



## 2027 COTTON IN THE CURRICULUM GRANT PROGRAM

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Proposal Submission Deadline: Friday July 24, 2026

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## Program Overview

Cotton Incorporated is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to increase the demand for and profitability of cotton through research and promotion. The Cotton in the Curriculum (CIC) Grant Program supports faculty in the fields of fiber, textiles, apparel, fashion design, and merchandising in developing coursework, class projects, and learning experiences that help students better understand cotton and cotton products. Projects may focus on areas such as design, product development, textiles, merchandising, or marketing, provided they support student learning about cotton and its role in the industry. The core resource supporting these efforts is the CottonWorks™ website, which provides industry-relevant information across the supply chain, from production and product development to marketing.

## Program Themes

All proposals must align with one of the following themes:

- **Choosing Cotton:** Focus on how cotton is evaluated, compared, and selected relative to other materials. Projects should engage students in understanding tradeoffs and determining when and why cotton is the right choice.
- **Expanding Cotton:** Focus on how cotton can be applied in new, underutilized, or non-traditional use cases. Projects should explore opportunities for cotton beyond its most common applications.

## Grant Tracks at a Glance

	<b>Track 1 Cotton Education Innovation Grants</b>	<b>Track 2 Cotton Materials Mini-Grants</b>
<b>Funding Range</b>	Up to \$40,000	Up to \$8,000
<b>Goal</b>	Advance students' understanding of cotton and its role in the apparel and textile industry through expanded and integrated learning experiences.	Promote hands-on experience with cotton materials among apparel, fashion, and textile students.
<b>Objective</b>	Support comprehensive educational programming that integrates cotton into curriculum and student learning experiences.	Support cotton-dominant raw materials, project supplies, and student awards for focused, application-based student projects.
<b>Apply if you want to</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop or expand curriculum, courses, or programs</li> <li>• Create immersive, project-based learning opportunities</li> <li>• Engage multiple students, courses, or disciplines</li> <li>• Develop marketing-focused projects that explore how cotton is positioned, communicated, or evaluated in the marketplace</li> <li>• Explore cotton's role across design, product development, textiles, merchandising, or marketing</li> <li>• Integrate CottonWorks™ resources into teaching and learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide hands-on experience with cotton materials</li> <li>• Develop projects focused on product creation or prototyping</li> <li>• Apply cotton in a defined end use</li> <li>• Explore new or nontraditional applications of cotton</li> <li>• Reduce student material costs</li> <li>• Recognize outstanding student work</li> <li>• Use CottonWorks™ resources to support learning</li> </ul>

## Selection Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on their ability to advance student understanding of cotton and demonstrate meaningful integration of cotton into teaching and learning. Across both grant tracks, proposals will be assessed based on the following:

### Project Concept and Alignment

- Alignment with the selected program theme (Choosing Cotton or Expanding Cotton)
- Clarity and quality of the proposed concept and intended outcomes
- Relevance of the project within the course, curriculum, or student experience
- Innovation and creativity in approach

### Student Learning and Impact

- Number of students directly engaged in the project
- Quality and depth of the proposed student learning experience
- Clarity of intended student outcomes and methods for assessing impact
- Integration of CottonWorks™ resources to support learning

### Project Design and Feasibility

- Alignment between project activities, materials, and stated goals
- Feasibility of the proposed timeline and scope
- Appropriateness and clarity of the budget

## Eligibility

U.S. university and college faculty in the fields of fiber, textiles, apparel, fashion design, or merchandising are invited to submit proposals. Preference will be given to programs that place a significant number of graduates in textiles, apparel and related merchandising positions with U.S. brand and retail companies.

Faculty project leads may only submit one proposal, but may be listed as supporting faculty on multiple proposals. Faculty project leads and supporting faculty must be at the same college/university. Multi-university proposals will not be considered.

## Project Timeline

All project activities must occur within the 2027 calendar year, and all awarded funds must be fully expended by December 31, 2027. Projects may be structured as a single semester or quarter, span multiple academic terms, or run across the full calendar year, provided that all work, purchases, and project-related expenses are completed within the 2027 calendar year.

