positions in the organization qualify?

- No, management and executive positions within the organization are not eligible for the temporary pandemic pay. As job titles and duties vary between organizations refer to the Manager Factsheet from the Employment Standards [website](#) to see if managerial staff fit the definition or not. If they fit the definition, then they are ineligible for TPP.

9. Are programs that transitioned primarily to virtual or remote service delivery models eligible for pandemic pay?

- Yes, front-line employees are eligible for pandemic pay irrespective if they were working remotely or on-site at their usual workplace.

10. Can service providers or employers use the TPP funding to reimburse top-up pay that was either already paid or previously guaranteed to employees prior to the announcement of the B.C. Temporary Pandemic Pay program on May 7, 2020?

- No. Service providers and employers that made decisions to pay a top-up to employees ***should not*** use the TPP funding to reimburse their budgets.
- The Ministry of Finance expects eligible employees to receive their TPP top-up from those funds provided, and reserves the right to audit service providers and employers that use the funding to do otherwise.

11. Are contracted service providers eligible?

- Yes, non-management employees of contracted providers who deliver direct services or related support services are eligible for the pandemic pay.
- Fee-for-service providers and their direct employees are not eligible, for example, medical office staff paid by physicians.
- For eligible subcontractors, the lead contractor should submit information pertaining to their staff hours eligible for pandemic pay, on their behalf. It is a responsibility of lead contractor to ensure that submitted hours by subcontractors meet all of the eligibility criteria requirements.

12.  Are subcontractors' staff eligible for TPP?

- Yes, if they meet the eligibility criteria and are not considered “fee-for-service” providers.
- Subcontractors that deliver a full range of services are eligible.
- Lead contractors will be responsible for collecting and submitting details on eligible employees and hours on behalf of their approved subcontractors.
- Lead contractors are also responsible for forwarding the accurately calculated

portion of the subcontractor's TPP funding to the sub-contractor for them to distribute to employees. The parties must resolve any issues on this process with each other.

13. Are employers funded from different sources still eligible?

- Yes, however, only to the extent of the provincial funding percentage. For example, if an employer is funded 50% from provincial funding and 50% from other sources (e.g. federal or municipal funding, etc.) an employee will be eligible to claim only the 50% provincially funded hours.
- For care facilities that receive different sources, the pandemic pay will be proportionate to the funding the employer receives from the provincial government. Co-payments made by residents of provincially funded beds will be considered provincial government funding for the purposes of calculating TPP funding for the \$4 per hour benefit.

14. What about private sector businesses, are they eligible? Are there any special circumstances where they would be eligible?

- No. Standalone private sector businesses, such as retail business or pharmacies, as well as privately funded facilities or medical offices are not eligible.
- Subcontractors that provide a service, such as security, are eligible if they are contracting that service to a provincially funded employer.

15. How was the eligibility for this program determined?

- Temporary pandemic pay is a cost-shared program with the federal government with a finite amount of funding available. The eligibility criteria were determined based on an assessment of provincially funded services that are listed at www.gov.bc.ca/pandemicpay. Within the available federal funding, B.C. did seek to extend eligibility to the most employees possible in the health, corrections and social services sectors.

16. Why aren't childcare employees eligible for the TPP program funding?

- B.C. government recognizes that not all employees who have been working during this time will be eligible for this temporary pay, however, given the limited funding of this cost-shared federal program, efforts have been made to maximize the benefit for the most employees possible.
- On June 16, 2020, the province announced that the Temporary Emergency Funding Program (TEF) for licensed childcare centres is being extended until August 31, 2020. To ensure all licensed providers continue to be supported, TEF will be available for both open and closed centres.
- Since April 2020, the Province has invested more than \$151 million to support over 4,500 childcare centres. As B.C. continues to open its doors, there will be an even greater need for childcare to help parents get back to work and help restart of B.C.'s economy. To ensure all licensed childcare providers can return to regular operations in the future, Government has been providing TEF to:
 - Help open facilities to remain operational even with reduced enrolments, and

- assist temporarily closed facilities to cover costs like rent, mortgage or lease payments.

