



**Agency Guidance and Reference Brief
for Implementing the**

**FRAMEWORK FOR THE DEVELOPMENT
OF A FEDERAL HBCU
COMPETITIVENESS STRATEGY**

**White House Initiative on
Historically Black Colleges and Universities
Executive Order 13779**

March 2020

Table of Contents

Guidance and Reference Brief Purpose	3
Framework Introduction	3
Level Setting HBCU Competitiveness	4
Framework Practice 1: Improving Alignment with Government Performance and Results Act Planning and Reporting	8
Framework Practice 2: Developing Action-oriented Plans Aligned with Agency Mission and Objectives	10
Framework Practice 3: Fostering a Federal HBCU Competitiveness Ecosystem (Interagency Action)	14
Framework Practice 3: Fostering a Federal HBCU Competitiveness Ecosystem (Intra-agency Action)	18
Framework Practice 4: Ensuring Government-wide Alignment via Four Priority Areas	20
Additional HBCU Competitiveness Planning Concepts to Explore to Improve Conditions Under Which HBCU Compete for Federal Opportunities	22

Guidance and Reference Brief Purpose

Since the founding in 1837 of the first college dedicated to serving the needs of African American students to the present, historically black colleges and universities (HBCU) have played an important role in helping our country fulfill its promise to hold true that all Americans are created equal. In recognition of this value, on February 14, 2020, the Trump Administration issued the **Framework for the Development of a Federal HBCU Competitiveness Strategy (Framework)** to help agencies strengthen compliance with Executive Order 13779, the White House Initiative to Promote Excellence and Innovation at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Executive Order 13779). In turn, the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Initiative) provides this guidance and reference brief to improve implementation of the Framework.

Importantly, this guidance and reference brief does not create binding requirements for Federal agencies; however, it does warrant thorough review and consideration prior to developing required agency HBCU competitiveness plans.

In sum, the purposes of this document are to provide agencies guidance to strengthen compliance with requirements of Executive Order 13779 and for agencies to reference this guidance when developing new or reviewing existing HBCU competitiveness plans, as well as when proposing and carrying out HBCU-related activities.

Framework Introduction

The Framework, for the first time, presents the Federal sector's vision for helping HBCU better align with, contribute to and realize value from delivering on agency missions and strategic goals and objectives. It activates a Federal aggregation exercise to ignite creation and assemblage of agency HBCU competitiveness plans, informed by the practices, strategies and tactics contained herein. **Significantly, the Framework also serves as a valuable North Star for non-Federal public and private actors to improve the competitiveness, capacity and contributions of HBCUs in the states and locales where they are situated.**

The Framework leads Federal agencies in the development of minimum 4-year agency HBCU competitiveness plans. To achieve the goal of improving the conditions under which HBCU compete for Federal opportunities, the Framework calls for the adoption of four practices to assist in fulfilling agency missions and strategic goals and objectives through collaboration with HBCU. This guidance and reference brief level sets and further explains the four practices, providing agencies with additional strategies and tactics to strengthen compliance with Executive Order 13779 and effectively implement the Framework.

The Framework does not create a single, centrally controlled Federal approach. Rather, agency HBCU competitiveness plans are developed internally as part of agencywide strategic plans for FY 2018 – FY 2022, in accordance with the Government Performance and Results Act Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRAMA). When agency HBCU competitiveness plans are collected – reflecting the directives of the Framework – they comprise the **Federal HBCU Competitiveness Strategy**.

Level Setting HBCU Competitiveness

HBCU Defined

The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, defines HBCU as: “...any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans, and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary [of Education] to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered or is, according to such an agency or association, making reasonable progress toward accreditation.”

HBCU Competitiveness Defined

For the past several decades, as a Federal policy priority, the U.S. has intensely focused on global economic competition. Despite Americans’ growing appreciation of the challenges of competing in the global economy, use of term “competitiveness” has been largely reserved for government, business, top research institutions and economic leadership organizations. It has not yet found its way to common usage among HBCU and the students and communities they serve. The absence of this term within regular discourse and action related to HBCU results in institutional misalignment with, and disconnection from, the best opportunities the Federal sector and the U.S. have to offer.

Informed by the U.S. Competitiveness Project¹, a research-led effort to define, understand and improve national competitiveness, the Framework defines HBCU competitiveness as:

The ability of HBCU to successfully compete for public and private investments to meet the needs of students and promote community prosperity.

HBCU Designation Does Not Rely on Suspect Classification

Federal action in support of HBCU should not trigger the highest form of judicial review – strict scrutiny – which is applied when government action impacts suspect classifications. The Supreme Court recognizes suspect classifications as race, national origin, religion and alienage. If Federal agencies do not use suspect classifications, then they are nearly unlimited in their creativity to

¹ <https://www.hbs.edu/competitiveness/Pages/default.aspx>

accomplish the objective to improve conditions under which HBCU compete for top Federal opportunities that meet student needs and promote community prosperity.

While HBCU have established traditions and programs that might disproportionately appeal to one race or another,² as reflected in their statutory definition, they are race-neutral institutions. HBCU have no threshold or specific percentage of students of a certain race or ethnicity. Accordingly, Federal agencies have tremendous latitude to creatively improve conditions under which HBCU compete for top Federal opportunities.

Access to All Available Federal Tools

Since they do not rely upon suspect classifications, HBCU are empowered to readily access all the tools, mechanisms and strategies that are available within the Federal sector to improve their ability to successfully compete for Federal opportunities, including programs, grants, contracts, cooperative agreements and other investment and partnership opportunities. Additionally, HBCU can seamlessly align with Federal efforts that encourage non-Federal public and private sector engagement to meet national objectives.

Policy, Framework and Strategy to Improve Conditions

Fresh Trump Administration policy empowers the Framework to create the Federal HBCU Competitiveness Strategy to improve the conditions under which HBCU compete for Federal opportunities. Agency actions as part of sustained strategy, consistent with the Framework, enable the Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem to generate more impactful outcomes.

