

PROJECT Agape

Environmental Scan and Community Voices Report

August 2025

Prepared by:



“Honestly, I am extremely grateful for all the connections, support and love I’ve received through Project Agape. The Black Joy & Healing program alone allowed me to make so many meaningful connections. I recently went through something ... and using the tools Project Agape had taught me, as well as leaning on my community, has really helped me cope. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart.”

Program Participant / Survivor

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Getting the Most Out of This Report

This report is organized into three key sections:

Part I: Executive Summary and Key Insights

This section provides a high-level overview of the report, summarizing key themes, insights, and strategic considerations derived from the engagement process. This section delivers the “big picture” insights upfront, enabling readers to grasp the report's findings offering a quick and accessible entry point for decision-makers needing immediate insights.

Part II: Foundations for Strategy

This section dives into the analytical backbone of the report, offering tools and frameworks (i.e., SOAR analysis and PESTLE analysis) that underpin the strategic recommendations. It delivers a structured and comprehensive explanation of the strategic context, ensuring recommendations are grounded in evidence.

Part III: Appendices and Supporting Data

This section houses the data, detailed methodologies, and in-depth analysis supporting the themes and recommendations outlined in Parts I and II. It includes specifics about listening sessions, surveys, and key informant interviews, along with detailed methodological notes. It provides depth for those who need it, allowing the main body to remain focused and actionable while ensuring transparency and rigor in the report's findings. It acts as a reference for community members who require deeper context, validating the conclusions presented earlier.

PART I:

Executive Summary and Key Insights

- 1.1 [Executive Summary](#)
- 1.2 [Introduction and Context](#)
- 1.3 [Key Themes and Insights](#)

1.1 Executive Summary

Project Agape has rapidly grown from a grassroots initiative into a trusted anchor for Black survivors of gender-based violence. Its survivor-led, Black-centered, and joy-rooted approach is both its greatest strength and the foundation of its distinctiveness.

This report brings together insights from survivors, staff, board members, funders, and community partners to illuminate the organization's current position, challenges, and opportunities as it develops its first strategic plan.

Community members consistently recognized Agape's authenticity, healing-centered programming, and deep community trust as its irreplaceable assets. At the same time, they pointed to the urgency of addressing structural vulnerabilities such as staff burnout, funding fragility, and governance gaps.

1. **Authenticity as the Non-Negotiable Core:** Survivor-led, Black-centered authenticity is Agape's legitimacy and strategic moat. Dilution poses the greatest risk.
2. **Healing and Joy as a Distinctive Model:** Agape offers a transformative blend of cultural affirmation, healing, and community that sets it apart from conventional service providers.
3. **Capacity Strain and Sustainability:** Burnout and overextension threaten internal stability unless governance, workload distribution, and wellness systems keep pace.
4. **Financial Success Masking Fragility:** Strong recent grant wins have created a surplus, yet reliance on short-term funding exposes the organization to volatility.
5. **Governance and Succession:** The current governance model must evolve to ensure continuity, embed survivor leadership, and support long-term stability.
6. **Expansion vs. Focus:** Community demand for broader programming must be balanced with the need for depth, focus, and alignment with core identity.
7. **Permanent Home Aspirations:** A dedicated space could anchor legitimacy and symbolize permanence but requires careful planning to avoid financial strain.
8. **From Service Provider to Movement Leader:** Agape is increasingly recognized as a systems-change actor with the potential to influence policy, public discourse, and sector practice.

Looking ahead, Project Agape does not face a problem of demand but of design. The strategic imperative is to codify its model, strengthen its foundation, and expand in ways that safeguard authenticity. With intentional planning, Agape can sustain its role as both a sanctuary for survivors and a catalyst for broader systems change.

1.2 Introduction and Context

Survivors deserve spaces where they are affirmed, supported, and empowered to reclaim their narratives. Project Agape provides such a space, more than a service, it is a movement rooted in survivor-led leadership, cultural affirmation, and community healing.

The increasing demand for Agape's programs reflects both the urgency of survivor-centered care and the resonance of its distinctive approach, which integrates healing, joy, and advocacy. Yet this **growth brings challenges: financial fragility, capacity strain, and systemic barriers** that continue to perpetuate harm.

This report reflects the voices of survivors, staff, volunteers, funders, and community partners. Their perspectives illuminate both strengths and vulnerabilities: authenticity as a core advantage, healing-centered programming as a distinctive model, and deep trust within community; alongside risks such as burnout, over-reliance on short-term grants, and the need for governance evolution.

This is not just an environmental scan, **it is a record of lived experience, collective wisdom, and strategic insight.** It highlights the crossroads at which Agape now stands: how to grow while remaining authentic, how to sustain impact without overextension, and how to move from grassroots resilience to long-term stability.

The findings presented here will guide the development of Project Agape's first strategic plan, shaping a path forward that balances sustainability with ambition, and ensuring that the movement remains rooted in survivor leadership, equity, and transformative justice.

"We get an opportunity to show up as our whole self. I never feel filtered. Everybody can show up the way that they want."

Board Member

"Limited funding or resources, burnout among staff or community members, staying true to the mission while growing, external systems (e.g., racism, policing, policy barriers), not enough visibility or outreach, difficulty sustaining long-term programs."

Community Member

"Another question that we should always continue to center is: is this going to burn out the team?"

Board Member

"I think that some conversations should be held on university campuses. I cannot speak from other Black communities, but as a first-generation African woman, the pressure to get married young is still present in the community. Informing young girls/women about gender-based violence can keep them aware of what to do if there are dangerous situations in their relationship."

Community Member

1.3 Key Themes and Insights

When looking across the voices of staff, funders, board members, sector leaders, and community participants, a clear set of patterns emerges. These are not simply a list of comments but signals of where Project Agape sits strategically, what enables its distinctiveness, and what could threaten it if left unaddressed.

Theme #1: Authenticity as the Non-Negotiable Core

The most repeated observation is that Project Agape's legitimacy comes from being survivor-led, Black-centered, and deeply authentic. This authenticity is not an accessory; it is the organization's strategic moat. In a crowded nonprofit ecosystem, where many groups deliver similar services, authenticity rooted in lived experience is what differentiates PA and builds trust with both survivors and funders. The strategic risk is dilution, any governance, program, or funding decision that chips away at this authenticity erodes the very advantage that has been built.

Theme #2: Healing and Joy as a Distinctive Model of Impact

Unlike conventional service providers that emphasize clinical or crisis response, Agape has consistently been described as a "green oasis." Its programs integrate healing, joy, cultural affirmation, and community, an approach that resonates deeply and builds loyalty.

From a strategic lens, this is a distinctive competency: PA is not just filling a service gap, it is reshaping what survivor support looks like. The challenge will be codifying and articulating this model so it can scale without becoming diffused or being co-opted by others.

For me, I believe that the core purpose of Project Agape is to support, uplift and cultivate safer spaces for the Black community. Focusing on healing as well as joy through many different programs, events and experiences."

Program Participant

Limited funding or resources, burnout among staff or community members, external systems (e.g., racism, policing, policy barriers)."

Staff

Expand efforts to empower underrepresented and at-risk youth through mentorship, resources, and safe spaces."

Program Participant

"Support and advance the needs and dreams of marginalized communities... and become a leading voice for survivors."

Community Member

Theme #3: Capacity Strain as the Achilles' Heel

Burnout, overextension, and internal communication gaps reflect a pattern seen across high-growth nonprofits.

The very passion that powers the organization risks becoming its undoing if structures, workload distribution, and wellness systems do not keep pace. Strategically, this is less an HR problem and more a survival issue: unless internal sustainability is solved, growth will collapse under its own weight.

Theme #4: Financial Success Masking Fragility

PA has had remarkable success in winning competitive grants and currently holds a surplus. Yet nearly every community member pointed to the fragility beneath the numbers: **reliance on short-term government and foundation funding, exposure to political shifts, and the absence of diversified revenue.**

From a strategy perspective, this is classic concentration risk: one change in the funding environment could undo years of progress. The strategic imperative is not simply "get more money" but **rethink the revenue architecture to include philanthropy, partnerships, and earned income streams** that reinforce the mission.

