The Bridge Grant

Program summary

The Bridge Grant is a family support program offered by Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island (CHFVI) that assists with the costs of health-related travel and equipment for Island kids and is intended to fill the gaps that exist in public funding. The program is designed for families with significant financial need that struggle to afford the associated costs, or that have barriers limiting their ability to access health care or equipment for their child. The The Bridge Grant Program is funded by the generous support of CHFVI donors.

Children/youth must meet all the following criteria:

- ✓ 0 to19 years old (up to 20th birthday),
- ✓ live on Vancouver Island or the surrounding islands,
- ✓ have a medical condition, health challenge, or disability confirmed by a health care professional,
- ✓ require financial support to cover the cost of the item(s) in the application, and
- ✓ have not exceeded the lifetime The Bridge Grant maximum of $12,500.

The Bridge Grant is a program accessed through referral only. A health care professional familiar with the applicant's needs and family circumstances should complete the online application with the consent of the applicant's parent or primary guardian.

Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island prioritizes applications from referring health professionals working within public systems like health authorities, school districts, and community organizations. Examples of health professionals include but are not limited to the following:

- audiologists
- behaviour consultants
- counsellors
- dieticians
- infant development consultants
- nurses
- occupational therapists
- orthotists
- physicians
- physiotherapists
- program navigators (on behalf of a health professional)
- social workers
- speech language pathologists

Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island encourages families to access available public resources to complement The Bridge Grant funding. The program is intended to fill gaps through a low-barrier, supportive, and dignified application process.

General guidelines

- The Bridge Grant provides funds to support future costs of health-related travel and equipment. The program does not reimburse expenses incurred before an application was approved. In case of emergency travel, special consideration may be available.
- Health professionals may apply on behalf of families for both travel and equipment on one application.
- If there are multiple children in a family who require The Bridge Grant support, a separate application is required for each child.
- Children may have more than one application submitted on their behalf during their lifetime and may be eligible for up to $12,500 in cumulative funding.
- All applications will be reviewed in consideration of the available program funding at the time of submission.
- If any parts of the application require further attention or information, a Program Navigator will contact the health professional and reach out to the family if appropriate.
- For travel funding, a document confirming appointments/treatments is required and should be uploaded through the online system. Documentation can also be sent later by email but may result in the application taking longer to process.
- Travel funding is intended to support one caregiver who is traveling with the child.
- Consent by the parent/guardian should accompany each application and may be provided by verbal confirmation, or the form can be printed, signed, and uploaded with the online application. Refer to Appendix C.
- Use of equipment loan libraries are encouraged for short term equipment use or to trial equipment prior to purchase.
- Funding will be paid to the vendor when equipment is approved. The family, or the health professional acting on their behalf orders the equipment. Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island is responsible for closing the transaction by paying the vendor.
- Travel allowance will be paid directly to the family, preferably by direct deposit.
- Applications will be reviewed as quickly as possible; however, the program is not set up to handle urgent requests where the funds are required immediately.
- Approved funds expire if not used within 1 month for travel and 3 months for equipment from the approval date and a new application will need to be submitted.

- The Bridge Grant does not fund dental work, medication, consumables, safety equipment, and services such as therapies and those related to service animals. Also not funded are administrative costs to complete the application, and labour or repair costs of equipment.

When a family's needs do not fit the The Bridge Grant criteria, we are committed to offering navigation to relevant resources and supports. To explore navigation support, a referring professional can connect with a Program Navigator.
Contacts: Cheryl Jordan and Roanna McLeod | bearessentials@islandkidsfirst.com | 1-833-751-0874 (toll-free)

What we fund

Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island's The Bridge Grant program is focused on health-related travel and equipment.

Health-related travel

Health professionals apply on behalf of families for funding to support travel within British Columbia when a child requires health care outside of their home community. Confirmed appointments and/or treatment within 30 days of the application date are acceptable.

Approved applicants will be provided with travel funding based on a calculation that accounts for the departure location, the intended destination, and the estimated duration of stay (Appendix D). The calculation accounts for round trips for the child and one caregiver. Approved travel allowance is provided directly to the family shortly before their departure date and can be used to assist with costs such as gas, parking, meals, and incidentals.

The Bridge Grant funding isn't intended to cover the full cost families incur related to medical travel for their children. Families are expected to use the province's Travel Assistance Program for BC Ferries when eligibility requirements fit.