17. Why aren't home share providers eligible for the TPP program funding?


- We appreciate the dedication and hard work of home sharing providers during this challenging time. However, home sharing providers do not qualify to receive TPP funding as they are considered fee-for-service providers and are ineligible.
- Government has provided temporary emergency funding to support CLBC funded residential services including home sharing service providers. All home sharing providers impacted by the pandemic were eligible to receive this support.
- Home sharing providers who have had their community or CLBC funded supports disrupted were eligible to receive this help. A significant portion of the emergency funding was distributed to contracted home sharing providers that have taken on additional responsibility during the pandemic.

NEW

18. If I can't claim TPP for employees funded by provincial Gaming Grants why do I have to include it in the organization's estimated funding on the claim form?

- Programs or employees funded solely through Gaming Grants are not eligible under the TPP program.
- To validate the claim, the organization's total estimated funding from all sources for the current fiscal year is required, including provincial and non-provincial sources. This amount should match to the total estimated income/revenues for the current fiscal year.
- This means funding received for Gaming Grants should be included in the total organization funding box of your claim or the validation process will be delayed.

Eligible Time

19.  An employee has resigned or retired (left) the organization during or after the 16-week period March 15 to July 4, 2020. Is the service provider/agency/employer still required to pay the employee the pandemic pay?

- Yes, on pro-rated basis. The pandemic pay only applies to straight-time hours worked during that period.
- Service providers/ employers must make best efforts to provide the funds to the former employee and if they are not able to do so, they must return those funds to the Ministry of Finance as soon as possible or by January 31, 2021 to remain in compliance.
- Terminated employees are not eligible for the pandemic pay.



20. What about employees hired after March 15, 2020?

- These employees can still receive pandemic pay for the straight-time hours worked during the applicable time period if they meet all other eligibility criteria.

21. Is the time spent on COVID-19 leave or required isolation due to possible COVID-19 exposure eligible for the pandemic pay?

- No, any kind of leave (e.g. sick leave, parental leave, vacation, short/long-term disability etc.) including one caused by COVID-19 is not eligible for the pandemic pay.

22. Does eligible time include the time spent on training?

- Training may qualify if it is directly related to front-line work (i.e., on the job shadowing).
- Online and off-site training does not qualify.

23. How many hours do I claim for employees that work live-in or overnight schedules?

- Employees working these shifts are not expected to work the full hours that they are in attendance at a client's location (eg. 24 hours (live-in) or 12 hours (overnight)). They are typically paid based on a calculation of hours the employee is expected to work in the shift, and the pandemic pay should be calculated on the same basis. For example, a live-in employee may be paid for 13 hours for each 24-hour live-in period, and the 13 hours would thus be used for the calculation instead of the full 24 hours.

Eligible Job Classifications

24. Where can I find the eligible roles?

- Eligible sectors, workplaces and roles are listed at www.gov.bc.ca/pandemicpay.

Temporary Pandemic Pay and Processing

25. How will service providers/employers receive the pandemic pay funding?

- Once the claim form has been validated, the Ministry of Finance will issue the funding to the service provider/ employer who will then be responsible for distributing it to each of their eligible employees as a lump sum on a regular paycheque.

- Lead contractors will have to ensure they accurately disburse the funding to the subcontractors included on their claim.
- If you normally receive a notification of funds being deposited, then you will get that, but the program will not specifically notify employers.

26. Why does the form ask for the organizational funding? What is required?

- To validate the claim, the organization's total estimated funding from all sources for the current fiscal year is required, including provincial and non-provincial sources. This amount should match to the total estimated income/revenues for the current fiscal year.

27. How will the pandemic pay be paid out to employees?

- Eligible front-line workers can expect to receive a lump-sum payment equivalent to about \$4 per hour for straight-time hours worked anytime over a 16-week period, starting on March 15, 2020 on regular paycheque from their employer.
- For example: \$150 per week = \$4 x 37.5 hours or \$2,400 for 16 weeks.

