

# Health Data Platform (HDP)

## Frequently Asked Questions for Researchers

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## 1. What is the Health Data Platform (HDP)?

*The HDP supports research and analysis both within the health sector and in academia, by allowing access to health data from multiple sources to be brought together as required (on-demand), linked, de-identified and analyzed on a single secure platform.*

*The goal of the HDP is three-fold:*

- *Provide more timely, secure and consistent access to integrated 'big' health data*
- *Establish a standard and enhanced privacy and security landscape*
- *Increase process transparency and efficiency for data providers and data consumers*

*Using consistent and streamlined processes, users can expect a faster and more transparent experience when requesting and obtaining approval to data access. Users will now have a consistent and single source to request and access data, rather than multiple.*

*Although the HDP is being developed and led by the Ministry of Health with matched funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research (SPOR), organizations contributing data are included in its governance.*

*For more information on the HDP, please go to our HDP website [homepage](#).*

**Note:** Please see question #4 (How and who will govern the HDP?) for further detail on the governance of the HDP.

## 2. Why do we need the HDP?

*Currently, researchers and health authority analysts experience a time-consuming and non-transparent request, approval and data access process. The HDP introduces standardized and streamlined process for requests, approval and data access, greatly improving timeliness and transparency to safely access data.*

*Each data source researchers and analysts may wish to access is individually governed and supported by its own set of request, approval and data access business processes. Managing multiple applications, varying timelines and the needs of each process can be a cumbersome and time-consuming experience.*

*Working in this siloed environment has resulted in difficulties in achieving dependable timely access to data, effecting our ability to unlock the value of our growing data resource.*

For more information on the HDP, please go to our HDP website [homepage](#).

### 3. How is the data in the HDP being kept safe and individual privacy being protected?

*The HDP Initiative was developed in partnership with privacy experts and has been reviewed by the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. The program complies with B.C.'s strict laws and embodies world-leading best practices for data privacy and security.*

*The HDP has developed a Data Access Framework that complies with existing legislation and based on the International Five SAFEs Privacy and Security Framework (Five SAFEs) and three approval paths. The HDP uses only de-identified data, or data stripped of any information that could reasonably be used to re-identify. Even still, data is treated as confidential, sensitive, and subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.*

*All Analysts or Researchers must submit an application for data access, which is then rigorously reviewed and screened using the 5 SAFEs privacy model. If the application is approved, the data can be accessed only in a secure setting and analysts will not have access to personally identifiable information. Currently, two have been identified: HDP Secure Environment operated by, and under the oversight of, the Ministry of Health and the Secure Research Environment operated by PopData BC.*

**Note:** Please see question #4 (How and who will govern the HDP?) for further detail on the governance of the HDP and question #11 (How are the 5 safes used to determine if a request is pre-approved or not?) on the application of the 5 Safes.

### 4. How and who will govern the HDP?

*The HDP has both an Operations Committee and the Health Data Council for its operations and request management, respectively. Overall executive oversight is provided by the MoH's Leadership Council and SCPMAE.*

*The governance structure of the HDP is shown below. It is important to note that the Health Data Council will be responsible for reviewing cross-organizational data access requests, rather than the current environment which requires individual review by each organization. In addition, the Data Stewardship Committee will continue to review requests for access to data for a research purpose, as required by legislation, for PharmaNet data and data from a designated Health Information Bank.*

*The structure will focus on representation from the Ministry and Health Authorities who bring perspectives into privacy, research operations, and sector analytics needs. Work will continue to refine this structure and transition to an ongoing operations structure where we will see more inclusive membership representative of the broader community, including citizens.*