## How to Apply

Submit a proposal by completing the online application on the CottonWorks™ website. The application includes a questionnaire about the project and will require you to upload a proposal file (PDF files only). Each grant track has specific requirements. Review the track descriptions and requirements carefully before submitting.

**Required:** Before applying, please inform the contracts and grants office or the business office at your college or university. Their name and email are required.

## Reporting and Financial Requirements

Grantees must complete a mid-point report and final report. Mid-point reports are completed via an online survey and focus on project progress, success sharing and budget updates and are typically due in June/July for full year projects.

Final reports are due within 30 days of project completion. For projects that run through December 2027, final reports are due by January 15, 2028. The final report must include:

- Summary of project activities, outcomes, and overall impact
- Description of how the project was implemented, including curriculum, course, or program integration
- Photos or digital documentation of student work, learning activities, or project outputs (e.g., assignments, modules, presentations, or other materials), where applicable
- Summary of student participation and engagement
- Student award categories, recipients, and amounts (if applicable)
- An estimated summary of total project expenditures

A final itemized financial report from the university's contracts and grants office or financial office is required in addition to the final report.

- For projects ending in December 2027, the itemized financial report is due by February 1, 2028.
- For projects ending earlier in the year, the itemized financial report should be submitted within 30 days of project completion.

## Funds Disbursement

All funds must be spent within the 2027 calendar year. Unspent funds must be returned. Payments will be issued in three installments:

- 50% of the total grant upon execution of the grant agreement, after January 1, 2027
- 40% after mid-point report is submitted and approved (about halfway through project timeline)
- 10% after completion of the project and submission and acceptance of the final report and financial documentation

Final payment is contingent upon submission and approval of all required reports.

## Important Dates

- Online submission portal opens: June 1, 2026
- Proposal due: July 24, 2026
- Project leaders notified: On or before October 1, 2026
- Project orientation meetings: November 2026 - January 2027

Applicants are encouraged to visit Cotton Incorporated's websites for additional information about Cotton Incorporated, cotton production, processing, products, and innovations - [cottoninc.com](http://cottoninc.com) and [CottonWorks.com](http://CottonWorks.com). Questions should be directed to [cottoneducation@cottoninc.com](mailto:cottoneducation@cottoninc.com).

**The following sections provide detailed requirements for each grant track. Applicants should carefully review the requirements for their selected track and ensure their proposal aligns with the specific objectives, criteria, and expectations of that track.**

## **Track 1: Cotton Education Innovation Grants**

### **Overview**

Cotton Incorporated's CIC program offers Cotton Education Innovation Grants to advance student understanding of cotton among those preparing for careers in the apparel and textile industry. Track 1 provides up to \$40,000 of funding to support the development of comprehensive educational programming that integrates cotton into curriculum and student learning experiences, with a focus on educating emerging professionals in design, product development, and marketing and cotton's role in the global textile and apparel supply chain.

Proposals must align with one of the [CIC Program Themes](#) (Choosing Cotton or Expanding Cotton). In Track 1, these themes are addressed through teaching and learning, with an emphasis on how students evaluate, compare, and select cotton.

### **Use of Funds**

Funding will support project activities that directly benefit the students involved in the project. Provided below is a list of allowable and non-supported use of funds for Track 1 projects. Although this list is not exhaustive, it provides a guide for applicants.

