

EarlyON Innovation Grant: Reimagining Early Years Programming for Black Children and Families

Grant Overview and Guidelines

November 2022.

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EarlyON Innovation Grant: Reimagining Early Years Programming for Black Children and Families

1. Grant Overview

1.1. Background

In 2017, City Council [adopted](#) the [Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism](#): a 5-year plan containing 22 recommendations and 80 actions to identify, address and ultimately, eradicate anti-Black racism within the City of Toronto. One of the key outcome areas for the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism (“Action Plan”) focuses on children and youth development, and includes recommendations for increasing access to high-quality, culturally safe and responsive programs for Black children and youth. This funding will work to empower EarlyONs to respond to Black children and their families in a meaningful way.

1.2 Supporting Black Families at Toronto Children Services

As a part of advancing the Action Plan, Toronto Children Services (TCS) is committed to enhancing the quality, safety and cultural responsiveness of its programming and services for Black children and their families.

Specifically, TCS is responsible for a number of initiatives including:

- developing and implementing training on effective programming for Black children, through an anti-Black racism lens;
- increasing culturally safe and responsive programming for Black children and families within the early years and child care system;
- increasing the hiring of Black Torontonians and partnerships with diverse Black communities to ensure that early years and child care programs reflect the diversity of the communities they serve; and
- developing and implementing intergenerational and cultural connections through programming.

Since 2017, TCS has undertaken a number of initiatives to confront anti-Black racism within EarlyON Child and Family Programs. As an initial step, TCS with 30 different stakeholders in the Black Community, and support from the Confronting Anti-Black Racism (CABR) Unit, engaged with Black parents and caregivers using early years and child care services to better understand their experiences.

Building on this work, in early 2022, TCS established an advisory body, the EarlyON Black Leaders Advisory, which is comprised of Black-identifying leaders from various EarlyON service providers from across the city. The purpose of the advisory is to

support the enhancement of the planning, programming and delivery of EarlyON services for and contribute to the health and well-being of Black children and families and to address and eliminate anti-Black racism within the early years system. Their work also includes the use of an ABR lens when advising and recommending effective practices, tools, policies and training, while co-developing an action plan to improve access for Black children and families.

1.3 Grant Purpose

The EarlyON Innovation Grant: Reimagining Early Years Programming for Black Children and Families

The EarlyON Innovation Grant was created in response to the recommendations brought forth by Black communities to address anti-Black racism within the early years and child care system and was endorsed by the EarlyON Black Leaders Advisory.

Through our engagement with Black children and families, and community partners, we heard about the importance of developing cross-sector partnerships and relationships with Black-mandated organizations, as well as recognizing the growing need for the EarlyON sector to develop more targeted, culturally safe and responsive programs, and community-based approaches to support Black children and families and promote the healthy growth and development of Black children in their early years. This grant will help inform the development of future Black mandated EarlyON Child and Family centres.

The grant must support EarlyON core services related to: supporting early learning and development, engaging parents and caregivers, and making connections for families. These core services place the focus equally on adult and caregiver well-being and development as it is on early learning and development. A large part of the work is also about community development resource sharing and connecting families.

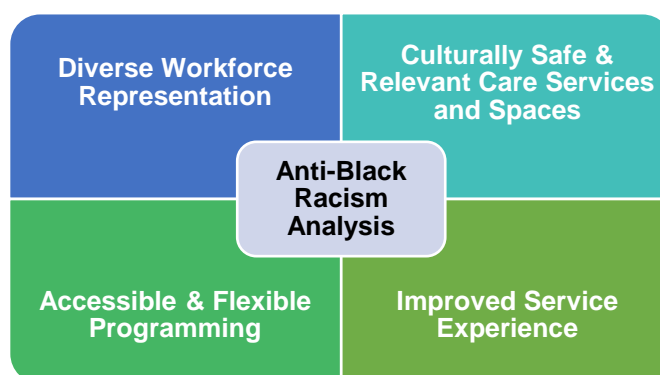
The grant aligns with TCS's commitments to [advancing equity](#) and [inclusion](#) in early learning and child care; the City Council [adopted](#) report, [Towards Recovery and Building a Renewed Toronto](#); and the Toronto Office of Recovery and Rebuild's report, [COVID-19: Impacts and Opportunities](#). These commitments and reports emphasize the need for the City to continue to invest in reconciliation and equity with a focus on Indigenous and Black communities.

