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BLACK TO THE FUTURE

COMMUNITY
OF PRACTICE

COVID-19 EMERGENCY AID REPORT

COORDINATED RESPONSE FROM
BLACK-LED AND BLACK SERVING ORGANIZATIONS



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INTRODUCTION

April 8, 2020

On behalf of: Black to the Future Community of Practice, Network for the Advancement of Black Communities.

To: Funders, Allies and Friends

Re: A request for immediate emergency aid to support the most vulnerable community members and Black-led / Black-serving organizations in Toronto amidst the COVID-19 Crisis.

The ***Black to the Future Community of Practice*** is requesting the support of funders, supporters and allies to secure emergency funds needed to provide support to vulnerable members of our communities and the agencies on the ground providing support. COVID-19 has amplified existing inequities impacting Black Communities. Emergency funds are needed to reach out to and support isolated seniors, the homeless, those requiring mental health counseling, single-mother households, people with pre-existing medical conditions, marginalized and impoverished community members, those with disabilities, those for whom food insecurity is a health concern and caregivers of these vulnerable segments.

Many members of the Black community are among the most marginalized within society and have to face added barriers to accessing support. It is now more essential than ever, to ensure that increased programs and services exist during this time. The COVID-19 crisis has brought with it unprecedented circumstances, where many organizations are unable to respond to the growing needs within their existing frameworks and are looking for innovative and responsive ways to keep their clients engaged and feeling supported at this time of deep isolation.

We must be reactive to what will occur if the Black community does not receive the support it requires at this time of crisis. Studies have shown that marginalized communities closer to impoverishment in a crisis are more likely to resort to crime, be victims of crime, and resort to delinquency. However, many organizations are currently meeting the needs of the community with limited resources. The resilience that we

have shown continues to be within us, and as we walk forward, it is essential that we are supported in ways that only Black-led, Black- serving organizations can provide.

With this in mind, we are requesting **\$1.58M** from our funders and partners to support the Community of Practice, which consists of over 36 organizations from across the Toronto Area. This support will better equip us to respond to the community's urgent needs and continue to provide services to both, our community members and organizations, so they can survive through this remarkably challenging set of circumstances.

The following report provides a detailed breakdown of the emergency support needs of our vulnerable communities, our partners, the numbers and the impact that COVID-19 has already had on our community and the ongoing effects that it will continue to have over the coming weeks or months.

We truly are in this together and are hopeful that the City, our allies, as well as other funding bodies, will respond to our request for the sake of our future as a community.

Sincerely,



Agapi Gessesse

Executive Director, Centre for Young Black Professionals –
on behalf of the Black to the Future Community of Practice

Acknowledgement:

The Network for the Advancement of Black Communities (NABC) has conducted a national survey to assess the impact of COVID-19 on Black communities. Black to the Future Community of Practice has analyzed the Toronto segment of the data and has written this report with the support of the Ujamaa Coalition.

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE: BY DEFINITION

A group of people who share a concern, a set of problems or a passion for topics. The group deepens their knowledge and expertise in the subject-matter by interacting on an ongoing basis. As they spend time together, they typically share information, insight, and advice. They may create tools, standards, manuals, and other documents.

ABOUT US: THE BLACK TO THE FUTURE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE (COP)

As the government closest to the people, the City of Toronto recognizes its responsibility to create a city that works for all residents. Confronting and removing barriers caused by Anti-Black Racism benefits all Torontonians, especially other Toronto communities experiencing racism and marginalization. The *Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism* is the result of a collaborative effort between the City of Toronto and Torontonians of African descent. The review of 41 years of reports and recommendations on anti-Black racism formed the basis for 41 community conversations in partnership with 19 community agencies, and engagement from over 800 members of Toronto's diverse Black communities.

What began as a united effort between 19 B3 (Black-led, Black-focused, Black Beneficiary – see diagram below) organizations that collaborated with the *Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit at the City of Toronto* to shape the framework and processes related to the Black To The Future initiatives has now led to a membership of over 30 agencies.

We are clear that Black Torontonians are contributing to all areas of city life, adding their talents and assets to make Toronto stronger, more vibrant and more successful. The goal through this COP is to ensure that our Black community thrives and that it is supported in ways that best serve us in a relevant and culturally appropriate manner.

