



Honourable Regional Chair  
Mr. Wayne Emmerson  
Regional Municipality of York Region

June, 12, 2024

Dear Chair Emmerson and members of Council:

Thank you for being gracious this morning as I deputized at Council. As I mentioned, I am sending you our formal request for operating and program support with a budget attached.

As you know, Anchor has been a staple in York Region since 2003. We were formed in 2003 by a group of teachers, principals and vice principals. Sadly, four of the original founders have moved out of York Region to Durham and Peel, but are still very involved in the organization. Since our formation, we have never made a plea to Council for program and operating funds.

Over the course of the past 12-months, we have attended Council meetings and watched as a number of organizations and agencies presented deputations asking the Region for funding, some asking for operational funds, program funds, program extensions and sustainable funding. It is vital that cities invest in agencies and projects that benefit the diversity of our communities.

Anchor has been serving the community without paid staff since 2003. Funding for programs that usually lasted 6-12 months afforded us temporary staff for that time period. But, once the program ended, we had to say good-bye to our staff. Over the course of 20 years, we have existed through the dedication, and support of our volunteers. Our volunteers have coached teams, started tutoring programs, helped our seniors, dropped off food hampers and toys to families in need, met with school boards on behalf of parents, packed care packages, supported the asylum seekers, written proposals, attended events, planned Galas and attended meetings sometimes out of the province in support of Anchor and our work with the Black community. We have done all of this, including our advocacy work with no yearly funding or permanent program space.

As our Founders are educators, education is extremely important to Anchor. We currently have two scholarship programs; one for a high school student entering post-secondary who is living with a disability or illness. That scholarship is in my namesake, *The Shernett Martin Scholarship* because I too live with a disability and life-threatening illness. The 2<sup>nd</sup> scholarship is the *Hodan Nalayeh Scholarship* named after Vaughan native and journalist who was killed by a suicide bomber in Somalia in 2019. Our goal was to offer each recipient coaching, mentorship and monthly meetings to ensure their transition to College/University was going well. We know that students from racialized communities oftentimes have a challenging time in their first and second year and benefit from community support. We wanted to hire dedicated staff to manage our education programs that would include our tutoring programs, parent navigation classes, Kindergarten prep-classes, summer camps and of course our scholarship programs. Without staff, we have one volunteer who is a retired nurse managing those programs.

We are always trying to be proactive with our programs. We want to create programs to support the community before they are in challenging situations. One of those programs is our “Rites of Passage” program. This program is used in Canada, the U.S., the Caribbean and South America. It is based on the same premise as the Jewish birth-rite program, without the travel to Africa. This program aims to teach Black youths about their ancestry, civilization, and their rich history. It aims to support youths in finding their purpose through religious texts and learning about the lives of our leaders, past and present. We would like to offer this program through Anchor, but need the staff and space to deliver the program. We have seen the data from the Rites of Passage program. This program has 100% success rate in changing the trajectory for youths who need a new pathway to success. It has brought out the brilliance in young people who didn’t know how to confidently let their talents and gifts shine. It has changed lives. As a teenager I went through a similar program presented by MACCA (Markham African-Canadian Caribbean Association) when I was very close to quitting school. I didn’t see myself reflected in the curriculum. I was bored in school. I didn’t feel like teachers understood me. The program changed me. The weekend retreat that I went to was led by Black lawyers, Black authors and community leaders who showed me that anything was possible. It changed my focus and I know I wouldn’t have become a teacher and writer without that program. The Rites of Passage program did that. It was powerful. I want to continue that tradition.

Along with advocacy work, we have run arts programs and sports programs. We started a basketball program in 2014 called Ballers Paradise. We sent over 15 students to the United States on scholarships. We have welcomed basketball coaches from Florida, Serbia, New York and South Carolina as part of our Ballers Paradise program. We brought the coaches to Canada to watch talent from across the Province during our tournaments. We even brought them to Montreal to meet basketball players at our Cross-border basketball tournament. As a result of our event that saw over 200 talented players attend the weekend event, 25 were selected to attend an elite camp in Florida. Out of the twenty-five, fifteen were offered scholarships. Sadly, after five years trying to keep our program running, we had to close the program due to lack of funding and lack of available gym space in the Region.

For members of Council who do not know much about what we do, and have only met us through the African asylum seekers response, I hope this email provides you with an overview of who we are. We were brought into the African asylum seekers response because staff at the Region called us. They knew who we were and the support we provide, they knew we would respond.

