



Educating Character Initiative 2027: Encountering Character in U.S. Higher Education

The [Educating Character Initiative](#) at Wake Forest University is excited to launch its renewed Invitation to Community and 2027 Request for Proposals for grants to institutions.

The Educating Character Initiative (ECI) was founded in 2023 as a project of the Program for Leadership and Character through the generous support of Lilly Endowment Inc. Since our launch, we have welcomed over 2,400 faculty, staff, and administrators from more than 840 institutions and organizations to join a community with a common purpose: educating character and building communities of character in higher education and beyond. Over three previous grant cycles, the ECI has awarded over \$58.4 million in grants, directly impacting over 200 institutions working to strengthen the understanding, integration, and education of character at U.S. colleges and universities.

I. Executive Summary

The ECI aims for character-centered institutional and cultural transformation of U.S. colleges and universities. We empower higher education institutions to become communities of character that, in turn, shape individual faculty, staff, and students as people of character for the common good. Our grantmaking and collective learning initiatives equip a wide range of institutions with the resources, funding, and support to integrate character education into their distinctive institutional contexts, curricula, and cultures. Additionally, our initiative supports practitioners and researchers across a variety of roles and sectors within higher education to collaborate and build communities of character. We aspire to build a movement of individuals and institutions committed to cultivating and nurturing character growth.

In addition to organizing workshops, conferences, and convenings and developing resources for faculty and staff, the ECI awards grants to institutions. In 2027, funding for institutions will include **Institutional Impact Grants** of between \$100,000 and \$1,000,000 and **Capacity-Building Grants** of up to \$50,000. Successful grantees will be teams of faculty, staff, and administrators at U.S. colleges and universities with outstanding proposals to develop the

moral, civic, and/or intellectual character of faculty, staff, students, and institutions.

The ECI is also excited to announce a new grant effort designed to support Communities of Impact across higher education. Jointly funded by the John Templeton Foundation and Lilly Endowment Inc., these **Communities of Impact Grants** will provide up to \$75,000 to seed and sustain intentional communities organized around a timely concern or aim in character education at U.S. colleges and universities. A separate [request for proposals](#) for Col grants is available [on our website](#).

II. An Invitation to Community

At the opening of our fourth year of the Educating Character Initiative, we are grateful for the exceptional creativity, effort, humility, and friendship visible in this emerging community of character. We are looking forward to embracing another year of opportunity.

We hope you will consider joining the growing ECI Community of faculty, staff, administrators, and higher education leaders from over 850 institutions and organizations. By creating and sustaining a broad-based network of individuals and institutions that serve faculty, staff, and students, we encourage a range of perspectives on character in higher education and support opportunities to learn from each other, experiment with new ideas and pedagogies, and benefit from the individual and collective wisdom of our community. We invite participation from individuals and teams from all two- and four-year colleges and universities—public and private, secular and religious.

Whether you are just beginning to explore an interest in educating character or have been teaching, researching, or educating character for years, we invite you to join us in one or more of the following ways:

- [Register as a member of the ECI Community](#). We are an international and collaborative community learning from and with each other. We hope you will join not only for what you might gain but also for what you might offer. Registration is free and provides access to information about events, opportunities for conversation and learning, and resources for educating character.
- Participate in [workshops, webinars, and convenings](#) hosted by the ECI, such as our faculty workshop on how to integrate character into courses; our monthly webinar focused on equipping faculty, staff, and administrators to educate character and design character-infused curricular and co-curricular programming; our ECI Book Club that meets regularly to discuss character-related books; and more.
- Contribute to resources or research on educating character.
- Apply for funding to support character-building efforts through our grants (see the

Request for Proposals below).

In addition to these opportunities, grant recipients and community members will be supported by the ECI team and by one another as we seek to understand, implement, and expand character education and to support a wider community of individuals and institutions focused on educating character in their distinctive contexts.

