



LAURA BUSH 21st CENTURY LIBRARIAN PROGRAM

Sample Application RE-259056-OLS-25
Project Category: National Implementation

HBCU Library Alliance

Amount awarded by IMLS: \$216,691

The HBCU Library Alliance (HBCULA), in collaboration with the American Institute of Physics (AIP), will address the significant under-documentation of contributions made by Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the field of physical sciences. The project will feature a three-day intensive summer workshop on oral history, digital collecting, and digital preservation for ten early and mid-career librarians from HBCUs. This workshop will lay the foundation for ongoing professional development and structured support over the project's two-year period. The primary beneficiaries will be the participating librarians, their institutions, and the broader community interested in HBCU contributions to science. Expected outcomes include enhanced documentation and preservation skills among participants, leading to the creation of open educational resources. Resources will be disseminated widely to foster similar initiatives across the academic community.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of completion

When preparing an application for the next deadline, be sure to follow the instructions in the most recent Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program to which you are applying.

*Documenting & Celebrating HBCU Contributions to the Physical Sciences:
The HBCU History of Science Collecting Fellows Initiative*

Introduction

The **HBCU Library Alliance (HBCULA)**, in collaboration with the **American Institute of Physics (AIP)**, requests \$249,700 for a two-year implementation project to support *Documenting and Celebrating HBCU Contributions to the Physical Sciences: The HBCU History of Science Collecting Fellows Initiative (CFI)*. This project will provide training and continuing education in oral history, digital collecting, and digital preservation to 10 early or mid-career librarians working at HBCUs. Fellows will then be supported to engage with students and physical science departments across their campuses to document and celebrate the extensive but under-documented contributions that HBCUs have made to advancing the physical sciences. Open educational resources produced through this project will be broadly shared to support others in similar activities. This initiative, aligned with LB21 Program Goal 2 and Objective 2.1, provides targeted professional development for early and mid-career librarians through specialized training in oral history, digital collecting, and digital preservation.

Project Justification

For over a century, HBCU campuses have been centers of excellence in the physical sciences, producing groundbreaking research, pioneering scholars, and inspiring new generations of scientists. Yet, this history remains largely untold and overlooked in the broader narratives of the physical sciences. Notably, there is a critical need for skill-based training and resources to equip library and archives staff with the expertise to document and commemorate these activities effectively. Over the last sixty years, the Niels Bohr Library and Archives at the American Institute of Physics has engaged in several efforts to partner with libraries and archives to document and celebrate the history of the physical sciences across the United States. Several top-ranked HBCUs, such as Howard University, North Carolina A&T State University, and Spelman College, are consistently among the leading institutions nationwide in producing African American graduates in the physical sciences.

The HBCU Library Alliance (HBCULA) proposes to support and coordinate this project to connect HBCU librarians with the resources of the Niels Bohr Library and Archives through a unique and distinctive fellowship opportunity. Through these fellowships, early and mid-career librarians at HBCUs will help address this disparity and support building partnerships and connections between HBCU librarians and physical scientists on HBCU campuses.

CFI draws inspiration from the AMIA Pathways Fellowship (APF, RE-254879-OLS-23). However, the initiative differs in several positive ways from APF. CFI is specifically tailored to early and mid-career librarians at HBCUs. It incorporates a structured fellowship model emphasizing long-term engagement and professional development, creating ongoing support and collaboration among fellows.

CFI also draws on recommendations made in the 2021 *Creating Access to HBCU Library Alliance Archives: Needs, Capacity, and Technical Planning*¹ study conducted by the Council on Library Information Resources aimed to build consensus around and articulate common values, priorities, and needs for describing and managing special and archival collections for the HBCULA membership. The survey findings revealed several challenges facing HBCU libraries, including staff shortages that hinder archives management. Inadequate space for collections is compounded by losing areas to other

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<https://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/creating-access-to-hbcu-library-alliance-archives-needs-capacity-and-technical-planning/>

campus services. Many libraries depend on unstable grant funding, receiving little institutional support. Insufficient resources hamper the urgent need for digitization.