Theme #5: Governance as the Next Frontier

The organization has outgrown its founding governance model. The frequent references to succession planning, board alignment, and leadership development all point to a structural gap: continuity is not yet assured.

This is a strategic vulnerability, not just a procedural one. If leadership transition is mishandled, the organization's authenticity advantage could be compromised. Conversely, if governance and succession are intentionally designed, they can become part of Agape's strategic strength, ensuring that survivor leadership is embedded for generations to come.

"I believe that the core purpose of Project Agape is to provide a safe space for Black survivors of gender-based violence through various resources, supports and events, such as healing circles. Project Agape also wants to bring awareness to Black communities about gender-based violence and helps to uplift survivors."

Community Member

"How within the Black community there are so many layers and so much diversity, and I think PA does a really good job of ... very specific programming for Black people."

Board Member

"I hope that Project Agape continues to focus their efforts on Black survivors, because while gender-based violence can affect anyone, the lens and experiences of Black survivors can be vastly different. ... We must continue to support and uplift our community and bring awareness to those who may not see the seriousness of the situation."

Community Member

Theme #6: Expansionary Pull vs. Strategic Focus

Community voices are asking for more: programs for men, mothers, intergenerational groups, and expanded geographic reach. At the same time, board and funders warn of overextension.

This **tension between breadth and depth is a strategic fork in the road**. PA cannot be everything to everyone without diluting its impact. The choice is not expansion or restraint, it is how to expand in a way that sharpens, rather than blurs, its distinctive identity.

Theme #7: The Aspiration for a Permanent Home

Calls for a dedicated physical space cut across all groups. Strategically, this is more than real estate. A permanent home could serve as a visible anchor of legitimacy, a hub for community identity, and a symbol of long-term commitment.

But it also carries financial and operational risk if pursued prematurely. The insight here is that **space is not just infrastructure; it is narrative power**. Timing and sustainability will determine whether it becomes a strategic asset or liability.

Theme #8: From Service Provider to Movement Leader

Funders and sector leaders are increasingly framing PA not only as a service provider but as a systems-change actor. Its Black-centered, survivor-led approach is seen as critical to reshaping the field of gender-based violence response. This presents a strategic choice: **remain a niche but powerful sanctuary, or deliberately position as a movement leader influencing policy, practice, and public discourse**. Either path has trade-offs in visibility, risk, and resource demands.

Looking Ahead

The most cited strengths, authenticity, healing-centered programming, and community trust are also the organization's most perishable assets if growth is unmanaged. The most cited risks, burnout, funding fragility, and governance gaps, are not side issues; they are the leverage points that will determine whether Agape's next five years build resilience or expose vulnerability. From a strategy lens, the insight is clear: PA does not face a problem of demand. It faces a problem of design. The community wants more, funders are ready to invest, and the organization has proof of concept. The question is whether PA can design the structures, governance, and funding architecture to hold its authenticity at scale.

"No matter how much money they're offering, and they've come to us with money in the past ... it will always be a no from us. Because our integrity and the values of PA are more important than any amount of money."

Board Member

"If we invite historical harm into our spaces ... it takes away the trust, and then we lose what we've built."

Board Member

"Even beyond what we do in the community for survivors, what we do for ourselves is really important ... we commune, we connect beyond that, and that fuels the work. And that's why we can go back to work recharged."

Staff

PART II:

Foundations for Strategy

- 2.1 [Internal Environment – Journey Map: Reflecting on Our Path](#)
- 2.2 [External Environment: PESTLE Analysis](#)
- 2.3 [SOAR Analysis](#)

2.1 Internal Environment – Journey Map: Reflecting on Our Path

The following highlights the journey of PA, gathered from the staff listening circle. Charting the past five years allows us to reflect on key moments that have shaped the organization, both its successes and challenges. By mapping out this journey, we can identify patterns, assess growth, and recognize strengths and gaps within our internal environment.

“The Power of Courage” Project Agape’s journey is defined by the courage of Black survivors to imagine new models of healing, build community from lived experience, and persist through systemic challenges. From its grassroots founding to its expansion into a recognized leader, courage remains the thread binding its past, present, and future.

The Power of Courage			
	2019: (A Bold Choice)	2020- 2021: (The Exploratory Growth Phase)	
Project Agape	- Esther launched Project Agape - First program event - Care Day at St. Joe's Women's Centre - Care packages for the community - Esther shared her idea: received full support - First survivor event hosted at St. Joe's	- Paint in the Park (community event) - First grant received \$2,000 - Workshops & Education - Men's Mental Health & Abuse (virtual) - Domestic Violence workshop ("this changed everything") - Boundaries session with Anne Thenault (virtual) - S.A. Back-to-School workshop (virtual) - Relationship Goals workshop in collaboration with HBG! (virtual) - Ongoing virtual education sessions - PA's Pamper Day at St. Joe's - Get to Know PA (introductory Zoom session) - Community Support: friends came together to contribute time (and sometimes funds) to bring initiatives off the ground - Leadership Recognition: Esther became a UN mentor for PA	- Self-Esteem Workshop with Sisters in Sync - Products Distributed to 200 Black menstruators
WORLD EVENTS	COVID-19 pandemic begins	"Shadow pandemic" of gender-based violence due to lockdowns, leading to increased awareness and response - Job losses caused by the pandemic - Murder of George Floyd (global reckoning on racial justice) #EndSARS movement in Nigeria solidarity with protests against police brutality	- U.S. and NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan: ongoing decline in women's rights - Pandemic-related uncertainty continuing throughout

2019: A Bold Choice Founding rooted in survivor leadership and community vision.

2020–2021: The Exploratory Growth Phase Small-scale funding, virtual adaptation, and proof of concept through community workshops.

	2022 – 2023: (A Breath of Fresh Air: Stability)		2024 – 2025: (Aligning with Our Values / MissionBack to Basics)	
Project Agape	- First in-person Boozy Brunch - Brought on 3 external staff/volunteers - First Project Agape photo shoot - Season 1 of Take Up Space - Shea Butter Bants (program) - Entire PA team met in Ottawa for the first time - Mental health check-in with Benslyne: kickstarted Let It Heal	- Summer Boozy Brunch - Pole Flow (transformative milestone) - Gave away 4 months of free therapy - Sharing Circles began with ORCC - Project Agape featured on the news	- Sharing Circles transitioned into Healing Circles - First staff hires (part-time & full-time) - Spoke at Western's GBV Learning Centre - Established a supportive board - Funding milestones: \$330K from Wage \$300K from Laidlaw \$18K from City of Ottawa - BJHP Fall Enchanté Grant - PA team retreat in Montreal - Launched <i>Soulcials</i> newsletter - Two <i>Let It Heal</i> cohorts in one year - First time leading & hosting a podcast season - Two YAN Awards received - Spoke at OCTEVAW Symposium	- May Wellness, 2nd Edition - First Cookout with 50+ participants - Let It Heal, 3rd Edition - First Aduro Event + Showcase centred on LGBTQIA+ community) - Community Dinners - Received United Way grant - Strategic planning process launched - Hired a bookkeeper - Secured first office space - Released first video publication - Rising awareness of femicides in Ottawa, people finally taking it seriously
WORLD EVENTS	- Freedom Convoy protests in Canada - Roe v. Wade overturned in the U.S. - Russia–Ukraine war dominates global media	- Ongoing crisis in Palestine - Beyoncé acknowledged our existence - Received OTF grant	- End of Biden's first term - EU passes first-ever law to combat violence against women - Kamala Harris lost U.S. presidential race to Donald Trump	- Prime Minister Trudeau stepped down - U.S.–Canada trade tensions: new tariffs imposed

2022–2023: A Breath of Fresh Air: Stability: In-person programming returned, innovative healing practices flourished, and media recognition expanded visibility.

2024–2025: The Expansionary Growth Phase: Major grants, staff hiring, board development, and new partnerships established a foundation for scaling.

