



# **Request for Expression of Interest (REOI) for Winter Program Operators for the 2025 -2026 Winter Season**

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## **1.0 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this REOI is to identify Successful Applicants who meet all prioritized criteria to operate emergency Warming Centres and / or Winter Respite during the 2025-2026 winter season. The programs will operate in several locations across the city.

The City of Toronto (the “City”) intends to establish a list of Successful Applicants to remain valid for the 2025-2030 winter programming period, and as required, subject to the terms and conditions of this REOI. Successful Applicants selected to operate a site, will be required to enter into an operating agreement with the City. The term of the agreement is to be for a one-year period, with an option to extend the agreement upon mutual agreement between the City and operator on the same terms and conditions, for an additional term of up to four (4) separate one (1) year periods, and subject to programming needs established by the City, as well as the availability of City funding. The City may release an REOI for operators of emergency Warming Centres and / or Winter Respite during any winter programming period and recruit new operators during the period of validity of the Successful Applicants list.

Successful Applicants are responsible for identifying and providing all requirements required to operate winter programs, including meeting operational expectations, administrative and management oversight, ensuring accountability and transparency, community engagement, as well as the provision of services to clients.

Responding to this REOI does not commit the Successful Applicants to commence operations. The selection of Successful Applicants and the assignment of sites to operators will be at the sole and absolute discretion of the City. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this REOI, the selection of Successful Applicants will not oblige the City to negotiate or execute an agreement with them. Any agreement resulting from this REOI will be in accordance with the by-laws, policies, and procedures of the City. The City shall have no liability to any person because of the REOI and any negotiations which result from it.

This REOI is governed by the Process Terms and Conditions in Appendix 1.0.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

Winter services support people experiencing homelessness who may be less likely to access emergency shelter spaces or related services. Adverse effects related to exposure to cold weather are well documented and known to increase the immediate risk of direct cold weather injuries such as hypothermia, frostnip, frostbite, chilblains, and trench foot. Cold weather can also increase the risk of mortality and hospitalizations for up to several weeks after exposure, especially for people with heart conditions. People experiencing homelessness are among those especially vulnerable to cold weather. The selected operators must be agreeable to and demonstrate the ability to service and support all clients that are accessing winter programming in a manner that is low-barrier and meets their unique needs.

## **3.0 EQUITY IMPACT**

Toronto's homelessness service system serves a range of equity-deserving groups, including people experiencing chronic homelessness, seniors, low-income households, people with disabilities, Indigenous people, Black people, 2SLGBTQ+ people, women, and youth.

### **3.1 Overview of Current Shelter Capacity**

In 2024, the demand for access to homelessness services in Toronto, far outweighed the number of people exiting homelessness to move to permanent housing. A total of 4,344 people were successfully moved to permanent housing in 2024 and an additional 2,067 people in the first four months of 2025. Meanwhile, there were 7,071 new entries into homelessness over the course of 2024 and an additional 2,761 new entries in January, February March and April of 2025. This net increase in demand despite the progress in connecting people to housing highlights the broad capacity issues facing the City's shelter system.

With the shelter system at capacity, there is no space to support surges in demand that may occur in response to severe winter weather. This can result in people seeking shelter in other public spaces, such as the transit system, hospital emergency departments, libraries, and coffee shops. To better serve people's needs, additional service responses are activated during the winter months to provide access to appropriate warm indoor spaces for people experiencing homelessness who are vulnerable to illness and injury related to exposure to cold temperatures. This service response has involved partnership and coordination across City divisions and between the City, community service providers, and faith-based organizations.

### **4.0 Need for Warming Centres and Winter Respite**

The need to open additional Winter Programs was identified through a review of policies and procedures, requested of the General Manager of the City's Toronto Shelter and Support Services (TSSS) division and by Toronto City Council. The report was submitted to the Economic and Community Development Committee, for further review. Included in the report, are recommendations on improvements that can be made, and information on the feasibility of providing 24/7 drop in spaces either at City of Toronto facilities or at locations provided by community/faith-based institutions. Recommendations made in the report are based on data collected from a roundtable and survey of homeless serving organizations when conducting the review of policies and procedures of emergency Warming Centres operations.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.HL1.6>

This REOI is intended to recruit operators for both Warming Centres and / or Winter Respite.

