A HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY (HBCU) TOOLKIT FOR POLICY RESEARCH FOR UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

Overview and Purpose of the Historically Black College and University (HBCU) Toolkit for Policy Research for Underserved Populations

Underserved communities have often been overlooked by policy makers and researchers. When policy and research do focus on these populations, their voices often are silenced or ignored. Given their history, staff, and location, history, staff, and location, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are in a unique position given their history, staff, and location to highlight the voices of the underserved, center research on these populations, and help overcome the disparities observed through the U.S. This toolkit is intended to facilitate this process. Enjoy! And please offer your questions and concerns to us as we continue to struggle to foreground the concerns and voices of the underserved in policy development.

Research on Underserved Communities

Underserved Communities

Underserved communities are defined as populations which face barriers in accessing comprehensive healthcare, housing, economic resources and education. These include racial/ethnic minorities, people of low-income households, immigrants (documented and undocumented), disabled people, LGBTQ, homeless, refugees, and structurally unemployed individuals in rural and urban settings.

Policy Research

Policy research is the process of conducting research on, or analysis of, a fundamental social problem in order to provide policymakers with pragmatic, action-oriented recommendations for alleviating the problem.

Important Resources for Research on the Underserved Communities

Research on urban and housing issues affecting underserved populations can be strengthened using existing resources at federal, state, and local sites. There are also research groups ("think tanks") that have important research to review and build on. Here are some useful sites.

U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

https://www.huduser.gov/portal/home.html

This site known as HUD User allows access to federal government research publications, datasets and other information relevant to housing and urban conditions and current housing market conditions. Its slogan is "Your One-Stop Resource for Housing and Community Development Research."

U.S. Bureau of the Census

https://www.census.gov/

This is the go-to site for population and housing data, and also includes tabulations on income, poverty, race, sex, families, economics and business, and myriad other topics. Some data is granular at the census tract, block group, block, and anonymized individual data. The data bases include the decennial census (now available for 2020), the annual American Community Survey, the American Housing Survey, and the every-five-years Economic Census (completed for 2017).

U.S. Department of Commerce and its Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)

https://www.commerce.gov/data-and-reports

https://www.commerce.gov/bureaus-and-offices/bea

BEA's national, industry, regional, and international economic accounts present valuable information on U.S. economic growth, regional economic development, interindustry relationships, and the Nation's position in the world economy. Some of the widely used statistical measures produced by BEA include GDP, personal income and outlays, corporate profits, GDP by state and by metropolitan area, balance of payments, and GDP by industry. These statistics are used by federal, state, and local governments for budget development and projections; by the Federal Reserve for monetary policy; by the business sector for planning and investment; and by the American public to follow and understand the performance of the nation's economy.

National Institutes of Health

https://www.nih.gov/

https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/

The NIH provides access to studies related to the health of communities and individuals. Its library and PubMed® portal are the go-to sites for any health-related research and data you may

need. PubMed® comprises more than 34 million citations for biomedical literature from MEDLINE, life science journals, and online books. Citations may include links to full text content from PubMed Central and publisher web sites. The NIH partners with U.S. HUD (see HUD USER, above) for some data sets.

U.S. Department of Agriculture and its Economic Research Service (ERS)

https://www.usda.gov/

https://www.ers.usda.gov/

Given growing food insecurity in the U.S. especially among the underserved, the USDA is a valuable resource, especially its ERS research and analysis which covers a broad range of economic and policy topics:

> Agricultural Economy – farm sector performance and farm households' well-being; farm size and concentration; market analysis, data, and projections on commodity supply, demand, and prices; and Federal farm policies
> Food and Nutrition – U.S. food security, food and nutrition assistance programs, food choices and health outcomes, food access and store proximity, food retailing and marketing, and food prices
> Food Safety – societal benefits associated with reducing food safety risks, economic impacts of food hazards, and potential results of regulation versus industry decisions
> Global Markets and Trade – major markets and competitors, economic impacts of exports and imports, trade barriers, and potential trade agreements
> Resources and Environment – economic impacts of conservation programs, efficacy of policies designed to protect the environment, and enhancing agricultural competitiveness through technology
> Rural Economy – investments in rural communities and drivers of rural economic performance, demographic change and its impact on rural communities

ERS digitally publishes its research and analysis in economic research reports, articles in its *Amber Waves* magazine, data visualizations and data products throughout the year. ERS's suite of data products encompasses estimates, forecasts, and economic and statistical indicators.

Policy-Oriented "Think Tank" Resources

 Urban Institute

https://www.urban.org/

The Urban Institute provides a wide range of data analysis and policy recommendations focused on the underserved in urban areas. Their range of policy centers include Center on Education Data and Policy, Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population, Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, Health Policy Center, and Housing Finance Policy Center.

Brookings Institution

https://www.brookings.edu/

https://www.brookings.edu/topic/cities-regions/

Like the Urban Institute, Brookings is a think tank with extensive research and data/policy analysis with respect to underserved populations.

Economic Policy Institute

https://www.epi.org/

Generally described as a left-leaning, pro-labor think tank, EPI maintains extensive databases, analysis, and policy recommendations especially of value to underserved populations.

The EPI maintains the *State of Working America Data Library* which provides researchers with up-to-date and comprehensive historical data on the American labor force. It is compiled from Economic Policy Institute analysis of government data sources. Researchers can use it to research wages, inequality, and other economic indicators over time and among demographic groups.

The Economic Policy Institute's vision is for all workers to share equally in the economic prosperity of the U.S. Its research exposes the forces that seek to exclude and diminish the power of people of color and women—particularly Black, Brown, and indigenous people—to the benefit of white supremacy and wealthy elites. It recognizes the economic legacy of anti-Blackness; slavery; colonialization; oppressive policies, practices, and institutions; and the persistence of structural racism, sexism, and xenophobia today. Therefore, its vision elevates the importance of racial, gender, and worker justice as central to meeting the needs of underserved populations.