2030 (Vision): Back to Basics, Rooted in Values: A permanent home for survivors, expanded leadership teams, multi-city reach (Ottawa, Montreal, Lagos, Ghana), and a survivor-centered housing model for Black women, refugees, and mothers.

Analysis of Journey Map

High Points (Moments of Success & Growth)

- **Founding & Early Momentum (2019):** Project Agape launched with strong community backing, rooted in survivor-led leadership and immediate community support through care days, events, and care packages.
- **Early Funding Breakthroughs (2020–2021):** The first grant (\$2K) marked a pivotal shift from self-funding to external recognition. The Domestic Violence Workshop drew over 40 attendees and became a defining moment, showing the demand and impact of survivor-centered programming.
- **Innovative Programming & Healing Models (2021–2022):** Initiatives like *Let It Heal*, boozy brunches, sound baths, and mental health check-ins reflected a creative, holistic approach that prioritized healing, joy, and cultural affirmation.
- **Increased Visibility & Recognition (2022–2023):** Project Agape gained media attention, built relationships with city partners, and secured major grants in 2024 totaling nearly \$700K. This positioned the organization as a recognized leader in Black survivor support.
- **Organizational Growth (2024):** Hiring of part-time and full-time staff, the development of a supportive and values-aligned board, and securing significant grants from Wage, Laidlaw, and municipal funders expanded both reach and stability.
- **Community Impact & Identity (Ongoing):** Programs like *Let It Heal* and Black Joy have become signature offerings, consistently affirming identity, healing, and empowerment for Black survivors and LGBTQ+ communities.

Low Points (Challenges & Setbacks)

- **COVID-19 Pandemic (2020–2021):** The sudden shift to virtual programming disrupted momentum, created isolation, and stretched organizational capacity. Despite resilience, it limited connection and growth.
- **Car Accident (2022):** A serious accident caused temporary disruption to operations and highlighted the vulnerability of a small, founder-led team.
- **Board Struggles (2022–2024):** Early tensions with board members who pushed for a more corporate direction created misalignment and risked diluting the grassroots mission. Political disagreements (e.g., Palestine solidarity) further strained governance, leading to turnover.
- **Staffing Missteps (2023):** Rapid hiring without strong HR systems led to challenges with fit, wasted resources, and strained capacity.

Funding Anxiety (Ongoing): Concerns about political shifts (e.g., Trudeau stepping down, fear of decreased federal support) and reliance on grants highlight financial precarity.

Transitional Moments (Shifts That Changed the Organization Permanently)

- **First External Grant (2020):** Marked the transition from self-funded passion project to legitimate nonprofit entity with growth potential.
- **Domestic Violence Workshop (2020):** Solidified community trust and established Project Agape as a credible survivor support space.
- **“Let It Heal” Program (2021):** Elevated the organization's profile and became a flagship healing program that shaped identity and strategy.
- **COVID-19 Pivot (2020–2021):** Forced digital adaptation, expanded reach, and proved resilience, while highlighting the need for diversified engagement methods.
- **Major Grants Secured (2024):** Nearly \$700K in funding shifted Project Agape into a new phase of stability and expansion, enabling scaling and formalized governance.
- **Hiring a Bookkeeper (2024):** Professionalized financial management, which in turn strengthened credibility with funders and opened the door to larger grants.

2.2 External Environment: PESTLE Analysis

The PESTLE framework examines Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, and Environmental factors to provide a comprehensive overview of the external trends shaping PA's landscape. This analysis integrates data, community members' feedback, and external research to help PA align its strategic priorities with emerging challenges and opportunities in a rapidly changing environment.

	Key Issues and Trends	Strategic Implications
Political	- Ongoing federal and municipal funding initiatives for equity-seeking and 2SLGBTQI+ groups provide opportunities for organizations such as PA - Election cycles, cabinet shifts, and periods of "caretaker" government can delay or disrupt funding decisions. - Sector trend: funders are moving toward trust-based philanthropy, offering more multi-year and flexible funding, but with heightened expectations for accountability and measurable impact	- Political shifts can influence eligibility, timelines, and funding priorities. - Building relationships with policymakers across parties may help mitigate risks. - Staying aligned with sector-wide accountability practices will support long-term funding access.
Economic	- Inflationary pressures have strained nonprofit budgets, although Canada's inflation has recently stabilized (~1.8%). - Broader economic uncertainty (trade risks, potential downturns) may reduce donor capacity and increase competition for limited grants. - Sector trend: while donor numbers are shrinking, average donation amounts are rising, and income has remained stable for many organizations by diversifying into major gifts, monthly giving, and local campaigns	- Economic fluctuations may affect both staff well-being (cost of living) and community demand for services. - Diversified and flexible funding strategies may help ensure continuity. - Monitoring donor composition (fewer donors, higher amounts) is necessary for forecasting.
Social	- Strong demand for culturally safe, intersectional services for Black, queer, and gender-diverse survivors. - Community members and service users express expectations for expanded programming (e.g., childhood sexual abuse supports, inclusive language for transmasculine survivors). - Burnout among staff and leadership capacity strain are consistent themes in nonprofit organizations. - Sector trend: workforce shortages and burnout are widespread, with rising service demand across Canada	- Social expectations point to both opportunities for growth and risks of overstretching capacity. - Balancing expansion with internal sustainability will remain a key consideration. - Workforce pressures suggest wellness and succession planning will be critical to avoid sector-wide pitfalls.

	Key Issues and Trends	Strategic Implications
Technological	- Increased reliance on digital platforms for outreach, program delivery, and internal team communication. - Potential for digital inequities if staff or participants lack consistent access to technology. - Digital fatigue and burnout are reported across the nonprofit sector. - Sector trend: AI adoption is rising rapidly (83% of nonprofits using generative AI), yet only 11% have formal policies; concerns over misinformation and data security are prevalent	- Technology can expand reach and engagement but also requires investment in tools, training, and wellness practices. - Remote inclusion strategies will remain significant for organizational cohesion. - Formalizing tech and AI use policies may mitigate risks and improve efficiency.
Legal	- Regulatory frameworks for nonprofit and charitable organizations are evolving, with possible impacts on reporting and compliance requirements. - Eligibility for certain funding streams is tied to classifications such as "youth-led" or registered charitable status. - Sector trend: funders increasingly expect simplified compliance balanced with evidence-based outcomes, reflecting the rise of trust-based philanthropy and accountability metrics	- Monitoring policy and regulatory changes will be necessary to maintain compliance. - Decisions on whether to incorporate as a charity or maintain current structure will influence long-term funding access. - Clear documentation of outcomes will align with sector funding expectations.
Environmental	- Ottawa is increasingly positioning itself as a city that values environmental sustainability and wellness. - Climate change and extreme weather events can affect vulnerable populations and increase demand for community support. - Environmental funders are increasingly looking for cross-sectoral collaborations (e.g., health + environment). - Sector trend: nonprofits are beginning to integrate climate and wellness agendas, linking environmental sustainability with equity and health outcomes	- Integrating land- and nature-based healing could align with environmental priorities and strengthen programming. - Partnerships in environmental wellness may provide new avenues for funding and collaboration.

Analysis, Interpretation, and Path Forward

The external environment reveals both tailwinds and headwinds: governments and funders are increasingly attentive to equity-seeking communities, while broader sector trends, donor concentration, workforce burnout, and shifting accountability norms, pose significant risks if left unmanaged.

Three dynamics stand out in interpreting the PESTLE analysis:

1. **Authenticity Meets Scalability**

Project Agape's distinctiveness lies in its survivor-led, culturally safe model. Yet, as demand grows, the risk is reproducing the very conditions (overextension, burnout, bureaucratic rigidity) that have undermined other service providers. The challenge is not whether to grow, but how to grow without eroding the core value proposition.

2. **Funding Volatility vs. Resilience**

Funding opportunities exist through government and philanthropic initiatives, but they are inherently cyclical and subject to political winds. Meanwhile, sector data shows a shrinking donor base but higher individual gifts. This creates a paradox: more reliance on fewer funders or donors amplifies vulnerability.

Building diversified, flexible funding, while resisting the temptation to chase every opportunity, is essential for long-term resilience.

