

Sheela Basrur Centre Grant: Application Guide

This application guide is intended for public health units across Ontario interested in applying for funding through the Sheela Basrur Centre Grant. Please review the information in this document carefully before completing your application, as it outlines the process and provides essential details about the program and how to apply.

Welcome to the Sheela Basrur Centre Grant

The Sheela Basrur Centre Grant fosters collaboration between Ontario's public health professionals and local academic and community partners. Through this grant, participants collaboratively design and implement innovative public health initiatives, including applied research and program evaluation projects, with a focus on enhancing communication and leadership within the public health sector.

Objectives of this grant include:

- **Support the design and delivery of programs** that enhance communication strategies and leadership capacity within the public health system, while generating actionable knowledge.
- **Promote collaborative partnerships** among public health units, academic institutions and community organizations to implement public health initiatives.
- Facilitate the **exchange and application of knowledge** across public health units and partners to strengthen system-wide learning and innovation.

About the Sheela Basrur Centre

The Sheela Basrur Centre (SBC) honours the legacy of Dr. Sheela Basrur, Ontario's former Chief Medical Officer of Health and Medical Officer of Health for the City of Toronto. The Centre offers training, education programs and special events focusing on enhancing the communications and leadership skills of existing and emerging public health professionals. SBC is operated and supported by [Public Health Ontario](#).

Contacting Us

If you have questions about how to apply for the SBC Grant Program or about the Centre, please email SBC@oahpp.ca.

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Part One: Call for Proposals

Fostering Trust and Countering Misinformation in Public Health

Effective public health communication serves as the backbone of community health, providing the tools and knowledge necessary for individuals to make informed decisions. From promoting vaccinations to encouraging healthy behaviors, effective communication ensures that individuals have the information they need to make informed decisions.

Recent global events, including the COVID-19 pandemic and other large-scale outbreaks like measles, have highlighted and magnified challenges in public health communication. Large volumes of misinformation and disinformation have spread rapidly, often undermining trust in science and public institutions. Public health professionals play a vital role in addressing these challenges by fostering trust through transparency, engagement, and culturally relevant approaches. Working at the local level is especially important, as it allows public health efforts to address specific community contexts, build meaningful relationships, and create tailored strategies to counter misinformation and promote trust in science and institutions.

The Sheela Basrur Centre's (SBC) Grant is currently seeking proposals for projects that aim to foster trust and counter misinformation in public health. Applicants are invited to apply for funding for a project that addresses at least one of the following priority areas. Funding can be used to support new projects or to enhance and expand the scope of existing projects.

Priority Areas

Priority Area	Project Examples
1. Building Trust in Public Health Projects should focus on communication strategies aimed at fostering trust in science and the health system. Efforts should prioritize transparency, emphasize evidence-based practices, and engage communities through inclusive and culturally sensitive approaches.	• Create a training program for health workers focused on empathy-based communication and delivering culturally relevant, health information. • Build an online platform that shares real-time, and easy-to-understand public health information. • Develop a toolkit for local public health partners that includes templates, visuals, and messaging strategies focused on transparency, clarity, and empathy. • Design and/or implement an evaluation or research study to assess the impact of public health communication initiatives on community trust and resilience.

Priority Area	Project Examples
2. Countering Misinformation and Disinformation Projects should focus on communication methods designed to address and mitigate the spread of false or misleading information. Emphasis is placed on building public resilience, promoting accurate scientific understanding, and fostering critical engagement with information sources.	• Develop an educational program aimed at improving health literacy and combating mis- and disinformation. • Conduct a communications campaign that shares accurate scientific health information and combats mis- and disinformation. • Create a community feedback system enabling community members to report or ask questions about confusing health information circulating in their networks. • Conduct a research or evaluation study to assess community knowledge, beliefs, and exposure to health misinformation and identify common misconceptions and trusted information sources. • Map how misinformation travels in a specific community using digital data (social media, messaging apps, etc.) and evaluate the effect of targeted, evidence-based counter-messaging in slowing misinformation spread.

Anticipated Deliverables

The aim of this funding is to implement public health communication initiatives focused on fostering trust and countering misinformation in public health. Final deliverables may include:

- A published resource (e.g., guidance and recommendations resources, training or education program curriculum, toolkits, reports, digital platforms, presentations, checklists, etc.) that can be shared with other public health units or broader public health stakeholders.
- Research or evaluation findings that can be published to serve as the foundation for future research or resources.

Funding and Project Duration

Project teams will be eligible for up to \$100,000 each in funding. Funding for successful proposals will be provided from October 2025 through September 2026, distributed in three installments. Installment amounts will be determined based on the scope and details of each project submission.