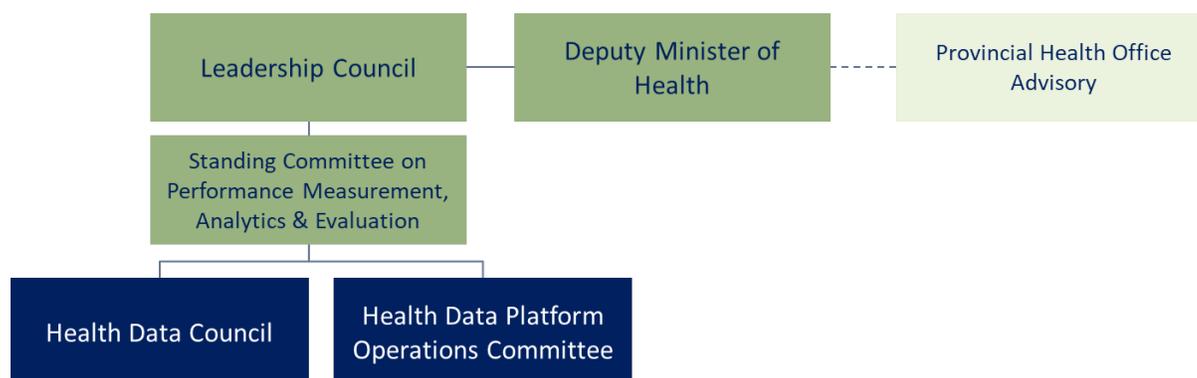


Figure 1. HDP governance structure

**Health Data Council Membership from the following organizations:**

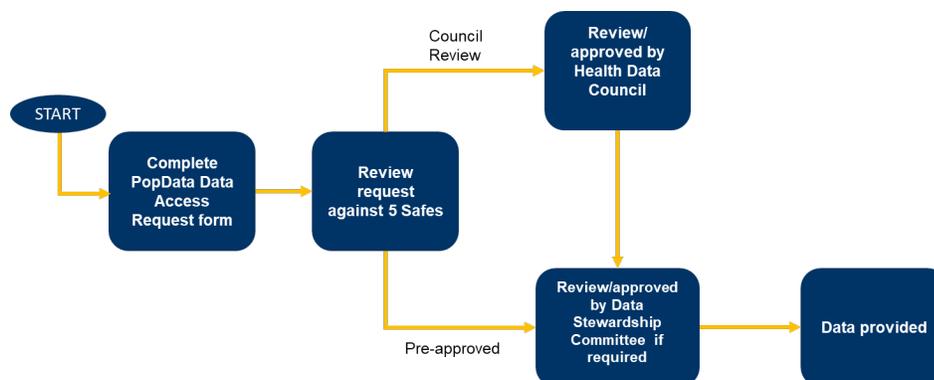
Vancouver Island Health Authority  
 Vancouver Coastal Health Authority  
 Fraser Health Authority  
 Interior Health Authority  
 Northern Health Authority  
 Providence Health Care  
 Provincial Health Services Authority  
 BC Ministry of Health  
 First Nations Health Authority

**Health Data Platform Operations Committee Membership from the following organizations:**

Vancouver Island Health Authority  
 Vancouver Coastal Health Authority  
 Fraser Health Authority  
 Interior Health Authority  
 Northern Health Authority  
 Providence Health Care  
 First Nations Health Authority  
 BC SUPPORT Unit  
 Provincial Health Services Authority  
 BC Ministry of Health

**Note:** Please see question #5 (How do I request access the HDP?) for further detail on how to make a request to the HDP for access to data sets.

## 5. How do I request access to the HDP? *\*Updated\**



**Step 1 – Application for Data:** Contact [dataaccess@popdata.bc.ca](mailto:dataaccess@popdata.bc.ca) for support on completing your Data Access Request (DAR) form and submitting your request.

**Step 2 – 5 Safes Review:** Once your request is submitted, it is assessed against the 5 Safes. If the request meets all 5 Safes, it is pre-approved and proceeds for review by the Data Stewardship Council, if required. If it is not pre-approved, the request proceeds to review by the Health Data Council and then the Data Stewardship Council, if required.

**Step 3 – Approvals:** Once final approval has been received, the data is assembled and access to the HDP environment is authorized.

### Notes:

**Require assistance from PopData with your COVID-19 data request?** Please see: [www.popdata.bc.ca/COVID-19\\_research\\_support](http://www.popdata.bc.ca/COVID-19_research_support)

**\*Further details\*** All applicants will be asked to complete a Data Access Request (DAR) form as part of their request to access data from the HDP. Requesting data from the HDP will follow a new streamlined request, approval and access process. All supporting documentation required to be included as part of your request has not changed (e.g. Valid Ethics Certificates, funding notifications, etc.). The DAR form will indicate which supporting documentation is required to be included with your request.

## 6. How are PopData, the BC SUPPORT Unit and the HDP working together to support data access?

*The HDP is an additional service to the sector. It does not replace current data services in the Ministry or Health Authorities.*

*PopData BC, the BC SUPPORT Unit and HDP are working collaboratively on this project. PopData will continue to be the front counter service for health data requests from researchers, which currently includes cross-organizational requests. The HDP will offer a separate front counter for organization-based health (health authority or Ministry of Health) data requests, operated from the Ministry of Health.*

*The mission of the BC SUPPORT (Support for People and Patient-Oriented Research and Trials) Unit, which implements the national Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research (SPOR) and is an operational unit of the BC Academic Health Science Network (BC AHSN), is to support high-quality patient-oriented research in British Columbia. One of the commitments to support the goals and objectives of the Unit is to build and implement a program for a distributed health data environment, which has been recognized as critical to health system transformation.*

*Conceptualizing a provincial HDP to support research within the context of the BC SUPPORT Unit's goals has provided a means to re-envision this commitment. The process has enabled new partnerships aimed at accelerating the sharing of data to external parties; streamlining data requests and access processes; and developing products and services that promote greater responsible data use and accessibility.*