III. Character in Context

Character education is not one-size-fits-all. While character education includes a set of widely shared virtues, strategies, and objectives and offers vital resources, frameworks, and examples to support faculty and staff in this work, it must be adapted to an institution's distinctive history, culture, and context and integrated in organic ways that align with an institution's core mission. At the ECI, we believe the process of discerning and achieving contextual alignment is more time-consuming than a simple "plug-and-play" approach, and also promises greater potential for success and sustainability.

The ECI welcomes a range of approaches to moral, civic, and/or intellectual character and encourages engagement in promoting character development that aligns with each institution's mission, vision, and unique population of faculty, staff, and students. The following feature stories from *LearningWell Magazine* offer some perspective on the wide range of institutions and their distinct approaches to character-building supported by ECI grants:

- [Colleges with Character](#), featuring Austin Community College, Radford University, Villanova University, and Wake Forest University
- [Good Sports](#), featuring Syracuse University
- [Character and Reconciliation](#), featuring Fort Lewis College
- [History, Mission, and Character](#), featuring Seton Hill University
- [Peace of Mind at Utah State University](#), featuring Utah State University
- [Knowledge and Virtue at University of California, Irvine](#), featuring UC Irvine
- [Truth and Service](#), featuring Howard University
- [The Davidson Difference](#), featuring Davidson College
- [Awakening the Lion Mind at Loyola Marymount University](#), featuring Loyola Marymount University
- [Focus and Flourish](#), featuring UNC-Chapel Hill
- [What We Bring with Us](#), featuring Villanova University

The ECI is a part of the Program for Leadership and Character at Wake Forest University, whose mission and vision to act for humanity serve as our institutional anchor. The Program for Leadership and Character understands character generally as "the collection of stable, deep, and enduring dispositions that define who we are and shape how we characteristically think,

feel, and act.”¹ The aim of the Program is to help students develop good dispositions (“virtues”) that foster individual and communal flourishing and to avoid bad dispositions (“vices”) that inhibit flourishing. Its work centers the development of virtues such as compassion, courage, gratitude, honesty, hope, humility, integrity, justice, kindness, resilience, temperance, and wisdom, among others. To learn more about the Program for Leadership and Character, including its [resources](#) and [seven strategies for character development framework](#), please visit our website: <https://leadershipandcharacter.wfu.edu/>.

We offer the above examples of grantee institutions and the work of the Program for Leadership and Character as illustrations of contextualized approaches to educating character. While other institutions are welcome to adapt what is useful from these models, we encourage institutions to develop frameworks or approaches embedded within the local contexts of their institutional cultures.

IV. Announcement of the 2027 Request For Proposals

In 2027, the Educating Character Initiative intends to award grants to institutions, varying in scale, focus, and expected impact. These grants are meant to provide institutions with the time, resources, and freedom to discern what might work best in their context. Priority will be given to applications that show: strong institutional support; clear alignment with the institution’s mission, vision, and values; the potential for integrating character in robust and meaningful ways across the institution; a commitment to preparing students to engage the world beyond their institution; and a willingness to contribute to the community of character through shared wisdom and resources. Details about Institutional Impact Grants (between \$100,000 and \$1,000,000) and Capacity-Building Grants (up to \$50,000) can be found below.

For those who are familiar with the rhythm of our institutional grants, **please take note of the accelerated timing of the 2027 grant cycle.** Deadlines are significantly earlier than they have been in previous years, in order to create a longer runway between award notifications and grant start dates.

1. Institutional Impact Grants

We will award **Institutional Impact Grants of between \$100,000 and \$1,000,000** to institutions that plan to undertake a substantial and sustained effort to educate character in undergraduate populations at their institution or through multi-institutional collaborations. Organizations should align the size of the request with the impact of the proposed project and with their expertise and capacity to steward the funds efficiently and effectively. Since funds are limited, please design projects that will have the maximum impact using the fewest

¹ See Michael Lamb, Jonathan Brant, and Edward Brooks, “Seven Strategies for Cultivating Virtue in the University” in *Cultivating Virtue in the University*, ed. Jonathan Brant, Edward Brooks, and Michael Lamb (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 115–156.

resources.

