# *Programs & Services*

2026 Guidelines

The Foundation recognizes that organizations and collaborations are under intense pressure to meet increasing service demands in the face of dwindling resources. Our Programs & Services cycle aims to provide an opportunity to support projects or initiatives that address emergent community needs or apply lessons learned. These can be undertaken by a single organization or collaboratively across organizations.

## Eligibility

- We will **ONLY** make grants to organizations/collaborations **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 applicants **MUST CURRENTLY PROVIDE** prevention, treatment, and/or recovery services to 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
- It's easiest for us to accept grant applications from:
  - Not-for-profit organizations with a 501(c)(3) designation that are not private foundations;
  - Not-for-profit public benefit corporations;
  - Public or diocesan school districts; or
  - Private or charter schools.
- 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+).
- While organizations/collaborations may have more than one active grant with the Foundation at any given time, we are likely to give preference to organizations that have not received a grant award recently.
  If we decline a funding request, your organization may reapply as soon as the following cycle.

## Funding Availability

- A total of $1.5 million is available for 2026 Programs & Services grants, *all of which will be awarded in a single grant cycle*
- The Tower Foundation is open to multi-year grants with budgets typically ranging from $40,000 to $70,000 per year. The most competitive applications are likely to be for projects funded for two-to-four years and falling at or below $250,000 in total (including administrative overhead).

## Application Timeline

| | |
|---|---|
| Preliminary Grant Requests Due* | Fri., March 27, 2026 |
| Clarification Calls (if needed)† | April 27-May 8, 2026 |
| Declines/Full Proposal Invitations Sent | Fri., May 15, 2026 |
| Collaborative Proposal Review | May 18-June 19, 2026 |
| Proposal Decisions Sent | Fri. July 10, 2026 |

*\* Preliminary grant requests must be received by 11:59:59 p.m. on the stated due date.*
† *Not all applicants will be invited for clarification calls, even if their requests remain under consideration. Please do not contact the Foundation inquiring about the status of your application if you haven't been invited to schedule a clarification call.*

## What We're Most Interested in Funding

The Peter & Elizabeth Tower Foundation is interested in funding requests that address the needs of young people affected by intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, mental health challenges, and substance use disorders 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+).

Through our Programs & Services grants, we seek to support projects or initiatives that may be new to an organization/collaborative or that sustain, enhance, expand, or adapt existing activities. We will not consider general operating requests (i.e., support for existing costs of doing business).

Applicants are welcome to apply an **administrative overhead rate** of 30% on grant requests, though the administrative overhead rate for colleges, universities, and affiliated organizations is capped at 10%. (Calculate your overhead amount just like you would sales tax – calculate 30% of the project budget and add that as your overhead. It's not 30% of the total grant budget.)

To be funded your project must align with one or more of our goals (see page 5), and the strongest requests incorporate most – if not all – of the Foundation's values:

- Diverse Voices – We listen to and learn from those with different points of view and perspectives. We seek to be proximate with the communities we serve – continually engaging in respectful conversation and incorporating what we hear into our work. (What we're looking for: Affected population(s) provided input and recognize applicant as an ally in improving its well-being.)
- Collaboration – We understand that in order to make progress, we must build relationships with our partners and share knowledge, resources, expertise, and strategies. (What we're looking for: Demonstrates awareness of community context and larger ecosystem, including others working in the space.)
- Innovation – We embrace change and are willing to take risks, recognizing the potential for transformative effect. We look for opportunities to try new and creative strategies and encourage others to do the same. (What we're looking for: New work or approach with potential to benefit affected population(s).)
- Equity – We pay close attention to the convergence of our focus areas with systemic issues of racism, sexism, classism, ableism, and more, because living at the intersection of multiple identities is a reality that factors importantly into our grantmaking. (What we're looking for:

Aware of diversity, equity, and inclusion issues; actively working to address DEI internally and externally.)

- Perseverance – We recognize that change work can be slow and challenging. We are committed to the long-term improvement of organizations and communities. (We're not looking for anything from you on this one: This is something the Foundation needs to address!)

## How to Apply

- We **STRONGLY** encourage first-time Tower Foundation grant applicants to contact us to discuss your proposal idea before applying. Go to *https://calendly.com/towerfdn-program* to book a time to talk with a Program Officer.
- Most of our grant requests 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*
- Please drop us an email at info@thetowerfoundation.org if an accommodation would make it easier for you to apply.
- For any of the following situations, please get in touch with a Program Officer to discuss your circumstances:
  - We're happy to take applications in non-written formats (e.g., video, audio). Nothing highly produced, though – keep it simple (but make sure you have good sound quality!).
  - Not one of the organization types listed above? No problem. We'll take proposals from groups or organizations that do not have non-profit status as long as they apply through a fiscal sponsor.
  - We're very open to accepting proposals written for other funders.

## 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.
  - 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.
  - 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).
  - 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 to Contact Us

If you have any questions that aren't covered in these guidelines, you'd like to discuss a special circumstance, or you want to see whether an idea you have for a grant is a good fit for the Foundation, please get in touch with one of our Program Officers.  We particularly recommend that first-time 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 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 anything, please send an email to support@thetowerfoundation.org and our system administrators will get you squared away.

TOWER FOUNDATION GOALS

# TOWER FOUNDATION GOALS

| Intellectual Disabilities Goals | Learning Disabilities Goals |
|---|---|
| 1. Children with intellectual disabilities are identified early and receive services that meet their evolving needs.<br>2. Young people with intellectual disabilities are engaged in meaningful social, vocational, and educational pursuits.<br>3. Families understand intellectual disabilities and secure needed supports.<br>4. Communities embrace persons with intellectual disabilities and provide them with a full-range of supports and opportunities to engage in community life. | 1. Children with learning disabilities are identified early, diagnosed and connected to services that meet their on-going individual needs.<br>2. Youth with learning disabilities understand how they learn and pursue resources that support them accordingly.<br>3. Young adults are confident and do not view their learning disability as a liability<br>4. Young adults with learning disabilities are ready for work and/or educational pursuits<br>5. Families are informed about learning disabilities and are able to identify and navigate available services.<br>6. Communities value persons with learning disabilities and accommodate their needs. |
| Mental Health Goals | Substance Use Disorder Goals |
| 1. Stigma related to mental illness is eliminated.<br>2. Children with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges are identified early and connected to appropriate services.<br>3. Young people with mental health challenges understand and manage their conditions and behaviors.<br>4. Families understand mental health challenges and help members live productive lives.<br>5. Communities offer meaningful opportunities and appropriate support to young people with mental health challenges and their families. | 1. Community members understand the prevalence and harmful effects of alcohol and drugs, and work to address them.<br>2. Resources for substance abuse prevention, treatment, and recovery are readily available.<br>3. Families provide safe environments that support healthy and informed choices about alcohol and drugs.<br>4. Young people make healthy and informed choices about alcohol and drugs. |