This funding is intended to invest into and enhance existing initiatives, programs, and infrastructure for Black children and families and is not to replace existing partnerships.

1.4 Objectives of the Grant

The objectives of the EarlyON Innovation Grant are to support the EarlyON sector to pilot, expand, and/or partner with Black-mandated organizations to develop targeted, responsive, and culturally safe and responsive programming and services to meet the distinct needs of Black children and families by using an Anti-Black racism analysis approach¹ in one or more the following four areas for action:

- diverse workforce representation;
- culturally safe and relevant care;
- accessible and flexible programming;
- improved service experience



Successful applicants will identify how the proposed initiative addresses one or more of the four areas for action: **diverse workforce representation, culturally safe and relevant services and spaces, accessible and flexible programming and improved service experience**. These areas of action were identified and articulated from engagements with Black community members, TCS advisory bodies and a review of key literature.

Initiatives can include direct service to families or sector supports such as mentorship, developmental planning, community/parental co-designed models of early years programming, research, African-centred approaches to learning i.e. curriculum development or any other initiative that aligns with the four action areas and that will advance your EarlyON organization/agency's services to meet the needs of Black children and families. Prioritization will be given to the development and delivery of

¹ "An Anti-Black Racism Analysis is the application of...anti-Black racism to the planning, development, operation, resource allocation and evaluation of policies, services, practices, and spaces, with the intent of achieving transformative change." See CABR Action Plan (p. 14 -16)

programming for Black children and families and programming must adhere to the EarlyON Cores services, be free and take place in a public space.

1.5 Population

The focus of the grant is for Black children (ages: 0-6 years old) and their families and caregivers.

Eligible applications will benefit Toronto's Black children and families, specifically those living in communities with a considerably higher population of Black Torontonians.

1.6 Funding and Duration

EarlyON service providers have the ability to apply for funding between \$30,000.00 and \$75,000.00 per site location, up to a maximum of \$150 000.00 per organization. This grant is **one-time** funding that will be directed to EarlyON service providers that support and enhance services for Black children and families, as well as EarlyON service providers that engage in collaborative mutually beneficial partnerships with Black mandated organizations.

EarlyON service providers can submit one application per EarlyON site location, as well as an additional application if they are offering mobile services, where applicable. For every application submitted, there needs to be an accompanying budget sheet. Black mandated organizations/agencies can partner with up to two EarlyON service providers.

All initiatives must take place between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2023 and funding must be appropriately spent by December 31, 2023, with no deferrals or exceptions. EarlyON service providers will be required to engage in a Community of Practice as one of the conditions of funding.

Grant applicants must explicitly state how the initiatives will either be completed within the designated time period or made sustainable beyond this funding period without further financial support from TCS.

1.7 Eligibility

Applicants must be an existing City of Toronto funded EarlyON service provider **AND meet ONE of the following criteria:**

1. Identify as a Black mandated organization under the following working definition²:

² Black-Mandated Funding Framework Overview

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2022/ec/bgrd/backgroundfile-224504.pdf>

- **Black:** Self-identifies as African, Caribbean, Black Canadian, refers to people of African origin and descent who identify as being Black, supports causes that Black impact the Black community, has a majority of Black service users and members, self-identifies as a Black organization serving the Black community.
 - **Black-led:** Is an entity that is led by people who self-identity as Black or has a Black-led governance structure that is made up of Black members (i.e. majority of board members and management staff self-identify as Black).
 - **Black focused/serving:** The primary population or service users are Black, is a not-for-profit group Black focused or organization that explicitly (i.e. through vision, mission, strategic plan or similar type plan) serves the Black community and uses an African-serving centered approach, or a cultural lens in its work
2. If an applicant is not a Black mandated service provider, it must be located in a neighbourhood with an above average Black population (the most recent census data available will be used for assessment), **and** the applicant must also have an existing working relationship/partnership with a Black mandated organization/agency to deliver this initiative. This can be demonstrated through existing partnerships, trusteeships and/or agreements or collaborative service models.
 3. If an applicant wishes to provide services in one of the neighbourhoods identified as having an above average Black population, where there is no existing EarlyON services and/or programs within this neighbourhood (see Appendix A for details), an applicant **must** be:
 - a. located within reasonable proximity to that neighbourhood;
 - b. have the ability to mobilize themselves within that neighbourhood; and
 - c. have an existing working relationship/partnership with a Black mandated organization/agency to deliver this initiative. This can be demonstrated through existing partnerships, trusteeships and/or agreements or collaborative service models.
 4. If an applicant is specifically mandated in providing services to an underserved population, (e.g., Francophone and 2SLGBTQ+ families), they must also have the ability to mobilize within various neighbourhoods **and** have an existing working relationship/partnership with a Black mandated organization to deliver this initiative to Black children and families of these underserved populations. This can be demonstrated through existing partnership, trusteeships and or agreements or collaborative service models.

