Digital Health & Discovery Platform
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FAQs

DHDP and Digital Health Innovation Fund (DHIF) RFA
Version 1, Date: May 2025

GENERAL INFORMATION

Where can I find more information about Digital Health and Discovery Platform (DHDP) and the Digital Health Innovation Fund (DHIF)?

- All application documents and information relating to the Request for Applications (RFA), as well as educational materials about the DHDP, are found under the Digital Health Innovation Fund webpage (https://www.dhdp.ca/funding-opportunities/digitalhealthinnovationfund).

What functionalities does the Platform support? Is it fully developed?

- The Platform is currently under development, with a Sandbox environment where workflows can be explored becoming available in summer 2025.
- The Platform will support data sharing across a federated network and under governance controls, which the data provider sets in place.
- See the other supporting documents on the Digital Health Innovation Fund https://www.dhdp.ca/funding-opportunities/digitalhealthinnovationfund webpage, in particular the DHDP Functionalities PDF, for more information.

What problem does the DHDP address?

- The current Canadian healthcare landscape poses significant challenges for data accessibility outside the walls of hospitals, research institutes, etc. where big data is stored. This creates siloes of data and barriers to real-world application and commercialization of AI for health care research.
- Rapid advancements in AI over the last decade have increased the need for access to diverse patient data to train, validate, and implement reliable and trustworthy models in real-world settings.
- The DHDP will help bridge these gaps and increase access for research to accelerate potentially life-saving advancements in precision medicine.

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How does DHDP bridge these gaps?

- Through federated distribution of data, data governance controls, and privacy-enabling technologies, DHDP's made-in-Canada data sharing platform improves the way health data is governed, shared, and analyzed.
- DHDP's network of data providers (including those who will be involved in projects for the DHIF) will build DHDP's data ecosystem and ultimately improve data accessibility.
- This will stimulate opportunities for collaboration, accelerating access to quality, standardized data to drive research into reality and bringing potentially life-saving innovations to market.

MEMBERSHIP

How do I become a DHDP member? I saw it is a requirement in order to be eligible for the funding opportunity (DHIF).

- Due to the high volume of inquiries, membership will be embedded in the RFA process when Letters of Intent (LOIs) are submitted (deadline August 15, 2025). *Note: EOI deadline is July 15, 2025.*

How much does it cost to become a member?

- There is currently no cost to becoming a member. Membership fees may be introduced in the future to sustain the DHDP.

What does membership entail?

- You must be a DHDP member to be eligible for project funding and/or to access and use the Platform.
- Like other collaborative networks within the scientific community, membership means being part of an ecosystem that shares and supports DHDP's vision and mission. Participating in DHDP Committees or data sharing projects helps build a collaborative and diverse network to transform health data governance and to improve health care for people in Canada.

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PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

What is the minimum eligibility for a project team?

- Each project must actively involve two (2) Canadian small- and medium- sized enterprises (SMEs), defined as fewer than 499 employees. An eligible project team must also have access to the data necessary to carry out the proposed project.

Can 2 individuals apply as a 2-person team, or must they be incorporated?

- Teams must be incorporated as a Canadian SME to qualify for funding. Sole individuals are not eligible. In clarification as an example, two individuals (for example, two academics) could be part of an application, but they need two SMEs as well. An individual (even as a consultant, for example) is not an SME.
- Project teams are not only composed of two SME individuals but also they need resources/their project teams to support the project given that two individuals can't carry out the scope of work. Two people will need to represent the SMEs but ultimately an entire project will require more than just two resources.

Who can apply to the Digital Health Innovation Fund (DHIF)?

- This funding call 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. Private-sector and public organizations are permitted to participate in multiple project team proposals.

If I am not a small- and medium-sized enterprise (SME) and am interested in DHIF, would collaboration with one SME suffice?

- The minimum requirement for each project is two Canadian SMEs. We recognize that potential applicants may not have the existing collaborations required to meet the minimum project eligibility requirements. If you do not meet eligibility criteria, we encourage you to submit the Expression of Interest and indicate a need for Matchmaking Assistance to find a suitable SME or data provider. Matchmaking Assistance does not guarantee applicants a suitable match, so we also encourage interested applicants to seek collaborators within their own networks.

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What should be the focus and goal of projects?

