



Public Health
Agency of Canada



Promoting Health Equity:

Mental Health of Black Canadians Fund 2018-2024

The [Promoting Health Equity: Mental Health of Black Canadians Fund](#) supports community-based projects across Canada to develop more culturally-focused knowledge, capacity, and programs aimed at improving mental health in Black communities.



Highlights

Social determinants and inequities in health for Black people in Canada 3

A decolonized co-development approach 4

An innovative funding approach 5

Key principles of the MHBC Fund 6

Objectives of the MHBC Fund 6

Products and activities funded through the MHBC Fund 7

Types of knowledge included in culturally-focussed approaches for Black communities 8

Reaching diverse populations in a range of settings 9

Embedding intersectionality in community-based projects to advance health equity 10

Partnerships and collaborations 10

Sustainability 11

Funded projects 11

Funded projects map 12

More info and References 13

Social determinants and inequities in health for Black people in Canada

- In 2021, 1.5 million people in Canada reported being Black, accounting for 4.3% of Canada’s total population.¹ Black people in Canada experience long-standing systemic inequities rooted in anti-Black racism that impact their mental and physical health.^{2,3,4}
- Anti-Black racism is a structural determinant of health, rooted in and sustained by legacies of historical slavery in Canada, forced resettlements, immigration and colonialism.¹³
- Structural barriers, like anti-Black racism, discrimination, and intergenerational socioeconomic marginalization, contribute to: disproportionate impacts on rates of poverty, educational attainment, criminalization, housing below standards, food insecurity, and a lack of access to culturally competent, safe and anti-racist care.^{2,3,4,14}
- According to data from the 2020 General Social Survey on Social Identity, 58% of Black people aged 15 years or older reported that they had experienced discrimination in the five years before the COVID-19 pandemic¹. Almost 50% of Black people reported experiencing discrimination because of their race or colour and 27% due to their ethnicity or culture.¹ Black people were 8.4 times more likely to report being a victim of ethnic or racial discrimination than the non-racialized population.¹
- In 2021, just under one-third, representing 25.9% of the Black population, lived in unsuitable housing, in comparison to the number of the total population in Canada living in unsuitable housing was 9.7%.¹
- Inequities in social determinants of health lead to inequities in health. It is essential to consider the intersectional nature of these factors and their cumulative effects on mental health outcomes.^{2,4,8,11,12} For example, 15% of Black women in Canada reported fair or poor health compared to 11% of White women; and Black people in Canada wait more than twice as long for mental health care as White people (16 months vs. 7 months).⁴ Black individuals living in Canada experience six times higher rates of depression compared to the general population.⁵



Adinkra The Symbol of Knowledge

Those who do not know, can know.
Life long education and continued quest for knowledge.



A decolonized co-development approach

- Recognition of and centering the experiential knowledge and expertise of Black people and their communities.
- Collaboration with Black-led, Black-focused and Black-serving community-based organizations to generate new evidence on culturally responsive programs and interventions.
- Establishment of the Mental Health of Black Canadians Working Group reflecting an interdisciplinary group with expertise in research, policy, practice, and lived experience from diverse Black communities across Canada to provide strategic advice and recommendations on project funding, provide guidance on capacity building and knowledge mobilization, and strengthen evidence on mental health and its determinants for Black communities.

An innovative funding approach



An incubator funding stream focused on short-term funding to support capacity-building activities to enable the design, development, implementation and evaluation of projects that promote mental health and address its determinants for Black communities.



An implementation funding stream supported multi-year community-based projects to implement and evaluate culturally focused programs that promote mental health and address its determinants for Black communities. In addition, incubator stream funding recipients who demonstrated success in increasing their capacity and readiness were invited through a targeted solicitation to apply for additional funding to implement the project idea developed through the initial incubation process.



A sub-stream of the implementation funding stream to develop a national Knowledge Mobilization Network to facilitate knowledge mobilization and capacity building across all funded projects and with the broader community of Black Canadian practitioners, researchers, organizations and the people they serve.



A sub-stream of the implementation funding stream focused on Black LGBTQI+ populations to generate, synthesize and mobilize knowledge on the unique needs of Black LGBTQI+ populations in Canada and support future interventions or culturally responsive programs that address mental health and its determinants for these populations.