These three-year grants will provide support to enable institutional leaders, faculty, and staff to infuse character in undergraduate curricula and programming in ways that align organically with their college or university mission, context, and culture. Institutional Impact Grants may be especially useful for institutions that have already begun educating character in their context, that have previously received a Capacity-Building Grant from the ECI, and/or that have faculty and staff with the relevant expertise to undertake a major initiative dedicated to character. We imagine these grants will focus primarily on coherent and collaborative implementation rather than initial exploration and development of an approach to character, though we welcome innovative ideas that have not been fully tested.

We welcome applications from two- and four-year U. S. colleges and universities. We also welcome applications from cross-institutional networks of colleges, universities, and organizations that wish to collaborate on a shared project or initiative. In the case of cross-institutional networks, grants must be based at one college or university, though funds may be disbursed to multiple institutions or organizations.

In fall 2026, the ECI will launch a community platform to serve as a shared space for connection, collaboration, resource-sharing, research, and funding for the character education ecosystem in higher education and beyond. We encourage teams applying for Institutional Impact Grants this year to consider how educating character in your context might contribute to collective learning, in particular by generating practical, adaptable resources that can be shared on the platform for public use.

Potential project activities could include, but are not limited to, some or all of the following:

- The launch of a new major, minor, certificate program, or curricular requirement and/or a co-curricular center, institute, or program related to character.
- New faculty, staff, or postdoctoral fellows whose time is committed to character education efforts.
- Course or time buyouts, salary replacement, and/or summer salary for faculty or staff to devote time to develop a program, initiative, or course at their institution.
- Credit-bearing courses and/or co-curricular programming such as speaker events, discussion groups, retreats, and/or workshops for students, faculty, and/or staff.
- Efforts to build alignment at the institution around an approach to character, including faculty/staff seminars bringing together key partners across the institution to discuss the opportunities and challenges of character education.
- Honoraria for visiting scholars, educators, or experts to generate interest in character education, lead a faculty workshop on character and related pedagogical strategies, and/or provide insight on how character might be integrated at their institution. (Note: Individual workshops and consulting may be requested by grantees for free from the

- staff and fellows of the ECI.)
- Books and materials for faculty/staff seminars, reading groups, and research on character education.
- Wages for student assistants to contribute to literature reviews, data collection, or other tasks.
- Survey administration and participant incentives to collect data from students, faculty, and staff related to the impact or viability of projects or initiatives.
- Professional development support, such as travel and registration for relevant workshops that focus on character or character education or funds to host “train the trainer” events at the institution. (Note: The ECI team may be able to provide some staff support for faculty or staff development workshops at your institution, but travel costs for ECI staff attendance should be incorporated into your proposal.)
- Development or revision of resources for educating character at the institution, and/or funds to make resources for educating character ready to share with the wider ECI Community.

As the ECI has a strong preference for funding projects with potential for long-lasting impact and growth beyond the grant’s end date, we encourage institutions to commit to the work by providing co-funding. Therefore, some costs that are typically allowable by other funders are not allowable under this grant. Unallowable costs include:

- Overhead/indirect costs.
- Fringe benefits (aside from applicable taxes) on stipends or other compensation that is not salary/wages.
- Travel expenses (lodging, meals and incidentals, and mileage reimbursement) exceeding U.S. General Services Administration rates.
- Costs related to tuition remission and/or fees support for students.
- Stipends that remunerate students for participation in an activity or experience.
- Stipends that remunerate students for external internships and/or fellowships related to student career experiences or service experiences.
- Individual honoraria exceeding \$5,000, while not strictly disallowed, are discouraged.

Faculty, staff, and students performing substantial work directly in support of the project may be paid as employees or contractors of the institution.

Lists of institutions and projects funded by ECI Institutional Impact Grants are available for [2024](#), [2025](#), and [2026](#).

Application Instructions

The application for Institutional Impact Grants is a two-step process.