- Please refer to the LOI requirements and project selection criteria outlined in the RFA on pages 6-8 for specific details. https://www.dhdp.ca/funding-opportunities/digitalhealthinnovationfund
- The overall goal of DHIF is for projects to foster collaborative opportunities focused on data sharing through the Platform and advancing AI (Machine Learning ML) efforts in digital health. Projects should adopt a view toward IP and commercialization and leverage mutually beneficial relationships between SMEs and other collaborators. Projects should simultaneously further progression of compelling research while advancing the Platform design so it can support the project use case through an approach tailored to the project needs via DHDP's disease- and technology-agnostic approach.
- Examples of where projects may wish to focus on alignment with DHDP's mission include but are not limited to: OMOP data standardization and quality assurance; machine learning and federated learning methods and use cases; data science applications; data linkage. Please refer to the DHDP functionalities resource for more information. https://www.dhdp.ca/funding-opportunities/digitalhealthinnovationfund
- Project teams should consider how proposed projects will contribute/add value to the scientific community through the Platform; for example, through contribution of data to the Platform to improve data accessibility, development of computational pipelines that can be replicated and re-used, etc.

How do SMEs need to be involved in project teams?

- The nature of the collaboration is fully dependent upon what has been agreed to within the project team. Examples include providing data, contributing background IP, contributing analytics tools (e.g., AI product), and providing data and AI services.

Is it required to give SMEs access to data if I am a data provider?

- No, it is not required. There should be agreement and alignment with how data would or would not be accessed, and how it would be used to collaborate on the proposed project. Each team will be required to outline procedures for data access and approval. It is not mandatory to permit SMEs to access data if it is not essential for project success.

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Do the SMEs associated with a project submission dictate ownership of project Intellectual Property (IP)? Does the DHDP have any ownership of or access to that IP?

- No, this should be a mutual agreement between project partners. DHDP has no ownership of or access to the IP.

Is it a prerequisite to have a curated database and then propose a novel machine learning method to extract more data?

- No, it is only a prerequisite for the project team to have access to data necessary to carry out the project. For example, an ML/AI model that has already been developed could be trained, tested, or validated across various datasets.

I am not sure if my [healthcare entity] would be classified as an SME. How can I assess?

- A small- and medium-sized enterprise means an Industry Collaborator (corporations, including not-for-profit organizations) with fewer than 499 employees. Hospitals and academic institutions are considered Academic Collaborators, though there may be certain exceptions; for example, if a research lab becomes/starts a spin-off company. Please email dhdp@tfri.ca directly to confirm your classification. *See Appendix A to this document for definitions.*

Can a data custodian (e.g., hospital) submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) without an SME partner and based on their own research needs?

- Yes, you do not need to have a fully formed eligible project team upon submission of the EOI. Please indicate a need for Matchmaking Assistance and we will try to find you a suitable SME to co-develop solutions.

Must a data provider already have the data available, or can there be plans to collect this data?

- The project team must have access to any data they deem necessary. This will vary from project to project, depending on the proposed use case(s) and the factors outlined for project success.
- However, it is a requirement to outline where the project stands in terms of plans for IP and commercialization. Please keep in mind that due to the

timeline, this funding opportunity is *not* dedicated to data collection efforts but rather *data sharing and advanced analytics*.

MATCHMAKING

Is there a way to view who has submitted an expression of interest in case we want to explore partnerships with them?

- We will offer Matchmaking Assistance based on the EOIs we receive. The majority to date have indicated interest in Matchmaking Assistance. We will contact you directly with suitable matches or a request to publicly post select information (e.g., contact information, disease focus) to support the formation of project teams.

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

Are international collaborators (e.g., consortiums, healthcare organizations, large-scale corporations) eligible to participate in the RFA for DHIF?

- Yes, so long as they are closely aligned with the goals of the DHDP and DHIF and can meet the following criteria:
    - Project meaningfully involves two (2) Canadian SMEs
    - All eligible project costs to be incurred in Canada
    - Eligible Project IP created will need to be owned and controlled by a Canadian entity.
    - Personal Health Information (PHI) remains in Canada at all times
- Eligibility will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, though it should be noted that DHIF is not a grant and operates under a reimbursement model.
- International collaborators should ensure that they are closely aligned to the goals of the DHDP and DHIF as outlined in pages 1-5 of the RFA.

FUNDING *Please note that the Digital Health Innovation Fund is not a grant and operates under a reimbursement model. See RFA page 5 for more information.*

What is the total amount of funding that we can request?