Priority will be given to Black mandated EarlyON service providers and to EarlyON service providers in partnerships with Black mandated organizations/agencies serving an above average Black population..

1.8 Eligible and Ineligible Use of Funds

This fund supports the piloting of new ideas and different approaches to EarlyON programming and services to meet the distinct needs of Black children and families (i.e. creation of targeted mobile EarlyON services and programs, providing expanded/enhanced program offerings in the evenings, and on weekends, incorporation of Afrocentric worldviews and perspectives, practices, rites of passage, and approaches to play-based learning, etc.)

EarlyON service providers have an opportunity to conduct research, engagement, and build capacity, awareness and understanding of the distinct needs of Black children, parents, guardians and caregivers, and develop approaches to creating culturally safe and relevant spaces, and programming within EarlyON, using an anti-Black racism lens.

The following list outlines eligible costs:

- Project costs and supplies for planning and development (including costs related to purchasing food and developing and supporting partnerships)
- Staffing (Increased service hours)
- Culturally appropriate and safe materials and tools (i.e. drums, books, pedagogical materials, music, toys, clothing/costumes, masks, building linguistic competency, etc.)
- Outreach and engagement with the Black community
- Space rental for the duration of the delivery of the grant
- Honorarium for identified community leaders
- Compensation and honoraria for elders and/or people with lived experience as a Black person and/or African descent
- Interpretation and translation for events and communications
- Costs associated with improving accessibility (e.g. sign language interpretation, etc.)
- Transportation (transit fare and mileage)
- Delivery, materials and participant-related costs
- Culturally appropriate small capital costs under \$5000.00
- Program evaluation (required)

Requests for the following purposes are NOT eligible for consideration:

- Fundraising events
- Donations to charitable causes
- Reserve funds
- Major capital costs over \$5000.00
- Debt repayment or deficit funding
- Political or religious activities

1.9 Assessment Criteria

EarlyON service providers will be assessed for, but not limited to, the following criteria:

- Meeting service needs by way of site location(s) (only those sites situated in neighbourhoods with an above average population of Black families), identified geographic neighbourhood (see Appendix A) and/or underserved demographic populations.
- Demonstration of Black mandate or mutually beneficial collaborative partnerships (where applicable).
- Meeting 1 or more of the areas of action identified in the anti-Black racism analysis.
- Application of anti-Black racism lens to all aspects of initiative(s) (i.e. materials, staff, activities, programs, etc.).
- Demonstrating financial acumen and commensuration of budget with request(s).
- Demonstrating organizational commitments and/or practices to anti-Black racism.
- Meeting specific and targeted needs as identified by the Black children and families within the local community.
- Demonstrating EarlyON core services.
- Demonstrating how consultation and engagement with Black community within the specified neighbourhood is done or will take place.

2. Additional Grant Information

2.1 Application Review Process

Eligible applications will be assessed by a strategic panel consisting of City of Toronto staff from Children's Services and Social Development, Finance and Administration's Community Funding Unit and the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit.

2.2 Key Dates

Activities	Date
Release of Grant Application	November 7, 2022.
Grant Open Q&A Session	November 14, 2022.
Grant Application Support Session	November 22, 2022.
Grant Application Due Date	December 5, 2022.
Review Period	December 6-16, 2022.
Applicants Notified of Outcomes	December 19-21, 2022.
Contract Agreements and Funds to be Issued	January, 2023.
Grant Period	Jan 1- Dec 31, 2023.

Interim Reporting and Assessment Due	April 2023; June 2023; August 2023; October 2023.
Interim Budgetary Reporting	July 2023.
Final Reporting Due	January 16, 2024.

