



**Request for Proposals  
Education for American Civic Life  
Revised Winter 2020**

This initiative supports efforts to prepare students to become informed and engaged participants in the civic life of their local and national 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 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.” Civic education entails an understanding of American history and democratic principles. 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.

Colleges and universities often assume that their incoming students have received prior preparation on topics such as the formation of the American republic or the crafting of the Constitution. In doing so, they miss opportunities to help undergraduates develop a mature understanding of the history and fragility of democracy. We encourage institutions to build on these themes across their curriculum and to invite deeper academic inquiry on critical issues that vex our local and national communities. Through “Education for American Civic Life,” the Foundation seeks to elevate the civic objectives of liberal arts education by partnering with institutions offering bold and coherent initiatives that endow students with the content, skills, and sensibility to participate in a political system designed for self-governance. 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 grounding such action in comprehensive civic education through the curriculum.

**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 scope of the project. Planning grants in the range of \$25,000 over 6-12 months will also be considered.

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 interpretation of the Constitution, the development of representative political structures, and the principles of democracy. 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.

We give priority to proposals designed to reach a significant proportion, if not all, of the undergraduate student body and that infuse civic education across the curriculum. 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. There are a variety of curricular approaches to and considerations for addressing this objective. Some examples are offered below.

### **Specific Areas of Interest**

The Education for American Civic Life Initiative is focused on funding in three particular areas. While we continue to accept applications that cross or go beyond these areas, we also value proposals that help deepen, expand, and scale the work we are currently funding.

- **Knowledge for Freedom**

In 2018, the Foundation made a commitment to expand nationwide a uniquely rewarding program called Knowledge for Freedom.

Knowledge for Freedom Programs invite underserved high school students to study humanity's deepest questions about leading lives of purpose and civic responsibility. Between the junior and senior years of high school, students come into residence on a college campus, where they experience the intensity of a seminar-sized discussion taught by college professors focused on major works of philosophy and literature. Over the following year, while applying to college as high school seniors, the students engage in civic initiatives inspired by the recognition that their lives are interconnected with the lives of others.

High school students who typically find themselves shut out from opportunities available to their more affluent peers are thus provided with an opportunity to undertake college-level work in the humanities, to build meaningful relationships with college faculty and college students, who serve them as mentors, and to develop, through practice, civic skills with their peers. Knowledge for Freedom programs, as demonstrated by the flagship "Freedom and Citizenship Program" at Columbia

University, dramatically improve college readiness, admission prospects, and college graduation persistence while building interest in humanistic writing and issues, as well as habits of civic engagement, that persist during and after college.

- **Big Questions & Coherent Answers**

In 2019, the Foundation began working with colleges and universities invested in creating comprehensive civic education for a significant portion of their student body. Some of our partner institutions are designing freshman core curricula, others are working inside divisions such as an honors college or a pre-professional program, to ask faculty to design a series of courses and extra-curricular opportunities to ensure that their students prepare to be informed and engaged civic participants in their local and national communities. These programs explicitly help students grasp the lived experience—past and present-- of their neighbors outside the campus gates as a valuable aspect of a civic education that builds on their education in areas like governance, history, and law.

Typically, these programs are anchored by a significant question concerning the past and present challenges of the community in which the college or university is located-- whether this is a metropolitan center such as Newark, New Jersey, with a long history of successive migrations into and out of the city, or rural Virginia, site of a major Civil War campaign and the struggle over segregation and civil rights.

- **Professional Development**

In 2019, the Foundation began partnering with colleges and universities that are working to deepen civic education and that recognize the need to provide faculty with their own learning opportunities to ensure that they are equipped to teach in the new civic curriculum. The Foundation is invested in building professional development opportunities for faculty focused on the knowledge and skills they need to give undergraduates a comprehensive civic education. Our partners have offered intensive summer seminars with leading scholars, created stipends for professors to learn to teach texts outside their area of expertise, and are investigating new ways to create faculty learning communities.

Regardless of curricular approach, all success proposals are expected to address the following:

**Sustainability**

Successful applicants will clearly articulate how proposed programs 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**

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 publicly 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 Mann Tweel ([ttweel@teagle.org](mailto:ttweel@teagle.org)) if you have questions about Education for American Civic Life.