Step 1: Letter of Inquiry

Teams from accredited U.S. colleges and universities that are interested in educating character in undergraduates are invited to submit a letter of inquiry (LOI) through the LOI Grant Portal available on our webpage beginning September 15, 2026. You must provide:

- Contact information for principal investigator(s) and administrative assistant(s)
- Contact information for financial officer responsible for this grant
- Contact information for authorized signatory for this grant
- Project title and abstract (50-100 words, written for a general audience for publication on ECI's community platform)
- Amount requested (between \$100,000 and \$1M)
- The anticipated number of students impacted by the proposed project
- The anticipated number of faculty and staff impacted by the proposed project
- The anticipated number of people outside the university impacted by the proposed project
- Proposal Narrative addressing the following (10-page maximum, titled "[Institution Name]-Proposal Narrative, [Year]"):
 - Brief overview of the institutional context that provides a frame for the proposed efforts in character education, including a sense of how the overall mission, vision, culture, orientation, or tradition at the institution supports the understanding and integration of character.
 - Description of work already undertaken at the institution toward the education of character in undergraduate students and any relevant outcomes. *If there are other projects at the institution that are supported by initiatives funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. (e.g., grants from the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education), applicants should include a statement concerning how the proposed work aligns with these initiatives and complements those efforts.*
 - Description of the character approach that applicants intend to use for the project, noting the applicants' relevant expertise and/or experience with this approach.
 - Description of the core goals of the project.
 - Description of the project activities, articulating the connection between those activities and the project goals.
 - General timeline for activities (a more detailed timeline will be requested at the full proposal stage). Grant activities may not extend beyond three years beginning summer 2027.
 - Description of the target impact, outcomes, and outputs for the project. Identify who will be impacted, how the impact will be achieved, and the place of intentional character formation in achieving this impact. Articulate proposed outcomes, including plans for assessment and measurement of those outcomes.

Name intended outputs, such as publications, resources, or other anticipated products of the work.

- Plan for sustaining this work beyond the initial grant period.
- Brief CVs of project leaders in a single PDF not to exceed five pages per CV (titled “[Institution Name]-CVs, [Year]”; no photos, please)
- Proof of accreditation of the primary institution
- Budget using [this template](#). Instructions and a sample budget are included to help guide you. The budget is to be uploaded in Excel format and titled “[Institution Name]-Budget, [Year].”
- Signed letter of support from the head of the institution, such as the president, chancellor, or vice-chancellor (titled “[Institution Name]-Primary Letter of Support, [Year]”)
- Audited financial statements of the institution (titled “[Institution Name]-Audited Financial Statements, [Year]”)
- Optional Appendices:
 - Statements of support from other institutional leaders (compiled as one PDF), such as a provost, dean, or department chair, or evidence of strong and broad faculty/staff partnerships (titled “[Institution Name]-Secondary Letters of Support, [Year]”).
 - Additional artifacts that support the narrative of the initial application, such as course syllabi; program descriptions; published or on-going research; descriptions of character-focused conferences, workshops, or convenings; or examples of other character-focused grants and awards. Additional artifacts should be organized in a Google Drive accessible to the ECI via a link in the project narrative.

Given limited funds, Institutional Impact Grant applicants should be mindful of the following when determining the size of the grant request:

- The proposed project’s depth and breadth of impact
- The unit(s) impacted by the proposed project (departments, divisions, schools, colleges, or university-wide)
- Whether the project involves collaboration across institutions
- The expected development of educational resources that can be adopted or adapted by other educators or institutions
- The expected development of scholarly research that can inform the larger community
- The extent to which existing expertise, programs, and operational frameworks at the institution can scaffold a project of the requested size

The Program for Leadership and Character will provide opportunities for colleges and universities to convene in person and virtually to discuss topics of common interest. Since the ECI will be organizing major conferences and convenings for the entire network, funding to host conferences may not be included in these requests, unless plans are coordinated in

advance with the ECI. Staff from the ECI will also be available to provide individualized coaching and support for faculty, staff, and student development and/or assessment at no cost.

