



Mental Health
Commission
of Canada

Commission de
la santé mentale
du Canada

Request for Proposal

Mental Health Commission
of Canada Assessment and
Validation of Mental Health Apps

Ce document est disponible en français



Health
Canada

Santé
Canada

The views represented herein solely represent the views of the Mental Health Commission of Canada. Production of this material is made possible through a financial contribution from Health Canada.

Issued by: The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC)

Date Issued: July 11, 2025

Introduction

The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), in partnership with the Organization for the Review of Care and Health Apps (ORCHA), has developed an Assessment Framework for Mental Health Applications (apps). This framework promotes the adoption of safe, effective, and culturally relevant mental health apps in Canada.

Mental health apps are reviewed through a two-stage process:

1. **ORCHA Baseline Review (OBR)**: An initial evaluation using internationally recognized digital health standards.
2. **MHCC Mental Health App Assessment Framework**: A detailed review focusing on Canadian policy compliance, safety, cultural responsiveness, and alignment with national mental health priorities.

Purpose of the RFP

This RFP invites submissions from developers of mental health apps interested in participating in the MHCC Mental Health App Assessment Process.

This call is particularly aimed at smaller or emerging apps that may not otherwise have the resources to afford the assessment cost, as well as those designed to support underserved or vulnerable populations, including Indigenous communities, youth, newcomers, and individuals experiencing socioeconomic disadvantages. MHCC is committed to promoting equity, innovation, and safety in digital mental health, and this opportunity reflects our focus on increasing access to quality-assured tools for those who need them most.

The goal is to select five diverse mental health apps to undergo assessment using the MHCC's evidence-informed framework. Selected apps will be supported in meeting both Canadian and international standards related to clinical safety, data privacy, accessibility, and cultural responsiveness.

Selected apps will undergo a comprehensive review through the MHCC and ORCHA assessment process. Those that successfully meet the criteria will gain national recognition, third-party validation, and the opportunity to be featured within a trusted and expanding ecosystem of digital mental health tools.

Criteria for Selection and Funding Support

Through this RFP, MHCC will fund the assessment of five mental health apps and eligibility will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **Demonstrated financial need (25%)**
 - Priority will be given to developers of smaller or emerging apps that may lack the resources to independently fund a comprehensive assessment.
- **Community Impact and Effectiveness (40%)**
 - The app must demonstrate effectiveness in improving mental health outcomes, supported by sound evidence. Consideration will be given to solutions that address the needs of underserved or vulnerable populations, including Indigenous communities, youth, newcomers, and individuals experiencing socioeconomic challenges. A range of evidence types will be accepted.
- **Alignment with MHCC's mandate (35%)**
 - The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) leads the development and dissemination of innovative programs and tools to support the mental health and wellness of Canadians. With a unique mandate from the Government of Canada, MHCC works alongside federal, provincial, and territorial governments and various organizations to implement sound public policy. Applicants must align with MHCC's priority areas outlined in the [E-Mental Health Strategy for Canada](#) and its [strategic plan](#), emphasizing equity, inclusivity, cultural responsiveness, and evidence-informed approaches to mental health promotion and care.

Successful applicants will receive funding for the MHCC and ORCHA assessment process, along with opportunities to collaborate with MHCC in advancing e-mental health nationwide.

Benefits of Participation

All successful apps will benefit from the following opportunities and supports:

- **MHCC Assessed® Badge**, awarded to apps that achieve a minimum score of 70% based on the MHCC Assessment Framework for Mental Health Apps, confirming they meet national criteria for safety, quality, and effectiveness.
- **Funded Assessment Process**, the full assessment and quality improvement process will be funded by MHCC, eliminating the financial barrier typically associated with self-funded evaluations.
- **Increased visibility through MHCC's networks**, connecting apps with healthcare providers, policymakers, government agencies, and other influential collaborators in the mental health sector.
- **Expert Evaluation** using international and Canadian frameworks.
- **Access a quality improvement process** designed to support continuous enhancement and maintain the app's effectiveness and relevance over time.
- **Targeted Feedback** for product improvement and market readiness.
- **Strategic Alignment** with Canadian mental health system priorities and public-private innovation networks.

