



PETER & ELIZABETH TOWER FOUNDATION

Short-Term General Operating Grants

2026 Guidelines

Background

In 2025, the Tower Foundation reallocated a significant portion of available grant dollars to a Federal Crisis Response funding initiative. Nonprofits faced reductions or cancelations of federal grants, a squeeze on pass-through state funding, a generally constrained spending climate for school districts and other entities, and threats to the security and well-being of vulnerable communities they serve.

These challenges are likely to persist in 2026. Accordingly, The Foundation is extending its response as follows:

1. Spring and fall funding cycles in 2026 for one-year 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 (DEI). We expect to award 15 grants of \$50,000 in each application cycle.
2. Continued support of systemic responses by organizations actively combating government actions/policies or promoting positive change in the face of federal funding cuts and/or anti-DEI efforts. The Foundation plans to award up to \$1.0 million in total, by invitation only.

We recognize that this funding is not sufficient to fill the financial gaps many organizations will experience, nor will we be able to assist every organization with their current needs. We hope that these unrestricted dollars can lessen the financial hardship for our grant partners, help sustain their support for populations that they serve or, by applying funds as they see fit, contribute to their own organizational resilience (e.g., strategic planning, exploration of new operating models, creative partnerships, workplace wellness).

Eligibility

- Please note that organizations that were awarded Federal Crisis Response – General Operating grants from the Tower Foundation in 2025 are not eligible for Short-Term General Operating grants in 2026.
- 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
- 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/collaborations meeting the above criteria are welcome to apply.

Funding Availability

- A total of \$1.5 million is available in 2026 for Short-Term General Operating Grants, with half of the dollars awarded in each of two application cycles.
- We will make 30 awards of \$50,000 each (15 awards per application cycle).
- There are no restrictions on use of grant funds, nor is there a deadline by which funds must be spent.

Application Timeline

	Spring Cycle	Fall Cycle
Applications Due	Fri., February 13, 2026	Fri., September 25, 2026
Decisions Sent (Expected)	Fri., March 27, 2026	Fri., November 6, 2026

How to Apply

- First-time Tower Foundation grant applicants should consider contacting us to discuss your organization's/collaborative'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.

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 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.