Who can Apply

In order to be eligible for funding, you must meet the following criteria:

- Project led by a public health unit in Ontario. Lead public health unit may choose to partner with another public health unit (or multiple) in Ontario.
- Work in meaningful collaboration with at least one local academic/research, or community organization.

- Address a public health issue within the identified priority areas of fostering trust and countering misinformation in public health.
- Generate insights that can be applied across the public health system and actively share those insights by developing and implementing a knowledge exchange and dissemination plan.
- Ensure that health equity is a core consideration in all aspects of project planning, delivery, and evaluation.
- Involve research and/or evaluation activities.

Evaluation Criteria

Projects will be evaluated for quality of project design, feasibility, potential impact, and alignment with one of the two priority areas.

How to Apply

1. Read the full Application Guide.
2. Download and fill out the [Application Form](#).
3. Email your application form, in Word format, to SBC@oahpp.ca by **October 1, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. ET** with the subject “Sheela Basrur Grant Proposal: Insert name of your organization.”

Virtual Information Session

A virtual information session will be held on **September 12 from 12 to 1 p.m. ET**. This session will provide applicants an overview of the application process and provide opportunity to ask questions. [Register now](#) to attend the virtual information session.

Key Dates and Timelines

Date	Project Timeline
September 12	Information session
October 1, 2025	Application submission deadline
Late October 2025	Project acceptances sent
October/November 2025	Project period starts with first funding installment
March 2026	Second project funding installment
June 2026	Final project funding installment
By September 2026	Final deliverable submitted and knowledge exchange activities completed

Part Two: Filling out the Application Form

The information provided in this part is to help you complete the following sections of the SBC Grant [Application Form](#):

- 2.0 Project Team
- 3.0 Project Information and Plan
- 4.0 Knowledge Exchange & Dissemination Plan
- 5.0 Evaluation Plan
- 6.0 Timeline and Activity Reporting
- 7.0 Funding

Please read each section carefully and provide the required information.

2.0. Project Team

The purpose of this section is to provide the full legal names of the public health unit and authorized contact, as well as project team members. In this section, you will also provide details about each team member's role on the project, and relevant information on their expertise and experience as it relates to this project.

When developing a project team, it may be helpful to ask the following questions:

- Who will act as the project lead(s)? Who will act as a 'back up' if needed?
- Who will lead specific phases or tasks for the project (e.g. data collection, analysis, report writing)?
- What skills, experience, and expertise does each member of the core team bring to the project?
- What other expertise needed may be needed to complete the project?
- How will you work together collaboratively?
- How can each project team member's experience and expertise add value?

The following table outlines the roles and responsibilities of the authorized individual(s) and team members:

Type	Roles and Responsibilities
2.1 Authorized individual(s)	• Considered an authorized representative of the team and acts as the project signatory. • Leads the day-to-day activities of project implementation. • Administers and effectively manages project funds. • Chairs team meetings and teleconferences. • Maintains study documents including Gantt charts, protocols, and ethics applications. • Leads the development of group processes to ensure the effective functioning of the team. • Ensures team policies and procedures are followed. • Ensures the project team follows an ethical code of conduct. • Ensure that all project team members have read and abide by the terms and conditions set out in the Application Form. • Submits interim and final activity and financial reports to SBC. • Ensures all milestones are met and deliverables produced in a timely manner.
2.2 Project team members: includes academic/research or community organization partner and additional members of the authorized public health unit	• Provides methodological and/or content expertise during proposal development and project implementation. • May lead the implementation of some aspects of project. • May lead submission to their institutional ethics board. • Participates in day-to-day activities of project implementation. • Contributes to team teleconferences and meetings. • Provides feedback on project documents. <i>If the academic/research or community organization partner is not known at the time of application, please include a brief statement on how you plan on engaging a partner.</i>

3.0. Project Information and Plan

The following sections provide guidance on filling out your main project information and plan.

3.1. Background and Rationale

Max word count: 250

Use this section to explain why your project is needed, what is already known, and how your work will address important gaps in knowledge or practice to improve public health.

Consider the following:

- **Problem statement:** Clearly define the issue your project addresses. Use existing evidence to describe the scope, impact, and who is affected.
- **Current knowledge:** Summarize what is already known from research and best practices. Highlight key findings and limitations.
- **Gaps and rationale:** Identify what's missing in current knowledge or practice. Explain why your project is a logical and necessary next step.
- **Significance:** Describe how your project will contribute to solving the problem. What new insights, improvements, or outcomes do you expect? How will it enhance public health knowledge, capacity, or practice?

3.2. Project Objectives

In this section, list three to five [SMART objectives](#) that clearly define what your project aims to achieve.

