



Peter & Elizabeth Tower Foundation

# Community Experts Fund

## A different kind of RFP:

### *Designed by and for the community*

This grant initiative has been developed by the Tower Foundation's Community Experts Team, a 16-member group of young adults with lived expertise relating to the Foundation's funding areas.

The design and administration of this grant opportunity is spearheaded by young adults with ties to the communities where services will be delivered. Their engagement in the grantmaking process both amplifies community voice and informs grantmaking with the concerns, insights, and priorities of the young people that are the focus of the work.

In 2023, this fund will focus on programs (new or existing) that support young people between the ages of 13-26 with either (1) life, social, and communication skills; or (2) treatment and recovery support for mental health challenges and/or substance use disorder.

Applicants will submit a brief written proposal and participate in a 15-minute follow-up Zoom call. **Applications must be submitted by August 31, 2023.**

## ► Eligibility Criteria

Eligible organizations are youth-serving nonprofit organizations that:

- Work with young people with an intellectual disability, learning disability, mental health challenge, or substance use disorder; and
- Currently provide services in one or more of these regions:
  - Massachusetts: Barnstable County, Dukes County, Essex County, Nantucket County
  - New York: Erie County, Niagara County



## Eligible Programs

**Population Focus:** Young people with an intellectual disability, learning disability, mental health challenge, or substance use disorder.

**Age Focus:** Eligible programs for grant funding must serve youth ages 13-18 and/or transition age young adults between the ages of 18-26.

**Programmatic Focus:** Applicants may request support for projects or activities that fit within one of the following categories:

1

### Life, Social, and Communication Skills

Essential skills for young people and transition-age adults to achieve their goals, help them build confidence, and build connections. These skills are defined as follows:

- **Life skills:** Skills that impact us as individuals, including time management, emotional regulation, transportation navigation, independent living, academics, job-seeking, and vocational/workplace competencies.
- **Social skills:** Skills that impact our relationships with others. For instance, learning how to navigate friendships, how to talk with people you have just met, and how to learn and benefit from connections with mentors and trusted adults.
- **Communication skills:** Skills that help us express ourselves and advocate for ourselves, including, non-verbal communication and conversation skills.

2

### Treatment and Recovery

Support of treatment and recovery programs for young people facing challenges with mental health and/or substance use. This could include, but is not limited to:

- School-based supports (e.g., re-entry, alternatives to suspension)
- Peer-led supports and interventions (e.g., peer mentors, group therapy)
- Community support and activities (e.g., sober living, wellness programming)

## Additional Criteria

The Community Experts Team has identified values and program components that they believe make programs stronger and more accessible. The Community Experts Team will give preference to applications that demonstrate one or more of the following:

- Inclusion of youth/young people in program design and implementation
- Diversity of organizational leadership and people served by organization
- Creativity of the project design
- Collaboration with other community partners
- Environmental and nature-based program components
- No-cost or low-cost fee structure

## ► Request Amount & Eligible Expenses

The Community Experts Team has a total of \$200,000 to award in this cycle. Applicants may request any amount between \$5,000 and \$25,000.

Applicants may apply for funding to support any of the following types of expenses, alone or in combination. This is not a comprehensive list. Other reasonable expenses for supporting your program work will be considered.

- Programming (e.g., stipends for peer advisors or funding for a portion of existing staff positions; costs of community programming/field trips)
- Transportation (e.g., transportation for young people to programming)
- Technology & Equipment (e.g., Laptop or zoom costs)
- Training (within or outside of agency)
- Events (e.g., space rentals, food costs, speakers)
- Other

## ► Proposal Process and Timeline

Applicants will be asked to submit a brief application in writing and will also participate in a fifteen-minute call with Community Experts Team and Foundation representatives. Specifically, the application process includes the following:

### ► **Step One: Organizational Information**

Applicants provide some brief organizational background, including diversity information, and contact information.

### ► **Step Two: Complete Brief Application**

Applicants respond to the narrative questions described in the application preview on the following pages.

**August 31, 2023:** All applications must be received by 11:59 PM

### ► **Step Three: Complete Zoom Call**

We will contact all applicants after they submit their application to schedule a 15-minute clarification call with representatives of the Community Experts Team and Tower Foundation staff.

**September 13 - September 27, 2023:** Zoom interviews take place

### ► **Step Four: Decision Notification**

We will notify all applicants of the outcome of their grant application by October 31, 2023.

## Application Preview

The following is a preview of what to expect when completing an application for funding from the Community Experts Fund. **Applications must be submitted by August 31, 2023 by 11:59 PM.** To complete an application, please visit:

<https://towerfdn.link/community-experts-23>

### I. Organizational Information

- Contact person & contact information
- Organization EIN and address
- Tower Foundation populations served
- Tower Foundation geographies served

### II. Equity Information

To help the Tower Foundation's Community Experts Team understand more about your organization and the people you support, grant applicants are asked to share:

- If your organization is led by a Black, Indigenous, or Person of Color or person with a disability/disabled person.
- If your organization's leader shares a key identity with the population served.
- Identities belonging to the populations that you serve that intersect with the Tower Foundation interest area(s) (for instance, Mental Health + LGBTQ).

### IV. Project Information

We will ask you to share:

- Which of the Community Experts Team 2023 priorities your project will focus on (life, social, and communication skills or treatment and recovery supports).
- Which priority age group your funding will focus on (13-18 and/or 18-26).
- How much money you are requesting.

*As a reminder, the Community Experts Team has a total of \$200,000 to award in this cycle. Applicants may request any amount between \$5,000 and \$25,000.*

### IV. Application Narrative

Applicants will be asked to briefly respond to the following questions. **Please note: For each question, there is a 250 word limit. This is a bit less than a half page, single spaced.** (Thank you in advance for your brevity. These word limits help make the applications accessible for members of the Community Experts Team.)

#### **1. Tell us about your organization.**

*For instance, what services does your organization provide and to whom?*

## **2. What do you want to do and how do you want to do it?**

*Tell us about the program you want support for. How will you incorporate the voices and perspectives of the people you serve in your project design and implementation?*

## **3. Why do you want to do it?**

*Tell us about the need in your community for this project. Do you have experience working on this particular need? What have you learned?*

## **4. Tell us how you plan to use the grant dollars.**

### **V. Follow-Up Clarification Calls**

Following your application submission, you can expect to hear from the Foundation to schedule a 15-minute Zoom follow-up call to learn more about your organization and your request. Applicants will receive an email with a link to sign-up. Members of the Community Experts Team and Tower staff will participate on the call which will be recorded for viewing by other Team members during the grant review process.

#### ***What will the call be like?***

The calls will be an informal chance for us to get to know your organization and your request better. Some questions will be asked of all applicants, others will be specific to your application. The following questions will give you a sense for what to expect:

- Give us an example of a young person going through your program. What is the experience like?
- What are you most interested in learning from this project?
- How will this make a difference to the organization and the people you serve?
- Additional questions in response to your application.

Calls will take place between September 13th - September 27th. Team members will review and discuss applications in October. All applicants to be notified of decisions by October 31, 2023.

**To complete an application, visit:**

<https://towerfdn.link/community-experts-23>

### **Accommodations & Contact Information**

For more information, to discuss alternative proposal formats (e.g., audio submission), or to request an accommodation, contact: [info@thetowerfoundation.org](mailto:info@thetowerfoundation.org)