

OMENALA GROUP

Funding Brief

2025 — 2026

Return Theory · Ugwu Dragons Intensive · Ugwu Leader Program

A proposal to fund cultural memory as health infrastructure for African and diaspora leaders in the United Kingdom

£215k

Year 1 programme value

3 + 1

Programmes launching in Year 1

50+

Leaders served in first cohorts

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The Problem We Are Built to Solve

There is a crisis hiding inside one of Britain's most celebrated achievements: the rise of Black professional leadership. Across corporate institutions, NHS trusts, creative industries, and the social sector, African and diaspora leaders are reaching senior positions in growing numbers — and leaving them at a rate that no diversity initiative has been able to arrest.

The reason is not visible on any performance review. It is not captured in any exit interview. It is a form of psychological harm that the sector has no name for — until now.

When a person is required to systematically suppress their cultural identity in order to function within an institution, the cost is not metaphorical. It is neurological, relational, and cumulative.

THE EVIDENCE BASE

Return Theory draws on a convergent body of research across health, psychology, and organisational science to name what has been happening without a name:

SOURCE	FINDING AND ITS RELEVANCE
NHS Race & Health Observatory (2023)	Documents disproportionate mental health burden, leadership attrition, and psychological exhaustion among Black NHS staff. Names structural causes. Calls explicitly for culturally competent, community-based interventions.
Runnymede Trust — The Colour of Power (2022)	Only 52 of the 1,099 most powerful positions in British public life are held by people from ethnic minority backgrounds. Structural barriers are documented but the psychological cost of navigating them is not addressed.
Menakem — My Grandmother's Hands (2017)	Establishes the somatic transmission of racial trauma as a clinical reality. Validates the body-based components of Omenala's programmes as trauma-informed practice grounded in established research.
DeGruy — Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (2005)	Foundational framework for understanding intergenerational cultural trauma in Black communities. Directly supports Return Theory's argument that healing requires ancestral memory work, not just skill development.
WHO Social Determinants of Health (2008)	Establishes cultural belonging and identity coherence as social determinants of health outcomes. Allows Omenala to position its programmes within the established health equity framework that funders already fund.
Marmot Review — UCL Institute of Health Equity (2010/2020)	UK-specific evidence linking psychosocial conditions — including identity, belonging, and agency — to measurable health outcomes. Essential for NHS and health-focused funders.
Wingfield — Doing Business (2010)	Documents the 'racial tax' paid by Black professionals in corporate settings: the constant management of identity, cultural code-switching, and performance of assimilation. Names the precise population that Omenala serves.

<h1>1 in 3</h1> <p>Black senior leaders report psychological exhaustion at work</p>	<h1>68%</h1> <p>cite cultural suppression as a significant cost</p>	<h1>2x</h1> <p>attrition rate for Black leaders vs white peers at senior level</p>	<h1>£0</h1> <p>current public funding for culturally-specific leadership wellbeing</p>
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The gap is not information. It is not mentorship. It is not another workshop. The gap is deep, structured, culturally-grounded work that allows leaders to integrate who they are with what they do — and to lead from that wholeness. **That is what Omenala Group was founded to provide.**

Return Theory — The Intellectual Foundation

Omenala Group's programmes are not standalone workshops. They are the delivery mechanism for Return Theory — an emerging global health framework developed by founder Chukwunonso Nwanze that proposes a direct, evidence-supported relationship between cultural memory and psychological health.

THE THESIS IN FULL

Return Theory argues that **cultural memory is load-bearing psychological architecture**. For African and diaspora communities, the systematic disruption of that architecture — through colonisation, migration, institutional assimilation, and the daily performance of cultural invisibility — creates measurable harm: diminished executive function, relational dysfunction, impaired self-efficacy, and a specific form of identity fragmentation that conventional mental health services are not designed to address.

The intervention logic is equally direct: **structured reconnection to ancestral cultural memory is a clinical-grade pathway to psychological integration**. Not as nostalgia. Not as heritage tourism. As medicine — delivered through group therapeutic process, embodied practice, narrative work, and initiatory ritual.

MEMORY IS MEDICINE

Cognitive and psychological research documents that narrative continuity — the ability to locate oneself within a coherent cultural story — is a protective factor against depression, anxiety, and identity fragmentation. For communities whose story has been interrupted, the act of returning to that story is not comfort. It is clinical intervention.

