Together We Can Youth Mentorship Program
2017 Application Feedback

The following document reflects feedback provided by the inter-ministerial selection committee for the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan – Youth Mentorship Program in Fall 2017.

The inter-ministerial selection committee was made up of Ontario Public Service staff with specific expertise in communications, community work and youth justice, who also self-identified as members of the Black community.

Note: Applications submitted in French were reviewed by French-speaking committee members.

Their feedback has been summarized to support organizations in improving their applications for future applications.

1. Overall Feedback

1.1 Read the Application Package Closely
Every program under the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan has a separate application package posted on the website: Ontario.ca/BlackYouthActionPlan. The application package was critical to completing a successful application. It contained information such as: program objectives, outcomes, scoring criteria and timelines.

1.2 Use the Application Template
Included in each package, is an Application Template. Each section of the application template was assigned a weight and details the scoring criteria that should guide the depth of your responses, ensuring that every element of the application is answered.

1.3 Answer the Application Questions Clearly
Selection committee members can only review what you input in the application, and the reference letters. Selection committee members may not be familiar with the work of your organization, so it is important for applicants to clearly answer all the questions.

2. Section One: Organizational Overview

2.1 Emphasize Black Leadership
The organizational overview asked applicants to indicate their connection to the community.

- High scoring applications clearly indicated in their application that the lead organization was Black-led or Black-focused (i.e. there are Black community members at the leadership table, the organizational mandate is to serve Black Ontarians, etc.).
- Low scoring applications did not indicate that the lead organization or partners were Black-led or Black-focused in the application. Low scoring applications may have indicated that they had Black beneficiaries, but Black identity was not at the core of their individual organization, partners or collaborative.
3. Section Two: Organizational Experience

3.1 Clearly Demonstrate Related Experience
The application asked applicants to indicate their experience delivering mentorship or other youth-serving programs. This question helps selection committee members determine the applicant’s capability to deliver the program they are proposing.

- **High scoring applications** clearly linked their experience to the program. For example, they not only indicated their experience delivering programs for youth, but specifically the targeted approaches they use to serve Black youth, including outreach methods and risk management. High scoring applicants also clearly indicated their experience working specifically with the Black community.
- **Low scoring applications** did not indicate their experience serving the Black community or provide examples of experience delivering programs for Black youth specifically.

3.2 Don’t Forget to Indicate Your Partner’s Experience
Many applications focused on the experience of the lead organization, but there was an opportunity to identify the experience of partners as well.

- **High scoring applications** leveraged the experience of their partners to bolster their application. Collective Impact relies on partnerships that help maximize the impact of the program.
- **Low scoring applications** did not indicate their partner’s experience.

4. Section Three: Initiative Proposal

4.1 Make Sure to Address All Elements of the Mentorship Proposal
The application asked applicants to address four (4) elements of their mentorship program (see below). Applicants needed to respond to every single element.

- **High scoring applications** reflected each element and presented a clear description of the mentorship program they intend to deliver. Key areas that marked high scoring applications were:
  - **Initiative Summary:** The proposal clearly outlined the mentorship program being proposed and links it to outcomes that improve the emotional well-being for Black children, youth or families. The proposal clearly selects an outcomes stream. The proposal was clear about the mentorship model (i.e. one-to-one or group mentoring).
  - **Beneficiary Community:** The proposal clearly defined a BYAP beneficiary community and presents evidence supporting the urgent need for service in their geographical area. Statistical data, community composition or barriers were identified to highlight gaps in service.
  - **Beneficiary Population:** The proposal identified a specific population of youth requiring support and describes them by using multiple intersecting qualifiers (i.e. age, gender, birthplace, nationality etc.). Recognition and understanding of cultural identity is clearly articulated to support alignment with the Collective Impact and Cultural Identity (CI²) guiding principles. It is clear how the mentorship program will support the particular needs of this population.
Mentors: The proposal aligned mentor selection with the beneficiary population and outcomes stream. For example, a mentorship program aimed at providing employment opportunities for Black women ensured all mentors were Black women employed in fields where Black youth are underrepresented.

- Low scoring applications did not address all four (4) elements clearly, or required support in the following areas:
  - Initiative Summary: The outcome or goal of the mentorship program was unclear, or not clearly linked to any particular life outcome stream (Section 1.3). Collective Impact and Cultural Identity (CI²) guiding principles were either not mentioned or not integral to the proposed mentorship program design.
  - Beneficiary Community: Supporting evidence, such as statistics, were lacking from the application to highlight the specific barriers faced by the community.
  - Beneficiary Population: The target population was not clearly defined. For example, the proposal was targeted at Black youth broadly. The specific cultural identity of the community, including elements such as nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, locality or any kind of social group that has its own distinct culture was not defined or considered in the program design.
  - Mentors: The proposal lacked detail in the mentor selection plan or was not identified. Mentors were broadly described as elders or parents in the community, rather than by a distinct specialized contribution or qualifications.

4.2 Make Sure to Address All Elements of the Implementation Plan
The application asked applicants to outline the project plan by addressing six (6) elements of their mentorship program (see below). Applicants needed to respond to every single element.

- High scoring applications outlined how they planned to accomplish a successful mentorship program. High scoring proposals provided a clear description of the program they intended to deliver. Key areas that marked high scoring applications were:
  - Recruitment: The proposal outlined specific recruitment techniques for both mentees and mentors that aligned with prior responses (i.e. selected outcomes stream, beneficiary community and population etc.). Specific examples of ideal mentors and outreach techniques to recruit mentors were provided.
  - Training: The proposal clearly defined a training plan for mentors that aligned with the intended beneficiary population, outcomes stream and CI² guiding principles (e.g. Anti-Black Racism Training).
  - Matching: The proposal identified a plan with specific activities and processes for matching mentors and mentees. The plan included responses to mispairing, attrition, etc.
  - Supports: In line with the CI² Guiding Principles, the proposal provided a list of local, community-focused supports to ensure long-term success of mentors. The proposal identified a process for referring mentees.
  - Targets: High scoring applications were realistic about targets given the size of the organization. High scoring applications used this section to further highlight expected program outcomes based on successful pairing (i.e. employment goals or educational success).
Evaluation: The proposal provided specific examples of how data will be collected to ensure that mentees met their program goals (i.e. surveys with applicants).

- Low scoring applications did not address all six (6) elements clearly, and provided limited or no examples in the following area:
  - Recruitment: The proposal only outlined recruitment for mentors or mentees, not both.
  - Training: The proposal referenced general training, but did not include specific details. There was no mention of training that reflects the unique cultural identities of the beneficiary population.
  - Matching: The proposal identified a plan and process that is limited in scope, for example, it does not include opportunities for youth to be introduced to different career opportunities.
  - Supports: The proposal was limited when addressing community networks and partnerships.
  - Targets: The proposal did not identify a realistic target given the size of the application.
  - Evaluation: The proposal did not identify multiple forms of gathering information (i.e. surveys, progress reporting, check-ins with youth, etc.) to determine overall success and opportunities for improvement along the way.