The focus group study, which included 32 institutions, encompassed various HBCUs categorized by level, type, and size. Specifically, it featured three 2-year colleges and 29 four-year or graduate institutions, with an equal split of 16 private and 16 public institutions, representing FTE from very small to large. HBCULA member institutions differ significantly in their funding, governance, and student demographics, directly affecting the support and resources available in their libraries. Public universities, funded by state governments, typically have larger budgets and more extensive library systems. In contrast, private institutions rely on tuition and endowments. Community colleges, which primarily focus on accessibility and workforce training, often have smaller libraries with limited archival support.

Additionally, HBCUs established in the 1890s as land-grant institutions under the Second Morrill Act of 1890 tend to emphasize agricultural, mechanical, and technical education. Due to underfunding, these schools often face unique challenges in preserving historical materials. These differences underscore the need for tailored support to meet the specific needs of CFI fellows.

By leveraging the expertise and resources of AIP and the HBCU Library Alliance, this project has the potential to make a significant and lasting impact on the documentation, preservation, and celebration of the HBCU legacy in the physical sciences. The project's outcomes will benefit the participating HBCU institutions and contribute to a broader understanding of the history of the physical sciences in the United States.

Target Groups

CFI collaboratively engages groups across HBCU campuses, including librarians, students, and faculty in physical sciences departments, each with distinct needs and interests in the project. The primary target group is early to mid-career librarians. While navigating the early stages of their career journeys, HBCU Library Alliance members have expressed a need for specialized training in oral history, digital collecting, and preservation techniques to enhance their skills and effectiveness in their work.

In July 2023, the HBCULA sought to survey members to assist us in designing innovative programs, events, and professional development opportunities. The 2023 HBCU Library Alliance Membership Engagement Survey² delivered feedback suggesting several critical areas for improvement and development. Another significant aspect that came to attention is the advocacy for giving greater attention to small college libraries, emphasizing the importance of support across all member institutions. The feedback emphasizes the ongoing significance of tailored support and offerings to address the unique needs and challenges faced by HBCU libraries. Ten percent of respondents were non-director library staff, with the remaining 90% comprising deans and directors. While the majority holds leadership roles, designing training that actively engages early to mid-career staff is important.

Supporting fellows in working directly with faculty is pivotal to the success of this project. By fostering collaboration between librarians and academic departments, CFI will have a second-order effect of engaging undergraduate and graduate students in physical sciences programs, connecting them with their institutions' historical achievements, and providing opportunities for active participation in documentation efforts with library fellows. Additionally, we recognize the importance of reaching the broader academic and research communities, including scholars and educators interested in the history of science.

² <https://hbculibraries.org/old-site/survey-2024.html>

Project Work Plan

In consultation with HBCU Library Alliance Staff, AIP staff will develop open educational resources to support a three-day intensive summer workshop in oral history, digital collecting, and digital preservation. AIP staff will develop educational resources to support a three-day intensive summer workshop in oral history, digital collecting, and digital preservation. AIP historians and NBLA staff have a long history of supporting the research community through educational resources and opportunities, including hosting oral history training and workshops hosted at science and history meetings; serving in adjunct positions and guest lectures at universities in the Washington, DC area; development of libguides and other instructional materials guiding the use of NBLA resources; and hosting Wikipedia edit-a-thons to create new entries (and develop existing entries) to create a more representative picture of scientists in Wikipedia.

We will then invite applications from early—and mid-career librarians and archivists at HBCUs to participate in this face-to-face workshop hosted at AIP's Washington, D.C. offices. Two cohorts of five fellows will receive travel support to attend this training. They will then be provided additional training and professional development opportunities throughout the two years of the grant.