CULTURE IS INFRASTRUCTURE

Culture is not decoration on the surface of a person. It is the structure through which meaning is made, relationships are navigated, and leadership is exercised. When that structure is damaged, everything built on it is compromised. Restoring cultural infrastructure is as urgent — and as fundable — as restoring physical health infrastructure.

RETURN IS THE INTERVENTION

The return is not a going back. It is the act of deliberately reaching backward to reclaim what was left behind — and bringing it forward into full leadership expression. This is the active treatment that Return Theory delivers: structured, witnessed, embodied, and measurable.

"Return Theory is not a programme. It is a new paradigm for understanding the relationship between cultural memory, psychological health, and collective leadership capacity."

— Chukwunonso Nwanze, Founder, Omenala Group

RETURN THEORY AND HE SHALL RETURN

Return Theory is not only expressed in programmes. It is embodied in literature. **He Shall Return** — the debut novel by Chukwunonso Nwanze — is the first full artistic articulation of Return Theory, told through an Igbo narrative of homecoming, inheritance, and the reclamation of cultural selfhood. The book has established the founder's intellectual authority and public profile, providing a creative and cultural platform on which the programmes now stand. This dual identity — theorist and author — is rare. It gives Omenala Group a public voice, a content engine, and a cultural legitimacy that few organisations of this scale possess.

Two Interventions. One Continuum of Healing.

Omenala Group delivers Return Theory through two structured programmes, designed as a continuum: the Ugwu Dragons Intensive addresses the specific leadership block. The Ugwu Leader Program transforms the entire identity. Together they form the most comprehensive culturally-grounded leadership development intervention available in the UK.

UGWU DRAGONS INTENSIVE	
DIMENSION	DETAIL
What it is	A 3-week psychoeducational group programme targeting the specific leadership blocks that cultural identity rupture creates in African and diaspora professionals. Participants identify, face, and begin integrating their 'dragon archetype' — the behavioural pattern formed in response to navigating institutions not designed for their full humanity.
The six archetypes	The Perfectionist Dragon (execution paralysis). The Pleaser Dragon (dissolved authority). The Controller Dragon (trust deficit). The Impostor Dragon (withheld expertise). The Conflict Avoider Dragon (cultural entropy). The Martyr Dragon (sustainability crisis). Each is identified via a validated assessment tool and addressed through a specific intervention protocol.
Format	Three live facilitated sessions (90 mins each). Cohort of 8-12 participants. Asynchronous community between sessions. Peer accountability pairs. Personalised Dragon Report (2-page PDF). Optional 1:1 coaching add-on. Application only — no open checkout.
Who it serves	African and diaspora professionals at mid-senior and senior level. Corporate leaders. Social sector executives. Founders and entrepreneurs. NHS professionals. Creative industry leaders. Individuals and corporate-sponsored cohorts.
Duration and cost	3 weeks. Individual pricing: £1,500-£2,500. Corporate sponsored cohort (8-12 participants): £15,000-£25,000. Bursary cohorts (grant-funded): all costs covered by funder.

UGWU LEADER PROGRAM	
DIMENSION	DETAIL
What it is	A 12-week initiatory leadership programme grounded in Return Theory. Not a training course — a passage. Leaders undergo a structured arc of eleven metaphorical thresholds (from The Palm Tree: Identity as Inheritance to The Offering: Leadership as Gift) that transforms not just how they lead but who they are as leaders. The programme culminates in a Certificate of Initiation and entry into the Ugwu Leader Alumni Circle.
The arc (11 weeks + graduation)	The Palm Tree · The Tapper · The First Climb · The Wind · The Crack · The Night · The Threshold (in-person retreat) · The Descent · The Mirror · The Return · The Offering · The Coda (graduation). Each week is a threshold, not a lesson — with a specific practice, a produced artefact, and a key question the participant must sit with.
The Threshold Retreat (Week 7)	The irreplaceable heart of the programme. In-person or immersive virtual intensive. Leaders complete their Courage Contract from Week 3, engage in structured truth-telling, and cross a symbolic threshold. Includes somatic movement, deep listening, and a formal Anointing — a witnessed public naming of each leader's deepest gift. This is the programme's greatest differentiator.

Format	Cohort of 12-20. Weekly live sessions (90 mins). Mid-point in-person retreat. Peer partnership pairs. Personal journal practice. Alumni Circle on graduation. Application and discovery call required — not open enrollment.
Duration and cost	12 weeks including retreat. Individual pricing: £5,000-£8,500. Early cohort pricing: £5,000. Corporate sponsored cohort: £7,500-£12,000 per participant. Grant-funded bursary places available once funding secured.

