ABSTRACT

TOWNSEND, KATINA EDWARDS. A Process Evaluation of a Partnership between an Education-Centric Nonprofit Organization and HBCUs and PBIs: A Study in Partnership Strategy and Success. (Under the direction of Dr. Carrol Warren).

This study sought to perform a process evaluation to identify strategies to potentially assist a nonprofit organization bolster their efforts to form and strengthen partnerships with historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominantly black institutions (PBIs). This study involved conducting a process evaluation based upon the Rainbow Framework from Better Evaluation (2022). This research highlights the importance of proper evaluation measures when used to track the internal organizational processes involved in forming partnerships with external stakeholders from HBCUs and PBIs. Without an established evaluation process, difficulties in achieving objectives to engage with leaders at HBCUs and PBIs could be faced. This, in turn, could hinder their ability to establish and sustain effective partnerships with these institutions leading to the inability to reach strategic goals.

The overarching research question that guided this evaluation dissertation is:
How can a process evaluation help to strengthen alignment with the goals of an education-centric nonprofit organization in the development of partnerships with HBCUs and PBIs?

Two sub-questions included:

1. What are the barriers to creating partnerships between HBCUs and PBIs and the nonprofit organization and how can those barriers be successfully navigated?
2. What strategies are recommended for developing effective partnerships between the education-centric nonprofit organization and HBCUs and PBIs?

This research gathered data from both individual participants and program documents. The data sources were comprised of transcripts from individual interviews conducted with four

internal stakeholders of the nonprofit organization, along with survey data completed by two additional participants; a document analysis of program documents provided by the nonprofit organization was also conducted. The qualitative data was examined through an approach known as thematic coding, which involved identifying text segments that shared a common theme (Gibbs, 2007). This enabled the researcher to develop categories and construct a thematic framework (Gibbs, 2007).

Based on the insights shared by the study participants, the partnership process revealed three key themes: partnership readiness, partnership formation gaps and implied partnership benefits. The results of this study suggest that it is crucial to explore the factors that contribute to successful partnership development with HBCUs and PBIs. Further investigation is needed to include an exploration of partnerships with HSIs. Additionally, future research could approach this topic from an approach that measures the equity implications of the application and interview process for partnerships to be established. The collaboration between HBCUs, PBIs, and nonprofit organizations presents considerable promise for the future. As pointed out by Lowe (2008), HBCUs frequently bridge the gap between communities and academia. Furthermore, a program stakeholder highlighted that educational institutions including HBCUs and PBIs must “partner or peril”.

Keywords: HBCU, PBI, education-centric nonprofit organization, partnership, Rainbow Framework, partnership readiness, partnership formation

A Process Evaluation of a Partnership between an Education-Centric Nonprofit Organization and HBCUs and PBIs: A Study in Partnership Strategy and Success.

by
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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
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APPROVED BY:

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Dr. Carrol Warren Committee Chair	Dr. Devon Graves
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Dr. Pamela Howze	Dr. Terri Lee

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the leaders at the education-centric nonprofit organization that partner with higher education institutions and workforce groups to provide pathways for learners to obtain meaningful careers and sustainable earnings.

This dissertation is also dedicated to my mother, Rose Cross, who gifted me with kindness and wisdom, but did not live to see me complete this work and also my grandfather, John Edwards, who gave me a strong work ethic, but did not live to see me begin or complete this work.

Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to anyone who ever failed and thought that failure was the end of the world. Remember, failure is not final, and your victory is guaranteed if you stay in the race.

BIOGRAPHY

Katina was born and raised in Raleigh, North Carolina. She was educated in Wake County Public Schools, and she graduated from Athens Drive High School in 1991. Katina attended North Carolina State University from 1991 – 1994 pursing a degree in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering. After facing academic challenges at North Carolina State University, Katina enrolled and graduated from Wake Technical Community College with an associate's degree in Accounting. Katina went on to further her education and completed a bachelor's degree in Accounting at North Carolina Wesleyan College and a Master of Business Administration at North Carolina Central University.

Katina has over 20 years of accounting and finance experience in both the corporate real estate and consumer packaged goods industries. Her doctoral research focused on the strategies to improve the partnership formation process between HBCUs and PBIs and an education-centric nonprofit organization. Currently, Katina is the Plant Controller at The Clorox Company and the brand she supports is Burt's Bees, natural personal care. Throughout her career at Clorox she has been able to teach and develop finance learning and development classes, onboard college summer interns in finance, coach NCCU students to complete a strategic project for Burt's Bees and raise over $60K for Junior Achievement as the Triangle's Funniest Accountant.

Katina lives in Durham, NC with her husband Whoquaza. She has two sons, Jordan and Christian.

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I want to express my gratitude to **God** and my Savior, **Jesus Christ**, who governs my life and is the beginning and end of my faith. I honor the **Holy Spirit**, the One who has always been present, never abandoned me, and will continue to be with me. It is through this life-giving power that I was sustained throughout my doctoral journey at NCSU.

I would like to graciously thank my dissertation chair, **Dr. Carrol Warren**, for the phone call that was the catalyst for this research, for cheering me on when I wanted to throw in the towel and for encouraging me throughout this journey. I am thankful for my dissertation committee, **Dr. Devon Graves**, **Dr. Pamela Howze** and **Dr. Terri Lee** who so generously gave their time and effort to serve so that I could reach this milestone. I appreciate the faculty in the Community College Leadership Program at NCSU for taking a chance on a former undergraduate student who left the university on academic probation with a 1.232 grade point average. I also appreciate the members of my 2021 doctoral cohort who helped me survive the doctoral coursework and I love how they welcomed me even though I had no higher education professional experience. Finally, I am thankful that I work for a company and brand that supports learning and higher education and gave me the flexibility needed to complete this program.

I am grateful for my husband, **Whoquaza**, who allows me to live my dreams by supporting each one of my shenanigans, including this 3 ½ year doctoral journey. I am thankful for my two sons, **Jordan** and **Christian** who believe in their mom, but they also keep me grounded and humble. I give thanks for my grandmother, **Dora Edwards**, my dad, **Robert Gray**, and my pastors, **Rodney** and **Valerie Frazier** each of whose prayers, faith and encouragement has strengthened me throughout this process. I would like to recognize my extended family and friends for their laughter, joy and support during this doctoral program. And yes, like everything

else, this doctoral degree belongs to all of us. My name may be on the paper, but THIS WAS FOR US!

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This study explored, through an evaluation approach, the process of the partnership development between an education-centric nonprofit organization that works with educators and workforce groups, and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominantly black institutions (PBIs). This dissertation specifically explores the process of establishing partnership connections and outcomes of one subset within the nonprofit organization's programs. This study relied upon process evaluation methodology to effectively evaluate the nonprofit organization's current practices and policies to establish a baseline for their partnership development strategy and offer ideas to strengthen their partnership connections, specifically for HBCUs and PBIs. Findings offer insights and recommendations on strategies to achieve the partnership goals established to identify and maintain thriving relationships with HBCUs and PBIs as partners.

The rationale for nonprofit and HBCU and PBI partnerships is well-documented; however, building and maintaining these partnerships is complex and hindered by a lack of scholarly literature documenting the perspectives of nonprofit organizations (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Bushouse, 2005; Corbin 2015; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Vernon & Ward, 1999; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000).

Problem Statement

Creating and sustaining partnerships between higher education institutions and non-profit organizations can be challenging due to complexities within the structure and policies within higher education (Worrall, 2007; Strier, 2011). Partnerships that exist between individuals who connect through a professional network versus partnerships between an organization and a higher

education institution are different (Trebil-Smith, 2019). Establishing and maintaining partnerships can be challenging, especially when the benefits are unclear or if an undue burden is present. The undue burden is often due to the time and capacity investment required (Trebil-Smith, 2019). If evaluation measures are not in place to capture the internal organizational processes for the implementation of partnerships with external stakeholders representing HBCUs and PBIs, then the nonprofit organization will experience challenges with meeting their goals to connect with leaders at HBCUs and PBIs in an effort to secure and maintain successful partnerships.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify a baseline of procedures taken by a nonprofit organization and organize strategies to support partnership efforts through a process evaluation in support of their efforts to develop and strengthen partnerships with HBCUs and PBIs. Through a process evaluation guided by the Rainbow Framework (Better Evaluation, 2022), results, findings, and recommendations will allow this research to offer valuable information to the nonprofit organization around its efforts towards creating and sustaining partnerships among identified stakeholders at HBCUs and PBIs. A focus on the strategies used to establish and maintain partnerships between the nonprofit organization and HBCUs and PBIs and the related outcomes from those efforts were the focus of this process evaluation. Partnerships were examined from the point of view of the nonprofit organization, because nearly all existing research on the effectiveness of these partnerships has been written from the point of view of higher education partners (Ferman & Hill, 2004). Scholarly literature supports the need for additional research to explore the challenges associated with creating partnerships from the nonprofit organization's perspective (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998).

This study was limited to the internal stakeholders at one nonprofit organization located in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The organization is similar in purpose to many other nonprofits across the United States who seek ways to partner with institutions of higher education, including HBCUs and PBIs, to produce positive outcomes for students of color, low-income students and first-generation college students. This study involved multiple modes of data collection including interviewing stakeholders connected to the development of partnerships, dissemination of a survey to internal collaborators, and a document analysis. The internal stakeholders interviewed had roles that required their direct involvement with creating and maintaining partnerships with HBCUs and PBIs.

Research Questions

This study investigated, through an evaluative lens, the approach one nonprofit organization took towards establishing and maintaining partnerships with HBCUs and PBIs. The overarching research question guiding this evaluation dissertation included:

How can a process evaluation help to strengthen alignment with the goals of an education-centric nonprofit organization in the development of partnerships with HBCUs and PBIs?

Two sub-questions included:

1. What are the barriers to creating partnerships between HBCUs and PBIs and the nonprofit organization and how can those barriers be successfully navigated?
2. What strategies are recommended for developing effective partnerships between the education-centric nonprofit organization and HBCUs and PBIs?

Definition of Key Terms

A. *Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)* - is defined as an institution of higher education that is an eligible institution; and has an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent

students that is at least 25 percent Hispanic students at the end of the award year immediately preceding the date of application. (U.S. Department of Education, White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Hispanics).

B. *Historically Black College or University (HBCU)* - "institutions of higher learning in the United States that were established beginning in 1837 and before 1964 to provide an education for free black men and women, Africans previously bound by chattel slavery, and their descendants" (U.S. Department of Education, White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity through Historically Black Colleges and Universities).

C. *Nonprofit organization* - "an organization that qualifies for tax-exempt status by the IRS because its mission and purpose are to further a social cause and provide a public benefit. Nonprofit organizations include hospitals, universities, national charities, and foundations" (U.S. Chamber of Commerce).

D. *Partnership* - "a collaborative relationship between entities to work toward shared objectives through a mutually agreed division of labor" (Nonprofits, 2017).

E. *Predominantly Black Institution (PBI)* - "an institution of higher education, as defined in section 101(a) (A) that is an eligible institution with not less than 1,000 undergraduate students; (B) at which not less than 50 percent of the undergraduate students enrolled at the eligible institution are low-income individuals or first-generation college students; and (C) at which not less than 50 percent of the undergraduate students are enrolled in an educational program leading to a bachelor's or associate's degree that the eligible

institution is licensed to award by the State in which the eligible institution is located" (Legislation - Predominantly Black Institutions Program, Sec. 318).

Conceptual Framework

There are different methods and processes that can be used in evaluation. The Rainbow Framework for evaluation organizes options into 34 different evaluation tasks (Better Evaluation, 2022). The Rainbow Framework structures these methods and processes in terms of the tasks that are often undertaken in evaluation (Better Evaluation, 2022). The range of the 34 tasks are organized into seven clusters that aim to simplify the selection of appropriate methods, strategies or processes for evaluation (Better Evaluation, 2022). The Rainbow Framework can be used as a planning tool to manage or plan an evaluation, check the quality of an on-going evaluation or develop evaluation capacity (Better Evaluation, 2022).

The organization of the 34 tasks into seven clusters are further defined to facilitate methods, strategies, and processes and include: manage, define, frame, describe, understand, synthesize and report (Better Evaluation, 2022). Each cluster is further defined in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Rainbow Framework: Seven Clusters of Organization

Cluster	Cluster Definition
Manage	Decide who will conduct the evaluation and make decisions
Define	Develop a description of what is to be evaluated and how it works
Frame	Set parameters for the evaluation including questions, criteria and standards
Describe	Collect and retrieve data to answer questions about the program and its outcomes
Understand	Collect and analyze data to answer causal questions about outcomes and impact
Synthesize	Combine data to form an assessment findings for the program
Report	Develop and present findings in ways that are useful for the users of the evaluation

Note: Adapted from www.betterevaluaton.org

To further explore the Rainbow Framework, Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the seven clusters, associated tasks, and methodology and data collection options based upon the Rainbow Framework.

Figure 1

Rainbow Framework: Clusters, Tasks and Options

Note: Source, www.betterevaluaton.org (permission granted from Better Evaluation see Appendix D).

Figure 1 provides a brief overview of the Better Evaluation Rainbow Framework and further breaks the framework down by the seven clusters, associated tasks, and options for collecting data.

This study sought to implement a process evaluation to identify processes in place and those which may be necessary to strengthen the alignment of the goals identified by a nonprofit organization related to partnership development with external HBCUs and PBIs. This study identified the barriers to creating partnerships with HBCUs and PBIs and seeks to develop strategies to create more effective partnerships with HBCUs and PBIs. The Rainbow Framework served as the conceptual framework guiding data collection and the research design implemented to answer the research questions. Utilizing the seven cluster model by defining what was being evaluated, developing a logic model, deciding on the purpose and use of the evaluation, and determining what success looked like served to inform the nonprofit organization of strategies to support the growth of their partner network (Better Evaluation, 2022).

