Programs & Services

Application Preview

Through the Programs & Services portfolio, the Tower Foundation entertains requests for grants to support organization- or collaboration-level work to address the needs of individuals and families affected by intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, mental illness, and/or substance use disorders. For more information on the types of projects that may be a fit for this funding opportunity, see the Programs & Services Guidelines. This document provides an overview of the online application process from the preliminary grant submission to the full proposal (by invitation only).

Confidentiality and Data Security

We understand that sharing information about your organization's diversity, equity, and inclusion practices can be sensitive and, frankly, a little scary. We promise to hold any such information you provide in confidence and to do our level best to ensure that your data are stored safely and securely.

Before You Start Looking at the Questions

- Please drop us an email (info@thetowerfoundation.org) to let us know what accommodations would make it easier for you to apply.
- We won't enforce any character limits, but we do offer a recommend maximum. We promise to keep reading if you write more.

PRELIMINARY GRANT SUBMISSION

Organization Information

We're looking for some pretty standard information here. Where do you work, whom do you serve, and what do you do?

1. Which of the Tower Foundation counties does your organization/collaboration serve? (Barnstable, MA; Dukes, MA; Erie, NY; Essex, MA; Nantucket, MA; Niagara, NY)
2. What age groups does your organization/collaboration serve? (Children, Adolescents, Young Adults)
3. Applicant organization's current/most recent annual operating budget
4. In what issue areas does your organization/collaboration work? (intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, mental health, substance use disorders)
5. What is your organization's or collaboration's mission?
6. What services/programs does your organization/collaboration provide? Highlight existing programs within the Foundation's service area.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Information

As noted above, we realize that it's a tough time to be sharing information about DEI openly. **PLEASE CONSIDER ALL QUESTIONS IN THIS SECTION TO BE OPTIONAL**, but we appreciate anything you're willing to share.

The Peter & Elizabeth Tower Foundation strives to incorporate a deliberate diversity-equity-inclusion (DEI) lens in its grantmaking practice. To help the Foundation understand more about organizations and beneficiaries they support, we ask grant applicants to tell us how their organization's leadership, workforce, and governance reflect DEI.

The Foundation will give preference to applications from organizations that are led by people who reflect the identities (e.g., race or disability) and/or lived experiences (e.g., addiction, mental illness) of the populations they serve.

1. If your organization collects demographic data, please enter the number of individuals of each race/ethnicity for each role in the chart below to give us a sense of your organization's racial and ethnic diversity. (Continue to the next question if your organization does not collect this information.) For "People Served," please consider those served in the last fiscal or calendar year.

Race/Ethnicity (Please enter counts for each)	Executive Director(s)	Staff (excluding Executive Director)	Board of Directors	People Served
African American/Black				
American Indian/Alaskan Native				
Asian				
Hispanic/Latina/ Latino				
Middle Eastern/North African				
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander				
White				
Biracial/ Multiracial				
Other/Unknown				

2. Our organization is BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, or People of Color)-led. Select all that apply:
   ▪ Executive Director identifies as BIPOC
   ▪ Majority of Staff identify as BIPOC
   ▪ Majority of the Board identifies as BIPOC

3. Our organization is led by people with disabilities. Select all that apply:
   ▪ Executive Director is a person with a disclosed disability
   ▪ Majority of Staff identify as people with disabilities
   ▪ Majority of the Board identifies as people with disabilities

4. The organization is led by people who reflect another key identity of the population served (e.g., LGBTQ or in recovery). Select all that apply:
   ▪ Executive Director reflects a key identity of the population served
   ▪ Majority of Staff reflect a key identity of the population served
   ▪ Majority of the Board reflects a key identity of the population served

   Please describe the key identities to which you are referring: (*No character limit; suggested maximum of 1,500 characters, or about 250 words*)

5. What additional information about your organization's diversity and inclusion practices would you like to share? (*No character limit; suggested maximum 3,000 characters or about 500 words*)

The Tower Foundation will give preference to organizations that are led by people who reflect the identities (e.g., race or disability) and/or lived experiences (e.g., addiction, mental illness) of the populations they serve. Consider telling us how you incorporate the perspectives of the populations you serve in your work, and what you are doing to make systems, access, and outcomes more equitable.
Please note: Equal employment opportunity or non-discrimination policies do not constitute diversity, equity, and inclusion practices.