The Framework defines:

- **Policy:** The Trump Administration declaration that HBCU competitiveness is an important national objective.
- **Framework:** The replicable process, including activities, planning, goaling, measuring and reporting, Federal agencies will follow to encourage HBCU competitiveness.
- **Strategy:** The sustained Federal method of marshalling agency opportunities and resources – through agency HBCU competitiveness plans – to improve conditions for HBCU to compete for Federal opportunities.

Opportunity Order of Magnitude

[In 2018, higher education institutions received a total of \\$1.068 trillion](#) in revenue from Federal and non-Federal funding sources. **Investments from the Federal government were \$149 billion of the total, representing 3.6% of Federal spending.** This money flowed into colleges and universities through three main vehicles: Federal student aid, grants, and contracts.

² <http://lawdigitalcommons.bc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1974&context=bclr>

[A Federal grant](#) is an agreement through which a Federal agency provides financial assistance to an individual or organization used for projects and expenses that contribute to public good.

- Total FY2018 Grant Funding to Higher Education: \$40,659,751,100
- Total FY2018 Research Grant Funding: \$28,716,550,516 (*Identified and set apart grants used for research projects; this subset of grants was awarded to individuals, groups, or institutions*)

[A Federal contract](#) is an agreement in which the Federal purchases a good or service from an organization or individual for government use.

- Total FY2018 Contract Funding to Higher Education: \$10,450,952,331

Articulation of a New HBCU Narrative

Narrative refers to the leading education and economic culture, leadership, and advocacy related to our nation's HBCU. It informs the kinds of education and economic support services, resources and opportunities that are demanded, available and accessed by the students and communities served by HBCU. Although narrative is not easily measured, it has been famously said, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast."³ In other words, to position the Framework for sustained impact, it should be and is aligned with overall Trump Administration education and economic objectives to help improve the performance of more Americans within U.S. competitiveness priorities.

Because it is intangible and complex in nature, narrative is generally not accorded the importance it deserves. There is massive under-tapped potential residing in HBCU and the students and communities they serve, that is at great risk of remaining at the sidelines. With the Framework, the Trump Administration is articulating a new HBCU narrative reflecting our nation's leading education and economic thrusts. An expected impact of the Framework is the **relentless inculcation** of this new narrative – among HBCU and the Federal and non-Federal public and private sectors – to improve conditions under which institutions compete for opportunities that meet student needs and promote community prosperity.

Embedding HBCU Competitiveness within Agencies

For optimum and sustained impact, HBCU competitiveness should be embedded into existing agencywide strategic plans for FY 2018 – FY 2022, in accordance with the GPRAMA. Agency HBCU competitiveness plans should not be relegated to standalone, ancillary or collateral objectives. This is important to advancing the Framework, as agencywide strategic plans have been thoroughly vetted by agency leaders and generally represent top Federal opportunities.

Significantly, since the Framework issues in the middle of current minimum 4-year agencywide strategic planning cycle under the GPRAMA, the first iteration of minimum 4-year agency HBCU competitiveness plans will substantively cover only FY21 and FY22.

³ <http://www.druckerinstitute.com/peter-druckers-life-and-legacy/>

Search Keywords and Key Phrases to Identify Opportunities

The Framework tasks Federal agencies to uncover opportunities to embed HBCU within agencywide strategic plans required by the GPRAMA. These agencywide strategic plans include mission, goals, and the means by which agencies measure progress in addressing specific national problems over a minimum 4-year period.

By searching for keywords and key phrases within agencywide strategic plan goals and objectives, HBCU competitiveness planning can be strengthened. These keywords and key phrases can uncover general areas of opportunity where higher education institutions, including HBCU, might be able to deliver value to agencies. When agencies identify keywords and key phrases within agencywide strategic plans, they are better able to explore questions, “Is this an area where higher education institutions have helped or can help achieve the agency goal or objective?”; closely followed by asking, “Is this an area where HBCU have helped or can help achieve the agency goal or objective?” *Upshot:* In areas where higher education institutions generally are considered sources of potential agency support, HBCU specifically also should be considered potential sources of agency support.

Importantly, the following list of keywords and key phrases is non-exhaustive. The list is intended to open new areas of agency exploration to unlock new opportunities for HBCU to contribute value to agency goals and objectives.

Select keywords and key phrases, include:

- Education
- Partnership
- Postsecondary Education
- Higher Education
- Training
- Teach
- Student
- Curriculum
- Faculty
- Science
- Technology
- Engineering
- Math
- STEM
- Workforce Development
- Career Development
- Credential
- Certification
- Grant
- Contract
- Cooperative Agreement
- Procurement
- Acquisition
- Goods
- Services
- Supplies
- Research
- Basic Research
- Applied Research
- Commercialization
- Tech Transfer
- Planning
- Assessment
- Performance Measurement
- Data Analytics
- Data Gathering
- Data Outcomes
- Evaluation
- Broadband
- Innovation
- Competitiveness
- Entrepreneurship
- Small Business Development
- Ecosystem
- Economic Competitiveness
- Intellectual Property
- Economic Development
- Community Development
- Strategy Development

Practices and Supporting Strategies and Tactics

To achieve the goal of improving the conditions under which HBCU compete for Federal opportunities, the Framework is girded by four practices. For each practice, specific supporting strategies and tactics are outlined for agency consideration, providing greater clarity and focus for implementing the Framework. Although presented separately, practices and supporting strategies and tactics are interrelated – effective implementation of each can positively impact the effectiveness of others.

Framework Practice 1: Improving Alignment with Government Performance and Results Act Planning and Reporting

Supporting strategy and tactics to strengthen Federal agency HBCU competitiveness strategic planning, goaling, measuring and reporting requirements.