SMART objectives are:

- Specific – Clearly state what will be done, with whom, and where.
- Measurable – Include indicators or criteria to track progress and success.
- Achievable – Ensure the objective is realistic given your resources and timeline.
- Relevant – Align with the overall goals of your project and the needs of the target population.
- Time-bound – Specify when the objective will be completed.

Here are some guiding questions on developing SMART objectives:

- What specific change or outcome do you want to achieve?
- Who is the target population or setting?
- How will you measure success?
- Is the objective feasible within the project scope and timeline?
- What is the deadline or timeframe for achieving this objective?

3.3. Project Design

Max word count: 500

Use this section to describe how your project will be carried out, and why this approach is appropriate. A strong project design should address four key elements:

- **Who:** Define your target population or audience. Who will benefit from the project? If applicable, describe how participants will be identified or recruited.
- **What:** Outline the main components or activities of the project. What will be done to achieve your objectives?
- **How:** Describe the methods, tools, and procedures you will use to implement the project. If your project builds on an existing initiative, provide details on how the SBC funding will be used to expand the scope.
- **When:** Provide a general timeline or sequencing of key activities. When will major milestones occur?

If your project includes data collection, also describe:

- The type of data you will collect and why.
- How data will be collected and by whom.
- Any tools or instruments used (and whether they are new or existing).
- Your plan for analyzing the data and how it links to your objectives.

Keep your description clear and practical so that others could understand or replicate your approach.

3.4. Ethics and Privacy Considerations

Max word count: 250

All projects should consider ethical principles, even if formal ethics approval is not required. Use this section to describe how your project will respect the rights, dignity, and privacy of individuals and communities involved.

Consider the following:

- **Respect and responsibility:** How will your project ensure respectful engagement with participants, partners, and communities—especially those who may be marginalized or vulnerable?
- **Privacy and confidentiality:** Describe how personal or sensitive information will be collected, stored, protected, and, when appropriate, destroyed. How will you ensure anonymity and confidentiality?
- **Informed consent:** If your project involves data collection or direct interaction with individuals, explain how informed consent will be obtained and documented.
- **Equity and inclusion:** Consider how your project design and implementation reflect ethical commitments to equity, inclusion, and cultural safety.

Ethics Approval (if applicable)

If your project involves research or data collection that requires formal ethics review, please include:

- A list of any required ethics approvals (e.g., from a public health unit, academic institution, or other board)
- Who is responsible for obtaining them
- The current status (e.g., pending, approved)

If you do not have access to an ethics review board, the [PHO Ethics Review Board](#) may be available to support your project.

3.5. Feasibility Considerations

Max word count: 250

Use this section to demonstrate that your project is realistic and achievable by highlighting any preparatory work, relevant experience, and available resources that will support successful implementation.

Consider the following:

- **Previous or pilot work:** Has your team conducted similar or related projects in the past? Are you building on pilot work or early findings?
- **Relevant experience:** Are there other similar projects the team or team members have been involved in that were successful, and demonstrate the feasibility of your project?
- **Established partnerships:** Are there existing collaborations or community relationships that will support your project?
- **Resources and infrastructure:** What tools, systems, or in-kind contributions (e.g., staff time, data systems, facilities) will you leverage?

3.6. Project Limitations

Max word count: 250

Use this section to identify any potential challenges or limitations that could affect your project's design, implementation, or outcomes. Be transparent and realistic—acknowledging risks shows thoughtful planning.

Consider the following:

- **Design or implementation challenges:** Are there any limitations in your project approach, tools, or timeline that could affect delivery?
- **Feasibility risks:** Could staffing, partnerships, funding, or external dependencies pose risks to success?
- **Bias or gaps:** Are there any limitations in how participants are selected, how data is collected, or how results are interpreted?
- **Mitigation strategies:** What steps will you take to reduce or manage these risks? How will you adapt if challenges arise?

4.0. Knowledge Exchange & Dissemination Plan

In this section, outline how your project findings and outputs will be shared to maximize their impact and usability. Your plan should focus on making information accessible, understandable, and actionable for your key audiences. Please note that your Knowledge Exchange & Dissemination Plan can be refined as projects progress

Consider the following:

- **Objectives:** What do you hope to achieve by sharing your findings (e.g., raise awareness, inform practice, influence policy)?
- **Audiences:** Who needs to know about your project? Be specific (e.g., public health units, community organizations, policymakers).
- **Activities:** How will you share your findings (e.g., reports, presentations, infographics, webinars, community meetings)? You are encouraged to present your work through [PHO webinars or Rounds](#). Plans can be refined as the project progresses.
- **Accessibility:** How will you ensure your outputs are clear, relevant, and usable for your audiences?

5.0. Evaluation Plan

Max word count: 250

In this section, describe how you will assess the success and impact of your project. Your evaluation should include both process (how the project was implemented) and outcome (what was achieved) measures.

