



NORDP Consultant Pilot Program Evaluator Request For Proposals

Evaluation of Increasing Competitiveness and Engagement
of HBCU Institutions NORDP Consultant Pilot Program

Bidders Conference: September 21, 2021 at 12:00-1:00pm (EDT)
Proposals must be received by November 10, 2021, 5:00PM (EST)

I. Background

Intent and Scope

The National Organization of Research Development Professionals (NORDP) requests proposals from experienced evaluators for the evaluation of a two-year pilot project that will create sustainable research support infrastructures at four (4) participating Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The evaluator will provide formative and summative feedback to NORDP leadership and the HBCUs related to impacts and outcomes as aligned with project objectives. The evaluator will also provide recommendations to inform future programmatic decisions.

Organizational Background

Formed in 2010 in response to increased research development investment by institutes of higher education, [NORDP](#) coordinates and promotes the professional development of research development personnel. As of Fall 2021, NORDP has over 1,000 members serving in research development roles in academic research institutions, medical schools, private foundations, private companies, and federal agencies. As a national organization, NORDP is committed to diversity, inclusion, and access, particularly in the context of research competitiveness and capacity.

Project Background and History

In 2019, the Executive Director of the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)¹ and the Director of the White House's Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) engaged NORDP to discuss strategies for growing research capacity and competitiveness within HBCUs. Subsequent discussions focused on the importance of assisting HBCU faculty in their ability to develop long-term plans for individual research programs and career trajectories; building sustainable expertise in ideation; identifying appropriate funding sources; engaging with funding organizations; developing competitive grant proposals; building and working in teams; collaborating with other institutions; and mentoring post-docs, and graduate and undergraduate students.

As an outcome of those discussions with the generous support of Eric and Wendy Schmidt via recommendation of the Schmidt Futures program, NORDP is piloting a program to grow research capacity and competitiveness within HBCUs by increasing institutional capacity for research development. To develop and grow sustainable research support infrastructure, the awarded two-year

¹ The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, defines an 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."

pilot project will provide NORDP consultants—via either virtual engagement or in-person engagement—to participating HBCUs at no cost to the institutions. The project will be organized and supported through a committee of NORDP leaders, present and past NORDP Board members, and NORDP members dedicated to broadening participation. The project organizers will select HBCU institutions for the pilot project, recruit NORDP consultants, review evaluation reports and discuss the evolution of the project, and serve as the knowledgeable contacts and organizers within NORDP regarding this pilot project.

Project Details

Consultant Application and Selection

A pool of six (6) to eight (8) NORDP consultants will be recruited and selected for this pilot through selection criteria established by NORDP leadership (i.e., number of years in research development, breadth of knowledge of research development and funding sources, knowledge of HBCUs and different types of institutions, experience from various institutions, commitment to broadening participation, and availability for consulting).

HBCU Application and Selection

Four (4) HBCU institutions of different research-level classification, types (i.e., public, private, four-year; two-year), and academic focus will be selected for the pilot project. Paralleling the consultant application and selection process, a formal process will be created by NORDP leadership for HBCUs. Applicants will be asked to submit a brief application (3-5 pages) addressing project interest and readiness, and institutional goals and objectives for research success. NORDP leadership will review applications and, following an established scoring rubric, will select the HBCU institutions for the pilot project. Based on institutional preference for in-person consultant engagement vs virtual consultant engagement, applications will be organized into two selection groups.

Institution and Consultant Pairing

From an approved pool of 6-8 NORDP consultants, the participating HBCUs will interview and select their preferred consultants. The consultant and HBCU will develop a two-year engagement plan in consultation with NORDP project leadership.

Project Activities

To explore the effectiveness of delivering services and support to participating HBCU institutions, this pilot project will provide two delivery approaches: in-person and virtual. Regardless of the delivery approach, each consultant will provide 300 hours of consulting time to their HBCU institution per year for two years, for a total of 2,400 hours across the four participating HBCU institutions over the project period.

Based on the presumption that repeated, *more frequent but brief in-person visits* are necessary to establish credibility and the perception of reliability in the delivery of research development services and support, two (2) participating HBCU institutions will each be paired with one (1) onsite NORDP consultant for three days per month, with additional communication only as needed. Based on the possibility that *longer, but more infrequent visits augmented with regular electronic discussions* will enable more contact and discussion, and decrease consultant costs (financial and travel time), two (2) participating HBCU institutions will each be paired with one (1) onsite NORDP consultant for one in-person visit each semester, with research

development services and support provided primarily by virtual communication (i.e., phone calls, video conferencing, email, MS Teams, etc.).

The full range of consultant activities will be determined in discussion with each participating HBCU institution, emphasizing the delivery of services to meet the needs and potential of each institution. Possible activities include hands-on sessions with faculty working on research ideas, collaborations, and proposals to be submitted; phone/video/email exchanges to discuss research ideas, collaborations, and proposals to be submitted; provision of workshops, seminars, and other group activities as appropriate to the context and culture of the participating HBCUs; strategic research infrastructure development, such as establishing/refining limited submission processes, institutional partnership programs, funding opportunity announcements; and other research development activities.

II. Evaluation Plan

The proposed evaluation plan should match the size, scale, and purpose of the described project. NORDP expects the successful applicant to refine the key evaluation questions in collaboration with NORDP leadership and HBCU stakeholders. A sample of evaluation questions of interest is noted below.