Strategy

Strategic planning, goaling, measuring and reporting requirements of the Framework serve as the methods by which to gauge progress on Framework implementation, keeping agency HBCU competitiveness direction and action plans on track. Those requirements are important elements of the ongoing process to improve conditions under which HBCU compete for Federal opportunities that meet student needs and promote community prosperity, answering the questions: “How are agencies doing?”; and “What can agencies do better?” Moreover, the planning, goaling, measuring and reporting requirements set forth in the Framework, should cascade from and align with agencywide strategic plans.

Tactic A. Minimum 4-Year HBCU Competitiveness Plans and Goals

In furtherance of the Framework, agencies will prepare minimum 4-year HBCU competitiveness plans, describing efforts to improve the conditions under which HBCU compete for Federal opportunities, aligned with agencywide strategic plans developed in accordance with the GPRAMA. Agency HBCU competitiveness plans will establish agencywide minimum 4-year goals, grounded in the Federal HBCU competitiveness priority areas, and should be supported by annual, agencywide, specific dollar amount targets for HBCU participation in contracts, grants and cooperative agreements or any other form of partnership opportunity.

Tactic B. Metrics

The Federal HBCU competitiveness priority areas set forth in the Framework fuel an interconnected Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem designed to improve the conditions under which the HBCU compete for Federal opportunities. Those priorities are not intended to be isolated, standalone

activities and should be firmly embedded in and become part and parcel to successfully achieving agencywide strategic plans for FY18-FY22.

Generally, Federal agencies have done a good job identifying the best existing and emerging opportunities and have already won strong buy-in and ownership from agency senior leaders and stewards for agency strategies. However, few, if any, agencies have begun to measure either the inputs or outputs of HBCU within those strategies. Implementation of the Framework should align with existing agencywide strategic plans and measure the performance of HBCU within those plans. The Framework follows, complements and builds on— and does not compete with nor replace — existing agencywide strategic plans.

Minimum 4-year agency HBCU competitiveness plan metrics should reflect the Federal HBCU competitiveness priority areas, align with agencywide strategic plans in accordance with the GPRAMA and measure the specific performance of HBCU within those areas. However, since the minimum 4-year agency HBCU competitiveness plan development will occur in the middle of current strategic plans, the first iteration of minimum 4-year agency HBCU competitiveness plans will substantively cover only FY21 and FY22.

Tactic C. Parameters of Impact

HBCU competitiveness is a new national thrust, without the benefit of building upon historic focus or legacy of agency infrastructure and action. Taken together, the following parameters can help establish — far beyond the Federal sector itself — the broad and sustained Federal and non-Federal public and private sector leadership needed to improve HBCU competitiveness.

- **Direct outcomes:** Measuring Federal agencies’ direct leadership in advancing HBCU competitiveness outcomes grounded in the Federal HBCU competitiveness priority areas and aligned with agencywide strategic plans, achieved primarily through the agencies’ HBCU competitiveness plans.
- **Indirect outcomes:** Measuring Federal agencies’ indirect involvement in advancing HBCU competitiveness grounded in the Federal HBCU competitiveness priority areas and aligned with agencywide strategic plans, achieved primarily through agencies’ collaborative efforts within the new Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem, and with non-Federal public and private sector partners.
- **Spin-offs, i.e., “but for”:** Measuring new HBCU competitiveness policies, practices, programs and projects grounded in the Federal HBCU competitiveness priority areas and aligned with agencywide strategic plans, adopted by other agencies within the Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem, or by non-Federal public and private sector partners, that likely would not have occurred “but for” the new conditions created by agencies.

Spin-off outcomes are an especially important metric, as they show that Federal agencies and non-Federal public and private sector actors are positively responding to the narrative and expectations created by the Framework. This action can demonstrate widespread acceptance of the national HBCU competitiveness imperative.

Tactic D. Annual HBCU Competitiveness Qualitative and Quantitative Reports

Each year, after the Fiscal Year Budget release, agencies will deliver a report to the Initiative **qualitatively** describing progress made towards advancing or achieving annual goals of the minimum 4-year agency HBCU competitiveness plans, aligned with the Federal HBCU competitiveness priority areas and agencywide strategic plans.

Also, each year, after the Fiscal Year Budget release, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) will issue a budget data request (BDR) to agencies to submit their Fiscal Year HBCU budget. Agencies are expected to annually deliver the BDR to the OMB, **quantitatively** detailing annual agency dollar amount allocations, awards and any other expenditures with HBCU. These include agency contracts, grants and cooperative agreements or any other form of investment or partnership opportunity, including, but not limited to, those made within the Federal HBCU competitiveness priority areas and in accordance with agencywide strategic plans.

Framework Practice 2: Developing Action-Oriented Plans Aligned with Agency Mission and Objectives

Supporting strategy and tactics to improve Federal agency HBCU competitiveness processes, activities, opportunity exploration and sustained implementation.

Strategy

It is difficult for agencies to achieve HBCU competitiveness outcomes without consideration of agency processes and activities required for sustained efforts and longer-term impact. Without following the crucial steps of first undertaking agency process and activity, what invariably follows is that agencies would experience the very real challenge to find, aggregate and implement new opportunities to achieve desired outcomes. It is the same as asking for outputs without the requisite inputs or attending to the effect of a matter without ever addressing the cause.

A “condition precedent” is an event that is required **before** something else would occur. Processes and activities are the condition precedent that is needed for agencies to effectively implement the Framework and achieve HBCU competitiveness outcomes. Agency processes and activities are the on-going development and implementation, repeatedly, of specific actions and behaviors. Importantly, agencies’ HBCU competitiveness processes and activities need the same level of senior leadership support as is provided for agencywide strategic planning and development process under the GPRAMA. Without this commensurate level of ownership, agency HBCU competitiveness processes and activities will not sustain; thus, outcomes would be materially weakened.

Tactic A. Processes and Activities

An expectation of the Framework is that Federal agencies answer the questions, “Where are we now relative HBCU competitiveness?”; and “How can we improve HBCU competitiveness?” These processes and activities identify the critical internal and external factors that speak to the agency’s unique needs and how HBCU can fulfill those needs.

