



# Grants to Individuals for Vocational Exploration

## *Invitation for Applications*

**Deadline: October 3, 2025 or March 11, 2026**

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The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) invites faculty members and staff in full-time roles at member institutions of its Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE) to apply for a Grant to Individuals for Vocational Exploration in varied amounts from \$5,000 to \$25,000. This grant is intended to support innovative projects in the scholarship, teaching, and/or practice of vocation in undergraduate education, with the goal of supporting projects that explore emerging questions and expand the scholarly and pedagogical body of expertise on vocation in undergraduate education.

## *The Opportunity*

While NetVUE offers a number of grant programs for institutions, this is its first program for individual projects by faculty members and staff members. Many employees at NetVUE member institutions engage in and contribute to the exploration of vocation in undergraduate education through their scholarship, teaching, and practice, but often need more resources to support new research and pedagogical innovation. Through the NetVUE Grants to Individuals for Vocational Exploration, CIC seeks to offer funding and guidance to support projects generating artifacts or products that will develop and expand the existing field of scholarship and pedagogy on vocation in undergraduate education.

**The Council of Independent Colleges is grateful to  
Lilly Endowment Inc. for its generous support of this program.**

NetVUE Grants to Individuals for Vocational Exploration may be requested in amounts ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000 for use over a semester, summer, or one academic year. Funds should be designated for activities that support research expenses, resources, travel, course releases, and similar expenses beyond the funding that is available from the applicant's institution. Requested funds may be designated for conference attendance specific to the proposed project (but note that NetVUE conference expenses are ineligible for grant support). The amount requested should be appropriate to the scope of the proposed project. This program welcomes smaller and medium-sized projects as well as projects seeking the maximum level of funding.

Grant funds may be used for a range of purposes, but some expenses are ineligible; applicants are expected to attend carefully to the **Grant Budget Guidelines** on the NetVUE website.

Proposals are welcome from both new and established scholars and practitioners. Examples of possible proposals are included at the end of this document. Proposal topics different from the ones described there are welcome as well, particularly projects that support belonging and inclusion with respect to vocation, and projects that invite the NetVUE community toward fresh considerations and new frameworks in vocation as a lens for undergraduate education. Grants will be awarded based on proposals that explain (1) how the project relates to existing scholarship, pedagogy, and/or practice on vocation in undergraduate education; (2) how the project will contribute to this existing body of scholarship, pedagogy, and practice in new and innovative ways, (3) the purpose and plan of proposed activities, and (4) a plan for assessing the impact or outcome of the project.

## *Eligibility and Funding Timeline*

All full-time employees (whether faculty members or staff) at NetVUE member institutions are encouraged to apply. Applications must demonstrate familiarity with the current discourse around vocation in undergraduate education.

While most grant projects will be conducted by individuals, in some cases grant recipients may choose to collaborate with scholars and practitioners at other institutions, including those at non-NetVUE member institutions; however, full grant funding will be disbursed to the project leader's institution. Individuals who are currently serving as the principal project leader for an institutional NetVUE grant project during the same time period are not eligible to apply.

More than one member of the faculty or staff at a given institution may apply for any given grant period, as applications are considered on the basis of individual merit without regard to institutional affiliation. In addition, prior applications and prior awards of a Grant to Individuals for Vocational Exploration will not influence (either positively or negatively) decisions about proposals from individuals at the same institution.

Applications are due on **October 3, 2025** for the spring 2026 and summer 2026 cohorts, or on **March 11, 2026** for the fall 2026 cohort. Applicants seeking support for the entire

2026–2027 academic year may apply at either deadline. Decisions will be announced in December 2025 (for applications received by October 3, 2025) and in May 2026 (for applications received by March 11, 2026). Funds will be disbursed at the starting date for each cohort, and spending must be completed by the end date for each cohort, as listed below:

**Spring 2026 Cohort** (may extend through the following summer)

- Starting date (funds disbursed): January 15, 2026
- Mid-point check-in: March 9, 2026
- End date (spending must be completed): August 31, 2026
- Final report due: September 30, 2026

**Summer 2026 Cohort**

- Starting date (funds disbursed): May 15, 2026
- Mid-point check-in: June 30, 2026
- End date (spending must be completed): August 31, 2026
- Final report due: September 30, 2026

**Academic Year 2026-27 Cohort** (may begin in the preceding summer and/or extend through the following summer)

- Starting date (funds disbursed): May 15, 2026
- Mid-point check-in: January 15, 2027
- End date (spending must be completed): August 31, 2027
- Final report due: September 30, 2027

**Fall 2026 Cohort** (may begin in the preceding summer)

- Starting date (funds disbursed): May 15, 2026
- Mid-point check-in: October 8, 2026
- End date (spending must be completed): December 31, 2026
- Final report due: February 17, 2027

In addition to the mid-point check-in with the NetVUE grant program officer, recipients should be available for informal check-ins periodically during the grant period.

