Digital Health Innovation Fund
Competition II

Introduction

I. Background

The Digital Health and Discovery Platform (DHDP) takes a pan-Canadian approach, leveraging a collaborative network of key experts and partners, to deliver a robust and secure infrastructure for data sharing coupled with a world-leading data and technology framework.

Funded through the Government of Canada's Strategic Response Fund (SRF, formerly SIF), administered by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), and led by the Terry Fox Research Institute (TFRI), the Digital Health & Discovery Platform (DHDP) aims to improve health outcomes for Canadians by bringing together industry leaders, health researchers, and AI and data scientists to accelerate medical breakthroughs and advance precision medicine.

With rapid advancements in AI in recent years, there continues to be a pressing need for access to more rich patient data to train, validate, and implement reliable and trustworthy AI models in real-world settings.

The goal of the DHDP is to build and operate a scalable multi-use platform to digitally enable national and international collaboration to advance next-generation, state-of-the-art data governance principles (i.e., FAIR: Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) and technology (i.e., distributed machine learning, identity management, data governance technologies) to transform health research as a collaborative, economy-building ecosystem linking healthcare data with artificial intelligence to improve patient outcomes.

DHDP Data Ecosystem
• Fostering a **network effect** across DHDP members to break data-sharing barriers and drive impactful collaborations between private-sector industry and the public sector (e.g., academia). • Using OMOP, an international common data model, to standardize health data and support interoperability across datasets and disease areas, with extensions used where additional data types are required. • The DHDP's roadmap includes **multimodal data (EHR and EMR, clinical, genomic, and imaging)** to prioritize oncology, neurology, and other disease areas that benefit from these data types.

- Privacy-by-design through federated access to de-identified data that remains behind institutional firewalls and is protected under access controls set by data providers.

Platform Functionality

The Platform operates through a cloud orchestrator in a federated network of edge storage and computing. By adopting FAIR principles, DHDP improves the ways in which data is made accessible under governance structures, traced, and re-used for computational analysis.

User functionalities: Discover. Prepare. Analyze.

- Data discovery: querying fields, exploration of aggregate statistics, and data visualizations without raw data leaving the institution.
- Data policy management: custom access parameters and auditing capabilities for data stewards.
- Advanced analytics: privacy-preserving data science, machine learning, and federated workflows in healthcare.
- Privacy-Enhancing Technologies (PET): Federated Learning (FL) across decentralized nodes keeping sensitive patient data localized.

Note: The capabilities listed above, including policy management and auditing, federated learning, and access to imaging and genomic data, are planned for summer 2027 onboarding, subject to implementation readiness.

II. Platform: Capabilities, Progress, and Impact

DHDP is developing a secure, federated national platform that enables researchers, clinicians, and innovators to discover and analyze health data across institutions while keeping sensitive patient data at its source.

Platform Capabilities	Progress to Date	Long-Term Impact
Secure multimodal data integration National data discovery and access AI and federated analytics Privacy-preserving collaboration	5 Marathon of Hope Cancer Centres Network nodes supporting national collaboration 14 DHIF-supported projects Approximately 19 million patient records available	National AI-enabled precision medicine research Faster clinical and therapeutic discovery Improved patient outcomes

	Expanding infrastructure for secure multimodal data integration	Investment and research talent attraction

DHDP Digital Health Innovation Fund

I. Description

The DHDP is launching Competition II of the Digital Health Innovation Fund to support collaborative projects that advance adoption and practical use of the Platform and contribute to Canada's digital health research and innovation ecosystem.

Competition II is looking for projects that:

- address a clear research, innovation, clinical, health system, or commercialization opportunity;
- involve meaningful collaboration and strategic partnerships among Canadian small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), researchers, data providers, health organizations, or other partners;
- bring high-value datasets, tools, methods, or use cases into the DHDP ecosystem;
- make practical use of DHDP platform capabilities, supporting reusable workflows, scalability, and long-term platform adoption; and
- deliver measurable research, clinical, or commercial benefits for Canada.

While DHDP continues to prioritize oncology and neurology research programs and other data-rich disease areas, the platform is disease-agnostic. Applications in other health domains (e.g., cardiology, diabetes) will be considered where they align with DHDP goals and capabilities.