Scope of the Study

This evaluation focused on one education centric nonprofit organization and the partnership process taken by that organization to establish connections with HBCUs and PBIs. To maintain confidentiality of the nonprofit organization, the pseudonym, Instruction Planning Organization (IPO) has been identified and will be utilized throughout this study. Of the many programs and services provided by IPO, only one specific program within the nonprofit organization was the focus of this research study. The partnership program studied, works to build regional ecosystems that support accelerated associate degree attainment for students who are Black, Latino, or from low-income backgrounds (IPO). The partnership process was examined from the perspective of the nonprofit team who worked directly with the partnership program, and who sought to establish and maintain valuable relationships with their partners, an extension of their mission. The goal of the study was to highlight any barriers to the existing partnership process, to suggest strategies to remove barriers from the partnership process, and to identify best practices and strategies for creating and maintaining partnerships through a process evaluation.

Overview of Research Design

This evaluation study was based upon collecting data through the process identified by the Rainbow Framework. The Rainbow Framework organized the research design of this study in terms of the tasks that are often undertaken in evaluation (Better Evaluation, 2022). There were seven clusters that supported the framework and contributed to the methodology established for this study: manage, define, frame, describe, understand, synthesize and report (Better Evaluation, 2022). Table 2 expands upon Figure 1, to further provide guidance on the tasks within each cluster of the Rainbow Framework, and demonstrates how the framework served to create

alignment for selecting and choosing the appropriate method, strategies and processes for this study (Better Evaluation, 2022).

Table 2

Rainbow Framework Tasks

Cluster	Task
Manage	Understanding and engaging stakeholders, establishing decision making processes, deciding who will conduct the evaluation, securing resources, defining ethical standards, documenting processes and agreements, developing planning documents, reviewing evaluation and developing evaluation capacity.
Define	Developing an initial description, developing the logic model and identifying potential unintended results.
Frame	Identifying intended users, deciding on the purpose, specifying evaluation questions and determining the success criteria.
Describe	Determining sampling strategies and metrics and collecting, managing, combining, analyzing and visualizing data.
Understand	Checking results that support causal attribution, comparing results to the counterfactual and investigating alternative explanations.
Synthesize	Combining data for an overall assessment and generalizing findings.
Report	Identifying reporting requirements, developing reporting format, ensuring accessibility, developing recommendations and supporting future use.

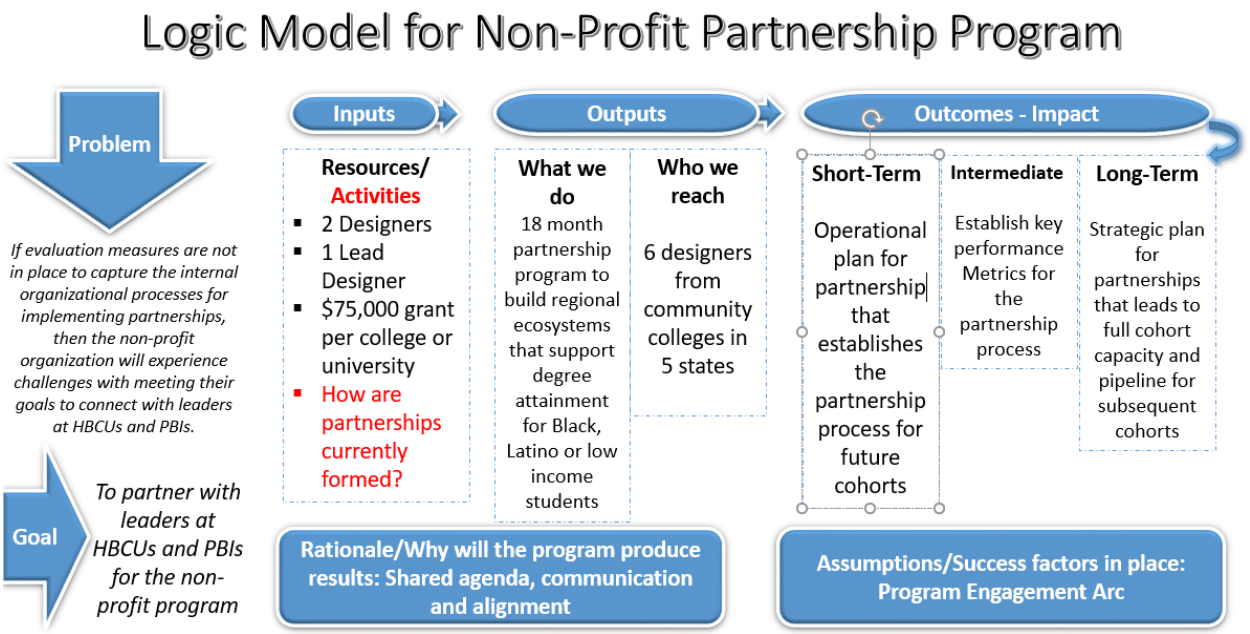
Note: Adapted from www.betterevaluaton.org

Part of the process evaluation involved creating a logic model to support the completion of the process evaluation using the Rainbow Framework. Logic models are the foundation of effective evaluation because they provide a thorough understanding of a program, its' resources, activities, and plans (Knowlton & Phillips, 2012) Completing the logic model process helped to

ensure the process evaluation yielded relevant and useful results (Knowlton & Phillips, 2012). Figure 2 is the logic model created for the education-centric nonprofit organization's partnership program and was developed at an initial strategy meeting with the organization.

Figure 2

Logic Model for Education-Centric Non-Profit Partnership Program



Note: Logic model created by Katina Townsend in preparation for the research design.

Organization of the Study

This study includes five chapters. Chapter one provides an introduction to the study. Chapter two provides an in-depth review of literature which focuses on an introduction to the research site, IPO, and its programs and partnerships, literature on community and education based partnerships, partnership success and literature from leading evaluation researchers. Chapter three provides details relating to the research design of this evaluation study. Chapter four provides an analysis and results based on the data collected at the research site, the education-centric nonprofit organization. Chapter five offers a discussion of the findings,

connections to scholarly literature, and practical insights and implications for practice on ways to secure and strengthen internal processes to inform partnership development for the organization, IPO, moving forward.

Summary

This study used the Rainbow Framework to complete a process evaluation of the partnership development that occurred between an education-centric nonprofit organization, IPO, that works with historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominantly black institutions (PBIs) who have expressed a need in strengthening this area of focus. Creating and sustaining partnerships in education can be challenging for many reasons and if partnership evaluation measures are not in place, then the nonprofit organization may experience challenges with meeting their goal to connect with leaders at HBCUs and PBIs. The evaluation of the partnership process relied upon the Rainbow Framework to guide the evaluation, whose seven clusters contributed to the research design.

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

This study examines evaluation literature from leading evaluation scholars. The foundational research necessary for this study was based upon the work of Michael Patton, an independent organizational development scholar and program evaluation consultant, and former president of the American Evaluation Association (AEA). Patton's research has yielded books on program evaluation, including utilization-focused evaluation where he emphasizes the importance of designing evaluations to ensure their usefulness (Patton 2018). Patton's work spans over 25 years including one of his latest scholarly works referencing the Rainbow Framework, used as the conceptual framework for this study (Patton, 2021; Better Evaluation, 2022).

This chapter provides an in-depth overview of the site selected, Instructional Planning Organization (IPO), examines scholarly articles on higher education and community partnerships, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominantly black institutions (PBIs) and community partnerships, and HBCUs/PBIs and community partnerships with nonprofit organizations similar to Instructional Planning Organization (IPO). This chapter also investigates the criteria, identified by scholars, that contribute to successful partnerships. Gaps in scholarly research are addressed, and an overview of IPO, the nonprofit organization, identified as the site, in the process evaluation study is provided.

History of Instructional Planning Organization and the Innovation Team

The site selected for this evaluation research is identified by the pseudonym, Instructional Planning Organization (IPO). IPO is a national nonprofit that brings a critical mix of expertise in higher education, K-12, talent development, policy and entrepreneurship. The organization believes that designing models from the learner perspective can address equity and skills gaps in

an incredibly dynamic world of work (IPO). Their motto centers around designing education toward the future of work (IPO). Headquartered in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States and founded in 2013, IPO's specialties include: Design Thinking, Education Innovation, 21st Century Skills, Micro-Credentials, Hybrid Post-Secondary Models, supports for the "New Traditional Student", Alternative Post-Secondary On-Ramps, Building Adaptive Leadership Capacity, Innovation, Equity, and Design. IPO is on the ground, applying their research and supporting institutions as they transform their models to respond to the changing needs of learners and employers. IPO has designed shorter and stackable pathways. They help colleges, universities, and employers design programs for working, rural, first-in-family, and parent learners with: "Earn and Learn" degrees that make school and work compatible and Micro-credentials and pathways tied to the needs of local employers that can stack to a full degree.

IPO catalyzes the transition to skills-based hiring. IPO is leading pilot programs with employers, colleges, learners, and workers to unlock and translate degrees into skills; to capture and credential all learning and make it visible to learners and employers. They put a special focus on 21st century skills, which are the biggest drivers of success and mobility, and the least credentialed.

IPO trains for human-centered design and change management. They offer a four-part design process, or targeted projects via immersive sprints and workshops, to train teams on key competencies, such as user-centered research, rapid prototyping, and pilot programs toward impact. They co-design campus innovation labs, diagnose innovation capacity and readiness, and facilitate change management workshops that equip institutional staff with a human-centered and learner-centered design process.

IPO scales solutions with equity at the center. They help move their highest impact pilot programs to scale and build communities of practice in key areas such as transfer solutions, 21st century skills credentials, and micro-pathways. They commit significant resources to the sharing of their learnings and insights from a decade of working with institutions and employers. They work with educators and workforce groups to design, implement, and scale equitable approaches that put today's learners on a trajectory toward meaningful careers and higher wage earnings. They measure success by the organization's influence in the creation and co-design of scalable education models that are more affordable, more relevant, more visible, and more portable for learners (IPO).

Since 2013, IPO has crafted a powerful, structured design and build process for colleges, high schools, employers, and regions to harness the capacity of diverse stakeholders to create living pilots that provide a laboratory for innovation and scalable impact. IPO has trained: 1,100 institutions and organizations in learner-centered design and innovation, 1,200 higher education leaders co-designing solutions, 2,100 education to workforce practitioners co-designing solutions, and 950 employers co-designing solutions.

IPO's impact model tracks progress toward scale with an equity lens. They begin with prototypes, preliminary versions of a learning tool, model, or process that provide a strawman to build upon. They then publish prototypes to share new learner-centered models as they emerge and invite others to take action. Together with their partners, they prepare the highest potential pilots for launch. These structured and deliberate implementations are observed and iterated. Their ultimate goal is to scale the best pilots to reach large numbers of learners, based on evaluation and learner satisfaction. IPO engages with partners in over 12 pilot projects and initiatives. This study evaluated the partnership process for the Innovators 2.0 initiative. To

maintain confidentiality of the nonprofit organization, the pseudonym, Innovators 2.0 is used for the partnership program. The next section provides a more in depth overview of the Innovators 2.0 initiative.

IPO Innovators 2.0: Accelerating Pathways

IPO invites applications from educational organizations to participate in projects aligned with their mission. Expanding upon the work of the first IPO Innovators cohort, Innovators 2.0 has an established goal to build regional ecosystems that support accelerated associate degree attainment for students who are Black, Latino, or who are from low-income backgrounds. A cohort of six innovators work with the organization for 18 months. The project kicked off in early June 2023 where the organization brought together cohort 1 and cohort 2 to talk about the project, the work which lay ahead, equity-centered design strategies to accomplish the work, and their reasons for investing in this particular sector of work. The organization's team met with each innovator and shared the data and evaluation needed for the project. Innovation sessions with the entire cohort have taken place monthly and the organization's team connects with each innovator individually on a monthly basis, or more if the innovator requests more technical assistance. Upon launching the cohort, the innovators brought together regional innovation teams to introduce the project, understand the current state of dual enrollment pathways and programs at the institutions, and to begin the design process for a blueprint for action. Innovators worked on pathways research including labor market needs and demand indicators for programs to consider, which serve to drive their list of stakeholders. Innovators Cohort 2.0: Accelerating Pathways connects learning from Innovators 1.0 to accelerate pathways for low-income students to earn an associate

degree within one year from high school graduation. This cohort brings together postsecondary leaders to build and enhance their regional ecosystem teams to design and activate accelerated guided pathways.

Over the period of 18 months, Innovators 2.0 will work with IPO to:

- Build their capacity to serve as regional transformation agents to align K-12, postsecondary, and workforce ecosystems
- Establish ongoing teams representing all regional stakeholders
- Learn human-centered design
- Co-lead design sessions with regional teams to build a sustainable, effective education to workforce ecosystem
- Provide rich user testing feedback on ecosystem alignment and other transformation tools
- Be a part of a lifelong network of leaders across the country seeking to reshape the learn-to-work journey
- Learn and train in IPO's human-centered design process alongside expert education designers
- Receive a grant award of $75,000 for their institutions
- Experience opportunities to share their work and amplify the ideas and voice of their regions
- Be mentored by the Innovators from Cohort 1 who created the tools that will be utilized and tested
- Gain first-hand access to ongoing organization's learning and initiatives, including access to the organization's novel community of practice and experts, institutional team

members, advisory groups, and peers from the organization's Community College Growth Engine and BRIDGES Rural initiatives

- This community will leverage design principles, blueprint for scale, and other elements designed to support learners from Black, Latino, and low-income backgrounds to complete an associate degree by one year after high school graduation

Innovators will:

- Participate in program convenings of all innovators (mostly virtual and up to 2 in-person 2-day convenings)
- Participate in bi-weekly design sessions with IPO
- Co-lead a minimum of 3 regional ecosystem sessions with IPO to be sustainable and create a pathway program
- Develop an implementation blueprint with the regional ecosystems design team
- Provide feedback on the use of each ecosystem tool used throughout the design process
- Participate in the Innovators Community of Practice and create opportunities for ecosystem stakeholders to participate as well
- Co-present with IPO to share the work of the Innovators 2.0

IPO defines regional ecosystems as regionally-focused, inter-industry, K-12, and higher education partnerships with centralized infrastructure, a shared agenda, consistent communication, and alignment across participating partners.