Letters of inquiry (LOIs) are due by **November 16, 2026, at 5:00 pm ET**. The submission portal will appear [on our website](#), ready to begin accepting completed applications on **September 15, 2026** and will remain open until the November deadline. Responses to LOIs are expected to be shared with applicants by **January 15, 2027**. All dates and deadlines are subject to change. For the latest information, please visit the [2027 Request for Proposals: Institutional Grants](#) page.

The ECI team will host a hour-long online session to provide a general overview of available grants on **September 3, 2026, from 12:00-1:00 pm ET**. We will host an overview of Institutional Impact Grants specifically on **September 16 from 12:00-1:00 pm ET**.

[Register for an online info session here](#). All inquiries should be directed toward ECI@wfu.edu

Step 2: Full Proposal

A subset of institutions who submitted LOIs will be invited to submit a **full proposal by March 15, 2027 at 5:00 pm ET**. Project teams invited to submit full proposals can expect to be asked to produce revisions to the LOI narrative, timeline, or budget, more detailed versions of requirements listed in the LOI, a theory of change, and supplementary materials as requested by the ECI. In some cases, teams will be invited to submit a full proposal for a level of funding reduced from the initial request.

We anticipate the announcement of grant decisions by **April 16, 2027**, with the term of the grant expected to begin on **August 1, 2027**. All dates and deadlines are subject to change. For the latest information, please visit the [2027 Request for Proposals: Institutional Grants](#) page.

Grant Eligibility and Expectations for Funded Proposals

The project leader(s) must be in or contracted to a long-term faculty or staff position at an accredited college or university in the United States. All contributors to applicant teams agree to [register as members of the Educating Character Initiative Community](#).

Funded projects and project leaders will commit to the following:

- Attend check-in meetings with ECI staff; submit interim and final reports, including assessments of outcomes on students, faculty, and/or staff; and interim and final expenditure reports.
- Attend or present key results at a convening or conference where they will:
 - provide feedback to others and receive feedback on their own project,

- suggest avenues for future research, integration, and/or implementation, or
- share the results and findings of their projects.
- Consent to have any ECI-hosted presentation(s) recorded.
- Maintain a profile on a community platform managed by the ECI.
- For all project outputs, events, presentations, or awards that arise from work supported by the grant, awardees must notify the ECI. Additionally, they must submit copies of all published work or other public products to the ECI. Finally, they must acknowledge the Program for Leadership and Character at Wake Forest University and Lilly Endowment Inc. in project publications as specified in their contractual agreements.
- Follow stipulations of the grant award as communicated and determined by the Educating Character Initiative.

The ECI does not approve the use of generative and/or assistive AI in the composition of grant proposals.

2. Capacity-Building Grants

Among the persistent challenges for faculty, staff, and administrators seeking to cultivate character at their institutions is a lack of resources, including difficulty integrating character across their curriculum or culture without more institutional and financial support. To address this challenge, ECI will award **Capacity-Building Grants of up to \$50,000** to institutions aiming to strengthen their ability to educate and embed character in their distinctive contexts. These grants may be especially useful for institutions that are just beginning to explore how to educate character or envisioning discrete projects that do not require substantial funding. Some teams may wish to use funding from this grant to develop a larger grant application to a funding initiative in a future year.

We welcome applications from two- and four-year colleges and universities. We also welcome applications from cross-institutional networks of colleges, universities, and organizations that wish to collaborate on a shared project or initiative. In the case of cross-institutional networks, grants must be based at one college or university, though funds may be disbursed to multiple institutions or organizations.

Potential project activities could include, but are not limited to, some or all of the following:

- Course or time buyouts, salary replacement, and/or summer funding for individual faculty or staff to devote time to planning or implementing a program, initiative, or course at their institution.
- Credit-bearing courses and/or co-curricular programming such as speaker events, discussion groups, retreats, and/or workshops for students, faculty, and/or staff.
- Efforts to build alignment around an approach to character, including faculty/staff

seminars bringing together key partners across the institution to discuss the opportunities and challenges of character education.