Academic Resources

Strategies for successful conduct of research with low-income African American populations

Beatrice Adderley-Kelly, PhD, RN

Pauline M. Green, PhD, RN

https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#search/rgreen%40howard.edu/FMfcgzGpFzwLQfQzRWmSppKQHVslPmJL?projector=1&messagePartId=0.1

Guidelines for research recruitment of underserved populations (EERC)

Yui Matsuda PhD, RN, MPHa

Jada L. Brooks PhD, MSPH, RN, BSNb

Linda S. Beeber PhD, PMNCNS-BC, FAANb

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5215593/

Foundation Resources

Ford Foundation

https://www.fordfoundation.org/about/about-ford/a-legacy-of-social-justice/

For over eight decades, Ford Foundation has advocated and supported the reduction of poverty and injustice among other values including the maintenance of democratic values and sustaining human progress and achievement at home and abroad. The Ford Foundation is one of the primary foundations offering grants that support and maintain diversity in higher education with fellowships for pre-doctoral, dissertation, and post-doctoral scholarship to increase diverse representation among Native Americans, African Americans, Latin Americans, and other under-represented Asian and Latino sub-groups throughout the U.S. academic labor market. It maintains an extensive array of reports on issues relevant to underserved populations.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)

The missions of the RSJF Foundation is to improve the health and health care of all Americans and to build a Culture of Health and achieve health equity in our communities.

The Russell Sage Foundation (RSF)

https://www.russellsage.org/

The Russell Sage Foundation (RSF) was established in 1907 for the improvement of social and living conditions in the United States. RSF funds research projects in four principal programs—Behavioral Economics; the Future of Work; Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration; and Social, Political, and Economic Inequality—and in a number of special initiatives. RSF also hosts working groups that develop and cultivate original social science research in new or understudied fields. It maintains research reports on the underserved on its website.

Involving Administrators in Research on the Underserved Communities

The partnership between the work of research scholars and administrators eager to raise the profile of their institution is vital to the success of research projects related to the underserved. Once external resources are identified and secured, administrators should support such efforts. Administrators should sponsor such efforts and welcome such opportunities because of the prestige and visibility such successful endeavors will bring to the university.

HBCU Administrators – Why You Should Get on Board with Research on the Underserved

Everyone knows that HBCUs are resource constrained. Their faculties have high teaching loads and often lack of research support from their academic units. It's hard even for passionate, driven faculty to devote sufficient time to succeed in securing external funding for their research programs. How can an administration-supported research program strengthen the institution?

Like PWIs, HBCUs want to be less dependent on state and federal funds and student tuition. Research activities, if fully supported by administrations, can lead to higher revenues through indirect costs associated with external research funding. A strong research program can even lead to increased alumni giving and a growing endowment. Here's the dynamic of how that can work.

As faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students are brought into funded research projects, a process of institutional visibility, prestige, and prominence can grow. Leaders of political, community, and philanthropic organizations notice when the university is addressing challenges faced by the underserved! And the process creates the student scholars who will address these matters long after they have graduated.

Externally funded projects not only provide tuition and stipend support for students but bring students and faculty into closer relationships than can be accomplished in regular classroom settings. These relationships lead to professional and intellectual growth as students mentored in the research process develop intense curiosity about important social questions. They learn novel research methods and tools and produce results from research that pass through rigorous review processes established by funders, scholarly journals and the research community.

Involving more faculty members and students in funded research activities will attract attention of private, non-profit, and public funders. Through funded research projects, HBCU students will be more competitive because they are exposed to research earlier and receive better mentorship enabling them to secure employment in prestigious institutions and professions. As HBCU graduates become more visible at research universities, think tanks, and private companies, these alumni will increase giving in gratitude for the support and development they received from their research-intensive institution. Donations from inspired private entities will increase the school's ability to support more students from underserved communities, creating a virtuous cycle of uplift.

Serving the poor and disenfranchised though community partnerships has been a core mission and value of HBCUs. By intensifying their research activities related to the underserved, HBCUs increase their capacities to serve this population and bring the voice of the underserved into policy and action, while simultaneously elevating their status in the broader community. HBCUs will, through an augmented research program, fulfill Mary Church Terrell's maxim of "lifting as we climb."

Administrators Can Use Creative Approaches to Stimulate Externally-Funded Research

The effort to secure external funding for research projects requires both an enthusiastic faculty member or team and a supportive administration that fosters and recognizes the important contribution that such research can make to the institution.

One creative effort that had excellent results was the Mordecai Wyatt Johnson Program, initiated in the 1990s under the leadership of Dr. James Donaldson, who served as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Howard University. He organized a funded internal competition to establish interdisciplinary research teams which would conduct research and seek additional funding from external sources.

The novelty of the program was that it substantially funded such teams, selected competitively through an internal application process, with three years of declining funding from university funds. The underlying goal of the declining funding was to stimulate interdisciplinary teams to conduct important research while also using such seed money to secure additional funding from government and/or foundation sources and become self-sustaining centers and/or teams.

Three teams won the competition, and one of these teams formed the Center for Urban Progress (CUP), which went on to secure, over a period of 30 years, $40 million in funding for research and community development projects. CUP engaged dozens of faculty members, graduate and undergraduate students, community organizations and residents. It secured funding from foundations, federal agencies, local government agencies, and private sources.

This approach was superior to an earlier effort which provided small research grants on a competitive basis to faculty members. The problem with these grants was their small size, their limit to one year, and their lack of emphasis on using such seed money for larger externally funded projects. There is no evidence that any of these internally funded projects stimulated significant external funding.

Build a Research Team and Form Partnerships

Build a Research Team

A multidisciplinary research team is often essential to undertake high quality research. A research team consists of a group of people working together in a committed way towards a common research goal. Teams could be comprised of Individuals with differing skills, disciplinary backgrounds, viewpoints, and cultural backgrounds and who are task oriented. Members should be able to work on tasks that work best for their schedule.

There are different research team arrangements in academia. A team may comprise principal investigators, faculty, executive directors, program directors, statisticians, postgraduate research assistants/associates, clerical staff, and undergraduate and graduate students. The team may be within the same department or across disciplinary departments at one university or it may be faculty and non-faculty across several universities. There may be international team members as well who contribute virtually on the project.

