

Health Ecosystem to Accelerate and Leverage Trials of Healthcare Innovation



Program Guide

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1. Health Ecosystem to Accelerate and Leverage Trials of Healthcare Innovation (HEALTHI) Program

Through an investment from the National Research Council of Canada Industrial Research Assistance Program (NRC IRAP), Innovation Factory and the Synapse Consortium established the ***Health Ecosystem to Accelerate and Leverage Trials of Healthcare Innovation (HEALTHI)*** program.

HEALTHI connects Canadian-based life science firms with world-class research hospitals, including Hamilton Health Sciences (HHS), St. Joseph's Healthcare, Hamilton, and health system partners within the Coordinated Accessible National Health (CAN Health) Network to establish connections with potential clinical collaborators, engage in knowledge mobilization activities, connect with key opinion leaders, engage clinical stakeholders, and better understand the processes and requirements required to undertake a commercialization project or clinical trial. Successful partnerships will accelerate commercialization efforts, better positioning life science firms to advance activities involving intellectual property, obtaining critical clinical data or undertaking key product testing and evaluations.

Through HEALTHI, participating firms can leverage up to \$15,000 in non-dilutive funding to undertake a collaborative project, unlocked with a minimum \$2,500 cash matching contribution.

HEALTHI participants must meet the following criteria to be eligible:

- A privately incorporated Canadian life science firm¹;
- Working towards commercializing an innovative technology at Technology Readiness Level Six (TRL-6: System/subsystem model or prototype demonstration in a simulated environment) or above;
- Demonstrated commitment to commercializing innovation with a clear clinical application;
- Interest in undertaking a commercialization project or clinical trial with a Canadian hospital or health system partner;
- Enrolled as a NRC IRAP firm; and
- Eligible firms must be a client of Innovation Factory. Firms can sign-up for free with Innovation Factory [here](#).
- HEALTHI-CAN Health Network projects only:
 - Working towards commercializing an innovative technology at TRL-8 (Actual technology completed and qualified through tests and demonstrations) or above.
 - Demonstrated interest and a recommendation by the CAN Health Network to explore a collaborative project.

The HEALTHI program operates under a rolling application intake process. Firms are invited to apply by filling out an application at: www.innovationfactory.ca/funding-HEALTHI. Applications will be accepted until March 31, 2026, or until program funds have been fully committed.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the HEALTHI team at lifesciences@innovationfactory.ca.

¹ Life science firms include for-profit firms operating in the fields of pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, medical devices, digital health, biomedical technologies, nutraceuticals, cosmeceuticals, and others that dedicate their efforts to creating products to improve the lives of organisms.

2. Program Stakeholders: Innovation Factory, Synapse and NRC IRAP

Innovation Factory (IF)



Innovation Factory is a non-profit business accelerator, providing entrepreneurs with business services, training, mentorship, and strategic connections to help bring your disruptive technologies to market, increase revenues, attract investment, and create jobs.

Serving as the catalyst for tech innovation in the greater Hamilton area since 2011, IF is driven to support:

- Entrepreneurs bringing new ideas to life and to market;
- Small/Medium Enterprises (SMEs) get to the next level; and
- The Hamilton ecosystem to build a dynamic culture and a community of innovation.

Innovation can happen anywhere. Our goal is to make it work everywhere. We work to elevate key industry sectors including life sciences & healthcare, advanced manufacturing, clean tech, information technology, integrated mobility and social innovations.

Learn more at: www.innovationfactory.ca.

Synapse Life Science Consortium



Synapse is the formal regional cluster organization for the life sciences ecosystem in the greater Hamilton region, representing more than 34,000 employees. Synapse is focused on supporting initiatives and projects that magnify the impact of collective action across the cluster ecosystem and accelerate the commercialization of life science innovation.

Synapse seeks to support all firms and institutions that make up the Hamilton life science cluster, celebrating the strengths and successes of industry leaders and new start-ups, as well as promoting the region as an attractive place to live, work and invest.

Founded in 2016, the Synapse Consortium initiative brings together leaders from anchor institutions across the Hamilton region, including both private and public sector organizations who saw significant opportunity for greater collaboration and coordination across the cluster.

Learn more at: www.synapseconsortium.com

National Research Council Industrial Research Assistance Program (NRC IRAP)



The National Research Council Industrial Research Assistance Program (NRC IRAP) is a Canadian government initiative that supports the innovation and growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It provides financial assistance, advisory services, and technical expertise to help businesses develop and commercialize innovative technologies. By connecting SMEs with Industrial Technology Advisors (ITAs), IRAP offers guidance in research and development, market expansion, and commercialization strategies. With its extensive network and resources, the program aims to accelerate the competitiveness of Canadian firms, fostering innovation and job creation, and helping businesses scale their operations in both domestic and international markets.

