



## **Notes from AFP GTC Listening Session #1 (Virtual Via Zoom)**

**Friday, January 12, 2024, 12:00 -1:00 pm ET**

### **In attendance:**

#### **Fundraisers:**

14 guests.

#### **AFP GTC Interim Board Members:**

Olumide Akerewusi - Interim Board President and Chair,  
Liz Rejman - Interim Board Secretary and Treasurer,  
Ann Rosenfield- Board Member,  
Esther Lee - Board Member.

#### **AFP Global:**

Brigit Smith-Burton - AFP Global Board Chair.

#### **AFP GTC Staff:**

Taylor Cunningham –“Listening Session” Lead Coordinator/ Professional Development & Events Specialist,  
Fadwa Hadeed – Marketing and Communications Specialist.

### **Summary:**

Fundraisers felt that AFP GTC is known as an exclusive club that is an unwelcoming and exclusionary space for most fundraisers. Fundraisers expressed a variety of concerns in relation to the barriers preventing an authentic association with AFP GTC and the broader fundraising community. These concerns ranged from the feeling of being canceled if they spoke about issues of equity, not feeling empowered to raise issues or concerns, and not feeling that they would necessarily be listened to or have their opinions considered. There was resounding interest in continuing the Listening Sessions as a permanent fixture of AFP GTC so that fundraisers could come together share, and build a community, while also supporting each other.

### **AGENDA:**

#### **~7 minutes Welcome and Introduction: Led by Mide**

Mide welcomed everyone and introduced Liz, Esther, and Taylor who were assisting in arranging these sessions. He also introduced Ann as an interim board member and Sara as a special advisor, who joined us to listen and learn.



### **5 minutes One Word poll with follow-up large group discussion: Led by Liz**

What is your perception of AFP-GTC?

1. Exclusive
2. Rebuilding
3. Disconnected
4. Exclusive – limited to a small group
5. A fundraiser club
6. Needing an overhaul/updating/making current
7. Dubious
8. Cliquey
9. Not diverse
10. Not very active

### **15-minute Small Group Discussion: Two break-out rooms led by Mide and Esther**

**How have you been affected by issues of anti-Black racism and/or discrimination within AFP GTC? In what ways might the fundraising community pursue healing? What would you like to see happen?**

- Consider offering an open space session (based on the autumn Accelerate session) in May with a facilitator - "What is bothering you now" as the organizing topic. (Ann)

#### **Group 1 Breakout notes**

Question #1 - How have you been affected by anti-black racism/discrimination?

- Would participate in events - would not be remembered by others when they would meet in the future.
- Didn't apply as a speaker because it was clear that it was always the same people presenting so no point in putting their names forward.
- "Is it just me?" Micro-aggressions experiences were mentioned by two attendees, and they had previously thought they were experiencing something particular to them.

Question #2 - How to pursue healing?

- Intentional inclusion of those traditionally kept outside.
- Fall Accelerate Conference included open space in the calendar with a professional facilitator. Arrived and created an agenda on the spot. The purpose was to allow people to bring issues that were bothering them - a session filled with fundraisers of colour.



- Mide's podcasts with Nneka and Muthoni helped articulate how one participant was feeling. Hearing people share has helped them heal.

## **What do you need from the AFP Board and AFP as members or the fundraising community?**

### **Overall themes**

- Need to be a more open inclusive, inviting, caring organization.
- Traditionally transactional - needs to be more relational.
- Culture was mentioned. There was an important note about AFP funding and moving away from the emphasis on consultants and sponsors to change the culture.

### **Group 2 Breakout notes**

- Not myself - but I've seen this happen to others too many times
- Personally affected, not applying to call to present because it didn't feel open to me. Always been the same people so felt like it was just AFP going through the motions and not actually interested in what other groups had to say.
- Used to go early in my career then stopped. Not feeling seen, included, or heard. I'm an outgoing person but it never felt like it was returned with AFP. Feeling like AFP members never even remembered who I was, clear cliques, they didn't even remember who I was despite the fact that I was clearly around, felt personal. After years of the same pattern stopped going, even with the offer of free opportunities it just didn't feel good. Randomly introduced recently to someone chairing fundraising day (a person of colour) signaling a desire for inclusion and seems like I could be a part of the change I got re-engaged/involved and took on a role with a committee even though it got canceled ultimately because of what was going on.
- Always participated from a learning standpoint (conferences, learning opportunities), over the last while I have started to see a different framework for AFP – AFP as a place for more than networking and a place to grow from a learning POV, but as a place for leadership in the fundraising community. Applaud for trying to create more space where more of the faces of fundraisers can have a voice. Have had feelings 'it's just me' and not naming it as micro-aggression or racism though that is what it is.
- E – thanked for bringing up AFP's responsibility to representation