Determining and analyzing what agencies already possess and are doing that could be better leveraged to improve HBCU competitiveness is critical to developing agencies’ strategic directions and implementing the Framework. Agency processes and activities should ensure that there are clear HBCU competitiveness objectives informed by the Framework and a comprehensive understanding of agencies’ strategic plans. The introspective diagnosis and discovery processes and the opportunity mapping exploration tool can help agencies structure HBCU efforts.

Tactic B. Diagnosis and Discovery

Diagnosis is the Federal agency process of identifying problems and verifying causes; *discovery* is the Federal agency process of uncovering solutions to challenges that have been identified. Similarly, the Framework provides the foundation on which agencies can make proper assessments and develop effective plans that improve the conditions under which HBCU compete for opportunities, aligned with agencywide strategic plans.

Introspective diagnosis and prescriptive discovery are conditions precedent for effective and sustained agency implementation of the Framework. Such undertaking should greatly enhance prospects for finding agreement and alignment within agencies about challenges and opportunities related to advancing HBCU competitiveness.

Tactic C. Areas of Inquiry

The following areas of inquiry can inform agencies’ diagnosis and discovery processes:

- What is the current performance of HBCU against agencywide strategic plans, goals and objectives relative to other institutions of higher education?
- Are there specific foundational competencies needed for HBCU to be successful across the agency?
- What are the issues that influence HBCU competitiveness, in relation to agencywide strategic plans?
- What are promising ways HBCU can contribute to U.S. dual pipelines of productivity—higher impact employees and higher growth entrepreneurs?
- Is there information available that depicts the ways in which HBCU are impacted by, and can positively interact with, larger agency opportunities?
- What are key elements of robust, interdisciplinary agency ecosystems that can promote HBCU competitiveness?

- What are ways to better target to HBCU research and other grants that reflect U.S. education and economic competitiveness priorities?
- What are the most promising ways to communicate new education and economic narratives to HBCU? What should be included in such narratives?
- How should Federal and non-Federal public and private sector policymakers and partners be engaged to better support HBCU competitiveness?
- How might agencies encourage or incent non-Federal public and private partners to collaborate with HBCU to meet agencywide strategic goals and objectives?
- How are the deep, diverse, and unique experiences of disparate agency offices and functions considered to properly frame and inform agencies' overall HBCU competitiveness work?
- What current research, literature, and existing models demonstrate the link between improving HBCU competitiveness and increased shared local, regional, and national prosperity?
- What are the barriers and incentives associated with connecting HBCU to agency goals and objectives? How can HBCU be empowered to overcome those barriers and take advantage of incentives to successfully compete for top agency opportunities?
- What are the most promising, replicable, and scalable ways — policies, practices, programs and projects — for agencies to enable HBCU to connect to and successfully compete within agency goals and objectives?

These non-exhaustive, foundational areas and opening inquiries provide an overall context for agencies' introspective diagnosis and prescriptive discovery process to align HBCU action with directives and expectations of the Framework.

Tactic D. Opportunity Exploration Mapping

The opportunity exploration mapping process⁴ provides agencies with a method for deconstructing and simplifying the complex set of interrelated objectives, activities, and relationships that exist within agencies. Opportunity exploration mapping is an immersion process that can significantly increase prospects for agencies to deliver sustained HBCU competitiveness action by:

- Deeply educating disparate agency offices and functions about the Framework and aligning HBCU competitiveness with agencywide strategic plan goals and objectives.
- Determining what disparate agency offices and functions value and how agency leadership can best individually and collectively advance the Framework.
- Intentionally connecting HBCU to agencies' leading assets, resources and priorities.
- Identifying keywords and key phrases within agencywide strategic plans that might open new areas of opportunity for HBCU competitiveness.

⁴ Based on the model developed by Bush Consulting Group, NorTech and ScaleUp Partners (formerly The America21 Project).

Opportunity exploration mapping is an immersion process to facilitate concurrent agency learning to better cope with agency complexity; and to launch high-leverage agency actions that have the best opportunities to advance HBCU competitiveness.

The opportunity exploration map is an interconnected set of activity-nodes used to illustrate and clarify the behavior within the agency. Each node represents a different action which can be taken to engage HBCU to achieve one or more agency goals and objectives. The dynamism and interconnectivity of the opportunity exploration map distinguishes it from the traditional and static asset map. The latter usually only provides an inventory of the strengths and resources of an entity and is generally depicted in linear form.⁵ As a result, the opportunity exploration mapping process encourages agencywide ownership of a narrowly defined set of concrete deliverables, milestones, and rationale for action.

Tactic E. Opportunity Exploration Map Deliverables:

Informed by agency information inputs, the opportunity mapping exercise should produce:

- Action plans with clear rationale for selecting specific areas of focus, action, and investment of scarce resources, enabling disparate agency offices and functions to achieve both greater individual and collective impact.
- Descriptions of specific existing and new high-impact actions that should help agencies better advance HBCU competitiveness.
- Identification of high-impact agency actions already taking place that have potential for scaled outcomes.
- Assignments of accountability to individual or collective agency offices or functions for implementing specific, high-impact actions that can “move the needle” on HBCU competitiveness.
- Outcome and performance metrics to measure agency performance and impact.
- An estimate of costs associated with implementing high-impact HBCU competitiveness actions.
- New policies, practices, programs and projects that could help improve HBCU competitiveness through student/education services, research and development, business development, entrepreneurship and job creation and career pathways and employment development.
- Opportunities for HBCU to leverage Federal opportunities to attract additional non-Federal public and private sector investment for the most promising efforts.

⁵ UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, Health DATA Program – Data, Advocacy and Technical Assistance, http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/programs/health-data/trainings/Documents/tw_cba20.pdf

- Collaboration across a diverse set of agency offices and functions to support HBCU competitiveness through demonstration projects, experimentation, and broad dissemination of findings and outcomes.

