



## Patient Portal (PP) Patient Access to their Health Information FY2021-22 and FY2022-23 Funding Criteria

### 1. Introduction

The Ministry of Health (MOH) has approved up to \$11.25M each year in dedicated funding for FY2021/22 and FY2022/23 for Ontario Health Teams (OHTs), In Development Teams and other health care organizations to implement new patient portal programs<sup>1</sup> or scale existing patient portal programs across the province. This funding is intended to support the recovery of the health system by transforming how care is delivered and assisting OHTs to build their digital health maturity.

Ontario Health (OH) is inviting proposals for innovative two-year programs up to March 31, 2023, to setup and implement a patient portal that will provide patients with digital access to their health information, aligned to the approved Patient Portal (PP) Provincial Service Standards. These patient portal programs can be led by an Ontario Health region, individual or groups of OHTs, In Development Teams, and other health care organizations, to provide patient access to a portal on a regional or sub-regional basis. This funding is intended for new or enhanced services rather than existing operations.

Successful applicants will receive funding for FY2021/22 and be eligible to receive additional funding in FY2022/23 up to March 31, 2023. Applicants are invited to submit a one or two-year implementation plan and funding request, as well as a detailed budget for FY2021/22. Ontario Health will enter into a Transfer Payment Agreement with successful applicants. Beginning in March 2022, OHTs and In Development Teams that have achieved their FY2021/22 deliverables, will be asked to submit a re-baselined implementation plan and budget for FY2022-23 to Ontario Health for review prior to entering a FY2022/23 Transfer Payment Agreement. OHTs will not be required to write a new project proposal to receive FY2022/23 funding.

Health care organizations that are members of an approved Ontario Health Team (OHT) should submit a coordinated proposal on behalf of the OHT that demonstrates alignment with the OHT model and the Patient Portal (PP) Provincial Service Standards. In Development Teams may submit a proposal and demonstrate how their proposal aligns with the OHT model.

OHTs and health care organizations are encouraged to collaborate on a multi-OHT or regional level proposal with a view to cover the patient population they serve with a single common solution.

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

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<sup>1</sup> Patient portals provide patients with digital access to their personal health information to enable them to manage aspects of their own health. See the diagram in section 1.2 of the Patient Portal (PP) Provincial Implementation Guide for a more detailed definition of "Patient Portal"

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regional digital health priorities. Upon the endorsement of the Ontario Health Regional Transitional Lead, proposals will be submitted by the Ontario Health Regional Digital Health Leads. Funding approvals will be overseen by the Ontario Health Digital and Virtual Care Secretariat.

## 2. Objectives

The objectives of this funding are to:

- Introduce new means for more Ontarians to access their personal health information or further augment the reach or functionality of an existing patient portal solution;
- Provide patients or delegates timely access to personal health information from two or more health sectors; and
- Increase patient engagement through improved digital patient access channels (e.g. educational materials, virtual care etc.).

Patients move within their ‘circle of care’ and potentially interact with many providers across the health care spectrum, and across geographical OHT boundaries. Proposals should therefore strive to reflect the patient journey and minimize the number of patient portals that a patient needs to use to access their information. It is for this reason that proposals reflecting regional or multi-OHT collaboration will be prioritized<sup>2</sup>.

Ontario Health recognizes that this funding envelope and its objectives are not standing in isolation from the many other planned digital health initiatives supporting systems renewal. Patient Portals intersect with Online Appointment Booking (OAB), Interoperability Standards, Clinical Systems Renewal, Patient Navigation, and the Ontario Health Data Platform, to name a few. It is thus important to take a pragmatic and evolutionary approach to Patient Portal development and focus on short term benefits and outcomes where patients get access to information based on current infrastructure and technological abilities. A more complete future state with fully integrated systems and a wide range of patient health data elements remains the goal we are striving for, and OHT’s are encouraged to demonstrate their vision for alignment and provide a clear roadmap exemplifying their goals and objectives, as they pertain to technology and infrastructure intentions.

## 3. Project Requirements

All proposals **must**:

- Be led by an Ontario Health region or one or more OHTs, In Development Teams or health service provider organizations/team with the capacity to implement a patient portal across regional or OHT attributable populations.
- Demonstrate how the program is co-designed and governed with input from clinical, patient, family and caregivers from their local care populations including mechanisms to:
  - measure and improve the patient experience;
  - demonstrate patient input was collected and is imbedded in the plan; and
  - ensure that patients will be engaged on an ongoing basis which may include the formation of patient advisory groups

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<sup>2</sup> Open to any collaboration, not limited by perceived regional boundaries or geography.