2.3 Contract Deadlines

The EarlyON Innovation Grant funds must be allocated prior to December 31, 2022. Organizations applying for this grant must be prepared for a quick contract turn around process to ratify any agreements. TCS commits to notifying applicants as soon as possible of their grant(s) statuses and encourages agencies to arrange with their Board of Directors and/or designated signing authority to expedite this process however possible.

2.4 Key Considerations

The following is a set of key considerations for prospective applicants:

- It is an expectation that EarlyON service providers and Black mandated organizations/agencies remain in partnership for the duration of the initiative
- It is a requirement that EarlyON service providers and Black mandated organizations/agencies engage in and remain engaged in a community of practice to foster sector wide learning and development.
- TCS has the right to recover the funds not used in accordance with approved funding and/or dissolved partnerships.
- Interim and end-of-year budgetary reporting is required for this grant.
- Completion of program evaluation is required for this grant.
- There will be no appeals process for this grant.

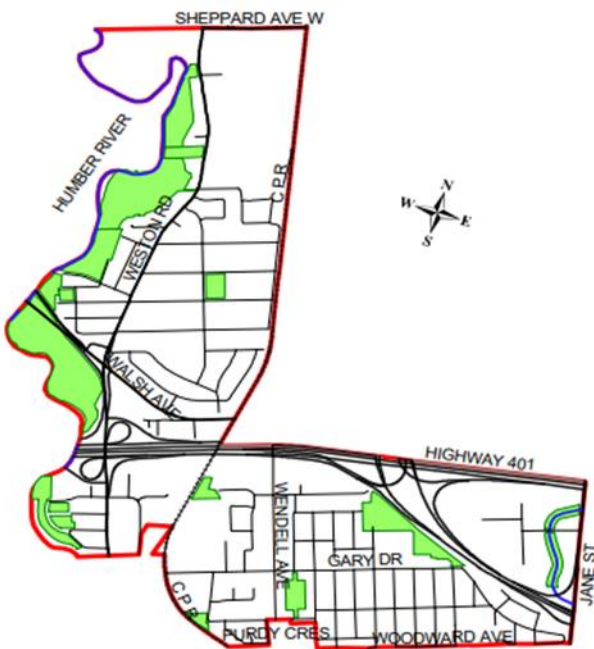
2.5 Questions/Follow Up

Agencies can direct any questions to about the grant and/or application process to EarlyON@toronto.ca

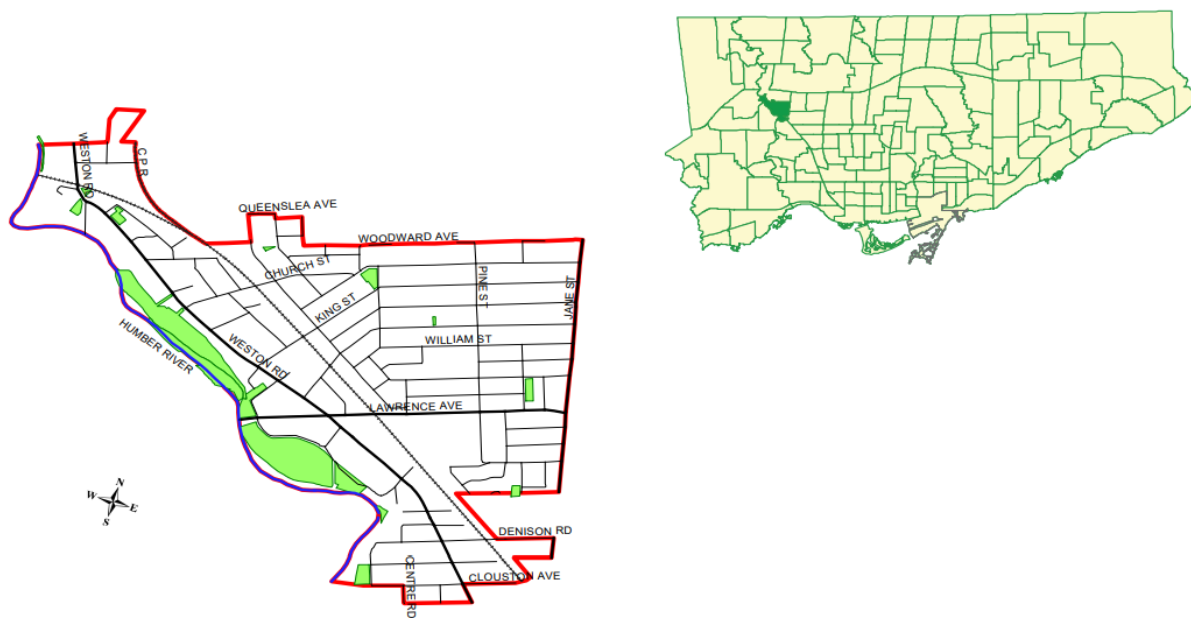
Appendix A

Neighbourhoods with little to no EarlyON service and an above average Black population