Framework Practice 3: Fostering a Federal HBCU Competitiveness Ecosystem

Supporting strategy and tactics for **interagency action to cultivate a new Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem, empowering the Initiative to perform the facilitating keystone function.**

Strategy

Improving and sustaining HBCU competitiveness depends on the ability of multiple and interconnected actors – HBCU, the Federal sector and non-Federal public and private partners – to work together effectively. Ecosystems are based on successfully aggregating disparate and disconnected assets, then effectively making productive connections among those assets, leading to desired results. By creating a platform that facilitates shared learning, development and collaboration, the aggregation and connectivity that ecosystems provide can drive improved productivity and create new and unique competitive advantages among ecosystem participants.

Tactic A. Building Block: Federal HBCU Competitiveness Ecosystem

The building block to effectively implement the Framework is creation of the Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem – the supporting infrastructure through which the Federal sector can catalyze, build, and sustain execution against the Framework. This new Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem requires effective, collaborative Federal agency offices and functions, focused on advancing mutual gain for the Federal sector and HBCU.

The laser-focus on the creation of the Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem distinguishes the Framework from past Federal approaches to engaging HBCU. This stark departure from previous failed Federal practice recognizes that collections of disparate agency HBCU plans that are disconnected from U.S. competitiveness priorities do not sustain. Rather, a resilient HBCU ecosystem, girded by HBCU plans aligned with U.S. competitiveness priorities, is essential to improve the conditions under which HBCU compete for Federal opportunities.

Tactic B. Keystone of the Federal HBCU Competitiveness Ecosystem

In natural ecosystems there is a species referred to as a keystone, which has a disproportionate effect on the ecosystem relative to its size or population. In other words, a keystone species can have an **outsized** impact on other organisms in an ecosystem, even though its size might be perceived as small. A keystone species is also critical for the overall structure and function of an ecosystem, and

influences which other types of plants and animals make up the ecosystem. Thus, in the absence of a keystone species, the ecosystem would fail to persist.

Like a keystone species, the Initiative can lead the way to anchor and enable the new Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem and have an *outsized* impact on myriad Federal functions. Importantly, it does not take a massively staffed Federal function to deliver this level of impact. Instead, the purposeful action of a good keystone, such as the Initiative, can help drive the Federal sector toward greater impact.

Almost all evolved networks or ecosystems of interacting elements have their stability and function governed by keystones, hubs, or some form of centralized or shared control.⁶ The Initiative can be the keystone that loosely governs and stewards the Framework and the Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem, at once providing both centralized and shared leadership.

Moreover, the new Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem can generate HBCU competitiveness outcomes in a systemic and consistent manner and this ecosystem will sustain, so that desired outcomes can continue year after year after year.

Tactic C. Keystone Functions and Objectives

The keystone function plays a fundamental, enabling role in encouraging, promoting, and facilitating HBCU competitiveness in the Federal sector. It's all about making good connections. If the keystone function does not exist, then HBCU and agencies would be without an efficient means by which to pursue and promote HBCU competitiveness. The Initiative can provide the way ahead, leading with four primary objectives:

- Provide the Federal operating and facilitating mechanism for mutual connectivity between HBCU and Federal resources and opportunities.
- Serve as the Federal accelerator, vigorously and boldly supporting innovative actions to advance HBCU competitiveness.⁷
- Provide a platform to communicate content to Federal and HBCU stakeholders.
- Help the Federal sector measure HBCU competitiveness impact.

In short, through the keystone function, the Initiative can create efficiencies in an otherwise unwieldy Federal sector to improve HBCU competitiveness. Significantly, the Federal sector does not require a huge keystone function to take on the day-to-day work of aggregating, organizing, and leveraging agency resources and opportunities in support of HBCU competitiveness. Rather, a small, highly skilled team at the Initiative is needed to fully own stewardship and facilitation of the Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem and to promote HBCU competitiveness throughout the Federal sector.

⁶ <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/326e/b6df46171210df8da2874b7121c5486cc2fd.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.innovationamerica.us/about-us/publications-and-presentations/white-papers/90-a-new-direction-for-technology-based-economic-development>

Tactic D. Housed within the Executive Office of the President

The Initiative keystone function should frequently involve undertaking meaningful activities that only senior agency leaders can empower. The Initiative would be most effective if it has direct access to agency senior officials. As an empowered role, it would be better able to overcome resistance to relationship-building, resource leveraging and opportunity connecting activities because of a direct reporting line to agency senior officials. Locating the Initiative within the Executive Office of the President empowers the keystone role to command respect and attention and marshal resources to meet HBCU competitiveness objectives. Accordingly, in recognition of those realities, the Initiative should continue to be housed in the Executive Office of the President, as established in Executive Order 13779.

Tactic E. Intrapreneurial Team

The Initiative should be comprised of talented, well networked professionals who are able to aggregate, organize and leverage Federal opportunities and resources and connect HBCU to the right people within the Federal sector to advance HBCU competitiveness. Initiative professionals should anchor, nurture, facilitate, and support the Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem that consists of agencies, and their disparate offices and functions.

This pivotal responsibility requires an **intrapreneurial** (employees who demonstrate an ethic of entrepreneurship), flexible, and creative Initiative team. A team that embodies and outwardly projects the boundless vitality of the Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem and demonstrates a commitment to pursue opportunities far beyond the limited resources the Initiative controls.

The following examples are professional attributes the Initiative should exhibit:

- Partnership building; thriving in developing new and nurturing existing relationships; credibility on behalf of HBCU, with ability to quickly grasp unique strengths that contribute to Federal sector goals and objectives.
- Identify and operationalize partnerships across the Federal sector to meet goals and objectives.
- Strong desire to improve HBCU prominence on the forefront of national priorities, helping to establish presence in highly competitive areas of opportunity.
- Lead cross-functional teams, working with key stakeholders across and outside the Federal sector.
- Convey gravitas to open doors within the HBCU community and the Federal and non-Federal public and private sectors.
- Inspire colleagues across the Federal sector, leading through influence and persuasion.
- Metrics driven, systems thinking, analyzing data from a variety of sources to support direction and to align others.