Innovators will build or enhance their regional ecosystem design teams that include members who:

1. Have an established active working relationship.

2. Demonstrate a commitment to shared goals and definitions, including racial/socioeconomic equity.
3. Include dedicated staff to lead the work and other ad-hoc roles for critical regional work.
4. Maintain a partnership structure for operationalizing the vision and delivering programs.
5. Have a demonstrable track record of pathway program/model development.

IPO relies upon higher education leaders from institutions who can commit to incorporating a set of guiding principles that outline the key qualities of associate-degree-by-grade-13 initiatives and the opportunities that they provide for young people into their initiative. IPO does not expect that applicants have each of the guiding principles currently in place, but that they commit to using the support and resources from the organization towards the principles and goals.

IPO's Principles and Goals for Innovators 2.0 Partnership

Principle 1: Enable young people to attain an associate degree through an additional year of formal education leading to good jobs and/or further education towards a bachelor's degree.

Goals: Students can earn, a minimum years' worth of high-quality program-aligned transferable college credit (a minimum of 30 college credits) by the end of 12th grade; a transferable, regionally in-demand, career-aligned associate degree by the 13th year; guaranteed acceptance to regional/state bachelor's degree programs upon completion of the associate degree.

Principle 2: Intentional, integrated curricular experience and integrated student support.

Goals: Provide career-aligned coherent program(s) of study that extends beyond introductory courses, designed around skills and credentials needed in specific middle- to high-wage, high-growth career clusters within IT, healthcare, business, or other high demand sectors in their region; Informed and validated by employers in these sectors, integrated learning and work experiences; Student perspectives and experiences are incorporated into the design of an ongoing

evaluation of the program; Quality postsecondary and career advising are provided to help students select and prepare for a range of postsecondary pathways offered; Student supports are embedded and span academic, career, financial aid, and social/emotional domains; Credit articulation/transferability agreements between and across institutions are established to maximize transitions; Programs are anchored to institutional brands that are recognized and valued in the local job market (as reflected in graduate employment rates).

Principle 3: Minimize transitions for students and ensure opportunities are available and equitably accessible for all students across the region and/or state.

Goals: Integrated into high school and institutional schedules and delivered through a range of high school model; Accessible to students across large geographic areas via partnerships and articulation agreements between degree-granting institutions and employers; To ensure accessibility, student support, coursework, and other learning experiences can be delivered in-person, virtually and in hybrid models; Incorporate intentional strategies to help prepare students for the rigors of college- and career-level coursework and experiential learning; Fully accessible and equitably available across student achievement levels (without exclusionary entrance or selection policies); Use data to regularly monitor student outcomes and ensure equitable opportunities and support.

Principle 4: Sustainable via public funding and affordable for students.

Goals: Draw on and bring together multiple sources of public funding (e.g. K-12, dual enrollment, 13th year, Pell/state financial aid, workforce) in ways that are accessible for both institutions and students; Require no or minimal tuition, and support students to navigate and address non-tuition affordability barriers (books, transportation, food, housing, etc.) (adapted from IPO website).

Factors That Contribute to Successful Partnerships

Partnerships are hard work, and they take time to develop (Wildridge, Childs, Cawthra, & Madge, 2004). Partnerships must be realistic and aim for what can be achieved, not be set up to fail by being too ambitious (Wildridge et al., 2004). Successful partnerships can achieve more than individual agencies working alone (Wildridge et al., 2004). An analysis of research on partnerships identified 20 critical partnership success factors, grouped into six categories. These 20 factors have been derived by the Centre through an extensive review of literature. Of the categories that are critical for partnership success, seven specific areas have been identified in the literature: environment, membership, process and structure, communication, purpose, and resources. Contributing success factors range from historical collaboration with a favorable political and social climate to skills in compromising, being adaptable and flexible, and having a shared vision (Wildridge et al., 2004). Success factors also attribute strong partnerships to those who share a unique purpose, have clear roles and policy guidelines, and whose members share a stake in the process (Wildridge et al., 2004).

To further explore the investment of resources to establish partnerships, research has considered the key stages of partnership development which include: 1) recognize and accept the need for partnership; 2) develop clarity and realism of purpose; 3) ensure commitment and ownership; 4) Develop and maintain trust; 5) Create robust and clear partnership working arrangements; 6) Monitor, measure and learn (Wildridge et al., 2004).

Additional scholarly literature affirms the findings above. Ostrander states that at “the forefront of successful collaborations is clear communication and understanding among all partners involved” (Ostrander & Chapin-Hoque, 2011 p. 457). The authors also state that

"commitment, which embodies the principles of mutual trust and shared goals, is essential for partnership success. Collaborations that failed to be committed, rarely experience success" (Ostrander & Chapin-Hoque, 2011 p. 457).

Evaluations

Michael Patton, leading evaluation researcher offers this definition of evaluation: "Evaluation involves making judgments about the merit, value, significance, credibility, and utility of whatever is being evaluated: for example, a program, a policy, a product, or the performance of a person or team" (Patton, 2018 p. 185). Evaluation is a process that critically examines a program and it involves collecting and analyzing information about a program's activities, characteristics, and outcomes (Patton, 1987). Its purpose is to make judgments about a program, to improve its effectiveness, and/or to inform programming decisions (Patton, 1987).

Professionals who engage in management or leadership roles have conducted some sort of evaluation, whether formally or informally (American Evaluation Association, 2024). Evaluation is often part of everyday tasks including deciding what to wear or prioritizing the various tasks before us. Criteria is weighted in order to make a decision, for example, cost, location, commitment of time and effort, and return on investment (American Evaluation Association, 2024). The evaluation profession has developed systematic methods and approaches that can be used to inform judgments and decisions; making judgments and decisions is involved every discipline, field, profession and sector, including government, businesses, and not-for-profit organizations (American Evaluation Association, 2024). Evaluations are used in different ways depending on the primary purposes of the evaluation and can be used to monitor how an effort is progressing (American Evaluation Association, 2024). Sometimes evaluations improve a program by collecting and using feedback from participants in a program (American Evaluation

Association). Evaluations can contribute to formulating a new policy or designing a program by discovering the needs of diverse people in a community regarding their areas of concern. Evaluations used for accountability ensures that funds have been properly spent to accomplish expected outcomes and decision makers can use evaluation findings to inform a major decision about whether to continue, expand, or end a program, like whether to continue a community project. Evaluations are used to learn lessons about what works and doesn't work, while identifying key success factors (American Evaluation Association, 2024). Evaluations can also capture and report the diverse experiences and perceptions of people with different backgrounds, those who share a particular culture, people with disabilities, and the poor and disadvantaged. Evaluators have developed special approaches to ensure that the experiences and views of diverse groups are included in evaluation findings (American Evaluation Association, 2024). Research points to two broad categories of evaluation, process and impact evaluations. Impact evaluations are intended to inform decisions about improving design characteristics from a formative perspective. For process evaluations a formative approach can be intended to inform decisions about improving implementation; a summative approach can inform decisions and when to stop and when to go on decision making processes (Rogers & Woolcock, 2023). This study utilized a process evaluation to provide the organization with critical metrics related to the process by which they follow to establish and maintain partnerships.

Rogers and Woolcock (2023) urge the consideration of *The intended beneficiaries* by considering the criteria for targeting, prioritizing, and inclusion. They further suggest that the idea of selection be considered as well as the process for engaging with the intervention. To clearly identify the percentage of the target population's engagement in the program by considering what worked well, for whom, and in what circumstances in terms of engagement, are

important parts of the process evaluation strategy. To give responsibilities to *The implementing organization*, research suggests that the characteristics of the entities or organizations implementing the program be considered and thoughtfully included (Rogers & Woolcock, 2023). When methodically approaching a process evaluation, the *Services offered* should be carefully identified, as well as the time period and specific dimensions of time, for example, were services offered in parallel or in sequence? Identifying whether a core package of services or a customized offering was acknowledged as well as the option for additional services for participants are ways to identify service changes over time (Rogers & Woolcock, 2023). *Implementation* processes can vary across (and within) implementing programs within organizations, groups, or locations; it is an essential step to understand who delivered the intervention, the selection process for that role and in what capacity they served. Considering any lead implementation roles and how were they prepared or trained so that the fidelity of the program remains intact is essential. By following the guidelines established by researchers, evaluators who choose to conduct a process evaluation can discern what works and what doesn't work, and can methodically identify the necessary components to generate a new intervention as well as potential barriers (Rogers & Woolcock, 2023). This study benefitted through the structured approach recommended by Rogers and Woolcock (2023).

Table 3 covers the types of process evaluations.

Table 3

Types of Process Evaluation

Type	When it is done	Purpose and focus
1. Chronicle	During implementation, before doing impact evaluation (efficacy and effectiveness)	Document what is done (especially in an innovation) to inform future evaluation or scaling up or document an intervention so that decision makers have a better understanding of it
2. Compliance	As part of impact evaluation (efficacy and effectiveness) or rollout/scale-up	Check that actual implementation matches planned implementation as part of an impact evaluation (fidelity) or as part of managing implementation (e.g., quality assurance of the performance of implementing contractors)
3. Translation	After impact evaluation	Identify and overcome barriers to implementation more widely and in other contexts
4. Improvement	As part of rollout	Improve implementation in order to improve results
5. Adaptive Management	In situations of rapid change and uncertainty	Support ongoing learning and adaptation in a complex intervention operating in an environment of unpredictable change and uncertainty

Note: Rogers, P., & Woolcock, M. (2023)

This study followed a chronicle type process evaluation. Chronicle type process evaluations document what is done in an intervention to inform decision makers (Roger & Woolcock, 2023). Another recommended practice is to couple evaluation with strategic planning. As goals and objectives are set, a desired vision of the future of the program, can help to identify ways to measure the goals and objectives and how information may be collected, analyzed, and utilized (EMI, 2004). This process helped throughout this study to ensure that objectives were measurable and the data collected could be used (EMI, 2004). Strategic planning can also be a good time to create a list of questions for an evaluation to answer. Another solid practice is to revisit and update the evaluation plan and logic model. Updating these documents on a regular basis, adding new strategies, changing unsuccessful strategies, revising relationships in the

model, and adding unforeseen impacts of an activity (EMI, 2004). Finally, building an evaluation culture by rewarding participation in evaluation, offering evaluation capacity building opportunities, providing funding for evaluation, communicating a convincing and unified purpose for evaluation, and celebrating evaluation successes are solid evaluation practices (EMI, 2004).

Evaluations and the Rainbow Framework

There were few scholarly articles referencing the Rainbow Framework for evaluation. There was only one article where Patton references the Rainbow Framework (Patton, 2021). This is due to the newness of the framework created by Better Evaluation in 2020. Although Patton is the only scholar who references The Rainbow Framework, Better Evaluation, the creator of The Rainbow Framework, references Patton's GUIDE framework as a resource for evaluations. In his book, Patton explains why principles matter for program development and evaluation and they can be used to navigate the uncertainties and emergent challenges of complex and dynamic environments. The book presents the GUIDE framework for effective principles referenced in Figure 3 below:

Figure 3

GUIDE Framework for effective principles: overarching and operating principles

Operating Principle ⇨ **Overarching Principle ⇩**	**Personal Factor**	**Engage Through Options**	**Observe, Interpret, Adapt**	**Evaluative Thinking**	**Leading Edge Inputs**
Guiding Wisdom	People matter. Learn about them.	Provide a process for comparing options.	Pay close attention to what happens.	Embed evaluative thinking throughout.	Offer relevant ideas, methods and models.
Useful Knowledge	Knowledge about participants guides and undergirds facilitation.	Review options and make choices that will enhance utility.	Keep the group moving forward.	Build coherence with evaluative thinking.	Inject innovative possibilities to solve problems and inform choices.
Inspiring Values	People's stories reveal aspirations, values and motivations.	Reinforce the importance of stakeholder perspectives and values.	Improve with practice.	Participants see the value of evaluative thinking.	Enlarge vision and enhance impact through creative possibilities.
Developmental adaptation	Knowing the participants facilitates adaptation.	Adapt options to fit the situation.	Read the group and adapt.	Evaluative thinking facilitates adaptation.	Adapt new approaches to the evaluation
Evaluable facilitation	Learn and attend to participants' criteria for success.	Evaluate progress and provide opportunities for feedback.	Solicit & use participants observations & interpretations.	Participants evaluate their progress.	Facilitate assessment of risks and benefits of innovation.

Note: Figure created by Katina Townsend based on the work of Patton (2018)

Overarching principles provide general and generic guidance for evaluation effectiveness as well as strategic guidance (Patton, 2018). Operating principles provide more specific guidance

for implementing the overarching principles (Patton, 2018). Operating principles can be thought of as providing tactical guidance for evaluations (Patton, 2018). The GUIDE framework offers overarching principles to accompany evaluation along with operating principles to execute in evaluation. The Rainbow Framework offers 7 clusters of tasks to conduct an evaluation and is more appropriate for this study because the clusters closely align to the research process.

Evaluation in Higher Education and Community Partnerships

In the evolving landscape of community-campus partnerships, the concept of evaluation emerges as a significantly contested phenomenon. According to Kuttner, Rawlings, and Washington (2023) during the Coalition of Urban Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) Community Engagement Evaluation Huddle, the approach, implementation, and implications of evaluation practices can evoke a wide range of perspectives among community engagement professionals (CEPs). This discourse is critical, as evaluation influences not just the collaborative processes between universities and communities, but also the outcomes of such partnerships.