AIP will support fellows through a range of structured activities designed to enhance their projects and ensure the long-term preservation of their work. AIP will host quarterly webinar sessions to provide training, best practices, and discussions on documentation and commemoration strategies. Additionally, fellows will receive individualized support through monthly one-on-one check-ins, assuring project development assistance is tailored to fellows.

To inform the planning of the summer workshops, AIP will draw inspiration from past successful convenings including the Early-Career Conference for Historians of the Physical Sciences (<https://www.aip.org/history-programs/physics-history/conferences>), which AIP hosts and partners to host in the US and internationally, as well as the 2019 History Observatory Workshop, a grant-funded exploration of the challenges faced by the science community in documenting ongoing projects in science. The History Observatory Workshop was attended by historians of science and information professionals who examined how AIP could demonstrate leadership and innovation in recording the history of modern scientific discovery through oral history creation and digital curation (see resulting report in Supporting Documents).

Along with archiving and enabling access to documentation produced through their projects in their respective campus libraries, AIP will also offer fellows the ability to deposit copies of any digital materials collected through their projects into the collections of AIP's Niels Bohr Library and Archives. AIP manages an open-access digital repository of primary sources related to the history of the physical sciences and will ensure that any deposited materials are made available to researchers and preserved. Digitized collections may also be featured on the "[Celebrating the Collections of Historically Black Colleges and Universities](#)" platform, the first collective effort to make historic collections digitally available, with contributions from HBCU Library Alliance member libraries.

The work plan below details activities supporting this work in sequence.

Project Initiation and Initial Curricular Content Development (August-December 2025):

At the start of the project, HBCU Library Alliance staff will announce the award to stakeholders across the HBCU library network. AIP staff will announce the project's initiation to its networks in the physical sciences. HBCU Library Alliance will host an online program to share the project and invite discussion and input from participants to inform the development of curricular resources and ensure that staff from a wide range of HBCU libraries are aware of this forthcoming opportunity.

During this initiation period, the AIP team, in collaboration with the HBCU Library Alliance team, will develop open educational resources for conducting oral history interviews, digital collecting, and digital preservation, which will be used during the workshops.

Recruitment of First Cohort of Fellows and continued Content Development (January-March 2026)

The team will launch the call for applications to the first fellowship cohort at the beginning of the year. The call will be broadly shared with staff at all HBCU libraries through the HBCU Library Alliance's extensive network of contacts. The program will be open to any full-time or part-time staff member working at an HBCU Library. To minimize the burden on applicants, the fellowship application form will require no more than two pages of information from the applicant, a copy of their resume or CV in whatever format they maintain that information. In their application, each fellow will identify what areas of work in the physical sciences they plan to document at their HBCU and their preliminary thoughts on how best to collect, preserve, and document material from their campus. To further minimize burdens on applicants, we will not require letters of support or reference, but will instead ask only for contacts' email addresses at the HBCU Library where the fellow works.

During this period, the team will host two informational webinars to build interest and answer potential applicants' questions. Applications for the first cohort will be due in March. While work to recruit fellows is ongoing, AIP staff will continue to develop open educational resources related to conducting oral history interviews, digital collecting, and digital preservation, which will be used during the summer workshops.

First Cohort of Fellows Selection and Orientation (April-May 2026)

Once the applications are received, a team of four staff from the HBCU Library Alliance and AIP, will review and select the fellows for the first cohort. In making selections, the team will work to maximize diversity of the HBCUs represented in the cohort of fellows, with a mix of individuals from large and less well-resourced HBCUs. Given the focus of this effort on providing support and training as ongoing professional development, review criteria will also prioritize staff from HBCUs in permanent staff positions as opposed to individuals in part-time student worker positions.

Once the fellows are selected, the team will host an online orientation session for the cohort in May. At this session, the fellows will meet the team and be given an overview of the resources and support available throughout the project. Along with answering logistical questions about their participation in the summer workshop sessions, we will invite the fellows to share their initial project plans. This session will serve as the first of an ongoing quarterly series of virtual meetings for the cohort of fellows, which will provide an opportunity for the fellows to receive support and ongoing input on the development of their projects throughout the project. Alongside this series of group meetings, the fellows will receive an

individual consultation with staff from AIP to help them think through the specific goals and plans for their proposed project.

