

HURON

Building Resilience in Higher Education

HE Transformation 2026

22nd October 2026

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Welcome



Shaun Horan

Senior Director

- Co-Founder and Joint CEO at Halpin Partnership (acquired by Huron in 2025).
- 23 years HE experience including 10 years in the senior leadership team at the University of Reading as Director of External Affairs.
- Qualified Barrister and non-profit experience in international development.
- Areas of focus include HE strategy, governance, portfolio review, student recruitment, fundraising and campaigns.



Benoit Jamous

Senior Director

- Senior Director in Huron's Global Education & Research practice, working with universities in the areas of student and academic strategy, financial operations, research and digital.
- 10+ years of experience in higher education, 15 years in consulting to the education and research sectors
- Areas of focus include IT and digital transformation, finance and operations, and resource allocation models.



About Huron

GLOBAL LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Huron is a preeminent professional services firm and technology partner with a global footprint. Since its founding in 2002, higher education has been a core focus. With the largest consulting team dedicated solely to higher education, Huron has a proven track record as an industry leader with strategic, digital, and research expertise.

What makes Huron different

Industry depth: Every member of the senior leadership team are former institutional leaders or industry professionals.

Global expertise: Huron identifies and leverages best practices from across global higher education to enhance strategy and optimise operations.

Full-service support: Our breadth of expertise creates a unique full-service partner to support the complexities facing higher education.

Tailored solutions: Custom deployments meet each institution's unique needs for successful implementation.

Results-driven: Huron ensures institutions maximise returns on technology and operations.

Huron knows higher education

23+ years serving global higher education institutions and leaders

7,000+ engagements across all institution types

1,250+ education-focused professionals

94% average client satisfaction rate

700+ client institutions across the UK, US, Ireland, Canada, Asia, and Middle East

100+ UK university clients



Evolving with Institutional Needs

Shifting external factors have affected university needs and requirements to build resilience.



Defining Institutional Resilience

Resilience requires proactive action to eliminate near-term deficits while maintaining a focus on the investment and capacity needed to achieve long-term goals.



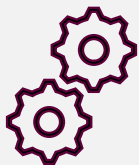
You Can't Cut Your Way Out Of A Structural Deficit

When operating revenues are declining, **simply cutting expenses will not lead to financial sustainability**. There must be a balance of investment, reallocation, and reduction to realise a sustainable turnaround.



Plan for What Works in Practice, Not What Looks Good on Paper

Even the most rigorous financial planning falls short if it doesn't take a realistic accounting of the **structure, skills, and capacity** necessary to implement. Lasting success comes from **pragmatic planning** for the on-the-ground work, not just its ultimate outcome.



Emphasise the Intersections between Different Levers

Realising improved service and experience, while eliminating a deficit, requires a proactive understanding of how different 'levers' influence each other (e.g., org design and retention). **Your view must be expansive and fully aware of the trade-off's being made.**

There isn't a single path to resilience and no defined 'right answer'. The optimal plan should be informed by the institution's current financial and strategic position.

Financial Health and Clarity		
← Low High →		
Strategic Health and Clarity	Operationally Misaligned	Healthy but Complex
	Need for Resource Efficiency	Sound but Not Sustainable
	Institutionally Vulnerable	At Risk of Stagnation
High	Institutionally Resilient	Need for Strategic Investment
Low	Strategically Misaligned	

Resilience requires intentional, sustainable performance across the nine focus areas that together determine an institution’s financial and strategic health.

Institutional Positioning Focus Areas

Academic Portfolio



Evaluation of academic programmes’ market position, strategic alignment, and internal cost economics

Student Lifecycle & Experience



Diagnostic focused on recruitment, retention, institutional aid, and other success factors

Advancement & Alumni Engagement



Assessment of advancement operations, donor activity, and trends in alumni giving

Resource Efficiency Focus Areas

Revenue Growth & Diversification



Evaluation of current and projected revenue streams to identify potential growth or net new funding sources

Cost Containment



Analysis of labor and non-labor spend, leveraging internal and external benchmarking