#### **Funds may be used for:**

- Project Materials
  - Cotton fiber, cotton yarn, cotton-dominant fabric (70% cotton or greater, 100% cotton preferred), cotton product samples, thread, buttons, notions, trims, paint, ink, boards, and paper
  - Shipping costs for project materials
- Workshops/Exhibitions
  - Direct costs and support, including facility rental/fees, food and beverage (excluding alcohol), technology, marketing and promotions
  - Costs related to hosting virtual events, webinars, or workshops
  - Speaker fees/honorariums, travel, lodging, meals, and parking
- Services
  - Printing related to student outputs, project marketing or event promotions
  - Marketing or technology services
- Student Experiences
  - Faculty and student costs related to travel for project-related events, company/farm visits, and the like
- Student Awards
  - Funds to award top papers, presentations, designs, concepts, products, etc.
  - Maximum individual student award is \$1,500, and total student awards should not exceed \$5,000
- Faculty/Project Staff/Student Support
  - Faculty support and benefits for project-related efforts
    - Funds requested for faculty salary or benefits will be reviewed closely and must be clearly substantiated and not excessive relative to the total project budget

- Undergraduate or graduate student support for project-related effort (college/university rate)
  - Payment for tuition and fees are not supported
- Faculty and student conference or workshop registration and travel for project-related effort and presentation
  - Request must be related to the proposal and costs should be clearly explained and justified in budget narrative
  - Maximum funding in this category is \$2,000

**Funds may not be used for:**

- Sponsorship of general events or fashion shows
- Tangible devices or equipment with an individual unit cost over \$4,000, and/or with an intended/potential use beyond the grant period
- Overhead or indirect costs
- Student tuition and fees

**Use of Funds Notes:**

- Cotton Incorporated does not produce fabric for commercial purchase. Applicants should plan to source cotton-dominant materials independently.
- Cotton Incorporated may accommodate limited requests for performance cotton or specialty cotton materials, subject to availability. Requests for materials that require additional processing such as plying or finishing cannot be accommodated.
- Cotton Incorporated staff cannot accept honorariums or paid travel. Many other firms do not allow honorariums; please confirm before including this budget item for industry speaker travel.
- Projects including a request to travel to Cotton Incorporated’s research center in North Carolina or to North Carolina cotton farms are subject to availability. The company will make all efforts to accommodate successful applicants.

**Proposal Requirements and Format**

Proposals must follow the outline and numbering format detailed below and include all required content. The proposal document should be single-spaced, no less than 11-point font, with at least 1-inch margins. Maximum proposal length is **10 pages** (not including cover sheet). All files must be in PDF format.

- I. Proposal Cover Sheet
  - A. Project title
  - B. College or university
  - C. Faculty project leader
  - D. Funding requested
  - E. Project duration - Indicate start month and end month in 2027
  - F. Project theme - Identify the program theme that best aligns with the proposed project - Choosing Cotton or Expanding Cotton (select one)
  - G. Abstract (250-word max) - Brief description of the project, including alignment with program objectives, how project will advance overall awareness and knowledge of cotton among emerging professionals, overview of major activities, and student impact and outcomes

## II. Project Plan

### A. Purpose and key activities

Describe the project's purpose and provide a detailed description of the project activities.

Include an explanation of how the proposed project relates to the goals of the CIC Grant Program, aligns with the selected [program theme](#) (Choosing Cotton or Expanding Cotton).

Clearly describe the specific outputs or deliverables that will result from the project (e.g., curriculum materials, modules, tools, student projects, or other educational resources).

### B. Student impact and outcomes

Identify how many students will directly benefit from the project and describe how students will benefit from the proposed activities.

Define what successful outcomes look like and how they will be measured, including specific methods or criteria used to evaluate student learning, project effectiveness, or curriculum impact (e.g., student work, assessments, presentations, feedback, or other evaluation methods).

Explain how these outcomes align with the CIC Grant Program and the selected theme.

### C. CottonWorks™ by Cotton Incorporated

Specify the CottonWorks™ website resources that will be used and how they will be integrated into student learning or project development. Note: Students only have access to archived Product Trend and Color Forecast resources on CottonWorks™. Assignments should not require use of current season forecasts.

Detailed timeline - Start/end dates of the project, major project milestones and events

## III. Budget (must include both an itemized budget in table format and budget narrative)

### A. Itemized budget

Provide an itemized budget presented in line-item table format organized by expenditure category, and each expenditure category should include a total row. If the project spans both spring and fall semesters, include a column that denotes costs per term.