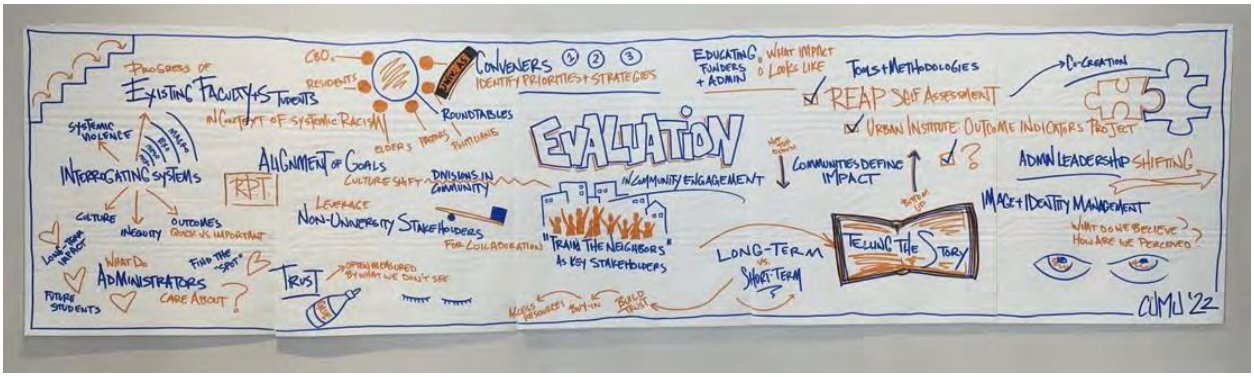
The conversation around evaluation in community-campus partnerships should shift from viewing it as a mere obligation to embracing it as an integral component of the partnership itself. This requires a fundamental transformation in how stakeholders approach evaluation. By fostering a culture of inquiry and mutual accountability, partnerships can co-create evaluative practices that are meaningful, responsive, and reflective of the diverse realities faced by communities.

In this reimagined landscape, evaluation becomes a shared learning process, promoting dialogue and collaboration among all partners. It can serve as a tool for empowerment, allowing communities to articulate their needs, aspirations, and understandings of success. By aligning evaluative efforts with the values and goals of those directly impacted by the work, universities

and communities can create more effective and equitable partnerships. Figure 4 below shows key themes and learnings that were recorded visually during the Coalition of Urban Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) Community Engagement Evaluation Huddle (Kuttner, Rawlings, & Washington, 2023).

Figure 4

Visual notes from the 2022 CUMU conference huddle.



Note: Visual notes from the 2022 CUMU conference huddle. (Kuttner, Rawlings, & Washington, 2023 permission granted from CUMU see Appendix E)

In a world where collaboration between higher education institutions and communities is key to addressing societal challenges, a recent conference identified six promising directions to enhance the evaluation of campus and community partnerships. Among these, two themes stood out, addressing critical gaps in the evaluation process: Community-Driven Evaluation and Evaluating Relationships. Both themes speak to the necessity of deepening the partnership evaluation framework to ensure that these alliances are effective and mutually beneficial (Kuttner, Rawlings, & Washington, 2023).

One of the most pressing concerns raised during the conference was the limited involvement of community partner voices in the evaluation processes. Despite a long-standing awareness of this issue—highlighted over fifteen years ago—there has been little progress in ensuring that

evaluations truly reflect the perspectives and needs of community partners (Kuttner, Rawlings, & Washington, 2023). This lack of representation can result in assessments that do not accurately capture the benefits or challenges faced by community partners, thereby undermining the effectiveness of the partnerships themselves (Kuttner, Rawlings, & Washington, 2023).

The call for community-driven evaluation stresses the importance of integrating the voices of these partners from the beginning of the evaluation process (Kuttner, Rawlings, & Washington, 2023). By actively engaging community members in discussions about goals, outcomes, and measurement strategies, the evaluations can become more relevant and transformative (Kuttner, Rawlings, & Washington, 2023). This partnership not only honors the contributions of the community but also enriches the evaluative process by introducing diverse perspectives that can lead to more meaningful insights (Kuttner, Rawlings, & Washington, 2023).

Another key theme discussed at the conference was the evaluation of relationships, which are intrinsic to the success of partnerships (Kuttner, Rawlings, & Washington, 2023). Relationships can be complex, multifaceted, and, at times, challenging to quantify. Yet, they play a critical role in partnership dynamics, influencing both process and outcomes (Kuttner, Rawlings, & Washington, 2023). To address this complexity, the conference recommended using a logic model at the onset of evaluations to systematically analyze these relationships.

In traditional logic models, relationships can be conceptualized as inputs that inform activities, leading to short-term outcomes and ultimately impacting long-term goals. By framing relationships within this model, evaluators can better understand how interpersonal dynamics contribute to the success or challenges of the partnership (Kuttner, Rawlings, & Washington, 2023). This analytical approach provides a structured way to define and measure the relational

aspects that are crucial for sustaining effective collaborations between higher education institutions and communities (Kuttner, Rawlings, & Washington, 2023).

Despite the importance of these themes, current literature often lacks a thorough examination of the partnership itself as a central unit of analysis (Bushouse, 2005; Worrall, 2007). Much of the research has focused on individual partners' experiences with specific institutions (Bushouse, 2005; Worrall, 2007), rather than investigating the partnership holistically. This gap highlights the need for further studies that not only capture the voices of all partners involved, but also analyze the partnership dynamics in a more integrated manner (Sandy and Holland, 2006).

By embracing the promising directions of community-driven evaluation and evaluating relationships, stakeholders in campus-community partnerships can enhance their evaluation processes (Kuttner, Rawlings, & Washington, 2023). As communities set forth to implement evaluation strategies, potential exists for richer, more equitable, and insightful evaluations that can ultimately lead to more impactful partnerships (Kuttner, Rawlings, & Washington, 2023). As the dialogue continues, the emphasis on collaborative voices and relational dynamics will be key in shaping the future of these vital connections (Kuttner, Rawlings, & Washington, 2023).

Evaluation in HBCUs and Community Partnerships

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) hold a unique place within the landscape of American higher education (Lowe, 2008). Established primarily to provide educational opportunities to Black students who were denied access to mainstream universities, these institutions are deeply rooted in a mission centered around social justice and community service (Lowe, 2008). Despite this significant mandate, the role of HBCUs in fostering university-community partnerships remains an area that warrants greater attention and exploration (Lowe, 2008).

According to Lowe (2008), HBCUs are dedicated to engaging students in efforts that enhance the welfare of their communities, particularly for underserved populations that are predominantly Black. The emphasis on instruction and service underscores their commitment to solving societal problems while challenging the prevailing status quo (Lowe, 2008). This mission aligns perfectly with the historical context of these institutions, which were founded in a quest for educational equity and social justice (Lowe, 2008).

Primarily concentrated on undergraduate education, HBCUs have adopted a dual focus on teaching and service as a means of fulfilling their social mission (Lowe, 2008). Professors and faculty members often take on the dual roles of educators and community servants, seeking to inspire students to not only excel academically, but also to become catalysts for positive change within their communities (Lowe, 2008). This focus fosters a sense of responsibility among students, encouraging them to apply their academic knowledge toward solving real-world problems (Lowe, 2008).

However, the heavy emphasis on teaching and community service comes at a significant cost (Lowe, 2008). Faculty members frequently find themselves overburdened with teaching assignments and service commitments, leaving little time to cultivate meaningful relationships that are essential for establishing robust community partnerships (Lowe, 2008). The unintended consequence of this scenario is a missed opportunity for collaboration—an area in which HBCUs could leverage their rich historical legacy of addressing the unique challenges faced by Black and low-income communities (Lowe, 2008).

As we reflect on the important mission of HBCUs and their commitment to social justice, it becomes clear that fostering university-community partnerships should not be viewed merely as an ancillary task (Lowe, 2008). Rather, it should be considered essential to their core purpose.

By adjusting expectations and providing the necessary support to faculty members, HBCUs can shift the paradigm to enable collaboration to thrive (Lowe, 2008).

Institutions should explore models of engagement that allow for meaningful interaction between students, faculty, and the community (Lowe, 2008). This could involve creating incentives for faculty to participate in community service, establishing dedicated units that focus on outreach efforts, or integrating community engagement into the academic curriculum (Lowe, 2008). Such actions can create a sustainable framework that allows HBCUs to amplify their social impact (Lowe, 2008).

Gaps in Literature

There are several gaps in literature around the subject of partnership and evaluations. Some commentators agree that there is "no universally accepted definition of partnership or that it is rare to find one" (Wildridge et, al. 2004, p. 3). There is a lack of tools available to assist in establishing the readiness for partnership for colleges and universities. There is limited literature available that examines partnerships with HBCUs and PBIs with nonprofit organizations similar to IPO. Finally, there is limited literature that examines partnerships from the nonprofit organization's perspective (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Sandy & Holland, 2006).

Conclusion

The study of evaluation is backed by research and processes formed by evaluation researcher Michael Patton and the American Evaluation Association. Better Evaluation offers the Rainbow Framework for Evaluation as a method for monitoring and evaluation based on the work of evaluation scholar Michael Patton (Better Evaluation, 2022; Patton, 2018). This literature review defined the factors that contribute to successful partnerships. It examined evaluations in higher education and community partnerships and evaluations in HBCUs and community partnerships.

There was no literature on community partnerships with organizations similar to IPO and HBCUs. The literature review also included an overview of IPO, the nonprofit organization used in this evaluation study.

This literature review accomplished the following objectives: defined factors for successful partnerships and evaluations and examined partnership evaluations which will influence outcomes of the research. The review of relevant literature supported the reliability of the Rainbow Framework to conduct a process evaluation (Better Evaluation, 2022). Finally, by highlighting the gaps in current research it illustrates the need for additional research on the formation of partnerships between nonprofit organizations and HBCUs and PBIs from the perspective of the nonprofit organization since most research is around partnerships and partnership outcomes are from the college or university perspective.

The next chapter describes the research methodology used to collect and analyze data using the Rainbow Framework for evaluation.

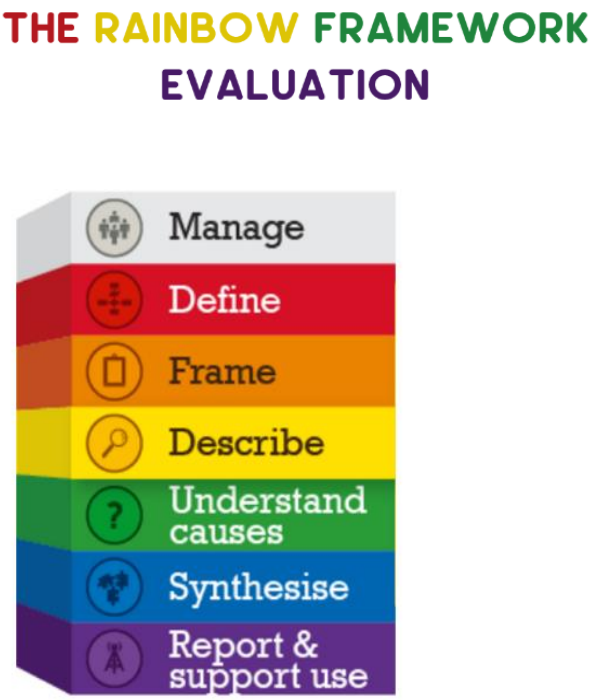
CHAPTER 3

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to complete a process evaluation of the partnership development process between an education-centric nonprofit organization and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominantly black institutions (PBIs) using the Rainbow Framework. A process evaluation informed the process produced by an intervention, in this particular study the process identified was the development of partnerships (Better Evaluation, 2022). A process evaluation was completed because a need to understand the impacts produced from the partnership development process was identified by the site. The connection between the nonprofit organization's strategies and priorities were better aligned through conducting a process evaluation (Better Evaluation, 2022). This evaluation resulted in identifying improvements to the partnership development process by producing findings on what was working throughout the process and what areas of the process needed improvement. Figure 5 provides an overview of the Rainbow Framework and the seven clusters used in this evaluation study.

Figure 5

7 Clusters of the Rainbow Framework



Note: www.betterevaluaton.org permission to use image located in Appendix D.

Rationale of Research

A process evaluation was the best method for evaluating the partnership development process because it supported a reliable and credible evaluation (Patton, 1998). A logic model was completed to ensure that the evaluation was sound (Cooksy, Gill, & Kelly, 2001). The logic model examined the partnership development process in practice. The purpose of the logic model was to produce useful results from the evaluation of the partnership development process (Cooksy, Gill, & Kelly, 2001; Better Evaluation, 2022). The Rainbow Framework was the evaluation design chosen for this process evaluation because it organized the tasks in clusters which simplified the evaluation (Better Evaluation, 2022; Patton 2018). There are seven key

clusters in the Rainbow framework, including: manage, define, frame, describe, understand, synthesize and report (Better Evaluation, 2022).

Research Design

A process evaluation provided information about the observed changes or 'impacts' produced by an intervention (Better Evaluation, 2022). The changes that occurred in this process evaluation could "…be positive or negative, intended or unintended, but the process evaluation must highlight a reason for the changes" (Better Evaluation, 2022, web n.p.). Scholarly research relies upon the definition of observed changes provided by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee, which states, "Positive and negative, primary and secondary long term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended" (Chianca, 2008, p.43). This definition implies that a process evaluation goes beyond describing or measuring impacts and seeks to understand the role of the intervention in producing the impacts (Better Evaluation, 2022; Chianca, 2008). This process evaluation relied upon the Rainbow Framework created by Better Evaluation and based upon the work of Michael Patton (2012).

The Rainbow Framework guided the study and considered the research questions, data collected through interviews, and follow up communication occurred to secure related documents for the document analysis. Interviews with the education-centric nonprofit organization team were conducted and contributed to the data collection process. Data was analyzed to get an understanding of the factors that impact creating and maintaining partnerships between the nonprofit organization and HBCUs and PBIs, from the internal perspective of the nonprofit. Current and relevant literature and other documents including websites supported this

process evaluation. To demonstrate the methodology which took place in this study the below format was based upon the Rainbow Framework (2022) and followed.

Clusters (Rainbow Framework, 2022)

Manage: Stakeholders were engaged early in the process (recruitment/sample)

Define: A logic model was developed early in the process to establish connections with goals

Frame: Research questions were specified to guide the process evaluation

Describe: Data was collected, retrieved, and analyzed

Understand Causes: Questions about impacts and outcomes were discovered through the identification of themes

Synthesize: Findings were uncovered & generalizable only to the specific organization that participated

Report and Support Use: Upon completion, findings will be shared out with stakeholders

Research Question

This study investigated, through an evaluative lens, the approach one nonprofit organization took towards establishing and maintaining partnerships with HBCUs and PBIs. The overarching research question that guided this process evaluation dissertation was: *How can a process evaluation help to strengthen alignment with the goals of an education-centric nonprofit organization in the development of partnerships with HBCUs and PBIs?*

Two sub-questions included:

1. What are the barriers to creating partnerships between HBCUs and PBIs and the nonprofit organization and how can those barriers be successfully navigated?