Organisational Optimisation



Assessment of organisational structure, compensation, benefits, and activity distribution

Operational Maturity Focus Areas

Platform Strategy



Evaluation of current technological maturity to identify opportunities for efficiency and improvement

Policy & Governance



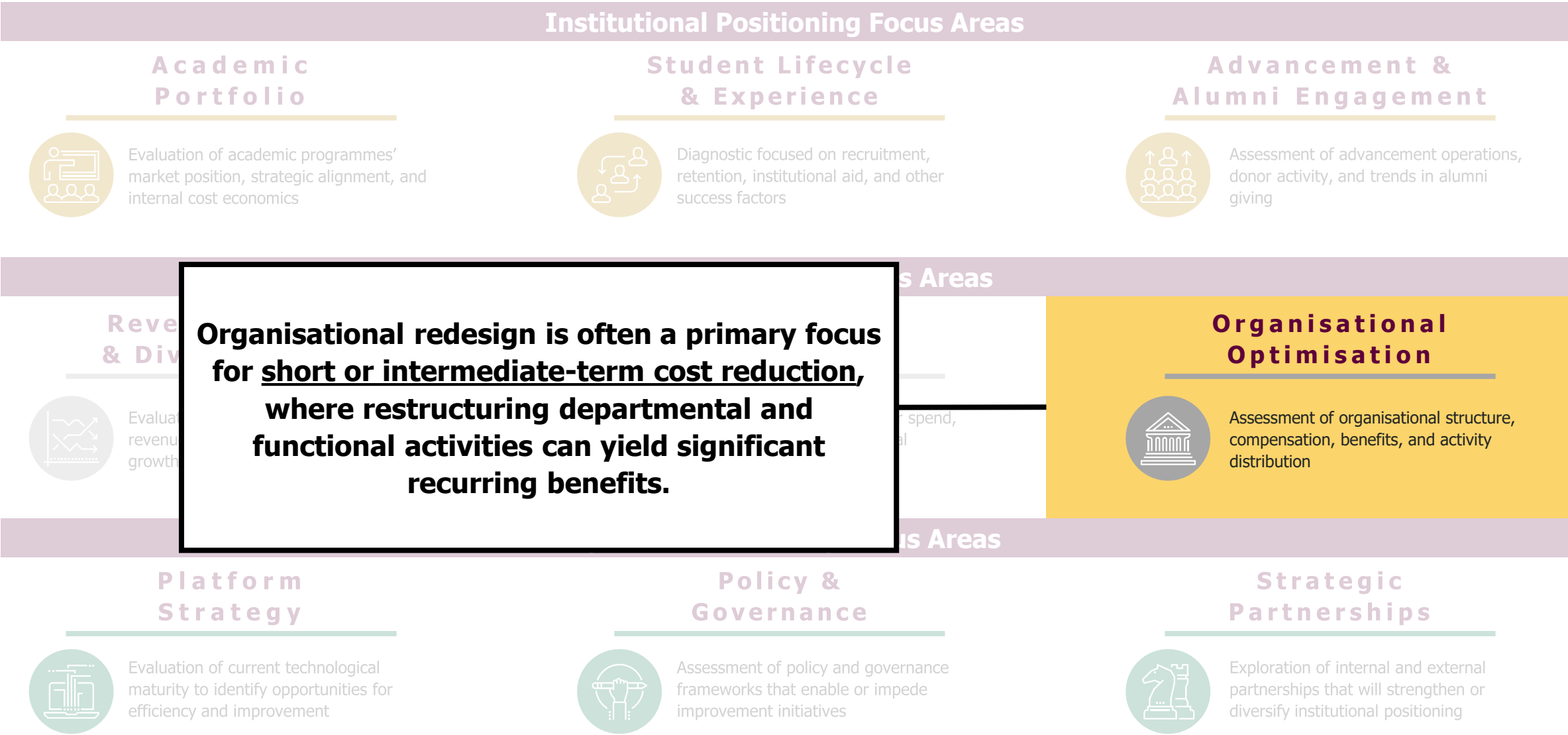
Assessment of policy and governance frameworks that enable or impede improvement initiatives