A research team leader should be identified to keep the balance and productivity of the work at hand. The team leader should identify the members' individual strengths and align their work to particular roles in the team. For instance, some members may be good communicators and networkers, visionaries/critical thinkers, data managers, or writers. Also, the team leader will ensure everyone is meeting their goals in a timely and effective manner.

Forming Partnerships

When considering partnerships, it is important to identify institutions or organizations of collaboration such as other universities, non-profit organizations, and for-profit organizations that are interested in the same problem. When considering universities outside of your university determine which departments or schools best to collaborate. Will you partner with a historically black college and university (HBCU), a predominately white institution (PWI), a private or public college/university? How resourced do you need the institution to be to support your research goals?
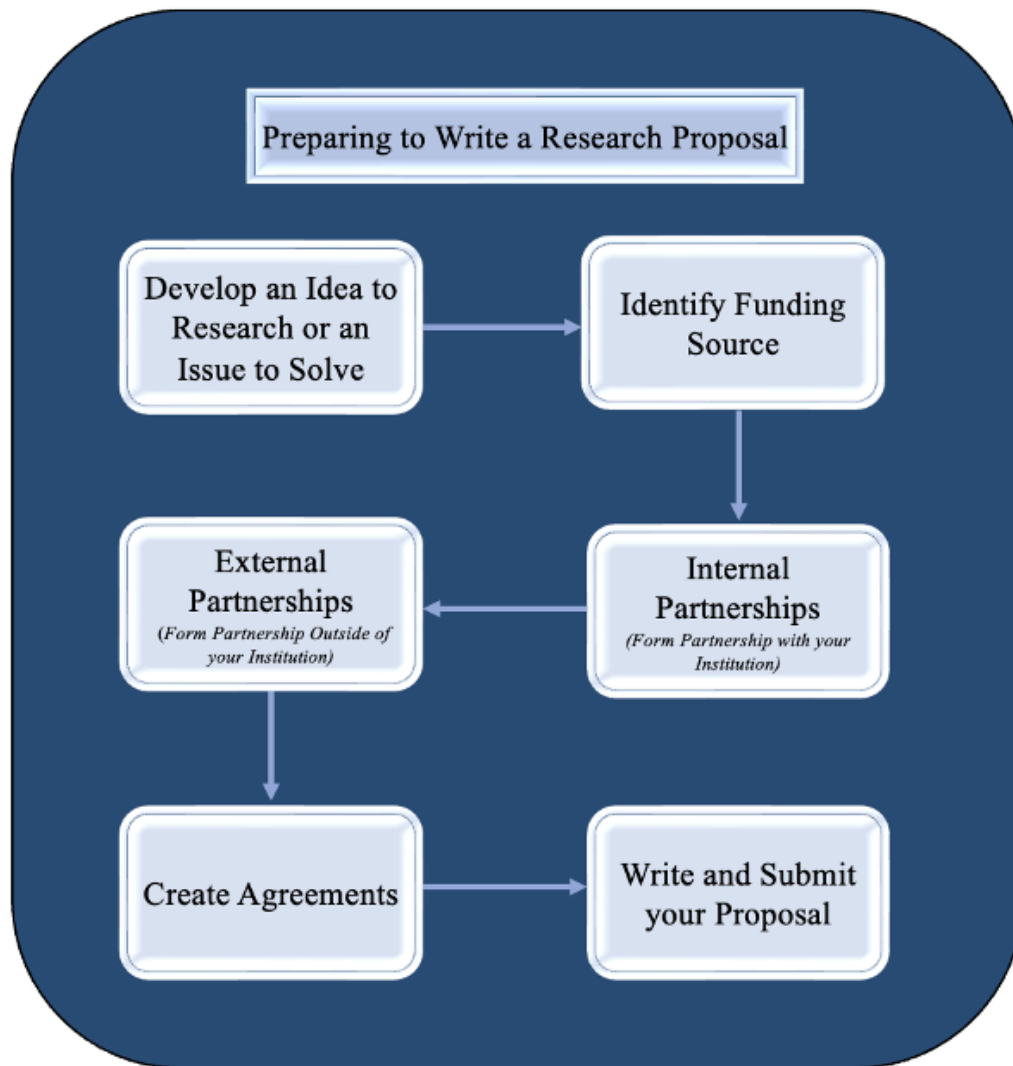
Partnerships with non-profits or private sectors that are interested in solving community issues are usually searching for research and evaluation support. Benefits for researchers working with non-profits and for-profits include leveraging resources, moving the mission forward, collaborating with a diverse group of stakeholders in the community, bringing about innovative ideas, creating shared learning that leads to policy decision making, publishing and sharing the work. Benefits for non-profit and public sectors working with a university consist of working with researchers to address complex research questions, performing needs assessments or program evaluations to determine agency needs, strengths, gaps, best practices, and recommendations for moving forward, community connections, cost savings, and increase brand credibility by working with a highly regarded university or universities.

As researchers develop relationships with partners, take into consideration the following –

> Legal agreements – a mutually decided-upon working agreement that serves as a guideline that defines how groups want to work together; the scope of work plan, the roles of the individuals; who will carry out aspects of the plan.
> Program liaison - How will institutions communicate project updates? How and with whom will the research team share results?
> Data ownership or data sharing agreements. - Under what circumstances can the researcher collect or receive data from the partners? What data are being shared and the appropriate use for the data?

Preparing to Write a Research Proposal

Develop an Idea to Research or an Issue to Solve → Identify Funding Source

External Partnerships (Form Partnership Outside of your Institution) ← Internal Partnerships (Form Partnership with your Institution)

Create Agreements → Write and Submit your Proposal

As an option, community-based participatory research (CBPR) is an important framework for partnering with communities for social justice and health equity. CBPR is viewed as an equitable research approach that is operationalized within a social justice framework. Researchers and community members work together in collaborative, nonhierarchical partnerships to try to improve the health, well-being, and housing stability of a community. Distinguishing features of effective CBPR include reducing the distinction between researchers and research participants, minimizing power imbalances, and researching in partnership with communities towards

positive community outcomes that are sustainable beyond the life of the research. Inherent intricacies of communities and partnership agreements can, however, lead to methodological and ethical challenges for researchers, therefore pointing to the need for adequate training and preparation for researchers who are new to CBPR.

