

# Novartis Canada extends Health Equity Initiative effort, fueling innovation and impact for second year

May 14, 2025

- *Applications are now being accepted, with \$500,000 in grants to be awarded to projects focused on improving health equity in Canada*

**Montreal, Quebec, May 14, 2025** – Novartis Pharmaceuticals Canada Inc. (Novartis Canada) is pleased to announce the launch of the second edition Health Equity Initiative. Aimed at promoting equitable healthcare for Canadians by addressing health disparities, Novartis Canada will award \$500,000 to non-profit projects focused on improving health equity and addressing the unique healthcare challenges faced by underserved and marginalized populations.

According to the World Health Organization, health equity is achieved when everyone can attain their full potential for health and well-being.<sup>i</sup> However, despite having a universal healthcare system, Canada ranks third to last with respect to equity in healthcare access and experience among nine peer countries, highlighting persistent challenges faced by underserved communities.<sup>ii</sup>

The 2025 Health Equity Initiative aims to address Canada's existing healthcare access inequity by supporting individuals and organizations that are fully immersed in their communities, understand their unique needs, and are dedicated to advancing fair access to healthcare. By empowering these agents of change, Novartis seeks to inspire broader community engagement and action to improve healthcare outcomes.

Sustaining the momentum from the inaugural Health Equity Initiative in 2024, Novartis will be awarding additional grants to support Canadian non-profit and/or charitable organizations that are pioneering innovative solutions towards equitable healthcare.

"We are incredibly proud to continue our commitment to supporting health equity in Canada by launching the second year of this Initiative," said Mark Vineis, Country President, Novartis Canada. "All Canadians deserve equitable access to healthcare and Novartis believes in the power of supporting sustainable, grassroots projects that help advance health equity for underserved communities."

In total, more than 130 applications for funding were received in the Initiative's first year. The 2024 winners were selected through a thorough evaluation process designed in collaboration with [Equity Mobilizing Partnerships in Community \(EMPACT\)](#), each exemplifying the spirit and impact of the Initiative through their innovative approaches to addressing and improving health equity:

- **Black Physicians of Canada:** By creating a national database of Black physicians across Canada, this project is tackling health disparities and improving access to culturally sensitive care, ensuring that Black patients receive health services that acknowledge and respect their unique needs. The development of a Black health digital hub further enhances connectivity and resource sharing among healthcare providers and patients.
- **Foundations for Social Change:** This project addresses the health equity challenges faced by those

transitioning out of homelessness and extreme poverty in Vancouver by implementing a comprehensive support system – including mental health services, healthcare navigation support and direct cash transfers – to empower individuals with the tools and resources needed to improve health outcomes.

- **Fort Severn First Nation:** The northernmost community in Ontario, this project focuses on bridging the healthcare access gap for First Nations communities. By establishing a team of community health coordinators known as *Payukotayno Meno ya win*, the initiative ensures timely diagnosis and treatment, as well as access to preventative care. These efforts promote greater engagement between families and the healthcare system, fostering trust and improving overall health outcomes within the community.

"The Health Equity Initiative's 2024 winners have set a powerful precedent, showcasing the impact of a community-based focus on innovation and collaboration," says Vineis. "Novartis Canada recognizes the importance of supporting community organizations and is committed to supporting all future winners in their missions to drive meaningful action."

### How to apply for funding

Canadian non-profit and/charitable organizations that are passionate about advancing health equity and committed to creating a more inclusive healthcare system are encouraged to learn more and apply for funding by visiting [www.novartis.com/ca-en/esg/novartis-health-equity-initiative](http://www.novartis.com/ca-en/esg/novartis-health-equity-initiative).

The deadline for applications is 11:59 p.m. PT on June 16, 2025

### About Novartis

Novartis is a focused innovative medicines company. Every day, we work to reimagine medicine to improve and extend people's lives so that patients, healthcare professionals and societies are empowered in the face of serious disease. Our medicines reach more than 250 million people worldwide.

In Canada, Novartis Pharmaceuticals Canada Inc. employs approximately 600 people to serve the evolving needs of patients and the healthcare system and invests over \$30 million in R&D yearly in the country. For more information visit [www.novartis.ca](http://www.novartis.ca).

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### References

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<sup>i</sup>World Health Organization. Health equity. Available at: [https://www.who.int/health-topics/health-equity#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/health-equity#tab=tab_1). Accessed April 28, 2025

<sup>ii</sup>The Commonwealth Fund. Mirror, Mirror 2024: A Portrait of the Failing U.S. Health System. Available at [www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/fund-reports/2024/sep/mirror-mirror-2024](http://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/fund-reports/2024/sep/mirror-mirror-2024). Accessed on May 2, 2025.

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1. <https://prod1.novartis.ca/ca-en/ca-en/en/news/media-releases/novartis-canada-extends-health-equity-initiative-effort-fueling-innovation-and-impact-second-year>
2. <https://www.womensacademics.ca/empact/>
3. <https://blackphysicians.ca/>
4. <https://forsocialchange.org/>
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6. <https://www.novartis.com/ca-en/esg/novartis-health-equity-initiative>
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10. <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/fund-reports/2024/sep/mirror-mirror-2024>