Consider the following:

- How will you measure progress toward your project's specific objectives?
- What process measures will you track? (e.g., participation, reach, engagement, timelines)
- What outcome measures will you assess? (e.g., knowledge gained, practices improved, partnerships strengthened)
- What data or feedback will you collect to support your evaluation?
- How will you know if your project contributed to the broader SBC grant objectives:
 - **Supported the design and delivery of programs** that enhance communication strategies and leadership capacity within the public health system, while generating actionable knowledge.
 - **Promoted collaborative partnerships** among public health units, academic institutions and community organizations to implement public health initiatives.
 - **Facilitated the exchange and application of knowledge** across public health units and partners to strengthen system-wide learning and innovation.

6.0. Timeline and Activity Reporting

In this section, outline your project's key activities, timelines, and outputs to demonstrate how your work will be organized and tracked over time. Complete the activity timeline table to show when major project activities will occur and what outputs will be produced. Outputs will not be required to be submitted to PHO but will help to inform progress reports.

Be realistic and ensure your timeline aligns with the funding period:

- **Project start:** October/November 2025
- **Progress reports due:**
 - February 2026 (approximately 40% of activities should be completed by this point)
 - May 2026 (approximately 80% of activities should be completed by this point)
- **Final deliverables (including final reports of expenses and confirmation of completion of all activities) due:** September 30, 2026

Consider the following:

- What are the major phases or components of your project (e.g., planning, implementation, evaluation)?
- What are the key activities within each phase?
- When will each activity start and finish?
- Are there any dependencies or critical deadlines to be aware of?

7.0. Funding

Funds must be applied towards the direct costs of the project for which they are awarded. Funding will be disbursed in three installments, which will be determined based on the scope and details of each project submission. Installments are contingent upon the achievement of key project milestones and a report back on financial expenditures:

- October/November 2025: First installment
- March 2026: Second installment: Approximately 40% of activities should be completed by this point.
- June 2026: Final installment: Approximately 80% of activities should be completed by this point

Project teams are expected to allocate 10–20% of the total budget toward knowledge exchange and dissemination activities.

The table below highlights some acceptable uses of SBC Grant funding. SBC reserves the right to modify and/or add non-eligible items at any time through the tenure of the award.

Description	Eligible Project Expenses	Non-eligible Project Expenses
Personnel	• Compensation-related expenses that include salaries and related non- discretionary benefits • Release time for health unit staff	• Discretionary severance and separation package • Costs related to staff awards and recognition • Release time for academic partners and staff from other organizations
Materials & Supplies	• Office supplies, printing and photocopying • Data analysis software, such as NVivo, SPSS, or SAS • Computers, printers, and USB keys	• Standard monthly connection, rental for telephones, internet, or long-distance fees • Cell phones and smartphone devices • Extended warranty for equipment • Cost of construction, renovation or rental of laboratories or supporting facilities
Services	• Transcription fees • Costs associated with professional report layout, design, and production • Independent consultant services	• Hospitality, incidentals or food expenses for consultants and other contractors
Activities	• Cost of networking or meeting activities directly related to the project, including collaboration, planning and exchange activities, venue rental, and extra travel funds required for members and trainees separated by significant distance (over 24 km from workplace)	• Costs related to commuting between residence and place of employment • Costs for traffic or parking violations
Knowledge Exchange Costs	• Conference registration fees • Print or online material • Manuscript submission fees • Translation fees • Knowledge user engagement strategy • Educational sessions or forums	• Cost of entertainment, hospitality and gifts • Additional costs of attending conferences (e.g., travel, accommodation, meal stipends, etc.)
Other Items	• Data sets • Fees paid to study participants	• Overhead, or other administrative charges or fees • Patenting expenses • Alcohol

Part Three: Application Review and Appraisal

Applications that satisfy eligibility criteria are reviewed and appraised based on three categories:

1. Project Relevance and Design

- Clarity and importance of the public health issue being addressed.
- Alignment with one or both priority areas:
 - Building Trust in Public Health
 - Countering Misinformation and Disinformation
- Appropriateness of the project approach, including communication strategies, community engagement, and knowledge generation.
- Logical connection between objectives, activities, and expected outcomes.

2. Feasibility

- Realistic and achievable project plan within the funding period (October 2025 to September 2026), demonstrating meaningful progress aligned with the timing of funding installments.
- Availability of resources, infrastructure, and partnerships.
- Demonstrated experience and capacity of the project team.
- Consideration of risks and mitigation strategies.

3. Potential Impact

- Relevance to public health practice and policy in Ontario.
- Potential to generate actionable, transferable insights.
- Contribution to system-wide learning, innovation, and equity.
- Plans for knowledge exchange and dissemination.