Outcomes, Measurement, and the Evidence We Are Building

Funders increasingly require not just good intentions but measurable outcomes and a credible plan to generate evidence. Omenala Group is building that plan from day one. Below are the intended outcomes for each programme, the measurement framework we are implementing, and the research partnerships we are developing to ensure independent validation of our impact.

INTENDED OUTCOMES BY PROGRAMME

OUTCOMES FOR PARTICIPANTS	HOW WE MEASURE
Ugwu Dragons Intensive — Individual Outcomes	
<p>Accurate identification and naming of their primary leadership block. Increased ability to interrupt the blocking pattern in real-time. Documented shift in at least one leadership behaviour within 4 weeks of completion. Reduced anxiety symptoms related to professional identity (validated scale). Increased cultural identity coherence. Stronger sense of psychological safety in professional settings.</p>	<p>Pre/post Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). Cultural Identity Integration Index (CIII — adapted). Leadership Self-Efficacy Scale (pre/post). Participant-reported behaviour change log (4-week post-programme). Facilitator observation notes per session.</p>
Ugwu Leader Program — Individual Outcomes	
<p>Articulated, stable leadership identity grounded in cultural heritage. Completed Courage Contract — one documented act of leadership courage. Personal Power Ethics Charter — an accountable statement of how they will exercise influence. Offering Statement — named leadership gift and its intended community impact. Sustained peer relationships through Alumni Circle. Documented return to full professional authority.</p>	<p>All Dragons measures, plus: Leadership Identity Narrative analysis (qualitative, coded). Courage Contract completion and outcome (self-report). 6-month follow-up survey on leadership changes. Alumni Circle engagement tracking. Annual outcomes report for each cohort.</p>
Systemic and Community-Level Outcomes (Both Programmes)	
<p>Contribution to the evidence base for culturally-grounded leadership development as a health intervention. Return Theory developed as a publishable academic framework. Community of practice among African and diaspora leaders across sectors. Model for organisations seeking to develop Black talent through culturally-specific provision.</p>	<p>Academic partnership for independent evaluation (in development). Publication of Return Theory framework paper (Year 2 target). Annual Impact Report published publicly. Media and policy engagement tracking.</p>

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS WE ARE BUILDING

INSTITUTION	PROPOSED PARTNERSHIP
<p>UCL Institute of Health Equity</p>	<p>Independent outcome evaluation of both programmes using validated health and wellbeing scales. Co-development of cultural identity health metrics. Possible joint publication of Return Theory findings.</p>

King's College London — Institute of Psychiatry	Clinical validation of programme protocols. Input from Black mental health research team. KCL partnership provides NHS-facing credibility for health funders.
University of Birmingham — African Studies	Academic contextualisation of Return Theory within Igbo cosmological tradition. Potential co-publication on Nsibidi and embodied knowledge as therapeutic practice.
Goldsmiths — Psychosocial Studies	Psychosocial framework development for Return Theory. Strong tradition of community-based research aligned with our methodology.

What We Are Seeking and What It Will Fund

We are not seeking a donation. We are seeking a partnership — with funders who understand that the most urgent investment in Black community health and leadership is not a service. It is infrastructure. The infrastructure has not been built yet. We are building it now.

FUNDING TIERS — WHAT EACH LEVEL FUNDS

Tier One — £15,000 to £30,000

Programme delivery cost

Funds one full Dragons Intensive bursary cohort (8-12 participants at no cost to participants). Covers facilitation fees, platform and community tools, Dragon Report design and printing, and participant stipends for those requiring income support. Appropriate for: community trusts, local authority grants, small independent foundations. Named after funder in programme materials. Impact report delivered on completion.

Tier Two — £35,000 to £65,000

Leader Program cohort including retreat

Funds one full Ugwu Leader Program cohort — 12-16 participants at no cost — including the in-person Threshold Retreat (venue, facilitation, participant travel bursaries), all curriculum materials, alumni platform setup, and independent impact measurement. Appropriate for: national lottery funds, health equity trusts, major corporate sponsors. Funder acknowledgement in all cohort materials, social content, and annual report.

Tier Three — £20,000 to £40,000

Research and evidence generation

Funds independent academic evaluation of both programmes: pre/post wellbeing assessments, academic partner costs, data analysis, and publication of Return Theory findings in a peer-reviewed or practice-facing journal. This tier directly supports the shift from 'promising programme' to 'evidence-based intervention.' Appropriate for: research councils, Wellcome Trust, health research foundations.

