



Request for Proposals: The 2025 Innovation Fund

Issued By

The Tow Foundation

Focus Area

Youth Mental Health and Well-Being

Round One Deadline

May 23, 2025

Grant Period

December 2025 - December 2028 (*some flexibility exists*)

Overview

The Tow Foundation is pleased to announce a new grant opportunity for nonprofit organizations innovatively expanding access to the care and support that youth need to thrive. The Foundation's Innovation Fund intends to make grants to up to 10 organizations that are improving youth mental health and well-being and serving young people between the ages of 0-25, as well as their families.

Through the Innovation Fund, the Foundation hopes to inspire and invest in bold approaches, and to learn from exploring questions like: *What are the most challenging barriers youth and their families face in accessing support for mental health and well-being? What emerging innovations exist to address these barriers? What is the resulting impact of these innovations on youth and their families?*

The Innovation Fund takes a broad and inclusive approach when imagining the kinds of care and support that may have a positive impact on youth mental health and well-being. This includes interventions across the prevention to treatment continuum. We welcome submissions from a diverse array of organizations working in a variety of community, school, and clinical settings. For the purpose of this initiative, the word "innovation" could mean scaling proven efforts, attempting to apply existing efforts to new populations or geographies, or experimenting with a novel approach altogether. By not defining "innovation," we hope to encourage creative thinking.

For the purposes of the Innovation Fund, we use Mindful Philanthropy's recent definitions of "mental health" and "well-being" from *Mental Health at the Center: The Case for Philanthropic Investment*.

Term	Definition	Primary Sources
<i>Mental Health</i>	Mental health is defined as the combination of a person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being, affecting how we think, feel, and act. A person's mental health is not static but evolves over time depending on stressors, life experiences, and biological factors.	World Health Organization. (2021, March 8). <i>Mental health: strengthening our response</i> . Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, February 8). <i>Mental health: Learn more</i> .
<i>Well-being</i>	While there is no universal consensus on definition, the World Health Organization defines well-being as overarching quality of life and ability to contribute to the world with meaning and purpose. It is determined by social, economic, and environmental factors. Other terms, such as thriving, flourishing, or wellness, are also used to describe the goal state of well-being.	World Health Organization. (n.d.). <i>Promoting well-being</i> . Harvard Human Flourishing Program. (n.d.). <i>Measuring flourishing</i> . Corey L. M. (2002). <i>The Mental Health Continuum: From Languishing to Flourishing in Life</i> . <i>Journal of Health and Social Behavior</i> .

Eligibility Criteria

Organizations applying for funding must meet the following threshold criteria:

- Be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit or have a 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor;
- Operate in one or more of the following states: California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, North Carolina, New York, or Pennsylvania;
- Demonstrate a track record of working to advance youth mental health and well-being and are exploring innovative solutions that may not yet have proof of concept but show potential for transformative impact;
- Support communities or populations facing barriers to accessing support for mental health and well-being.

Grant Amount and Use of Funds

Up to 10 grants will be awarded, each spanning three years, with funding amounts ranging from \$300,000 to \$1,000,000. Grants will be made in the form of general operating support.

Grantees will commit to two update calls per year with representatives of The Tow Foundation, as well as submitting a final written report. The Foundation may provide grantees with support beyond grant dollars, such as learning or targeted capacity-building opportunities. Grantees may also be asked to join an in-person celebratory meetup once grantees are announced; if so, the Foundation will gladly cover costs associated with participation in this event.



How to Apply

Interested nonprofit organizations should submit a brief first-round application introducing their work, alignment with Innovation Fund priorities (as set forth in the Overview section), and anticipated impact.

This first-round application is available now on The Tow Foundation's website: <https://www.towfoundation.org/impact-areas/innovation-fund/>.

All applicants will receive a status update by June 30, and select applicants will be invited to submit a more detailed second-round application requiring additional information and documentation.

Learn More

Prospective applicants are encouraged to register for an informational webinar scheduled for Wednesday, May 7 from 1:00-2:00 p.m. Eastern Time. A registration link for this webinar is available on the webpage hyperlinked above.

This webinar will provide detailed information about the Innovation Fund's goals and application/selection processes. It will also offer an opportunity to ask questions of program directors.

About The Tow Foundation

Established in 1988 by Leonard and Claire Tow, The Tow Foundation is a family-led philanthropic organization committed to promoting wellness and expanding access to opportunities for individuals and communities to thrive. The Foundation supports visionary leaders and nonprofit organizations working to achieve solutions to persistent inequities, empowering individuals to contribute meaningfully to their communities. You are invited to learn more about The Tow Foundation at: <https://www.towfoundation.org>.