Strategic Partnerships

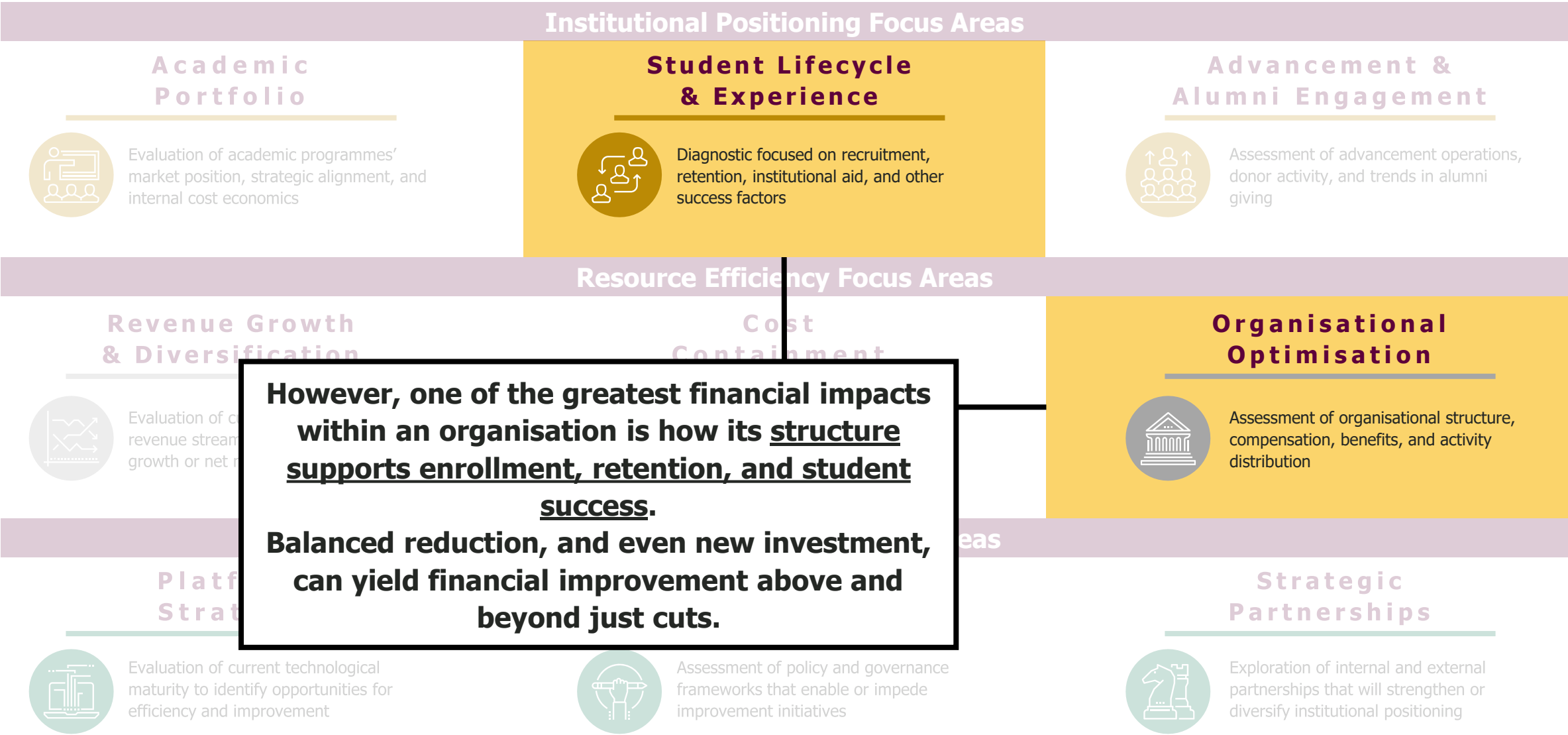


Exploration of internal and external partnerships that will strengthen or diversify institutional positioning