Eligibility Criteria

To be considered eligible, an app must meet all the following criteria:

- **Mental Health Focus:** The app must be designed to support mental health or emotional well-being. Apps classified as [medical devices](#) are not eligible.
- **Type of Solution:** Apps must not be considered a [medical device](#). A broad range of digital mental health solutions are welcome, including - but not limited to - self-help tools, mood trackers, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) - based interventions, peer support platforms, mindfulness apps, crisis support services, and culturally tailored resources.
- **Canadian Origin and Language Availability:** Only apps developed in Canada are eligible. They must also be available for use in English, French, or both official languages.

- **Privacy, Security, and Accessibility:** The app must prioritize user privacy, data security, and accessibility in both its design and functionality.
- **Stage of Development:** The app must be currently in-market or in the final stage of development and ready for assessment.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** The app must demonstrate a clear commitment to equity, cultural safety, and inclusive design - especially to meet the needs of diverse and underserved populations.
- **Quality Improvement Commitment:** Applicants must be willing and able to engage in an 8- to 12-week quality improvement process. This includes submitting evidence for review by the digital health assessor, considering assessment feedback, implementing recommended enhancements, and collaborating with MHCC and ORCHA to strengthen the app's safety, effectiveness, and cultural responsiveness.
- **Time Commitment:** Participants should anticipate dedicating approximately 3 to 5 hours per week to complete quality improvement activities throughout the process.

Proposal Submission

- Applicants seeking a subsidized assessment for their app must complete the following steps and submit all required information via the online application form available at: survey.alchemer-ca.com/s3/50380766/Application-Form-for-App-Developers

Required Submission:

- **Application Overview**
Provide a clear summary of the app's core functions, target users, and primary goals related to mental health support or outcomes. Include a statement describing how the app aligns with MHCC's values and program goals. Space will be provided within the application form to enter your responses.
- **Evaluation Plan**
Outline the app's readiness for assessment, including any planned or anticipated updates. This information should also be entered directly into the application form.

- **Organizational Profile**
Describe the size of your development team or organization (e.g., number of staff) and any relevant background information.
- **Interest, Availability, and Capacity**
Confirm your willingness and availability to actively participate in the quality improvement process. Applicants must commit to providing any required evidence submissions and achieving a minimum passing score of 70% on the MHCC Assessment for Mental Health Apps by December 18th, 2025.
- **Supporting Documentation (Optional)**
Applicants may upload additional materials, such as letters of support from community organizations, to demonstrate community relevance or alignment with equity goals. Document(s) upload information will be available within the application form.

Foundational Assessment Process for Submitted Apps

Mental health app submissions will be reviewed by the MHCC E-Mental Health Team using a defined shortlist framework:

- **Mandatory Criteria**
Certain fields require a “Yes” response. Each “Yes” earns one point, and applicants must meet a minimum threshold to qualify.
- **Contextual Indicators**
The team will qualitatively assess factors such as cultural responsiveness, research validation, cost model, language availability, alignment with MHCC values, and relevance to priority populations.

Funding Information

MHCC will fund up to five app assessments this year, prioritizing those that make the shortlist based on the evaluation criteria.

Assessment Timeline

Please note: The following timelines are approximate and subject to change.

Stage	Timeline
Application Deadline	August 15, 2025 (5 p.m. EST)
App Shortlisting	September 12, 2025
ORCHA Baseline Review	September 18-29, 2025
MHCC Framework Review	October 1-21, 2025
Developer Feedback and Engagement	Ongoing throughout September-November, 2025
Final Decision and Badge Award	By November 28, 2025 (upon successful completion)

Optional Self-Funded Assessment Stream

Developers who are not eligible for, or not selected through, the competitive process have the option to pursue an assessment through a self-funded stream. This pathway is intended for developers with established or revenue-generating mental health apps, such as commercial entities or social enterprises.

