



## Context

The AFP Greater Toronto Chapter (AFP) is recognized as the largest of the more than 240 AFP chapters globally. It is seen as a leader in promoting philanthropy and providing education, training, and best practices for fundraising professionals. With a mission to empower individuals and organizations to practice ethical fundraising and a vision to stimulate a world of generosity and positive social good, inclusivity is one of its core guiding principles. AFP Toronto aims to reflect the diversity of the communities it serves, creating a welcoming and supportive environment for diverse individuals offering them pathways to succeed. The AFP Board experienced recent upheaval when several Board members resigned over anti-Black racism, the implementation of IDEA principles, and the Board's inability to address concerns raised. Nyanda Consulting was retained to assist the Board in understanding the best way forward.

## Methodology

A rapid assessment audit was conducted to develop an understanding of organizational culture from an insider's perspective. This process involved intensive qualitative interviews using triangulation to quickly develop a preliminary understanding of the challenges experienced with the attempted implementation of IDEA principles and the dismantling of anti-Black racism within the organization. Triangulation refers to the use of multiple information sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena and provide a clear picture of any organizational problems. It also provides us with knowledge of unique circumstances that may not be so obvious to those working within the organization.

## Data Sources

Focus groups, key informant interviews, organizational public documents, e-mails and social media platforms were used to engage 66 individuals who represented a cross section of AFP Toronto stakeholders.

## Focus Groups were conducted for the following groups:

Staff

Board

Volunteers

Black members

Racialized and other equity deserving members

General members

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### **Individual key informant interviews were conducted with the following individuals:**

Current Executive Director  
Current and Past Board Chairs  
Current and Past Incoming Board Chairs  
4 Past Board members  
AFP Global Representatives  
Individual member interviews (12 in total)  
E-mail/Social media correspondence (8 in total)

**Note:** Black Board members who recently resigned from the AFP Toronto Board were offered an opportunity to be interviewed but all declined.

### **What did the AFP community have to say?**

I have taken the liberty of combining all forms of feedback and will be providing high-level themes and interpretations that were common across all forms of communication. The goal is to present a snapshot of where AFP is situated from the perspective of IDEA and anti-Black racism. Direct quotes from participants will appear in italics throughout the report, and any identifiers have been removed. I will refer to all interviewees as participants to maintain anonymity.

## **Main Themes**

### **Aspirations for AFP Toronto**

All participants that contributed to the audit expressed a strong desire to see AFP Toronto live up to its full potential. All participants were willing to participate in a process that would bring about the necessary changes for AFP Toronto to be an equity leader in the fundraising sector. The following are some aspirations expressed by the participants.

- AFP regains its place as an exemplary leader
- Barriers to access are addressed
- Become an organization where everyone feels welcome
- Respect for the leadership is restored
- Become a truly equity supportive organization vs. reactionary
- Let's be so excellent that we put IDEA out of business

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- AFP Toronto becomes a true leader in equity

## Loyalty and Commitment to AFP

***“I have been a member of AFP for over 20 years, I have volunteered at every level including the Board. This year is the first time I am questioning whether I will continue my membership.”***

Organizational commitment with a high level of engagement and dedication to AFP was overwhelming expressed by all participants regardless of their role in the organization. Participants were clear about why they joined AFP and why they have remained loyal to AFP despite ongoing challenges. Participant engagement ranged from 1 – 30 years, with a large majority having been with the organization for 10+ years. Networking opportunities and professional development were cited as the main reasons for loyal engagement. Participants noted that professional advancement in the fundraising sector required AFP membership, and employers often paid for membership and required participation as a condition for employment. Participants clearly expressed that in recent years their loyalty and commitment to AFP was diminishing.

The inability for the organization to incorporate IDEA principles as part of core functioning was creating an unhealthy organization which made it difficult to continue supporting at the same level of commitment many had entered the organization with. Concerns were raised about all forms of discrimination that participants were experiencing, most noting, racism, anti-Black racism, anti-ableism and homophobia. Participants expressed that the patriarchal culture of AFP along with the absence of any Indigenous engagement made it difficult to continue supporting an organization that was so far behind the organizational changes that were happening globally.