2. What strategies are recommended for developing effective partnerships between the education-centric nonprofit organization and HBCUs and PBIs?

The goal of the study was to define the current partnership process through the development of an initial description of the partnership process, using the logic model to understand how the partnership process worked and to identify any potential unintended outcomes. The primary users of the process evaluation included the internal stakeholders at the education-centric nonprofit organization. The process evaluation findings are discussed in a future chapter and are intended to be used to inform decision making in the partnership process and to provide strategies to achieve the nonprofit organization's partnership goals.

Recruitment of Participants & Sample Selection

The Rainbow Framework states that "sampling is the process of selecting units (e.g., people, organizations, time periods) from a population of interest, studying these in greater detail and then drawing conclusions" (Better Evaluation, 2022, n.p.). The Rainbow Framework offers three clusters of sampling options: Probability, Convenience and Purposeful. This study was conducted using purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to intentionally select participants based on their characteristics and their knowledge or experience (Patton, 2015). Within purposeful sampling, this study used the criterion sampling strategy which involved the identification of a particular criterion of importance (Patton, 2015). In the case of this study, the criteria of importance for the sample population included the connection to the education-centric nonprofit organization's partnership program. The researcher interviewed four of the nonprofit organization's internal stakeholders that work directly with the partnership program and the nonprofit organization's partnership program's second cohort completed a survey. The study participants were identified based on this criterion.

Population

The six study participants included two groups, four participants from the nonprofit organization's internal stakeholders who worked with the non-profit partnership program and two participants (PBI and HSI) from the partnership program's second cohort, a group selected by the nonprofit to participate in programmatic offerings. The nonprofit organization population represents stakeholders and participants who were directly tied to the education-centric nonprofit organization's partnership program. This population was involved in the process evaluation and helped to ensure accurate data, contributed to a deeper understanding of the data, and allowed the researcher to identify appropriate recommendations and report quality findings (Gujit, 2014). The study included the distribution of a survey (Appendix A), which collected demographic data from the participants. The demographic survey was launched in May and sent to five of the nonprofit organization's internal stakeholders. Four of the five internal stakeholders completed the demographic survey within one week. The study also included a cohort survey (Appendix B) which collected demographic data and answers to partnership questions from the six-member cohort which included a PBI and HSI. Two of the six cohort members completed the survey in June. The two cohort members that completed the survey were from the PBI and HSI.

Data Sources

Collecting and retrieving data falls within the ***Describe*** cluster of the Rainbow Framework (Better Evaluation, 2022). This study collected information from both individual participants and program documents. Sources of data included transcripts collected from individual interviews held with four of the nonprofit organization's internal stakeholders, questionnaires and surveys created by the researcher based upon the research questions included in the study completed by two members of the current cohort and program documents provided by the nonprofit organization. Questionnaires and surveys were completed by nonprofit organization's internal

and external stakeholders in the current program cohort and in the initial plan for this study a focus group was included; however, due to conflicts with the stakeholder's times and commitments, this part of data collection pivoted to a survey. The survey was designed to maintain the confidentiality of the participants, and the data collected resulted in the collection of descriptive statistics, representing demographic variables for the purpose of describing the internal and external stakeholders without using their names. A document analysis of the education-centric nonprofit organization's website and internal program documents was also completed.

Data Collection

Interviews with the nonprofit organization's four internal stakeholders were conducted along with a survey completed by two of the nonprofit organization's external stakeholders that are in the current program cohort. Additionally, a document analysis was supported by the nonprofit organization's website and program documents. Data was collected from the four internal stakeholders via one-on-one structured interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The interviews were recorded and transcribed using Zoom software. The interviews ranged from approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The researcher utilized their password protected Google drive, university Zoom account, hard drive, and flash drive stored in a secure location, to store all data consistent with the expectations of data security mentioned in the Rainbow Framework process.

The Rainbow Framework supported the organization of data collection tasks into five clusters (Better Evaluation, 2022).

1. Information from individuals such as interviews
2. Information from group such as a focus group

3. Observation such as attending a team meeting and taking notes
4. Physical measurements
5. Reviewing existing records and data such as the website, program outline and application

Data Analysis

The ***Describe*** cluster of the Rainbow Framework (Better Evaluation, 2022) uncovered data analysis processes, which provided recommendations for investigating patterns in data. Data analysis involved several steps: 1) creating a compilation of the data, 2) disassembling the data, 3) reassembling the data, 4) making sense of the data, 5) building upon what was collected to generate an explanation of the data, and 6) drawing conclusions based upon a collection of all data (Yin, 2003). The process of collecting data from multiple sources for the evaluation created space for data triangulation which occurred between the collection of interview transcripts, member checking, and the analysis of documents which ultimately led to the convergence of evidence (Yin, 2018). The data was analyzed using a textual analysis method called thematic coding which is a form of qualitative analysis that involves identifying passages of text that are linked by a common theme (Gibbs, 2007). This allows the researcher to create categories and establish a framework of themes (Gibbs, 2007). Thematic analysis was completed for both the one on one interviews and the cohort surveys. The first step in thematic analysis included selecting quotations and statements from the interviews and surveys that supported the research question. The second step identified keywords from the quotations and statements. The third step was to code the keywords. The researcher completed the coding manually. The final step was to identify themes from the codes. An example of the researcher's documentation of thematic analysis is represented in charts located in Appendix F.

Interviews were transcribed, then member checking occurred, allowing participants to review interview transcripts and offer corrections. Thematic analysis took place last to identify themes. An audit trail of each interview includes the transcript and the notes and observations from the interview. The survey which included demographic questions is included in Appendix A. The questions designed to collect additional qualitative data to replace the focus groups is included in Appendix B. The interview protocol is provided in Appendix C.

Document Analysis

The ***Describe*** cluster of the Rainbow Framework (Better Evaluation, 2022) framed the document analysis process. The ***Describe*** cluster includes the task of collecting and retrieving data around activities, results or other factors (Better Evaluation, 2022). The ***Describe*** cluster examines 5 types of data collection activities including existing documents and data which was the basis of the document analysis (Better Evaluation, 2022). Included in existing documents and data are six examples, inclusive of project records which were used in the document analysis for this research (Better Evaluation, 2022). This research examined the following project records: nomination, application, and interview forms, data and rubrics, cohort selection framework documents and applicant maps.

The documents allowed the researcher to collect and retrieve data about the activities and outcomes of the partnership process at IPO by investigating patterns in the document data. Through the document analysis process data was gathered around the formation of the Innovators 2.0 partnership cohort. The document analysis influenced the strategies and recommendations for improving the partnership process with HBCUs and PBIs and helped to answer the research questions. The document analysis offered insights to best practices for partnership and future research.

Ethical Issues

North Carolina State University confirmed Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for process evaluations are not required. In addition, the researcher sought information from the research site regarding any necessary approvals for conducting the evaluation and there were no requirements. Despite there being no IRB requirements, the researcher maintained consistent and ethical treatment of all participants, ensuring a thorough explanation of the study, their role, how the data would be used, and reviewed the confidentiality requirements. Before each interview was digitally recorded, the researcher confirmed with each participant the purpose of the process evaluation, benefits of the process evaluation, and collected participant consent to being recorded.

Summary

This chapter outlined the Rainbow Framework for evaluation methodology aspects including site selection, data collection and storage, and the specific stages of the process evaluation designed to explore the partnership development process between an education-centric nonprofit organization and HBCUs and PBIs. This study, conducted from the perspective of the nonprofit organization, involved structured interviews with the nonprofit organization's internal stakeholders, surveys completed by the current program cohort and a document analysis of the program documents. This study was specific to the experiences of a unique education-centric nonprofit organization. Data and findings are not generalizable to other studies.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to complete a process evaluation of the relationship development process between a non-profit educational program and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominantly black institutions (PBIs) using the Rainbow Framework (Better Evaluation, 2022; Patton 2021). Following a process evaluation, guided the recommended interventions. In this study, the organization identified a need for their approach to relationship development to be explored and the researcher relied upon a process evaluation to identify potential areas for improvement. The nonprofit organization supplied the data needed to conduct the process evaluation which included application and programmatic documents, including a historical context of the program. The nonprofit organization's partnership strategies were analyzed through a process evaluation. The evaluation was aimed at identifying potential areas for improvement in the partnership development process and provided findings on what worked throughout the process and areas of the process that could be improved.

Through data collection, which included structured interviews, survey questionnaire responses and a document analysis, findings were revealed. Six participants described their partnership experiences with the site, through a combination of interview and survey data. Interview data provided results that identified the effects that interpersonal factors played in the establishment and maintenance of partnerships at IPO. The research findings presented in this chapter are derived from the examination of the structured interviews, survey questionnaires and a document analysis. Structured interviews were conducted with IPO staff who engaged in work which contributed to partnership development. Interviews provided data in response to the research questions of the study, which examined factors that influenced the establishment and

maintenance of successful partnerships with HBCUs and PBIs, as well as obstacles that hindered the formation of these collaborative relationships.

This study included a total of six interview participants, which were assigned the following pseudonyms: Red, Yellow, Blue, Green, Orange and Purple. Of the six interview participants, four were nonprofit leaders at a southeast regional nonprofit organization with experience working in partnership with higher education and workforce communities, and two were higher education leaders - one at a PBI and another at an HSI. The interview participants ranged in age from 25 to 54 with half of the participants in the 45-54 age range. Fifty percent (*n*=6) of the participants reported that they identified as male, and the remainder identified as female. Of the six participants, 50% (*n*=6) were white and the remainder were non-white. Fifty percent (*n*=6) of the participants had completed a doctoral degree, 33% (*n*=3) had completed a master's degree, and 17% (*n*=1) had completed a bachelor's degree. Four of the participants worked in innovation and education design for the nonprofit sector and two of the participants worked in higher education as department heads.

Description of Research Design

This study relied upon a process evaluation utilizing the Rainbow Framework developed by Better Evaluation (2022) and inspired by the work of Michael Patton (2012). The study was guided by the Rainbow Framework, which involved exploring research questions, gathering data through interviews and surveys, and following up to obtain relevant documents for document analysis. Interviews were conducted with the team from a nonprofit organization focused on higher education and workforce outcomes. Surveys were conducted with the two of the members of the six-person cohort. The interview and survey data were analyzed to gain insight into the factors that affect the establishment and sustainability of partnerships between the nonprofit

organization and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominantly black institutions (PBIs). The current and up-to-date literature and other supporting documents, including website and application material, contributed to this evaluation process.

Using the Rainbow Framework, the researcher completed the following seven step evaluation process as described in Table 4 below, with a specific focus on the "Understand Causes" cluster for this chapter.

Table 4

Evaluation steps based on the Rainbow Framework

Cluster	**Task**
Manage	Understand and engage stakeholders
Define	Develop logic model
Frame	Specify research question
Describe	Collect, retrieve and analyze data
Understand Causes	Answer questions about outcomes/impacts
Synthesize	Generalize findings
Report and Support Use	Present findings to stakeholders

Note: Table created by Katina Townsend based on Rainbow Framework (2022)

Research Questions

The overarching research question that guided this process evaluation dissertation was: *How can a process evaluation help to strengthen alignment with the goals of an education-centric nonprofit organization in the development of partnerships with HBCUs and PBIs?* Through the data collection process, which included structured interviews, surveys and a document analysis, the researcher discovered three themes. Of the themes discovered, two, which included partnership readiness and implied partnership benefits, were identified to contribute towards

ideas which serve to strengthen the partnership development between the nonprofit organization and HBCUs and PBIs. Partnership readiness includes aligning the partnership goals of the nonprofit organization and the HBCU or PBI. Alignment work takes a significant amount of time because, in this study, the nonprofit organization had to navigate many higher education complexities, including culture, communication and resourcing. The time it took to overcome these complexities is why some partnerships never start or they start and decline. Partnership readiness also includes assessing the readiness of an institution to engage in partnership. The assessment should include current partnership capacity and past partnership outcomes, along with determining if developing and maintaining partnerships is included in the higher education institution's strategic plan documents. In this study, IPO could benefit from dedicating time to understand the readiness of potential partners.

The implication of partnership benefits has the potential to strengthen the partnership development between the nonprofit organization and HBCUs and PBIs. The partnership provides capacity building dollars which enables the higher education partners at HBCUs and PBIs to enable the work of the partnership. The capacity building dollars create opportunities for the HBCU or PBI higher education partner but there are times when the higher education partner is not aligned to how the funding for the program works. In this study, the higher education partner wanted to use the capacity building dollars, but not the way the partnership intended the funds to be used. This misalignment around the implied partnership benefit should be addressed during the partnership application process, so a clear understanding of how the funding is to be used is established in the beginning of the relationship.

Scholarly literature supports the outcomes aligned above in response to the overarching research question. Michael Patton, a prominent evaluation scholar, defines evaluation as the

process of assessing the merit, value, importance, credibility, and usefulness of whatever is under consideration, such as a program, policy, product, or the performance of an individual or team (Patton, 2018). Evaluation is a process that thoughtfully analyzes a program (Patton, 1987). It encompasses the gathering and examination of data regarding a program's actions, features, and results (Patton, 1987). Its aim is to evaluate a program, enhance its efficiency, and/or guide decisions related to programming (Patton, 1987).

