



Grants to Individuals for Vocational Exploration

Invitation for Applications

Fall Deadline: October 2, 2026

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 work that explores emerging questions and expands 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 expenses for NetVUE's own conferences and gatherings 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. **Please read these guidelines carefully**; budget documents that fail to follow these guidelines may lead to the proposal not being entered into the review process.

Proposals are welcome from both new and established scholars and practitioners; examples of possible proposals are included at the end of this document. Other proposal topics are welcome as well, particularly projects that support belonging and inclusion with respect to vocation. In addition, CIC seeks to support 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, including NetVUE scholarly resources; (2) how the project will develop and expand this existing body of scholarship, pedagogy, and practice in new and innovative ways; (3) the purpose and plan of proposed activities, including plans to share the products of the grant project; and (4) a plan for assessing the impact or outcome of the project.

Please note that this grant is intended to support individual and small collaborative projects. While institutional programs may be supported by other grants offered by CIC, such projects are not a good fit for this grant. However, individual research on (or development of) institutional programs may fit the scope of this grant, as long as the primary use of funds supports the individual(s) leading project activities *and* the production of the enduring artifact(s) of the grant 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 their own institution or at other institutions, including those at non-NetVUE-member institutions. In such cases, 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.

Grants are disbursed to the project leader's institution, but funds are to be used according to that person's proposal. More than one member of the faculty or staff at a given institution may apply for or hold a NetVUE Grant to Individuals during 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 will not influence (either positively or negatively) decisions about proposals from individuals at the same institution.

The next application deadline is **October 2, 2026**, for which decisions will be announced in December 2026. (Another deadline will be announced for the spring, accepting proposals for summer 2027 and later.) 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 2027 Cohort (may extend through the following summer)

- Starting date (funds disbursed): January 15, 2027
- Mid-point check-in: March 22, 2027
- End date (spending must be completed): August 31, 2027
- Final report due: September 30, 2027

Summer 2027 Cohort

- Starting date (funds disbursed): May 14, 2027
- Mid-point check-in: July 30, 2027
- End date (spending must be completed): August 31, 2027
- Final report due: September 30, 2027

Academic Year 2027–2028 Cohort (may begin in the preceding summer and/or extend through the following summer)

- Starting date (funds disbursed): May 14, 2027
- Mid-project check-ins: November 16, 2027, and June 14, 2028
- End date (spending must be completed): August 31, 2028
- Final report due: September 29, 2028

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, 2027 (for spring 2027 and summer 2027 projects)
 - September 29, 2028 (for academic year 2027-28 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 project 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; and
- 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 the following in clearly-marked sections:

- A description of the individual project, including the applicant's understanding of vocation, the institutional context of their work, and their vocation-related engagement prior to this project. This section should also include a description of current engagement in the scholarly discourse on vocation and how the project's products will develop and expand the field of vocation in undergraduate education.
- A statement of project goals and objectives, and of potential impact (including who will be impacted by the project, how this impact will be achieved, and the place of vocation in achieving this impact). These elements should be described in ways that allow them to 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, and a plan for where these products will be shared, within or beyond the NetVUE network.
- 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 consult on the development of assessment plans when needed.
- A statement of how the applicant’s institution and/or the NetVUE network might benefit from the individual project after the grant period.

The Résumé or Curriculum Vitae of the applicant (limited to four pages, counted separately from the three-page limit placed on the project narrative).

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 next application deadline is **October 2, 2026**. 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. Another deadline will be announced in spring 2027, when proposals for Summer 2027 and later will also be considered.

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 sustained personal reflection, or of 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 collaboration 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.