The following guidelines are specific to health-related travel:

- For families to receive funding prior to their travel, a completed application must be received a minimum of 10 business days to guarantee funding on time.
- Travel support for regular, routine healthcare appointments such as dentistry, optometry or vaccinations will not be considered.
- Any travel related to any type of prenatal care will not be considered.
- For long-term medical stays, The Bridge Grant will set up weekly or bi-weekly payments and request monthly check-ins with the referring professional.
- When travel is required out of province for a medical need unavailable within BC, applications will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Health related accommodation

- Health related accommodation is only considered when traveling further than 45 kms and requiring multiday appointments.
- Families are encouraged to use subsidized home away from home resources of the Children's Health Foundation when available. The room rate at Jeneece Place and Q· ʷalayu House is $26.25 per night for families (includes GST); CHFVI subsidizes the remaining nightly cost. Families are encouraged to pay when possible.
- In Vancouver, families are encouraged to use subsidized accommodation (e.g. Ronald McDonald House), when available.
- When subsidized accommodation is not available to families, partial accommodation support can be applied for. Once approved, please request a medical rate at the time of booking and email the booking confirmation to the Program Navigators for accommodation allowance. Contact a Program Navigator for a list of affordable hotel options if needed.

Health-related equipment

Health care professionals may apply on behalf of families for funding to support the purchase of health-related equipment. Families are encouraged to pursue the most cost-effective option that best meets the child/youth's health needs. Approved equipment expenses are typically paid directly to the vendor. Local and/or Canadian vendors are preferred.

Types of eligible equipment include, but are not limited to:

- Medical equipment such as hearing aids, orthotics, or wheelchairs
- Adaptive equipment such as specialized seating or a standing frame
- Assistive technology hardware and software such as an iPad with special communication software for a non-verbal child. There is a requirement that the equipment has been successfully trialed prior to submitting The Bridge Grant application.

Complementary funding

The Bridge Grant is intended to fill the gaps that exist within current health care programs. When public funding sources are not available, or only partially available for a child, The Bridge Grant welcomes applications to fund the identified gap. The Bridge Grant may consider co-funding alongside other funders for families experiencing high financial stress.

The Bridge Grant funding isn't intended to cover the full cost families incur related to medical travel for their children.

It is expected that families and referring professionals will source complementary funding for costly medical equipment. If complementary funding is not available, The Bridge Grant may need to cap funding based on available funds at the time of the application.

Please refer to Appendix B for a list of available funding sources.

How to apply

1. **Assess need and program fit**

- Identify need for health-related travel or equipment support.
- Consider available public resources to address needs (Appendix B) and whether The Bridge Grant is a fit.
- Introduce The Bridge Grant to the family. The Bridge Grant is a donor funded program of the Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island and aims to provide financial support to families most in need.
- Receive verbal permission or written consent from the family to proceed with an application.

2. **Gather information**

For privacy reasons, the online system does not have the ability to store information. Applications need to be completed in full at one time. Closing the online application prior to submitting will result in loss of data so it is recommended that all necessary information is gathered and accessible prior to starting an application.

- Work with the family to acquire the necessary information for a successful application (Appendix A). This may include connecting with equipment vendors for quotes/estimates, supporting the family to plan their health-related travel, helping the family get an appointment/treatment schedule, and gaining an understanding of funding confirmed from other sources.
- Connect with the Program Navigators as needed. Their role is to help you help families and to facilitate successful applications. Please reach out!

3. **Complete online form and submit required documents**

- Health professionals can access the online application here and reach out to a Program Navigator for the password.
- Incomplete or unclear forms will result in delayed processing.
- Upload required documents through the online system or send shortly after by email.

4. **Application status**

- You will receive an email confirming that the application was received. Please contact us if you don't receive confirmation immediately.
- All applications will be reviewed to determine suitability, and to prioritize need alongside available funding.
- If any parts of the application require further attention or information, a Program Navigator will contact the referring professional and reach out to the family when appropriate.
- Equipment applications will be reviewed on a weekly basis and may be deferred based on available funds.
- Final granting decisions will be communicated as quickly as possible to the health professional and the family.