Please find membership list at the end of this report

THE COVID-19 CRISIS: ITS IMPACT & THE NEEDS AT HAND

THE COVID-19 CRISIS: ITS IMPACT & NEEDS AT HAND

The COVID-19 crisis has wreaked havoc within many communities and sectors, including the human services sector. The government has responded rapidly to accommodate and support organizations, businesses, and citizens as best as they are able to do given these extreme circumstances. Yet, in their announcements of emergency funding, there has been no mention of support to “marginalized communities”, and the added barriers that they experience to accessing support and services to survive during these times.

Studies continue to show that Anti-Black racism affects the life outcomes of more than 200,000 people of African descent or origin in Toronto.

We also know that many disparities exist that Black Torontonians continue to face:

- 3 Black Torontonians are victims of **85% of hate crimes** in Toronto where racism is the motivating factor.
- 3 **42% of children in the care** of the Children’s Aid Society of Toronto are Black, *five times* their representation in the overall population.
- 3 Black students become “**early leavers**” of high school at rates – **23%** compared to **12% of white students**.
- 3 Torontonians of African descent have an unemployment rate of **13%**, **nearly two times the provincial rate**.
- 3 Ontario has released over 1,900 inmates from its jails in an attempt to slow the spread of COVID-19, many of which would undoubtedly be **members of the Black Community**.

On February 21, 2017, the Ontario Government announced the official recognition of the ***International Decade for People of African Descent***. Followed by the Government of Canada on January 30, 2018, then the City of Toronto on March 25th, 2019. The Decade was proclaimed in 2014 by the United Nations General Assembly. It provides a framework for state and non-state actors to join people of African descent and take measures towards the objectives of the International Decade. These include promoting respect, protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of people of African descent. It encourages a greater knowledge of and respect for the diverse heritage, culture, and contributions of these communities to the society around the world.

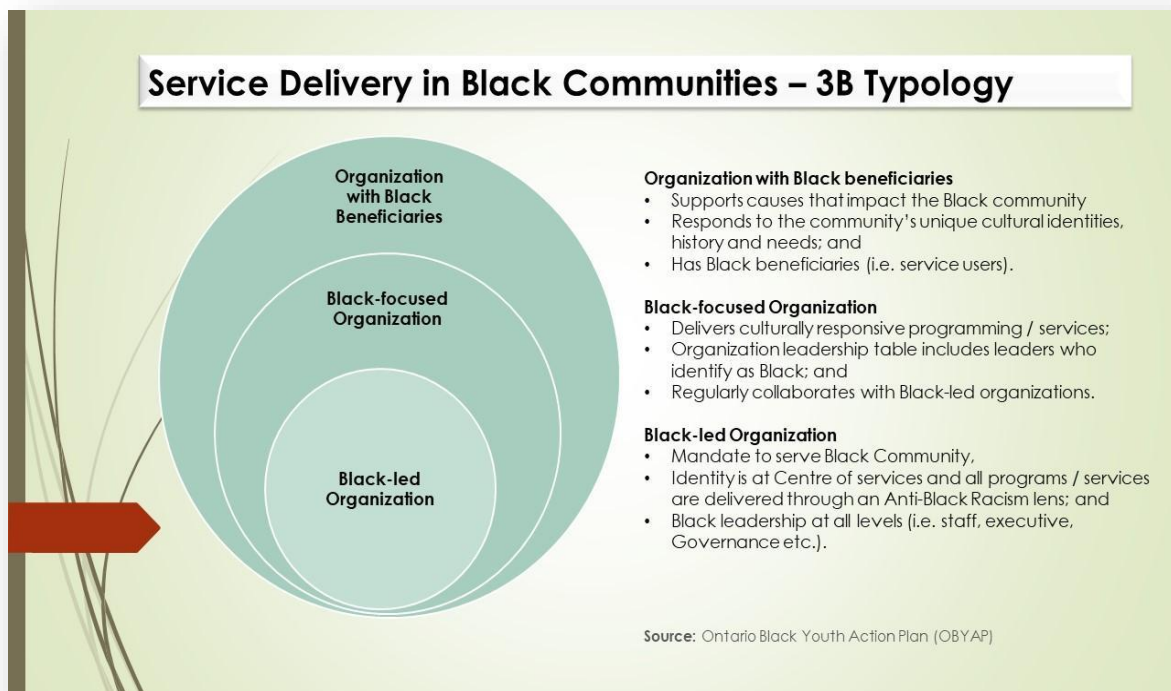
With the above context in mind, how can we as the Black community be overlooked when emergency aid is being provided to ensure that the city's most marginalized people are taken care of? The United Nations' Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent said it best (Oct 2016):

“Despite Canada’s reputation for promoting multiculturalism and diversity... Canada’s history of enslavement, racial segregation, and marginalization, has had a deleterious impact on people of African descent which must be addressed in partnership with communities.”