Budgets should:

- Clearly identify what is being purchased or funded (avoid vague terms such as "materials" or "supplies")
- Include sufficient details to understand how funds will be used
- Identify vendors or sourcing approach for major purchases when applicable
- Reflect realistic and reasonable costs
- Align with the proposed project activities and scope

Budgets for cotton materials should reflect sourcing from retail or small-quantity suppliers, as most manufacturers require minimum order quantities that exceed the scope of this grant.

### B. Budget narrative

Provide a brief explanation and justification for each expenditure category, including its purpose and connection to project objectives. The narrative should add context and rationale, not restate the itemized table. It should:

- Describe how each category supports the proposed project activities
- Explain the purpose of key budget items, particularly higher-cost or less typical expenses
- Connect budgeted costs to student learning, project implementation, and outcomes

- IV. Project Contacts
  - A. Faculty project leader - Name, title, department, email address, mailing address, and phone
  - B. Supporting faculty - Name, title, department, email address, mailing address, and phone
  - C. Contracts and grants or business office contact - Name, title, department, email address, phone number, official school/university address
- V. Supporting Information
  - A. Description of department program and relevant curriculum
  - B. Brief summaries of project leader and supporting faculty/staff - Name, title, department/college/university affiliation, key areas of research and/or teaching, and other highlights of professional experience and accomplishments that are most relevant to the grant proposal (150-words max for each summary)

## Track 2: Cotton Materials Mini-Grants

### Overview

Cotton Incorporated's CIC program offers Cotton Materials Mini-Grants to support hands-on learning with cotton materials. Track 2 provides up to \$8,000 in funding for cotton-dominant raw materials, project supplies, and student awards to enable focused, application-based projects centered on product development, prototyping, and material exploration. The goal is to promote hands-on experience with cotton materials among apparel, fashion, and textile students.

Proposals must align with one of the [CIC Program Themes](#) (Choosing Cotton or Expanding Cotton). In Track 2, these themes are addressed through hands-on application, with an emphasis on how cotton is used in products, prototypes, or materials.

### Use of Funds

Funding supports the purchase of cotton materials and related project expenses. Track 2 grant allowable costs include cotton raw materials, project supplies, student awards, and limited faculty or project staff support.

#### Funds may be used for:

- Cotton-Dominant Raw Materials
  - Cotton fabrics or yarn that contain at least 70% cotton (100% cotton preferred)
  - Shipping costs for materials
- Project Supplies
  - Funds to support creation or presentation of cotton products
  - Notions, art supplies, tools, presentation materials, specialty papers, lining/interfacing, and similar
  - Shipping costs for project supplies
- Student Awards - up to \$2,000
  - Funds to award top presentations, designs, concepts, products, etc.
  - Maximum individual student award is \$500
- Faculty/Project Staff Support - up to \$1,500
  - Faculty support and benefits for project-related efforts
    - Funds requested for faculty salary or benefits will be reviewed closely and must be clearly justified and not excessive relative to the total project budget
  - Undergraduate or graduate student support for project-related effort, paid as hourly wages
    - Funds may not be used for student tuition, fees, assistantships, or non-hourly stipends

#### Funds may not be used for:

- Tangible devices or equipment
- Workshops, exhibitions, or events as standalone activities or primary deliverables (these may be included as part of a broader project, but will not be funded in isolation)
- Student fieldtrips or faculty conference travel
- Software
- Sponsorship of general events or fashion shows
- Overhead or indirect costs
- Student tuition, fees, assistantships, or non-hourly stipends

### **Use of Funds Notes:**

- Cotton Incorporated does not produce fabric for commercial purchase. Applicants should plan to source cotton-dominant materials independently.
- Cotton Incorporated may accommodate limited requests for performance cotton or specialty cotton materials, subject to availability.
- Requests for materials that require additional processing (e.g., plying, finishing, or custom development) cannot be accommodated.

### **Proposal Requirements and Format**

Proposals must follow the outline and numbering format detailed below and include all required content. The proposal document should be single-spaced, no less than 11-point font, with at least 1-inch margins. Maximum proposal length is **6 pages** (not including cover sheet). All files must be in PDF format.