Project Details

1. **Project Summary: What are you trying to accomplish?** (*300 character limit*)
   Imagine explaining your project in two very short sentences (or one tweet). That's what we're looking for here. This is the express elevator pitch. Don't worry, we promise to keep reading.

2. **What do you want to do?** (*No character limit; suggested maximum 3,000 characters or about 500 words*)
   This is the longer, slower elevator pitch. We're looking for a high level, general description of what you're trying to accomplish. Don't get into the concrete details/day-to-day aspects of the project yet — that's going to come up later in the "How do you want to do it?" section.

3. **Why do you want to do it?** (*No character limit; suggested maximum 3,000 characters or about 500 words*)
   Tell us why you see your project as important and/or urgent. Give us some background information to help us understand the issue(s) and how it affects your community.

   This is also where you'd want to connect your project with the Foundation's [focus areas and goals](#), including a description of the people you serve. Projects that are more closely aligned with the Foundation's focus areas and goals are more likely to be competitive, especially those serving young people 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+).

   If you're trying something completely new, tell us why you think it will work/be helpful. If this is something that's been done elsewhere (or in a different context/with a different population), tell us why you think it will import well to your community and/or the people you serve.

4. **How do you want to do it?** (*No character limit; suggested maximum 3,000 characters or about 500 words*)

   Now you can get into the nuts and bolts of your project's activities! Be as detailed and concrete as you like (remember: no character limits, but be kind — we have to read 40 or 50 of these!). We think it's important to incorporate the voices and perspectives of the people you serve in your project design. Please share in this section how your program will incorporate the norms, values, beliefs, and community context of the people and communities you serve. If your project will depend on the strength of local partnerships, be sure to describe where these stand and what you'll do to develop and nurture them.

5. **What do you need to do it?** (*No character limit; suggested maximum 3,000 characters or about 500 words*)

Since you're applying for a grant, we assume you need money. Give us a sense of how much money you need and what you expect to spend it on. If it's not necessarily obvious how an expense fits in with the project you're proposing, feel free to offer a brief explanation here.

The Tower Foundation allows most organizations to apply an administrative overhead rate of 30%, though the administrative overhead rate for colleges and universities is capped at 10%. If, for some reason, you don't want to take any administrative overhead, that's fine — just be sure to make that explicit in this section so we know that's your plan and not an oversight.

Even though this section seems focused on the dollars, some required resources might not come with a price tag. If it makes sense, you can also use this section to discuss less tangible requirements (e.g., culture change, interagency cooperation, and community engagement).

Project Team

You will need to identify individuals in your organization that will serve as primary contact, signatory contact (the person responsible for signing grant agreements), and fiscal contact (the person to contact regarding payments). If they do not already exist in our grants management system, you will need to add them.

Once submitted, the Foundation reviews each application to determine whether it wishes to explore the opportunity further through a phone call or meeting. Applicants will be notified by email approximately three weeks after submitting their preliminary grant request as to whether the Foundation will invite further discussion. Further discussion is not an indication of likely support.

FULL PROPOSAL

You will have about **five weeks to submit the full proposal** through the online portal after receiving an invitation. During this time, you will be paired with a Program Officer who will guide you through the full proposal process. Your Program Officer will work with you to provide feedback on your preliminary online application, develop a timeline for narrative revisions and submissions of each additional component, and facilitate a conversation about performance indicators for your project.

As the Tower Foundation full proposal process is iterative and interactive, please make sure that you have a point person who will be available to work with your Program Officer during the five-week time period following your full proposal invitation.

The narrative required for the preliminary online application and the full proposal is ***identical***. In fact, your prior responses will be copied over to your full proposal for you. Your Program Officer will most likely have some revisions to suggest in these sections.

Additional Proposal Components

In addition to any revisions to the narrative section, there are several additional components included in the full proposal:

1. **Work Plan**
   The work plan can take lots of forms. For some it might be a table, for others it may be a logic model or theory of change. We are open and flexible to the format that works best for you and your team as long as we have the information we need to fully understand your project (who, what, roughly by when).

2. **Performance Measures (Evaluation)**
   We are interested in the data that are most important for you in your learning and monitoring progress with this project. The performance measures section should capture your answers to three questions: (1) How much did we do? (2) How well did we do it? (3) Is anyone better off as a result of our project?