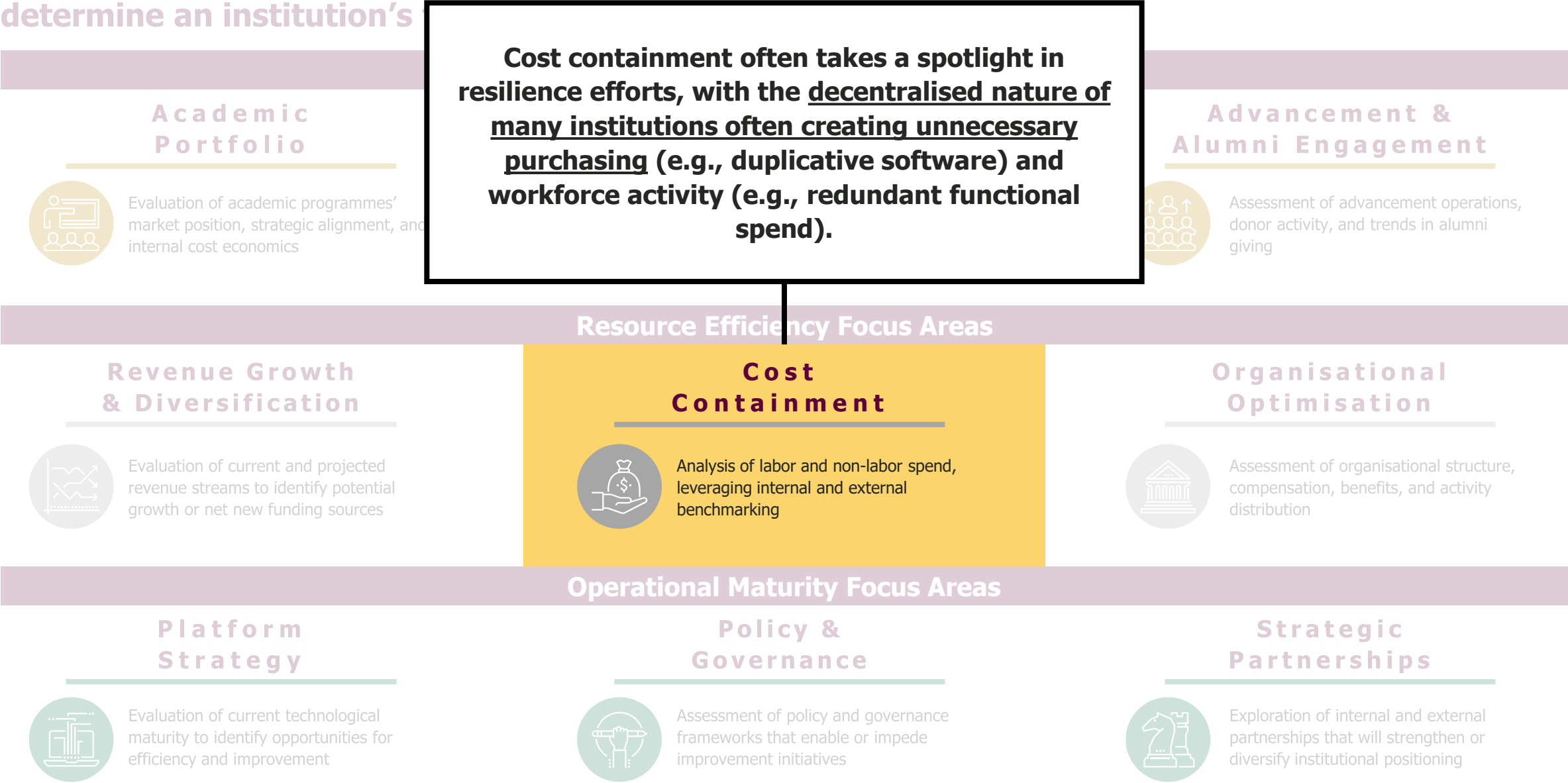
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