Building partnerships within the University and the Community

University departments and schools are notoriously siloed; faculty in one department often don't know anyone outside of their department. While limiting oneself strictly to one's own department, a faculty member may feel claustrophobic, surrounded by gossip, competitiveness, and gamesmanship which can be very demoralizing. Why not reach out to other faculty on campus, thus building interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary friendships that can be the foundation for research?

Start with lunch. Instead of inhaling a sandwich at your desk between office hours and teaching, go to the cafeteria, restaurant, or other place where faculty gather and introduce yourself! Strike up a conversation about your research interests. You may find some common interests across disciplines. Serving the underserved is inevitably a multidisciplinary endeavor, so give it a try! You're a sociologist, go visit the economists, political scientists, social work scholars or psychologists. This will pay off when you decide to seek external funding and need partners in an application. But don't stop there. Many funded programs are looking for concrete partnerships with the community. HBCUs are often located in underserved communities with many 501(c)3 and other grassroots organizations. Go visit them as potential sites for service-learning assignments for your students and in the process learn what challenges they are facing and what kinds of projects they would be interested in undertaking.

Many community organizations have been burned in the past by researchers who only want to use the community as a test-bed for their projects and do not want to be used just to enable the researcher to get funding for themselves. See what kind of concrete improvements your work can bring to the organizations and move on from there.

In one case, the Center for Urban Progress director (an economics faculty member) was interested in stimulating and strengthening more community development around the campus by accessing HUD programs. He was a novice until a community partner took him under their wing and helped him develop connections with other community groups that had a partnership to build a "community renaissance" near the University. The organizations in the renaissance initiative were deeply skeptical of the faculty member, having had bad experiences in the past with university researchers just using the community, but gave him a chance and joined in his submission to HUD. The funding was approved, which included promises of subcontracts for various projects the renaissance initiative partners wanted to undertake. The members were

shocked (in a good way) when they actually received the promised contracts, and the projects were carried out over a multi-year process, with a research element built into the overall effort.

Partnering with Local Government Agencies to Access Administrative Data

Local and state government agencies are places to go to find important data for research on the underserved, as well as potential partners for your work. These agencies administer important government programs that pursue equity for the underserved in housing, employment and community development. They need data-driven and granular investigation by HBCU scholars and students to assess the impacts of their programs and whether the outcomes match program design and goals. Here's one such effort that went well and has led to published scholarly research.

A Faculty Learning Community

A faculty member at Bowie State University established the Faculty Learning Community (FLC) in which faculty from diverse disciplines come together around a common goal(s) over a define period of time. The group has frequent and regular interactions and have created a "safe space" to explore new ideas. The FLC has two major goals are to Increase BSU Faculty's knowledge in Data Science and Analytics (DSA) through training and to incorporate DSA knowledge into diverse courses at Bowie State University through module development and infusion.

Proposal Development

Introduction

You're a faculty member who wants to carry out externally-funded research that serves the interests of the underserved, either directly, through knowledge development, or through policy recommendations. You may have a research idea that may require substantial funding, you may want to develop a broader research program or center, or you may simply be entrepreneurial in seeking funding to support summer salary for you, achieve something useful for the underserved, and boost your career at the same time. All of these are reasonable motivations for seeking external funding for research on the underserved.

The first order of business is to determine where relevant funding may be available. It may turn out that your very specific research idea doesn't fit into any funder's priorities, but you may find a funder that has a priority close to yours. Remember, they are the ones with the money you

need, so be realistic about your funding goals. Also remember that most proposals are not successful, but if you keep at it, you will improve your proposal skills and eventually succeed.

Key Sources of Funding

Research to support the interests and needs of underserved populations is inherently broad because the needs of the underserved are complex and holistic, so you are likely to find a source. Federal resources are a good starting point. Go to grants.gov to find all of the federal research opportunities that exist. You can search the site with keywords and find a program that fits your interests or comes close to it.

The federal government website https://www.grants.gov/ will likely lead you to programs and projects from U.S. HUD (housing, healthy homes, and community development), U.S. Health and Human Services (NIH, health and wellness, family structure and support), U.S. Department of Labor (workforce development and labor rights), U.S. Department of Agriculture (food security and nutrition), U.S. Department of Education (pre-kindergarten programs, special needs programs, charter schools, and curriculum development) and many other government agencies.

Also consider the foundation world. The big foundations, like the Ford, Rockefeller, Robert Wood Johnson, Kellogg, Open Society, MacArthur and Mellon foundations all have commitments to the underserved. You may also find support from local foundations that serve your particular city or region, usually with smaller grants, which may be a good way to begin. Foundations usually ask for letters of interest, and if your project fits their priorities, they may engage you in a conversation about it. They tend to be more flexible than federal grant and cooperative agreement programs.

How to Read a Request for Proposal (RFP)

Federal programs issue RFPs that are extremely detailed and dense. It takes some extended study time to fully understand what is being requested and how your proposal will be evaluated. Don't be surprised if there are apparent internal contradictions in the RFP because of their detailed nature.

Usually, agencies will have pre-application opportunities to raise questions about their RFP. Take advantage of them by thoroughly reading the RFP and preparing a list of questions. Please note, though, that once the RFP has been officially made available, agency officials are limited in how they answer your questions. In some cases, successful proposals from previous rounds of a similar program are made available. Take advantage of such an opportunity. In fact, if you get the opportunity to serve on a grant review team for the agency in which you're interested, you will learn a great deal about how your proposal will be read and evaluated.