WHY 3B ORGANIZATIONS NEED TO REMAIN OPEN AND OPERATIONAL DURING THIS TIME:

Black-led and Black-serving organizations have a unique role during this crisis. We provide culturally responsive programs and support that cater to Black Communities, their history and needs. These needs only can be met meaningfully by those who are reflective of Black Communities and have the skills, lived experiences and the knowledge to impart to their clients. The following diagram clearly outlines the value of service delivery in Black Communities.



THE BREADTH OF THE IMPACT: ON AGENCIES

Each of our COP members has been impacted deeply and differently. Here are some examples of the breadth of the impact on our ability to offer programming and services in the traditional sense:

Space:

- Loss of space to operate out of local schools to run programming.

Services & programs:

- Cancellation of programs due to isolation requirements, after-school programs youth leadership programs, employment training programs & placements.
- Cancellation of in-person: 1 to 1 and group counselling sessions, mental health workshops and informational sessions.

Human Resources:

- Inability to maintain staff members, layoffs and reduced hours in highly vulnerable communities.
- Remote work – challenges in providing staff and volunteers with communication devices especially for the vulnerable with mobility issues.

Rent: A moratorium on evictions/ Rent deferral and rent forgiveness.

Communication devices especially for the vulnerable with mobility issues.

FOOD INSECURITY

Families are dealing with **acute food security**, **financial difficulties** and **lack of information**.

All services and events have been postponed or cancelled.

The isolation is negatively affecting their **mental health** especially those who were already suffering.

INCOME INSECURITY

Increased anxiety around income security.

Lack of tools to apply for EI and emergency relief.

- 3 Increases in Income Support Programs and Disabilities Support Program payments to accommodate critical needs such as phone cards and minutes for cell phones.
- 3 Many face disruptions to employment as part-time/contract workers and are experiencing economic instability. Construction Contractors are being laid off due to lack of work.
- 3 Start-Up Entrepreneurs are anxious due to inability to access funds to keep offices open.
- 3 Job loss and instability of housing due to low cash flow is causing a lot of anxiety.

MENTAL HEALTH

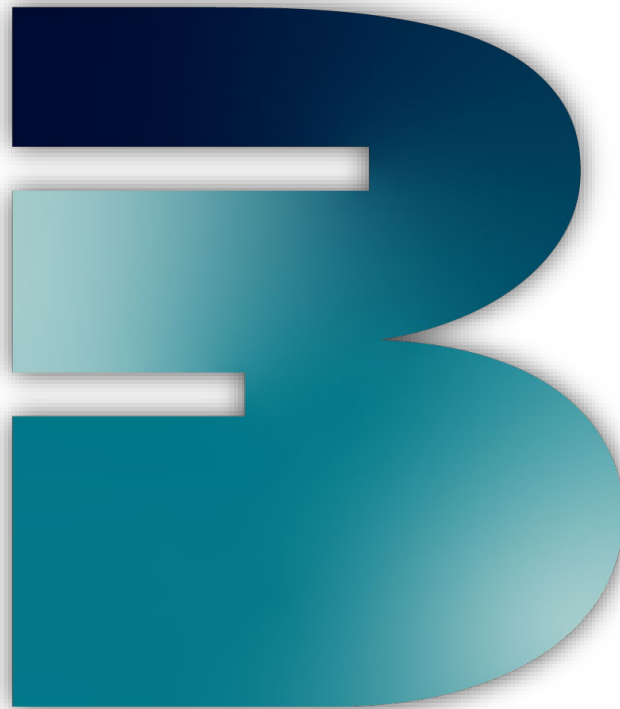
- 3 Social Isolation is exacerbating anxiety, depression and other mental health challenges.
- 3 No-contact means no planning or building together to meet the needs of our near and surrounding neighbourhoods.
- 3 Youth are experiencing emotional and social gaps as a result of no longer being able to congregate for programming.
- 3 Children and youth from lower socio-economic households do not have access to necessary resources (including laptops, pads, cellphones and internet) to participate in online programming.
- 3 Some children and youth are experiencing anxiety and social isolation during this time of social-distancing.
- 3 Additionally, parents must now find alternative ways for the children and youth to remain engaged in activities that foster development and learning.