3. **Capacity and Legitimacy in a Changing Sector**

The nonprofit sector is shifting toward trust-based philanthropy and AI-enabled operations, with heightened expectations for accountability and digital fluency. Organizations that strengthen governance, outcome measurement, and thoughtful technology adoption will hold legitimacy with funders and partners. For Project Agape, the choice is whether to remain primarily a grassroots sanctuary or evolve into a hybrid entity that combines authenticity with institutional rigor.

"We must continue to support and uplift our community and bring awareness to those who may not see the seriousness of the situation. Finally, I hope that Project Agape continues to do consultations with members of the community (for instance, the Advisory Committee) to gain an external point of view on the work you are doing and what can be improved for it to be as inclusive as possible."

Community Member

"Project Agape is not just about services — it's about creating a movement where survivors are seen, heard, and celebrated. That's what makes it different."

Community Member & supporter of Project Agape

"When I imagine the future of Project Agape, I see it becoming a hub — a place where Black survivors don't just heal but lead change for the whole community."

Survivor/participant

"Project Agape is a pillar in the community — it holds space for Black survivors in ways no one else has ever done."

Survivor & community follower

The Path Forward

The strategic choice is not between mission and sustainability, it is about **aligning growth with purpose**. PA's path forward could be guided by three interlocking priorities:

- **Codify the Core:** Define, in unambiguous terms, the non-negotiables of PA's model (survivor-led, culturally safe, unconditional care). This serves as a filter for all growth decisions, ensuring expansion reinforces rather than dilutes the essence.
- **Build the Foundation for Scale:** Invest in governance, staff well-being, outcome measurement, and funding diversification before expanding program scope. This is not administrative overhead; it is the scaffolding that allows authenticity to endure under greater demand.
- **Position in the Ecosystem:** Rather than operating in isolation, PA can build resilience by embedding itself in broader networks, across health, justice, and environmental sectors. This creates visibility, influence, and access to cross-sector resources, while also distributing the weight of advocacy and service delivery.

Conclusion

The analysis suggests that PA is uniquely positioned to be both a sanctuary and a systems-change actor. The tension between authenticity and scale, grassroots energy and institutional expectations, is not a liability but the strategic terrain on which the organization must operate.

The organizations that thrive in the current environment are those that *hold fast to their core while deliberately constructing the structures that allow that core to expand*. For PA, the next five years will be less about adding programs and more about shaping the organizational architecture that ensures its mission can withstand the volatility of the sector while remaining true to the community it serves.

2.3 SOAR Analysis

A SOAR analysis provides a structured framework to assess and align an organization's Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results.

It focuses on leveraging strengths and opportunities to envision a desired future and define measurable outcomes. This SOAR analysis is synthesized from multiple external data sources and listening circles, interviews and the survey results.

Strengths

(what we do well, current assets)

Community-Centered & Survivor-Led:

Project Agape is uniquely led by Black women, survivors, and people with lived experience, ensuring programming is culturally safe, relevant, and affirming.

Healing & Sisterhood: Seen as a “green oasis” and a space of connection, sisterhood, and care. Programming blends holistic approaches (sound baths, mindfulness, creative arts) with practical supports (therapy access, care packages, food, bus fare).

Diversity & Inclusion: Strong commitment to LGBTQ2IA+, gender-diverse/non-binary and trans inclusion, with programming tailored to Black queer femmes, mothers, and youth. Representation of Black women at all levels is a consistent value.

Resilience & Adaptability: Successfully shifted during COVID with virtual programming, while still growing visibility and reputation. Staff and leadership demonstrate persistence in securing grants and adapting to challenges.

Staff Dedication & Authenticity: Staff are seen as the heart of the organization, their authenticity, lived experience, and commitment to community are what make Project Agape different.

Opportunities

(where we can grow, leverage strengths)

Permanent Community Space: A consistent request across staff, service users, and board, a dedicated, physical centre where healing, programs, childcare, and professional supports can be anchored.

Expanded Programming: More targeted supports for men, mothers, and broader gender/sexuality identities; intergenerational and land-based healing opportunities; expanded use of professionals for facilitation.

Scaling & Sustainability: Moving from grassroots “test” funding into larger, multi-year, scale grants. Developing stronger governance, internal systems, and financial infrastructure to support growth.

Visibility & Advocacy: Increased outreach, storytelling, and partnerships with other organizations locally and internationally. Opportunity to position Project Agape as a thought leader in survivor justice, racial equity, and healing justice.

Staff & Leadership Support: Building stronger internal systems (HR, communication, mental health supports, workload distribution) to prevent burnout and improve sustainability.

Aspirations

(shared hopes for the future)

A Permanent, Multi-City Presence: Establishing Project Agape hubs in Ottawa, Montreal, Lagos, and Ghana, rooted in Black communities globally.

Model for Survivor Justice: Becoming a recognized leader in reimagining how survivor support is done, centering joy, dignity, and cultural safety rather than traditional charity models.

Thriving Internal Culture: A workplace where staff are cared for as much as participants, with mental health supports, community-building, and systems that prevent cycles of exhaustion.

Intergenerational Healing: Programs that hold space for elders, mothers, men, youth, and queer communities, weaving together diverse Black experiences.

Movement Leadership: Continuing to shift from service delivery to shaping policy, advocacy, and public narratives on gender-based violence and racial justice.

Results

(what success looks like, measures of progress)

Community Impact: Increased reach and deeper outcomes, more survivors accessing healing spaces, building lifelong friendships, and reporting positive transformation.

Sustainability & Growth: Securing multi-year funding, maintaining strong reserves, and diversifying income streams to reduce vulnerability.

Infrastructure & Governance: A resilient organization with strong board, leadership succession, and internal systems that match program growth.

Recognition & Influence: Project Agape known nationally and internationally as a leader in survivor- and Black-led healing justice.

Staff & Participant Wellbeing: Evidence of reduced burnout, improved wellness, and high satisfaction among staff and community members.

Conclusion & Considerations

In just five years, PA has grown from a grassroots initiative into a trusted community anchor for Black survivors and gender-diverse people, while also gaining recognition from funders, sector leaders, and peers. The organization is celebrated for its authenticity, survivor-led approach, and ability to create culturally safe spaces of healing, sisterhood, and joy.

At the same time, rapid growth has stretched internal systems, highlighted the risks of burnout, and underscored the need for sustainable funding and governance. The first strategic plan offers an opportunity to intentionally chart a path that balances expansion with sustainability, secures the organization's foundation, and clarifies its long-term role in the broader movement for survivor justice.

Strategic Considerations

1. Balancing Growth with Sustainability

- PA is at risk of replicating sector-wide challenges of overextension and burnout. Staff, community members, and funders consistently flagged the importance of pacing growth and investing in internal systems.
- Strategic choices may involve deepening impact in core programs rather than expanding too broadly, and ensuring workload distribution and wellness supports are embedded in planning.

2. Securing Financial Sustainability

- Grassroots resilience has enabled strong grant wins in recent years, but long-term sustainability requires diversification. Opportunities exist to secure multi-year scale grants, broaden philanthropic partnerships, and explore revenue-generating models rooted in PA's expertise (e.g., training, consulting).
- Attention to financial systems, board engagement, and a strong bookkeeper/finance function will be critical to maximizing future funding opportunities.

3. Solidifying Governance & Leadership Succession

- The organization has relied heavily on a small group of dedicated leaders. To ensure continuity, Project Agape will need to strengthen governance structures, clarify roles, and build pathways for leadership development and succession.
- Involving past participants in leadership roles and expanding the board with values-aligned members may bolster resilience and legitimacy.

“Planning for potential funding gaps and building diverse funding relationships are critical to long-term survival.”

Funder

“Expanding the board with values-aligned members will bolster resilience.”

Trustee

“Project Agape is seen as a green oasis... where participants can access support without having to prove their worthiness.”

Staff Interview

“The main thing that comes out of PA is a sense of sisterhood & community... PA caters to multiple Black experiences not just one.”

Service User Listening Circle

“The staff would have to remain the same if we get bigger, the staff is the best part.”