Through NRC IRAP's mandate of stimulating wealth creation through Canadian Innovation, NRC IRAP has been successful in the mission to accelerate the growth of SMEs by providing a comprehensive suite of innovation services and funding including:

- Providing value-added frontline service to clients;
- Respecting and investing in the value of people
- Building and contributing to partnerships;
- Maintaining and enhancing technical credibility; and
- Ensuring accountability for quality service and effective use of resources.

Learn more at www.nrc.canada.ca/en/support-technology-innovation.

3. HEALTHI Program Overview

3.1 – HEALTHI program objectives

HEALTHI seeks to catalyze commercialization efforts of Canadian life science firms, connecting them with clinical administrative resources required to enable future collaborations and/or clinical trials required for life science firms to scale and grow. Through supporting globally competitive Canadian based life science firms, HEALTHI aims to expedite the development and adoption of home-grown intellectual property (IP) and talent, helping retain the economic and scientific value generated by innovative Canadian firms.

3.2 – HEALTHI activities

Through HEALTHI, participating firms develop relationships and acquire critical knowledge from clinicians and potential hospital champions to enable future collaborative commercialization projects. HEALTHI supports firms to undertake early engagement activities, connections with stakeholders, resourcing assessments, develop funding assessments and funding strategies, undertake due diligence processes, partnership communications and more. The specific scope of activities conducted through the HEALTHI program are agreed upon on a project-by-project basis, based on the unique needs of the participating firm.

3.3 – Who can apply?

Canadian life science firms can apply to participate in HEALTHI, subject to the following minimum criteria:

- A privately incorporated Canadian life science firm²;
- Working towards commercializing an innovative technology at Technology Readiness Level Six (TRL-6: System/subsystem model or prototype demonstration in a simulated environment) or above;
- Demonstrated commitment to commercializing innovation with a clear clinical application;
- Interest in undertaking a commercialization project or clinical trial with a Canadian hospital or health system partner;
- Enrolled as a NRC IRAP firm; and
- Eligible firms must be a client of Innovation Factory. Firms can sign-up for free with Innovation Factory [here](#).

Please note that while all firms that match the above criteria are encouraged to apply, final program acceptance will require a positive recommendation from the program funder NRC IRAP. This is obtained through an assigned NRC IRAP ITA. If you do not have an ongoing relationship with NRC IRAP the HEALTHI team can support you in connecting with them.

3.4 What funding is available?

Participating firms can access up to \$15,000 in funding through the HEALTHI program. A \$2,500 matching contribution is required to unlock this funding. Funding will be released on a reimbursement basis, following the conclusion of all work and once final report and attestation has been received by Innovation Factory.

² Life science firms include for-profit firms operating in the fields of pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, medical devices, digital health, biomedical technologies, nutraceuticals, cosmeceuticals, and others that dedicate their efforts to creating products to improve the lives of organisms.

3.5 Considerations on use of government funding as cash match

When applying for a government funded program there are certain considerations that apply. Please note that:

- Applications must declare any other sources of government funding received within the 12 month period prior to the application processes;
- Stacking federal government funding is not allowed; and
- Stacking provincial and municipal funding is subject to review and approval.

3.6 – What costs are eligible?

Innovation Factory will reimburse the delivery partner (HHS, St. Joseph's Hospital, or a Coordinated Accessible Network Health System Partner) up to \$15,000 at the completion project activities. Reimbursement is subject to the completion of an attestation that all work has been performed, and a final report that describes the impact of the project and future plans for collaboration.

Costs associated with the project include portions of salary for clinical coordinators and research administrators who provide assistance on drafting all project protocols and supporting documentation in preparation for a larger commercialization project or clinical trial.

3.7 – What costs are ineligible?

Third party contracting fees, travel expenses, alcohol, and meals are ineligible expenses which cannot be reimbursed by the HEALTHI program. Overhead charges by hospital or health system partner administrations will not be charged for HEALTHI collaborations.

All project costs are subject to approval by the Innovation Factory team and must be submitted in an auditable form.

3.8 – Eligibility requirements: HEALTHI-CAN Health Network projects

Through HEALTHI, participants can undertake a collaborative project with a CAN Health Network system partner to complete due diligence activities and reach a go-no-go decision for a fully funded [CAN Health procurement project](#).

Given the potential to access CAN Health Network funding, additional program eligibility requirements include:

- Working towards commercializing an innovative technology at Technology Readiness Level 8 (TRL-8: Actual Technology completed and qualified through tests and demonstrations) or above.
- Demonstrated interest and a recommendation by the CAN Health Network to explore a collaborative project.

Please note that while all firms that match the above criteria are encouraged to apply, final program acceptance will require a positive recommendation from the program funder NRC IRAP. This is obtained through an assigned NRC IRAP ITA. If you do not have an ongoing relationship with NRC IRAP the HEALTHI team can support you in connecting with them.