Most agencies include "Ratings Factors" in the RFP along with the points allotted for each of them. They usually include the likely ability of the proposed research team to carry out the research or project; the experience of the individuals and institutions in previous related research; how well your research plan meets the goals of the project; how effective will your management plan for the research be; how realistic and thorough the your budget is; and eligibility for any bonus points (sometimes being an HBCU will gain a point or two, which can make a difference in close competitions). The ratings factors may seem to ask for information that has already been included in your research plan. Be careful not to omit the requested information under the ratings factor since that is where you will receive points towards winning the award.
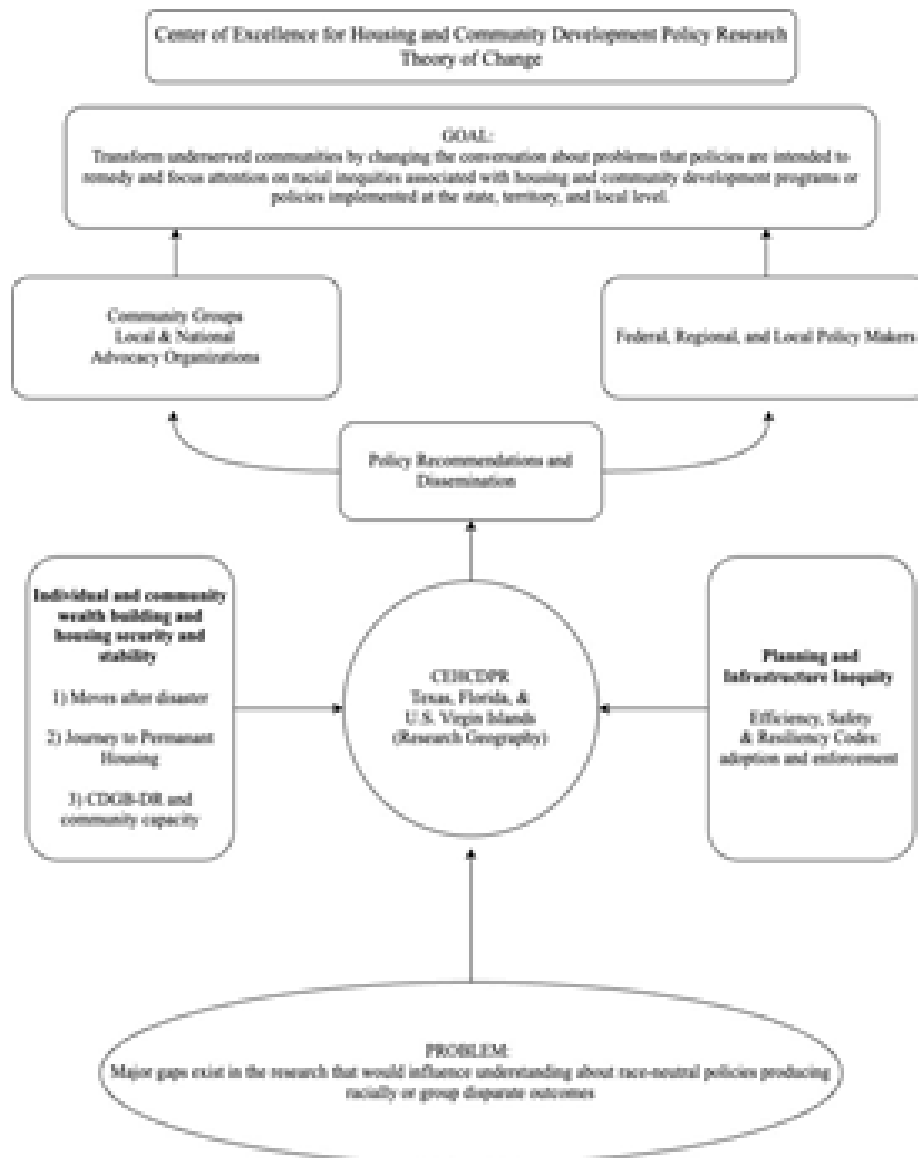
Finally, throughout the proposal development process, return to the RFP again and again. You will always find something new that you have overlooked or misunderstood in a previous reading. The day before you submit, set aside some time to read through the RFP again carefully. You will undoubtedly find a few places where you will need to tweak the final proposal – and thereby gain additional points. Don't neglect this step even if you are feeling "proposal exhaustion". It is likely to mean the difference between winning the award and coming in second--with no funding!

Theory of Change (TOC)

Government agencies, foundations, and other funding organizations may ask you to prepare a "theory of change" within which your project will be situated. A clear and compelling TOC, presented in diagram form, can be an important component of your application. An example that was used in a successful application to HUD is included for your consideration. You will want to develop and adapt any TOC for the specific purposes of a given RFP.

Writing the Proposal

The proposed principal investigator (PI) must take the lead in preparing the research proposal. The PI should prepare a preliminary outline and share it with prospective team members. The PI should, in particular, prepare a strong section on the research questions to be addressed and, where appropriate, the hypotheses to be tested. Each prospective team member can be asked to prepare a write up of the area that is closest to their expertise. For example, a person particularly well-versed in statistics might be asked to prepare the section describing the data and statistical tests that will be used, if that methodology is to be used. Another person may know the literature in that research area. A team member who is more intimately aware of the community (for community-based participatory research projects, for example) could be tasked with writing up that portion, and also with contacting community partners for the project. That person should also solicit sections of narrative from the external partners and integrate these

Center of Excellence for Housing and Community Development Policy Research
Theory of Change

GOAL:
Transform underserved communities by changing the conversation about problems that policies are intended to remedy and focus attention on racial inequities associated with housing and community development programs or policies implemented at the state, territory, and local level.

Community Groups
Local & National
Advocacy Organizations

Federal, Regional, and Local Policy Makers

Policy Recommendations and Dissemination

Individual and community wealth building and housing security and stability

1) Moves after disaster

2) Journey to Permanent Housing

3) CDGB-DR and community capacity

CEHCDPR
Texas, Florida, & U.S. Virgin Islands
(Research Geography)

Planning and Infrastructure Inequity

Efficiency, Safety & Resiliency Codes: adoption and enforcement

PROBLEM:
Major gaps exist in the research that would influence understanding about race-neutral policies producing racially or group disparate outcomes

contributions into their section. Don't be shy about asking for help in writing additional narrative, for more deep dives into the literature, and for more feedback. After all, the participants in this process will all benefit from a successful proposal as will the underserved.