- Honoraria for visiting scholars, educators, or experts to generate interest in character education, lead a faculty workshop on character and related pedagogical strategies, and/or provide insight on how character might be integrated at their institution. (Note: Individual workshops and consulting may be requested by grantees for free from the ECI.)
- Books and materials for faculty/staff seminars, reading groups, and research on character education.
- Wages for student assistants to contribute to literature reviews, data collection, or other tasks.
- Survey administration and participant incentives to collect data from students, faculty, and staff related to the impact or viability of projects or initiatives.
- Professional development support, such as travel and registration for relevant workshops that focus on character or character education or “train the trainer” events at the institution. (Note: The ECI team may be able to provide some staff support for faculty development workshops at your institution, but travel costs for ECI staff attendance should be incorporated into your proposal.)
- Development or revision of resources for educating character at the institution, and/or funds to make resources for educating character ready to share with the wider ECI Community.
- Funding and time to plan and apply for a larger grant from another funding initiative.

Because we are eager to support diverse approaches to character education and learn from thoughtful experimentations, we encourage project leaders to be intentional and creative in building the necessary support and capacity to educate character across their institutions. Given limited funding, we also encourage project leaders to be frugal with resources and intentional about which funds are most necessary to achieve the project’s aims.

A list of institutions and projects funded by Capacity-Building Grants is available for [2024](#), [2025](#), and [2026](#).

Application Instructions

Interested applicants for the Capacity-Building Grants should apply through the CB Grant Portal available on our webpage beginning November 15, 2026. You must provide:

- Contact information for principal investigator(s) and administrative assistant(s)
- Contact information for financial officer responsible for this grant
- Contact information for authorized signatory for this grant
- Project title and abstract (50-100 words, written for a general audience for publication on ECI’s community platform)

- Amount requested (\$50,000 maximum)
- The anticipated number of students impacted by the proposed project
- The anticipated number of faculty and staff impacted by the proposed project
- The anticipated number of people outside the university impacted by the proposed project
- Proposal Narrative addressing the following (10-page maximum, titled “[Institution Name]-Proposal Narrative, [Year]”):
 - Brief overview of the institutional context that provides a frame for the proposed efforts in character education, including a sense of how the overall mission, vision, culture, orientation, or tradition at the institution supports the understanding and integration of character.
 - Description of work already undertaken at the institution toward the education of character in undergraduate students and any relevant outcomes. *If there are other projects at the institution that are supported by initiatives funded by the Lilly Endowment Inc. (e.g., grants from the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education), applicants should include a statement concerning how the proposed work aligns with these initiatives and complements those efforts.*
 - Description of the approach to educating character that applicants intend to use for the project, noting the relevant expertise and/or experience of the applicants. If the project aims to determine the most appropriate character frameworks, orientations, or approaches for the institution, please explain how this discernment will proceed.
 - Description of the core capacity-building and character goals of the project.
 - Description of project activities and explanation of why ECI support is necessary to complete these activities.
 - Description of the target impact, outcomes, and outputs for the project. Identify who will be impacted, how the impact will be achieved, and the role of intentional character formation in achieving this impact. Articulate proposed capacity-building and character outcomes, including plans for assessment and measurement of those outcomes. Name intended outputs, such as publications, resources, or other anticipated products of the work.
 - Timeline of activities, to extend not more than one year beginning summer 2027.
 - Plan for sustaining this work beyond the initial grant period.
- Brief CVs of project leaders in a single PDF not to exceed five pages per CV (titled “[Institution Name]-CVs, [Year]”; no photos, please)
- Proof of accreditation of the primary institution
- Budget using [this template](#). Instructions and a sample budget are included to help guide you. The budget is to be uploaded in Excel format and titled “[Institution Name]-Budget, [Year].”