Service User Listening Circle

4. Defining Distinctive Competencies

- Project Agape's unique value lies in its survivor-led, Black-centered, and joy-rooted approach. Unlike traditional service providers, it creates spaces that blend healing, community, and cultural affirmation.
- Defining and codifying this model, through documentation, curriculum development, and knowledge-sharing, could help scale impact without losing authenticity.

5. Expanding Programming Thoughtfully

- Participants and staff emphasized the need for targeted programming for men, mothers, intergenerational groups, and Black queer communities.
- Opportunities also exist for land-based healing, cultural heritage connections, and partnerships that extend PA's reach beyond Ottawa while retaining its grounding in local community.

6. Establishing a Permanent Community Space

- Across all voices, the call for a permanent physical centre was strong. A dedicated home could anchor programming, provide stability, and symbolize PA's long-term presence.
- However, such an expansion should be carefully planned with sustainability in mind, ensuring funding and staffing can support ongoing operations.

7. Positioning as a Movement Leader

- Project Agape has the potential to shape survivor justice beyond service delivery, influencing policy, advocacy, and broader public narratives on gender-based and racialized violence.

Final Thoughts

Project Agape's first strategic plan is a defining opportunity. By grounding its future in survivor- and community-led values, strengthening its internal foundation, and positioning itself as both a healing hub and a movement leader, the organization can sustain its authenticity while scaling its impact. The next five years are less about "doing more" and more about doing differently, balancing care with ambition, sustainability with growth, and service delivery with systemic change.

PART III:

Appendices and Supporting Data

[Appendix A: Methodology](#)

[Appendix B: Perspectives of Our Community](#)

[Appendix C: Survey Results](#)

[Appendix D: About Project Agape](#)

Appendix A: Methodology

To ensure a comprehensive and participatory approach to Project Agape's strategic planning process, data collection was conducted through multiple methods, each designed to capture diverse perspectives and insights from various community members across the organization. The methodologies employed included:

1. Listening Circles

Three facilitated listening circles were conducted with key groups across Project Agape: one with staff, one with program and service users, and one with board and leadership.

Each session involved structured discussions focusing on Project Agape's evolution, strengths, challenges, and future opportunities. Participants shared their experiences and reflections, contributing to a rich internal environmental scan that informs this strategic plan.

In recognition of the value of their insights, participants were compensated for their time in providing feedback.

2. Key Informant Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders to capture specialized insights and institutional knowledge. Participants included a funder from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, a former service user who recently joined the board, a former service user who is now a staff member, a current trustee, as well as community members who have facilitated workshops, performed at events, and participated on panel discussions with Project Agape.

These conversations provided a deeper understanding of strategic priorities from multiple perspectives and shed light on external influences shaping Project Agape's future.

3. Community Survey

A broad survey was distributed to the Project Agape community to gather input from a wider audience. The survey aimed to capture quantitative and qualitative data on key themes, priorities, and opportunities identified during earlier phases of engagement.

- **Responses:** 99 respondents

4. Resources

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Appendix B: The Perspectives of Our Community

The **Key Informants** and **Listening Circle with Community** provided valuable insights into Project Agapes strengths, challenges, and opportunities across key community members groups:

Staff

For staff, PA represents much more than a workplace. It is seen as a unique, affirming space that prioritizes Black women and gender-diverse communities in ways that are rarely found elsewhere in Ottawa. Staff consistently emphasized that the organization's authenticity stems from being led by people with lived experience, which allows programming to feel deeply relevant, culturally safe, and grounded in genuine community care.

One of PA's greatest strengths is its role as a healing and community-building hub. Staff described it as a "green oasis" where participants can access support without having to prove their worthiness, and where relationships and solidarity are as important as services. This commitment to dignity and unconditional care sets Project Agape apart from more traditional service providers.

At the same time, staff were candid about internal challenges. **Burnout and capacity strain emerged as recurring themes.** While the organization has grown rapidly, the internal structures and supports have not always kept pace. Staff expressed concern that patterns common in the wider nonprofit sector, such as overextension, inconsistent communication, and insufficient mental health supports, risk being reproduced within PA.

Internal communication was highlighted as a critical area for growth. Staff emphasized the importance of consistent, transparent, and supportive feedback loops, noting that when communication breaks down, trust and morale suffer. Remote staff in particular identified feelings of isolation, reflecting both the challenges of working in a dispersed team and the difficulty of staying connected to day-to-day organizational culture. They stressed the need for intentional community-building practices to bridge these gaps and ensure that all staff feel equally engaged and supported.

Looking forward, **staff see opportunity in defining a different model of nonprofit work, one that sustains both community members and staff. They called for stronger accountability systems, meaningful investment in staff wellness, and space to innovate without cycles of exhaustion.** Attention to workload distribution, especially during leadership transitions and busy program seasons, was also emphasized.

By holding to its survivor- and community-led values while strengthening its internal culture, PA can deepen its external impact and model a more sustainable approach to community work, one that nurtures both the people it serves and those who deliver the work.

"The fact that it's run by people who would use those services makes it more authentic... it doesn't get lost in that corporate charity vibe."

"We don't actually have to be chronically exhausted and burnt out all the time... I want us to imagine what this work could look like when it feels fulfilling instead of draining."

"When you don't have those bonds, there's a lapse in trust, you don't know how your communication is being received."

"We don't have to do things the way other organizations do. We can choose to dream and imagine what this work looks like when it's sustainable."

"Everybody's tired, everybody's exhausted, and then responsibilities just get divided up. It's not healthy, it's not sustainable."

Funder

From the funder's perspective, PA has demonstrated strong accountability and reliability in meeting its commitments. Activities funded to date have been delivered as planned, and when adjustments were needed, the organization adapted quickly, often in response to community feedback. Responsiveness and adaptability were highlighted as key strengths, especially given the challenges grassroots groups often face with staffing and turnover.

The funder emphasized that PA is at a critical stage of development. Having tested its model and built experience over the past two years, the organization now has an opportunity to define its long-term direction through strategic planning. **The advice offered was to shift focus from solely delivering programs to also strengthening the internal foundation**, including staff, board, and core team development, to ensure sustainability and continuity beyond individual leaders.

Opportunities for growth include moving from a "test grant" to applying for a "scale grant," which would allow PA to expand successful elements of its work. However, **success in scaling depends on establishing a strong foundation in governance and leadership**. The funder cautioned against over-reliance on a small group of individuals, underscoring the need for clear succession pathways, involvement of past participants in leadership roles, and building a resilient organizational structure.

The broader funding landscape presents both opportunities and risks. PA currently benefits from being youth-led, but this eligibility may change as the group matures. The organization will need to decide whether to continue identifying as youth-led or to evolve toward charitable incorporation, which would open new funding streams but also increase competition. Planning for potential funding gaps and building diverse funding relationships were identified as critical to long-term survival.

Finally, the funder stressed the importance of balance and sustainability. **Grassroots groups are especially vulnerable to burnout, and strategic planning should explicitly account for staff and board well-being**. Ensuring participants' voices remain central in planning and decision-making was also highlighted as essential to maintaining authenticity and relevance.

"If things were not delivered, they always had a plan B... I always know because of the community."

"They have delivered their activities for two years with us. They know what works, what does not work. So I think this is the best time for them to push and be like, is this something that we want to continue? Do we want to add anything? Do we want to bring any more partners?"

"If there is no strong team, no strong foundation, then it becomes harder as time goes by. Then it will be only on one or two people, and when those two people move on, the initiative would not be there."

"There might be times where you might not get funding. That should not discourage you. Planning for that stage is very important."

"There's a thin line between you wanting to help and you burning out... participants will continue to come, but it's very important to take care of self as well as staff and board members."

Service User and Program Facilitator

From the perspective of a former service user and facilitator, PA is seen as a unique and affirming space in Ottawa that fills a gap for Black survivors, especially those with intersecting identities such as being queer and gender-diverse. The informant emphasized the sense of belonging created at events and gatherings, where participants experience community, safety, and mutual understanding without needing to explain themselves.