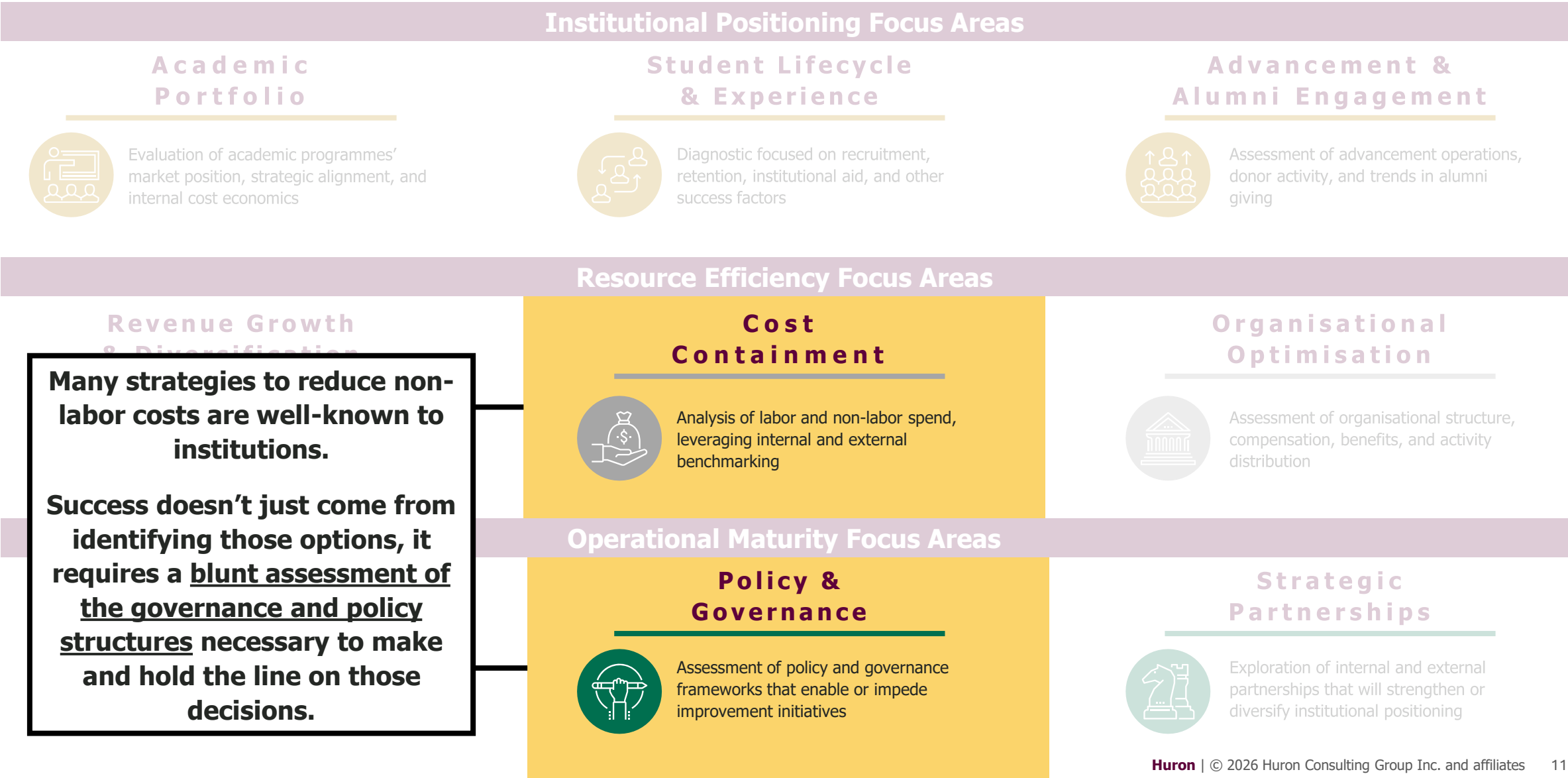