- Ability to get things done; strong professional presence that exudes integrity and competence.

Tactic F. HBCU Interagency Working Group

Advancing HBCU competitiveness through the Federal sector requires high-leverage action, defined as agency efforts that achieve outsized positive impact on a single or multiple agency goals and objectives. The Federal HBCU Interagency Working Group (HBCU IWG), established in Executive Order 13779 and comprised of agency partners, is the instrument of high-leverage action. The HBCU IWG is established to coordinate work throughout the Federal sector to strengthen the capacity and competitiveness of HBCU.

The HBCU IWG includes “Liaisons,” the senior officials appointed by agency heads to provide overall coordination with the Initiative and report directly to their secretary, administrator or commissioner on progress made to implement the Framework. “Liaisons” are the agency officials of record, responsible for developing and accountable for executing against the agency HBCU competitiveness plan. In support of “Liaisons,” there are also “Representatives” who regularly participate in HBCU IWG meetings and serve as the Initiative primary points of agency contact for the day-to-day, operational work of the HBCU IWG.

Tactic G. Enabling Push Out – Connect Up – Pull Down

Through its keystone function, the intrapreneurial Initiative team should work with the new Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem to empower HBCU share in a new, tri-fold dynamic: *Push out – Connect up – Pull down*. The Initiative priorities are to work with:

- Federal and non-Federal public and private sector partners to “**push out**” opportunities toward HBCU.
- Federal and non-Federal public and private sector partners to recognize that HBCU provide unique competitive advantages and join with institutions to “**connect up**” to sources of opportunities.
- HBCU, Federal and non-Federal public and private sector partners to enable institutions to “**pull down**” more value from sources of opportunities.

Tactic H. Organizing the Work: Programs, Projects and Policies

To support the new Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem, the Initiative should organize its work into three primary buckets:

- **Programs** are embedded, ongoing and longer-term activities that are generally singularly owned and delivered by the Initiative and can be collaboratively delivered through the new Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem.
- **Projects** are finite-duration, discretionary actions, often outside the Initiative’s, day-to-day organizational programs; they are designed to accelerate the desired performance in a targeted area. These short-term efforts are generally jointly owned by the Initiative and

Federal and non-Federal public and private sector partners and delivered through the Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem. They act as **intervening boosters to accelerate** HBCU competitiveness.

- **Policies** are Trump Administration, Federal agency and non-Federal public and private sector partners' written or oral expressions of important public missions, goals and objectives.

Framework Practice 3: Fostering a Federal HBCU Competitiveness Ecosystem

Supporting strategy and tactics for **intra-agency action to enhance Federal agency capacity building to perform high-leverage actions within the new Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem.**

Strategy

While frequently invisible, and often overlooked, capacity building is the all-important infrastructure that enables Federal agencies to develop the foundations, competencies and skills needed to implement the Framework. Such new capacity can shape agencies into stronger forces to improve conditions for HBCU to compete for Federal opportunities.⁸ Put simply, a well-networked group of people and/or organizations can act in concert to accomplish what cannot be accomplished individually by “building relationships for sharing knowledge... and experiences and... learning from each other”⁹ Federal agencies that are part of the Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem can leverage complementary resources to build capacity more efficiently than those that go it alone.¹⁰

Tactic A. Power of Agency High-Leverage Action

High-leverage action is used to achieve outsized results and illustrate the best way Federal agencies can promote HBCU competitiveness. For purposes of the Framework, the main job of agencies is to cultivate new environments to improve the conditions under which HBCU compete. However, agencies simply cannot do so efficiently and effectively without high-leverage action. The size of the Federal sector and complexity of agencies requires high-leverage action to implement the Framework. Empowering a discrete, identifiable thrust within agencies to deliver high-leverage action can enable outsized impact for both HBCU and the Federal sector.

Tactic B. Instrument of Agency High-Leverage Action: HBCU Intra-agency Working Groups

Agency high-leverage action supporting HBCU competitiveness includes policies, practices, programs and projects designed to achieve outsized positive impact on a single or multiple agency goals and objectives. The instrument of agency high-leverage action is HBCU Intra-agency Working Groups (HBCU IAWGs).

⁸ <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/what-capacity-building>

⁹ <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/sites/default/files/documents/a-network-approach-to-capacity-building.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/network-approach-capacity-building>

HBCU IAWGs can be the primary vehicle for coordinating implementation of the Framework within agencies, providing the collaborative platform needed for high-leverage action. HBCU IAWGs should span a wide range of interconnected and cross-disciplinary agency offices and functions to address agency goals and objectives. By bringing together disparate agency offices and functions to plan, develop, and implement coordinated activities, and to identify and fill gaps in agency strategies and plans, HBCU IAWGs can be an effective tool to implement the Framework.

HBCU IAWGs should allow communication throughout agencies on emerging directions and priorities, HBCU stakeholder needs and promising practices learned from the activities of various agency offices and functions. Together, collaborative efforts should enable HBCU IAWGs to work in a more coordinated, efficient and effective manner within agencies to advance HBCU competitiveness.

Tactic C. Intrapreneurial Talent to Lead HBCU IAWGs

Intrapreneurs are agency employees whose capabilities and actions provide the higher leverage leadership needed to increase their agencies' impact. They considerably enhance the probability of positive outcomes related to HBCU. Effective HBCU IAWGs requires agency intrapreneurs who:

- energetically and closely operate throughout their agencies and have deep passion for HBCU;
- seek to “connect the dots,” enabling HBCU to access, contribute to and realize value from Federal opportunities; and
- are committed to ensuring that HBCU continue to grow as positive, contributing forces in the U.S.