### **5.0 Opening and Operations of Warming Centres and Winter Respite**

Warming Centres operate during the winter season, from November 15 to April 15, providing overflow space when demand for shelter space increases due to cold or inclement winter weather conditions. Individuals can walk in to access the space; no referral is required.

Warming Centres will be activated when temperatures reach -5°C or colder; and/or when directed by the General Manager, TSSS.

Warming Centres will be directed to close when the temperature increases above -5°C. There could be multiple openings and closings during the winter season.

When directed to close the Warming Centre, the site will remain open until all clients are referred to an appropriate Shelter/Respite space and all beds are vacated.

Winter Respites provide additional shelter beds during the winter season from November 15 to April 15. They remain open 24-7 for the entire winter season.

### **5.1 Compliance with [24-Hour Respite Site Standards](#)**

Warming Centres are not required to adhere to the [24-Hour Respite Site Standards](#) (TRS), however, the TRS provides guidelines around best practices that are employed across the Respite sector, and are useful in the operation of a Warming Centres.

[Winter Respites are required to comply with 24-Hour Respite Site Standards](#) (TRS)

### **5.2 Activation Timing and Services Offered at Warming Centres**

Warming Centre sites can be City owned or leased sites

Locations hosting a Warming Centre site may operate other programs in the space when not required by the Warming Centre. Once an activation is called, the host location will be notified by 7:30 a.m., approximately 12 hours prior to the Warming Centre's opening. The Warming Centre Operator will require the vacant space by 2:30pm or 6 hours after receiving notification.

The Warming Centre will open at 5 p.m. on the day that locations are activated and will remain open and staffed 24 hours a day until TSSS determines that locations will close. Sites are notified by 7:30 a.m. of the decision to deactivate and the Warming Centre will then be closed to new admissions. The site will remain open until all remaining clients are referred to alternate shelter spaces. **Warming Centres will be operational starting November 15, 2025 – April 15, 2026.**

## **6.0 Scope of Work – Warming Centres**

The intent is to provide emergency shelter services during the winter to support people experiencing homelessness who are less likely to access traditional shelter services during inclement weather conditions.

### **6.1 At minimum the Successful Applicants must:**

- Provide a safe and welcoming space for all clients, including clients from equity deserving populations (e.g., 2SLGBTQIA+, Indigenous, and Black clients);
- Be able to ramp up and ramp down services when an activation is called or ending. Must be able to open by 5 p.m. on the evening that activation is called.
- Warming Centres are activated when Environment and Climate Change Canada forecast temperatures to reach -5C or issues a winter weather event warning, or when determined by the General Manager, TSSS.
- Remain open during the day when an activation continues for multiple days
- Provide warm referrals to all Warming Centre clients when an activation ends as part of their ramp down plan

- Organize and provide three meals and a snack each day that a Warming Centre is open
- Be responsible for rigorous Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) of the space, including cleaning, laundering bedding and disinfection
- Accept clients with pets.
- Provide harm reduction supports (and cannot be abstinence based)
- Work from a trauma informed and anti-Black racism lens, and be experts in de-escalation and building rapport
- Provide basic referrals (e.g., respite, shelter, medical services etc..)
- Work with local community agencies, including ensuring access to primary health care.
- Provide services to clients in a supportive manner that is client focused and accommodating persons with a variety of needs and issues.
- Have capacity and commitment to hiring, training, and supporting peers/people with lived experience to work at the Warming Centre. Must be reflected in proposal and budget
- Connect clients with appropriate community resources
- Operate using the Shelter Management Information System (SMIS) to record all relevant client related information

**6.2** At a minimum a Warming Centre operator should be prepared to provide harm reduction supports and health referral services, which may include:

- Assistance finding appropriate health and mental health services and make referrals when a program cannot provide the requested services
- Ensuring that naloxone kits (injectable or nasal spray) are available at all sites. All program staff on each shift will be trained in the administration of naloxone
- Upon client request, providers should also:
  - i. Provide safer injection equipment, safer smoking equipment, safer sex products, training and related supports if qualified to do so
  - ii. Refer clients to Toronto Public Health or an organization listed by Toronto Public Health or similar program that offers harm reduction supplies, training, and related support services
- Upon the request of a client for any of the following services. Providers will refer clients to Toronto Public Health or community-based programs for:
  - i. Opioid substitution clinic
  - ii. Supervised injection services
  - iii. Free testing for HIV (anonymous and Rapid testing available), Hepatitis A, B and C, Gonorrhea, Chlamydia and Syphilis
  - iv. Free vaccinations for Hepatitis A and B, Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis, Pneumococcal pneumonia and Influenza
  - v. Naloxone distribution and training
  - vi. General nursing services (e.g., injection-related abscesses, counselling, pregnancy testing and supportive decision-making, referrals to internal and external services).
  - vii. Providers will refer clients who are seeking methadone/suboxone treatment to Toronto Public Health's Methadone Works program or a similar program

**6.3** TSSS will consider providing financial assistance to the Successful Applicants for start up related costs as part of the budgetary process. The Successful Applicants will be expected to

work with the City and other recommended partners (e.g., Toronto Health Teams, community agencies, other City of Toronto services providers (e.g. TTC. to access additional resources.

**6.4** The Successful Applicants will be expected to work with the community in which the Warming Centre is located to maintain a positive community relationship. This would include both engagement and complaints management.

## **7.0 Scope of Work – Winter Respites**

The intent is to deliver high-quality services to individuals or households experiencing homelessness while fulfilling the obligations set out in their Operating Agreements and in the [24-Hour Respite Site Standards](#) (TRS)

Winter Respites will operate 24-7, open on November 15, 2025 and close on April 15, 2026. The site will remain open until all clients are referred to an appropriate Shelter/Respite space and all beds are vacated.

## **8.0 Eligibility Requirements**

- Be incorporated as a non-profit organization
- Organization is in good standing with the City of Toronto
- Provide harm reduction in alignment with [Toronto Shelter & Support Services' Harm Reduction Framework](#)
- Must have experience running an overnight emergency shelter and/or respite program
- Staff must have sound working knowledge of Toronto Respite Standards (TRS)
- For Warming Centres, must have capacity to ramp up and ramp down operations quickly, including the ability to manage and redeploy staff and support client transitions within established timelines; ability to open and close on short notice more frequently during the winter
- Demonstrate experience dealing with high crisis situations
- Must have experience with community engagement and the City's engagement and complaints processes, with relevant policies and procedures as outlined in [24-Hour Respite Site Standards](#) (TRS)
- Must be able to provide meals, laundry, and cleaning services (or contract out these services)
- Must allow pets

## **9.0 WINTER PROGRAMS – RESPONSE INSTRUCTIONS AND CHECKLIST**

Please ensure your response:

- Is complete
- Meets all eligibility requirements outlined in Section 6, 7 & 8.
- Includes one electronic copy of the REOI
- Follow response instructions as outlined in section 11
- **Is received by 11:59 p.m., Thursday, July 24, 2025**

## **REOI Process**

The purpose of this REOI is to identify interested Applicant(s) and suitable spaces that meet the Winter Program requirements

### **Main Contact Information**

The City of Toronto main contact for this REOI is Lorraine Clarke, Manager of Operations and Support Services. REOI Submissions, questions or concerns must be sent to [winterprogramoperations@toronto.ca](mailto:winterprogramoperations@toronto.ca) subject line: REOI Winter Programs

### **Submission Instructions**

Applicant(s) must include their REOI questionnaire and copies of all required documents listed in the section 9.1, Response Checklist, attached in one email to Lorraine Clarke ("REOI Contact") [winterprogramoperations@toronto.ca](mailto:winterprogramoperations@toronto.ca) subject line: REOI Warming Centre

**Submissions will only be accepted electronically and must be clearly labeled as**  
"Applicant(s) Name - REOI Winter Program - Operator".

