



2021-22

# Solutions Program

Virtual Care Focus Area

## Strategic Framework for Virtual Care

Effective August 12, 2021

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## About This Application Package

This package will support you through SHRF’s application process and, if successful, in managing your grant. It includes important information on program guidelines, our partners, and application instructions.

Along with the information contained in this Application Package, this program is subject to all policies and procedures as outlined in the current *SHRF Funding Guide* (formerly “Awards Guide”) available for download at [shrf.ca](http://shrf.ca). It is important that the applicant read and understand the current *SHRF Funding Guide* alongside this package.

### Contacts

For questions about eligibility, program guidelines or the peer review process:

**Cara Spence, Ph.D.** Acting Director of Programs and Partnerships  
[cspence@shrf.ca](mailto:cspence@shrf.ca)

For other questions or technical help with the SHRF RMS:

**Tanya Skorobohach**, Programs and Peer Review Coordinator  
[tskorobohach@shrf.ca](mailto:tskorobohach@shrf.ca)

For general inquiries: [fundinginfo@shrf.ca](mailto:fundinginfo@shrf.ca)

For SHRF technical issues: [helpdesk@shrf.ca](mailto:helpdesk@shrf.ca)

For CCV technical issues: [support-soutien@cihr-irsc.gc.ca](mailto:support-soutien@cihr-irsc.gc.ca) or call toll free at 1-888-603-4178

## Important Dates

<b>Competition Launch</b>	August 12, 2021
<b>Eligibility Check Opens on RMS</b>	August 12, 2021
<b>Eligibility Check Cut-off</b>	September 15, 2021 – 4:30 p.m. CST <b>EXTENDED</b> September 29, 2021
<b>Eligibility Revisions Deadline</b>	October 6, 2021
<b>Application Deadline*</b>	November 30, 2021 – 4:30 p.m. CST
<b>Funding Decisions</b>	February 23, 2022
<b>Funding Start Date</b>	March 1, 2022

**\*Check with your institution for internal deadlines and allow time to obtain required approvals.**

## Program Overview

### Purpose

The Solutions program aims to mobilize the research community and its partners to focus and coordinate their diverse skills and perspectives to address timely Saskatchewan health challenges. All applications must address the partner focus area identified for the competition year. Please note: Principal applicants are permitted one application to the Solutions program per competition year, regardless of focus area or funding opportunity.

In the Solutions program, SHRF partners with organizations or individuals who share an interest in funding excellent health research with an aim to improve the lives of Saskatchewan residents. Funding partnerships are aimed to meet the needs of our partners within the SHRF mandate to fund high quality research that advances the health and well being for the people of Saskatchewan.

### About Funding Partnership

#### Saskatchewan Ministry of Health

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Health (MOH) is responsible for setting policy and standards for the delivery of health services in the province. The MOH is seeking support from the research community for the development and evaluation of the effectiveness and appropriateness of virtual care in the delivery of health care services in Saskatchewan.

The MOH defines virtual care as any interaction between patients and/or members of their circle of care occurring remotely, using any forms of communication or information technologies with the aim to facilitate or maximize the quality and effectiveness of patient care. The development of a Strategic Framework for Virtual Care will create the vision for Saskatchewan health care for the delivery of virtual health care services, and will guide coordinated and aligned activity by health system partners over the coming years. Reflecting on the above definition of virtual care, the two strategic theme areas within the framework are: *empowered patients*, and *informed and connected providers*.

### Focus Area

#### A Strategic Framework for Virtual Care

The strategic theme areas *empowered patients* and *informed and connected providers* have the overall goal to achieve:

- Improved patient experience
- Improved provider experience
- Reduced per capita cost
- Improved population health.

The key enablers to achieve these outcomes via virtual care include:

- Guidelines / policy development
- Change management
- Measurement and evaluation
- Payment approaches

- Technology infrastructure and interoperability
- Governance and leadership.

In support of the ongoing development of the MOH Strategic Framework for Virtual Care, the successfully funded team will work directly and in partnership with the MOH as part of the research team. Please contact David Howland ([David.Howland@health.gov.sk.ca](mailto:David.Howland@health.gov.sk.ca)) at the Ministry of Health to discuss your proposal plan prior to the development of the application.

