

## HRF HEALTH SYSTEM SOLUTIONS GRANT

### APPLICANT GUIDE

#### Program Context

The Health Research Foundation (HRF) Health System Solutions Grant program supports applied health system research that develops, implements, and evaluates practical solutions to challenges affecting the adoption, delivery, and real-world impact of innovative medicines within the Canadian health system.

The program prioritizes projects that move beyond describing health system challenges to generate new evidence, test innovative approaches, and produce actionable insights that can improve patient access, strengthen health system performance, and support sustainable implementation in real-world care settings. The ultimate aim of the program is to improve health system performance, implementation effectiveness, patient outcomes, and long-term health and economic value for Canadians.

The 2026 competition is organized around the HRF's two complementary Applied Research Pillars:

- Pillar 1: Health System Factors Affecting Real-World Use and Outcomes
- Pillar 2: Improving the Coherence and Performance of Review and Reimbursement Processes

Applicants must align with one of the pillars and, for Pillar 1 applications must address the priority research area of Improving the Patient Journey Through Care Pathways, Referral, and Coordination and demonstrate how the project generates practical, implementation-relevant, and decision-relevant insights.

Greater consideration will be given to projects that:

- Integrate research with implementation and operational improvement
- Generate novel and actionable insights into barriers affecting patient access to innovative medicines
- Develop, implement, and/or evaluate scalable, real-world solutions
- Improve care coordination, referral processes, and patient pathways
- Lead to measurable improvements in patient outcomes, system performance, equity, and/or efficiency
- Demonstrate clear value, including financial, operational, or economic value to key health system stakeholders such as health system managers, hospitals, provider organizations, and governments
- Proposals should clearly define the specific problem they intend to solve, articulate where the project's scope begins and ends, and describe a credible pathway for implementation and sustainability



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- Leverage technology-enabled, data-informed, and/or AI-supported approaches where appropriate
  - Produce evidence that can inform policy, implementation, reimbursement, or care delivery improvements
  - Demonstrate strong embedded partnerships with health system organizations, clinicians, patients, and other stakeholders

Projects focused solely on discovery research, basic science, technology development without a clear implementation pathway, or problem description without evaluation of potential solutions are not within scope.

Lastly, priority will be given to projects focused on oncology, cardiovascular/renal/metabolic conditions, respiratory and immunology (chronic inflammatory disease), neurodegenerative and rare diseases, and mental health.

## **Funding Structure**

Applicants may apply under one of the following funding tiers:

### **Tier 1 – Smaller Time-Limited Projects**

- Up to \$50,000
- Duration: 6–12 months

These projects should focus on clearly defined questions, feasibility assessments, testing assumptions, pilot implementation activities, or incubating larger future initiatives.

### **Tier 2 – Larger Applied Projects**

- Up to \$250,000
- Duration: 18–24 months

These projects typically involve multiple sites, jurisdictions, complex system challenges, broader implementation activities, or more comprehensive evaluation approaches.

Funding is milestone-based and tied to defined KPIs, deliverables, and reporting requirements.

Co-funding and in-kind contributions are encouraged where appropriate.

## **Application Process**



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The HRF Health System Solutions Grant program uses a two-stage application process consisting of:

### **Stage 1 – Letter of Intent (LOI) Application**

Applicants must complete an LOI application providing a concise overview of the proposed project. The LOI stage is intended to assess alignment with the HRF program objectives, Applied Research Pillars, priority research area, implementation focus, and overall strategic fit.

The LOI Application includes:

- Project Information and Applicant Details
- Health system challenge and rationale
- Proposed solution, intervention, or research approach
- Alignment with the Applied Research Pillar and priority research area
- Anticipated impact and implementation relevance
- Partnerships and implementation setting
- High-level budget and timeline

LOI Applications will be assessed based on:

- Alignment with the HRF Applied Research Pillars and priority research area
- Magnitude and importance of the proposed impact
- Novelty and relevance of the proposed approach
- Implementation feasibility and operational readiness
- Strength and relevance of partnerships

Only shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a Full Application.