- I. Proposal Cover Sheet
  - A. Project title
  - B. College or university
  - C. Faculty project leader
  - D. Funding requested - Max funding allowed is \$8,000
  - E. Project duration - Indicate start month and end month in 2027
  - F. Project Theme - Identify the program theme that best aligns with the proposed project - Choosing Cotton or Expanding Cotton (select one)
  - G. Abstract (150-word max) - Brief description of the project, including alignment with program goals and objectives, overview of major activities, value of cotton to project, and student impact and outcomes
- II. Project Description
  - A. Purpose and key activities

Describe the project's purpose and provide a detailed description of the project activities. Include an explanation of how the proposed project relates to the goals of the CIC Grant Program, aligns with the selected [program theme](#) (Choosing Cotton or Expanding Cotton). Address the course or program the materials will support (course name, majors, student level). Clearly describe the hands-on activities students will complete and the specific outputs or deliverables they will produce (e.g., garments, prototypes, samples, research-based products, presentations).
  - B. Role of cotton

Describe why cotton is important to achieving the project goals and student outcomes. Explain how cotton will be actively used in the project (e.g., material selection, product development, testing, comparison to other fibers) and how it informs student learning or decision-making.

C. Student impact and outcomes

Describe how students will benefit from the grant and the number of students supported.

Define what successful outcomes look like and how they will be measured, including specific methods or criteria used to evaluate student learning or project success (e.g., completed products, skill development, project evaluation criteria, student feedback, presentations, or other assessment methods).

Explain how these outcomes align with the CIC Grant Program and Track 2 goals.

D. CottonWorks™ by Cotton Incorporated

Specify the CottonWorks™ resources that will be used and how they will be integrated into student learning or project development. Note: Students only have access to archived Product Trend and Color Forecast resources on CottonWorks™. Assignments should not require use of current season forecasts.

E. Detailed timeline

Provide start/end dates of the project, major project milestones, and events. Ensure the timeline reflects a realistic sequence of activities from material sourcing through final student deliverables.

III. Budget (must include both an itemized budget in table format and budget narrative, refer to requirements below)

A. Itemized Budget

Provide an itemized budget presented in line-item table format organized by expenditure category. Each expenditure category should include a total row. If the project spans multiple academic terms, include a column that denotes costs per term.

Expenditure categories are limited to the following: Cotton-Dominant Raw Materials, Project Supplies, Student Awards, Faculty/Project Staff Support.

Budgets should:

- Clearly identify what is being purchased or funded (avoid vague terms such as “materials” or “supplies”)
- Include sufficient detail to understand how funds will be used (e.g., material type, quantity where relevant, and purpose)
- Include supplier names and estimated unit costs for major material purchases
- Reflect realistic and reasonable costs aligned with current market pricing
- Align with the proposed project activities and scope

Budgets for cotton materials should reflect sourcing from retail or small-quantity suppliers, as most manufacturers require minimum order quantities that exceed the scope of this grant.

B. Budget Narrative

Provide a brief explanation and justification for each expenditure category, including the purpose and how it relates to the project objectives. The narrative should:

- Describe how each category supports the proposed hands-on project activities
- Explain the purpose of key budget items, particularly higher-cost or less typical expenses
- Clearly connect budgeted costs to student work, project execution, and defined outputs or deliverables

Avoid simply restating the table. The narrative should provide context and justification, not a list of items.

- IV. Project Contacts
  - A. Faculty project leader - Name, title, department, email address, mailing address, and phone
  - B. Contracts and grants or business office contact - Name, title, department, email address, phone number, official school/university address
- V. Supporting Information
  - A. Description of department program and relevant curriculum
  - B. Brief summaries of project leader and supporting faculty/staff that include - Name, title, department/college/university affiliation, key areas of research and/or teaching, and other highlights of professional experience and accomplishments that are most relevant to the grant proposal (150-words max for each summary)