- Signed letter of support from the head of the institution, such as the president, chancellor, or vice-chancellor (titled “[Institution Name]-Primary Letter of Support, [Year]”)
- Audited financial statements of the institution (titled “[Institution Name]-Audited Financial Statements, [Year]”)
- Optional appendices:
 - Statements of support from other institutional leaders (compiled as one PDF), such as a provost, dean, or department chair, or evidence of strong and broad faculty/staff partnerships (titled “[Institution Name]-Secondary Letters of Support, [Year]”).
 - Additional artifacts that support the narrative, such as course syllabi; program descriptions; published or on-going research; a description of character-focused conferences, workshops, or convenings; or descriptions of grants and awards focused on character formation. Additional artifacts should be organized in a Google Drive accessible to the ECI via a link in the project narrative.

The Program for Leadership and Character will provide multiple opportunities for colleges and universities to convene in person and virtually to discuss topics of common interest. Since the ECI will be organizing major conferences and convenings for the entire network, funding to host conferences may not be included in these requests, unless plans are coordinated in advance with the ECI. Staff from the ECI will also be available to provide individualized coaching and support for faculty, staff, and student development and/or assessment, so those costs need not be included within the grant.

The submission deadline for the application is **December 15, 2026, at 5:00 pm ET**. The grant portal will appear [on our website](#), ready to begin accepting completed applications on **November 15, 2026** and remain open until the December deadline. We anticipate the announcement of award decisions by **March 19, 2027** for projects to begin no earlier than **July 1, 2027**. All dates and deadlines are subject to change. For the latest information, please visit the [2027 Request for Proposals: Institutional Grants](#) page.

The Educating Character Initiative team will host a hour-long online session in order to provide a general overview of all available grants on **September 3, 2026**, from **12:00-1:00 pm ET**. We will host an overview of Capacity-Building Grants specifically on **September 17** from **12:00-1:00 pm ET**.

[Register for an online info session here](#). All inquiries should be directed toward ECI@wfu.edu.

Grant Eligibility and Expectations for Funded Proposals

The project leader(s) must be in or contracted to a long-term faculty or staff position at an accredited college or university in the United States. All contributors to applicant teams agree

to [register as members of the Educating Character Initiative Community](#).

Funded projects and project leaders will commit to the following:

- Attend check-in meetings with ECI staff, submit final reports, including assessments of outcomes on students, faculty, and/or staff, as well as final expenditure reports.
- Attend or present key results at a conference or convening where they will:
 - provide feedback to others and receive feedback on their own project,
 - suggest avenues for future research, integration, and/or implementation, or
 - share the results and findings of their projects.
- Consent to have any ECI-hosted presentation(s) recorded.
- Maintain a profile on a community platform managed by the ECI.
- For all project outputs, events, presentations, or awards that arise from work supported by the grant, awardees must notify the ECI. Additionally, they must submit copies of all published work or other public products to the ECI. Finally, they must acknowledge the Program for Leadership and Character at Wake Forest University and Lilly Endowment Inc. in project publications as specified in their contractual agreements.
- Follow stipulations of the grant award as communicated and determined by the ECI.

The ECI does not approve the use of generative and/or assistive AI in the composition of grant proposals.

V. Conclusion

We are grateful to Lilly Endowment Inc. for its commitment to the ECI's vision and to current members of the ECI Community, who are contributing their insight, expertise, and effort to this initiative. We look forward to expanding the community of character educators within higher education through this Invitation to Community and 2027 Request for Proposals for grants to institutions. Over the next year and beyond, the ECI aspires to empower generative partnerships with and among individuals and institutions—partnerships of mutual learning organized around creative and thoughtful new projects in character education. We hope you will join us.

Dates to Remember

Information Sessions	General Grants Info Session: September 3, 12-1 pm ET Institutional Impact Grants Info Session: September 16, 12-1 pm ET Capacity-Building Grants Info Session: September 17, 12-1 pm ET Register for an online info session here.
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Deadlines	Institutional Impact Grants	Capacity-Building Grants
Letter of Inquiry Due	November 16, 2026	n/a
Final Proposal Due	March 15, 2027	December 15, 2026
Grant Decisions	April 16, 2027	March 19, 2027
Grant Start Date	August 1, 2027	July 1, 2027

All dates and deadlines are subject to change. For the latest information, please visit the [2027 Request for Proposals: Institutional Grants](#) page.