The following, based on work outlined by Rogers and Woolcock (2023) contributed to identifying findings for this study in an effort to answer the research question:

1. The *intended beneficiaries* of the process evaluation was the education centric nonprofit organization and 80% of the target population was involved in the process evaluation through one on one structured interviews.
2. IPO is the *implementing organization*. IPO is an education-centric nonprofit organization located in the mid-Atlantic United States. The partnership application process includes applicants that were nominated (7) and general applicants (23). None of the 7 applicants that were nominated were from HBCUs or PBIs. 1 of the 23 general applicants was from a PBI. 17 applicants were selected for the interview process and 1 applicant was selected from a PBI. 6 applicants were selected for the partnership including 1 PBI and 1 HSI. No HBCUs applied for the partnership program.
3. The partnership with IPO offers the following *services* over an 18-month period:
    - A grant award of $75,000 for their institutions
    - Mentorship by the Innovators from Cohort 1 who created the tools that was utilized and tested

- First-hand access to ongoing organization's learning and initiatives, including access to the organization's novel community of practice and experts, institutional team members, advisory groups, and peers from the organization's Community College Growth Engine and BRIDGES Rural initiatives
- Belonging to a community serving to leverage design principles, blueprint for scale, and other elements designed to support learners from Black, Latino, and low-income backgrounds to complete an associate degree by one year after high school graduation

The first of two sub-questions which guided this study included:

1. *What are the barriers to creating partnerships between HBCUs and PBIs and the nonprofit organization and how can those barriers be successfully navigated?*

The barriers to creating partnerships between HBCUs and PBIs and the nonprofit organization included: use of the capacity building dollars and a lack of nominations or applications from HBCUs and PBIs and HBCU and PBI culture and resourcing. Each college or university partner received a $75,000 grant award for their institution which had to be used to support the partnership program; however, the HBCUs and PBIs already had ideas around how the partnership should work and how the grant would be used. This barrier could be successfully navigated by outlining the criteria for the grant during the application process so that expectations can be set around the partnership work and subsequent grant funding. Including this criterion in the initial partnership screening process would help to alleviate roadblocks later in the process.

PBIs make up less than 2% and HBCUs make up less than 3% of all higher education institutions in the United States (U.S. Department of Interior, Minority Serving Institutions

Program, 2024), which is another barrier to creating partnerships between HBCUs and PBIs and the nonprofit organization. A review, through the document analysis of the non-profit organization's internal communications revealed the nonprofit organization received 37 nominations and only one PBI and zero HBCUs were nominated to apply for the partnership program. The nonprofit organization received 30 completed applications, 7 applicants were nominated including one PBI, and 23 applicants directly applied to the partnership program without a nomination. Of the 23 applicants that directly applied to the program, none were from HBCUs or PBIs. Sixteen applicants advanced to the interview phase of the partnership program. None of those applicants were from HBCUs or PBIs. The one PBI that was nominated and applied to the partnership program was invited to interview once it was discovered that no HBCUs or PBIs had advanced to the interview phase of the partnership program. Six applicants were selected for the partnership program cohort including the one PBI that was nominated and applied to the partnership program. This barrier can be successfully navigated by establishing contacts and relationships with HBCU and PBI networks like the United Negro College Fund, the HBCU Faculty Development Network, the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education and others whereby the networks can be used to solicit applicants for the partnership program and learn how to navigate HBCU and PBI culture, which is another partnership barrier, creating a more inclusive approach to partnership development.

The next barrier to creating partnerships between HBCUs and PBIs and the nonprofit organization is HBCU and PBI capacity and resourcing. The nonprofit organization should rethink its inclusion strategies around the application process. When you review the length of the application and the limitations posed to the applicants with fewer resources, it could potentially exclude HBCUs and PBIs, which is why some HBCUs and PBIs dropped out of the

application process.

The final barrier to creating partnerships between HBCUs and PBIs and the nonprofit organization is cultivating relationships, i.e. overcoming the culture differential at HBCUs and PBIs. This barrier could be successfully navigated by developing relationships with HBCU and PBI networks like the United Negro College Fund, the HBCU Faculty Development Network, the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education and others and also engaging current the current PBI partner on what was successful in the partnership process and what needs to be improved so that the culture or resources at HBCUs and PBIs do not prevent partnership.

The second and final sub-question guiding this study included:

2. *What strategies are recommended for developing effective partnerships between the education-centric nonprofit organization and HBCUs and PBIs?*

Several strategies are recommended for developing effective partnerships between the education-centric nonprofit organization and HBCUs and PBIs including allocation of the nonprofit organization's resources during the application process. Participant Blue stated, "there are so many applications to review and that takes capacity which hinders completing a thorough review of all the applications and considering as many applications as the nonprofit organization would like to vet." This barrier could be eliminated by streamlining the application process to consider removing the nomination process. Only 7 of the 36 applicants that were nominated completed the application process and only 2 of the applicants that were nominated were interviewed. Only one applicant that was nominated was selected for the nonprofit organization's program cohort and that applicant was the PBI. Eliminating the nomination process would free up capacity for the nonprofit organization to review applications and cease following up on

nominations to determine if they are going to apply to the partnership program. Another strategy is to include partnership readiness questions in the application and interview process. The application and interview process could be further developed to include questions about current and past partnerships, identify the college's partnership strengths and opportunities, and explore how partnerships are reflected in the college's strategic plan documents. The final strategy identified is for the non-profit organization to consider designing a partnership readiness curriculum to engage future partners. This can be a new, innovative program that the education-centric nonprofit organization offers which allows colleges including HBCUs and PBIs to complete the partnership readiness program so that they can be considered as applicants for the next partnership program cohort. This strategy would serve two initiatives: ensuring college readiness for partnership, and building a pipeline of potential future partnerships especially with HBCUs and PBIs.

Emergent Themes

Three themes emerged from the data in response to the research questions: partnership readiness, partnership formation gaps and implied partnership benefits. A discussion of the themes is provided below. The themes are supported by the partnership critical success factors (Wildridge, Childs, Cawthra, & Madge, 2004).

Partnership Readiness

The partnership readiness theme consisted of three components, misalignment in partnership, adaptive partnership and overall partnership readiness. The misalignment component included opportunity areas from the nonprofit perspective and a strength area from the PBI higher education perspective. Participants Green and Blue from the nonprofit organizations shared that aligning ecosystems between higher education institutions and nonprofit organizations required a

significant amount of time and effort. This is identified in scholarly literature as partnerships require significant resources including staff, materials and time (Wildridge et al., 2004). Another misalignment component is the two distinct languages that are used in communication between nonprofit organizations and higher education institutions. Research implies that for partnerships to be successful communication has to be open and frequent (Wildridge et al., 2004). Finally, the culture present in higher education is constrained by numerous complexities, limiting its ability to effectively fulfill its purpose in partnerships with nonprofit organizations. Consistent with findings in this study, partnerships must have a shared vision to have success (Wildridge et al., 2004). The PBI noted alignment as a strength when partnering with the nonprofit organization stating that "the partnership was very open to the unique challenges of the area. The alignment from beginning to end was well planned." Another partnership readiness strength noted by both higher education institution participants was the adaptive ability of the nonprofit organization and the nonprofit organization's ability to pivot constantly throughout the partnership process, which is evident in research within membership and structure categories of process evaluations (Wildridge et al., 2004). Membership included the ability to compromise and process and structure included flexibility and adaptability as success factors.

From an overall partnership readiness perspective participants Green and Blue noted that many HBCU/PBI institutions are left behind because they lack the readiness to collaborate, making it essential for partnerships to be included in strategic planning documents at these higher education institutions. Educators and organizational leaders have sufficient tasks to complete in establishing and overseeing partnerships and must centralize the process to allow capacity for HBCUs and PBIs to participate. Understanding the reason behind the partnership and how it relates to the mission and vision at the college is vital to the success of the

partnership. Research approaches this part of the process as an environment category, a critical success factor in the partnership environment is a history of collaboration and partnership (Wildridge et al., 2004).

Partnership Formation Gaps

The partnership formation gaps theme consisted of three components, barriers to partnership, equity in partnership and overall partnership momentum. Barriers to partnership with HBCUs and PBIs included consideration of how different cultures deal with power differentials, which is supported by the environment category noted in process evaluation research, which includes a favorable climate for partnership (Wildridge et al., 2004). A trust barrier existed which surfaced as a higher education institution defense mechanism, which can keep institutions from fully letting partners in. Mutual respect and trust were noted success factors in the literature (Wildridge et al., 2004).

Participants Blue and Red participants from the nonprofit organization noted the capacity it takes to review so many applications, which can be a barrier to partnership formation along with using existing partner networks to garner applicants from HBCUs and PBIs. Again sufficient resourcing including staff and time are critical to forming partnerships.

Equity issues in partnership development were noted by participants Blue, Green, Yellow and Red and included the application criteria, specifically application criteria that the nonprofit grant funder asked the nonprofit organization to build in that left HBCUs and PBIs out. Almost all of the HBCUs and PBIs dropped out of the application process possibly due to the structure of the application. Participant Red stated, “you can’t do equity work if you exclude the folks who need the most help.” Notably missing from process evaluation research including success factors

identified by Wildridge, Childs, Cawthra, and Madge (2004), was an equity category which could strengthen the equity gap noted by participants based upon the interview data.

Finally, the nonprofit organization participants noted that they had a "human centered design." This simply means focusing on those who are most impacted by the partnership during the problem-solving process. The nonprofit organization's success measure of improving economic mobility and closing equity gaps for the students at the higher education institution partners is an indicator that the intentions are present. Findings aligned with the process evaluation purpose category research, because the non-profit organization and the HBI or PBI had a shared vision for the students (Wildridge et al., 2004).

Both higher education participants discussed the momentum involved in forming partnerships with the nonprofit organization. When partnering in general and with the nonprofit organization, participant Orange stated, "There is often very little time to cultivate relationships and get to know those participating in the partnership. The level of engagement is based on due dates, deadlines and tasks to complete. This partnership was different [nonprofit organization] as we met more frequently and meetings were not solely transactional. There was care and concern interwoven into each interaction." Participant Orange did not want the partnership to end with no additional communication or framework to continue engagement and dialogue. Participant Purple thought the partnership should focus on assembling a partnership team at the higher education institutions, but the participant also saw the value of a single, responsible individual.

***Implied Partnership Benefit*s**

The implied partnership benefits theme consisted of two components, value of the financial partnership benefit and overall partnership benefits. The partnership provided capacity building dollars important to enable HBCUs and PBIs to innovate and change. Capacity building dollars

was not a significant amount of money for a college, but the amount was large enough that solid partnership execution needed to be achieved, because the capacity building dollars will not last forever. The goal of the partnership and the capacity building dollars could be to provide tools and some funding so that the higher education institutions can continue the work well past the 18-month partnership timeframe.

The nonprofit organization had a design framework for the partnership program that through engagement between the nonprofit organization and the higher education institution, opportunity was created and goals that previously seemed impossible were made possible through the partnership. When engaging with HBCUs and PBIs this meant that there could be large gaps in the partnership process, but the partnership could potentially transform those gaps into big impact wins for the institution. There is a greater need for partnership at HBCUs and PBIs and through the partnership relationship with the nonprofit organization's leadership on the effort to create partnerships, partnership capacity at these institutions could be built. Scholarly literature suggests successful partnerships can achieve more than individual agencies working alone (Wildridge et al., 2004). Participant Green described the partnership benefit for HBCUs and PBIs as "they are either going to partner or peril."

Chapter Summary

The aim of this study was to conduct a process evaluation of the partnership formation process between an education-centric nonprofit organization and HBCUs and PBIs using the Rainbow Framework (Better Evaluation, 2022). A process evaluation was conducted to examine the impacts of the nonprofit organization's partnership development process. Conducting a process evaluation enhanced the connection between the strategies and priorities of the nonprofit organization around partnership formation specifically with HBCUs and PBIs. The purpose of

this evaluation was to pinpoint ways to enhance the partnership development process by highlighting successful aspects and areas that could be improved. The research results in this chapter are based on the analysis of structured interviews, survey questionnaires and a document analysis. Structured interviews were carried out to collect information in response to the study's research questions, which focused on exploring the factors impacting the development and sustainability of successful partnerships with HBCUs and PBIs and the obstacles that impeded the creation of these collaborative partnerships. Several emerging themes were identified in the data including partnership readiness, partnership formation gaps, and implied partnership benefits. These themes will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

The aim of this research was to discover methods that will assist a nonprofit organization in enhancing their partnerships with HBCUs and PBIs process evaluation. Through a systematic evaluation guided by the Rainbow Framework, recommendations for strengthening the nonprofit organization's approach to establishing partnerships provided valuable information including findings and recommendations on how their initiatives to establish and maintain partnerships with identified stakeholders at HBCUs and PBIs can be improved. This process evaluation focused on the strategies used to build and sustain partnerships between the nonprofit organization, and HBCUs and PBIs, as well as the outcomes of efforts. Partnerships were analyzed from the internal perspective of the nonprofit organization, as most research on partnership effectiveness has been focused on the viewpoint of external higher education partners (Ferman & Hill, 2004).

This research study focused on the internal stakeholders of a single nonprofit organization in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The organization operates with a similar mission to many other nonprofit organizations in the United States aiming to collaborate with higher education institutions, including HBCUs and PBIs, to create successful results for college students of color, low-income students, and first-generation college students. This research relied upon an evaluative method to collect data, including interviewing individuals who had active involvement in forming partnerships, a collection of data through surveys, and an analysis of documents. The internal stakeholders interviewed for this study had direct responsibility with establishing, engaging, and maintaining strategic partnerships with HBCUs and PBIs. The guiding research question included: *How can a process evaluation help to strengthen alignment*

with the goals of an education-centric nonprofit organization in the development of partnerships with HBCUs and PBIs?

Two sub-questions included:

1. What are the barriers to creating partnerships between HBCUs and PBIs and the nonprofit organization and how can those barriers be successfully navigated?

2. What strategies are recommended for developing effective partnerships between the education-centric nonprofit organization and HBCUs and PBIs?

The Rainbow Framework (Better Evaluation, 2022) was relied upon for the collection of data, which contributed to the results and findings of this study.

A summary of key findings identified potential barriers to the current practices of the organization to engage with external HBCU and PBI partners and helped to establish a baseline. Further, findings led to implications for policy and practice. Recommendations for practice revealed potential strategies the organization can take to build a plan for strengthening processes associated with their goal of increasing the number of HBCU and PBI partners and strengthening ongoing relationships with current partners.