***“I find it hard to be committed to an organization that is not committed to me as a member of a marginalized group.”***

## Value Added

***“Very little has changed in the 17 years I have been a member.”***

Participants acknowledged that at one time, AFP-Toronto was “the only game in town,” but this was no longer the case. Participants were clear to voice their concerns about the value of membership, and many were making decisions about membership renewal. It should be noted that this was seen as a

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difficult decision for most, considering the number of years many had dedicated to the organization. Older members felt that now that their careers were established, they no longer benefitted from AFP membership. Some expressed that the professional development offered was too general and applied only to lower-end giving.

***“AFP needs to figure out who its target audience is – entry level fundraisers? What are you doing for top tier fundraisers?”***

Participants noted that if their employer were not funding membership, they would not renew. Some noted that the job posting discount was a reason to stay, but this may no longer be enough incentive. Others noted that it looked good on their resumes, but no other added value was provided. There was a general sentiment that AFP needs to be more innovative and cutting edge. Education and professional development were not keeping up with the advancements that have been made in the profession, and people were finding more support from online sources and fundraising networks in other countries such as the US and UK. Participants expressed disappointment in paying for a membership to an organization where they have experienced discrimination, racism, and exclusion.

***“Racialized fundraisers are starting their own network. Not a good look on AFP.”***

## **Lack of Organizational Commitment to IDEA**

***“We have a lot of goals to accomplish, and we can get nothing done if we are not able to address this issue of IDEA. It is hindering all other work from happening at AFP.”***

After speaking with AFP Global representatives, it is evident that the principles of IDEA are central and core to the day-to-day business of AFP. It is seen as priority work, not just nice to have work. Participants discussed that the inability of AFP to be leaders in the area of IDEA and anti-Black racism was causing the organization to lose its credibility. Toronto was noted as the most racially diverse city in Canada, and AFP Toronto was the largest chapter. It was, therefore, crucial that AFP Toronto set the standard of what IDEA should look like not only within AFP but also within the fundraising sector. Participants felt that AFP Toronto’s challenges with implementing IDEA into the core functioning of the organization was a missed opportunity to be a leader.

***“The spotlight is shining on us as the Toronto chapter.”***

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Participants felt that the infrastructure was not put in place to support an IDEA committee and therefore it was bound to fail. There was a general culture of not supporting or resourcing any social justice initiatives within AFP. This would need to change in order for IDEA to be prioritized within the organization. Many expressed that the biggest challenge faced by the IDEA committee was the lack of authority to effect change in the organization. IDEA committee recommendations were often ignored or not taken seriously. It was always a fight for any suggestion from the IDEA committee to be addressed. It was felt that this pattern was more pronounced when Black board members chaired the committee.

The fact that the IDEA committee was not an organizational-wide committee and did not include representatives from the Staff was seen as problematic by participants. There were no clear guidelines and processes for the committee to follow, and therefore it became dysfunctional due to a lack of direction. The general sentiment about the disbanding of the committee was that it was a strategy to silence the Black members of the committee who were vocal about Anti-Black racism in the organization. The decision to discontinue the committee and move KPIs into every committee's work plan has been seen as ineffective due to a lack of monitoring mechanisms to hold committees accountable to the IDEA deliverables. It was also noted that committee members had not been trained to implement IDEA principles so there is no consistency across the organization.

**“How can we show that we are living our values internally if we can’t maintain an IDEA committee.”**

Participants discussed how the standard practice in most organizations now is to have some version of an IDEA committee. It did not make sense for AFP to move in the opposite direction. The reinstating of the IDEA committee with the proper supports, infrastructure and training was the overarching message from participants.