YOUTH AND STUDENTS

- 3 Youth have lost a space and supports that allowed them develop positive skills to navigate relationships among family members and peers.
- 3 School closure and resultant physical/social isolation affect students' mental health, learning, academic achievement, regular connections with community, separation from normal support systems, the capacity to act on issues such as university admission (grades issues) and scholarship submission, reduced opportunity for summer earnings, general air of confusion and despair.
- 3 Students' parents are also affected by job dislocation, staying at home, uncertain and lowered income, social isolation etc., and this affects the students' well-being. Moreover, the actual health threat creates fear in students. For some students, it includes lack of computer and network resources and they cannot easily adapt to learning and connecting from home.

3 Missing out on tutoring and mentoring opportunities which traditionally is difficult for parents to provide supports to their children due to a host of challenges for students:

- social isolation is difficult for people who thrive on gathering together; this is not just social but also causes mental isolation.
- Isolation from mental health support, susceptibility to mental health episodes, inability to access resources/services necessary for their health and well-being.
- disruption to their educational development and future goals, lack of challenges, lack of routine.
- alienation from their peers and recreational/physical outlets - boredom, prone to abuse and to be abused.
- financial deficiency - unable to meet their basic human needs for food/shelter leading to further marginalizing, racializing and disenfranchisement, stripping away of their basic human dignity when parents are unable to adequately provide for the family needs.





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**"IN THE DAYS AND WEEKS AHEAD, WE EXPECT
TO SEE THE NUMBER OF CASES, THE NUMBER OF DEATHS,
AND THE NUMBER OF AFFECTED COUNTRIES CLIMB
EVEN HIGHER"**

- DR. TEDROS

SAFETY

- 3 Access to thermometers, masks, gloves and hand sanitizer.

HOUSING

- 3 Emergency shelters and temporary housing for the homeless.
- 3 Assistance with tenant evictions, deferral and/or forgiveness.

POST-INCARCERATION

- 3 Members of the community are being released from the prison system and being let back into the community. They need support for shelter, food, counselling, etc.

UNDOCUMENTED

- 3 Some members in the Black Community, like the undocumented, will not be able to access the same supports.

FINDING INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

- 3 Now more than ever before, we need to find innovative solutions to continue to offer programs and services to the city's most vulnerable populations. It is with this in mind that our COP members have come up with specific ways in which we can pivot our work to ensure that the programming exists during this moment of crisis.
- 3 The challenge has been that not all funders have been flexible in allowing many of our agencies to pivot our programming and reallocating dollars in this way. Yet the work still needs to continue if we expect to maintain harmony and safety within the community.

