

Toronto Children's Services

Black-Mandated EarlyON Programs

Expression of Interest

Statement of Intent

Toronto Children's Services (TCS) is establishing two (2) new Black-Mandated EarlyON Programs in the City. These programs will be shaped by and for Black communities. This is part of our shared journey toward a more responsive, inclusive, and equity-driven EarlyON system, where Black children and families are reflected, supported and celebrated. The Black-Mandated EarlyON Programs will directly support the City's on-going commitment to confronting anti-Black racism. Specifically, aligning with the [City's Confronting Anti-Black Racism Action Plan](#) by advancing:

- **Recommendation 1: Increase access to high-quality programs for Black children and youth, and**
- **Recommendation 5: replicating and expanding effective models of Black-led health and community services to under-served neighbourhoods and populations of Black Torontonians.**

By centering Black identity, knowledge and leadership in all aspects of programming, the proposed Black-Mandated EarlyON Programs embody **Strategic Priority 6** of the [TCS Service Plan](#) by “**centering inclusion in the early years for children, families and staff**”.

We invite expressions of interest from Toronto-based, [Black-Mandated Organizations](#) committed to centering Black culture, affirming racial identity, rooted in community, and leveraging the inherent strengths within Black communities to create impactful programs.

This expression of interest aims to engage not-for-profit, Black-Mandated organizations to deliver and develop EarlyON programs for Black children and their families. We propose delivering the Black-Mandated EarlyON Programs in communities with a demographic concentration of Black children and their families and areas identified as priority neighbourhoods. Demonstrated experience working with Black children and their families is required. Experience operating an EarlyON Program is **not** required. A dedicated consultant will provide consistent and collaborative support to empower the organization to lead its program delivery.

Eligibility to Apply as a Black-Mandated Organization

The City of Toronto Children Services Division developed this Expression of Interest to provide opportunities for **Black-Mandated Organizations, referred to as B3**, to act as a service provider for Black-Mandated EarlyON Programs.

A Black-Mandated (B3) Organization or group **is assessed based on four key criteria below**. Applicants must meet all the criteria to be eligible to apply as an established, **Black-Mandated non-profit Organization**.

- **Black-Led:**
An organization that is led by a majority (51% or more) of paid staff and board members who self-identify as Black, including African, Caribbean, or, of African descent
- **Black-focused:**
An organization that has a publicly facing mandate that explicitly states it serves Black communities and is grounded in Black/African-centred approaches across services and programs throughout the entire organization
- **Black-Serving:**
An organization that primarily serves (at least more than 40%) Toronto's diverse Black communities, including, but not limited to African-descendant populations, such as Black Francophones, Afro-Indigenous, Continental African, Caribbean descendant, 2SLGBTQ+, refugee and newcomer populations, and Black children and their families
- **Community Accountability and trust:**
An organization that has a proven track record of working in and with Black service users to respond to the pervasive and emergent needs of Black populations and continually develops and maintains positive relationships within Black communities being served, and with other Black-mandated organizations and groups community partners and vendors to deliver services to clients

This definition was developed by the City of Toronto's Social Development Division in close consultation with the [City of Toronto's Confronting anti-Black Racism Unit](#) and community organizations as part of the [Black Mandated Funding Framework](#) and expanded to ensure effective partnership to deliver Black-Mandated EarlyON Programs. **To be eligible to apply for this Expression of Interest, applicants must meet the definition of a Black-Mandated (B3) Organization, as described above.**

Who Can Apply

Applicants must meet ALL requirements below to apply and be eligible for this EOI:

1. Be an established, Black-Mandated, non-profit organization, also referred to as B3.
2. Be incorporated as a non-profit organization with a recently audited financial statement.
3. Be physically located in the City of Toronto (with a postal code that begins with the letter M) and whose primary activities take place within Toronto.
4. Be in good standing with the City, where applicable (e.g. recipients of funding must have met the terms and conditions of previous funding).
5. Have expertise in providing direct services to Black children and their families through Black/African centred approaches in programming, and/or service design.
6. Submit the following required documents by, or before the application deadline of **Friday, December 5, 2025 at 11:59 p.m.:**
 - ☐ Letter from the current Board of Directors stating that the application is approved by the Board
 - ☐ Declaration of Not-for-Profit Compliance
 - ☐ Organization's By-Laws
 - ☐ Copies of Agency's Audited Financial Statements for the two most recent years
 - ☐ Written response to the Expression of Interest suitability questions
 - ☐ Completed proposed EarlyON program budget

Annual EarlyON Funding

An annual program operating budget of up to \$400,000.00 per year is available to cover all program, operating and lease costs, including rental and permit fees. Payment will be prorated based on the actual start date of operations. For example, if the program starts in March 2026, then the allocation for that year will be \$300,000.

The EarlyON program must operate for a minimum of 30 hours per week and include some evening and/or weekend programming.

An additional one-time start-up fund up to \$100,000.00 is available for the Black-Mandated EarlyON Program.

Organization Responsibilities

As a Black-Mandated Service Provider delivering EarlyON Programs, your organization will be responsible for:

- Implementing programs rooted in the [three mandatory EarlyON core services](#) and aligned with current [EarlyON Business and Operating Guidelines](#):
 - Engaging parents and caregivers
 - Supporting early learning and development
 - Making connections for families
- Creating and delivering high quality EarlyON programming specifically for Black children aged 0 to 6 years, including:
 - Community-responsive curricula rooted in diverse Black cultures, histories, ways of knowing, and innovation (E.g. arts, storytelling, science, technology, engineering, math, land-based learning, etc.)
 - Programming that reflects the strengths, needs, and lived experiences of local Black families and communities
 - Building a care team that reflects and understand the communities being served, including intentional integration of a multidisciplinary Black staff team
 - Strongly encouraged to comprise of Registered Early Childhood Educators, Social Workers, family support workers and/or other allied professionals to design and deliver holistic and culturally affirming supports
 - Designing welcoming, culturally affirming, family-centred, learning environments and physical spaces (e.g. wall feature of art and photos of Black children, bookshelves with children's books written by Black authors, etc.), for families to gather, play, and learn together
 - Building strong connections to community through intentional outreach, family-centred communication and local partnerships
 - A robust culturally relevant referral system connecting families to additional supports via system navigators or family support workers
 - Holistic wraparound services tailored to the needs of Black families
- Designing and implementing effective outreach and marketing strategies focused on the delivery of Black-focused Black children and families
- With support from TCS EarlyON, collaborating with Black-Mandated partners and community stakeholders to ensure EarlyON program alignment with the needs and goals of Black families
- Supporting food security by integrating food access and education into EarlyON programming by embedding principles of City of Toronto's [Black Food Sovereignty Plan](#). This may include:

- Building partnerships with Black-Mandated food and land-based organizations to ensure access to nutritious, culturally relevant foods and to foster lifelong connections to community, culture, and the land
- Integrating culturally relevant food education into daily programming - highlighting African, Caribbean, and diasporic food traditions - while promoting food security, intergenerational knowledge sharing, and holistic wellness
- Supporting early childhood literacy skills for Black children by removing barriers and increasing access to high-quality, culturally relevant literacy and reading programs, services and resources
- Participating in a Community of Practice for EarlyON service providers
- Fulfilling all responsibilities and requirements outlined in the Service Contract, EarlyON Program Deliverable Agreement and any other applicable agreements with Toronto Children's Services
- Upholding strong principles of data governance by managing all information respectfully, securely and transparently, ensuring the dignity, privacy and rights of Black children, families and communities are fully protected
 - Ensuring all program and financial reports include disaggregated, equity-focused data, incorporate community-defined success measures and narrative storytelling, while protecting privacy and honouring community ownership of the information
 - Ensuring families understand how their information is used and have a voice in its collection and sharing

Suitability Questions

Please respond to the following questions.