Upon your submission, you will receive an email confirming receipt of your response. Incomplete responses will not be considered.

### **Questions**

Questions regarding this REOI can be directed to [winterprogramoperations@toronto.ca](mailto:winterprogramoperations@toronto.ca). TSSS shall respond to questions directly to all questions from applicants and on the REOI webpage. If necessary, any addenda to the REOI shall be posted on the same webpage.

### **Information Sessions**

There will be two information sessions held leading up to the response deadline. Dates are listed in section 10 Scheduled Events.

## Submission Deadline

Applicant(s) are required to submit their Response(s) by email by the Response deadline of Thursday, July 24, 2025, at 11.59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. **Responses and documents received after the Response Deadline will not be accepted.**

### 9.1 Response Checklist

Please use the checklist below to ensure that your Response contains the following:

<b>RESPONSE INSTRUCTIONS &amp; CHECKLIST</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Applicants must submit a complete REOI Response Package, and provide all required documents listed below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Harm reduction policy</li><li>• Anti-oppression/discrimination policy</li><li>• Most Recent Audited Financial Statement</li><li>• Certificate of Insurance (only for Applicants proposing their own space)</li></ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	A signed REOI Response
<input type="checkbox"/>	Completed Response package, addressing all required criteria.

## 10.0 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

This REOI will be governed generally by the following schedule:

<b>REOI Process Timeline</b>	<b>Dates</b>
Release of REOI	Wednesday June 25, 2025
Information Sessions	Thursday July 3, at 2:00 to 3.00 PM and Friday July 4, at 9:30 to 10.30 AM
Deadline for Questions	Thursday July 10, 2025
Release of Addendum, if required	Thursday July 17, 2025
Response Deadline	Thursday July 24, 2025
Follow up and additional questions	July 28 and 29, 2025
Final Decision	August 26, 2025.

## 11.0 CONFIDENTIALITY

Response evaluation results are the property of the City and are subject to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (the Act). Evaluation results may be subject to public release pursuant to the Act and to members of Council in accordance with the City's procedures.

Applicants should identify any portions of their Response which contain a trade secret, scientific, technical, financial, commercial, or labour relationships information supplied in confidence, and which will cause harm if disclosed.

This document may be subjected to a Freedom of Information Request (FOI), as outlined in the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA). The documentation comprising any Response, along with all other information and documentation in any form provided or made available to the City by, or on behalf of, any Applicant in connection with, or arising out of this REOI (e.g. emails), once received by the City: (1) become the sole and absolute property of the City; and (2) become subject to Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA), and the City may be required to disclose the Application to members of the public, pursuant to MFIPPA.

For the purposes of the City's compliance with MFIPPA, Applicants are advised to identify in their Responses any scientific, technical, commercial, proprietary or similar confidential information, the disclosure of which could cause them injury. Proponents should not include any personal information in a Response. Responses will, as necessary, be made available: (1) on a confidential basis, to advisers retained by the City to advise or assist with the REOI process; (2) to members of Toronto City Council in accordance with the City's procedures; and (3) to members of the public pursuant to MFIPPA.

Each Applicant:

(1) represents and warrants that the information contained in its Response does not infringe any intellectual property right of any third party;

(2) hereby assigns and transfer to the City, and shall cause all its personnel and other third parties to assign and transfer to the City, all right, title and interest in the Response, including intellectual property rights therein;

(3) shall cause all its personnel and other third parties to waive, for the benefit of the City, their respective moral rights (and any similar rights to the extent that such rights exist) in and to the Response; and

(4) shall indemnify, defend and hold harmless the City and its agencies, boards, commissions, elected officials, officers, employees, servants, agents, volunteers, advisers and contracted personnel, if any, against all claims, actions, suits and proceedings brought against, or losses, costs, expenses, damages suffered, sustained, or incurred by them which may be directly or indirectly attributable to, or arising or alleged to arise out of the infringement or alleged infringement of any patent, copyright, trademark, or other intellectual property right of a third party in connection with the Response.