### **Anti-Black Racism within AFP**

***“Sometimes we don’t see how intense anti-Black racism is until you actually have to interact with Black people as equals.”***

The need to create a safe environment where people feel that they can challenge racism and Anti-Black racism without repercussions was expressed by participants. Participants noted that the fundraising world is based on White privilege, and those who have it do not want to let go of

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power. There was fear of reprisals for speaking out about and against racism at AFP. Participants noted that those members who spoke up were punished, or their concerns or complaints were ignored. If issues of racism were raised, the person reporting was often made to feel that they were a problem or creating a problem for AFP. The inability of AFP to create an environment where one could complain about racism and expect changes to be made created a toxic culture of bullying and intimidation from those who complained and those in leadership positions to address the need for change. Participants expressed not feeling protected when the Board failed to address racism in the organization and the bullying they were experiencing. This fear was also deepened when colleagues did not speak up or support allies when racism occurred.

Black Board members were explicitly recruited to increase diversity, but there was no work or preparation to address anti-Black racism in the organization prior to recruiting them. Participants felt that this situation was a setup for both sides. Past and current Board opinion is quite split with some members feeling victimized by the Black Board members, others agreed with the accusations of anti-Black racism but not with the methods utilized to raise the concerns and there were those who felt the Board engaged in White supremacy tactics to silence and remove the Black Board members for speaking out.

***“Everyone had their own agenda for Black people coming on to the Board and it nothing to do with what Black people wanted.”***

The need to create a space where people feel safe to have honest conversations about racism without repercussions was highlighted as a priority. It was noted that the Board needs to be clear and outspoken in its opposition to anti-Black racism, to develop a culture where members will be supported if they speak out. It was also felt that AFP needed to understand how Black members and their communities want anti-Black racism in AFP to be addressed and resolved. There needs to be a secure complaints process that supports an IDEA initiative. Instances of Anti-Black racism in AFP need to be tackled head-on and not allowed to fester and get out of control. The AFP Board should send very clear messages stating that anti-Black racism will not be tolerated and the consequences from an organizational standpoint.

## **Volunteer- Driven Organization**

***“The AFP culture is to lean on the volunteers until they burnout.”***

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While AFP has a small dynamic Staff team, the volunteers are a valuable resource that allows AFP to truly fulfil its goals and mandate. As a resource-constrained organization AFP counts on volunteers to maintain its high level of functioning. Despite the understood value of the volunteers, participants felt the volunteers were exploited, undervalued, and tended to be the more marginalized members of AFP. Racialized volunteers were often treated in a paternalistic manner where they were positioned as ‘needing’ the volunteer opportunities more than non-racialized members because they were lacking skills and experience. They were seen as requiring more training, mentorship, and leadership skills.

***“I came to Canada with extensive fundraising experience from my country of origin. I don’t need leadership skills I just need to learn the Canadian system.”***

Participants felt that the more marginalized you were, the more you needed to prove your worth through excessive volunteer hours and commitment. This also played out for fundraisers from smaller nonprofits not seen as skilled as those from larger organizations. Tokenism was also a key theme discussed by participants concerning volunteers. Prominent roles that racialized volunteers were tapped for this year were seen as “window dressing,” with AFP performing IDEA without doing the work to make changes in the organization. Participants felt volunteer concerns were often dismissed. They were seen as problematic if they complained, and as volunteers, they were supposed to feel gratitude for even being allowed to volunteer with AFP. What motivated participants to volunteer for AFP was a strong desire to give back to the profession and networking opportunities to advance in their field. When their contributions were diminished, undervalued, or tokenized, this resulted in them feeling exploited. Participants felt they had taken the time to provide AFP feedback for years about the harm they were experiencing without response or change. The consensus was that participants felt they were labeled problematic if they had a problem volunteering with AFP.

## **Culture of Exclusion not Inclusion**

***“You get to network with who you are allowed to network with.”***

The culture of exclusion affirms the power of one group over others and either excludes those others from full and equal participation in the organization or allows inclusion only to the degree that the participants can shape themselves to be accepted by the group in power. Participants described this as the dominant culture of AFP. This has caused loss of morale and poor Board/Membership relations. Participants expressed a lack of confidence in the leadership of the organization. AFP did not have strategies to welcome new members, and AFP Toronto

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operated like a private club with members having limited access to the Board level. Participants felt the board was committed to its power and did not represent its members or their needs. Members noted that you were required to be a CEO or high-powered executive to serve on the board as the Chair. The gender imbalance was also noted at the Board level with a female-dominated membership with a male-dominated Board composition. Lack of transparency at the Board level was often cited as problematic by participants, and it was felt that there was limited engagement or communication with the members.