   Your Program Officer will facilitate a workshop with you and your project team (lasting about an hour) either in-person or via videoconference to identify a handful of measures for each of those questions. We've found this workshop format saves applicants time in developing measures that are both realistic and informative. It also ensures that applicants and the Foundation are on the same page as far as what's important to track and measure.

3. **Budget & Budget Narrative**
   Last, we are looking for a detailed budget and budget narrative that describes how much you are requesting of the Foundation, how much (if any) you have secured from other sources, and how much (if any) in-kind or cash support your organization is providing. More budget guidance can be found on page six (6).

Attachments

The following documents are also required:

- Quotes for goods or services exceeding $1,000
- Current list of board members
- Resumes or job descriptions of key personnel associated with the project
- Letters of collaboration from relevant partners
- Current board approved annual operating budget, including expense and income
- Most recent annual financial statement

Notes on Using 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: Profile icon → Settings → Data Controls → turn off "Improve the model for everyone." New conversations after you change this setting will not be used to train

OpenAI's models; you can also use "Temporary chat" for individual conversations that are not saved or used for training.

- o Claude: Claude uses chats for model training by default unless you opt out. In Claude's privacy or account settings, look for an option such as "Help improve Claude" or similar, and switch it off to opt out of training. Also avoid using the thumbs up/down feedback tools if you do not want those conversations stored for training.
- o Gemini: Go to "Gemini Apps Activity" in your Google account and turn off "Keep activity" for Gemini Apps. This stops those chats from being stored long term or used to improve Google's AI models, but you will not have ongoing access to the history of new chats initiated after changing this setting (Google may still keep short-term logs for safety).
- o Copilot (consumer): In your Copilot or Microsoft account privacy settings, turn off "Model training on text" and "Model training on voice" wherever they appear (web, desktop, or mobile). This prevents Microsoft from using your chats and voice inputs to train Copilot's models, though some processing for safety and service operations may still occur.

How Do I Get in Touch with the Foundation If I Have More Questions?

If you have questions about the Foundation's Programs & Services funding opportunity, please contact us. You can send us an email at info@thetowerfoundation.org or schedule a 30-minute phone call with a Program Officer at https://towerfdn.link/30-min-call

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 the issue is that you can't get 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.

Programs & Services Budget Guidelines

Applicants to the Programs & Services portfolio who are invited to submit full proposals will develop a budget and budget narrative for each year of the project. The budget and budget narrative should clearly outline all expenses associated with implementing the proposed project. They should also include all revenue sources known, including any cash and in-kind contributions from the organization and funding from other sources. Quotes are required for purchases of goods or services exceeding $1,000.

A budget template is available on the website and in the online grant system. If you have another template or budget form you prefer to use, please do so provided the information below is addressed.

1. **Direct Expenses**
   Direct expenses are costs that can be directly attributed or allocated to the project.

   a. *Personnel*
   Itemize all personnel costs for staff directly involved in the project. In the budget narrative, include the full annual salary for the individual and what percentage of their time will be spent on the project. Please include pro-rated figures for payroll taxes and fringe benefits (e.g., health insurance and retirement benefits) as a separate line item.

   b. *Non-Personnel*
   Itemize all non-personnel costs, including costs needed to directly support the implementation of the project (e.g., consultants, travel, and supplies). Consultant services may be detailed in the budget narrative or referenced in an attached scope of work.

   The budget narrative must offer a detailed breakdown of each expense. For example, a line item for $1,200 in teacher training supplies could be detailed in the budget narrative as: $12 per binder, including handouts, for 100 teachers.

   Under most circumstances, we will only accept costs such as rent and phones as part of your indirect costs.

2. **Indirect Costs (Administrative/Overhead)**
   Indirect costs are expenses that benefit the organization as a whole. While we do not require that indirect costs be itemized, expenses classified as indirect typically include:

   - Rent and utilities
   - Audit and legal
   - Accounting
   - Human resources
   - Finance
   - Administration
   - Fundraising costs
   - Maintenance
   - Information technology (including telephone)

   Applicants may request up to 30% of their grant-funded expenses in indirect costs. (For example, a grant request for $115,385 in direct costs may include up to $34,615 for indirect costs, for a total grant of $150,000.) Indirect costs for grants from colleges and universities are limited to 10%.