Hosting first cohort of fellows face-to-face workshop (June-July 2026)

In late June 2026, the fellows will travel to the D.C. Metro area to participate in the three-day intensive face-to-face workshop on oral history, digital collecting, and digital preservation. This program will start by providing fellows with a tour of AIP's Niels Bohr Library and Archives. This tour will include a special focus on AIP's collections of unpublished institutional histories, manuscript biographies, donated photographic collections, and oral histories. Expert historians from AIP will offer training on how to conduct oral histories. Librarians and Archivists from AIP will provide overviews of approaches to soliciting, collecting, and describing unpublished materials that document the history of the physical sciences on various campuses.

Given that this kind of documentation is increasingly born digital, AIP staff will also provide core overviews of digital preservation and content management approaches. By having relatively small cohorts of fellows, the intention of these workshop trainings will be hands-on and focused on helping support the fellows' plans for the execution of their specific projects. As part of this work, AIP staff will also work to tailor the support that they can provide for each fellow, helping them to maximize the resources available to them at their home institutions for collecting, describing, and preserving content they collect while also making sure that they can also make use of the resources that AIP has available to support them. Fellows will be invited to deposit copies of the material they collect in the Niels Bohr Library and Archives. Along with this, AIP will support transcription and distribution of any oral histories that fellows collect through the ongoing operations of its long-standing oral history program.

As part of the intensive summer workshop, AIP and HBCU Library Alliance staff will also coordinate two site visits to round out fellows' understanding of documentary collecting initiatives and help fellows establish valuable professional contacts working in this area. We have confirmed with staff from the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress and with the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture that each institution will be willing and able to support 2-3 hour visits and consultations with the cohort of fellows to support this goal.

Ongoing Support to First Cohort of Fellows (August-December 2026)

Once the first cohort of fellows' summer workshop is completed, the HBCU Library Alliance and AIP teams will transition to support their ongoing work throughout the fall. As fellows begin to complete portions of their projects, the team will work to promote the results of their work in multiple channels as further described in the results section of this proposal. In October of 2026, we will invite individuals from this first cohort of fellows to share about preliminary results from their projects at the HBCU Library Alliance Membership meeting.

Along with this support for fellows, we will also set up one-on-one consultations with each fellow to provide further support for their projects and gather information about improving and refining the process for the second cohort of fellows in 2027. Based on feedback from the fellows, we will work to refine and improve the curricular materials and the entire cohort experience for the second set of fellows.

Recruitment of Second Cohort of Fellows and ongoing support to first (January-March 2027)

At the start of 2027, the team will begin recruiting and supporting the second cohort of fellows. This phase of work will be very similar to the previous year's recruitment process. During this period, we will also

support the successful completion of the projects from the first cohort of fellows.

Second Cohort of Fellows Selection and Orientation (April-May 2027)

In the spring of 2027, the team will work to select and provide an orientation to the second cohort of fellows. This will work through the same process as the previous cohort of fellows. With that noted, we will share the completed projects from the first cohort of fellows as concrete examples to help the second cohort plan for their projects. If fellows from the first cohort want to continue participating in ongoing monthly calls set up for the second cohort of fellows, we will welcome their continued participation.

During this period, the HBCU Library Alliance and AIP will also host a two-hour virtual session for staff from HBCUs. This session will intend to reach a much larger set of librarians and archivists to share the results of the work of the first cohort of fellows and orient them to the free open educational resources produced by AIP which they could use to implement similar projects on their campus. We will also guide participants on the availability of AIP's ongoing grants to archives and grants-in-aid, which could provide funding to support projects like the work the fellows completed.

Hosting the second cohort of fellows face-to-face workshop (June-July 2027)

In the summer of 2027, we will host the second cohort of fellows face-to-face workshop. This will work much the same as the first cohort's workshops but will benefit from lessons learned from the first effort.

