

# Integrated Virtual Care Program Funding

FY2021/22 Funding Criteria

## 1. Introduction

The Ministry of Health is providing one-time funding to support Ontario Health Teams (OHTs), In Development Teams and other health care organizations to implement, enhance, and scale virtual care programs and services to support integrated care delivery. This funding is intended to support the recovery of the health system by increasing access to key services, transforming how care is delivered, and building OHT digital maturity.

Ontario Health (OH) is inviting proposals that align with one or more of the following provincial priorities:

- Patient navigation and care transitions
- Mental health and addictions services
- Other priority populations, including seniors, palliative care, and patients with chronic diseases
- Outreach services for unattached, underserved, or marginalized communities

Other virtual care proposals from OHTs and In Development Teams seeking to become an approved OHT may be considered if they align with regional priorities.

Health care organizations that are members of an approved OHT should submit a coordinated proposal that demonstrates alignment with the OHT model. In Development Teams may also submit a proposal and demonstrate how their proposal aligns with the OHT model. Health care organizations are encouraged to collaborate on a multi-OHT or regional proposal. A multi-OHT submission should demonstrate how their proposal aligns with the OHT model.

All other health care providers and organizations who are not yet part of an approved OHT due to their location may submit a proposal that aligns with the program requirements outlined below. Ontario Health welcomes proposals from Indigenous health care organizations, including those serving First Nations, Inuit, Metis and Urban Indigenous persons.

Interested health service provider organizations should discuss this opportunity with their Ontario Health Regional Digital Lead, who is responsible for identifying initiatives that best meet the criteria and align with regional clinical priorities. Upon the endorsement of the Ontario Regions, proposals will be submitted by the Regional Digital Health Leads. Funding approvals will be overseen by the Ontario Health Digital and Virtual Care Secretariat.

## 2. Objectives

There is strong evidence that virtual care can improve patient and caregiver experience by facilitating more convenient, timely, and equitable access to care. In addition, virtual care programs can be designed to improve other Quadruple Aim objectives, including improved patient and provider experience, efficiency, and population health outcomes. In most cases, virtual care is most effective when it complements in-person care in the context of established provider-patient relationships.

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The objectives of this funding include:

- Providing patients with more choice in how and when they navigate the system and access their care.
- Improving access to care in the most appropriate setting(s), including facilitating transitions from hospital to home, post-acute care, or other congregate settings.
- Increasing access to community mental health and addictions services.
- Enhancing care for other priority populations, including frail seniors, palliative care, and chronic diseases.
- Increasing outreach services for underserved or marginalized communities.

### 3. Project Requirements

All successful proposals **must**:

- Be led by an OHT, In Development Teams or one or more health care organizations who would agree to signing a funding agreement with Ontario Health that includes performance targets and reporting requirements. See guidelines below for OHT proposals;
- Propose an enhancement to an existing virtual care program or a new virtual care program that improves how patients navigate the system and access care. Note: please review Section 5 to ensure any technology costs included in your proposal are eligible;
- Demonstrate alignment with one or more provincial or regional priorities (see Section 4 for more information);
- Provide an estimate of the volume of patients and caregivers that can be supported up to March 31, 2022;
- Propose a sustainable operating model that demonstrates how virtual care investments will enhance health human resource capacity. Proposals that include clinical staffing funding requests must propose matching in-kind contributions;
- Be designed with input from patients with mechanisms to measure and improve the patient experience;
- Demonstrate how services will be provided equitably for patients who face barriers to accessing virtual services because of a lack of devices, internet connectivity or digital literacy;
- Describe how the program will meet the language needs of the communities it serves (e.g., offer communications in different languages, integrate translation services into clinical workflows). Organizations within areas that are designated or partially designated under the French Language Services Act (FLSA) should describe how services will be provided in French to the Francophone community;
- Be willing to participate in an evaluation;
- Be reviewed, submitted, and endorsed by the OH region; and
- Acknowledge that funding is only available for FY 2021/22.

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## ***OHT Proposal Guidelines***

Health care organizations that are members of an approved OHT should submit an OHT proposal. Members of an In Development Team seeking to become an approved OHT can also submit an OHT proposal. OHT proposals must demonstrate one or more of the following criteria:

- The proposal was developed by the OHT according to processes outlined in their Collective Decision-Making Arrangement(s) and submitted with the OHT as signatory (e.g., leadership council).
- The proposal aligns with OHT priorities and OHT-specific performance indicators.
- The proposed program involves an active collaboration between OHT members.
- Funds will be flowed to and managed by a fundholder nominated by the OHT on behalf of all beneficiary OHT members.
- The proposal aligns with ministry direction to In Development Teams, if applicable, (e.g. to join with other teams).

Health care organizations are encouraged to collaborate on a multi-OHT or regional proposal.

### **4. Additional Criteria**

All proposals should align with the criteria for **one or more** of the following provincial priorities. Ontario Health welcomes comprehensive proposals that align with multiple priorities.

OHTs are encouraged to review available OHT resources and on the on-the-ground supports prepared by the Rapid Improvement Support & Exchange (RISE) team to help approved OHTs re-design care for their target populations using population health management approaches. See (<https://www.mcmasterforum.org/rise>) for more information.

Other virtual care proposals from OHTs and In Development Teams that improve patient access and experience may be considered if they align with regional priorities. Please discuss your proposal with your Ontario Health Regional Digital Lead.