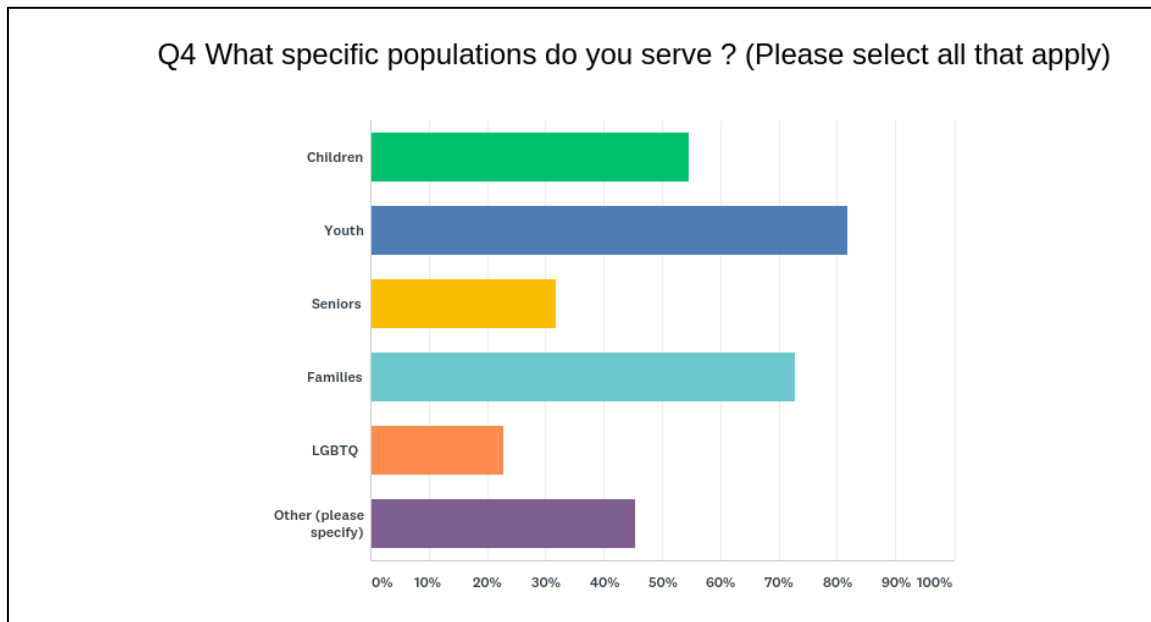
The following are examples of how our members will continue to provide programming through this time:

By providing:

- 3 Mental health and afro-centric therapy over the phone
- 3 Afro-centric Mental health weekly activities online
- 3 Webinars around birthing companions and prenatal health are usually provided once a month. Due to COVID-19, all in-class materials will have to become webinars, which will require the hiring of new facilitators.
- 3 Creating care plans over the phone
- 3 Virtual meeting with clients for mental health supports
- 3 Online seniors group
- 3 Checking in with - youth with mental health issues
- 3 Financial counselling
- 3 Providing information, awareness, and online training on leadership, community organizing, capacity building, and skill development for newcomer populations.
- 3 Bridging the information-gap between the Ministry of Community and Social Services, Corrections Canada, Corrections Ontario, and passing information to family members and other agencies.
- 3 Online educational supports for youth
- 3 Online - group and individual support
- 3 Weekly online event/sharing resources that are available financially
- 3 Counselling services (teleconference), support groups, outreach through the trans-identifying groups, community engagement via social media.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON WHOM WE SERVE

In conducting a survey to gather information from our partner agencies, we have been able to discern clearly that the populations we serve have a variety of populations with youth and families being at the very top. This chart indicates our findings clearly.