Ongoing Support to Second Cohort of Fellows and Project Closeout (July-August 2027)

Throughout July and August of 2027, the team will provide further support for successfully implementing fellows projects. During this period, we will also work to collect input from both cohorts of fellows about the results of their work.

After the grant closes out, staff from HBCULA and AIP will continue to be available to support fellows on these specific projects and subsequent collecting projects.

Key Project Staff

HBCU Library Alliance Program Manager Shaneé Yvette Willis will assume the role of Project Lead, overseeing the program's operations and strategic direction. Willis has over a decade of experience in the library and archival field. As Program Manager, she is responsible for developing program objectives and evaluation systems that align with the HBCU Library Alliance's mission and vision. She facilitates collaboration among member institutions, organizing professional development opportunities, and advocating for increased accessibility to information resources that support student success and research.

AIP joins this project through the support of two staff members from the Niels Bohr Library & Archives (NBLA): Corinne Mona, librarian, and Ben Henry, archivist. Corinne and Ben have overlapping expertise in outreach, communication, collection development, and engagement, as well as skills and experience in creating educational materials and training opportunities in the library and archives community. Corinne leads efforts in collection development for the library collections, is the editor of the NBLA blog *Ex Libris Universum*, and has developed outreach and engagement materials like libguides and instructional presentations on accessing and utilizing NBLA collections. Corinne also leads AIP's Wikipedia efforts, leading edit-a-thons (in person and virtual) for staff and student groups, diversifying the presentation of science history in Wikipedia entries and advocating to broaden the use of NBLA photo collections to allow inclusion in WikiCommons. Ben works closely with NBLA director, Melanie Mueller, to manage donor relations, process collections, and advise on collection development for the archives. Additionally, Ben has

experience creating and hosting information literacy sessions for university students and conducting instructional sessions for library and archives patrons. Beyond their direct contributions to the project, Ben and Corinne will consult with other subject specialists and experts within the AIP Research staff, including digital collections archivists, historians of science, and staff that create and manage oral history interviews.

Project Results

As a result of the project, 10 early to mid-career librarians from at least 10 different HBCU libraries will receive training and support in oral history, digital collecting, and digital preservation. The training materials produced to support this project will be made openly available for use and reuse by others interested in the initiative. AIP and the HBCU Library Alliance will collaborate to broadly disseminate the results of fellows' work. Throughout the project, the HBCU Library Alliance and AIP will work to feature and draw attention to the fellows' work, their libraries, and the work they surface documenting the contributions of HBCUs to the Physical Sciences.

We will feature results of this work in our social media channels and through AIP's flagship publication *Physics Today*, which reaches an audience of more than 120,000 readers interested in the physical sciences. Throughout the project, we will showcase the results of this initiative in the ongoing programming of both the Society for Physics Students, Sigma Pi Sigma (the national physics honor society), and at the biennial HBCU Library Alliance Membership Meeting. The 2024 meeting had a total of 120 attendees, which included 22 non-director library staff and six library student ambassadors. Fellows will also be invited to present their work at the ALA and SAA annual meetings, culminating in an interview-style article in *Archival Outlook* to share their experiences.

CFI will also leverage the HBCU Library Alliance's *Let's Talk* series, a recurring hour-long Zoom webinar that covers topics relevant to the membership community. On May 30, 2024, AIP hosted a "Grant Opportunities for HBCUs from the American Institute of Physics" session, showcasing four grant programs supporting archival collections, research travel, and student support in physics and astronomy. Building on this engagement, we will host two webinars annually to share lessons learned with the broader community. At the project's conclusion, we will offer a no-cost online training session and resource overview, open to up to 100 additional librarians and archivists, to support adopting and reusing educational materials developed through the initiative.