#### ***Improve Patient Navigation***

Coordination of care within and across the full continuum of care and system navigation will be integral to the effective functioning of Ontario Health Teams. OHTs will aim (at maturity) to ensure seamless and continuous transitions between individual providers, across the health system, and throughout a person's life span. System navigation project proposals should:

- Demonstrate alignment with the goal of providing an OHT's attributed patient population with access to 24/7 care coordination and system navigation services.
- Agree to work with Ontario Health to ensure alignment with the planned scope of the provincial Healthcare Navigation Service (HCNS), which is under development and will help both patients and providers to navigate our healthcare system more effectively.
- Be designed to guide and connect patients to the most appropriate health care option (i.e., information, service, program, provider, OHT), related information and supports to address their health care & social service needs.
- Demonstrate how navigation information and services will be provided in an accessible and equitable manner that considers the needs of different patients.

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- Provide targeted navigation information and services to target patient populations.
  - Propose how self-management resources and tools can be incorporated to support health promotion, disease prevention, and chronic disease management (if applicable).
  - Identify metrics to evaluate the project impact on patient access and experience.

### ***Improve Care Transitions***

As part of the health system recovery plan, OHTs and other health service providers will need to address the challenges faced by patients, their families and the health system to ensure that patients receive the right care in the right place. Care transition proposals should:

- Improve overall access to care in the most appropriate setting, including facilitating transitions from home or hospital to post-acute care, long-term care, or other settings.
- Identify care transition barriers and how the proposal will address these challenges.
- Propose how different virtual care options (video, audio, secure messaging) can be used to complement and enhance in-person services.
- Include cross-sectoral partnerships with primary care, acute care or social service providers to improve coordination of services.
- Describe the virtual care transition model (referral process, patient onboarding, clinical model and staffing, communication pathways, etc.).
- Leverage existing clinical resources and available technology solutions (if applicable).
- Identify metrics to evaluate the project impact on patient access and experience.
- Provide information on estimated cost avoidance (i.e., impact on LOS, hospital readmissions, etc.)

### ***Improve Access to Mental Health and Addictions Services***

Improving access to mental health and addictions (MHA) services is one of the four main pillars of the *Roadmap to Wellness*. Providing virtual care programs as an option to patients is one of the ways to improve access. MHA proposals should:

- Describe the patient population that will be proactively targeted through the intervention.
- Describe the virtual care program model (patient onboarding, clinical model, stepped care, and staffing, communication with patient and/or circle of care, etc.) and how it will improve access and enhance care for their patient population.
- Propose how different virtual care options (video, audio, secure messaging) can be used to complement and enhance in-person services.
- Describe how the proposed program aligns and/or integrates with other existing programs and with the MHA system in the region.
- Identify metrics to evaluate the project impact on patient access and experience.

### ***Enhance Care for Target Populations***

OHTs have been asked to identify and develop interventions to support the care for initial target patient populations. Common examples of target populations include frail seniors, palliative and chronic disease patients. Proposals focusing on target populations should:

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- Demonstrate how programs and services have been designed to improve the health of a target patient population. Applicants are encouraged to use a population health management approach.
  - Propose how different virtual care options (video, audio, secure messaging) can be used to complement and enhance in-person services.
  - Clearly define a problem the OHT wants to solve within their prioritized patient population through a virtual care intervention.
  - Describe the virtual care program model (referral process, patient onboarding, clinical model and staffing, communication with patient etc.) and how it will address the defined problem and enhance care for their prioritized patient population.
  - Leverage existing clinical resources and available technology solutions (if applicable).
  - Identify metrics to evaluate the project impact on patient access and experience.
  - Provide information on estimated cost avoidance (i.e., impact on length-of-stay (LOS), hospital readmissions, etc.).
  - Provide a plan for sustainably scaling up the intervention(s) to reach as many patients within the OHT's attributed population as possible.

### ***Increase Outreach Services***

Virtual care programs can be designed to deliver outreach services to unattached, underserved, and marginalized patients who are not actively seeking care or experience barriers to care. Proposals focusing on outreach services should:

- Describe the population that will be proactively targeted through the intervention. Applicants are encouraged to incorporate a population health management approach.
- Describe the virtual care program model (referral process, patient onboarding, clinical model and staffing, communication with patient and/or circle of care, etc.) and how it will address the defined problem and enhance care for their patient population.
- Propose how different virtual care options (video, audio, secure messaging) can be used to complement and enhance in-person services.
- Identify metrics to evaluate the project impact on patient access and experience.

### **5. Technology Criteria**

- Any funding requested for technology, including infrastructure, solution licenses, set-up or configuration costs, devices, voice or data plans, must support the delivery of health care resources and services to patients.
- Eligible virtual care tools include patient navigation and screening, online appointment booking, videoconferencing, audio, asynchronous messaging and remote care solutions that support care pathways and the collection and exchange of patient biometric or self-reported data.
- Digital self-care tools that support health promotion, disease prevention and chronic disease management and provider-to-provider messaging tools may also be eligible if they are part of a broader program that supports the delivery of virtual care services to patients.

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- Proposals for device lending programs, with or without data plans, must be cost-effective, targeted at individuals who face barriers to accessing care, and include a sustainability plan.
  - Proposals that include requests for technology licenses or services for virtual care solutions using video or secure messaging, successful proposals will be required to use a verified solution (<https://otn.ca/providers/verified-solutions/>) or use a solution provider that is actively participating in the verification process by December 31st, 2021.

## **6. Approvals Process**

Interested OHTs and other eligible health care organizations should contact their Ontario Health Regional Digital Lead to discuss their new or sustainment proposal. Ontario Health Regions are responsible for facilitating proposal development and determining which should be submitted for funding approval. Ontario Health's Population Health & Valued-Based Health Systems team can also be engaged during proposal development as a subject matter expert on virtual care models.

Proposals which are approved by the Ontario Health Transitional Executive Leads will be submitted to the Ontario Health Virtual Care Secretariat for funding review and approval. The Secretariat will oversee the allocation of funding to eligible proposals according to a criteria-driven process.