A major challenge in proposal development, especially with multiple partners/writers, can be procrastination by one or more of the team. Since proposals have deadlines, a timeline should be established and insisted on by the PI.

Some universities may have specialized grant writers who can be brought into the process to finetune the proposal. This would be unusual, however, for HBCUs, who are generally underfunded in such research proposal support. Still, it is desirable to have one or more colleagues on the team and beyond the team review the proposal and provide a critique. The

onus of finalizing the document, however, is most likely to fall on the PI to ensure that all sections are written and then merged and massaged into a coherent document.

Central to the proposal narrative is the response to Ratings Factors. Each team member who writes up their section of the overall research or project plan should constantly refer to the requirements in the ratings factors to make sure that such requirements are embodied in the research plan. The PI must make sure that the final merged document responds specifically to the ratings factors.

Making the Proposal Persuasive

To make your proposal stand out, try to think about what may make a reviewer remember your strengths. Here are some examples.

> The institutional history of experience in and passion about the challenges facing the underserved. Most HBCUs have this. It is often embodied in the school's mission statement, strategic plan, or core values. And usually there have been previous research findings and concrete projects that show the implementation of this mission. Highlight these commitments and concrete experiences.
> The unique history of the PI and/or other team members. HBCU faculty often have deep experience with the underserved. Be sure to showcase this.
> HBCUs are often located in communities with large underserved populations. Often the students of the institution have engaged in many service-learning activities. Calling attention to the depth of this talent and commitment to the underserved by the students can make your proposal stand out. Student passion matters!
> Ideally your proposal will have a unique twist or perspective on a given problem or need. This could be a new use of a particular statistical technique on administrative data, a unique grouping of participants in a focus group, a new type of partnership among health, housing, and university units, or many more. Make sure to show how your proposed project concretely addresses a problem or policy in a new way.

Create the budget

The budget and budget narrative are critical components of any proposal. Federal programs have very clearly defined requirements for budgets with specialized forms. The justification for expenditures, prepared in a separate budget narrative, should be developed with as much specificity as possible. Some reviewers will look at the budget and budget narrative first to see

exactly how the dollars they may provide are actually going to be used. So don't wait until the last moment to prepare the budget, and make sure that it accurately reflects the salaries of key participants, the proper fringe benefits rates, and the indirect costs or F&A rates.

Guiding Questions for HBCU faculty and administrators trying to decide whether to pursue HUD HBCU Community of Excellence (COE) support

U.S. HUD has launched a program to stimulate research on the underserved at HBCUs. This may be an excellent opportunity for administrators and faculty at HBCUs to pursue.

1. Who are the faculty members at my HBCU that have a record of engaging in policy research or academic scholarship focused on underserved communities that would be of interest to HUD?
2. What theory of change guides my involvement to pursue policy research projects via the HBCU COE model?
3. Which collaborations within my network could potentially yield HUD support for an HBCU COE or partnership with one?
4. How do I (with and without help from my HBCU) typically ensure research findings are shared with decision makers and others involved in policy development that improves the quality of life in underserved communities?
5. What benefits do you envision would be derived for my HBCU from an HBCU COE that develops evidence-based solutions, shapes public opinion, and promotes equitable and innovative policies of interest to HUD focused on underserved communities?
6. What is my HBCUs history of receiving HUD funding?
7. How would HBCU COE engagement further the mission of my HBCU?
8. Does the institutional or executive administrative (i.e., provost, VP for Research, Dean, T&P guidelines) infrastructure exist at my HBCU that would be supportive of establishing an HBCU COE or joining in partnership/collaboration with one?
9. What institutional resources (i.e., financial, human [faculty, staff, and students], etc.) exist to engage in effective policy research via an HBCU COE?
10. What is my HBCU's capacity and commitment to sustaining an HBCU COE or maintaining a partnership with one?

Conducting the Research

Implement the Research

Congratulations! You have received funding for your project or have decide to plunge ahead with or without external support.

Before you begin, you should contact your department chair, dean, provost, and/or president to inform them of your success (or your determination!) and explain exactly what resources you need from them to successfully execute your research project. Administrators – It is in your interests to support such productive faculty!

Perhaps you need release time from teaching? Or student stipends so they can devote significant and dedicated time to your research? Or perhaps you need funds that are not covered in the grant for certain costs like software for quantitative (e.g., Stata, SPSS, Python) or qualitative research (e.g., Qualtrics for surveys, Atlas[ti] for focus group analysis) or for geospatial analysis (e.g., ArcGIS).

You may also need administrative support, such as a part-time administrative assistant depending on the nature of your project. Don't be shy about asking for support from your university – university administrations benefit greatly from a robust, externally funded, research program!

The Research Question(s) Related to Underserved Populations

The research question should ideally be simple while considering the complexity and interconnectedness of challenges facing underserved populations, as reflected in your theory of change. In addition, the research question should logically be related to possible federal or other government policy.

For example, suppose you are interested in home ownership for low-income people, especially those who might be displaced when landlords sell their buildings. Programs providing tenants the right of first refusal in acquiring their building when a landlord plans to sell the property have been put into place in several local jurisdictions in the U.S. A question that addresses this cooperative approach to home ownership could be:

RQ: Can a tenant opportunity to purchase program (TOPP) at the federal level improve housing security for low-income people facing displacement?

Hypotheses to be Tested

There are many hypotheses that can flow from this simple research question. A review of the literature on the various local versions of TOP should be reviewed. The other programs related to housing security for low-income people should also be studied. Accessing HUDUSER and HUD's *Cityscape* journal would be a good way to start your literature review since those resources include many studies on housing for the underserved.

The hypotheses you decide to test should reflect your expectations associated with both the local programs and a possible federal program. For example, you may want to hypothesize that one or more of the existing programs at the local level have had beneficial effects on a local population as a first step. So, you might hypothesize,

H1: The Washington DC Tenant Option to Purchase Assistance (TOPA) program over the period 2005 – 2015 has met its goal of increasing housing security for low-income people facing displacement.

