

The Novare Project

Fostering Fresh Expressions of Theological Education

Executive Summary

Novare is a large-scale collaborative initiative designed to help schools, churches, denominations, and networks strengthen their capacity to identify, develop, and support pastoral leaders for Christian congregations across the United States and Canada. Through the newly formed Novare Center for Organizational Formation, collaborators work together to imagine and live into alternative futures of theological education while cultivating leaders who serve faithfully in their local communities. The project is anchored in four cascading objectives that shape every activity and partnership.

1. Developing Faithful Stewards

Our primary goal is to strengthen the reach and depth of pastoral formation. Over the next five years, the project will identify, develop, and support 3,000 new pastoral leaders. This work focuses on cultivating contextually aware, developmentally minded, and holistically formed leaders who can steward the work of local communities of faith with wisdom and faithfulness. All other project activities serve this central objective.

2. Fostering Generous Collaboration

Novare brings together a diverse, resilient, and sustainable ecosystem of partners who are committed to working alongside one another on shared projects. Some projects address technical challenges while others engage adaptive challenges that require new ways of thinking, organizing, and being. Generous collaboration is both a way of working and a desired outcome, creating a community that supports and challenges one another across traditions, geographies, and institutional types.

3. Cultivating Thriving Communities

Partners participate in shared research, data analysis, and resource development that deepen our collective imagination for pastoral formation. Shared tools and resources created through Novare help congregations, denominations, and schools assess and strengthen their organizational vitality and enhance their capacity for Spirit-led change. This work aims to strengthen the broader ecosystem in which leaders are called and formed.

4. Imagining New Pathways

Partners work together to identify, cultivate, and implement alternative ways of being within theological education, thereby shaping the future of theological education. These pathways involve new financial models, new structures for collaboration, or entirely new approaches to pastoral formation. The aim is to develop a wide range of models that are contextually grounded, mission aligned, and adaptable to the changing realities facing the Church.

How Collaboration Works

Novare welcomes participation through three levels of engagement. All levels contribute to the broader ecosystem while allowing organizations to choose the depth and scope of their involvement.

Level 1: Collaborators

Shared Learning and Assessment

Collaborators participate in shared conversations, contribute basic data for collective learning, and complete the Organizational Vitality Index. This tier provides a common foundation for collaboration and helps build a shared understanding of current realities.

Level 2: Innovators

Technical Change Projects

Innovators work together on targeted projects that address specific challenges. These may include humanized AI practices, competency-based approaches to theological education, operational and financial models, Latinx pastoral formation, collaboration among embedded schools, or other focused initiatives. Resources are available to support these collaborative efforts.

Level 3: Reformers

Adaptive Change and Transformation

Reformers commit to a holistic, systemic process of adaptive change. Each organization participates in an initial engagement to discern the scope and nature of the work. Projects developed at this tier are approved and guided by the project stewardship team. This is where the majority of project resources are invested, supporting long-term transformation across the ecosystem of theological education.

Stewardship and Structure

The initiative is guided by a stewardship team representing the breadth of collaborating organizations. This team helps design the project's processes and oversees the assessment and approval of tier three projects. All work takes place within the Novare Center for Organizational Formation, which provides coordination, support, and continuity across the life of the project.

An Open Invitation

Novare is not about advancing a single institution. Rather, the focus is on strengthening a system of interconnected and interdependent organizations that share a commitment to forming pastoral leaders for the life of the Church. Partners who join this effort become part of a community seeking faithful stewardship, generous collaboration, thriving communities, and new pathways for theological education.