They identified **PA's ability to create culturally safe spaces as its greatest strength**. Unlike other service providers, the organization affirms multiple aspects of identity at once, offering an inclusive environment where participants feel recognized and supported.

At the same time, **the informant highlighted opportunities for growth, particularly in developing more specific programming**. They noted that while current offerings are strong, there is a pressing need to address the issue of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) more directly, given its prevalence in the Black community and the lack of tailored supports.

Potential partnerships with organizations already working in CSA were suggested, **though the importance of maintaining cultural safety and organizational identity was underscored**. The informant also raised the need for more careful attention to inclusive language, particularly for transmasculine survivors, to ensure no one feels excluded.

When asked about risks, **funding was identified as the greatest threat to long-term sustainability**. Despite this, the informant encouraged PA to embrace creativity and courage, expanding its programming while continuing to build on its unique role in the community.

"Every time I go to one of their events, I see people I know... we don't really have to say much. It's just all love and gratitude for each other."

"You've got to work hard to find Black spaces in Ottawa. To find one that is welcoming to not just one identity, but multiple of them... Project Agape opens that space."

"It would be awesome to see some sort of programming specifically for survivors of CSA... it's so common in the Black community, but it's not talked about enough. That would be very life-changing for a lot of people."

"I never want to bring my people into spaces that could potentially be not the safest space."

"The biggest risk for Project Agape long-term is funding."

"Finally, there's a Black community of survivors... we're showing up and showing our faces. How can we even go further with this and really create spaces to heal and to talk about the things we as Black people don't tend to talk about?"

Trustee & Sector Leader

From the perspective of both a grant trustee and an experienced sector leader, PA is recognized as making a vital and distinctive contribution to the gender-based violence field. The interviewee highlighted the organization's ability to center Black and racialized young women and apply an anti-oppression, intersectional lens, calling this approach critical to the broader ecosystem of survivor support.

They emphasized that **PA's future growth depends on sustaining focus on its mission while continuing to expand partnerships and networks.** Building relationships, across Ontario, nationally, and internationally was seen as essential for learning, influence, and organizational resilience. Conferences, coalitions, and sector collaborations were identified as key opportunities for visibility and growth.

When asked about strategic trade-offs, the trustee advised caution around political involvement, emphasizing the need to stay grounded in social service and survivor support work rather than becoming entangled in partisan politics. At the same time, they acknowledged that global and social issues inevitably impact the communities served, and that organizations must be responsive in ways that support staff and service users.

The most pressing risks identified were financial sustainability and capacity. Reliance on short-term grants creates vulnerability, making diversification of funding and proactive fundraising urgent priorities. The interviewee encouraged PA to leverage business and community partnerships, host annual fundraising events, and embed fundraising as a core practice. She also emphasized the importance of committed staff, board, and volunteers to carry the mission forward.

Finally, she encouraged PA to remain bold, focused, and true to its values, treating mission, vision, and values as "living documents" that guide day-to-day practice. **Partnerships and networks, she suggested, are not only a growth opportunity but also a survival strategy,** ensuring that PA can continue to thrive even in challenging funding climates.

"I believe they are doing a great work in the field of violence against women... [and] on diversity, equity and inclusion because they are reasonable on the intersectionality of gender-based violence and anti-oppression that Black and racialized young women experience."

"They should continue to build partnerships. Partnership in this sector is very important... networking, building partnership, attending conferences, training opportunities when it arises anything that can expand their scope in delivering the service."

"The trend we are seeing now is funding gap... during COVID there were lots of grants, now everything is dry. There is lack of funding right now... our organizations are going through hardship because no new grant is coming in."

"The risk would be funding... we get grants for two, three years, one year, that kind of thing. It makes it challenging. People need money to run the organization and also people need talent, skills, and committed individuals."

"Diversification of funding, find different ways of bringing money to the organization."

"What strategic advice? To never give up on their goal... remain focused. Turbulences will come, but they already know what they are set up to do. They should maintain the vision and continue to leverage through partnership."

"They should be leveraging on their business communities like banks, businesses for fundraising purposes... and try to be initiating at least one fundraising event in a year to raise funds for the organization."

Board and Leadership

From the perspective of the board and leadership team, PA's most important and irreplaceable quality is its survivor-led, Black-centered, and BIPOC-affirming foundation. Members emphasized that the organization must always remain rooted in serving Black survivors, centering their voices, and ensuring that representation of Black women exists at all levels of the organization. This authenticity, along with a commitment to joy, healing, and empowerment, was named as the core strength that must never be lost.

The board and leadership highlighted that relationship-building and community connections are among PA's most powerful assets. The ability to create lifelong bonds, build partnerships with BIPOC vendors and businesses, and foster mentorship within the community were seen as key drivers of outsized impact. Transparency in partnerships, intentional inclusion of community voices, and a strong online presence were also identified as practices that have amplified PA's reach and credibility.

When asked about bold opportunities, the board and leadership pointed to several strategic directions:

- Establishing a central physical location accessible to the public.
- Expanding PA's reach locally and beyond, including exploring national or international connections.
- Developing a set of focused, pillar programs, ensuring that growth remains intentional rather than scattered.
- Investing in capacity strengthening, including professional development, additional staffing, and resources to sustain operations.

At the same time, they were clear about what the organization should avoid. **They stressed saying “no” to projects, events, or partnerships that do not align with mission and values, as well as avoiding work that risks staff burnout. Protecting the well-being of the team was highlighted as central to sustainability.**

Looking ahead five years, **the vision of success centered on staying grounded in the mission, vision, and values** while also embedding practices of intentionality and accountability.

Leadership emphasized the importance of regular staff wellness check-ins, maintaining space for diverse perspectives, and ensuring that the community is always involved in decision-making. They also saw value in integrating community-based participatory research to both validate and amplify the lived experiences at the heart of PA's work.

“Survivor-led, centered and supportive to the BIPOC community, that can never be lost.”

“Relationship, community, friendship building and lifelong connections are at the core of who we are.”

“Our ability to center and embed joy, pleasure and playfulness in the work, that's what makes us different.”

“Healing space rooted in joy, not just surviving. A team atmosphere where rest is also centered.”

“Transparency in partnerships, community events, funding announcements, that accountability is part of our power.”

“Community voices must guide us, making sure people are heard, acknowledged, and valued in every decision.” “Dream big, but don't dream alone. We heal together.”

“Regular check-ins with staff to ensure overall wellness are as important as any program.”

Community User Perspectives (Listening Circle)

Community participants described Project Agape as first and foremost a space of **sisterhood, connection, and care**. They emphasized the organization's unique ability to bring people together across age and background, creating an environment where participants immediately feel understood, affirmed, and safe. As one participant put it, sharing stories and experiences in PA's programs "made me humanize my timeline in life" and reduced feelings of isolation.

The environment of PA was consistently praised as **comfortable, welcoming, and holistic**. Small but intentional touches, such as providing blankets, lavender eye masks, or fidget toys, were seen as symbolic of the care and thoughtfulness that distinguishes PA from more clinical or "heavy" therapeutic models. Activities such as sound baths, mindfulness, and creative arts were highlighted for their ability to foster both healing and joy, helping participants connect to their Blackness and to one another in affirming ways.

Participants celebrated PA's **programming diversity and intentional design**, noting that it is not a "one-size-fits-all" model but rather caters to different identities and experiences within the Black community. Programs such as *Let It Heal* and *Black Joy* were specifically named for building lifelong friendships and creating spaces that feel uplifting, interactive, and empowering. The organization's consistent practice of supporting Black-owned businesses and engaging professionals to guide workshops was also named as a strength.

At the same time, participants expressed clear aspirations for growth. They want to see programming expand to include more communities, such as men, mothers, queer and gender-diverse people, and to explore heritage-based or land-based healing activities. There was also strong support for **a permanent community space** or centre, which could provide stability, childcare, and expanded offerings. Participants also called for broader outreach and marketing, collaborations with other organizations, and documentation or frameworks that would allow PA's model to be shared and replicated.

Risks and cautions raised included the need to prevent staff burnout, maintain the same culture of care even as the organization grows, and introduce a clear code of conduct to support safety and accountability in programming.