Applications to this funding opportunity must be related to at least one or more of the following:

- The appropriateness of virtual care, with a specific focus on identifying those individuals, circumstances / settings, conditions that are not suitable for virtual care;
- Identify the opportunities to improve health equity through the use of virtual care;
- The development and validation of tools and applications that enable patients to have effective interactions with providers through virtual care (with the goal of achieving the best possible experience and outcome for the patient);
- Measurement and evaluation, including:
  - Development and validation of appropriate and available process, output, outcome measures, and evidence informed targets, including baseline measures;
  - Research and development of an evaluation framework to guide the assessment of the progress of virtual care in Saskatchewan in 5 and 10 years.

## Funding Opportunity

*Impact Grant*

**Amount:** \$150,000

**Term:** 2-years

**Objective:** Support transdisciplinary teams, including knowledge-users, to advance the translation and evaluation of research into real world settings and practical applications to address virtual health care delivery in Saskatchewan.

## Funding Available

One (1) Impact project will be funded.

## Funding Process Overview

Following eligibility approval (research focus and team membership), all applications will undergo peer review to determine both the scientific excellence and potential for impact in the focus area.

Funding envelopes are set for each focus area and funding opportunity. Applications are funded in top-down rank order until funds are exhausted in each envelope.

## Eligibility to Apply

### Multiple Applications

The Principal Applicant can submit only one application per annual Solutions program competition.

### Renewal

Funding is non-renewable.

### Project Roles Overview

Individuals and organizations participating in the proposed research fall in to three categories: applicants, personnel (i.e. trainees and research staff) and supporters. An individual can only fulfill one of the following roles on a given application:

- **Applicants/ Investigators** are individuals who contribute to the intellectual or scientific direction of the proposed work. They share responsibility for the direction of the proposed activities. They are designated as Principal Applicant, Co-Principal Applicant, or Co-Applicant based on their level of leadership responsibility and involvement. Individuals in these roles may be researchers, knowledge users, or people with lived experience.
- **Personnel (Trainees and Research Staff)** are individuals tasked to carry out aspects of the research project and compensated from the grant funds.
- **Supporters** are individuals or organizations who provide a specific service in a limited and defined role in the proposed activities, have an interest in the research outcomes (i.e. knowledge user organization) or represent private industry.

**NOTE:** See more information on each role in the current [SHRF Funding Guide](#).

### Research Project Team Requirements

The Solutions Program aims to support research with the potential to make a difference in Saskatchewan within the focus area. Therefore, research teams should be collaborative and constituted to support the goals of the proposed research and potential impact, and with the program purpose and opportunity objectives in mind.

The following minimum team requirements must be met at both eligibility and application submission:

- Two (2) Saskatchewan-based researchers from different disciplines as applicants, including one that meets the eligibility requirements for a Principal Investigator;
- One (1) Saskatchewan-based knowledge user applicant.

Additionally:

- Having patients or people with lived/living experience on your team is strongly encouraged. If this role is not represented on the research team, please justify at eligibility.
- Once the minimum team member requirements are met, additional team members from within or outside Saskatchewan may be included in any role.

- There is no maximum number of team members; however, all team members should have a clear role and demonstrate how their expertise is beneficial in addressing the research question(s) and/or potential impacts.
- To support mentorship and capacity building, teams are encouraged to have both early career and established investigators, with trainees as appropriate. Novice and early career researchers applying as Principal Investigators are encouraged to have experienced co-lead(s).
- Having relevant supporters, including health system decision-makers, community leaders, community organizations, industry partners, etc. is strongly encouraged, as appropriate for the proposed project.

## Allowable Expenses

Allowable expenses are those necessary to carry out the proposed activities and are not provided through other means. Budgets are reviewed carefully and should include only those expenses allowed and necessary for the proposed research.

Include **in-kind** and **other sources of funding** required to complete the proposed research in the budget and justification.

Refer to the [SHRF Funding Guide](#) for important policies which apply to all SHRF programs.

In addition, the Solutions program:

- Does not provide funding for costs explicitly associated with preparing future grant applications.
- Does not fund equipment purchase. In cases where a minor exception may be required to complete objectives, please consult SHRF prior to the application deadline for a review and decision. See current [SHRF Funding Guide](#) for equipment definition.
- Requires industry supporters to provide cash or in-kind contributions in an amount equal or greater than 50% of any reimbursement received from the grant for good and services.
- Permits release time allowance to allow participation of a knowledge-user in the activities directly related to the proposed research. See current [SHRF Funding Guide](#) for more information.
- Limits travel to academic conferences for dissemination purposes to a maximum of \$3,000. Open access publication fees or knowledge sharing in other formats may be in addition, but the total cost of academic focused knowledge sharing should not exceed 10% of the total budget request.
- Some budget or in-kind resources should be shown to support sharing knowledge gained with stakeholders and/or target audiences outside the academic community.