CFI will significantly enhance documentation, strengthen institutional capacity, and empower understudied voices in the physical sciences. It will equip librarians with oral history and digital preservation skills, increasing the documentation of HBCU contributions and creating a richer historical record. The project will also facilitate collaborations between librarians and physical science departments, leading to interdisciplinary research projects and events celebrating HBCU achievements. Ultimately, these efforts will create a more inclusive and diverse scientific community while enriching the academic landscape and strengthening ties among HBCU librarians.

Evaluation

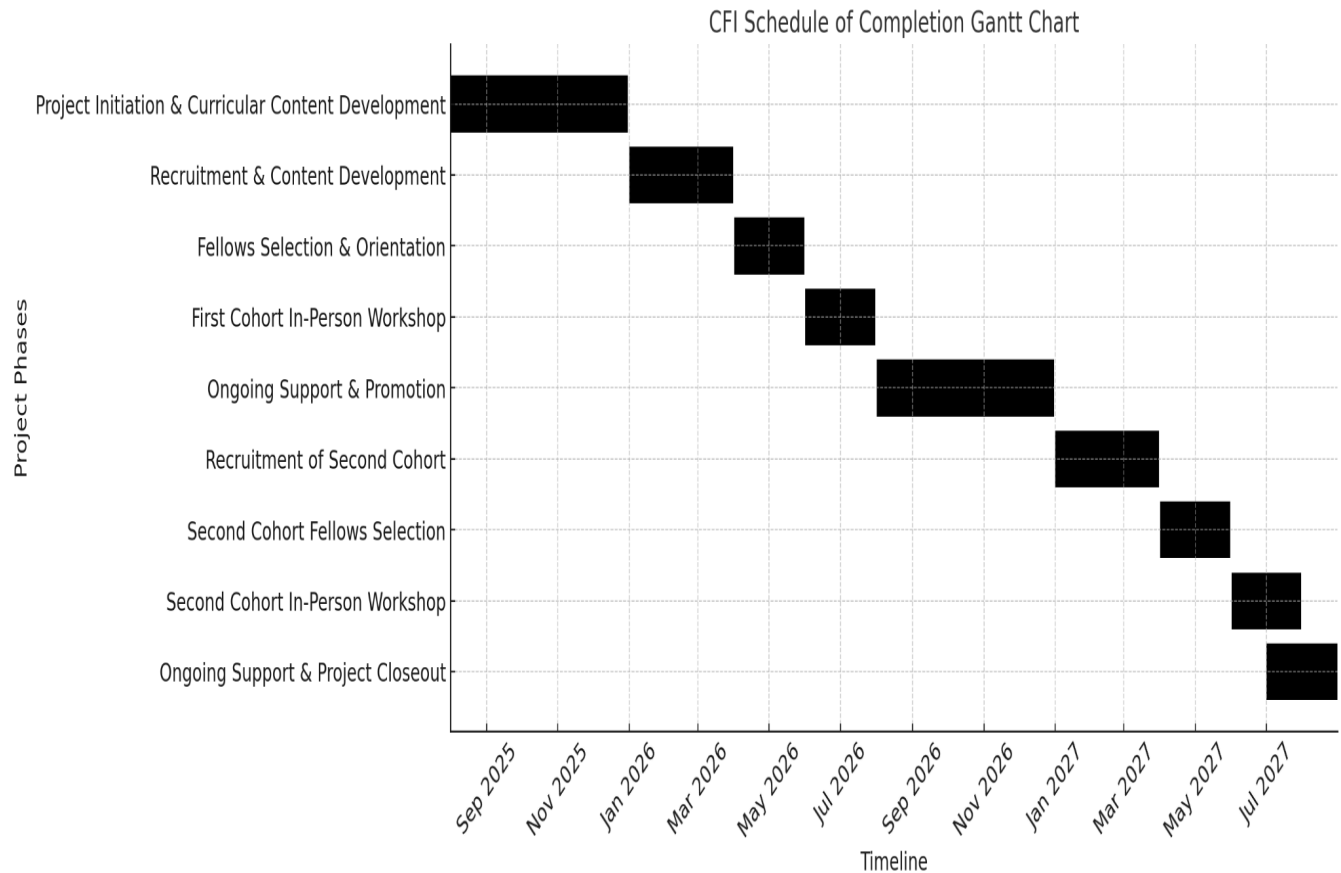
To assess the impact of the training and support provided to HBCU librarians in oral history, digital collecting, and digital preservation, the CFI project team led by the HBCULA program coordinator will conduct periodic surveys and interviews with the fellows to gather their perspectives on the project's impact and areas for improvement. Surveys will track the number of HBCU librarians trained through the summer workshops and ongoing professional development opportunities. Interviews will gather feedback from the fellows on the usefulness and relevance of the training materials and support provided.