3.9 – Who are HEALTHI’s delivery partners?

The HEALTHI is collaborating with three key partners to support HEALTHI collaborative projects:

Hamilton Health Sciences (HHS) is a community of 15,000 staff, physicians, researchers and volunteers that provides specialized, advanced care to southwestern Ontario residents. HHS is Ontario’s only hospital that cares for all ages, from pre-birth to end-of-life, offering world-leading expertise in many areas, including: cardiac and stroke care, cancer care, palliative care and pediatrics. The hospital is world-renowned for healthcare research, and has a history of collaborating with private sector organizations to support the commercialization of health innovation.

The Research Institute of St. Joe’s Hamilton (RISJH) is a not-for-profit corporation that administrates, oversees and conducts all scientific research and experimental development being conducted at RSJH-affiliated healthcare providers (including but not limited to, St. Joseph’s Healthcare, Hamilton (“SJHH”, “St. Joseph’s”)). SJHH is a member of the St. Joseph’s Health System (“SJHS”) and is affiliated with McMaster University and Mohawk College. St. Joseph’s has earned a national reputation for outstanding patient care and innovative models of care including excellence in respiratory care, kidney care, urinary care, mental health and addictions surgical services, cancer surgery and women’s and infants’ care. St. Joseph’s is home to the Firestone Institute for Respiratory Health, McMaster Institute for Urology, The Peter Boris Centre for Addictions Research, The Michael G. DeGroote Centre for Medicinal Cannabis Research, and Hamilton Centre for Kidney Research.

Coordinated Accessible National Health Network (CAN Health Network) is a federally funded national organization working to introduce more Canadian innovation into Canada’s health system. The Network works with 50+ leading Canadian health care operators, (“health system partners”), across 10 provinces and territories to identify their biggest challenges and match them with Canadian-made technology solutions. By partnering Canadian firms directly with health care operators, with the support of public and private partners, CAN Health enables these firms and their solutions to be rapidly validated, procured, and scaled across the Network.

4. HEALTHI Program Process

4.1 – The HEALTHI process

Participation in HEALTHI occurs in eight (8) key steps including:

- **Step 1 Application:** Participant completes a HEALTHI application [form](#).
- **Step 2 Screening:** The HEALTHI program team reviews the application and schedules an introductory meeting to explore project suitability and alignment.
- **Step 3 NRC IRAP Eligibility:** The HEALTHI program team reaches out to the participant's NRC IRAP Industry Technology Advisor (ITA) to secure a recommendation to participate HEALTHI. Should the participant not have an assigned NRC IRAP ITA, the HEALTHI team will work with the firm to connect them to NRC IRAP to explore eligibility.
- **Step 4 Alignment with Delivery Partner Capabilities:** HEALTHI program team works with delivery partner(s) to determine capacity and alignment of capabilities to help initiate a HEALTHI project.
- **Step 5 Contracting:** Participant and delivery partner draft a contract to define the scope of work, deliverables, and milestones that will be achieved through the HEALTHI project. Once completed the contract is reviewed by the HEALTHI team and tri-laterally executed by the participant, delivery partner, and Innovation Factory.
- **Step 6 Project Execution:** Working together, the delivery partner and participating firm perform activities described in the scope of work.
- **Step 7 Close Out:** Delivery partner submits an attestation of work completed and a final report, signed by both the participant and delivery partner, to the HEALTHI program team. These documents confirm all deliverables and milestones have been successfully completed.
- **Step 8 Reporting:** HEALTHI program team socializes the final report and attestation of completion of work to the participant's NRC IRAP ITA and the NRC IRAP program sponsor to report on program outcomes and potential next steps. The HEALTHI team will follow up with both delivery partner and firm one and two years after project completion to measure success of the program and report back to the program funder, NRC IRAP.

4.2 - The HEALTHI-CAN Health Network Process

Engaging in a HEALTHI-CAN Health Network project largely follows the same process listed above, however there are key differences participating firms must be aware of:

1. Participating firms must answer CAN Health Network's Call for Innovation and be selected by a CAN Health Network health system partner to participate in a CAN Health Network commercialization project.
2. Participating firms must discuss their desire to participate in a HEALTHI engagement with their health system partner and the CAN Health Network team.
3. The participating firm must have support from the CAN Health Network team and their health system partner to participate in the HEALTHI program.