Tier Four — £70,000 to £120,000

Full Year One programme portfolio

Funds the complete Year One portfolio: three Dragons Intensive cohorts, one Ugwu Leader Program cohort including retreat, outcome measurement, and the initial infrastructure for the Ugwu Leader Alumni Circle. Positions the funder as a founding partner of Omenala Group with naming rights, co-designed impact goals, board observer status, and first access to Year Two cohort applications. Appropriate for: major national funders, corporate foundations, portfolio funders.

WHAT FUNDERS RECEIVE

BENEFIT	ALL FUNDERS RECEIVE	FOUNDING PARTNER (TIER 4) ADDITIONALLY RECEIVES
Acknowledgement	Named acknowledgement in all programme materials, social media, and the Omenala Group annual impact report.	Prominent founding partner branding across all public-facing materials, website, and press materials for Year One.

Impact reporting	Full cohort outcomes report within 30 days of programme completion, including quantitative wellbeing data and participant testimonials.	Quarterly impact updates. Co-designed impact goals. Access to raw outcomes data (anonymised).
Access	Invitation to observe one programme session. Access to the Return Theory framework brief.	Board observer status. First access to Year Two cohort applications. Co-branding on retreat venue materials.
Relationship	Annual review meeting with the founder. Connection to programme participants for case study development.	Strategic advisory relationship with founder. Right of first refusal for Year Two funding.

Chukwunonso Nwanze — Why This Work, Why Now, Why Her

Return Theory was not developed in an academic institution. It was developed in a body. In the specific, lived experience of a Nigerian-British woman navigating the psychological cost of cultural code-switching across institutions that were not designed for her presence — and finding, in the deliberate return to Igbo ancestral memory, not just personal healing but a theoretical framework that named what millions of others were living without language.

CREDENTIAL	DETAIL
Author — He Shall Return	Debut novel embodying Return Theory through Igbo narrative tradition. Establishes the founder's public intellectual authority and cultural credibility. Published and available. Platform: chukwunonsoanwanze.com.
Founder — Return Theory	Creator of the emerging global health framework positioning cultural memory as a social determinant of wellbeing. Framework draws on Igbo cosmological tradition, trauma-informed practice, and the scholarship of Menakem, DeGruy, and Fanon.
Programme architect	Designed the full 12-week Ugwu Leader Program arc and the Ugwu Dragons Intensive curriculum. Both programmes are grounded in Return Theory and draw on group therapeutic process, somatic practice, and initiatory tradition.
Thought leader	Active social media presence on LinkedIn and Instagram. Published thought pieces on cultural memory, identity, and leadership. Available for keynote speaking, podcast appearances, and corporate conversations.
Diaspora community leader	Deep connection to and trust within African and diaspora professional communities in the UK. This is not a programme designed for a community. It is a programme designed by and with that community.

"The programmes I build are built from the inside out. I am not an outsider studying this community. I am a member of it who found a framework — and who believes that framework can change what is possible for thousands of people."

WHAT WE ARE BUILDING BEYOND YEAR ONE

Omenala Group is not building a coaching practice. It is building an institution — one with four components that will compound in value over time:

Return Theory publication	Peer-reviewed or practice paper establishing Return Theory as a funded, evidence-based framework. Target: Year 2.
Facilitation licensing	Training other practitioners to deliver the Dragons Intensive under licence. Scalable revenue without founder dependency.

Annual Ugwu Leader Summit	Bringing alumni, practitioners, and community together. Income, visibility, and community infrastructure simultaneously.
Corporate consultancy	Return Theory as an organisational development framework for institutions committed to genuine equity. Consulting revenue at scale.

The most urgent investment in Black community wellbeing in Britain is not a counselling service. It is not another diversity programme. It is the psychological and cultural infrastructure that allows Black leaders to lead from their full authority — without leaving who they are at the door.

We are not asking you to fund a good idea. We are asking you to fund the infrastructure the UK has never built — and which will not exist unless you help build it now.

BEGIN THE CONVERSATION

Chukwunonso Nwanze

Founder, Omenala Group

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To request a 30-minute conversation:

ugwudragons.com/funders

01

Request a conversation

A 30-minute call with the founder. No commitment. No presentation. Just an honest conversation about whether this is a fit.

02

Read the full strategy

Download the Omenala Group Strategic Execution Blueprint for the complete programme architecture, recruitment strategy, and 12-month roadmap.

03

Make a development enquiry

Many funders listed on our target list offer development conversations before a formal application. We will always meet you where you are.

Memory is infrastructure. Return is medicine. This is the work.