



HBCU Library Alliance Strategic Plan 2027–2032 Request for Proposals (RFP)

Introduction

The [HBCU Library Alliance](#) invites proposals from qualified strategic planning consultants and firms to facilitate the co-development of its 2027–2032 Strategic Plan. As the Alliance approaches its 25th anniversary, it seeks a partner to help chart an ambitious course for its next era of organizational effectiveness, member services, consortial expansion, financial growth, long-term sustainability, and national impact.

For nearly twenty-five years, the HBCU Library Alliance has served as the nation's premier consortium dedicated to strengthening libraries and stewarding culturally significant collections at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Through leadership development, professional education, collaborative initiatives, advocacy, and strategic partnerships, the Alliance has advanced institutional excellence while supporting the professionals who lead and serve HBCU libraries. The Alliance serves as one of the nation's foremost champions of Black cultural heritage stewardship. HBCU libraries, archives, and special collections preserve irreplaceable records documenting the intellectual, political, artistic, educational, and social history of African Americans. These collections safeguard the historical record while supporting scholarship, teaching, and public engagement.

HBCU libraries currently operate within a rapidly evolving higher education environment shaped by technological transformation, changing accreditation expectations, increased accountability for student success, the need for new and expanded funding outlets, and growing on- and off-campus demands for equitable access to information and digital resources. At the same time, they continue to serve as essential partners in student learning, faculty research, community engagement, institutional effectiveness, and cultural preservation, even as they stand to play a critical role for institutions seeking to raise their Carnegie research designation.

At its recent Board Retreat, the Alliance made significant progress reviewing past surveys and current feedback from members, environmental scans, and benchmarking analyses. The Alliance now seeks a strategic planning partner capable of helping to integrate this data and gather additional member and stakeholder input to capitalize on this moment of opportunity and navigate this season of change in higher education by co-authoring a visionary, actionable, and measurable strategic plan that will guide the organization from 2027 through 2032.

Organizational Background

The HBCU Library Alliance is a national membership organization representing nearly 100 Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The Alliance exists to strengthen member libraries through leadership development, professional learning, collaboration, advocacy, resource sharing, and innovation.

Its work includes:

- Executive leadership development
 - Professional education for library faculty and staff
 - Archives and special collections stewardship
 - Collaborative grant initiatives
 - National advocacy for HBCU libraries
 - Consortial partnerships
 - Student success initiatives
 - Digital equity and information access
 - Preservation of Black cultural heritage
 - Research and thought leadership
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Project Purpose

The purpose of this engagement is to produce a strategic plan that increases the HBCU Library Alliance's visibility as the leading national organization advancing HBCU libraries as centers of educational excellence, cultural stewardship, scholarly innovation, and institutional transformation.

The strategic planning process should:

- Establish a bold vision for the Alliance's next five years.
 - Identify strategic priorities and measurable objectives.
 - Scope and strategize key opportunities for developing centers of excellence.
 - Strengthen the Alliance's organizational and financial capacity.
 - Diversify revenue and funding sources.
 - Expand member reach, engagement, benefits, and value.
 - Position the Alliance for long-term sustainability via evergreen endowment and campaign development.
 - Identify opportunities for national leadership and influence.
 - Develop an implementation roadmap with measurable outcomes.
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Strategic Planning Process

The selected consultant will facilitate a four-month strategic planning process beginning in August/September 2026 and concluding in January 2027.

The consultant will have access to all preliminary data gathered and created by the Board and will be expected to use that information in the planning process. This process should include both virtual and in-person engagement opportunities and employ a participatory planning methodology that ensures broad representation across the Alliance's membership and stakeholder community.

The consultant should conduct the following:

- Board interviews and Surveys
 - Staff interviews and Surveys
 - Member Interviews and Surveys
 - Stakeholder Interviews and Surveys
 - Focus groups and listening sessions
 - Virtual town halls
 - In-person planning workshops
 - Assessment of revenue opportunities and sustainability
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Strategic Opportunities

In conversation and thought partnership with HBCU Library Alliance leadership, the planning process should examine, at minimum, the following strategic opportunities:

Leadership Excellence and Professional Development

- Expand HBCU Library Alliance’s national visibility and public engagement as a leading steward of Black cultural heritage collections and scholarship.
- Develop a permanent and nationally recognized Executive Leadership Institute.
- Design a comprehensive approach to delivering continuing education to a range of members, including support staff, students, early career professionals, to senior leaders.

Membership Growth and Consortial Strength

- Focus on growing active member participation by all HBCU libraries according to their specific needs and contexts.
- Strengthen services for libraries pursuing advanced Carnegie standing and accreditation reaffirmation.
- Strengthen services for smaller and under-resourced libraries.
- Expand consortial benefits via lower-fee and no-fee resources.
- Manage strategies for extending membership invitations and benefits to peer institutions.

Student Success

- Strengthen the role of libraries in student retention, persistence, and graduation.
- Support first-generation college students.
- Advance information literacy and critical thinking.
- Promote student-centered library innovation.