5. **Support family with acquisition**

- The family or the referring professional is responsible for ordering most equipment or booking accommodation. A Program Navigator will close the transaction by paying the vendor.
- If travel funding is approved, a Program Navigator will request banking information and arrange payment to the family.
- The Bridge Grant will follow up with a short survey that will be emailed to the family. Participation in the survey is optional, but it is appreciated to help assess and strengthen the Program.

Privacy commitment

As a registered charity, Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island (CHFVI) collects personal information under the authority of the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA). Personal information (Appendix A) collected through an application to the The Bridge Grant program will be used for the purpose of evaluating a family's eligibility to receive a grant, to coordinate disbursal of the funds, and to help the family access other relevant support programs.

Non-identifying information gathered from the application may be used on an aggregate basis for understanding need, reporting trends, demonstrating impact, and improving services.

Information in this application will be reviewed in confidence by CHFVI staff. CHFVI staff at Jeneece Place and Q̓ʷalayu House may be consulted to determine occupancy options for families. All personal information will be used only as specified and stored securely.

If you have questions about the collection, use, or storage of this information by CHFVI, please contact the Director of Family and Programs at 250-940-4950 ext. 128.

Online application link

If you need the online application link, have questions, or require technical support, please contact a Program Navigator:

Cheryl Jordan and Roanna McLeod support@islandkidsfirst.com

1-833-751-0874 (toll-free) | 250-940-4948

Appendix A - Summary of application questions

About the referring professional

- Name
- Profession, Organization
- Contact Details (phone and email)

About the applicant

- Child/Youth Name
- Parent/Guardian Name(s)
- Contact Details (phone and email)
- Date of Birth
- Identifies as Indigenous?
- Recent immigrant, refugee, or newcomer to Canada?

Family financial circumstances

- Confirm current and significant inability to afford the travel or equipment
- Primary contributing factor to the significant financial need at this time

About the medical condition, disability, or health challenge

- Description of condition related to the application request
- Life-threatening? Lifelong?

Request details – health-related travel*

- Departure location
- Health travel destination
- Departure and return date
- Accommodation plan including preferred vendor and cost including taxes
- Additional travel details (optional)

****A document confirming appointments/treatment is required.***

Request details – health-related equipment*

- Type of equipment
- Description of how the equipment supports the applicant
- Urgency of the equipment
- Equipment vendor
- Equipment cost including taxes and shipping

**A quote/estimate from the equipment vendor is required*

Complementary funding and support

- Other funding and support pursued
- Confirmed funding amounts from other sources (if applicable)
- Amount family can contribute

Informed consent of parent/guardian

- Consent to submit information and for future communication related to the application (Appendix C. Consent Form)

Professional acknowledgement

- Confirm the family is in financial need of support; awareness program is to use donor-based funds for families in greatest need

Digital signature of referring professional

- Signature indicating you verify the information in the application and support its submission

Appendix B – Complementary funding and support

The Bridge Grant is intended to fill the gaps that exist with current health care programs. If the following funding sources are not available, or only partially available for a child, The Bridge Grant welcomes applications to fund the identified gap.

1. **An extended health benefits plan through place of employment or privately purchased**

2. **Ministry of Children and Families**

   Autism Funding - funding for autism intervention services and therapies.

   At Home Program - support children and teens with a severe disability or complex health care needs.

3. **Ministry of Social Development & Poverty Reduction**

   Healthy Kids Program - basic optical care, hearing assistance, and dental treatment for children in low-**income families.**

4. **Ministry of Health**

   Pharmacare - helps BC residents with the cost of certain medical supplies as well as pharmaceuticals. Travel Assistance Program - helps alleviate some of the transportation costs for eligible BC residents who must travel within the province for non-emergency medical specialist services.
   BC Family Residence Program - accommodation assistance to enable families to stay together when their child requires medical care at BC Children's Hospital or Sunny Hill Health Centre.

5. **First Nations Health Authority**

   Medical supplies and equipment - medical equipment and supplies for personal use. Mental Health Benefit – counselling services from a qualified mental health provider. Vision care - covers eye exams and eyeglasses. Pharmacy - prescription drugs, over the counter drugs, and compounds. Dental - covers eligible dental treatments.
   Medical Travel – supports travel costs for medical related travel.

6. **Government of Canada**

   Jordan's Principle - supports First Nations children to access products, services, and supports they need. It can help with a wide range of health, social, and educational needs and medical travel funding is available. The Jordan's Principle Hub for BC is also a helpful resource.
   Canada Dental Benefit – intended to help lower dental costs for eligible families.

