

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. The Ministry of Health has allocated monies as a professional development fund for the HSPBA to administer. As a member of BCGEU covered by the HSPBA/HEABC Provincial Agreement, when will I be able to apply for funding to support my education/training?**

You may apply now. Applications will be accepted until August 31, 2023.

- 2. What period will the fund cover expenses related to education/training for?**

The fund is designed to cover education/training commenced between April 1, 2022 and August 31, 2023.

- 3. Is this a one-time offering?**

Subject to whether the fund is totally disbursed during this current offering, another announcement will be made in the future.

- 4. Is it possible to be approved for funding before I register for courses?**

Yes. However, you would have to submit an application and have received a conditional approval letter prior to your course registration deadline. Due to the very large volume of applications, we are unable to provide any estimated timeline in relation to application assessment or approvals.

- 5. How are applications prioritized? Is it first-come, first-served?**

The \$3M fund is to be allocated proportionally across three professional development categories:

- retraining HSPBA members for professions which are in short supply;
- ongoing required professional development for HSPBA members; and
- professional development for HSPBA members working specifically in rural and remote settings.

Applications will be processed in the order they are received, and any application that is approved will have satisfied the eligibility criteria and funding guidelines. A successful applicant must submit satisfactory expense receipts in accordance with instructions found in an application approval letter. Only then will reimbursement of approved expenses be issued.

- 6. Certain Ministry priority service areas are listed in the application form. Should I submit an application even if I can't say for certain that a particular priority service area would be advanced with my application?**

Yes. Do your best to answer how you think your application will serve the particular priority.

7. What types of education/training are considered as professional development?

Professional development includes a range of events/instruction, such as workshops, seminars, conferences, courses, or programs. It might require in-person attendance, distance learning, or clinical placement. It might be of relatively short duration or a more lengthy pursuit of credentials such as a diploma, advanced certification, or degree. This does not include professional association membership fees, exam fees, invigilation fees, or travel related to any of these exemptions.

8. How do I submit an application for a degree program, or multiple courses from the same provider?

If you wish to apply for funding towards your degree program, you must list specific courses to be considered in your application. The fund is not a scholarship and individual courses must be considered rather than a program as a whole. If your program began before the funding term period, only courses with start dates within the term period may be eligible.

In the case of a degree program, you may list multiple courses per application. Otherwise, please submit individual applications for each course.

9. What type of actual costs are considered for reimbursement?

Tuition fees, registration fees, the cost of required books/materials, and other reasonable education/training-related expenses are considered, to a maximum of \$2500.00.

Travel and accommodations costs include: mileage at the standard BCGEU rate of \$0.61/km (after May 1, 2022), and hotels or other lodgings. Transit passes will be reimbursed provided there is a detailed history of eligible trips and proof of purchase by the applicant.

Costs that are not eligible include: meals, fuel receipts, child care, student fees, exam fees, and memberships to professional organizations.

10. What if the training and associated costs are in a foreign currency?

As exchange rates fluctuate daily, please enter the cost on your application form in the currency that is listed by the provider. When submitting your expense claim, you must show both the original cost in the foreign currency and the actual amount paid in Canadian dollars at time of purchase.

11. How much detail do I need to provide about my course/program?

In order to assess eligibility per the funding guidelines, the following details are required:

- The start date for each course or courses
- the tuition amount and/or registration fee for each course
- the location of the course or courses
- If the web link doesn't fit in the application field, please include it in your email message
- Course description

12. I understand that travel and/or accommodation outside B.C. is not eligible for funding support. But is the cost of education/training (as described in Part A of the application form) eligible for funding support if it is offered outside B.C.?

Yes, provided it is offered within Canada. Courses delivered outside of Canada may be eligible for funding provided it is taken online within Canada.

13. Can I receive funding for travel costs if I have already reached the funding cap for my education?

No. Travel costs can only be approved in conjunction with the corresponding approved education costs.

14. What is the definition of “rural and remote”?

Rural and remote sites/locations are covered by the following criteria:

- All communities in the Northern Health Authority
- All communities listed in the HSPBA Collective Agreement article 37.02 – Isolation Allowance
- all communities on the current list of “eligible underserved communities” used to determine eligibility for BC student loan forgiveness:
https://studentaidbc.ca/repay/repayment-help/bcloan-forgiveness-program#Am_I_eligible
- All communities defined as rural, small rural or remote at page 46 of the Ministry of Health’s 2015 policy paper “Rural Health Services in BC: A Policy Framework to Provide a System of Quality Care.”

If you are unsure of whether your community is considered rural or remote, **please see the separate Rural and Remote document**, which includes the complete list of eligible communities, or send a query to HSFund@bcgeu.ca.

15. Is there an appeal process to access if my application is not approved in part or whole?

No. Every effort will be made to process applications fairly and in accordance with the eligibility and funding guidelines.

16. Can members apply to have wages paid from the fund?

No. In order to support professional development for as many members as possible, the fund will not pay for wages associated with an application.

17. Are my professional dues or association memberships fees eligible for this funding?

No. This funding is intended for tuition and course-related expenses such as books, travel, etc.

18. Is this fund a substitute for any collective agreement provisions?

No. The professional development fund is over and above the collective agreement. All provisions of the HSPBA/HEABC Provincial Agreement continue to apply, including Education Leave as per Article 17 and Unpaid leave as per Article 22.

19. How do I get any other question about this Professional Development Fund answered?

Please direct any other questions to: HSFund@bcgeu.ca