## **12.0 EVALUATION CRITERIA AND SELECTION PROCESS**

### **12.1 Evaluation Committee**

All submissions will be evaluated through a comprehensive review and analysis by the Evaluation Committee, which will include members from the Toronto Shelter and Support Services Division and other relevant City staff and stakeholders, where necessary.

The Evaluation Committee may at its sole discretion retain additional committee members or advisors.

The Evaluation Committee will select Successful Applicants(s), which in its opinion meet(s) or exceed(s) the City's requirements under this REOI and provide the best overall value to the City. By responding to this REOI, Applicants agree that the decision of the Evaluation Committee will be final and binding.

### **12.2 Selection Process**

The Evaluation Committee will score each REOI using consistent selection criteria to determine and rank the feasibility of each proposed warming centre and respite. The criteria are described in Section 2.0 of the Appendix. If the Response fails any of the under requirements outlined in the scope of work, Sections 6, 7 & 8, the Response will be rejected.

The City, in its sole discretion, reserves the right to either cancel the REOI or to re-issue a new REOI.

### **12.3 Response Evaluation/Selection Criteria**

Each Response will be evaluated using consistent selection criteria to determine and rank the feasibility of each response and each agency's capacity to provide emergency warming centre or respite services to people in need of shelter services who cannot or opt to not access shelter space (The evaluation table in Appendix B).

### **12.4 Clarifications**

As part of the evaluation process, the Evaluation Committee may contact an Applicant(s) to verify and/or clarify information submitted as part of its Response. The clarification process will not be used to obtain required information that was not submitted at REOI response deadline.

The Evaluation Committee may request this further information from one or more Applicants and not from others.

The Evaluation Committee will not accept unsolicited supplemental information provided by Applicants outside of the Response or unsolicited requests to meet with the Evaluation Committee.

## **12.5 Evaluation Results**

Upon conclusion of the evaluation process, a recommendation will be made by the Evaluation Committee to the General Manager, TSSS.

By submitting a Response, Applicants agree that their Responses may become public information.

## **12.6 Decision**

The Applicant(s) whose Response best meet the requirements of the City, will be designated as the Successful Applicant(s). The selection of a Successful Applicant will be in the sole and absolute discretion of the City. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this REOI, the City is not required to enter into an agreement with the Successful Applicant. Any agreement resulting from this REOI will be in accordance with the by-laws, policies, and procedures of the City, including approval by City Council and the establishment of funding, where required. The City has no obligation to provide funding to a Successful Applicant until an agreement is signed with the City.

The relevant terms/text/content of this REOI and Successful Applicant's Response may be incorporated into that agreement.

## **12.7 Qualified List**

Successful applicants will be added to a 'Qualified List' to be considered for Warming Centre and/or 24-Hour Winter Respite Site operations throughout the 2025-2030 winter seasons.

## **13.0 RESPONSE PACKAGE**

The procedures set out in this REOI are designed to ensure that submissions are received through an open, competitive process, and that Applicants receive fair and equitable treatment in the solicitation, receipt, and evaluation of their submissions. The City may reject the submissions of any Applicant who fails to comply with any such procedures.

See Response Document attachment

Submissions must address the REOI content requirements as outlined below, should be well ordered, detailed and comprehensive. Clarity of language, adherence to suggested structuring, and adequate accessible documentation is essential to the Evaluation Committee's ability to conduct a thorough evaluation.

Successful applicants will be required to provide a letter from their Board of Directors formally accepting and approving the terms of the winter program service agreement.

## **APPENDIX**

### **1.0 Appendix A: REOI Process Terms and Conditions**

The following terms and conditions will govern the REOI process.