7. **Métis Nation of BC**

   Métis Family Connections – focused on helping families build a network of support
   Miyoopimatishihk (Wellbeing) Program– financial support to assist with the costs of a wide range of services, programs and products.

8. **Canadian Cancer Society**

Cancer Travel and Accommodation Services - dedicated to reducing the financial burden associated with travelling for cancer treatment across the province.

This is not an exhaustive list of complementary funding sources.

Appendix C – Parent/guardian consent form

Informed consent for parent/guardian

As a registered charity, Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island (CHFVI) collects personal information under the authority of the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA). Personal information collected through an application to the The Bridge Grant program will be used for the purpose of evaluating your eligibility to receive funding support, to coordinate disbursal of the funds, and to receive follow-up communication from CHFVI.

Use of information
Information in this application will be reviewed in confidence by CHFVI staff for the primary purpose of determining your child's eligibility to receive funding through the The Bridge Grant program. All personal information collected will be used only as specified and stored securely.

Non-identifying information gathered from this application may be used on an aggregate basis for understanding needs, reporting trends, demonstrating impact, and improving services.

If you have questions about the collection, use, or storage of this information by the CHFVI, please contact the Director of Family Programs and Impact at 250-940-4950 ext. 128.

Agreement
By agreeing below, you hereby consent to:

1. the collection of personal information for the purposes set out above,
2. permission for your referring professional to submit the information in this application form and any required documents accompanying the form,
3. permission for Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island to communicate directly with you, your referring professional, and vendors to coordinate your The Bridge Grant funding.

Your signature indicates you have read, understood, and agree to the above terms.

Full name of parent/guardian (print clearly):

Signature of parent/guardian: Date (MM/DD/YYYY):

Professional acknowledgement

As the health professional applying on the behalf of the applicant, I can confirm the family is in financial need of support and I am aware the The Bridge Grant program is aiming to use donor-based funds for families in greatest need.

Your referring professional can indicate your verbal consent on the application form or upload your signed consent form through the online application system or it can be emailed to support@islandkidsfirst.com. Thank you.

Appendix D - Mileage chart

The Bridge Grant travel funding (2025/26)

1 Day travel funding

The following chart will give you and the family an estimate of the travel funding amount. The Bridge Grant Program Navigators will calculate the mileage using this chart and the information you provide and then add it to the request total if you indicate travel funding is required.

		Travelling to									
		NW Coast (Gold River)	N. Island (Port Hardy)	West Coast (Tofino)	Port Alberni	Campbell River	Comox Valley (Courtenay)	Oceanside (Parksville)	Nanaimo	Cowichan Valley (Duncan)	Victoria
Departing from	North West Coast (Gold River)		$99	$179	$124	$55	$78	$111	$126	$149	$177
	North Island (Port Hardy)	$99		$246	$190	$122	$146	$177	$193	$216	$244
	West Coast (Tofino)	$179	$246		$73	$139	$119	$93	$110	$133	$161
	Port Alberni	$124	$190	$73		$84	$63	$37	$54	$77	$105
	Campbell River	$55	$122	$139	$84		$39	$70	$89	$109	$137
	Comox Valley (Courtenay)	$78	$146	$119	$63	$39		$50	$66	$88	$116
	Oceanside (Parksville)	$111	$177	$93	$37	$70	$50		$33	$56	$84
	Nanaimo	$126	$193	$110	$54	$89	$66	$33		$38	$66
	Cowichan Valley (Duncan)	$149	$216	$133	$77	$109	$88	$56	$38		$43
	Victoria	$177	$244	$161	$105	$137	$116	$84	$66	$43	
	Vancouver	$145	$211	$126	$75	$107	$85	$60	$50	$60	$50

***Travel funding accounts for round trips and amounts indicated are for 1 travel day.**
****Funding for trips longer than 1 day will include a per diem regardless of the number of family members travelling. ***If a home town is not indicated in the above chart, a The Bridge Grant Program Navigator will calculate the travel funding based on the mileage travelled between communities.**
******Travel funding calculations assumes BC Ferries is covered by the provincial Travel Assistance Program.**
*******Weekly funding disbursements will be made for long term travel.**