Key principles of the MHBC Fund



Address anti-Black racism



Social determinants of health approach



Leadership by Black Canadians



Health equity lens



Evidence-based action



Cultural competency and safety



Partnerships and collaboration

Objectives of the MHBC Fund

Increase:

- Understanding of the unique barriers to and social determinants of the mental health of Black communities in Canada;
- Knowledge of effective, culturally focused approaches and programs for improving the health of Black communities in Canada; and,
- Capacity within Black communities in Canada to address barriers to mental health.

Products and activities funded through the MHBC Fund

Participants benefitted from culturally adapted interactive courses and training, workshops, community fora, conferences, mentorship and employment support, mental health services navigation, cultural learning, mental health curriculum, videos, pamphlets, literature reviews, surveys, focus groups, posters, presentations, reports, journal articles and other such activities.

Explore the Black Wellness Network website and many resources from MHBC funded projects.

Culturally-focussed approaches and why they are needed

- Black people in Canada face barriers while seeking mental health services due to stigma, lack of culturally appropriate care, systemic lack of cultural inclusion and safety; a lack of knowledge about and information on mental health services; the cost of mental health services; geographical and locational barriers; judgmentalism and limits of resilience and other barriers.^{6,12}
- There is a need for greater awareness regarding anti-Black racism and how it occurs in Canadian institutions, health care settings, schools and other areas.^{9,10}
- In order to address social determinants of mental health, projects developed unique methods that address systemic anti-Black racism and other socioeconomic factors.

Types of knowledge included in culturally-focussed approaches for Black communities

Cultural Knowledge:

Projects prioritized understanding the cultural factors that influence the mental health of Black individuals. Cultural knowledge helped project professionals (e.g. service providers and health professionals) develop cultural competence, tailor interventions, and provide appropriate supports that respect and align with the cultural backgrounds of Black individuals.

- Projects implemented knowledge about the history, traditions, values, beliefs, and customs of Black communities within their workshops, curriculums and focus groups.

Socioeconomic Knowledge:

Recognizing the social and economic determinants of Black mental health was crucial in addressing the inequities that exist.

- Knowledge about socioeconomic factors such as low income, unemployment, housing insecurity, and limited access to quality education and healthcare was included in project activities and helped individuals identify and address the structural barriers that impact the mental well-being of Black individuals.

Anti-Racist Knowledge:

Projects noted that knowledge about systemic racism, implicit biases, and discrimination is crucial in promoting equitable mental health outcomes for Black individuals. Recognizing and challenging racist beliefs, attitudes, and practices within oneself and within professional settings is necessary to provide anti-racist mental health services and create a supportive environment for Black individuals.

- Many Black individuals have experienced various forms of trauma, including racial trauma, intergenerational trauma, or trauma related to systemic violence. Projects created various trauma-informed approaches, for example, for incarcerated individuals, to help understand the impact of trauma on mental health and develop strategies to provide trauma-informed care that prioritize safety, trust, empowerment, and resilience.

Having these types of knowledge about Black mental health and their impacts on daily life and professional practice is essential for developing effective interventions, reducing inequities, promoting mental health equity, and providing culturally competent care to Black individuals.

Reaching diverse populations in a range of settings

The funded projects have reached and impacted diverse Black populations including newcomers, immigrants, refugees, people on low incomes, individuals experiencing homelessness and individuals with health and mental health issues, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, children, youth, adults and seniors facing social and economic barriers and/or pre-existing mental health conditions.



Black people in Canada (e.g. children and youth, adults, parent/caregivers, and older adults)



Professionals (e.g. educators, health care workers)



Project sites and settings in which interventions were delivered (e.g. universities, correctional facilities)



Embedding intersectionality in community-based projects to advance health equity

- Projects recognized that Black individuals have diverse identities and experiences shaped by their cultural backgrounds, ethnicity, and combinations of other intersecting factors. Cultural factors, including cultural norms, values, and beliefs, can influence how Black individuals perceive and seek mental health support.^{2,4,8,11} It is crucial to provide culturally responsive and inclusive mental health services that consider the diverse needs and identities within Black communities^{11,12} and to work towards addressing systemic barriers and promoting equitable access to culturally responsive mental health programs and services.^{2,6,8,12}
- Applying an intersectional approach shed light on the barriers that Black project participants faced when accessing mental health services. These cumulative barriers included various combinations and intersections of a lack of culturally competent care, language barriers, stigma, financial constraints, and limited availability of services in their communities.^{6,8,11} Addressing these barriers and promoting equitable access to quality mental health care is crucial for supporting Black individuals' mental well-being.^{6,8,11,12}

Partnerships and collaborations

Projects developed and sustained partnerships with various sectors, including for example, the not-for-profit sector, academic/research sector, organizations within and outside of the health sector (e.g. mental health associations, community housing, food access organizations, schools, police services, Black cultural associations, art sector, etc.) and other levels of government.