28. How will employee issues about eligibility and payment be resolved?

- Service providers/agencies/employers will be responsible for resolving any issues about the pandemic pay, such as the amount paid or hours worked towards the pay. There is no dispute resolution body beyond the employee's direct employer.

29. Is the pandemic pay taxable?

- Yes, the pandemic pay is taxable.

30. How does the pandemic pay affect base salary, deductions, pension and benefits or MERCs (Mandatory Employment Related Costs)?

- It is not part of base salary and does not impact the benefits that employees are otherwise entitled to receive from their employer.
- Pandemic pay is taxable, is subject to the payroll deductions that would otherwise apply to additional lump-sum compensation (Income Tax, Canada Pension Plan and Employment Insurance) and is subject to employer payroll expenses (Employer Health Tax, Worksafe BC and employer's portion of Canada Pension Plan and Employment Insurance).
- If the employer participates in the Municipal Pension Plan or the Public Service Pension Plan, the lump-sum payment does not impact pension contributions. If the employer participates in other pension plans, please consult your plan provider.



31. Why can't employees get their lump-sum on a separate cheque so that they pay less tax?

- Payroll departments do not issue separate paycheques for adds-to-pay (overtime, substitution pay, premiums, etc.) or retroactive lump sum adjustments such as pandemic pay.
- The software used to calculate payroll and taxation uses taxation methods and formulas approved by the Canada Revenue Agency. These formulas cover federal income tax, provincial income tax, contributions to the Canada Pension Plan and premiums for the Employment Insurance program. Neither the employer nor payroll alters these formulas in any way.
- When TPP recipients file their taxes next year, their earnings from all sources will be reviewed by the Canada Revenue Agency and adjustments are made as necessary.

32. Do eligible employees who went on maternity leave or EI after July 4th need to claim the TPP as income for tax purposes?

- The pandemic pay is taxable and should be claimed as regular income.

33. Do eligible employees accrue benefits (e.g. vacation pay) on the lump sum payment for pandemic pay?

- No. As the payment is not part of employees' wages, it has no impact on the accrual of benefits such as sick leave and vacation entitlements, nor does it factor into health benefits calculations.

34. Does the TPP program have an end date or deadline for submissions?

- Yes. Submissions will be accepted until October 31, 2020 and submissions received after that date may not be processed.
- Funding may continue to be issued until December 31, 2020 as submissions received before the deadline will continue to be processed.

35. Does the TPP program impact an employee's income tax bracket?

- TPP is subject to income tax. Income tax brackets are determined based on the individual's taxable income for the calendar year. Income tax brackets are not impacted by the decision to pay TPP separately or add it to a regular paycheque. TPP could bump an individual to a higher tax bracket, but only in the scenario where that individual was close to the bracket threshold and would have otherwise been in the lower tax bracket.
- TPP will be reflected as part of an employees pay and does not need to be treated in any special way for tax purposes (i.e. it will be captured under income box 14 on their T4).

36.  How long will I have to wait for payment once I submit my claim?

- Once your completed claim has been submitted to bcpandemicpayclaim@sp2016.sp.gov.bc.ca a review process will begin followed by validation.
- Validation time may be affected when a claim is incomplete or requires further information. Once your claim has been validated, it will be sent to the Ministry of Finance for payment which typically takes 7–10 business days.
- We cannot provide the status of your claim. We appreciate your patience in this and understand that there is significant pressure to pay eligible employees.
- Those performing the review and validation are processing as fast as they can.

NEW Payroll Expenses and Processing

37. Will the employer-paid payroll expenses be funded?

- Yes, funding will be provided to offset employer payroll expenses, including the Employer Health Tax, WorkSafe BC, Canada Pension Plan and Employment Insurance.
- The funding will be based on 10.1% of the eligible TPP claim value.