Discussion of Key Findings

As a result of data collection and analysis, key findings were identified to establish a baseline for the current processes followed by the nonprofit organization to establish and maintain HBCU and PBI partnerships. Based upon an evaluation of the processes, results contributed to specific findings which serve to offer strategies to stakeholders which have potential to improve their strategies to initiate and engage with stakeholders specific to HBCUs and PBIs. According to Ferman & Hill (2004), research has approached the study of partnerships from the perspective of external partners in higher education, which excludes an internal assessment of the processes

taken by the nonprofit organization initiating partnerships with those agencies. The Rainbow Framework (Better Evaluation 2022), was created to offer an evaluation method to identify organizational processes and offers a seven-step methodology to complete the evaluation process. Data collected included interviews with internal stakeholders, survey responses, and a comprehensive document analysis. Analysis contributed to the results for the research questions and provided implications for policy and practice as well as recommendations for future research.

The discussion of key findings is organized by the research questions. Conclusions are also presented. Key themes emerged from the findings in response to the research questions. In response to the Research Question, the following themes were identified: partnership readiness, partnership formation gaps and implied partnership benefits.

The guiding research question included: *How can a process evaluation help to strengthen alignment with the goals of an education-centric nonprofit organization in the development of partnerships with HBCUs and PBIs?*

Alignment efforts require considerable time as the nonprofit organization must maneuver through numerous complexities in higher education, such as cultural differences, communication challenges, and resource allocation. The endurance required to navigate these challenges is the reason some partnerships never take off, or if they do, they end up faltering.

Next, partnership readiness also involves evaluating an institution's preparedness for collaboration. The evaluation should take into account the existing partnership capabilities and previous partnership results, as well as whether the establishment and upkeep of partnerships are reflected in the strategic planning documents of the higher education institution.

The final approach that will enhance the collaboration between the nonprofit organization and HBCUs and PBIS is the inherent advantages of the partnership. The collaboration offers funding for capacity building, allowing higher education partners at HBCUs and PBIs to benefit from the partnership efforts. The funding for capacity building offers valuable opportunities to HBCUs or PBIs, but occasionally, the higher education partner may not be in sync with the program's funding mechanisms. The higher education partners at HBCUs and PBIs aimed to utilize the capacity-building funds, but not in the manner that the partnership had envisioned the use. This confusion regarding the funding benefits of the partnership should be clarified during the application process to ensure everyone understands the intended use of the funding.

In response to sub question 1: *What are the barriers to creating partnerships between HBCUs and PBIs and the nonprofit organization and how can those barriers be successfully navigated?*

The obstacles to establishing partnerships between HBCUs and PBIs with the nonprofit organization involved the utilization of capacity-building funds, a shortage of nominations or applications from HBCUs and PBIs, and issues related to the culture and resources of HBCUs and PBIs.

Each college or university partner was awarded a grant of $75,000 for their institution, which was intended to support the partnership program. However, the HBCUs and PBIs already had plans in place for how the partnership would function and how the grant funds would be utilized. This obstacle can be effectively addressed by clearly defining the grant criteria during the application process, allowing for well-established expectations regarding the collaborative efforts and future funding. Incorporating this criterion into the initial evaluation of partnerships will help eliminate obstacles further down the road.

PBIs and HBCUs account for about 2% and 3% respectively of higher education institutions in the United States however they serve 9% and 8% of enrolled minority students (U.S. Department of Interior, Minority Serving Institutions Program, 2024), posing an added challenge for partnership formation between HBCUs, PBIs, and nonprofit organizations. The nonprofit organization received 37 nominations, including one from a PBI institution, while no HBCUs were nominated for the partnership program. The nonprofit organization received 30 completed applications. Out of the completed applications, 7 candidates were nominated, including 1 PBI, while 23 applicants applied directly to the partnership program. Among the 23 institutions that applied directly to the program, there were no applicants from HBCUs or PBIs. Sixteen candidates advanced to the interview stage of the partnership program. None of the interviewed applicants were from HBCU or PBI institutions. The sole PBI nominated for the partnership program was invited for an interview after it was discovered that no HBCUs or PBIs had advanced to that stage. Six candidates were selected for the partnership program cohort, including the sole PBI institution that was nominated and applied. This obstacle can be effectively addressed by establishing connections with HBCU and PBI networks, including the United Negro College Fund, the HBCU Faculty Development Network, and the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, among others. These networks can be utilized to attract applicants for the partnership program and to understand the culture of HBCUs and PBIs, which may present additional challenges to partnership. The next challenge in establishing collaborations between HBCUs, PBIs, and the nonprofit organization lies in the capacity and resources of HBCUs and PBIs. The nonprofit organization ought to reconsider its strategies for inclusivity regarding the application process. Upon examining the extensive requirements of the application, it becomes clear that it poses challenges for applicants with

limited resources, which includes numerous HBCUs and PBIs. The length of the application led some of these institutions to not apply at all or to withdraw from the application process altogether. This barrier could potentially be successfully navigated by streamlining the application process to reduce the amount of resources and capacity needed to complete the application.

The last obstacle to forming partnerships between HBCUs, PBIs, and the nonprofit organization is building meaningful relationships. Navigating the cultural gaps at HBCUs and PBIs can be daunting. This obstacle can be effectively addressed by fostering connections with HBCU and PBI networks such as the United Negro College Fund, the HBCU Faculty Development Network, the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, among others. Additionally, it is important to engage with current PBI partners to identify successful aspects of the partnership process and areas for improvement, ensuring that the culture and resources at HBCUs and PBIs do not hinder collaboration.

In response to sub question 2: *What strategies are recommended for developing effective partnerships between the education-centric nonprofit organization and HBCUs and PBIs?*

It is recommended to employ multiple strategies to cultivate successful collaborations between the education-focused nonprofit organization and HBCUs and PBIs. This encompasses the careful allocation of the nonprofit organization's resources during the application phase. Participant Blue stated, "There are numerous applications to evaluate, which requires significant resources, making it challenging to conduct a thorough review of all submissions and consider as many applicants as the nonprofit organization would like to assess." This issue can be addressed by streamlining the application process and removing the nomination stage. Out of the 36 nominated applicants, only 7 completed the application process, and just 2 were selected

for the interview process. Only one nominated applicant was selected for the nonprofit organization's program cohort, and that nominee was the PBI institution. Eliminating the nomination process would enable the nonprofit organization to concentrate more on reviewing applications, thereby removing the necessity to follow up on nominations to determine their intent to apply for the partnership program.

The second approach is to incorporate questions about partnership readiness into the application and interview stages. The application and interview process should encompass inquiries regarding existing and previous partnerships, identifying the college's strengths and opportunities in collaboration, as well as how partnerships are integrated into the college's strategic planning documents. The ultimate plan is for the nonprofit organization to create a curriculum focused on partnership readiness to attract prospective collaborators. This could be a fresh, groundbreaking initiative presented by the education-centric nonprofit organization, enabling colleges, including HBCUs and PBIs, to complete the partnership readiness program, thereby qualifying them as candidates for the upcoming cohort of the partnership program. This approach would support two key objectives: preparing institutions for nonprofit partnerships and creating a pathway for future collaborations, particularly with HBCUs and PBIs.

Implications for Practice

Since this study was limited to one education-centric nonprofit organization the implication for practice will be solely for the nonprofit organization.

Implication for Practice 1: Allocation of Resources

The nonprofit organization should consider the allocation of resources for the application process. The organization should examine if taking nominations is really working since only

19% (*n*=7*)* nominated institutions applied to the partnership program. Only 1 of the 7 (14%) nominated institutions that applied to the partnership program was a PBI and there were no HBCUs that were nominated. Of the 7 that applied only 2 or 29% were interviewed and none were selected for the partnership program. Participant Blue reveals "IPO reaches our through its networks and through partner networks but there are [many institutions] who would benefit from this work who are not in those networks." The nonprofit organization should redesign the partnership application and interview process so that HBCUs and PBIs are not excluded due to resource and capacity constraints that exist at these institutions. As the allocation of resources is identified research centering on how HBCUs approach partnerships highlights the need to generate a consistent communication process serving to clearly identify, through a fact sheet, the potential benefits of a partnership (Lawrence, 2024). By considering this approach through the lens of the non-profit organization a similar affect could be in place for starting conversations and facilitating new contacts.

Implication for Practice 2: Restructure Application

Reducing the length of the application and interview process would also improve capacity and resourcing at the nonprofit organization as it was noted during the study that the application review process is time consuming. Participant Blue stated "there are so many applications to review and that takes capacity. We may not have all the time [needed] to review them all thoroughly or we may not have time to seriously consider as many as we would like." More focus should be geared towards reviewing the application and interview process for inclusion to gain more HBCU and PBI applicants and ensure that both the application and the interview include partnership readiness questions including if partnerships are discussed in strategic and operating plans, department meetings and/or board meetings.

Recommendations for Future Research

The goal of this study was to identify strategies that could help a nonprofit organization improve its collaborations with HBCUs and PBIs. By conducting a process evaluation using the Rainbow Framework, the nonprofit organization will gain important insights, including findings and suggestions regarding their efforts to create and sustain relationships with identified stakeholders at HBCUs and PBIs. The evaluation process centered on the strategies employed to establish and maintain collaborations between the nonprofit organization and HBCUs and PBIs, along with the results of these initiatives. The analysis of partnerships was conducted through the lens of the nonprofit organization, since much of the existing research on partnership effectiveness has primarily centered on the perspective of higher education institutions (Ferman & Hill, 2004). The Rainbow Framework cluster seven provides guidance for developing recommendations including recommendation for future research. The findings of this study serve as a foundation for future investigations into the evolution and sustainability of partnerships between HBCUs and PBIs and nonprofit organizations. Recent research establishes the value of partnerships with HBCCs and PBCCs, specifically due to the challenges posed with funding being impacted by DEI legislation (Polk, 2024). Additional research is needed to validate or challenge these results. Additional research could be broadened to include the partnership formation process with HSIs which may expand on the themes that were identified during the current study. Although this study was qualitative in nature, aside from descriptive data, using interviews, survey questionnaires and document analysis to draw conclusions, another recommendation for further research would be to use the quantitative data from the application and interview scoring process to determine if there is a correlation between the applicant's scores and readiness for partnership. Further research should be conducted to determine if the application and interview quantitative data could be used to determine if there is a correlation

between the aggregate score and type of institutions and how scores could be interpreted through an equity lens i.e. schools that have more resources vs. HBCUs, PBIs and HSIs. Additionally, future research could identify focus groups to build a more robust data collection approach.

Study Limitations

This study was limited to the four internal stakeholders at one nonprofit organization located in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States and two members of the current partnership program cohort. Six participants may not be large enough sample size to reflect the partnership experiences of all nonprofit organizations. A larger sample size could have produced different results. However qualitative research is not intended to generalize study findings to other populations and this study is limited to the six participants within the nonprofit organization's partnership program. All participants at the non-profit organization and the members of the current program cohort were assured that their identity and the information they provided would be held in confidence. However, there could have been hesitation on behalf of the participants to be candid if they had concerns that information that was shared in the interviews or questionnaires would be available to others. Beyond application and interview documents referenced by some of the participants at the nonprofit organization, no other means of confirmation was used to confirm that the provided information was accurate or valid concerning the partnership process. The participants reported on partnership efforts that are ongoing until November 2024. The accuracy of their reports could be affected by changes in the partnership experience over the next three to four months.

Researcher Subjectivity Statement

For the purposes of this evaluation research study, the researcher journaled and took notes throughout the process to document thoughts and to make valuable connections during the data

collection and analysis process (Amankwaa, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Journaling is one way trustworthiness was established for this evaluation research study (Amankwaa, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During interviews and conversations with participants, the researcher did not ask leading questions and did not prompt participants towards specific responses during the interview (Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Maintaining a neutral tone was important to the researcher in an effort to offer a non-judgmental experience for the participants during the interview process (Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods states that a "subjectivity statement is a summary of who researchers are in relation to what and whom they are studying" (Riessman, Given, 2008 p. 844). The ***Manage*** cluster of the Rainbow Framework includes deciding who will conduct the evaluation (Better Evaluation, 2022). The ***Manage*** cluster provided structure on who should conduct and lead the evaluation. The researcher for this study was the identified evaluator and expert reviewer based upon qualification criteria including: completion of doctoral level coursework on evaluation and a service project completed during coursework with an education-centric nonprofit program. Consistent with the expectations of expert evaluators, the researcher served as an external consultant because of no connection or association with the nonprofit organization and the population studied. The researcher is a 51-year-old, African American female pursuing a doctoral degree at North Carolina State University at the time of data collection. The researcher's personal experiences and beliefs created no bias towards the research.

Conclusion

While limited to one specific education-centric nonprofit organization, this study, which is simple to reproduce using the Rainbow Framework, can be broadened to encompass various

nonprofit organizations that partner with higher education institutions including HBCUs and PBIs. A larger sample can benefit both the higher education institutions and the nonprofit organizations as they look to establish connections and expand their partnership networks. According to the information provided by the study participants, the partnership process had three emerging themes: partnership readiness, partnership formation gaps and implied partnership benefits. These themes along with partnership success factors (Wildridge et al., 2004) provide strategies for successful partnership formation.

The findings from this research indicate that examining the elements that influence effective partnership formation is essential and should be researched further to include partnership with HSIs, quantitative data analysis and equity impacts in partnership. Collaboration between HBCUs and PBIs and nonprofit organizations hold significant potential for the future as noted by Lowe that HBCUs often connect “town and gown” and noted from the education centric nonprofit organization higher education institutions must “partner or peril.”

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Demographic Survey Part I Questions

1. Which of the following best describes your age? Select one.
2. Which of the following genders do you most identify with? Select one.
3. Which of the following best describes your race? Select all that apply.
4. Please select your ethnicity? Select one.
5. What is the highest level of education you have completed? Select one.
6. What is your primary field of work or area of study?
7. What is the focus area of your work?
8. What is the ZIP code of your primary residence? Enter a 5-digit ZIP Code.
9. What is the ZIP code of your work institution? Enter a 5-digit ZIP Code.

Appendix B

Thank you for your willingness to share time by providing responses to this survey. The purpose of this confidential survey is to collect meaningful insights on the partnership formation process between your organization and HBCUs and PBIs.