***“Board elections are a farce; the process is not clear, and the average member has no idea how people get nominated or elected.”***

Participants expressed frustration with a lack of clarity of the role of the Board since they are often involved in the operations of the organization. Participants also discussed the risk to their reputation in the sector if they serve on a Board that has challenges addressing anti-Black racism or IDEA. The lack of Board policies to govern Board conduct, conflict of interest, and harassment eroded participants' confidence in the Board's ability to lead AFP.

***“If I can't trust the board to ensure that I don't have a traumatic experience when serving how can I trust in its ability to lead, this is what causes people to feel excluded and leave.”***

## Board / Staff Relations

***“We are the face of AFP. We need to be supported.”***

The Staff team of AFP is exceptionally positive and has a deep understanding of the day-to-day workings of the organization. They are the closest to understanding the members' needs, and they were clear in their understanding of what AFP initiatives have worked or not. The Staff worked collaboratively to be innovative and produce work at high levels despite limited resources. It was evident that their work and goals were tied to the organizational mission and the maintenance of organizational reputation.

The Board does not tap into the expertise at the Staff level, with little consultation happening on issues of IDEA and anti-Black racism. Many participants expressed that AFP is under-resourced, putting pressure on the Staff and affecting Staff morale. Participants felt that reliance on a volunteer-driven model was no longer sustainable for the success of the organization and its growth. The distinction between the Board governance role and the Staff's management role is often blurred. The Board is seen as often creating additional work for Staff without consulting

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on capacity first. Board committees often come up with great ideas but cannot follow through in their volunteer capacity, and this work is then handed over to the Staff without a plan or extra resources.

The Board/Staff power imbalance is often exercised by delegating board work to the Staff without following proper lines of communication and process. It was expressed by many that IDEA is the day-to-day work of the Staff. They have embraced the principles and are trying to implement them in the organization, but there has not been adequate Board support to do this work authentically. Staff members were not a part of the IDEA committee and were provided limited support to troubleshoot with members in the aftermath of the Board's decision to disband the committee.

Trust has become eroded on the issues of racism in particular. Participants felt that the Board never held the former Executive Director accountable for her lack of engagement with IDEA and anti-Black racism, which was an indication that Staff concerns were not being prioritized in the organization. The participants reported having experienced microaggressions from Board members to Staff without any mechanism to address the situation. Because of the tokenistic culture within the organization, Staff from equity deserving groups were left questioning if they were hired for their skill or just as a shield against accusations of discrimination. When racism arose at the Board level, the Staff were left to deal with the negative press and social media, with the Board taking little responsibility for the situation. The participants felt that Staff managed the backlash of the situation and absorbed the liability to reputation as the face of AFP. They were now being associated with an organization that could not address racism and anti-Black racism.

Participants noted that the change in organizational leadership was welcomed, but the Executive Directors' role is not yet well established. The Staff is seen as having a minimal say in the functioning of the organization. Participants felt that there needs to be structured engagement where Staff expertise and knowledge about the membership can be fully utilized.

***“In the Past the ED was never held accountable. Penny is the best thing that has happened to AFP, but she needs to be allowed to lead the organization.”***



## Recommendations

*“The Board needs to see the opportunity they have been given to be leaders and fix this problem.”*

We cannot hope to address the need to incorporate the principles of IDEA with a checklist, but instead, AFP needs to ensure that it is working towards creating a long-term dynamic, iterative process. As part of that process, there must be a genuine commitment to listening to members and creating an environment where they feel valued and engaging in the education that will allow informed decisions that will have lasting effects. There also needs to be an accelerated process of examining how power, inequality, and anti-Black racism play out at every level of AFP.