II. Funding Opportunity

Competition II represents approximately **$70 million** in total project costs, including DHIF contributions and project partner funding, over the remaining eligible program period. Funding is administered under the Government of Canada's Strategic Response Fund (SRF), managed by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), on a reimbursement basis.

It is anticipated that total project values will range from approximately $2 million to $20 million, depending on the proposed scope and objectives. This range is indicative only and does not establish a minimum or maximum project value.

- Reimbursement Formula: Funds are disbursed based on approved SRF-eligible supported costs at an agreed reimbursement ratio (typically 25%), determined on a project-by-project basis considering the proposed eligible budget, total eligible expenditures, and available funding.
- Stacking Limits: Eligible SRF funds may be combined with other federal, provincial, or municipal government assistance, provided that total government assistance, including DHIF contributions (typically 25%), does not exceed:
    - 75% of Eligible Supported Costs incurred by any Industry Collaborator; and
    - 100% of Eligible Supported Costs incurred by any Academic Collaborator.

DHDP will provide onboarding guidance, documentation, and tools for data readiness, OMOP mapping, and edge deployment. Data curation and mapping efforts should be planned as project activities.

III. Eligibility Criteria

This competition is open to all private-sector and public organizations (for example, academic, health and research institutions and their foundations, independently owned businesses or industries, multinational enterprises (MNEs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and granting agencies) from across Canada.

Minimum Eligible Project Team Requirements
Projects must include the following:

- Inclusion of Canadian Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs):
    - Project teams must include at least one (1) SME, with applicants strongly encouraged to include at least two (2) Canadian SMEs as part of their project team. For this purpose, SMEs are defined as organizations with fewer than 499 employees. Applications that include two or more SMEs will receive a higher score under the project team evaluation criterion. TFRI will make reasonable efforts to help applicants connect with eligible SMEs through matchmaking support.
- Inclusion of a Data Provider:
    - Projects must include a Data Provider that:
        - Can make relevant de-identified health data accessible through the DHDP Platform;
        - Has the legal authority to authorize access to and use of the data for the project; and
        - Identifies IT and privacy contacts to support onboarding and data governance.

  - A Canadian SME may also serve as the Data Provider if it holds the necessary data and meets applicable data governance and platform requirements.
  - Data providers must be able to conduct project activities within Canada and align with proposed access governance.
- Federated Analysis/Learning Use Case
  - Projects must involve data collaboration solely or primarily through secure and/or federated analysis or learning on the DHDP Platform. Each use case must connect at least one data user site with at least one separate data-providing node, and ideally more than one.
  - Projects must outline a clear timeline for DHDP platform deployment and data ingestion, including a defined milestone and target date for running the project's first federated analysis job.
- DHDP Network Membership:
  - Applicants not currently members of the DHDP Network must obtain Network Membership prior to the execution of funding agreements. The membership process will be integrated into the application process. Applicants may also visit Joining the DHDP Network for more information or to complete the membership process.
- Project Agreements:
  - Selected project teams will be required to formalize their collaboration through a Project Partner Collaboration Agreement involving all project partners.
  - Each project partner receiving DHIF funding will be required to execute an individual Ultimate Recipient Contribution Agreement (URCA) as part of the funding onboarding process.
- Canadian Project Execution & Benefit:
  - Projects must be undertaken in Canada and demonstrate clear scientific, clinical, economic, or commercial benefits to Canada.
- Operational and Financial Capacity:
  - Project teams must demonstrate the technical and financial capacity to deliver the project and meet their co-investment commitments within the project term. Funded teams will submit regular progress reports, annual performance benefit reports, expense claims, and outcome metrics (e.g., data onboarded, jobs, IP, publications) to comply with SRF audit and reporting standards. Funded teams will also designate a platform contact, participate in DHDP user research and product feedback sessions, and report platform usage metrics (e.g., active users, queries, completion of the first federated learning run, and federated jobs run).

Note: SMEs, Data Providers, and Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) may participate in multiple proposed project teams.