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Cost containment often takes a spotlight in resilience efforts, with the decentralised nature of many institutions often creating unnecessary purchasing (e.g., duplicative software) and workforce activity (e.g., redundant functional spend).

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Representative Case Studies

Huron’s philosophy of resilience is equally applicable across all institutional types, bringing a focus on customising the plan to where the institution is and where it needs to go.

	INSTITUTION A	INSTITUTION B	INSTITUTION C	INSTITUTION D
Institution Description	Research institution with 30K+ students	Multi-campus system with 15K+ students	Flagship campus with 40K+ students	Liberal arts institution with 3K+ students
Operating Budget	£3.75 B	£600 M	£3.0 B	£180 M
Current Position	Sound but Not Sustainable	Operationally Misaligned	Need for Strategic Investment	Need for Resource Efficiency
Key Areas of Focus	• Cost Containment: Reduction of non-labour spend through strategic sourcing • Student Lifecycle: Undergrad expansion and investment in programming • Organisational Optimisation: Select redesign of high priority and high-volume functions	• Organisational Optimisation: Reorganise key finance functions and increased shared services • Tech Infrastructure: Improved process workflows to reduce admin burden • Policy and Governance: Reset policy thresholds around approvals and budget authority	• Platform Strategy: Data definition and dashboard development • Resource Reallocation: Reallocation of resources to revenue-generating areas • Policy & Governance: Established space governance to reduce mid-to-long-term capital expenditures	• Cost Containment: Targeted reduction in redundant technology platforms • Recruitment and Retention: Consolidation of disparate student services units, increased recruitment staff • Policy and Governance: Changes in cabinet authority to align oversight and accountability

Institution A | Cost Containment

Huron is currently engaged with an institution on identifying opportunities to reduce costs and generate revenue toward an ambitious target of nearly 6% in margin improvement.

Approach

- Huron partnered with institutional leadership on a comprehensive review that generated **145+ opportunities**
- Functional leaders worked with Huron to evaluate and develop business cases for **PS staffing, benefits, and spend**
- Additional analyses explored **real asset monetisation, space utilisation, lease strategy, and travel policies**
- Huron partnered with leadership to **guide evaluation and decision-making** on priority initiatives,

Outcomes



Savings Target of £200M+

The institution has committed to an ambitious savings goal to mitigate macroeconomic pressures and sector-wide volatility, aiming for ~6% margin improvement over the next 2–3 years.



Priority Opportunities Identified

Detailed analyses of selected opportunities enabled the institution to size potential impact, evaluate implementation pathways, and assess risks, change management, and prerequisites



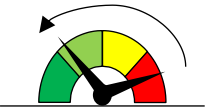
Strategic Sourcing Initiative

The institution is advancing a strategic sourcing opportunity projected to deliver £50–100M in cost savings over 3 years.

Institution B | Cost Savings Through Redesign

Huron supported the 15K+ student institution in campus-specific performance improvement assessments, leading to the implementation of a system-wide shared services center.

- The institution had a decentralised governance structure without direct oversight of its campuses, emphasising the need for **representation and buy-in**.
- Each campus received a **customised inventory of margin improvement opportunities**
- With the approval of campus and university leaders, Huron supported the institution in implementing the **design and implementation of systemwide finance and administrative shared services**.

Outcomes: Improving Service Delivery	
Processes Mapped 260+	Reduced Risk  Including PCI Compliance, Fixed Assets, NSAR
Reduction in Redundant Processes 55% Reduction 260 120	Technology Improvement Enhanced automation and workflow across multiple platforms, including: • DocuSign/Ticket Mgmt • P-Card • 3rd Party AR
Employee Efficiency 4.5X (Increase in Transaction Counts per FTE)	
Outcomes: Optimising the Organisation	
Promote 30+ Employees Moved to Higher Classification	Invest £750K+ Identified for Strategic Investment
Expense Reduction £3.75M In Direct, Recurring Cost Reduction	

Institution C | Data Transparency

Huron partnered with a 30K+ research university on an institution-wide analysis of financial, operational, and academic data to identify recommendations for improvement

- Enhancing **transparency** into how university resources deployed
- Supporting unit leaders in **managing finance and operations**
- Proving university leadership with **insights into specific areas for improvement**
- **Enabling internal resource prioritisation**, supporting reallocation of funds to areas of strategic need

Approach

- Huron and campus leaders identified 75+ **operational, financial, and academic metrics and analyses** through which to assess administrative and academic units.
- Following a pilot phase, Huron engaged 50+ units to **review central data, gather context, and collaborate on interpretation.**
- Drawing from central data sources and unit insights, established a **data dictionary** and built a **data dashboard.**
- Huron leveraged insights gained throughout the assessment and engagement process to identify **recommendations for increased efficiency and reinvestment.**

Outcomes



Data Transparency

Huron and the campus established standardised metrics and a central dashboard to enable equitable data access and greater understanding between units and central.



