Federal Crisis Response:
General Operating Grants
2025 Guidelines

Background

After careful consideration, the Tower Foundation has decided to reallocate all remaining grant funds for 2025 — approximately $4.9 million — to emergency response. Consequently, we have canceled all regular grant cycles for the remainder of 2025.

The Foundation's remaining grant funds will be divided among four categories:

(1) General operating support to organizations serving our core populations within our funding geographies that are most affected by federal funding cuts, a generally adverse fundraising environment, and hostility towards diversity, equity, and inclusion (~$2.7 million);
(2) Systemic response to support organizations actively combating threats to essential services in our fields of interest (~$1.2 million, by invitation only);
(3) Support for shared Services and collaboratives working to offer support for organizational efficiencies and collaboration among organizations aligned with our areas of interests (~$500,000, by invitation only); and
(4) A small reserve of funds to respond to unanticipated threats or opportunities (~$500,000).

We know we can't expect to fill the enormous financial gaps facing so many organizations working to serve the populations that the Tower Foundation supports. We also recognize that we can't assist every organization with needs right now. We hope that the grants we do award will make some difference to those who receive them.

Eligibility

- We will ONLY make grants to organizations CURRENTLY PROVIDING SERVICES in one or more of these regions:
    - Massachusetts: Barnstable County, Dukes County, Essex County, Nantucket County
    - New York: Erie County, Niagara County
- At a minimum, grant partners MUST CURRENTLY PROVIDE prevention, treatment, and/or recovery services benefitting people aged 26 years or younger from at least one of these populations:
    - People with intellectual disabilities (including those on the autism spectrum)
    - People with specific learning disabilities
    - People with mental illness/mental health challenges
    - People with substance use disorders

- Applications for this funding opportunity are open to:
  - Not-for-profit organizations with a 501(c)(3) designation that are not private foundations; non-501(c)(3) with a fiscal sponsor (Please get in touch with a Program Officer before submitting a request if you plan to apply via a fiscal sponsor.)
- Applications for this funding opportunity are NOT open to:
  - Colleges/universities; public benefit corporations; government entities; school districts ; private/charter schools (organizations that operate schools as a component of their programming are eligible to apply)
- Our ideal grant partners serve one or more of the populations listed above who also have intersecting identities as members of historically marginalized communities (e.g., Black/African-American, Hispanic/Latinx, Native American/Indigenous Peoples, disability, housing insecure, immigrant/refugee, LGBTQIA+).
- Current and past grant recipients as well as new-to-us organizations meeting the above criteria are welcome to apply.

Funding Availability

- A total of $2,700,000 is available in 2025 for General Operating Grants, all of which will be awarded and disbursed this year.
- We will make 45 awards of $60,000 each.
- There are no restrictions on use of grant funds, nor is there a deadline by which funds must be spent.

Application Timeline

	Date
Applications Due	September 5, 2025 at 11:59:59 PM
Decisions Sent (Expected)	October 17, 2025

How to Apply

- First-time Tower Foundation grant applicants should consider contacting us to discuss your organization's eligibility before applying. Go to *https://calendly.com/towerfdn-program* to book a time to talk with a Program Officer.
- Requests for this opportunity must come in through the Foundation's grants portal. If you don't need any sort of special consideration (see "How to Contact Us" below), please submit your application at: *https://towerfdn.link/grants-portal*
- We strongly encourage applicants to review the Application Preview for additional guidance, available on the Foundation's website.
- Please drop us an email (info@thetowerfoundation.org) to let us know what accommodations would make it easier for you to apply.
- While we normally invite applicants to contact us to learn more about why we declined a request, we aren't able to extend such an invitation for this grant opportunity. Given the anticipated volume of applications and the limited funding available, many decisions will involve very small distinctions between strong applications rather than significant deficiencies in any single proposal.

Generative Artificial Intelligence

While we're not big fans of using generative artificial intelligence to write grant proposals, we absolutely encourage you to use these tools to help you strengthen your requests. Two important caveats:

- You're still responsible for what you submit, so make sure to review anything you let AI touch to ensure quality and accuracy!
- Do not ever submit sensitive information without checking on the privacy policy and settings (and even then, think twice). Most AI platforms – even the free versions – have a setting to turn off data sharing for model training.
    - ChatGPT: Go to Settings > Data Controls and turn off "Improve the model for everyone."
    - Claude: Does not train its models on your conversations by default. (Providing feedback on responses – thumbs up or thumbs down – gives permission to share that conversation's data for training purposes.)
    - Gemini: Go to Activity > Gemini Apps Activity and turn off "Gemini Apps Activity." You will lose access to the history for any chats initiated after changing this setting.
    - Copilot: Go to Account > Privacy and turn off "Model training." (You might see separate settings for text and voice. Turn off both.)

How to Contact Us

If you have any questions that aren't covered in these guidelines or you'd like to discuss a special circumstance, please get in touch with one of our Program Officers. We recommend that first-time Tower Foundation applicants connect with a Program Officer before submitting a proposal – preferably several weeks in advance of the deadline.

- Schedule a phone call: https://calendly.com/towerfdn-program
- Send us an email: info@thetowerfoundation.org

Having Problems with the Grants Portal?

- If you're having trouble with the grants portal (e.g., you aren't able to create a new application), please use the Support button on the grants portal home page to request assistance. Please **DO NOT** send an email to the general info email address or to any specific Program Officer (even if you know them well and really like them).
- If you have an account but you can't log into the grants portal, please try a password reset (there's a link on the login screen). If that doesn't help, please send an email to support@thetowerfoundation.org and our system administrators will get you squared away.