Participation in a HEALTHI-CAN Health Network project occurs in ten (10) key steps including:

- **Step 1 CAN Health Network Program Eligibility:** The CAN Health Network submits a recommendation to the HEALTHI team of a potential participating firm, following the participating firms application and evaluation of eligibility into the CAN Health Program.
- **Step 2 HEALTHI Application:** Participant completes a HEALTHI application [form](#).
- **Step 3 HEALTHI Screening:** The HEALTHI program team reviews the application and schedules an introductory meeting to explore project suitability and alignment.
- **Step 4 NRC IRAP Eligibility:** The HEALTHI program team reaches out to the participant's NRC IRAP Industry Technology Advisor (ITA) to secure a recommendation to participate HEALTHI. Should the participant not have an assigned NRC IRAP ITA, the HEALTHI team will work with the firm to connect them to NRC IRAP to explore eligibility.
- **Step 5 Alignment with Delivery Partner Capabilities:** HEALTHI program team works with the CAN Health Network health system partner to determine capacity and alignment of capabilities to help initiate a HEALTHI project.
- **Step 6 Contracting:** Participant and CAN Health Network health system partner draft a contract to define the scope of work, deliverables, and milestones that will be achieved through the HEALTHI project. Once completed the contract is reviewed by the HEALTHI team and tri-laterally executed by the participant, health system partner, and Innovation Factory.
- **Step 7 Project Execution:** Working together, the health system partner and participating firm perform activities described in the scope of work.
- **Step 8 Close Out:** Health system partner submits an attestation of work completed, signed by both the participant and health system partner, along with a final report to the HEALTHI program team. These documents confirm all deliverables and milestones have been successfully completed.
- **Step 9 Reporting:** HEALTHI program team socializes the final report and attestation of completion of work to the participant's NRC IRAP ITA, the NRC IRAP program sponsor, and to the CAN Health Team to report on program outcomes and next steps. The HEALTHI team will follow up with both delivery partner and firm one and two years after project completion to measure success of the program and report back to the program funder, NRC IRAP.
- **Step 10 CAN Health Project:** Participating firm secures approval from the health system partner and CAN Health Network to begin work on a CAN Health funded project.

[4.3 - Deadlines and timelines](#)

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis. Project grants for this program will be approved until March 31st, 2026, or until all funds have been committed.

5. Program Administration

5.1 – Project contracts

A signed project contract, outlining the scope of work and activities to be performed, is required for every HEALTHI project. A contract template has been created by Innovation Factory to expedite the contracting process. Timelines associated with each project will be agreed upon in a project by project basis; and

5.2 – Reporting requirements

HEALTHI participants will meet with the HEALTHI program team on an *ad hoc* basis to provide an update on the project progress. A final report detailing the successful completion of the project deliverables, attestation of the work completed, and submission of all claims will be due at the end of the project. These reports will be submitted by the delivery partner or health system partner in collaboration with the participant. Reporting templates have been provided to facilitate this process.

The participant will be asked to periodically report back to the HEALTHI program team one and two years following the completion of the project, including basic firm performance data required to measure the success of the program.

5.3 – Protection of intellectual property

Coverage and treatment of intellectual property generated through the execution of a HEALTHI project will be aligned with the Innovation Factory IP Policies (available upon request).

Participant's should clearly mark as "proprietary" any information within their application or within the drafted protocol documents that they deem to be a trade secret or proprietary information. Proprietary information can include details regarding the participant(s), their financial information, and their project. This information is to be maintained as confidential and will not be shared on public sites. Proprietary information found within applications will be used or disclosed only for the purposes of delivering the HEALTHI program.

5.4 – Becoming a client of Innovation Factory

As the HEALTHI program is operated by Innovation Factory a requirement for participation in the HEALTHI program is that Ontario headquartered participants become a client of Innovation Factory.

As a client of Innovation Factory participants unlock our innovation advisory services delivered by our Venture Growth team. In addition to accessing non-dilutive funding opportunities like HEALTHI, clients of Innovation Factory receive mentorship services, support building strategic connections, and access to training opportunities, all free of charge.

Please fill in the Client Intake Form found [here](#).

Once Innovation Factory receives this form from you our Venture Growth team will make contact with you for an initial meeting so that we can best tailor our services to the exact needs of your business.

5.5 – HEALTHI team contact information

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the HEALTHI team at lifesciences@innovationfactory.ca or visit our website at <https://innovationfactory.ca/> and check out our FAQs. Alternatively, please feel free to call us on our general line at 905-667-2611.

Visit us at our Hamilton Regional Office located at:
B21 - 175 Longwood Road South,
Hamilton, ON
L8P 0A1 Canada; or

Visit us at our Halton Regional Office located at:
801 - 5500 North Service Road,
Burlington, ON
L7L 6W6 Canada.

6. Supplemental Information

6.1 – Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act

The HEALTHI program is subject to the federal [Access to Information Act](#) and [Privacy Act](#).

6.2 – Underrepresentation balance (EDI)

Synapse and Innovation Factory encourage the participation and engagement of life science firms from underrepresented groups to encourage diversity among HEALTHI program grant recipients.