- How, and to what extent, have participating HBCUs built sustainable expertise in
 - Ideation (i.e., an intentional consideration of the systems/processes in place for an institutional pursuit of external funding as well as how to consider and pursue specific grant opportunities)
 - Identifying appropriate funding sources
 - Engaging with funding organizations
 - Building and working in teams
 - Collaborating with other institutions
 - Mentoring post-docs, graduate, and undergraduate students?
- How, and to what extent, do participating HBCUs show an increased and sustained ability for faculty and other researchers to compete for federal and private sector funding, and to develop partnerships with other organizations?
- How, and to what extent, do participating HBCUs demonstrate an enhancement in institutional culture toward greater valuation and promotion of research, as well as integration of research into the learning enterprise?
- How, and to what extent, have participating HBCUs explored opportunities to enhance institutional infrastructure and capacity and access to laboratories and equipment via partnerships with other institutions and joining regional consortia?
- How, and to what extent, has institutional networking among HBCUs and with non-HBCU NORDP institutions changed?
- What activities did the NORDP consultants provide? Which activities could be more helpful with some improvements? Which activities were ineffective and therefore, discarded? What other activities should NORDP consider?

The ideal evaluation plan will consider mixed methods using both quantitative and qualitative methods and may include surveys and interviews, as well as any other methods that the evaluator deems useful. The evaluation should enable NORDP to better understand the project's value and identify concrete steps for future project implementation and scaleup. The proposed evaluation plan will:

- Explain how the applicant will engage with NORDP, HBCU stakeholders (i.e., leadership, research faculty, etc.), and participating NORDP consultants.
- Explain how ongoing reflection and formative feedback will be communicated and when.
- Use multiple, innovative ways to capture what HBCU stakeholders, and the participating NORDP consultants are experiencing and how changes in practice and belief are occurring.
- Capture unintended and/or unanticipated impacts and outcomes.
- Outline qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, metrics, evaluation approach, and instruments (e.g., surveys, interviews, site visits, extant institutional data, current literature on research inequity in higher education).
- Detail how collected data will be analyzed to measure a) the extent to which project objectives and goals have been met, b) the effectiveness and issues of the two proposed approaches (i.e., in-person engagement and virtual consultant engagement), and c) provide NORDP and stakeholders with the information needed to inform future project decisions.
- Include a timeline indicating when updates, reports, and briefings on evaluation findings will occur.
- Include procedures for IRB approval and maintenance.

III. Contract Period and Costs

The contract period for this evaluation will be two years. The amount of the contract award will be \$70,000 total for the two-year period. The contract is expected to begin in January 2022.

IV. Submission Process

Please submit a response to this RFP to Dr. Kimberly Eck, keck@emory.edu by **November 10, 2021, at 5 PM** (eastern). Any response not received by the designated time and date will be considered late and may not be considered. The successful applicants will be notified no later than December 15, 2021, by Dr. Kimberly Jo Eck.

By submitting a response, vendors agree that the content of this RFP, the submitted response, and any follow-up negotiation shall become a part of any contract agreement. NORDP reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals, and waive any formalities or informalities, and cancel this solicitation at any time before an award. NORDP reserves the right to negotiate minor changes or variations to the proposal of the apparent successful bidder. Final reports and outcomes will be expected no later than 90 days following the period of performance.

V. Questions and Bidders Conference

Questions regarding this request for proposal should be submitted by September 20, 2021 at 12:00pm (EDT). Questions will be responded to during the Bidders Conference on **September 21, 2021 at 12-1pm (EDT)**. You can submit questions in the registration form or by emailing to Dr. Kimberly Eck, keck@emory.edu In the subject line, write "Question - NORDP Consultant Evaluator's RFP."

Participants must register for the Bidders Conference by September 20, 2021 here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdhjKcsJEumXYABHVYA8WCit8D9G2XWGYEUqxJV9vLKIB4T0w/viewform?usp=sf_link.

VI. Proposal Format

Applicants must submit a succinct proposal that addresses the following areas noted below, totaling no more than (10) single-spaced pages (excluding biographical sketches and references). Upon review,

applicants may receive a request for additional information or a phone interview. Applicants may be individual evaluators or a team/organization.

A. Organization Expertise, Experience, and Capacity

- Description of the organization including experience designing, evaluating, and implementing research studies, especially of a similar nature to this evaluation
- Description of the organization's capacity to provide direct support, coordination, implementation of the evaluation
- Qualifications of the proposed team members

B. Technical Design/Methodology

The response shall include the technical design/ methodology proposed to address evaluation questions and provide needed information to project stakeholders. The applicant must present a thorough understanding of the goals and scope of the project. Please include a detailed timeline that relates to the proposed approach.

C. Budget and Budget Justification

The proposal should include a two-year project budget and should be accompanied by a justification describing costs in the proposed budget categories.

D. Attachments

- a. Biographical Sketch(es):* For the proposed team members, include bio sketches (following formats for NIH, NSF, or similar brief format).
- b. References:* Please provide client references, a minimum of two and not more than four.

VII. Criteria for Selection

Evaluators with Masters or Ph.D. degrees and experience with evaluation in a higher education context are preferred/highly desirable. Minority-owned and women-owned businesses are encouraged to apply.

The successful proposal will succinctly demonstrate the following:

Experience

- Experience evaluating consulting engagements or comparable technical support or capacity building activities – 20%
- Experience working with HBCUs, MSIs, and/or comparable institutions – 20%
- Awareness of challenges for higher education research development infrastructure - 10%

Proposed Workplan

- Feasibility of work plan and timeline – 30%
- Clarity and realism of budget justification – 10%

References

- References from previous clients/contact – 10%