Through active community engagement and empowerment, projects fostered partnerships between, for example, mental health organizations and community leaders to develop targeted programs that address the unique needs and challenges faced by Black individuals, leveraging collective expertise, resources, and networks to have a greater impact.

Sustainability

Community members contribute their time, skills, and expertise to volunteer, participate in fundraising efforts, and provide other forms of support to ensure the sustainability and success of mental health projects.

Project referrals and recommendations of the projects through word of mouth to friends and family and participant testimonies to help facilitate participation in the projects.



New partnerships



Increased in-house capacity



Knowledge Mobilization Network



Matched/alternate funding

Funded projects

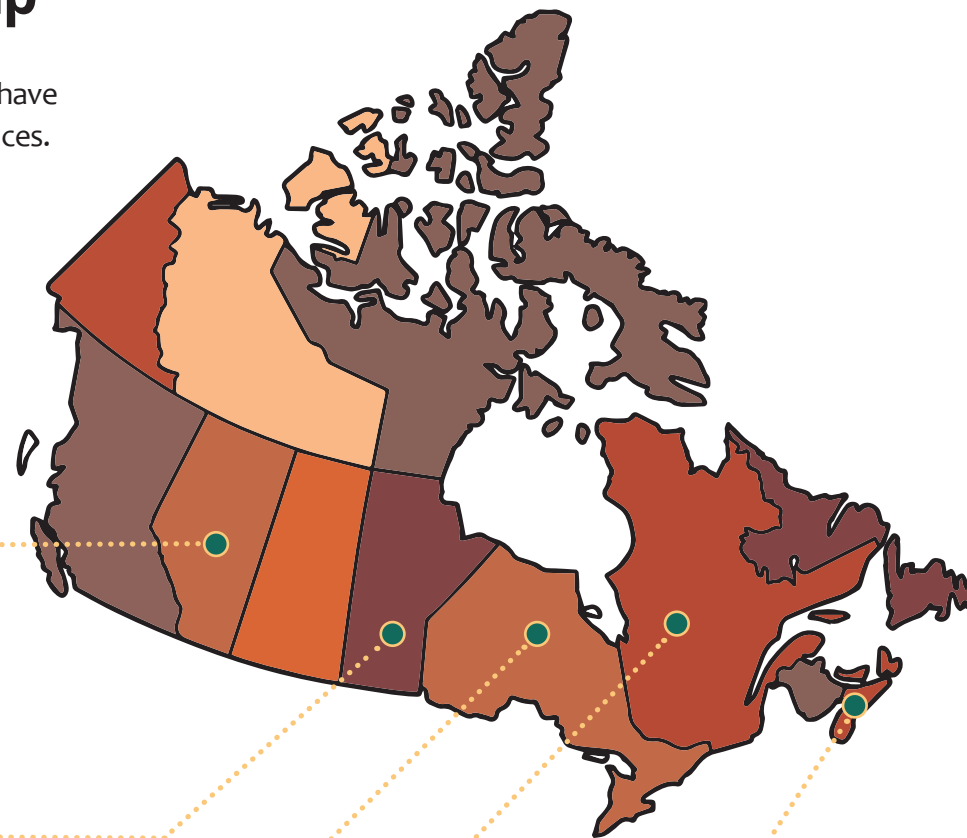
From 2018 to 2024, a total of 23 projects were funded through the MHBC Fund. Explore the MHBC project stories to learn more about some of the specific projects that were funded.



Explore the interactive version of the Map that includes both MHBC funded projects and other similar community-based projects.

Funded Projects Map

The various streams of the MHBC Fund have supported 23 projects across five provinces.



Alberta

- University of Calgary
- Council for the Advancement of African Canadians (Africa Centre)
- Ribbon Rouge Foundation

Manitoba

- Barbados Association of Winnipeg Inc.