Moreover, agency intrapreneurs generally share many of the following professional traits:

- **Entrepreneurial spirit.** Like business entrepreneurs, they treat HBCU competitiveness challenges in their agencies like market opportunities requiring market-oriented solutions.
- **Courage.** They possess courage born of strong convictions and vision for HBCU.
- **Passion.** Their energy, along with a conspicuous agency and Federal sector presence, allows them to lead by influence and persuasion. In the end, they garner the support of diverse agency colleagues with the intention of getting them to understand, accept, and act upon new HBCU competitiveness ideas and opportunities.
- **Competitive nature.** Because of their competitive nature, they are naturally risk-astute—as opposed to risk-averse or risky. They have “fire in the belly” for HBCU and are willing to step through the possible resistance of others to advance HBCU competitiveness.
- **Strong communication skills.** How they achieve the desired impact depends on their ability to effectively connect with a broad range of Federal and HBCU constituents to build relations among and between Federal and non-Federal public and private sector partners.
- **Solution-oriented.** They are value-adders who understand the value of HBCU. Informed by their real, on-the-ground experience, they constantly assess challenges and deliver HBCU

competitiveness solutions. They create new opportunities that can greatly enhance the value of Federal investment by catalyzing, leading and managing higher impact projects, programs, and policies that have multiplying effects.

Tactic D. Vision for HBCU IAWGs

The vision describes what HBCU IAWGs work to achieve over time:

To be the best points of entry and outreach for agencies' pursuit of HBCU competitiveness, further enabling institutions to deliver on agency missions and achieve agencywide strategic plan goals and objectives.

The Framework is not about changing agency missions or strategic goals and objectives. Rather, the Framework promotes thinking and acting in new ways about **how** agency missions or strategic goals and objectives can be achieved with and through HBCU. HBCU IAWGs can provide an effective means through which needed agency high-leverage actions can developed and implemented.

Tactic E. Organizing the Work of HBCU IAWGs

Adopting the HBCU IWG model, HBCU IAWGs' work should be organized into three primary buckets:

- **Programs** are embedded, ongoing and longer-term activities that are generally singularly owned and delivered by the agency and can be collaboratively delivered with others.
- **Projects** are finite-duration, discretionary actions, often outside agencies' day-to-day organizational activities; they are designed to accelerate the desired performance in a targeted area. These short-term efforts: 1) can be singularly owned and delivered by agencies; or 2) can be jointly owned by agencies with the Initiative, Federal and non-Federal public and private sector partners, and delivered through the Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem. They act as **intervening boosters to accelerate** HBCU competitiveness.
- **Policies** are Trump Administration, Federal agency and non-Federal public and private sector actors' written or oral expressions of important public missions, goals and objectives.

Framework Practice 4: Ensuring Government-wide Alignment via Four Priority Areas

Supporting strategy to align Federal agency HBCU competitiveness plans across the Federal sector to achieve meaningful impact in four priority areas.

Strategy

To drive execution of the Framework and inform the strategies and tactics outlined above, the following four Federal HBCU competitiveness priority areas are designed to increase alignment

throughout the Federal sector. By committing to a handful of priorities that matter to HBCU competitiveness, the Federal sector clearly signals its intended direction related to HBCU. Importantly, those priorities will be linked to explicit agencywide strategic planning, goaling, measuring and reporting. In sort, they provide a basis on which to evaluate the Federal sector's progress toward the national goal to improve conditions under which HBCU compete for Federal opportunities:

Education

Promoting HBCU student achievement, fostering educational excellence and institutional development to build capacity and creativity to support civil society and strengthen local economies.

21st Century Infrastructure (4G and 5G Broadband)

Ensuring the availability, access, and adoption of information and communication technologies in general, and broadband specifically, to ensure HBCU competitiveness, further enabling institutions to perform as both education and economic anchors in for their communities.

Economic Development and Competitiveness

Leveraging HBCU as economic anchors, helping institutions provide experiences that meet student needs and promote community prosperity, including, among other things, public-private partnership formation; access to relevant data and research and development opportunities; and capacity-building and technical assistance related to broadly defined innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem-building and other development, aligned with U.S. competitiveness priorities.

Academic Research Enterprise

Increasing the competitiveness and capabilities of HBCU undergraduate students, graduate students, post docs, and early career faculty by improving their awareness of, and ability to compete for opportunities in, the many facets of the America's academic research enterprise. Additionally, strengthening the research competitiveness of HBCU through improving the ability of faculty to develop sustainable expertise and long-term plans for their research program and career trajectories.

Potential Supplemental Opportunities

Representing the diverse array of good opportunities within agencies that are important and might advance HBCU competitiveness, but possibly may be outside of and disconnected from the Federal HBCU competitiveness priority areas. Potential areas of opportunity could include, arts, culture and humanities; healthcare; targeted informational outreach activities; campus safety and resilience; environmental; aviation; transportation; data gathering, assessment and evaluation; campus internationalization and others.

Additional HBCU Competitiveness Planning Concepts to Explore to Improve Conditions Under Which HBCU Compete for Federal Opportunities

Overview

The Framework encourages the Federal sector to explore additional concepts to strengthen agency HBCU competitiveness plans to improve conditions under which HBCU compete for Federal opportunities, developing and adopting promising new and innovative strategies that might support HBCU competitiveness.

Importantly, agencies should consider, make workable where feasible and otherwise demonstrate openness to explore how they might improve and possibly adopt concepts such as:

HBCUZone Program

Modeled after the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Historically Underutilized Business Zones (HUBZones) program, the Framework encourages agencies to explore concepts to develop and potentially adopt a program such as the HBCUZone Program. This program would help HBCU located in underutilized urban and rural communities to gain preferential access to Federal procurement opportunities.

The HBCUZone program would aim to improve disadvantaged community competitiveness by increasing employment opportunities, stimulating capital investment in those areas and empowering HBCU and communities through economic leveraging and multiplier effects (the increase in income and other positive effects from the new injection of spending).