You are strongly encouraged to make your response as complete as possible. No assumptions will be made. It can include, but is not limited to, your B3 organization's demonstrated experience with:

- culturally responsive programming
- accessible, equitable and inclusive access to relevant services and supports
- building community capacity and resiliency
- cultivating partnerships that maximize and leverage community resources for Black service users

The response can be up to 500 words for each question.

1. Organizational Alignment

How does this opportunity align with and build on your organization's existing mission, strategic priorities and long-term goals for improving outcomes for Black children, their families and communities? (10 points)

2. Experience and Community Connections

Describe how your organization is uniquely positioned to meet the needs of Black children and their families. Please include examples of programs, services, or partnerships that reflect your experience serving the diverse Black community (e.g., refugees, newcomers, lone parents, francophones, 2SLGBTQ+, and other intersecting identities). (20 points)

3. Program Approach and Delivery

a. Please describe how you will integrate culturally grounded and identity-affirming practices in family engagement and uplifting community voice in your approach to delivering the Black-Mandated EarlyON Program. (10 points)

b. How does your organization embed principles of anti-Black racism, equity, inclusion, and cultural safety in your policies, operations, and service delivery? (10 points)

4. Capacity and Readiness

Describe your organization's capacity and readiness to launch and operate a Black-Mandated EarlyON Program. Consider areas such as staffing and leadership, governance, partnerships, space and infrastructure. (10 points)

Additional Information and Resources

[2026 EarlyON Operating and Business Practice Guidelines](#)

[Toronto Children's Service Division Service Plan](#)

[Child Care and Early Years Act \(2014\)](#)

[Confronting Anti-Black Racism Action Plan](#)

[How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#)

[Raising the Village](#)

[CABR Anti-Black Racism Analysis Tool](#)

[Ministry of Education Service Management and Funding Guidelines](#)

Contact Earlyon@toronto.ca for a copy of the EarlyON Child and Families Design Guideline

Expression of Interest Process and Organization Selection

Events	Date and Time
Pre-socialization of the Expression of Interest - Continue to share information with Interdivisional contacts to broaden reach of the EOI information - Tailored meetings with organizations to support application process for EOI	On-going
Release of Expression of Interest	November 17, 2025
Information Session Community Coordination Plan Black Resiliency Cluster* (For Black Resiliency Cluster Members Only)	November 18, 2025
General Virtual Information Sessions (2)	November 19, 2025 at 3:30 - 5:00 p.m. Microsoft Teams Join the meeting now Meeting ID: 249 406 706 019 27 Passcode: Mi2Xd2Tn
	November 28, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Microsoft Teams Join the meeting now Meeting ID: 253 142 576 073 78 Passcode: FA36ZF7E
Deadline for Questions Note: All questions regarding the Expression of Interest must be emailed to EarlyON@toronto.ca or Roxanne Martin at Roxanne.Martin@toronto.ca	December 1, 2025

Events	Date and Time
Expression of Interest Closing Date - Open for 3 weeks Note: Applications must be submitted electronically and emailed to EarlyON@toronto.ca and copy Roxanne.Martin@toronto.ca	December 5, 2025, at 11:59 p.m.
Application Review for eligibility and scoring	December 8-11, 2025
Interviews with Selected Candidates	December 15, 2025
Announcement of Successful Black-Mandated Organization	December 19, 2025

Expression of Interest Contact: Roxanne Martin, EarlyON Consultant

Email: Roxanne.Martin@toronto.ca

All questions regarding the Expression of Interest must be emailed to the EarlyON Inbox at EarlyON@toronto.ca by 5:00 P.M on Monday, December 1, 2025

Reminder: The complete Expression of Interest application package must be emailed to EarlyON@toronto.ca no later than 11:59 P.M. on Friday, December 5, 2025.