The project team will also monitor the number and quality of the fellows' projects, including the digital collections, oral histories, and other materials produced. Since increased access to collections and training

resources is a vital project outcome, we will partner with project partners to track the reach and impact of the dissemination efforts, including the number of views, downloads, or engagements with the shared resources. To measure the broader impact, we will collect survey feedback from the wider community of librarians, archivists, and physical sciences researchers on the value and accessibility of the project's outputs.

A survey and interview-based evaluation strategy will allow us to effectively assess the project's impact, identify areas for improvement, and ensure the long-term sustainability and impact of CFI. The project team will work closely with the HBCU Library Alliance and the leadership of the participating HBCU institutions to secure long-term institutional commitments to sustaining the project's activities and outputs.

Documenting & Celebrating HBCU Contributions to the Physical Sciences: The HBCU History of Science Collecting Fellows Initiative



Schedule of Completion

Project Period: 08/1/2025 to 08/31/2027

Year 1 (Aug 2025 – Jul 2026)

Phase 1: Project Initiation & Curricular Content Development (August - December 2025)

- Announce project to stakeholders across HBCU Library Alliance and AIP networks.
- Host an online program to introduce the project and gather input.
- Develop open educational resources for oral history interviews, digital collecting, and preservation.

Phase 2: Recruitment & Content Development (January - March 2026)

- Launch call for applications for the first cohort of fellows.
- Host two informational webinars to engage potential applicants.
- Continue developing educational resources for summer workshops.

Phase 3: Fellows Selection & Orientation (April - May 2026)

- Review applications and select the first cohort of fellows.
- Host an online orientation session to introduce fellows to the program.
- Begin monthly virtual meetings and one-on-one consultations with fellows.

Phase 4: First Cohort In-Person Workshop (June - July 2026)

- Conduct a three-day workshop at the American Institute of Physics, the D.C. area offices

- Include site visits to the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture.
- Provide specialized training on oral history, digital collecting, and preservation.

Year 2 (Aug 2026 – Aug 2027)

Phase 5: Ongoing Support & Promotion (August - December 2026)

- Continue monthly virtual meetings and individual consultations.
- Showcase fellows' work at the HBCU Library Alliance Membership Meeting (October 2026).
- Gather feedback to refine program materials and support.

Phase 6: Recruitment of Second Cohort & Ongoing Support (January - March 2027)

- Begin recruitment for the second cohort of fellows.
- Provide continued support to first cohort fellows completing their projects.
- Host a virtual session to share first cohort results and open resources.

Phase 7: Second Cohort Fellows Selection & Orientation (April - May 2027)

- Select a second cohort of fellows and provide orientation.
- Share examples from the first cohort as models for new fellows.

Phase 8: Second Cohort In-Person Workshop (June - July 2027)

- Host a second three-day workshop at the American Institute of Physics, the D.C. area offices
- Apply lessons learned from the first cohort's experience.

Phase 9: Ongoing Support & Project Closeout (July - August 2027)

- Provide continued guidance and consultation to second cohort fellows.
- Collect feedback from both cohorts to evaluate the program's impact.
- Plan for ongoing post-grant support and institutional adoption of resources.