Data-Driven Decision-Making

Institution-wide collaboration deepened trust between units and supported rapid action.

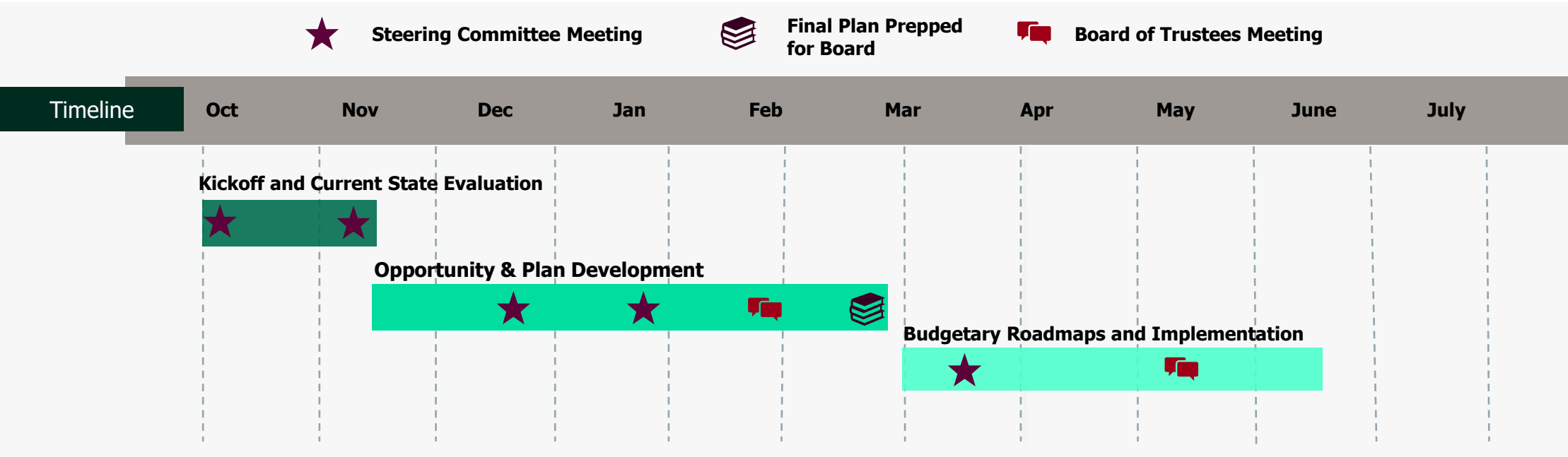


Evidence-Based Action

Leaders were able to thoughtfully consider and act upon vetted opportunities that aligned with strategic objectives.

Institution D | Building Institutional Resilience

Huron partnered with a mid-sized institution to develop a multi-year plan, for Board approval, that successfully closes a £22.5M budget deficit by FY28.



The timeline allowed for rapid plan development, paired with high-touch scenario planning, and successfully received approval from the Board on schedule.

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Key Takeaways

1

Don't Make Decisions in a Vacuum

Take downstream consequences into account, consider short- and long-term trade-offs of all possible changes

2

Resilience isn't Achieved Overnight

Some of the most impactful opportunities take the longest time to realise. Leaders must give themselves runway to reach lasting sustainability.

3

The Plan is Only as Good as the Underlying Governance

Success is ultimately determined by the ability to make nimble decisions and hold leaders accountable to them. Even the best plans falter without accountability.

4

Do it Right and Do it Once

These efforts should result in an actionable multi-year plan. Quick fix approaches result in putting out fires and a cycle of reactive problem-solving.

Questions?

HURON