H2: TOPA's goals reached a significant share of tenants seeking homeownership to avoid displacement.

H3: TOPA has achieved its goals in a cost-effective manner compared to other local housing subsidy programs for low-income people.

Assuming that data analysis suggests support for these hypotheses, you could move on to a set of hypotheses about how a federal program could extend such benefits more broadly and cost-effectively.

H4: The national scope of a TOPP program would increase housing security for low-income people seeking to avoid displacement.

H5: National TOPP can reach a significant share of tenants seeking homeownership to avoid displacement.

H6: National TOPP can achieve its goals in a cost-effective manner compared to other housing subsidy programs for low-income people.

Research Design: Methodology and Data

Many studies related to the underserved require mixed methods due to the complex, interacting factors that challenge the underserved. Administrative data can be found through partnership with local and federal government agencies as well as with NGOs involved in these content areas. Such data can initially be studied descriptively (frequencies, correlations). More complex statistical analysis and modeling can then be conducted for more complete testing.

Other data may need to be generated through original quantitative and qualitative data gathering (surveys, focus groups, key informant interviews)

Each hypothesis is likely to require its own method and data. Hypotheses 1 and 2 can perhaps be best studied using administrative data from the local jurisdiction(s) that operate the TOPA program. But Hypothesis 1 may also benefit from qualitative data drawn from focus groups with tenants who participated in the TOPA program. Hypothesis 3 is more complex and could include both administrative data and clarifying interviews with key informants.

Hypotheses 4-6 would require the researcher to suggest the parameters of a proposed federal program through extensive document review of existing programs. National data to test the hypotheses coupled with key informant interviews could then be used to test the hypotheses. Given the hypothetical nature of the proposed federal program, greater reliance on key informants and content experts would be especially important.

Institutional Review Board

The university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) must review all research projects that involve human participants prior to any data collection. The IRB is a group of individuals formally designated to review and monitor research. The IRB serves to protect the rights and welfare of human research subjects participating in the research and has the authority to approve, require modifications in (to secure approval), or disapprove research. The IRB will review the research proposal, informed consent documents, brochures, and any other materials for the study.

Findings, Discussion of the Findings, Conclusions, and Policy Recommendations

The findings from your study should be organized around the six hypotheses, and simply report what the findings were. A separate section in which these findings are discussed in the context of the overall study and their implications would follow. The conclusions would then answer the research question, and the policy recommendation section would build from the conclusions. It may turn out that a federal program, for example, might improve housing security of certain underserved populations, but not be cost-effective due to the variations in local conditions, regulations, and practices.
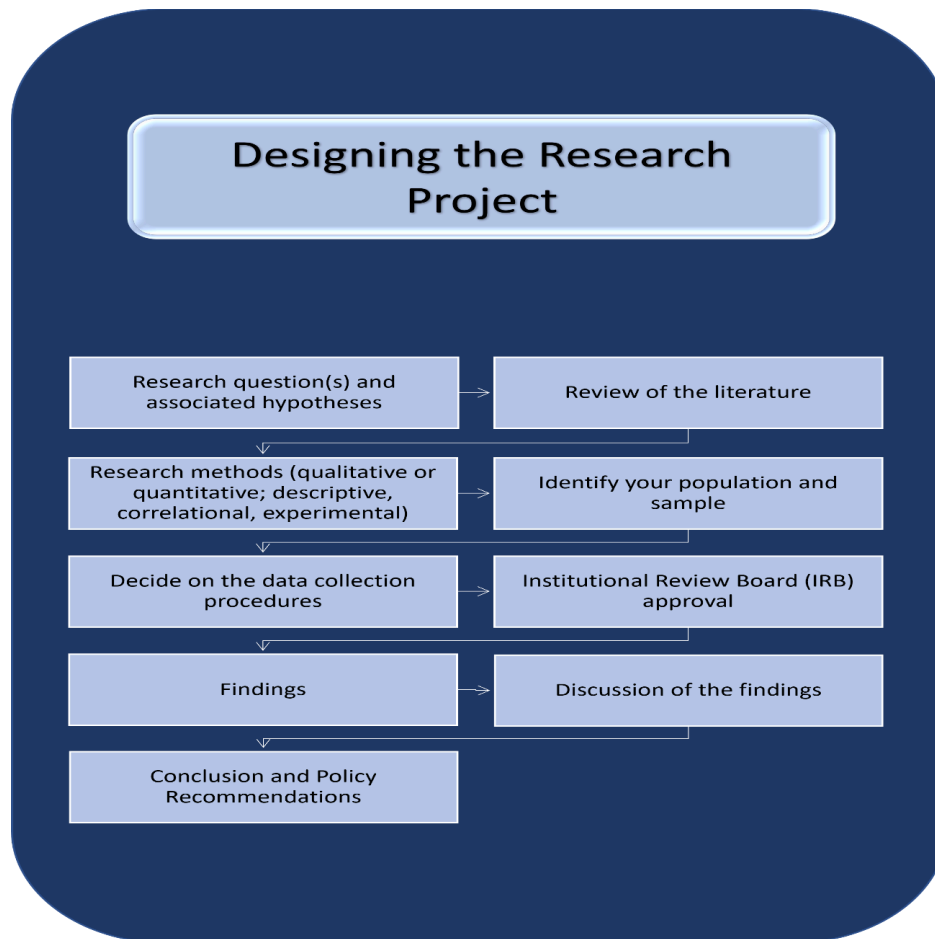
The goal of better meeting the needs and interests of the underserved might then require additional research on, perhaps, expanding local TOPP programs.

Research Methods are Diverse

There are other forms of valid research relating to the needs and interests of the underserved. Some research projects rely on "grounded theory" to develop a better understanding of social problems through an inductive process quite different from the hypothesis-driven approach presented above. Ethnography is a good example of this approach. Similarly, evaluation projects done in collaboration with local or NGO programming may involve using logic models and tracking program success using such tools. All research should be done in a culturally competent manner that reflects an awareness of the multiple, interacting aspects of life for the underserved.