Addressing the recommendations that have been generated from a dynamic cross-section of participants made it difficult to decide what to highlight. The following are recommendations that were generated by the participants. As you review the following recommendations, please be reminded of the spirit of generosity, careful thought, and effort that each participant put forward as they worked collectively to ensure that their contributions would support a successful process for AFP. The recommendations, as listed, follow no particular order or priority:

### Organizational Structure

- Clarify the vision, direction and purpose of AFP and help to create a clear pathway for the organization going forward.
- The mandate and the structure of the whole organization needs to be reviewed
- The Board election process should be reviewed and more transparent
- There needs to be a clear distinction made between the role of the Board, ED, Staff, and volunteers

### Member Engagement

- More focus groups and listening sessions with members
- Skip congress and lets really talk
- Survey members on a regular basis so that you know what their professional development needs are and you stay current
- Host membership engagement meetings
- Collect and report on sociodemographic data: Do we know who our members are? What is the diversity of AFP? You can't know if you are truly representative if you don't ask
- Strengthen the Board capacity to be better equipped to respond to the needs of members

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- Improve the communication flow that seems to be missing within the organization
- Reduce feelings of mistrust that has been going on in the organization between the Board and members

### **Strategic Planning**

- Need to develop a strategic plan with an equity focus for the next 5 years
- AFP should consider moving away from networking and focusing more on advocacy
- The relevancy of AFP needs to be addressed
- The mandate and focus of the organization need to be refreshed

### **IDEA and ABR**

- Need to see AFPs commitment to Anti-Black racism in writing (Public Statement)
- Need to develop an IDEA workplan with key indicators and public reporting
- We need reparative sessions and support for those people who have felt harmed by racism in AFP
- The creation of affinity groups for equity seeking members
- Mandatory training should occur across the entire organization and should include anti-Black racism, unconscious bias, learning to talk about race, white privilege, white fragility, equity, allyship, institutional and systemic racism
- The former IDEA committee needs to be reinstated
- All recruitment process in the organization needs to be reviewed for equity and access
- There needs to be a clear complaints process clearly outlining the processes for addressing issues of racism and discrimination in AFP
- Create spaces to have conversations about anti-Black racism and other forms of discrimination
- Accessibility needs to be prioritized within AFP
- Ensure that competence in IDEA is a requirement for Staff and Board recruitment
- Address dismantling the systems within the organization that reproduce oppression
- Develop clear public messages that the organizational culture of AFP is one where equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility are promoted and practiced.
- AFP should identify any learning gaps amongst its leadership in their ability to understand concepts such as systemic discrimination and microaggressions
- Increase Staff involvement in the change that is needed within AFP.
- Build more robust Board policies, procedures, and processes with a strong EDI lens.



## Final Comments

Moving from a status quo organization to an equity responsive organization requires long-term and sustained effort. An organization's intellectual capital gains depth and breadth through equity. Fair treatment increases in the workplace, equal access to opportunities becomes the norm, there is transparency, and everyone knows what to expect in terms of outcomes and rewards. Equity in an organization will mean increased access to diverse experiences, perspectives, and source material to draw from in brainstorming, solving problems, and creating innovative services. Mobilizing a full spectrum of ideas, talent and experiences are essential to creating an equity responsive organization that responds to changing Toronto demographics and global challenges. Full engagement in this process will build an innovative, successful, and inclusive organization that is responsive, nimble, and able to ensure the next generation of fundraisers can navigate effectively in an ever-changing world.

Based on the feedback provided and the recommendations outlined, I assess that to achieve an equity responsive organization and one that respects the worth and dignity of all members, a robust organizational IDEA program should be implemented that supports:

- The alignment of AFP's organizational policies, practices, and mandate with equity principles
- Increased organizational capacity to lead from a strong equity foundation
- Increased organizational effectiveness to be responsive to all stakeholders on issues of equity

The following three elements will ensure the success of the organizational IDEA program

1. A work plan should be developed in collaboration with all critical stakeholders of AFP including but not limited to Board, Staff, members, and volunteers. Clear goals, targets, and timelines should be outlined.
2. A monitoring framework to track successful plan implementation would allow AFP to be aware of problems as they occur and place the organization in a position to address them quickly and effectively. Regular reporting would help gain the confidence and trust of AFP members.

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3. Ongoing evaluation of the AFP IDEA program will ensure its effectiveness. This will allow for transparent reporting, feedback, and engagement with the AFP membership.

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