IV. Eligible Project Scope

At minimum, an eligible project must:

- Leverage the DHDP platform to advance a compelling research, innovation, clinical, or commercialization use case;
- Outline a feasible project plan executed in Canada within the approved program timeline (ending by September 30, 2028);
- Detail regulatory, privacy, and ethics pathways (e.g., REB approvals, institutional privacy impact assessments) required to onboard and analyze data;
- Plan data pipeline activities, including data curation and mapping to the OMOP common data model, where appropriate. OMOP CDM v5.4 is preferred but not mandatory.
- Describe the quality of each proposed dataset and identify known data-quality issues. Where applicable, explain how identified issues will be addressed.
- Address the management of Background Intellectual Property and Eligible Project Intellectual Property, including plans for protection, ownership, use, and commercialization. Eligible Project IP ownership and associated rights must remain in Canada for at least four (4) years after the end of the funding agreement term, unless an exception is approved by the Minister in accordance with the applicable Contribution Agreement process.
- Define measurable evaluation metrics to demonstrate project success.

Examples of eligible project activities include, but are not limited to:

- Preparing, harmonizing, and onboarding health datasets through DHDP-compatible workflows;
- Multi-site research or clinical validation using DHDP federated discovery and analytics;
- Developing or evaluating digital health tools, diagnostics, or AI-enabled models using governed data access;
- Creating, validating and running standardized, containerized analysis pipelines; and
- Strengthening institutional data readiness and interoperability pipelines for ongoing research use.

V. Application Process and Key Dates

Stage/Event	Purpose	Timing
DHIF Competition II Launch	Public announcement and release of Request for Applications guidelines and portal.	**November 4, 2026**
Expression of Interest (EOI) & Matchmaking	Complete this EOI survey to register interest, outline the proposed project team, and request matchmaking assistance.	**Due December 18, 2026**
Information Webinar and Q&A	Invitations will be sent to those who have completed the EOI survey, as well as existing DHDP Network members. Participants will have the opportunity to submit questions through the webinar registration form.	**Webinar:** November 25, 2026
Letter of Intent (LOI) Submission	One (1) LOI per project team is used to assess strategic fit, team composition, data readiness, and high-level budget. Templates and guides will be posted shortly.	**Due January 27, 2027**
Invitation for Full Applications	LOIs are assessed for eligibility and alignment with DHDP objectives. Select project teams will be invited to submit a full application.	**Early February 2027**
Full Application Submission	Detailed workplans, budgets, data governance plans, and statements of work (SOW).	**Due March 24, 2027**
Project Review and Selection	A multidisciplinary Eligible Project Selection Committee will evaluate each project before final review and approval by the DHDP and TFRI Boards.	**April 2027**
Notification of Results	Recommendation or conditional award letters will be issued to successful applicants.	**Early May 2027**
Clarifications Period	Clarifications for conditionally selected projects, if applicable.	**May 2027**
Agreements & Onboarding	DHDP membership finalization, Project Partner Collaboration Agreement, URCA execution, and data-readiness assessment.	**May – June 2027**
Project Execution Window	Active project performance period, with technical onboarding phased according to project and data readiness.	**July 1, 2027 – September 30, 2028**

Note: Recipients funded under Competition I may apply to Competition II with new or materially distinct project proposals. Applicants will undergo the same evaluation, review, and approval process as other submissions and must meet all applicable eligibility and funding requirements. Previous performance may be considered where relevant, taking into account the project's stage of implementation.

Note on Matchmaking Assistance: TFRI will facilitate connections based on shared research interests, data availability, and potential collaboration opportunities. Matches

are not guaranteed, and participation in any proposed collaboration is voluntary and subject to mutual interest.

VI. Application Review Process and Selection Criteria

Applications will be evaluated by an Eligible Project Selection Committee comprising domain experts in precision medicine, artificial intelligence, health data governance, and commercialization.

At least one-third of the Selection Committee will consist of independent reviewers to ensure an objective assessment. TFRI will take proactive measures to prevent conflicts of interest (COI), and all reviewers will be required to declare any potential conflicts. Feedback on full project proposals will be provided to applicants. Appeals will be considered only on the basis of procedural errors and must be submitted to dhdp@tfri.ca.