The responses you provide will be held confidential and will not be shared in a way that will reveal your identity in any way. As a precaution any potential identifying information you share (names of colleagues, cities, specific program names, etc.) will be de-identified through bracketing, where I will replace a specific name with a more general term. The responses provided in this survey will be utilized to inform a process evaluation being conducted to fulfill research requirements for the doctor of education degree at North Carolina State University.

I anticipate this survey will take no more than 20-30 minutes of your time. The results captured in this survey are only accessible by the researcher, Katina Townsend and the faculty chair, Dr. Carrol Warren. If at any point you have questions related to content contained in this survey please reach out to one of us at the contact information provided below:

Katina Townsend, 919-622-3332 kjedwar3@ncsu.edu

Carrol Warren, 910-379-8035, clwarren@ncsu.edu

- Let me start by asking you to share some of the highlights of your experiences with the IPO partnership. What are some of the things that stand out as highlights and successes that you would want me to know about as I prepare to evaluate the partnership with IPO?
- Are there any things that have happened in the partnership process, directions taken, or decisions made that, with the benefit of hindsight, weren't such a good idea?
- Partnerships change, evolve, adapt, and develop new directions over time. What are your thoughts about what should be preserved (CONTINUE) as the partnership moves into the

future, and what strategic new directions or approaches (START) you think should be explored? Also what are your thoughts on what should end (STOP) as the partnership moves into the future?

- Sometimes in working with partners all the different elements do not quite align and there are some things that get out of sync. I just want to see if some things are not fully aligned, maybe different elements are not working together, or if there is some tension in how things work.
- This survey intends to collect your responses to explore the processes that have taken place since your engagement with the IPO. As part of a process evaluation, it is important to understand your perspective of the steps that have occurred. Based on what I've shared about this process evaluation, what would you like to have happen? What would make the process a success from your point of view?
- Based on your experiences with both the partnership and your experiences with other partnerships, are there any things you want to see avoided? Anything that worries you?
- Please use the space below to share information on how you engage in partnerships or form partnerships outside of the IPO.
- Please use this space below to share any additional information about your experience with the IPO.

Your experiences and perspectives are an important contribution to this research. Thank you all for participating and engaging with me for this research study. I appreciate your contributions. This will conclude your responses.

Appendix C

Interview Protocol - Individual Interviews

Welcome! I appreciate your time today. I anticipate this will take approximately 1 hour of your time. Are you OK with me recording our conversation? It will only be used for my note-taking purposes.

—----------

Pause conversation and press record in zoom…make sure the RED button is continuing…..

Thank you for your willingness to share time in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to collect data on the partnership formation process between IPO and HBCUs and PBIs.

Your responses will not be connected to your identity in any way and as a precaution any potential identifying information you share (names of colleagues, cities, specific program names, etc) will be de-identified through bracketing, where I will replace a specific name with a more general term.

I anticipate this interview will take no more than 60 minutes of your time.

If at any time you would no longer like to participate you may leave the zoom session.

The study will ask these interview questions of the non-profit partnership team:

1. Tell me about the project that focuses on developing partnerships with HBCUs and PBIs.
2. Why is the partnership important to the organization?
3. Why do you think the partnership is important to HBCUs and PBIs
4. How were the existing partnerships created?
5. What parties are involved from the nonprofit organization?
6. What parties are involved from HBCUs and PBIs?
7. Did the partnership develop as planned? Why or why not?

8. How did the HBCUs and PBIs contribute to the effectiveness of the partnership?
9. What are the barriers to creating partnerships with HBCUs and PBIs and how were you able to overcome those barriers? If so, how have you been successful? unsuccessful?
10. What characteristics make the partnership process ineffective?
11. What barriers cause the partnership process to be ineffective?
12. What could be done differently to make the creating and maintaining partnerships with HBCUs and PBIs more effective?

Thank you all for participating and engaging with me for this research study. I appreciate your contributions. This will conclude our time together.

Researcher will stop the zoom recording and end the meeting.

Appendix D

On Tue, Jul 16, 2024 at 8:13 PM BetterEvaluation <hello@betterevaluation.org> wrote:

Dear Katina

Thank you for getting in touch.

I'm happy to let you know that the content on BetterEvaluation is under a creative commons license, and is free to use and adapt so long as BetterEvaluation (and any named authors of individual pages) is attributed. You can read more about using and citing our material here: https://www.betterevaluation.org/getting-started/using-betterevaluation-material

However, please let me know which graphics you intend to use so I can check whether BetterEvaluation is in fact the copyright holder.

Warm regards

Simon

On Wed, 17 Jul 2024 at 03:13, Better Evaluation <noreply@betterevaluation.org> wrote:

Message

Good Afternoon,

My name is Katina Townsend and I am a doctoral student at North Carolina State University. I am working on my dissertation which is a process evaluation using the Rainbow Framework. I would like to get your approval to use two of your graphics in my research. I will give BetterEvaluation credit for the graphics. Please let me know if I have your approval to use the graphics.

Many Thanks,

Katina

Appendix E

Dear Katina,

On behalf of my colleagues here at CUMU, I give you permission to use the image. We do not have any other versions to share.

We hope your dissertation writing goes well, and would be grateful if you would share your final work with us when it is finished. We would love to read it!

Sincerely,

Stacey Johnson

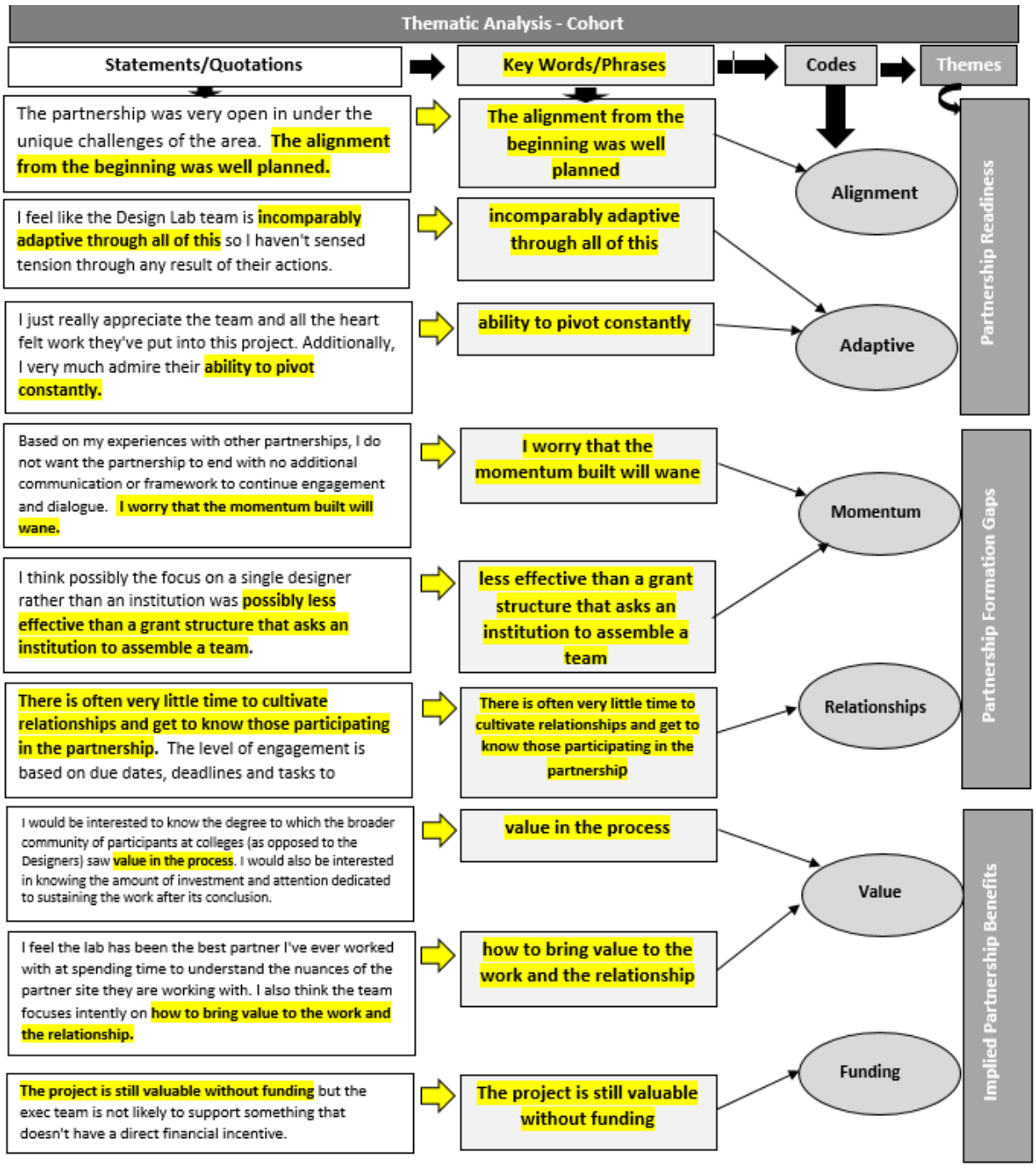
Director of Learning and Engagement

Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities

On Tue, Jul 16, 2024 at 12:26 PM Katina Townsend <kjedwar3@ncsu.edu> wrote:

> Good Afternoon,
>
> My name is Katina Townsend and I am a doctoral student at North Carolina State University. I am working on my dissertation and would like your approval to use an image from the CUMU 2022 conference in my dissertation. I will credit CUMU for the image. Please see below for the image and let me know if my use is approved. Also if you have a jpeg version of the image that you could share, that would be great.
>
> Many Thanks,
>
> Katina Townsend

Appendix F


Thematic Analysis - Cohort
Statements/Quotations
Key Words/Phrases
Codes
Themes
The partnership was very open in under the unique challenges of the area. The alignment from the beginning was well planned.
The alignment from the beginning was well planned
Alignment
I feel like the Design Lab team is incomparably adaptive through all of this so I haven't sensed tension through any result of their actions.
incomparably adaptive through all of this
I just really appreciate the team and all the heart felt work they've put into this project. Additionally, I very much admire their ability to pivot constantly.
ability to pivot constantly
Adaptive
Partnership Readiness
Based on my experiences with other partnerships, I do not want the partnership to end with no additional communication or framework to continue engagement and dialogue. I worry that the momentum built will wane.
I worry that the momentum built will wane
Momentum
I think possibly the focus on a single designer rather than an institution was possibly less effective than a grant structure that asks an institution to assemble a team.
less effective than a grant structure that asks an institution to assemble a team
There is often very little time to cultivate relationships and get to know those participating in the partnership. The level of engagement is based on due dates, deadlines and tasks to
There is often very little time to cultivate relationships and get to know those participating in the partnership
Relationships
Partnership Formation Gaps
I would be interested to know the degree to which the broader community of participants at colleges (as opposed to the Designers) saw value in the process. I would also be interested in knowing the amount of investment and attention dedicated to sustaining the work after its conclusion.
value in the process
Value
I feel the lab has been the best partner I've ever worked with at spending time to understand the nuances of the partner site they are working with. I also think the team focuses intently on how to bring value to the work and the relationship.
how to bring value to the work and the relationship
The project is still valuable without funding but the exec team is not likely to support something that doesn't have a direct financial incentive.
The project is still valuable without funding
Funding
Implied Partnership Benefits

Thematic Analysis - Nonprofit Organization		
Keywords	**Codes**	**Themes**
not a lot of money	Financial Benefit	Implied Partnership Benefits
we bring capacity building dollars but we won't be there forever, and we don't want to be because we're trying to teach people to fish right	Financial Benefit	Implied Partnership Benefits
capacity building dollars the education design lab provides are important to being able to enable that.	Financial Benefit	Implied Partnership Benefits
equisent design for partnership	Partnership Benefit	Implied Partnership Benefits
better relationships	Partnership Benefit	Implied Partnership Benefits
partnership benefit	Partnership Benefit	Implied Partnership Benefits
choose institutions that need you most.	Partnership Benefit	Implied Partnership Benefits
there is a greater need for partnership	Partnership Benefit	Implied Partnership Benefits
we create an opportunity. Space where things that previously seemed impossible can be possi	Partnership Benefit	Implied Partnership Benefits
big gaps and big impacts	Partnership Benefit	Implied Partnership Benefits
partner or peril	Partnership Benefit	Implied Partnership Benefits
culture power differential	Barrier	Partnership Formation Gaps
higher ed defense mechanism	Barrier	Partnership Formation Gaps
They have to switch to start over like letting us in.	Barrier	Partnership Formation Gaps
we can talk a good game.	Barrier	Partnership Formation Gaps
because there's so many applications to review, and that takes capacity	Barrier	Partnership Formation Gaps
partner networks	Barrier	Partnership Formation Gaps
HBCUS/PBIs dropped out	Equity	Partnership Formation Gaps
criteria you asked us to build in leaves these folks out	Equity	Partnership Formation Gaps
you can't do equity work	Equity	Partnership Formation Gaps
where the folks who need the most help	Equity	Partnership Formation Gaps
application criteria	Equity	Partnership Formation Gaps
improving economic mobility and closing equity gaps	Equity	Partnership Formation Gaps
core methodology is human centered design	Equity	Partnership Formation Gaps
ecosystem alignment work takes a lot of time	Misalignment	Partnership Readiness
bound by so many complexities that are confining and restricting their ability to truly serve	Misalignment	Partnership Readiness
culture that exists in higher Ed	Misalignment	Partnership Readiness
2 different languages that are spoken	Misalignment	Partnership Readiness
very visible display of misalignment	Misalignment	Partnership Readiness
oftentimes it's up to the players on the ground to solve for X in that equation.	Readiness	Partnership Readiness
are not the folks who are going to have the greatest readiness to engage	Readiness	Partnership Readiness
and so a lot of institutions then get left behind because they don't have the readiness	Readiness	Partnership Readiness
long term change	Readiness	Partnership Readiness
build the capacity and equip those who are to better serve people	Readiness	Partnership Readiness
we have enough work to do in building with managing partnerships that we need to centrally organize it. And we need to understand the purpose of these, how they connect to each other and to the work of the organization	Readiness	Partnership Readiness
conversations that never really got off the ground	Readiness	Partnership Readiness
show up in strategic plan documents	Readiness	Partnership Readiness