## Application and Review Process

Applying to this program involves two steps: Eligibility Check and the Application. Both steps must be completed and submitted online using the SHRF Research Management System (SHRF RMS).

For an overview of the eligibility and application requirements, please refer to the [Applications Instructions](#).

### Eligibility Check

The purpose of the eligibility check is to ensure the following:

- The application is submitted to the appropriate funding opportunity, identifying relevance to the purpose, objectives, and focus areas;
- The Principal Applicant is eligible;
- Minimum team requirements are met;
- To facilitate the creation of the review committees, and search for appropriate reviewers with expertise to the proposed projects;
- To inform partners of interest regarding partnered funding; and
- To formalize the process of eligibility, so that decisions made by SHRF are available to applicants and reviewers.

The eligibility check is reviewed internally by the program manager, following the above principles, checking only for eligibility. If questions arise regarding eligibility, SHRF will contact the Principal Applicant for further clarification and may require that revisions be submitted. Multiple revisions can occur until a final decision can be made or the eligibility revisions deadline has passed.

The eligibility check is a rolling intake up until the cut-off; therefore, it is strongly suggested that the Principal Applicant complete this step early for a timely review and response from SHRF. Eligibility checks submitted after the cut-off date will not be accepted. Any revision request must be completed by the eligibility revision deadline, or they will not be accepted.

### Full Application Review Process and Funding Recommendations

Applications are evaluated in a competitive, peer-review process according to SHRF's [Research Funding Peer Review Committee Guidelines](#). Applications are assigned to a multidisciplinary committee whose members are from outside Saskatchewan, but within Canada.

Applicants will receive written comments from lead reviewers on the committee along with any external reviewers assigned to the application.

For information regarding funding allocation procedures, please refer to the current [SHRF Funding Guide](#).

### Review Criteria

Peer reviewers use the following criteria when evaluating applications. Scores are based on the SHRF 5-point scale which is fully described in SHRF's [Research Funding Peer Review Committee Guidelines](#). Applications should score a minimum of 3.5 on each of the three criteria to be considered for funding.

## Quality of Proposal (50%)

### Approach:

- Clarity of the project goals, objectives and deliverables
- Quality and feasibility of the research design
  - Standards relevant to the field of study are met
  - Adherence to principles of ethical research are in place
  - For research involving Indigenous Peoples, appropriate consideration of [TCPS2: Chapter 9 – Research Involving First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada](#)
  - Where applicable and appropriate, the research design is sex and gender equitable
- Methodological approach(es), study design and analysis plans are well-described, appropriate, innovative and relevant to the research goals and objectives. Potential difficulties/pitfalls are identified, and strategies outlined to address them.

### Team composition:

- Project brings together diverse skills and perspectives appropriate to address the health challenge and research question(s)
- Roles and responsibilities clearly outlined
- Appropriateness of knowledge user involvement for carrying out the planned research activities and achieving intended outcomes. Meaningful engagement is evident
- Appropriateness of academic researchers' expertise and experience for carrying out the planned research activities and achieving intended outcomes
- Experience and track record of the team members are strong relative to career stage, where they demonstrate an appropriate level of productivity, originality and impact of scientific contributions
- Appropriateness of involvement of people with lived/living experience, as applicable

### Workplan:

1. Project steps and timelines are clear and reasonable
2. Role, responsibilities and time commitments are clear and reasonable
3. Project goals and objectives are feasible
4. Communication and team engagement plan is in place

### Resources:

- Budget justification for the proposed activities is appropriate. There are indications of financial and in-kind contributions from other sources, where appropriate
- Appropriate and supportive research environment, including space, equipment, staff and other supports that are necessary to do the research

### Overall readability

#### Relevance and Need (25%)

- Relevance of proposed research in addressing Saskatchewan health challenges and the selected focus area(s)
- Demonstration of the contextual need for this research in Saskatchewan and convincing scientific rationale
- Relevance and value-add of knowledge user applicants, people with lived experience, and supporting individuals or organizations, as appropriate

#### Potential for Impact (25%)

- Significance of expected contributions for Saskatchewan and the selected focus area(s)
- Potential of expected contributions to advance research to the next stage, according to the funding opportunity selected:
  - Innovation grants: catalyze innovative new ideas and approaches, promoting creative problem solving
  - Impact grants: advance the translation of research into real world settings and practical applications
- Strategies and plans to mobilize knowledge gained with stakeholders and target audiences both within and outside the academic community

To apply, please refer to the [Application Instructions](#).