38. What is the process to receive the payroll expenses?

- The funding to offset payroll expenses will be calculated by the Province based on the eligible TPP claim value. Employers should not add these costs to their TPP claim.
- Any claims that include these employer costs may be returned for revision, which may delay the payout.
- If you have already submitted a claim that includes these employer costs, and they are clearly identified in the claim, the Province will endeavor to correct the eligible claim amount and proceed to issue the payment.
- Do not submit a new claim unless you are specifically asked to do so.

39. Can I negotiate my payroll costs or indicate how much our organization wants to receive?

- No. The funding to offset payroll costs is based on a set 10.1% that will be applied uniformly by the Province across the eligible claims.
- For those who have submitted a TPP claim but have not yet receive the TPP funding, the Province will calculate the employer payroll cost offset and include that amount with the eligible TPP claim payment.

40. How were the payroll costs for my organization calculated?

- The payroll cost offset is based on a uniform 10.1% that will be applied to all eligible claim amounts.
- Actual employer payroll costs will vary based on the size of your respective payrolls and the degree to which your employee salaries and wages fall below maximum taxable thresholds for CPP and EI.
- An accurate assessment of actual incremental costs due to TPP would not be possible until the close of the 2020 tax year.
- As such, the payroll cost offset rate was set reasonably high but also at a rate that could be accommodated within the overall available funding for the TPP program.

41. How will it be paid?

- Providers will receive one payment either by cheque or direct deposit (however the vendor normally receives payment) that includes the itemized top-up for employees and the payroll cost offset.
- Lead contractors are responsible for ensuring their subcontractors receive the accurate amounts for both.

42. Can I use the payroll funding to provide a TPP top-up to employees that were not eligible to receive it?

- No. Only eligible employees can receive the TPP top-up.



Final Details

43. Are there plans to extend or expand the B.C. TPP program?

- No. While the Province has many initiatives in response to the global pandemic, there are no plans to increase the length of the program or change the eligibility criteria in any way.

44. Not all my staff in one workplace were eligible for the top-up, what should I tell them?

- Temporary pandemic pay is a cost-shared program with the federal government with a finite amount of funding available.
- The eligibility criteria were determined based on an assessment of provincially funded services that are listed at www.gov.bc.ca/pandemicpay.
- We recognize this will mean not all employees who have been working during this time will be eligible.
- Unfortunately, not all programs can be available to everyone – there has to be criteria for eligibility and given the limited funding parameters of this cost-shared federal program, government did its best to maximize the benefit to the most employees possible in health, social services and corrections.

- We know there are many other critical workers providing supports across our province and we are pleased to see many of those employers stepping up to provide wage supports.
- Employers that receive the funding are responsible for addressing any issues arising from employees. For example, the amount of pandemic pay or the hours that were worked in the 16-week period.

45. My employee has expressed concern over the amount of top-up and wants to understand how it was determined and why it is taking so long to get – how should it be explained?

Determining amounts:	<p>Providers/employers had to submit a claim that did not list any individual employee names which is why the employer/provides is responsible for answering your questions about the amounts. I had to enter the total number of employees/subcontractor employees eligible based on who was working during the March 15 to-July 4, 2020 time frame.</p> <p>Claim forms did not include personal employee information, rather the total number of employees based on eligible, provincially funded program(s) and the total number of hours worked by all these employees during the period were listed.</p> <p>The excel claim form template calculated these amounts automatically either as \$4 per straight-time hours <i>worked</i> or pro-rated based on the provincially funded portion of the service. Overtime is eligible but not the premium.</p>
Process:	<p>Once an employer completes a claim, it is submitted for a review process, followed by the validation. Validation is not connected to individual employees – there are no names included. The processing time may be affected if a claim is incomplete or requires further information to be accurate. Once the claim has been validated, it will be sent to the Ministry of Finance for payment which typically takes 7-10 business days.</p>

46. Where can employers remit this unused TPP funding properly?

- Refund cheques are to be made payable to the Minister of Finance and remitted to the following address by January 31, 2021:
 B.C. Temporary Pandemic Pay Program - Remittance
 C/O Corporate Financial Services
 PO Box 9415 STN PROV GOVT
 Victoria B.C. V8W 9V1