



## Request for Applications (RFA)

Issued by: Reinvestment Fund - HBCU Brilliance Initiative

### **I. Introduction**

The HBCU Brilliance Initiative is a national effort led by Reinvestment Fund to support Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) through capital investments, technical assistance, and strategic capacity building. HBCUs are critical engines of opportunity for first-generation students, low-income communities, and regions that face persistent underinvestment. This initiative addresses the long-standing systemic barriers that impact HBCU infrastructure, financial stability, and community impact. Through a cohort-based model, selected institutions will access \$40,000 grants, up to \$1,000,000 in loans, and a full suite of tailored technical assistance and peer learning opportunities. The goal: to elevate institutional sustainability, improve student outcomes, and advance community impact.

### **II. Program Overview**

Each selected HBCU will participate in a comprehensive 8-month capacity-building program, including:

- \$40,000 Pre-Development Grant
- Access to Up to \$1M in loans in capital-intensive projects
- Technical Assistance Modules
- Strategic Planning Support
- Collaborative Peer Convenings

Projects may include campus upgrades, community development, tech innovation spaces, housing, and more. Institutions will co-design elements of the program to ensure relevance and alignment with local priorities.

### **III. Eligibility**

Eligible applicants must:

- Be a federally designated and accredited HBCU.
- Demonstrate institutional need (e.g., high Pell enrollment, low endowment).
- Have board and executive support for participation.
- Exhibit readiness for strategic or capital project development.
- Commit to the co-creation of a collaborative cohort experience.

### **IV. Funding Details**

- Grant Support: \$40,000 (per institution) for pre-development and planning.
- Capital Financing: Up to \$1M available through flexible loan products.
- Loan Terms: 10-year term, with repayment beginning in Year 9. Disbursements based on milestone completion.

Grants and loans can support separate or related projects based on institutional priorities. Institutions will work with Reinvestment Fund to align investments with their strategic goals.

### **V. Financial Documentation Requirements**

Institutions must complete a financial narrative outlining:

- Operating budget
- Debt obligations
- Capital project pipeline
- Endowment (if any)
- Liquidity
- Recent challenges and improvements

**Optional:** Institutions may upload a recent audit to strengthen their submission.

## VI. How to Apply

Applications must be submitted through SmartSimple. Institutions will need to register for an account before applying.

1. Visit: <https://reinvestmentfund.smartsimple.com>
2. Click “Register Here” to create a new account.
3. Follow the prompts to complete your organization profile.

A video tutorial on how to create a SmartSimple account:  
<https://vimeo.com/reinvestfund/smartsimpleregistrationinstruction/>

**📘 Tool Tip:** The application contains guidance prompts and tooltips for each question. Hover over the information icon (?) to view additional instructions.

**Contact information for technical support:** [smartsimple.support@reinvestment.com](mailto:smartsimple.support@reinvestment.com)

## VII. Timeline

Milestone	Date
Information Webinar	August 22, 2025
Application Opens	August 25, 2025
Application Deadline	September 29, 2025
Notifications of Award	October 23, 2025
Program Launch	October 27, 2025

## VIII. Selection Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on:

- Demonstrated need and readiness
- Clarity and feasibility of proposed goals
- Institutional leadership support
- Willingness to collaborate and co-create
- Commitment to impact and sustainability

An external HBCU Advisory Committee will review and score all submissions to ensure an equitable and transparent process.

## **IX. Contact Information**

For general questions, please contact: [hbcubrilliance@reinvestment.com](mailto:hbcubrilliance@reinvestment.com)