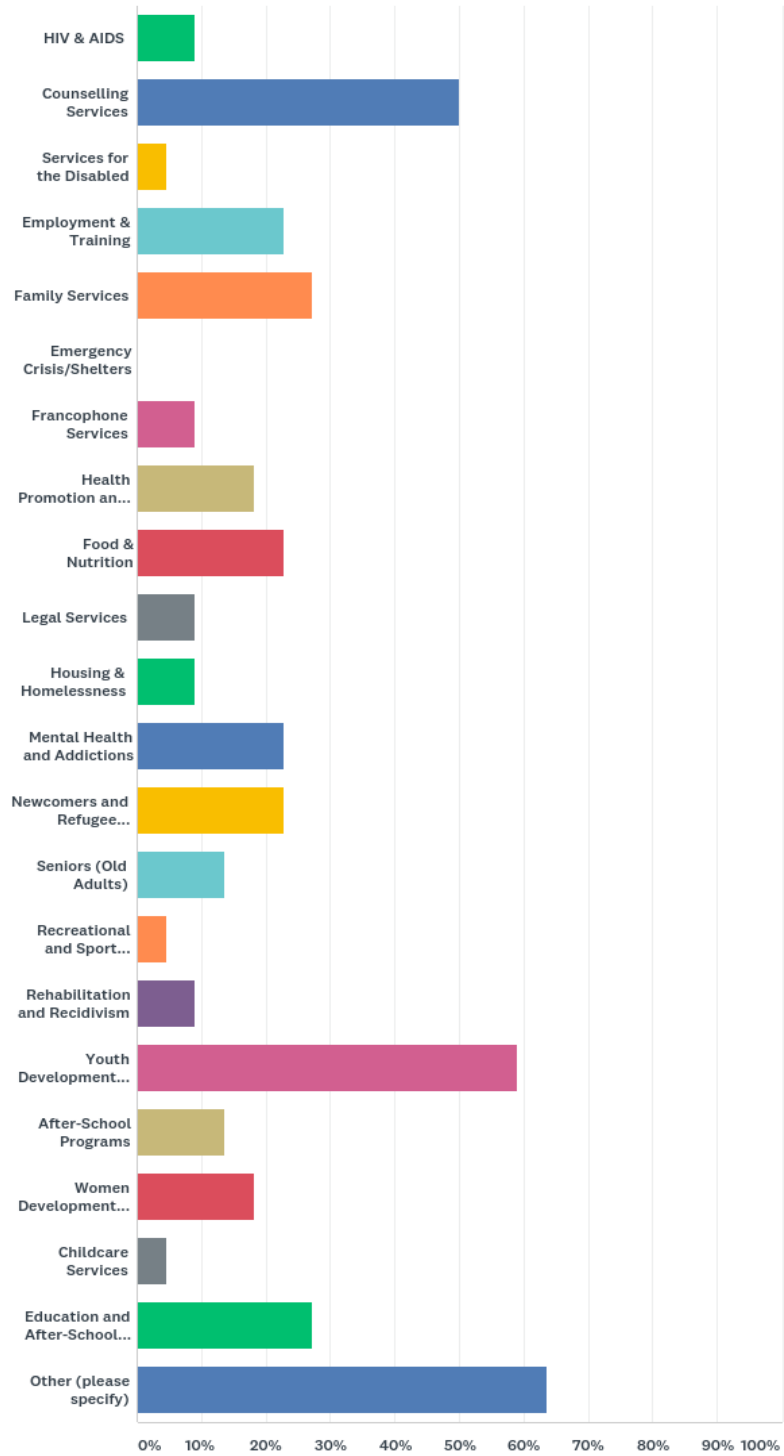


NABC Survey Results 2020

PROGRAMS & SERVICES BEING OFFERED

In the same survey, the results clearly identify the type of programming and services that our organizations currently offer. While there are a variety of programs, the main focus is counselling support and youth development, both of which we know are essential during this time of crisis. When spending is cut we have an increase in gun violence as we saw with the "Summer of the Gun."

Q5 What core services do you provide (Please select all that apply)



NABC Survey Results 2020

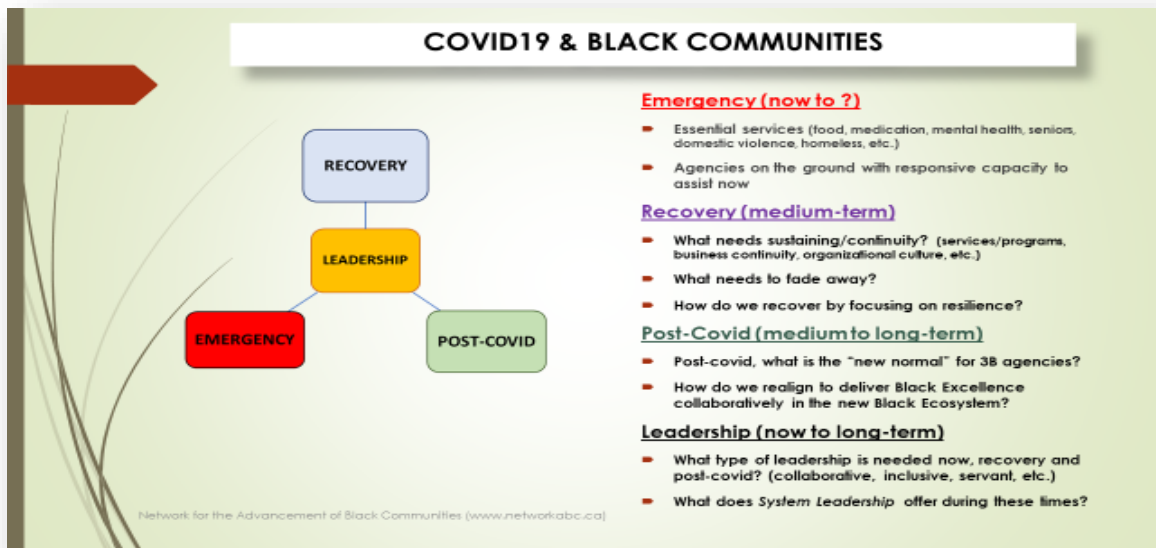
AN URGENT REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY FINANCIAL AID: THE NUMBERS

The Black to the Future Community of Practice is seeking immediate relief in raising **\$1.58M** for interim-measure recovery funds and help with supplies acquisition and advocacy efforts for the aforementioned critical needs areas.