Ontario

- Kaleo Productions Inc.
- Aspire for Higher (2)
- Women's Health in Women's Hands Community Health Centre
- Black Creek Community Health Centre
- Black Health Alliance
- University of Ottawa
- TAIBU Community Health Centre (2)
- York University
- Across Boundaries - An Ethnoracial Mental Health Center (In partnership with Adornment Stories)

Nova Scotia

- Dalhousie University
- African Diaspora Association of the Maritimes (ADAM)
- The Lesbian Gay Bisexual Youth Project society (The Youth Project)

Quebec

- Regroupement des intervenant(e)s d'origine haïtienne
- Événement Hoodstock (2)
- Université du Québec à Montréal
- Head and Hands / À deux Mains

References:

1. Statistics Canada. Black History Month 2023... by the numbers https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/dai/smr08/2023/smr08_270
2. Salami B, Idi Y, Anyieth Y, Cyuzuzo L, Denga B, Alaazi D, Okeke-Ihejirika P. Factors that contribute to the mental health of Black youth. *CMAJ*. 2022 Oct 24;194(41):E1404-E1410. doi: 10.1503/cmaj.212142. PMID: 36280243; PMCID: PMC9616134.
3. Husbands, W., Lawson, D.O., Etowa, E.B. et al. Black Canadians' Exposure to Everyday Racism: Implications for Health System Access and Health Promotion among Urban Black Communities. *J Urban Health* 99, 829–841 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-022-00676-w>
4. Social Determinants and Inequities in Health for Black Canadians: A Snapshot, Ottawa, ON: Social Determinants of Health Division, Public Health Agency of Canada. 2020
5. Cénat, J. M., Kogan, C., Noorishad, P., Hajizadeh, S., Dalexis, R. D., Ndengeyingoma, A., & Guerrier, M. (2021). Prevalence and correlates of depression among Black individuals in Canada: The major role of everyday racial discrimination. *Depression and Anxiety*, 38(9), 886-895. 10.1002/da.23158
6. Planey, A. M., Smith, S. M., Moore, S., & Walker, T. D. (2019). Barriers and facilitators to mental health help-seeking among African American youth and their families: A systematic review study. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 101, 190-200. 10.1016/j.chilyouth.2019.04.001
7. Codjoe, L., Barber, S., Ahuja, S., Thornicroft, G., Henderson, C., Lempp, H., & N'Danga-Koroma, J. (2021). Evidence for interventions to promote mental health and reduce stigma in Black faith communities: systematic review. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 56(6), 895-911. 10.1007/s00127-02102068-y
8. Fante-Coleman, T., & Jackson-Best, F. (2020). Barriers and Facilitators to Accessing Mental Healthcare in Canada for Black Youth: A Scoping Review. *Adolescent Research Review*, 5(2), 115-136. 10.1007/s40894-020-00133-2
9. Ontario's Anti-Black Racism Strategy <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-anti-black-racism-strategy>
10. HEALTH DISPARITIES, SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH, AND SYSTEMIC ANTI-BLACK RACISM DURING COVID-19: A CALL TO ACTION FOR SOCIAL WORK <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2779516827?pq-origsite=summon&parentSessionId=vC5QKIhmpj6cA4BaaK%2F8TukxY8s93KUfOuSovMXYdxY%3D&sourceType=Scholarly%20Journals>
11. Stephanie Leitch, J Hope Corbin, Nikita Boston-Fisher, Christa Ayele, Peter Delobelle, Fungisai Gwanzura Ottemöller, Tulani Francis L Matenga, Oliver Mweemba, Ann Pederson, Josette Wicker, Black Lives Matter in health promotion: moving from unspoken to outspoken, *Health Promotion International*, Volume 36, Issue 4, August 2021, Pages 1160–1169, <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daaa121>
12. Salami B, Denga B, Taylor R, Ajayi N, Jackson M, Asefaw M, Salma J. Access to mental health for Black youths in Alberta. *Health Promot Chronic Dis Prev Can*. 2021;41(9):245-53. <https://doi.org/10.24095/hpcdp.41.9.01>
13. National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health (2018). Let's Talk: Racism and Health Equity (Rev. ed.). Antigonish, NS: National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health, St. Francis Xavier University <https://nccdh.ca/images/uploads/comments/Lets-Talk-Racism-and-Health-Equity-EN.pdf>
14. Pan-Canadian Health Inequalities Data Tool. A joint initiative of the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Pan-Canadian Public Health Network, Statistics Canada and the Canadian Institute for Health Information. Available from: <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/health-inequalities/Indicat>.



More Information:

[Promoting Health Equity: Mental Health of Black Canadians Initiative](#)

[Promoting Health Equity: Mental Health of Black Canadians Fund Outcomes & Impacts](#)

[MHBC Project Stories](#)

[Black Wellness Network Website](#)

Graphic Design:

Michael Scheianu (fiveline.ca)