Overall, community members described PA as **uplifting, inspiring, and irreplaceable**. They urged the organization to build on its strengths, a safe, joyful, and affirming community for Black survivors, while planning boldly for growth, sustainability, and inclusivity.

"The staff are the best part what makes Project Agape the way it is. If we get bigger, the staff must remain the same."

"You look at someone and can feel exactly what they're saying and feel close to them... even though there was a 10-year age gap, I knew everyone goes through the same things as me."

"The environment is comfortable the blankets, the lavender, the fidget toys. Those small things make such a big difference."

"It's therapy in a sense... offloading experiences, but not as heavy as traditional therapy."

"Staff cater to Black experiences in real, practical ways, even supporting with bus fare and food."

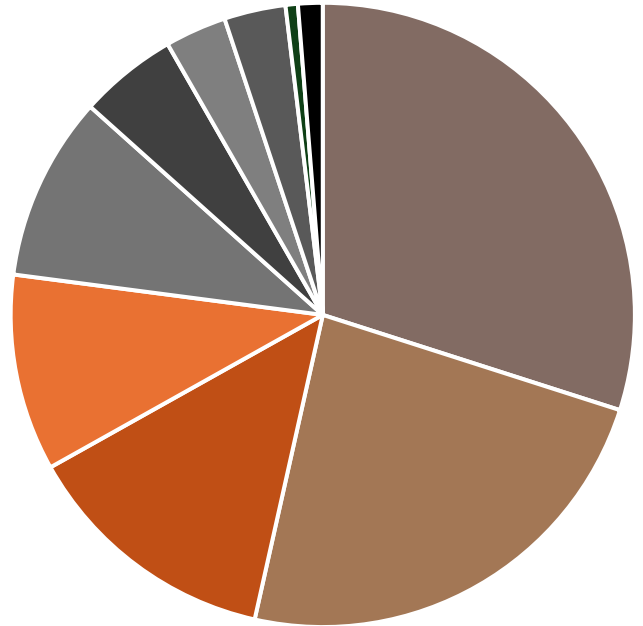
"Programming for Black queer femmes, for mothers, and for men, we need spaces for all of these communities."

"We need a permanent Project Agape community centre, a designated space with childcare, care professionals, and a place for us to always gather."

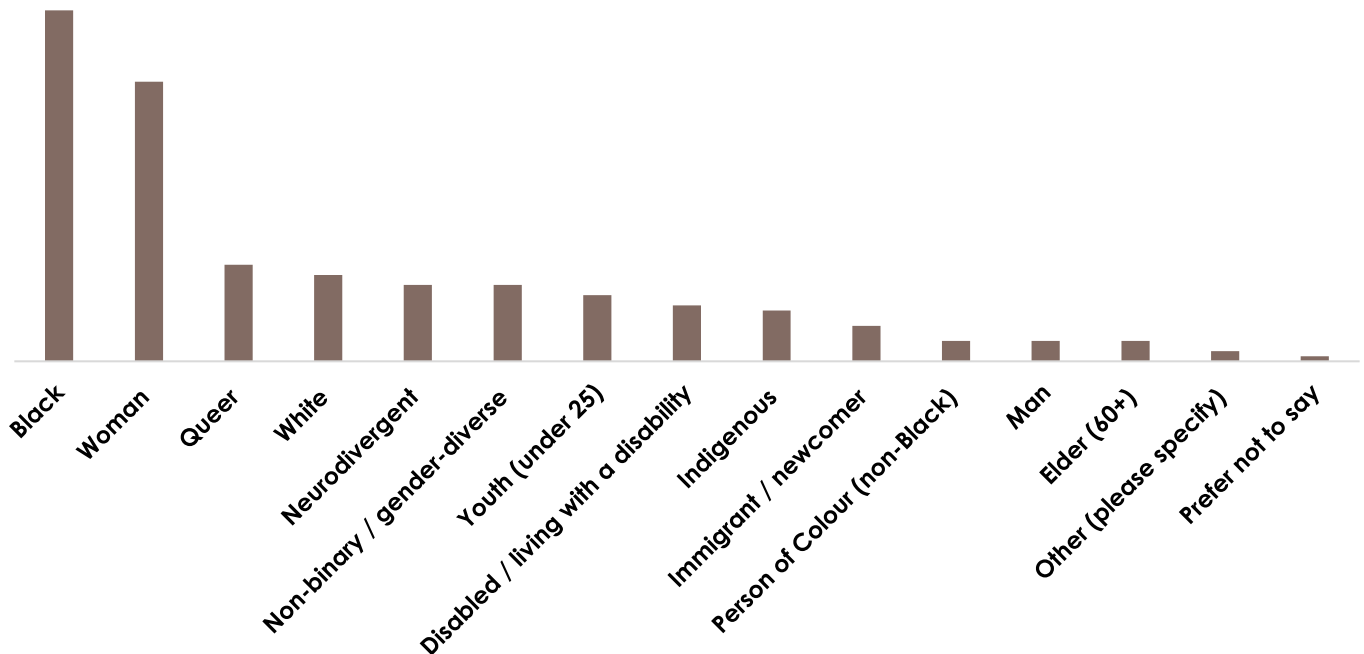
Appendix C: Survey

Respondents – 99 individual respondents with some indicating multiple roles.

- I follow Project Agape's work or engage with content (47)
- Black survivor supported through Agape (37)
- Program Participant (21)
- I'm not currently involved but I'm interested in the work (16)
- Financial/in-kind supporter (15)
- Partner organization (8)
- Staff member (5)
- Volunteer (5)
- Board Member (1)
- Other (2)