A Good Starting Point for Research on the Underserved: Program Evaluation

Program evaluation is the systematic process of collecting, analyzing and describing the components and outcomes of an organized intervention or service with the aim to improve the quality of services received or to document a program's beneficial impacts. Evaluation provides information to funders to help improve a program. The information for instance can be whether goals are being met, whether components of the program are working or not, and an evaluation can provide unanticipated insights. An evaluation can also justify current program funding or support the need for increased levels of funding.

Designing the Research Project

Research question(s) and associated hypotheses	Review of the literature
Research methods (qualitative or quantitative; descriptive, correlational, experimental)	Identify your population and sample
Decide on the data collection procedures	Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval
Findings	Discussion of the findings
Conclusion and Policy Recommendations	

There are several types of evaluations, such as a needs assessment, cost/benefit analysis, effectiveness, efficiency, formative, summative, process, and outcomes evaluation. Therefore, it is best to determine the appropriate evaluation approach at the beginning stages of planning.

A program evaluation requires funding, time and evaluation skills. Evaluation can be viewed as a negative process, in that program stakeholders think the evaluators may be out to "get them." Misperceptions regarding the purpose and process of evaluation can result in adverse attitudes. It is important that the evaluation be a part of the program implementation and not conducted in silo. Planning, implementation, and the evaluation should all be developed together. A key component of a successful evaluation process is the collaboration amongst the stakeholders. Stakeholders can include program staff, program clients, funders, decision makers, and evaluators.

A participatory approach to evaluation based on respect for one another's roles and equal partnership in the process overcomes barriers to a mutually beneficial evaluation,

Programs can have an internal evaluation or an external evaluation or both. An internal evaluation, also known as an in-house evaluation, is when an evaluation is conducted by a staff member within the organization. The primary responsibility of the internal evaluation lies within the organization. An external evaluation is conducted by someone or a team of individuals outside of the organization being studied. This is where HBCU faculty research scholars can play a key role in serving the needs of the underserved. Selecting an evaluator entails finding an individual who understands the program, the capacity to conduct the evaluation, and demonstrated experience and knowledge in the research area. Depending on the type of evaluation and the rigor of an evaluation, funders may require an external evaluation, and HBCU faculty are often ideal candidates for this role.

Evaluation work -- A Great Entry Point for Research

Many HBCUs are located in jurisdictions rich with non-profit organizations as well as local government agencies. These groups often need help in evaluating their programming both for assessing the impact of their activities and to provide insight into further policy development.

Faculty members and advanced students interested in using their academic skills for applied research can often get started by providing evaluation services to such groups. Evaluations, if conducted systematically, can provide important insights to government policy makers at every level of government as well as offer ways that nonprofits can improve their outcomes. Engaging in these activities may a first step towards even broader research projects.

Usually, such evaluation work requires that the researcher and the assisted agency collaboratively develop a logic model that links the inputs available to the agency to their activities and then to their desired program outputs and outcomes in the world.

U.S. HUD has many diverse types of logic models that it has developed over the past two decades and can be an excellent resource for this. See, for example, a series of workshops and the associated documents that HUD has used to help researchers do this for the Promise Neighborhoods program https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5760/promise-zone-data-and-evaluation-framework-desk-guide/ There are many other resources for logic model development.

Developing a logic model in partnership with an agency often helps the agency think strategically about their planned activities and goals. For example, Howard University researchers worked with a faith-based non-profit engaged in youth development. The agency drafted a logic model proposing two Bible study sessions per week for their participants, with the projected outcome being "the end of crime in America." The researchers were able to help the

agency develop a much more realistic set of expectations for their work, and then develop monitoring mechanisms to follow their progress.

Once the logical framework is established, the researcher can work with the agency to ensure high quality data gathering to assess if the activity is having the desired effect. Mid-course corrections can be made by the agency with the help of the research partner. All of these activities, with nonprofits or government agencies, can lead to scholarly publications.

For example, in a complex community development project that lasted five years, Howard University researchers were able to help design the logic model, conduct focus groups, carry out community surveys, interview community thought leaders and officials, carry out additional gathering and analysis of administrative data to assist the nonprofit, and help write the final report to the federal funding agency. From this wealth of diverse data, two journal articles were published in leading urban journals and a great deal of insight was received by the federal funders that can assist in future policy development.

Dissemination and Sustainability

Dissemination

Sharing policy-oriented research findings on and by the underserved is vital in informing a range of communities - academic, community, and local and federal government. A dissemination plan should be developed at the same time the research project begins. Faculty members typically think about journal articles in refereed journals, and this is appropriate because it adds credibility to the findings for policy makers as well as the broader community. But a direct approach to these communities is also important because journal articles take a long time to be published and the findings can inform policies before publication dates.

Some studies can be posted on university websites. Howard University CHURP, for example, has a website where it will host articles and studies relevant to the underserved from many different agencies including your institution. Other placements are also desirable. Holding roundtables with policy makers locally as well as with community leaders is another approach that has the value of person-to-person interaction. It is likely (and desirable) that during the research process, you will make connections to policy makers and to community leaders, so keeping them apprised of your progress and your findings, as they become available, would be of great value in raising the profile of your institution, and increasingly foregrounding the importance and voice of the underserved in policy development. Don't hide your light under a bushel! Get the information out there and make changes!

Research Sustainability

So now you have completed one or more research projects. Where do you go from there? The first rule is don't sit on your laurels, you just end up with crushed laurels. The challenges facing the underserved transcend a single research project. Your initial planning for the research should include developing a network of prospective funders and supporters. If you have kept up with them and you have produced credible results, you are in a good position to deepen your relationships and secure additional funding for projects related to the underserved. Not all of the available projects will exactly fit your own personal interests, but by engaging in these you will increase your own credibility and influence. This will redound to the benefit of your career in academia, raise the profile of your institution, contribute to the research preparation of your students, and lay the foundation for substantial improvement in the lives of the underserved.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we hope the information and resources contained in this toolkit will help HBCU faculty and administrators develop their research capacity and apply for and carry out externally funded research that services the interests of underserved communities. The writers of this toolkit will be pleased to field inquiries and comments from the HBCU community.