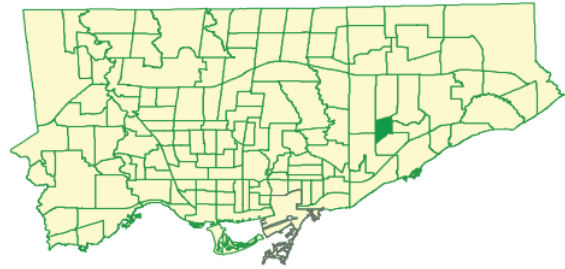
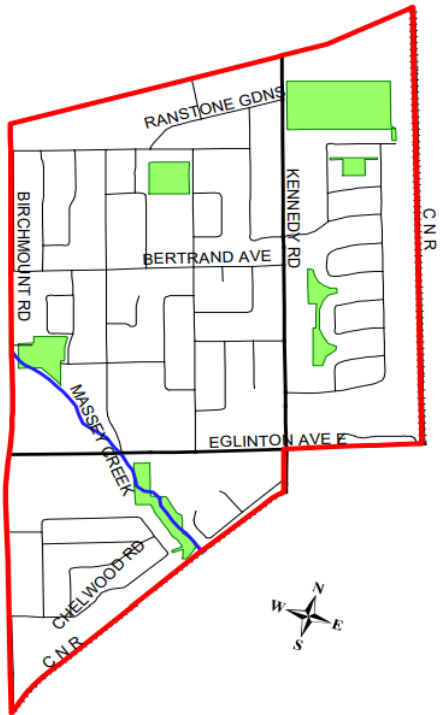
Pelmo Park-Humberlea



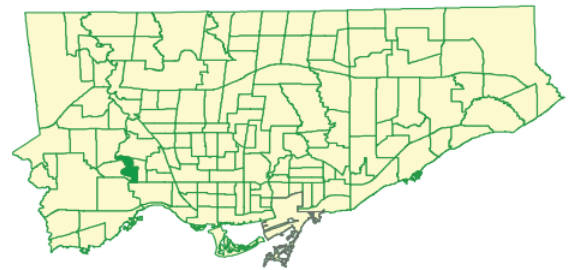
Weston



Ionview



Lambton Baby Point

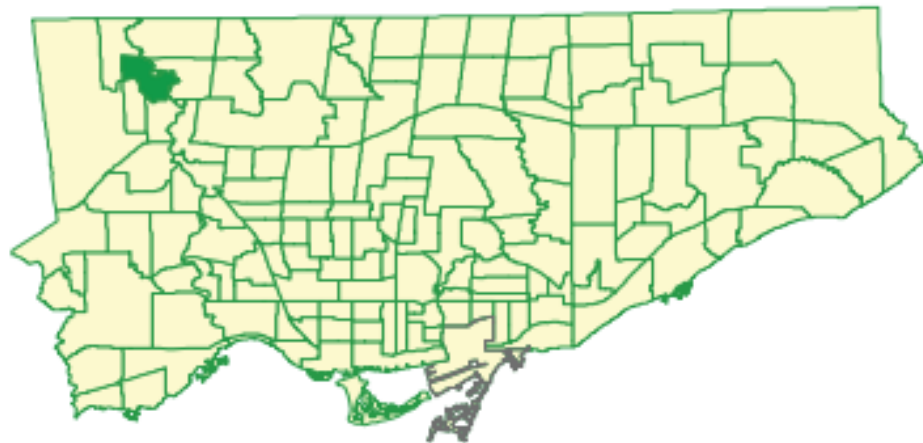


Neighbourhood Snapshot

Population 7,985

Population Change
2011-2016 **+0.8%**

Thistletown-Beaumont Heights



Humbermede