Self-funded applicants would undergo the same rigorous MHCC and ORCHA assessment process and, if successful, receive the same recognition and benefits as funded participants.

The cost of the assessment will vary based on the app's complexity and readiness. A detailed breakdown will be provided upon expression of interest.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. Who developed the MHCC framework?

The framework was developed by the MHCC with support from ORCHA and over 200 contributors, including clinicians, researchers, and people with lived experience.

2. What standards are used in the assessment?

The MHCC Assessment Framework evaluates mental health apps across seven key standards to ensure safety, effectiveness, and alignment with Canadian values and regulations. These include:

- **Privacy and Data Protection:** Compliance with Canadian laws such as PIPEDA, and where applicable, international standards like GDPR.
- **Clinical Evidence:** Use of evidence-informed practices supported by qualified professionals and credible sources.
- **Clinical Safety:** Identification and mitigation of potential risks to ensure the app does not cause harm.
- **Usability and Accessibility:** Design that supports ease of use for a broad range of users, including those with disabilities or varying levels of digital literacy.
- **Security and Technical Stability:** Robust data security measures and consistent app performance across platforms.
- **Cultural Safety, Social Responsibility, and Equity:** Inclusive design that reflects the diverse needs of users across cultures and communities.
- **Data Sovereignty:** Adherence to principles of Indigenous data sovereignty and transparency about where and how user data is stored and managed.

These standards ensure that apps are not only safe and effective but also culturally responsive and aligned with national mental health priorities.

3. What happens if an app does not pass?

If an app does not meet the assessment criteria, developers will receive detailed, constructive feedback highlighting areas for improvement. The assessment and quality improvement process follows a clear timeline to support timely progress:

- **Initial Assessment (Weeks 1–3):**

The app undergoes a full review based on the MHCC framework. Feedback is provided within two weeks of submission.

- **Quality Improvement Period (Weeks 4–8):**

Developers have up to four weeks to review feedback, submit additional evidence, and implement recommended enhancements. MHCC and ORCHA will collaborate to support this process.

- **Reassessment (Weeks 9–12):**

The app undergoes a focused reassessment within two weeks of evidence resubmission by the developer to evaluate changes and improvements. Results and next steps are communicated promptly.

- **Additional Attempts:**

Developers may have up to three total assessment attempts (initial assessment plus two reassessments) within a 12-month period. If the app does not meet the required standards after three attempts, developers will be invited to reapply during a future funding cycle.

4. **How long does the process take?**

The typical assessment timeline is 4 to 8 weeks.

5. **Can someone recommend an app?**

Yes. Individuals may nominate apps through the MHCC application link.

6. **Where will approved apps be listed?**

Approved apps will receive increased visibility through MHCC's digital mental health initiatives and communications, reaching care providers, policymakers, and other key collaborators across Canada. These apps may also be recommended for inclusion in provincial or territorial digital health directories as opportunities arise.

7. **Contact Information**

For additional information or questions regarding this RFP, please contact:

Sapna Wadhawan

Program Manager – Innovation

Mental Health Commission of Canada

swadhawan@mentalhealthcommission.ca

Useful Links

- **Contact Us:** ementalhealth@mentalhealthcommission.ca
- **MHCC Website:** mentalhealthcommission.ca
- **ORCHA (Assessment Partner):** www.orchahhealth.com
- **MHCC App Assessment Framework Overview:**
mentalhealthcommission.ca/app-assessment
- **Application Form Link:** survey.alchemer-ca.com/s3/50380766/Application-Form-for-App-Developers



Mental Health
Commission
of Canada

Commission de
la santé mentale
du Canada

Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2025

Suite 1210, 350 Albert Street
Ottawa, ON. K1R 1A4

Tel: 613.683.3755

Fax: 613.798.2989

 @MHCC_  /theMHCC

 /1MHCC  @theMHCC

 /Mental Health Commission of Canada

 /theMHCC