#### **1.1 Applicant's Responsibility**

It shall be the responsibility of each Applicant to:

- a) Examine all the components of this REOI, including all appendices, forms and addenda; and
- b) Acquire a clear and comprehensive knowledge of the required services before submitting a Response.

#### **1.2 Acceptance of Responses**

The City shall not be obliged to accept any Response to this REOI. The City may, without incurring any liability or cost to any Applicant:

- Accept or reject any or all Response(s) at any time.
- Waive immaterial defects and minor irregularities in any Response; and
- Modify and/or cancel this REOI prior to accepting any Response.

The City is relying on the experience and expertise of the Applicant. The City reserves the right to disqualify any Applicant who has given inaccurate, incomplete, false, or misleading information in the sole opinion of the City.

#### **1.3 Addenda**

If it becomes necessary to revise any part of this REOI, post questions and answers or clarify aspects of the REOI, the information will be made available by email communication. Applicants should check their emails as frequently as they deem appropriate until the day of the closing date for responses.

#### **1.4 Omissions, Discrepancies, and Interpretations**

An Applicant who finds omissions, discrepancies, ambiguities, or conflicts in any of the REOI documentation or who is in doubt as to the meaning of any part of the REOI should notify the City Contact in writing at [winterprogramoperations@toronto.ca](mailto:winterprogramoperations@toronto.ca) not later than five business days before

the Response Deadline. If the City considers that a correction, explanation, or interpretation is necessary or desirable, the City will issue an Addendum. The decision and interpretation of the City shall be final and binding, from which there is no appeal. No oral explanation or interpretation shall modify any of the requirements or provisions of the REOI document.

### **1.5 Exceptions to Mandatory Requirements, Terms and Conditions**

If an Applicant wishes to suggest a change to any mandatory requirement, term or condition set forth in any part of this REOI, it should notify the City contact in writing at [winterprogramoperations@toronto.ca](mailto:winterprogramoperations@toronto.ca), not later than the deadline for responses. The Applicant must clearly identify any such requirement, term or condition, the proposed change, and the reason for it. If the City wishes to accept the proposed change, the City will issue an Addendum as described in the article above titled **Addenda**. The decision of the City shall be final and binding, from which there is no appeal.

### **1.6 Incurred Costs**

The City will not be liable for, nor reimburse, any potential Applicant or Applicant for costs incurred in the preparation of their Response, or any other activity that may be requested as part of the evaluation process or the process for the negotiation or execution of an Agreement with the City, as the case may be. The rejection or non-acceptance of any or all Responses shall not render the City liable for any costs or damages to any Applicant.

### **1.7 Post-Response Adjustments and Withdrawal of Responses**

An Applicant may withdraw its Response prior to the Closing Date for Responses by notifying the City in writing. An Applicant who has withdrawn a Response may submit a new Response, but in accordance with the terms of the REOI.

### **1.8 Verification**

The City reserves the right to verify with any Applicant or with any other person any information provided in its Response but shall be under no obligation to receive further information.

### **1.9 Conflicts of Interest**

In its response the Applicant must disclose to the City any potential conflict of interest. If such a conflict of interest exists, the City may, at its discretion, refuse to consider the submission. The Applicant must also disclose whether it is aware of any City employee, Council member, member or employee of a city agency, board or commission having a financial interest in the Applicant and the nature of that interest. If such an interest exists or arises during the evaluation process the City may, at its discretion, refuse to consider the Applicant's Response until the matter is resolved to the City's satisfaction.

## 2.0 Appendix B: REOI Evaluation Table

EVALUATION CRITERIA		Points Available
<b>Evaluated Response Content</b>		
a)	Organizational Capacity	20
b)	Service Design and Delivery	30
c)	Overall demonstrated commitment to equity, diversity, accessibility, and peer involvement	15
d)	Harm reduction and prevention planning	15
e)	Financial Capacity Review	20
<b>Total Response Content</b>		<b>100</b>