## 7. How will I hear of the status of my request? **\*New\***

**Step 1 - Receipt of approval:** *Once your DAR has been approved (either through the pre-approval or the HDP Data Council review pathway), the secretariat for the HDP Data Council will be in contact with your approval results and any follow up questions.*

**Step 2 - Receipt of HDP credentials:** *Next, you will receive your HDP credentials for logging into the HDP environment.*

**Step 3: Complete your training:** *You will need to complete your HDP training, which can be accessed via the [HDP Website](#).*

**Step 3 – Questions?:** *If you have any questions about your training, accessing the HDP environment or using the HDP environment, contact [mohanalytics@gov.bc.ca](mailto:mohanalytics@gov.bc.ca)*

8. How can I add users to my HDP environment? **\*New\***

Contact [mohanalytics@gov.bc.ca](mailto:mohanalytics@gov.bc.ca) with your request.

9. When will the HDP be ready? **\*Updated\***

*The HDP launched on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to respond to high priority COVID-19 data requests.*

*Starting April 2021, access to the HDP will be open to all projects.*

10. What changes will I see with the launch of the HDP? **\*Updated\***

- *Starting April 2021:*
  - *New Cardiac and Transfusion datasets available*
  - *HDP will be available to all types of requests.*

**Note:** *Please see question #5 (How do I request access the HDP?) for more information regarding the data access request and approval process for data.*

11. How are the 5 safes used to determine if a request is pre-approved or not?

*When a request is submitted to the HDP, it undergoes a review against the 5 safes to make informed decisions when protecting data privacy and security and making decisions that benefit the people of BC. The criteria will evolve over time. The 5 safes for the HDP for the July launch are as follows:*

- 1. Safe People**  
Principal investigator is from a Canadian Institution **OR**  
Analyst from a BC health authority or MoH as approved by the organization's delegate
- 2. Safe Project**  
Research: High priority research project as determined by Strategic Research Advisory Council (SRAC)  
Organization: High Priority Organization Project as determined by the requesting organization designate
- 3. Safe Data**  
Core Data set provided by each organization
- 4. Safe Environment**  
HDP secure environment **OR**  
PoPData secure research environment
- 5. Safe Output**  
Statistical products

## 12. What data sets are available in the HDP? **\*Updated\***

Data Set	Scope
<b>COVID test lab data</b>	Individuals tested and their result, starting Jan 2020
<b>COVID ICU Admissions</b>	Starting Jan 2020
<b>COVID Acute Admissions</b>	Starting Jan 2020
<b>Cardiac Service British Columbia (CSBC)</b> <b>*New*</b>	Basic information on patients in BC who received interventional cardiology, cardiac surgery or attended an A Fib Clinic  January 1, 2012 to March 31, 2020
<b>Transfusion Registry</b> <b>*New*</b>	Subset of the transfusion registry dataset including whole blood, plasma and platelet recipients  Fiscal year 2011/2012 to 2019/2020
<b>Mortality Data - Vital Statistics</b>	2008 - current year
<b>Fee for Service (MSP) Data</b>	All available years, including open year
<b>Chronic Disease Registry</b>	Latest version
<b>Discharge Abstract Data (DAD)</b>	All available years, including open year
<b>National Ambulatory Care Reporting System (NACRS)</b>	All available years, including open year
<b>Pharmanet</b>	All available years, including open year
<b>Client Roster</b>	Latest version
<b>811</b>	Respiratory only - All available years

### 13. What features and tools are available in the HDP? **\*Updated\***

*The HDP environment will continue to develop and plans for iterative releases are planned in 2021. Please see below for a description of currently available and upcoming technology and tools:*

#### Programming:



R programming language is available for data analysis.



Distribution of Python and R programming languages that aims to simplify package management and deployment.



Python programming language is available for data analysis.

#### Tools: **Available April 2021**



Cloud-based engineering tool used for processing and transforming large data sets and exploring the data through machine learning models



#### Bring Your Own Data

Import data from other sources into the HDP environment that you need for your analysis.

#### Support: **Available April 2021**



#### Support Model

HDP Front desk available for timely request and technical support for HDP requests and work being conducted in the HDP secure environment.



#### Training

Learning for approved requestors on accessing and using the HDP environment.

### 14. What datasets will be available next and when? **\*Updated\***

*The HDP Project Team, Operations Committee and Project Board are currently planning which data sets will be available and when. The Project team will provide updates as they become available through the HDP Newsletter and [website](#). A new release of the HDP, which could include new tools, support and/or data, will be released quarterly.*

Questions? Please contact the HDP team at: [mohanalytics@gov.bc.ca](mailto:mohanalytics@gov.bc.ca)