Cultural Heritage Leadership

- Expand support for archives, special collections, and preservation.
- Increase visibility of HBCU collections nationally.
- Advance digitization and digital stewardship initiatives.
- Position HBCU libraries as leaders in preserving Black history and culture nationally and in their local communities.

Research and Scholarship

- Build stronger research and digital humanities infrastructure.
- Support HBCUs pursuing enhanced research status.
- Develop data resources demonstrating library impact.
- Expand publishing and scholarly communication initiatives.

Digital Equity

- Address digital deserts and digital redlining.
- Promote equitable access to technology and broadband.
- Advance AI readiness and digital scholarship.
- Strengthen digital information access and sharing across member institutions.

Organizational Sustainability Evidenced By:

- Diversified revenue streams
- Earned and unrestricted revenue opportunities
- Expanded funder/philanthropic partnerships
- Corporate partnerships
- Endowment development
- Long-term financial sustainability

Note: The Alliance's long-term aspiration is to build an annual operating budget greater than \$2.5 million to expand member services, provide grant funds to HBCU libraries and archives, and increase overall organizational capacity.

National Leadership Positionality:

- The leading advocate for HBCU libraries nationally
- A center for leadership development
- A publisher of scholarship and best practices
- A convener of national conversations related to Black scholarship and cultural heritage collections and data
- A network of National Centers of Excellence serving HBCU libraries

Deliverables

The selected consultant will provide:

- Project management plan and timeline
- Stakeholder engagement plan
- Board and Staff Feedback Analysis
- Membership Feedback Analysis
- Stakeholder Interview Summary
- Draft Strategic Plan (December 2026)
- Final Strategic Plan (January 2027)
- Executive Summary (January 2027)
- Implementation Roadmap (January 2027)
- Performance Measurement Framework (January 2027)

Project Timeline

Project Launch: September 2026

Discovery and Engagement: Fall 2026

Planning Workshops: Fall 2026

Draft Strategic Plan: December 2026

Final Strategic Plan: January 2027

Proposal Requirements

Proposals should include:

Organizational Qualifications

- Description of firm
- Years in business
- Relevant areas of expertise

Project Team

- Lead consultant
- Key personnel
- Relevant experience

Methodology

Describe your proposed approach, including:

- Stakeholder engagement
- Facilitation techniques
- Planning framework
- Drafting Process
- Implementation planning

Relevant Experience

Provide descriptions of at least two comparable strategic planning engagements completed within the last five years.

For each engagement, include:

- Client name

- Organizational type
- Project scope
- Strategic planning process
- Deliverables
- Outcomes achieved following implementation

Preference will be given to firms that can demonstrate measurable organizational outcomes resulting from previous strategic planning engagements.

Client Recommendations

Include two letters of recommendation from former clients who have engaged your firm for comparable strategic planning work.

Letters should specifically address:

- Quality of facilitation
- Strategic insight
- Project management
- Responsiveness
- Stakeholder engagement
- Overall client satisfaction

Cost Proposal

Provide a detailed project budget that includes:

- Professional fees
- Travel
- Interview
- Group Facilitation
- Survey design and administration
- Research
- Other anticipated expenses

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based upon:

- Understanding of the HBCU Library Alliance's mission and aspirations
- Experience serving higher education, nonprofit organizations, library organizations, or associations
- Quality of strategic planning methodology
- Demonstrated success with stakeholder engagement
- Experience facilitating critical conversations with internal and external stakeholders that lead to transformational organizational change
- Evidence of measurable client outcomes
- Two Letters of Reference

- Overall strength of proposal and relationship to HBCU Library Alliance’s articulated requests and aspirations.

Budget

The HBCU Library Alliance has projected a budget **of \$8,000 to \$10,000** for the co-creation and completion of the strategic plan over a projected four and a half months. Proposals should include a detailed budget for each aspect/activity.

Submission Instructions

Proposals and two letters of reference from past clients should be submitted in PDF format via email by **August 17, 2026** to:

HBCU Library Alliance

Tracie D. Hall

Executive Director

tdhall@hbculibraries.org (Please cc LaTasha Denard at ldenard@hbculibraries.org)

Questions regarding this Request for Proposals should be submitted to the contacts above no later than **August 10, 2026**.

The HBCU Library Alliance reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, request additional information, negotiate scope and pricing, and select the proposal that best advances the interests of the Alliance and its member institutions.

Vision

In selecting a consultant, the HBCU Library Alliance seeks a strategic thought-partner and co-designer capable of listening to and supporting the Alliance board, staff, and member community in defining and articulating the future of one of the nation’s most important higher education consortia. As the Alliance enters its second quarter-century, this planning process represents an opportunity to strengthen institutional capacity, cultivate the next generation of library leaders, preserve Black cultural heritage, expand national influence, and ensure that HBCU libraries continue to thrive as indispensable engines of learning, scholarship, innovation, and community impact.