- Be supported by an OHT funder holder or a lead health service provider organization who would agree to signing a funding agreement with Ontario Health that includes performance targets and reporting requirements.
- Be willing to participate in an evaluation.
- Be reviewed, submitted, and endorsed by the Ontario Health region and;
- Acknowledge that funding is only available for FY2021/22 and FY2022/23.
- Provide achievable implementation milestones for FY2021/22, ending March 31, 2022.
- Provide an estimated number of unique users that will access the patient portal solution in the first six months following go-live and projected future growth.
- Describe how the patient portal 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.
- Describe how the patient portal solution will provide patients with the means to gain digital access to their personal health information. The data content of the portal will demonstrate the ability to grow over time as more health service providers and health sectors contribute data or make the data available to the patient portal.
- Describe the scope of data content that will be made available and planned expansion phases (if applicable).
- Indicate the geographical region(s) / catchment area(s) of the targeted patient population served.
- List the initially participating health service providers and a summary of their planned data contributions to the patient portal.
- List the mandatory and recommended requirements met by the proposed patient portal solution specified in the Patient Portal (PP) Provincial Services Standard (see Additional Resources below). The proposal must indicate the process that will be followed to verify (or have verified) the compliance of the patient portal solution against each of the standards specified in the Patient Portal (PP) Provincial Service Standards. The detailed results of the verification process shall be made available to Ontario Health.
- Include a proposed two-year implementation plan up to March 31, 2023, with key milestones for FY2021/22. See program implementation guidelines below;
- Include requested funding amount for FY2021/22 and an estimated cost for FY2022/23 up to March 31, 2023. Include a detailed budget for FY2021/22 up to March 31, 2022 (include in-kind and new funding request). Budgets must clearly indicate:
  - Initial costs to setup, procure and prepare for implementation;
  - Implementation costs;
  - Operational costs;
  - Provide an estimated cost per user for the solution;
  - Resourcing plan for implementation, clearly indicating which resources will be provided in-kind and which will be required as part of the patient portal program;
  - Other eligible expenses (e.g., project management, change management, communications & marketing). Include reasonable funding requests for project management and communications costs. Note: Ontario Health will provide a limited amount of change management support.

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## ***OHT Proposal Guidelines***

Submissions from Approved OHTs, In Development teams, and multi-OHT submissions must demonstrate that their proposals align with the OHT model. Examples of how applicants can demonstrate alignment with the OHT model include the following:

- The proposal was developed by your OHT using your Collective Decision-Making Agreement (CDMA).
- The proposal involves an active cross-sector collaboration between OHT members.
- The proposal involves an active collaboration amongst other OHT's within a specific region or cross regionally.
- Funds will be flowed to and managed by a designated OHT fundholder on behalf of all beneficiary OHT members or OHT partners.
- The proposal aligns with ministry direction to In Development teams (if applicable).

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

### **4. Additional Criteria**

Successful proposals **should** aim to meet all the following criteria:

- Submit as a partnership serving multiple OHTs. This is strongly encouraged as are proposals that indicate a willingness to add OHT partners in the future.
- Describe the consultation process that was used, and the assumptions made in developing user targets.
- Outline a plan to evaluate patient portal benefits to facilitate sustainability.

### ***Technology and Integration***

Proposals could take one of two approaches:

1. Leverage an existing patient portal solution in operation. Existing resources and available technology solutions could be further augmented in terms of the reach or functionality where appropriate.
2. Procure appropriate technology. These proposals shall clearly indicate the process, time scales and milestones from the point of procurement preparation to final product and functionality implementation.

Note: If an existing solution is available but not leveraged, please describe the rationale for procuring a new solution.

Proposals **should**:

- Strongly contemplate leveraging provincial clinical data assets and/or represent a broad number of data sets from multiple organizations. The aim is to minimize the patient need to reach into disparate solutions for a full picture of their health data.
- Include a current state view of technology and infrastructure with plans for future state. This includes outlining a roadmap to a more complete and feature rich future state patient portal and

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future strong alignment with other technology and infrastructure programs (see the comments in objectives above). This roadmap should indicate timelines for:

- Future integrations with other patient access channels (e.g., OAB, Virtual Visits)
- Future data integrations/contributors - If integration to other data sources is needed, all integrations must be reviewed and approved by Ontario Health (if funding is requested)
- Functionality enhancements
- Data releases
- Alignment with upcoming digital identity initiative

### ***Governance Model***

Proposals **should**:

- Outline the governance structure/plan that will guide selection and implementation of a patient portal solution.
- Demonstrate that clinical champions were engaged, and support and endorse the proposed patient portal program; this may include the formation of clinical advisory groups.
- Include executive sponsorship implementation and rollout.
- Provide an outline of roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities of each participating organization, if multiple organizations are involved.