<https://www.sba.gov/contracting/government-contracting-programs/hubzone-program>

HBCU Contracting Development Program

Modeled after the SBA's 8(a) Business Development Program, the Framework encourages agencies to explore concepts to develop and potentially adopt a program such as the HBCU Contract Development Program. This program would offer a broad scope of technical and other assistance to help HBCU compete for Federal contracts.

The HBCU Contracting Development Program could be an essential instrument for helping HBCU gain access to and successfully compete within the education and economic competitiveness priorities of the U.S.

<https://www.sba.gov/category/navigation-structure/8a-business-development-program>

HBCU Mentor-Protégé Program

Modeled after the SBA's Mentor-Protégé Program, the Framework encourages agencies to explore concepts to develop and potentially adopt a program such as the HBCU Mentor-Protégé Program. This program would encourage larger higher education institutions and corporations, that have demonstrated success in winning Federal grant and contract awards (mentors), to provide institutional development assistance to HBCU Contracting Development Program participants.

The HBCU Mentor-Protégé Program would aim to enhance the capability of HBCU Contracting Development Program participants to be competitive, achieve entrepreneurial success, and to improve their ability to successfully compete for Federal contracts. Also, mentors would be able to enter joint-venture arrangements with protégés to compete for, and perform on, certain Federal contracts.

<https://www.sba.gov/content/mentor-protege-program>

HBCU Community Benefits Partnership Program

Modeled after Community Benefits Agreements, the Framework encourages agencies to explore concepts to develop and potentially adopt a program such as the HBCU Community Benefits Partnership Program. This program would implement a policy of partnering with locally situated HBCU to conduct a community benefits impact study (CBIS) for any development project Federally financed/subsidized at or more than \$10 million.

The HBCU Community Benefits Partnership Program CBIS would examine in detail the impacts and effects of Federally financed or subsidized development projects on local residents, including items such as the real costs and benefits of the Federal subsidy; local job training, hiring, and compensation; multiplied community economic development opportunities; and historically underutilized business contracting opportunities.

HBCU Federal Contract Financing Program

Modeled after common contract financing tools and strategies, the Framework encourages agencies to explore concepts to develop and potentially adopt a program such as the HBCU Federal Contract Financing Program. This program would offer qualified HBCU lines of credit to finance Federal contracts, wherein the borrowing HBCU may assign payments due from performance of a Federal contract to a third-party, e.g., a developer, general contractor, corporation, etc.

Government contract financing is a good way for HBCU to cover operational expenses that come along with doing business with the Federal sector. Being awarded a Federal contract can be exciting; at the same time the overall cost of completion (or even starting) can be a huge burden. The HBCU Federal Contract Financing Program could be a solution for HBCU to avoid reaching points where they are having cash flow problems by selling their Federal contract invoices to trusted, qualified third parties. Advances could be made under the line of credit, based on invoices billed for completed work. As invoices are paid, additional advances could be made. Common contract financing programs authorize lines of credit for up to one year and provide advances on receivables for as much as 90% of billed receivables. The basic objective of the contract financing tool would be

to guarantee loans or to make loans to HBCU for working capital needed to perform Federal contracts, further encouraging HBCU to seek, win and perform such contracts.

HBCU Contract Prompt Payment Program

Modeled after common contract prompt payment tools and strategies, the Framework encourages agencies to explore concepts to develop and potentially adopt a program such as the HBCU Contract Prompt Payment Program. This program would require the agency and their contractors and subcontractors to incorporate prompt payment provisions into Federal contracts with HBCU. Such provisions would appear in every contract with HBCU and would obligate the agency to pay HBCU within a given number of days from receiving an invoice and obligate their contractors and subcontractors to pay HBCU within a given number of days from receiving payment from the agency. Prompt payment should be required only for satisfactory completion of work.

HBCU Advance Payment Program

Modeled after common advance payment tools and strategies, the Framework encourages agencies to explore concepts to develop and potentially adopt a program such as the HBCU Advance Payment Program. This program would provide advance payments of 10-15% of the total contract value, with a maximum advance payment cap, which could significantly increase prospects for HBCU success.

Lack of up-front capital prohibits many HBCU from being able to successfully compete for Federal contracts. A possible way to address this challenge and increase access to Federal contracts is to offer advance payments to qualified HBCU that are unable to work on a contract without initial assistance.

HBCU Equitable Competition Program

Modeled after the SBA's small business set-asides program and the U.S. belief in fair competition, the Framework encourages agencies to explore concepts to develop and potentially adopt a program such as the HBCU Equitable Competition Program. This program would create new educational institution contracting classifications based on "principal mission" (as "principal mission" is used in Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965), size, revenue, low-income students, first generation students, etc.

The HBCU Equitable Competition Program would create an environment of fair and reasonable competition; retaining the vital competitive tension in the Federal contracting process that is necessary to keep prices/costs in check. The objective of the program is to require similarly situated institutions to compete against each other for Federal contracting opportunities:

- set-aside classifications for Federal contracts, where only a certain class of HBCU and similarly situated institutions would be eligible to compete on certain Federal contracts;
- HBCU to compete against each other and against similarly situated institutions; and
- larger, well-resourced institutions compete against other larger, well-resourced institutions.

<https://www.sba.gov/contracting/government-contracting-programs/what-small-business-set-aside>

Incorporating HBCU into Federal Agency Centers of Excellence

A particularly powerful way Federal investment fortifies U.S. competitiveness and spurs innovation is through the creation of Centers of Excellence (COEs), which exist throughout Federal agencies. A COE can be defined as a “premier organization providing an exceptional product or service in an assigned sphere of expertise and within a specific field of technology, business or government, aligned with the unique requirements and capabilities of the COE parent organization.” Such multi-partner, collaborative COEs – consisting of industry, education institutions and government – provide the Federal sector, and the nation, needed public-private partnership platforms for accelerating innovation and education and economic competitiveness in myriad fields that achieve enduring global competitive advantages for our nation. Incorporating HBCU within COE structures not only builds their institutional capacity, but also improves U.S. competitiveness.