



**Request for Proposals  
Education for American Civic Life  
Revised Fall 2019**

This initiative supports faculty-led efforts to prepare graduates to become informed and engaged participants in the civic life of their local, national, and global communities. Grants of varying amounts, ranging from \$100,000-\$400,000 over a 24-36 month period, will be made to each funded project participating in this initiative. The size of the grant will be based on the number of institutions involved and the scope of the project. We expect this grant program will remain open for approximately three to five years.

**Goals**

The mission of the Teagle Foundation is “to support and strengthen liberal arts education, which we see as fundamental to meaningful work, *effective citizenship*, and a fulfilling life.”

At its most fundamental level, civic education entails an understanding of American history grounded in scholarly research. When viewed expansively, this knowledge can guide students to recognize elements of community formation and push them to consider their responsibilities beyond themselves. It lays the groundwork for how members of a shared community appreciate and grapple with their differences and guides them toward a collective civil life.

Unfortunately, many students arrive at college with little knowledge of the ideas, principles, and institutions that undergird American democracy—fundamental ideas such as freedom of speech, separation of powers, the rule of law, individual rights and responsibilities. While progress has been made at many institutions of higher education to promote civic *action* as part of the undergraduate experience, the Foundation is especially concerned with civic *education*.

**Criteria for Project Proposals**

The Teagle Foundation welcomes the participation of a diverse array of institutions—community colleges, liberal arts colleges, comprehensive and research universities—in this initiative. Grants of varying amounts, ranging from \$100,000-\$400,000 over a 24-36 month period, will be made to each funded project participating in this initiative. Requests from both single institutions and multiple institutions partnering together will be considered. The size of the grant will be based on the number of institutions involved and the scope of the project. Planning grants in the range of \$25,000 over 6-12 months will also be considered, particularly for projects that involve multiple campus partners.

- **A curricular focus on central issues that define and challenge American democracy**

Through this initiative, the Foundation seeks ambitious projects that confront gaps in undergraduates' civic knowledge and prepares them for the intellectual demands of democratic participation. Successful proposals will seek to promote learning about the formation of the American republic, the crafting of its Constitution, the history of contention over the meanings of the Constitution, the development of representative political structures, and the principles of democracy. We also encourage a comparative approach to studying these principles that may deepen students' understanding of what is unique about American institutions by placing them in contrast to the principles and institutions of other societies.

We welcome proposals designed to reach a significant proportion, if not all, of the undergraduate student body. While innovative pedagogies that advance civic engagement are acknowledged and appreciated (e.g., service-learning, public sphere pedagogy), please note our chief interest is in *content*, i.e., what students will learn and how that learning will be assessed.

There are a variety of curricular approaches to and considerations for addressing this objective. Some examples are offered below:

- In our digital age, information is readily available and freely shared, but its accuracy and quality are often unclear, making it difficult to distinguish between sense and nonsense. Proposed curricular approaches should nurture students' roles as responsible consumers and disseminators of knowledge.
- Proposed projects may consider ways to connect students through the curriculum to the larger community beyond the campus. Such approaches might include connections with persons, agencies, or institutions beyond the academy, including public officials in local and state governments, leaders of local organizations and businesses, or members of the media—all of whom could play a role in the classroom.
- A variety of curricular structures will be considered, e.g., seminars, short-term courses, or linked sets of coursework.

- **Bridging civic connections across the disciplines**

Civic education is strongest when it is not treated as a subject in isolation but becomes part of the student experience across disciplines. For example, the study of history and literature can help students recognize recurring themes and problems in American life such as the tension between individual rights and national security, or the challenges and opportunities faced by immigrants. The social sciences may provide insight into how data from the Census or from the science of epidemiology or from ethnographic studies have shaped policies that have significant impact on the lives of all Americans.

- **Fostering civil discourse**

The Foundation welcomes projects that cultivate respectful inquiry and dialogue, which are essential to any civil society. These may take the form of faculty development to prepare

professors to address civic matters in their classroom in such a way that draws all students to join in thoughtful participation (e.g., deliberative dialogue—moderated discussion aimed toward inclusion, understanding, and problem-solving). They may also entail specific programming for students involving well-informed speakers who bring different viewpoints to contentious issues.

- **Faculty as leaders to develop and implement curricular change**

Given the central role of faculty as the architects and executors of undergraduate curriculum, their vision, direction and engagement are critical to sustainable changes within the institution and, more generally, throughout higher education. As such, we seek proposals that are faculty-led and driven across academic departments, with appropriate support from campus administrators. Inter-institutional collaborations are encouraged but are not required.

- **Sustainability**

Successful applicants will clearly articulate how proposed curricular changes are aligned with institutional priorities, will be enacted, as appropriate, through institutional governance structures, and will be sustained beyond the life of the grant. Projects are expected to move beyond additions to course catalogs and reflect content integration to support civic learning outcomes. Grants from the Teagle Foundation are made in the expectation that once the formal grant period ends, should the piloted efforts be successful, the costs associated with supporting the work will be absorbed by the participating institution(s).

- **Assessment**

Proposals must provide clearly articulated goals for undergraduate civic learning and how they will be measured. The Teagle Foundation may wish to collaborate with grantees in an external evaluation to assess the short- and longer-term outcomes of funded projects, including follow-up studies three to five years after the conclusion of the funded projects.

- **Dissemination efforts**

Active dissemination efforts will be important to spread the knowledge and practices developed by grantees to higher education stakeholders. Dissemination might take the form of publically available instructional materials; action-oriented tool-kits or other publications; webinars; websites and blogs; and conference presentations and workshops.

## **Submission Process**

Requests for grant support will be considered following our two-stage application process. First, we ask that prospective grantees share brief concept papers. After review of the concept papers, a limited number of applicants will then be invited to submit full proposals. For complete details on the submission process, please refer to information on how we grant here:

<http://www.teaglefoundation.org/Grants-Initiatives/How-We-Grant>

We encourage interested institutions, organizations, or consortia to submit a 3-5 page concept paper that names all the campus partners and sketches the project description, with an eye towards meeting the criteria discussed above. The guiding question to keep in mind while developing your concept paper (and if invited, your proposal) is: in what ways will your curricula be substantively different as a result of a grant? And how will those curricular innovations be sustained beyond the life of a grant?

We consider concept papers on a rolling basis. The Teagle Board of Directors reviews all grant requests when it meets in February, May, and November. If a proposal is invited, program staff will confer with applicants to determine the appropriate timeline for submitting a full proposal in line for potential review by the board.

**All concept papers should be submitted electronically at [proposals@teagle.org](mailto:proposals@teagle.org).** If invited, full proposals will be submitted through the Foundation's online application system.

**FOUNDATION CONTACT:** Please feel free to contact Tamara Tweel ([ttweel@teagle.org](mailto:ttweel@teagle.org)) if you have questions about Education for American Civic Life.