### **Stage 2 – Full Application**

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a comprehensive Full Application.

Projects are expected to move beyond describing health system challenges to generate novel, actionable, implementation-relevant insights and practical solutions that can improve patient access, care coordination, implementation effectiveness, and health system performance.

The Full Application includes:

- Project Information and Applicant Details (same as details provided in LOI)
- Executive Summary (1 page)
- Health System Challenge and Rationale (3 pages)
- Proposed Solution (3 pages)



- Implementation Plan (2 pages)
- Evaluation and Impact (3 pages)
- Data Strategy (2 pages)
- Scalability and Sustainability (2 pages)
- Partnerships and Governance (2 pages)
- Equity and Access (1 page)
- Knowledge Translation and Adoption (1 page)
- Budget and Justification (1 page)
- Supporting Documents

### Full Application Evaluation Criteria

Criterion	Description	Weight
<b>Magnitude and Importance of Health System Impact</b>	Importance of the challenge and potential to improve patient access, care pathways, coordination, implementation effectiveness, health system performance, and/or long-term value	20%
<b>Potential for Measurable Patient, System, and Economic Impact</b>	Likelihood of generating measurable improvements in patient outcomes, quality of care, equity, efficiency, sustainability, and/or economic value, including clearly defined, well-articulated value (financial, operational, or economic) that is demonstrable to relevant health system stakeholders	20%
<b>Scientific, Methodological, and Implementation Rigor</b>	Strength and appropriateness of the research design, implementation approach, evaluation methodology, and potential to generate novel and actionable insights	15%
<b>Implementation Readiness and Operational Feasibility</b>	Credibility and practicality of implementation plans, operational readiness, workflow integration, infrastructure, governance, interoperability, and stakeholder engagement	15%
<b>Scalability and Sustainability</b>	Potential for adoption, transferability, sustainability, and broader implementation across jurisdictions, populations, or care settings	10%
<b>Strength of Embedded Health System Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement</b>	Meaningful involvement of health system organizations, clinicians, patients, policymakers, and other relevant partners	10%
<b>Breadth of Applicability Across the Health System</b>	Relevance and applicability across multiple diseases, populations, care settings, jurisdictions, or system functions	10%



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## Projects Not in Scope

The following types of projects are generally not considered within scope:

- Basic science or discovery research without a clear health system application
- Clinical efficacy studies focused primarily on individual products
- Technology development projects without a defined implementation and evaluation pathway
- Projects focused solely on describing a problem without testing, implementing, or evaluating potential solutions
- Projects lacking meaningful health system partner engagement
- Projects without relevance to real-world implementation, scalability, or system improvement

## Review and Adjudication Process

Full Applications will undergo a structured, multi-stage review process:

1. Administrative screening for completeness, eligibility, and alignment with the outlined priority research areas, Applied Research Pillars, and HRF program objectives
2. Expert peer review and scoring by the HRF Research Oversight Committee (ROC) members
3. ROC adjudication and consensus-based ranking
4. Final approval by the HRF Board of Directors

## Funding and Oversight

Funded projects will be monitored through:

- Defined milestones and KPIs
- Performance and financial reporting at defined intervals
- Review by the HRF Research Oversight Committee (ROC) (provides recommendations on continuation to the HRF Board of Directors)

Continuation of funding is contingent on demonstrated progress and performance.

## Reporting Requirements

Successful applicants must:

- Submit interim and final reports
- Participate in knowledge sharing and dissemination activities
- Report on implementation barriers, adaptations, operational learnings, and system integration considerations



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- Produce actionable outputs suitable for policymakers, health system leaders, and operational decision-makers
  - Contribute evidence and insights to support broader health system learning and adoption

### **Key Dates**

- Call launch: June 24, 2026
- LOI deadline: July 22, 2026
- LOI decisions: August 4, 2026
- Full application deadline (by invitation): September 16, 2026
- Funding decisions: October 20, 2026
- Public announcement: November 17, 2026

### **Contact**

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