## *Expectations of Grant Recipients*

If awarded a NetVUE Grant to Individuals for Vocational Exploration, the recipient will agree to:

- Submit final narrative and financial reports to CIC that describe the outcome of the project and reflect on the effectiveness of grant-supported activities, by the following dates:
  - September 30, 2026 (for spring 2026 and summer 2026 projects)
  - February 17, 2027 (for fall 2026 projects)

- September 30, 2027 (for academic year 2026-27 projects)
- Provide NetVUE with two copies of the final product or artifact of the grant project (essays being submitted for possible publication, revised course syllabi, campus program descriptions and publicity, or similar documentation of the work done with grant support);
- Attend informal check-ins with fellow cohort members and with the NetVUE grant program officer;
- Send a one-page summary of progress to the NetVUE grant program officer by the mid-point check-in date for the recipient's cohort (see cohort dates above);
- Demonstrate meaningful use of assessment as part of the grant project;
- Participate in efforts by CIC and NetVUE to assess, coach, and advise grant-funded activities, including (but not limited to) participation in surveys, virtual focus groups, and virtual gatherings of grant directors;
- Permit the inclusion of information about the individual project in CIC and NetVUE publications;
- Be willing to share, at future NetVUE Conferences and gatherings (and by means of a one-page summary to be posted on the NetVUE website) what the recipient has learned through the grant-supported activities;
- Identify the funded activities as supported by the Council of Independent Colleges and Lilly Endowment Inc. in all project materials and publicity.

## *Application Guidelines*

Proposals should be submitted online as a single document and consist of the following components. Please use a **12-point font** and standard **1-inch margins** for legibility.

**A Brief Public Description** of the project (120 words, maximum), to be posted on the NetVUE website if the project is funded, providing a concise account of the planned project that will be understandable to those who have not read the proposal.

**A Two- to Three-Page Narrative** that provides sections identified as follows:

- A description of the individual project, including the applicant's understanding of vocation, the institutional context of their work, and their vocation-related work prior to this project;
- A statement of project impact, goals, and objectives (including who will be impacted by the project, how the impact will be achieved, and the place of vocation in achieving this impact) that can be assessed at the end of the grant period to evaluate project success;
- A description of project activities, including mid-project benchmarks of progress

and intended products, such as publications, resources, or presentations;

- A plan for assessment and evaluation of the project's goals and objectives, describing the assessment instruments that will be used. Resources for assessment measures related to vocation can be found on the [Assessment Resource Website](#). NetVUE staff may also consult on the development of assessment plans where necessary.
- A statement of how the applicant's institution and/or the NetVUE network might benefit from the individual project after the grant period;
- The applicant's résumé or curriculum vitae (limited to four pages).

**A One-Page Project Timeline** that includes activities, mid-project benchmarks of progress toward goals, and spending. The elements of this timeline should fall within the disbursement and spending deadlines of the grant cohort chosen by the applicant (see "Eligibility and Funding Timeline" section above).

**A One-Page Budget with Budget Notes** that describes the expense categories, including research expenses, stipends or released time, meals and travel to meetings, and costs of materials and supplies. Applicants are encouraged to determine how best to use grant funds and to show institutional support through cost-sharing or donor-matching where appropriate. If the institution is contributing financial support to the project, the budget should list this support in a separate column. (Such contributions are not required for this grant, but they can help to demonstrate the institution's commitment to supporting the project.) Applicants are expected to follow rigorously the rules about eligible expenses and the construction of the budget, which are provided in the **Grant Budget Guidelines** document on the NetVUE website. This important document provides answers to frequently asked questions and a sample budget; please study it carefully in the construction of the budget.

**Please Note: Budgets must include support for the project leader(s), preferably through buyouts of time—i.e., funding other employees (adjunct instructors or staff members) to perform the project leaders' contracted duties—in order to ensure that the project leader has adequate time and space to bring the grant-funded project to fruition. Budgets should not allocate fractional time of any employee's work without a clear description of who will take up that percentage of duties and how that person will be compensated.**

**A One-Page Letter of Support** from a cabinet-level supervisor, describing the nominee's qualifications and commitment to the institution's mission, and affirming the structure, expense, and payment timelines outlined in the application.

## *Application Deadline*

The application deadlines are **October 3, 2025** (for spring 2026 and summer 2026 cohorts) **or March 11, 2026** (for fall 2026 cohorts). Applications for academic year 2026-27 may be submitted at either the October 3, 2025 or March 11, 2026 deadline. In order to be considered, proposals must be submitted electronically as a single document via the portal on the NetVUE website, accessible via the page at [www.cic.edu/netvue-give](http://www.cic.edu/netvue-give).

## *Examples*

Examples of projects that might be considered include (but are not limited to):

- Exploration of an emerging question in the scholarship of vocation in undergraduate education, supported by a course release and budget for acquiring scholarly materials, with the goal of publishing an academic article or presenting at an academic conference;
- Development of a new course or creative pedagogical methods for teaching vocation in undergraduate education, supported with a course release, purchase of resources, and/or collaborating with others involved in innovative pedagogy in vocation;
- Development of groundbreaking practices for engaging vocation in undergraduate education, particularly in forging new cooperative partnerships to involve those students who are typically less deeply engaged in more conventional vocation-related programs. These practices may be featured in co-curricular and/or extra-curricular programs, with the goal of sharing a product or artifact based on the practices.
- Deeper exploration of how vocation-related ideas and practices might shape institutional leadership. The results of such exploration could be applied to areas like assessment, institutional research, fostering leadership teams, and strategic planning.

## *Questions?*

Questions about NetVUE Grants to Individuals for Vocational Exploration should be addressed to Kari Kloos, NetVUE grant program officer, at [kkloos@cic.edu](mailto:kkloos@cic.edu).