

# Digital4Health: Disrupting Benefits Challenge (Information for Technology Solution Providers)

*November 7, 2023*

Given pressures of a growing and aging population, a higher prevalence of chronic disease, the rise of consumerism in health, and the long and expensive process of converting health research into new innovations, health care costs are continuing to rise. This financial strain is forcing conventional treatment pathways to adapt towards more proactive and citizen-oriented digital wellness solutions.

Navigating more than 500,000 (and growing) health-related digital tools supplementing individual health and wellness can be a complex and confusing journey for both health system decision makers and consumers. Alberta Blue Cross® and Alberta Innovates are partnering to accelerate and ease this journey by implementing and evaluating digital health and wellness solutions with Alberta Blue Cross Plan Sponsors.

Alberta Blue Cross and Alberta Innovates aim to connect participating Plan Sponsors with innovative digital health solutions to support the prevention and management of chronic disease, a large contributor to lifelong illness and unsustainability of rising benefits costs.

The Disrupting Benefits Challenge is a competition-based program open to digital health **Technology Solution Providers (TSPs)** nationally that have the potential to address these key health and wellness challenges. Selected **TSPs** will have the opportunity to pilot their digital health solutions for up to 24-months with select Alberta Blue Cross Plan Sponsors to validate their unique and ground-breaking technologies while addressing the growing needs of all Albertans and enhancing the reach and credibility of a TSP in the market. Technology solutions will be evaluated based on pilot outcomes and may be adopted and expanded to additional Alberta Blue Cross Plan Sponsors.

## Plan Sponsors and Challenges

A plan sponsor is an employer that provides benefits coverage to their employees and dependents.

**Plan Sponsor #1**

<b>Challenge Statement</b>
How might we address chronic conditions for our workforce and their families by changing or sustaining their wellness micro-habits, so they aspire to achieve their peak health and wellbeing?
<b>Organization Description</b>
Industry: Industrial Automation Location: Alberta # of individuals on the benefit plan: Between 1,000 and 1,500
<b>Context</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>organization has shared their vision statement</b> to help provide additional context for goal setting: <i>“Empower, guide and inspire employees and their families to get upstream of preventable health challenges, so that they can live long, vibrant, happy lives.”</i></li> <li>• The organization is looking for <b>long-term usage, across the lifespan</b> with a focus on sustainable, meaningful engagement.</li> <li>• The organization would like to see a solution that has <b>engagement across the continuum of health</b> and demonstrates progression in health metrics.</li> <li>• The organization has an interest in allowing their employee’s family members to participate in the digital solution.</li> </ul>

**Plan Sponsor #2**

<b>Challenge Statement</b>
How might we address rising rates of cardiovascular risks among our workforce by empowering them to make positive health changes to improve cardiovascular health?
<b>Organization Description</b>
Industry: Utilities Location: Alberta # of individuals on the benefit plan: 1,500 and 2,000
<b>Context</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Employee demographics:</b> multiple working styles to consider including a large makeup of field staff, fully remote employees, and hybrid employees. Accessibility for all is a consideration. Majority of employees are a male-identifying population.</li> <li>• <b>Employees are familiar with digital health solutions</b>, where a previous organization-led initiative utilized a digital health solution with good participation.</li> <li>• <b>The organization is focused on ‘knowing your numbers’ campaign.</b> The goal is to educate and build awareness among employees around understanding the significance of health metrics; for example, blood pressure measures, and what to do about these numbers.</li> </ul>

**Plan Sponsor #3**

<b>Challenge Statement</b>
How might we address obesity and weight related illnesses by shifting lifestyle management behaviours including readiness to change at the individual and organizational level?
<b>Organization Description</b>
Industry: Finance Location: Alberta # of individuals on the benefit plan: Between 6,500 and 7,000
<b>Context</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The organization has an <b>Innovation and Digital Edge Strategy</b> that the Disrupting Benefits Challenge would fit well into.</li> <li>• The organization would like to see a <b>mental health component to the solution</b>, recognizing that concerns and co-morbidities play a factor in supporting individuals.</li> <li>• The organization would like to look at solutions that <b>focus on readiness to change and stigma reduction</b>.</li> <li>• Obesity and weight related illnesses is defined as those who are obese, overweight or at risk of obesity or weight related illnesses (e.g.: cardiovascular, diabetes, prediabetes)</li> </ul>

## Technology Solution Provider (TSP) Eligibility

The **Disrupting Benefits Challenge** is open to TSPs with market-ready, high-potential solutions based in Alberta or elsewhere in Canada. They must