### **In what ways can AFP pursue healing? What would you like to see happen?**

- Intentional inclusion of those traditionally kept outside.
- Didn't realize how conflicted I was at an event "foot in both worlds" and feeling upset, facilitated a gathering of fundraisers who are people of colour – need a spot where fundraisers can come and design their own session to speak about issues relevant to them
- E – acknowledge a feeling of being with 'community', grounded, and connection



- Space to talk about experiences is healing. listening to Mide's podcast with folks talking about it is also healing. Continuing will be important, especially for new/upcoming folks.

Large group consensus: The ongoing need for this space to provide the opportunity to speak, share, and help build the chapter for everyone. These sessions/forums need to continue.

#### **~5 minutes Closing Remarks and Thank you: Led by Mide**

Attendees in the listening sessions will be entered into a draw for a ticket to AFP ICON which takes place April 7-9.

#### **What would you like to see more of from AFP-GTC? Lean into? Share? Content?**

- Mide – It is clear that we need to be a more open, caring, sharing, and inclusive organization, and it's obvious to us but how do those values/virtues become manifest, how do we do this? What should be in place? We understand the expectations on us but how do we manifest?
- Noticed the transactional nature of AFP e.g. newer folks in the sector reach out to AFP for learning and the ability to demonstrate credibility. There is a missing 'value added' for those in the middle stage of their careers – and look across the career spectrum, including in how and who we learn from
- On the surface it looked like AFP was 'meeting all the right markers', felt to some it was performative, think the problem is deeper than ticking the boxes because the 'activities' have been done in the past, a need to look at the structure, looking back the folks working may have been 'doing the best they could with what they had' but we need to look deeper to the structural issues like culture
  - Birgit - This is helpful for me to hear and share - beyond the GTC.
  - Chat "Agree with the comment about programs in the past. Whatever happens, going forward, it needs to be authentic.... not just about checking off boxes."
  - Chat "Agreed with that programming has to be part of a larger plan for behavior and culture change."
  - Could do more, e.g. assess the organization's ability/credibility, think it is problematic, an organization that was problematic, AFP wasn't there to help. So perhaps it is helpful to introduce standards in the profession, which would support us in this mission, e.g. 'to achieve more these are the lessons that will help'.

What would motivate you to participate in AFP-GTC organized activities?

- New member perspective – have not participated in past activities. Think it is about networking and sharing, Quebec does monthly online network/share sessions, realize we



often share the same realities but also share best practices and such. It was the main motivation to join.

- By a longtime member and past board member – the issue of culture and how we got here today. The foundation of all chapters is driven by those who were originally in the sector to give it a ‘professional’ status, why it became about training and credentialing and moved away from the concept of ‘making a difference in the world’ and how to do this as a professional association, opportunities to participate in something meaningful at a bigger scale. Need to build a world with more humanity. Thought moving back to the NFP/ philanthropic sector would do that and I/we look to our professional association to help. Culture, how we operate, who’s in leadership selection, etc. Need to get into our hearts and minds; what the world needs to be a better place and look at our role as the biggest actor in the economic sector. This is where our focus needs to be. For those of us on the front line, we work hard to make a difference and that is what we need help/support with.
- Highlight a small point – these challenges are a good thing. We’re at a point when GTC is evolving into a better version of itself as we grow.

What questions do you have for us?

- What do you need from us to continue the work that you’re doing, knowing that it’s probably a bit of a slog for us at this time?
- M – what are we expecting from our members? From the fundraising community?

Mide thanked everyone for their time and participation. Everything resonates with him because it brings truth and clarity. Our job is to take these notes and reflect on them. Thanks for acknowledging the work we as a board have to do. Our work is figuring out how to shift from being self-serving to member-serving. Want to change who sees and gets value from the chapter. Our change process has 11.5 months to start effecting the change we need to see. Want to keep you involved – the key takeaway is to keep these forums going.

Liz – this is the start of the conversation so please/invitation to keep this going. Want to do co-creation to make this chapter amazing.

Needs to be a better advocate for the profession, but this is the job of the organization, less for the chapters, so maybe we need to do info sessions.