Anchor has always been there for community. We are passionate about our advocacy. We have always advocated for programs to make our City better for years. We have supported Black business owners, created a program specifically for Black girls & Black women, organized Caribbean cultural events, asked to have Emancipation Day and Black history month proclaimed in Vaughan. We have run a summer program for Black students to get them ready for the upcoming school year. We advocated for an Equity & Diversity manager in Vaughan. We advocated to have the name “Vaughan” stripped from a high school after learning about the life of our namesake Benjamin Vaughan. With the support of the Muslim, Asian, Jewish, Tamil, Italian and Black community we fought to have it renamed Hodan Nalayeh Secondary School. We advocated for a Human Right’s office to deal with anti-Black racism at the York Region School Board and changes within the Board. It was a tough fight, but we got it. Our advocacy work has shaped our City and Region. Our work is well documented. And, we have done all of this without funding or staff capacity. We are presently chairing the York Region Black Mental Health Roundtable with community partners from Cayre and 360 Kids. We simply see a problem and work to solve it. We are committed to community building.

Our program outline and budget that is being submitted is asking for a commitment of \$340,000 over five years for a total of 1.7 million. This amount if granted will enable Anchor to build capacity within our

organization by hiring staff that will be able to have a living wage with benefits. It will provide us with funding to run our programs fully with all the resources that they require. It will ensure that we can expand our seniors program and youth programs. It will help us acquire necessary items for our office space making it accessible for all. It will enable us to continue to provide support and services to the growing Black community in Vaughan and across the Region. It will provide us with the staff compliment to train, and provide workshops to community members. It will enable us to be funded equitably like other social service agencies. We will have the capacity to appoint staff to sit on committees and broaden our reach and stakeholder relations. It will provide us with the capacity to create a succession plan in line with our strategic plan so we can ensure that we have the right talent ready for our next twenty years. It will help us maintain our programs year-after-year without fear of having to cancel them due to lack of funding. It will provide us with sustainable funding for important programs that depend on funding for their continuation. Most importantly, it will signal to the Black community that the Region is a valuable partner. It tells us that you see us and you hear us. You understand that in order for a community to flourish it needs investment to equip it so that it can continue doing great work.

Thank you for taking the time to read our proposal and go through our budget. We appreciate the importance you have placed on providing community groups and cultural groups with funding. We are grateful that you see the need to support the growing Black/African community in York Region. We look forward to continuing to provide needed services for the community.

With gratitude,

*Sherrett Martin, Executive Director*

*Marcie Boathe, Board Chair*



Through the support of the City of Vaughan, Anchor is creating a space called **The Helm**, which will be a welcoming and inclusive space offering a range of our current and new programs and services.

## **ANCHOR Programs -2024/2025**

### Youth Housing Navigator

The Youth Housing Navigator (YHN) program will be managed by our Youth Navigator Team (Manager, intake workers) who will support young individuals aged 16-30 in York Region by helping them find and maintain safe and affordable housing, obtaining furniture, subsidized rent, supporting them with mini-grants, first & last month rent and support integrating them in community.

### JiWA Mental Health Support Program

JiWA is a Sanskrit word meaning “soulful” or “spiritual”

Our Mental Health Support Program is called the “Jiwa Program” and is a specially tailored initiative for culturally sensitive mental health support delivered by Black and racialized psychotherapists, social workers and psychiatrist. This program will follow recommendations from the York Region Black mental health roundtable. All appointments are subsidized.

### Newcomer Youth Settlement

Designed for youth who are new to Canada, this program offers recreational, skill-building and mental health services, working with young newcomers as they make friends and settle into their new home. Youths will be matched with Anchor youths to help them settle into the City and Canada.

### EAS - Employment Accessibility Services for Persons with Disabilities

We work with many individuals with visible and invisible disabilities. This program assists youths, post-secondary students and graduates with disabilities to prepare for, obtain and maintain meaningful employment. Our team aims to reduce disability-related barriers to employment while supporting clients to achieve their goals. We will work with the City of Vaughan’s Accessibility team to ensure we are creating safe, and barrier programs and conditions for all.