### ***Functional Model***

Proposals **should** describe:

- Marketing and communication plans
- Means/methods of how patients will get access to the portal (e.g., plan to scale the program across the region and onboard patients)
- Functionality provided to patients. What will patients be able to do apart from viewing their personal health information?
- Ongoing user support from a technical and inquiry perspective.
- Plans to sustain and mature the portal program (e.g., expand the existing data set/sources beyond funded period)
- How patients will be provided with the means to gain digital access to other educational materials or resources.

### ***Implementation Model***

Applicants **should** consider leveraging existing patient portals, processes and technology solutions that have been developed by early adopters elsewhere in the province (see Patient Portal (PP) Provincial Implementation Guide).

Key components of a successful patient portal implementation project include, but are not limited to:

- Establishing data sharing agreements with data contributors.
- Establishing service agreements with vendors or service organizations.
- Performing privacy impact assessment (PIA) and threat risk assessment (TRA).

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- Developing a comprehensive communication plan.
  - Developing a patient onboarding plan / process.
  - Developing a change management plan and adoption strategy for data contributors.
  - Developing a stakeholder engagement plan where the mechanisms of data sharing, data inclusions and data exclusions are defined.
  - Developing a program sustainment plan.
  - Developing a roadmap for clinical workflow integration and change management.
  - Detailing the resourcing available or required to implement.

The proposal should address how the above activities will be planned and executed.

Note: These plans do not have to be ready at application.

## **5. Additional Resources: Patient Portal (PP) Provincial Service Standards and Patient Portal (PP) Provincial Implementation Guide**

Both the Service Standards and Implementation Guide should be consulted as part of the proposal preparation. These documents are available and distributed separately. If copies are needed, contact your Ontario Health Regional Digital Lead until such time that these are posted online.

### ***Patient Portal (PP) Provincial Service Standards***

The Patient Portal (PP) Provincial Services Standard provides the standards each patient portal platform needs to comply with. It outlines standards that are mandatory, recommended, and those for future consideration. Categories include:

- Functional requirements
- Non-functional requirements
- User facing requirements (interface)
- Data requirements
- Technical requirements

The purpose of these standards is to:

1. Define the general functional and non-functional requirements for digital solutions used by health care organizations and clinicians to support Patient Portal Platforms (PPPs) that digitally share Clinical information with users (patients).
2. Outline a framework and mandatory requirements that the platform must demonstrate concerning the digital release of clinical information to users.
3. Assist health service providers in selecting solutions that are designed to support safe, privacy and security-enhanced clinical data with users and advance interoperable health information exchange.
4. Guide health care organizations, including Ontario Health Teams (OHTs), who are interested in procuring a patient portal solution.
5. Equip OHTs with recommendations and considerations necessary for maximizing the value of their investment in acquiring a first patient portal or scale an existing one.

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## ***Patient Portal (PP) Provincial Implementation Guide***

Health care organizations, including Ontario Health Teams (OHTs) seeking to implement a patient portal can refer to the Patient Portal (PP) Provincial Implementation Guide document to support their education and decision making prior to procuring and implementing a patient portal solution. Organizations selecting a patient portal solution should consider impacts to administrative and clinical workflows, patient experience, privacy and security, and analytics and reporting; all which this document and the complementary service standards for patient portals describe.

The purpose of this guide is to:

1. Increase awareness and provide information about patient portals.
2. Provide practical guidance for organizations that are keen to offer portals to their patients.
3. To complement the Patient Portal (PP) Provincial Service Standards.

### **6. Approval Process**

Interested OHTs, In Development Teams and other health care organizations should contact their OH Regional Digital Lead (contacts in application template) to discuss their proposal. OH, Regions are responsible for facilitating proposal development and determining which should be submitted for funding approval.

Proposals must be documented using the approved Patient Portal Proposal Template. Proposals which are approved by the Ontario Health Transitional Executive Leads will be submitted to Ontario Health Digital and 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.

Ontario Health (OH)'s Digital Excellence in Health Team can be engaged during proposal development as a subject matter expert on patient portal models and technology solutions (OH contact Betina Millar [betina.millar@ontariohealth.ca](mailto:betina.millar@ontariohealth.ca)).