Selection Criteria

The selection criteria will consider the following components at a minimum:

- Strategic DHDP Fit (High Priority): Contribution to platform adoption, data ecosystem growth, federated analytics usage, and long-term Network sustainability.
- Data Value & Readiness: Relevance, quality, and diversity of datasets; feasibility of data onboarding, interoperability, and OMOP mapping. Evidence should include an existing OMOP instance or mapping plan, research ethics board (REB) and privacy impact assessment (PIA) status, and a named IT contact.
- Research & Innovation Merit: Scientific excellence, clinical relevance, technological advancement, innovation potential, Technology Readiness Level (TRL) and expected progression, and potential health and social benefits.
- Partnership & SME Integration: Meaningful participation of Canadian SMEs, with a higher score awarded to applications including two or more SMEs, alongside complementary expertise and multi-institutional collaboration involving academic institutions, healthcare organizations, MNEs, and public-sector partners.
- Feasibility & Execution: Technical feasibility, realistic workplan, achievable milestones within the September 30, 2028, deadline, sound budget, and institutional IT, ethics, and regulatory readiness.
- Commercialization & Canadian Benefit: Potential for commercialization, including market opportunity, reimbursement and regulatory strategies, IP generation and management, publications, R&D investments, job creation (including co-op positions), business creation, and economic benefits to Canada's health and digital sectors.

- Meets all eligibility criteria (Mandatory) (see Section III. Eligibility Criteria)

The DHDP is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion and encourages applications from a diverse range of organizations across the AI and healthcare sectors. Underrepresented and equity-deserving groups, including women, Indigenous peoples, members of racialized communities, people with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, are strongly encouraged to apply.

VII. Questions and Applicant Support

General inquiries regarding Competition II may be directed to dhdp@tfri.ca.

Appendix A – Definitions and Acronyms

Members of the DHDP Network ("Network Members") may participate in a collaborative network contributing to the development, usage, operation, enhancement and/or the promotion of the DHDP Platform (the "Platform") which enables data discovery, sharing, and advanced analytics.

Acronyms

DHDP – Digital Health & Discovery Platform
DHIF – Digital Health Innovation Fund
EHR/EMR – Electronic Health Record / Electronic Medical Record
EOI – Expression of Interest
FL – Federated Learning
IP – Intellectual Property
LOI – Letter of Intent
ML – Machine Learning
MNE - Multinational Enterprise
OMOP – Observational Medical Outcomes Partnership Common Data Model
PET – Privacy-Enhancing Technologies
PIA – Privacy Impact Assessment
R&D – Research and Development
REB – Research Ethics Board
RFA – Request for Applications
SRF – Strategic Response Fund
SME - Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprise
SOW – Statement of Work
TFRI – Terry Fox Research Institute
TRL – Technology Readiness Level
URCA – Ultimate Recipient Contribution Agreement

Definitions

Industry Collaborator – means corporations, including small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), multinational enterprises (MNEs), and not-for-profit organizations, incorporated in Canada.

Academic Collaborator – means universities and colleges located in Canada which grant degrees or diplomas, and any research institution or academic health sciences centre owned, controlled, co-located, or formally affiliated by/with a Canadian university or college.

Eligible Costs – means the Eligible Supported Costs and Eligible Not-Supported Costs incurred in Canada.

Eligible Supported Costs – means Eligible Costs that can be reimbursed through the Digital Health Innovation Fund.

Eligible Not-Supported Costs – means Eligible Costs not supported by the Digital Health Innovation Fund but instead covered by contributions from other sources, including funding from Industry Collaborators.

Background Intellectual Property – means IP already owned or controlled, or that is made, conceived or acquired by an external party.

Eligible Project Intellectual Property – means IP created, invented, conceived, produced, developed, or reduced to practice in carrying out an Eligible Project.

Intellectual Property – means all inventions, whether or not patented or patentable, all commercial and technical information, whether or not constituting trade secrets, and all copyrightable works, industrial designs, compilations of data or information, integrated circuit topographies, and distinguishing marks or guises, whether or not registered or registrable, and all rights pertaining thereto, including any rights to apply for protections under statutory proceedings available for those purposes, provided they are capable of protection at law.