- Although we anticipate each project proposed will cost several million dollars, we require applicants to provide a budget for the estimated total project costs

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as part of the application and funding agreement. DHDP is mandated to fund a variety of project sizes and Technology Readiness Levels (TRL). If selected, successful applicants will receive a reimbursement ratio of 20-25% and can submit quarterly eligible expense claims (with all supporting documents) after the project commences and work has begun.

What are the sources of funding that can be stacked (i.e. combined using multiple funding sources for the same project)?

- Funding for the total project costs is the responsibility of the applicant teams and will be a required section as part of the application. Private and Government funding sources are all eligible, however the amount of government funding eligible may be limited. Government funding can be stacked on top of any other level of governmental assistance (federal, provincial or municipal) within certain limits depending on the type of organizations in your team. For example, project fundings can be stacked provided that each collaborator within a project team does not exceed their particular maximum government assistance ratio, which is seventy-five percent (75%) of Eligible Supported Costs incurred by any Industry Collaborator and one hundred percent (100%) of Eligible Supported Costs incurred by any Academic Collaborator.

Does reimbursement also apply to academic organizations?

- Yes, academic collaborators may stack funds up to 100% reimbursement.

What are eligible costs? Are overhead costs allowed with this fund? Will DHIF cover direct wages and expenses?

- Eligible Supported Costs incurred and paid by the recipients of the Digital Health Innovation Fund awards are those which are directly for the project execution and necessary to carry out the activities of the approved project only.
- Only direct costs incurred and paid for work conducted on the actual project can be supported. Please carefully review the Eligible Costs Table for general guidance and note that several common costs cannot be directly reimbursed (e.g. employee benefits, vacations, taxes, etc.), but can be supported through a pre-determined indirect cost rate that will be added to project budgets. Please direct specific questions to dhdp@tfri.ca for assistance.

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Can we access funding for multiple projects?

- Yes. SMEs, data providers, and MNEs may participate in multiple proposed project teams but may not be a recipient and a subcontractor on the same eligible project.

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 and Discovery Platform

EHR – Electronic Health Record

EMR – Electronic Medical Record

FL – Federated Machine Learning

FTE – Full-time Equivalent

IP – Intellectual Property

ML – Machine Learning

MNE - Multinational Enterprises

PET – Privacy-Enhancing Technologies

R&D – Research and Development

SIF – Strategic Innovation Fund

SME - Small- and Medium- sized Enterprise

Definitions

Industry vs. Academic Collaborator
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 Projects

Eligible Project – means a project undertaken by a team which includes Industry Collaborators, and if applicable, Academic Collaborator(s). A project must meet the Digital Health Innovation Fund eligibility criteria, demonstrate high value according to the selection criteria, and meet the SIF expenditure cost and reporting guidelines including government stacking limitations.

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 includes contributions from other sources including funding from Industry Collaborators.

Intellectual Property

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

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.

Technology Readiness Level

Technology Readiness Level (TRL) – means technology readiness according to the Technology Readiness Level scale described below.

- TRL 1—Basic principles observed and reported: Lowest level of technology readiness. Scientific research begins to be translated into

applied R&D. Examples might include paper studies of a technology's basic properties.

- TRL 2—Technology concept and/or application formulated: Invention begins. Once basic principles are observed, practical applications can be invented. Applications are speculative, and there may be no proof or detailed analysis to support the assumptions.
- TRL 3—Analytical and experimental critical function and/or characteristic proof of concept: Active R&D is initiated. This includes analytical studies and laboratory studies to validate the analytical predictions of separate technology elements.
- TRL 4—Product and/or process validation in laboratory environment: Basic technological products and/or processes are tested to establish that they will work.
- TRL 5—Product and/or process validation in relevant environment: Reliability of product and/or process innovation increases significantly. The basic products and/or processes are integrated so they can be tested in a simulated environment.
- TRL 6—Product and/or process prototype demonstration in a relevant environment: Prototypes are tested in a relevant environment. Represents a major step up in a technology's demonstrated readiness. Examples include testing a prototype in a simulated operational environment.
- TRL 7—Product and/or process prototype demonstration in an operational environment: Prototype near or at planned operational system and requires demonstration of an actual prototype in an operational environment (e.g. in a vehicle).
- TRL 8—Actual product and/or process completed and qualified through test and demonstration: Innovation has been proven to work in its final form and under expected conditions. In almost all cases, this TRL represents the end of true system development.
- TRL 9—Actual product and/or process proven successful: Actual application of the product and/or process innovation in its final form or function.