### Pre-Apprenticeship and Trades Programs

Anchor will work in partnership with our friends at Liuna 183 and the Carpenters Union as well as Black-owned construction companies, and skilled-trades programs geared towards Black youths and adults interested in the skills trade, free pre-apprentice and trades programs, providing a pathway to high-demand trades. Participants will undergo assessments for grade 12 Math and English and engage in Academic Upgrading to develop essential communication and numeracy skills for entry into skilled trades. We will employ facilitators student teachers and

tradespeople to lead the classes, which will be offered during the day, evenings and weekends to maintain flexible hours.

#### Youth Job Connection Program

Youth Job Connection (YJC) serves youth aged 15 – 29 who experience multiple or complex barriers to employment. The program provides more intensive supports beyond traditional job search and placement opportunities. We will require support to purchase lap tops and technology to support the development of a teaching lab. Tutors and facilitators will be hired.

#### Foundations for Youth Success

We will be contacting the United Way to bring the Foundations for Youth Success program to York Region. This program is designed for youth experiencing multiple or complex barriers to education and employment. Building on activities offered through the Youth Job Connection program, it aims to equip participants with the life skills needed to successfully engage in employment or employment readiness programs.

#### Jobs Ontario

Anchor will apply for funding to offer the Better Jobs Ontario program (formerly known as Second Career) provides unemployed individuals with financial support and skills training to secure in-demand jobs in their communities. This will be great for newcomers, asylum seekers, 2<sup>nd</sup> career seniors, retirees and new Canadians.

#### Mechanic Millwright Pre-Apprenticeship Program

This free program equips students with skills related to the millwright trade, which involves installing, maintaining, diagnosing and repairing industrial machines. Delivered by George Brown College in partnership with WoodGreen, the program includes trade readiness, employment preparation and academic upgrading.

#### Visual Effects (VFX) & Creative arts program

This VFX training program is designed to give Black youth a competitive edge as they launch careers in digital compositing. Over 16 weeks, participants gain the knowledge and experience necessary to find post-production work. Training includes a six-week paid internship.

#### YJR - Program

Youth Justice Reform program is by referral and works with youths in the justice system. Youths who are charged, out on bail, awaiting trial, incarcerated or youths who have been released after incarceration. We meet with and support youths and their families with stakeholders and partners to ensure they stay out of the system and find gainful employment, social programs, training and internship.

#### Black Girls Inc.

Our flagship entrepreneur program created to address the inequities of business ownership Black women experience through providing coaching, mentorship, workshops and personal support

Expense Category	Description	Cost
Administrative staff	FT/1.0	75,000 per year
Administrative staff	FT/ 1.0	60,000 per year
Administrative staff	FT/1.0	\$50,000 per year
Administrative Assistant	PT/1.0	\$30,000 per year
Rites of passage cost for Program Training/ Orientation/Copyright	culturally relevant program materials and activities	\$10,000 (one-time cost)
Guest Speakers, workshop leaders and Facilitators for yearly events	Honorariums for cultural experts, mentors, and workshop leaders (x15)	\$8,000 per year
<b>Workshop, Programs and Activities</b>		
Mental Health and Well-being programs – Jiwa program	Mental, physical, and spiritual health program	\$15,000 per year
Leadership Training Sessions	Board, Leadership, planning, and training	\$5,000 per year
The Helm Programs	Program cost – see program intro’s	\$36,000
Community Engagement Event	Caribbean Cultural Event	\$7,000 per year
<b>Tech/IT, Materials and Supplies</b>		
IT/Tech, Educational Materials	Tech/IT, educational supplies, tools, and workshop materials	\$5,000 per year
Office Supplies	General office supplies for program administration	\$2,000 per year
<b>Events and Seniors Exploration</b>		
Cultural Events	Black History Month & Emancipation Day yearly event	\$6,000 per year
Field Trips, Community social events for youths and seniors	Youth and Seniors exploration trips to museums, historical sites, and cultural centers (transportation, subsidizing)	\$5,000 per year
<b>Technology and Equipment</b>		
Computers and Software	Laptops, software, and other technology	\$5,000
<b>Facilities and Utilities</b>		
Venue Rental/permit costs	Rental of space for workshops, events, and activities (ex: CariVaughan & Juneteenth event)	\$5,000 per year
<b>Marketing and Outreach</b>		
Community Outreach Events	Radio, online marketing, outreach, online ads	\$3,000 per year
Technology/IT/ website	Website update, maintenance, emails, domain costs	\$8,000 per year
Contingency Fund	Unforeseen expenses and miscellaneous costs	\$5,000 per year
Total Annual Budget		<b>\$340,000</b>