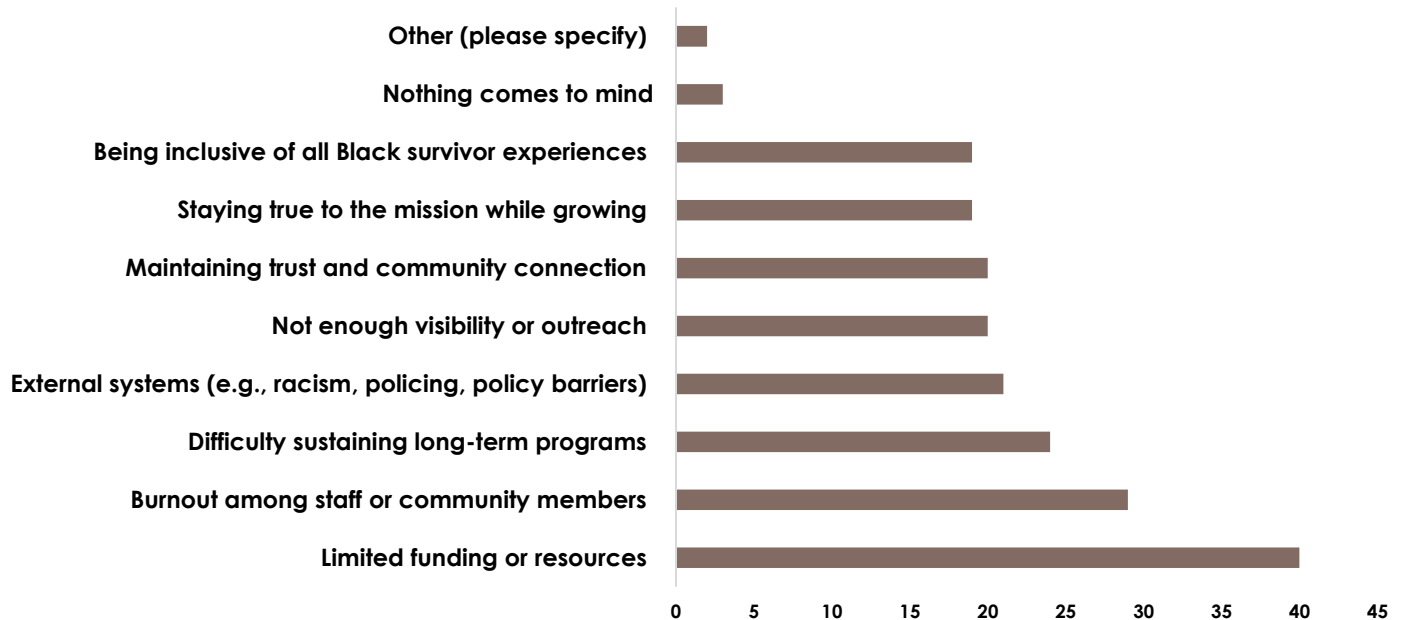


1. Which of the following identities apply to you?



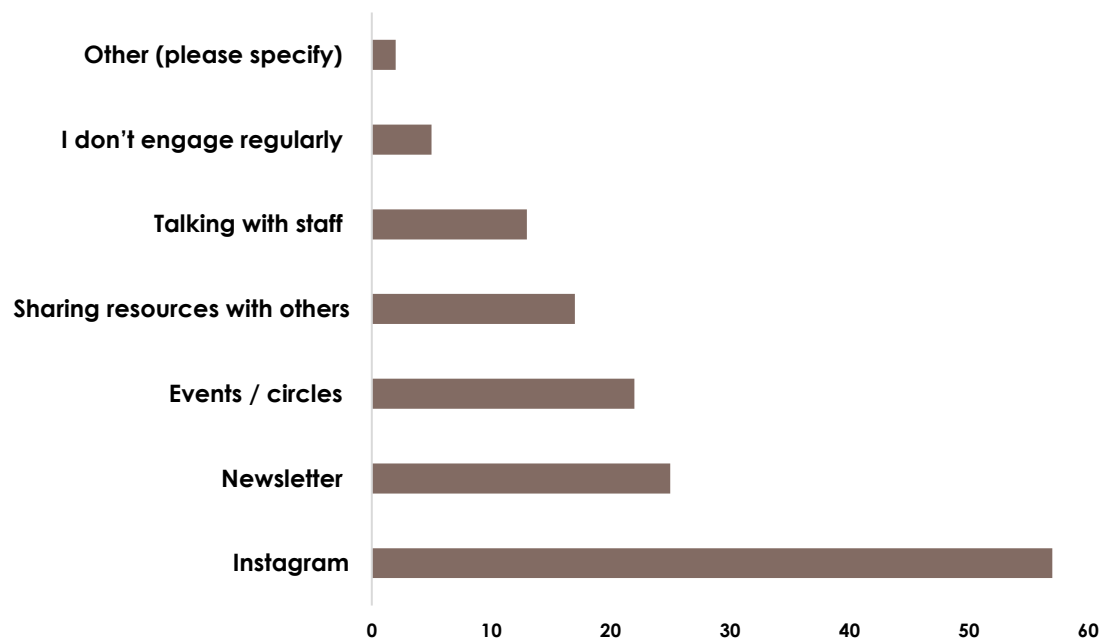
Most respondents identified as Black and women, with many also naming queer, youth, neurodivergent, Indigenous, immigrant, and disability identities.

2. What do you think may be some of the biggest challenges Project Agape will face in the coming years?



The biggest challenges identified were limited funding, staff burnout, sustaining programs long term, and pressures from external systems like racism and policy barriers.

3. How do you usually engage with Project Agape



Instagram is the top way people connect with Project Agape, followed by the newsletter, events, and direct relationships with staff.

Question	Responses – Common Themes
4. In your own words, what do you believe is the core purpose of Project Agape?	• Safe Space for Black Survivors → Many respondents emphasized Agape as a sanctuary and safe haven specifically for Black survivors of gender-based violence. • Healing & Empowerment → Healing circles, empowerment programs, and joy-centered approaches were repeatedly mentioned. • Community Support & Solidarity → Agape was described as a pillar in the community, bridging gaps and offering collective care. • Advocacy & Awareness → Respondents saw Agape's role as bringing visibility to issues of GBV in Black communities and advocating for systemic change. • Inclusivity & Love → Some respondents described Agape's purpose as embodying love, compassion, and uplifting marginalized groups beyond survivors (e.g., LGBTQ+, low-income, youth).
5. When you imagine the future of Project Agape, what do you hope it continues to do or begins to do?	• Stay Rooted in Core Mission → Respondents want Agape to remain focused on Black survivors and its original mission. • Growth & Expansion → Hopes for broader geographic reach, more programming, and even a permanent community centre. • Diversification of Programs → Expanding offerings to serve youth, queer and trans communities, and underrepresented groups. • Stronger Infrastructure → Calls for more staff, sustained funding, and deeper organizational capacity. • Visibility & Advocacy → Requests for Agape to amplify events, provide resources, and continue advocacy in broader policy spaces.
6. Is there anything else you'd like to share with us?	• Gratitude & Appreciation → Many respondents expressed thanks for the love, support, and impact Agape has already had in their lives. • Personal Impact Stories → Respondents shared how programs like <i>Black Joy & Healing</i> gave them tools and connections to cope with challenges. • Calls for Expanded Outreach → Suggestions included holding conversations on university campuses and reaching younger audiences. • Affirmation of Current Work → Several emphasized that Agape is already doing impactful work and should be acknowledged for it.

Appendix D: About Project Agape

1. What do we provide (product, service, value)?

Project Agape delivers **trauma-informed, culturally relevant programs** rooted in the lived experiences of Black survivors of gender-based violence. Core offerings include:

- **Healing & Wellness Programs** – *Let It Heal, Black Joy and Healing, Healing Circles*, and *May Wellness Series* provide safe spaces for collective healing, resilience-building, and community advocacy.
- **Capacity-Building & Advocacy Tools** – resources like the *Self-Advocacy Toolkit for Black Youth* and initiatives like *The Blooming Space* equip participants with tools to navigate systems (education, housing, immigration, wellness).
- **Community Engagement & Cultural Programming** – *Nourish & Connect Dinner Series* and creative platforms such as the *Take Up Space Podcast* amplify Black voices and foster belonging.

Value Proposition: Project Agape creates **healing-centered, survivor-led spaces** that restore dignity, build leadership, and influence systemic change.

2. Who exactly do we serve?

Project Agape's mandate is clear: it is **founded and run by Black survivors of gender-based violence** and serves this community as its primary focus.

- **Primary Participants:**
 - Black survivors of gender-based violence (with particular attention to newcomers, women, queer, non-binary and trans individuals).
 - Black youth navigating systemic barriers (immigration, education, housing, health).
- **Secondary Audiences/Influencers:**
 - Broader Black communities in Ottawa seeking culturally safe spaces for healing, food security, and advocacy.
 - Policy and decision-makers, indirectly, through advocacy outputs such as reports and toolkits.

Defining Feature: The community served is not broad or generic **it is intentionally specific**, centering the intersecting identities of Black survivors, making programs highly targeted and culturally resonant.

3. How is it sustainably funded?

Currently, Project Agape is **heavily grant-dependent**:

- **Confirmed/Recent Funders:**
 - WAGE (Women and Gender Equality Canada) – strategic planning and training.
 - City of Ottawa – Healing Circles program.
 - Laidlaw Foundation – toolkit for Black survivors, immigrants, and refugees.
 - Ontario Trillium Foundation and private fundraising exploration.
 - The Houssain Foundation
 - United Way Eastern Ontario

Funding Model Assessment:

- **Strength:** Strong ability to secure competitive government and foundation grants. Current surplus indicates financial health.
- **Risk:** Single-source reliance on grants with limited earned revenue, donations, or diversified income streams.
- **Opportunity:** Board expertise in finance, marketing, psychotherapy, and communications could be leveraged to diversify into philanthropy, corporate partnerships, and earned revenue streams (e.g., training, publications).

Summary for Decision-Makers

- **What we provide:** Healing-centered, culturally grounded programs for Black survivors of gender-based violence.
- **Who we serve:** Black survivors, particularly women, youth, queer non-binary and trans individuals, and newcomers.
- **How funded:** Almost exclusively through grants, with strong recent success but limited long-term sustainability.

Strategic Implication:

The next 5 years should focus on **balancing growth with sustainability**, expanding high-impact programming while **diversifying revenue** and strengthening infrastructure to reduce vulnerability to grant cycles.