



Early Childhood Content Development Consultant

Background

The early childhood years are critical for all children, but particularly for children with intellectual disabilities (ID). These years are a time of great vulnerability for the general health and well-being of a child and can impact their foundation for life-long health and development. Effective early childhood development (ECD) and early intervention services are critical in supporting a child and their entire family. Unfortunately, children with ID often have limited access to these programs and services. To ensure children of all abilities have access to the opportunities to live healthy, fulfilling lives, Special Olympics has built an evidence-based early childhood intervention program for children with and without ID and their families.

Young Athletes

[Special Olympics Young Athletes](#) delivers direct, evidence-based support to children with and without ID through inclusive developmental skill activities, with the potential to make a long-term, meaningful impact on the social, cognitive, psychological and physical development of young children. Young Athletes programming lasts a minimum of eight weeks and takes place in homes, schools and communities, led by family members, teachers, and volunteers supported with Special Olympics training and resources.

Sample Young Athletes activities can be seen in key Young Athletes resources, including the [Young Athletes Activity Guide](#) and [Young Athletes activity videos](#).

Healthy Start

Based on the success and reach of Young Athletes, Special Olympics has expanded to a comprehensive Maternal and Child Health (MCH) intervention that prioritizes parental education and support. The MCH intervention focuses on the development of skills and confidence for families to improve their child's healthy development from the time of diagnosis (Healthy Start), through Young Athletes participation and throughout life. This comprehensive maternal and child health model is critical to providing families with children with ID with direct health services, resources, support, and access to follow-up care and intervention. Healthy Start welcomes families into the Special Olympics movement by providing research-based information on ID, digital resources, and messages of support from experts and families in order to help families successfully meet the health and care needs of their child with IDD. Sample Healthy Start content includes the [Guide for New Parents of Children with ID](#).

The Mobile App

In efforts to expand upon the success and reach of Young Athletes and Healthy Start, Special Olympics is creating the first digital developmental tool designed to support the needs of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their parents and families. The mobile app will create a transformative and encouraging digital environment to guide and advise parents and caregivers through a child's early development years (0-7). The goal of the project is to create a multi-platform mobile application that will guide families and caregivers of children with IDD through their child's development with developmentally appropriate activities, while also creating an online resource forum to engage, educate and connect families of children with IDD. The app will differentiate itself from other early childhood and milestone tracking apps on the market by being the first app specifically targeting the development of children across the intellectual and developmental disability spectrum. The target end



user for the app is parents or caregivers of young children with IDD. **The app will provide support to families from the time a child is diagnosed with IDD through their progress across key developmental milestones.**

The app will offer positive support for children as they progress through developmental milestones by helping families understand where their child is developmentally and then providing a broad range of activities that support child development for families to do at home. Using the information collected in the child assessment, the app will determine where a child is along a developmental continuum. From there, the app will suggest a variety of different activities that a family can do together at home that will help the child progress to the next developmental milestone. As they complete activities, the user can mark them as complete and keep track of their relevant activities. The user will be able to note when their child has reached a new developmental milestone, at which point, the app will suggest new activities to support the child's continued development.

Scope of Work

Special Olympics seeks to identify a consultant (individual or organization) to provide oversight and technical expertise in the curation and development of content to be incorporated within the Mobile App. Content to be curated will consist of articles, videos and scientific content related to development for children with IDD. This content will help inform and provide activity suggestions for children and their families to complete to support their development.

This consultancy will take place concurrently with the backend app development and initial pilot phases of the project to support the customization of the user and child experience. The consultant's responsibilities will be broken down into the following key deliverables:

Deliverable 1: Develop initial survey questions for families to complete upon registration in the app with health, developmental and diagnostic information that will be used to inform user experience throughout the Mobile App and assess where a child is developmentally. (Due: August 15, 2022).

- Review Special Olympics pediatric screening documents as guidance to curate and develop relevant survey questions related to child's development, diagnosis and background.

Deliverable 2: Construct a 'development continuum' with key milestones that will connect with initial registration survey responses and help to guide users through different stages of development. The development continuum will serve as a guide throughout the family's experience navigating the app for their child. Based on initial survey responses, developmentally appropriate activities will be recommended to families that align with the milestones established within the continuum. (Due: August 30, 2022).

- Work with Special Olympics teams to classify behaviors, skills, and traits into key developmental stages.



Deliverable 3: Curate articles, videos and scientific content (10 per diagnosis area) focused on disability and child development. Curated content will be included within the app as education for families and caregivers. (Due: September 30, 2022).

- Collaborate with Special Olympics staff and additional project experts to compile relevant resources for the information section within the app. All content will be curated with the intention of supporting families to become comfortable understanding their child's diagnosis and development.

Deliverable 4: Develop a mapping structure to align current and new Young Athletes activities, resources and additional content to developmental milestones and survey responses. The consultant will produce a logic model that will be used to map when activities are suggested to families based on responses to their child's development survey. (Due: October 1, 2022).

- For each stage along the development continuum, the consultant will connect developmentally appropriate activities and relevant content. These activities and content will be suggested to the family based on individual child survey responses to support a child's development journey.

Deliverable 5: Develop new Young Athletes activities that are developmentally appropriate for children 2 years of age and under. The consultant will use the mapping structure from deliverable 4 to identify gaps in development areas that will inform the creation of new activities that children and families can conduct at home. (Due: November 1, 2022).

Timeline: Consultant will begin work on July 25, 2022. All deliverables must be complete and approved by November 30, 2022. Special Olympics will work with the selected consultant(s) to determine a reasonable timeline for all listed deliverables.

Compensation: The Early Childhood Content Development Consultant will receive up to \$80,000 in compensation for work, with payment based on completion of deliverables.

Applying for Consultancy

Interested applicants will be asked to submit a short proposal by June 20, 2022. Proposals should include:

1. Brief project description that outlines your vision and strategy for implementing project work (max. 2 pages), inclusive of:
 - Overview of the overall approach and methodology proposed to respond to the expectations of the consultancy deliverables.
 - Proposed project budget, including an anticipated breakdown of working hours per deliverable.
 - Relevant work sample of ECD focused interventions or projects.
2. CVs for all individuals that would support the consultancy, including relevant project experience.
 - Proposals must be sent via email to Cassandra Ryan, Early Childhood Project Manager at Special Olympics International, at cryan@specialolympics.org. Any questions or clarifications can also be directed to Cassandra Ryan via email.

Required/Preferred Qualifications

- MD, Ph.D., or Master's in a field relevant to early childhood interventions, child development, pediatrics, or disability.



- Experience with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Experience with the implementation of early childhood development interventions.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills in English, including ability to communicate effectively with a culturally and professionally diverse range of stakeholders.