IDENTIFYING THE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITIES & 3B ORGANIZATIONS NOW

We have categorized our need into the following categories:

- 3 **Recovery** – focuses on what needs to be sustained or what can be done to recover by focusing on resilience
- 3 **Emergency Response** – focuses on essential services i.e., food, medication, mental health, homelessness, domestic violence etc.,
- 3 **Post-Covid** - what is the new normal for 3B agencies? How do we collaborate and how do we align to offer Black focused programming and services better?



THE NUMBERS: BROKEN-DOWN

The following are the required funds by category. The Post-Covid funding request will be provided later after the current emergency is over. At this time, our focus for funding is on **Emergency Response** as priority followed by the **Recovery**.

1. Emergency Response:

The following is the funds required for emergency response efforts right now:
\$1,100,500.

2. Recovery:

The following is what we require for organizations that are in the recovery at this time: **\$475,400.00.**

The total ask is for \$1.58M.

THE NEED TO ACT NOW: ACTIONS & FOLLOW UP

As members of Black to the Future Community of Practice, we are doing our part to ensure that we can meet the growing needs of our communities during this COVID-19 crisis.

We are doing our part to ensure that we continue to offer innovative solutions to support our members in this moment of crisis, but we need your help. Access to the necessary and urgent funds not only pay staff, acquire resources and provide support such as practical assistance to our clients, but we also must take the appropriate measures to remain safe. This also created more of a financial burden on us as we aim to continue to meet the provincial and city-wide safety standards by purchasing protective wear, sanitization products, etc.

It is imperative that we receive the support of the funders and allies of Black Communities to not only survive this catastrophe but also remain resilient.



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THE FUTURE



"WE'VE KNOWN, LITERALLY FOREVER, THAT DISEASES LIKE DIABETES, HYPERTENSION, OBESITY AND ASTHMA ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTING THE MINORITY POPULATIONS, PARTICULARLY THE AFRICAN AMERICANS."

- DR. ANTHONY FAUCI

Appendix – List of Organizations that Completed the Survey

The following is a list of organizations that completed the survey at this time. Each has a unique role to play in supporting the Black community in Toronto.

1. Centre for Young Black Professionals
2. Jean Augustine Centre for Young Women's Empowerment
3. Harriet Tubman Community Organization
4. Tropicana community services organization
5. Jamaican Canadian Association
6. Stolen From Africa
7. Roots Community Services Inc.
8. Centre Canadian de L'unite de la famille
9. Morningside Community Changers
10. Dua Kro Family Services
11. Ontario Black History Society
12. SoundCheck Youth Arts Inc.
13. Uzima Women Relief Group International
14. Dream Legacy Foundation
15. Rwandan Canadian Healing Centre - RCHC
16. NAIFA Toronto
17. Lifelong Leadership Institute
18. Sankofa Mentoring Program
19. Vaughan African Canadian Association
20. Africans in Partnership Against AIDS (APAA(L'organisme Africaine en Partenariat avec d'autres Organismes Africaine pour la lutte contre le SIDA)
21. Mommy monitor
22. WFG
23. FrancoQueer
24. CAFCAN
25. Malton Black Development Association
26. ResQ Youth International Incorporated
27. Markham African Caribbean Canadian Association (MACCA)
28. All-African People's Revolutionary Party Toronto Circle
29. North Preston's future
30. RISE - Edutainment
31. Nia - Centre For the Arts
32. Blackcap
33. Generation Chosen
34. Black Daddies
35. Young and Potential Fathers
36. Youth LEAPS

Contact Information

Agapi Gessesse

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To direct financial contributions, supports and/or inquiries.

Website <https://blacktothefutureto.com/>



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