- Exist as a corporate person, with up-to-date corporate filings,
- Be authorized to undertake the proposed project and execute a grant with Alberta Innovates (AI) on Alberta Innovates’ standard terms,
- Be able to demonstrate that the relationship between the TSP and Alberta Blue Cross Plan Sponsors does not present a conflict of interest,
- Have the potential to address the challenge statement with their digital health technology,
- The technology meets a minimum [Technology Readiness Level](#) 7 requirements,
- Offer a digital health solution(s) that can be formulated into an implementation study leading to the development and evaluation of an innovative care model,
- the ideal digital health solution is supported by strong evidence of effectiveness and end-user satisfaction, and

- Comply with privacy, security and accessibility requirements as determined by Alberta Blue Cross:
  - **All user data must reside in Canada (including backup data).**
  - **Solution conforms to WCAG Level AA 2.1.**
  - **Cyber security technical safeguards in place.**
  - **Regular vulnerability testing performed.**

## How to Apply

- Complete and submit the [Letter of Intent \(LOI\) form](#).
- The LOI will be reviewed to determine program eligibility and challenge fit.
- High potential TSPs will be invited to pitch their technology solutions to Alberta Blue Cross Plan Sponsors.
- Successful TSPs will be invited to proceed to co-create a Full Proposal with Alberta Blue Cross Plan Sponsor(s).

## Key Dates

<b>Letter of Intent (LOI)</b>	<b>Pitch Presentation</b>	<b>Full Proposal</b>	<b>Pilot Project Agreement<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Investment Agreement<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Submissions Deadline</b> Dec 06, 2023, at 4:00 p.m. MST	Week of February 12 – 16, 2024 (virtual)	<b>Submission Deadline</b> Apr 26, 2024, at 4:00 p.m. MST	March 2024	July 2024
<b>Decision Communicated:</b> January 2024	<b>Decision Communicated:</b> March 2023	<b>Decision Communicated:</b> June 2024		

<sup>1</sup> The Pilot Project Agreement is a legal agreement between Alberta Blue Cross, the Alberta Blue Cross Plan Sponsor, and the TSP. For inquiries related to the Pilot Project Agreement, please email [wellness@ab.bluecross.ca](mailto:wellness@ab.bluecross.ca) with the subject line "Disrupting Benefit Challenge – Pilot Project Agreement Inquires."

<sup>2</sup> The Alberta Innovates Investment Agreement is a legal agreement between Alberta Innovates and the TSP that sets out in detail the roles, responsibilities, and obligations of the two parties to ensure a successful Project. Alberta Innovates will not provide any funding until the Investment Agreement has been signed by both parties. For inquiries related to vendor eligibility or the Investment Agreement, please email [antonio.bruni@albertainnovates.ca](mailto:antonio.bruni@albertainnovates.ca) with the subject line "Disrupting Benefits Challenge Vendor Eligibility and Investment Agreement Inquiries."

## Funding

Alberta Innovates will contribute up to \$200,000 CAD of funding and/or in-kind contributions to support approved Projects over a maximum term of 24 months.

## Evaluation Process

All LOIs are reviewed and evaluated to determine fit with the Disrupting Benefits Challenge evaluation criteria. Alberta Innovates and Alberta Blue Cross leverage internal staff and external expert reviewers to evaluate LOI submissions.

### **ABOUT ALBERTA BLUE CROSS**

Alberta Blue Cross is the largest benefits provider in Alberta and one of the largest in Western Canada. We serve more than 1.8 million members with coverage through more than 5,000 small and large employer group plans, individual plans and government-sponsored programs. In 2021, Alberta Blue Cross processed more than 71.7 million claim lines with a value exceeding \$3.3 billion. Alberta-based and Alberta-grown, we provide health and wellness plans, programs and services on a viable, not-for-profit basis for the financial protection and well-being of our communities.

Learn more about [Alberta Blue Cross](#)

### **ABOUT ALBERTA INNOVATES**

Alberta innovates is the province's most comprehensive research and innovation agency. From funding to commercialization, we are Alberta's innovation engine. We foster and accelerate research and innovation to benefit citizens and drive economic growth. The corporation operates in 11 locations with more than one million sq ft of industrial testing and lab facilities and 600 acres of farmland. Alberta Innovates employs 589 highly skilled scientists, business and technical professionals and has an annual operating budget of \$250 million. Our total managed portfolio impact is \$1.2 billion in value encompassing 1,320 active projects.

This Program is managed through the Health Innovation Business Unit within Alberta Innovates. The Health Innovation Business Unit is on a mission to strengthen economic competitiveness and enhance the well-being of people living in Alberta by cultivating a health innovation ecosystem that excels at converting research and technology into sustainable human-centered care. To achieve this mission, we are focused on advancing Digital Health in Alberta. For us, Digital Health is a revolutionary approach to health that integrates digital technologies into the life sciences and healthcare sectors.

Learn more about [Alberta Innovates](#)