# PENINSULA ENDOWMENT

# INNOVATION GRANT PROGRAM

# FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions

GRANT CYCLE 2025

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# Question 1: Who is the Peninsula Endowment?

Peninsula Endowment is a small philanthropic nonprofit organization with a long history of working with community based nonprofit organizations to enhance the lives of persons with visual disabilities in Northern California.

## Question 2: What are the Vision and Mission Objective Statements of the Peninsula Endowment?

The Peninsula Endowment Vision Statement: To enhance the lives of individuals with visual Disabilities in Northern California.

The Peninsula Endowment Mission Objective Statement:  To support with a partially needs based innovative project grant funding program, worthwhile charitable nonprofit IRC Section 501(c)(3) organizations which: (1) are physically located primarily in Northern California; and (2) offer innovative programs enabling access to written materials for persons with visual disabilities as part of their provision of life enhancing educational programming and support services to individuals with visual disabilities primarily residing in Northern California.

# Question 3: What is the Peninsula Endowment Innovation Grant Program?

The Peninsula Endowment’s Innovation Grant Program awards one-time non-recurring grants to qualifying nonprofit applicants which develop a new single project to fund during a grant cycle, which project supports innovations enabling access to written materials for persons with visual disabilities (“***Innovation Grants***”).

Grant cycles are typically on a calendar year basis, starting with the circulation of a grant cycle announcement in late January, submission period through the end of march, evaluation and selection process through May with funding in June or July.

The Peninsula Endowment may award several or no Innovation Grants in any given grant cycle, in its sole discretion, depending on the quality and quantity of Innovation grant Applications (IGA) submitted during that grant cycle.

# Question 4: Who may apply for an Innovation Grant?

Qualifying Applicants are. nonprofit IRC Section 501(c)(3) organizations which: (1) are physically located primarily in Northern California, USA; and (2) offer programs or services to enhance the lives of persons with visual disabilities primarily residing in Northern California, USA.

Potential grantees may include, but are not limited to, any museum, academic institution, sports / recreational organization, social organization, non-governmental organization (often referred to as an NGO) or community organization focusing on servicing persons with visual disabilities, and the like provided that the organization is a nonprofit. The size of a nonprofit organization in terms of annual budget, employees, facilities, number of programs offered, and the like is not determinative. What is important is the nature and quality of the project described in the IGA. As a general matter, we do not usually fund projects submitted by local, regional, state or federal governmental agencies, but exceptions can be made as governmental agencies are, by definition “nonprofit organizations, if the specific project is meaningful enough and falls within our Funding Priorities. See below for additional information on what types of projects are funded by Innovation Grants.

# Question 5: How does a qualifying nonprofit organization apply for an Innovation Grant?

Qualifying Nonprofit organizations eligible to receive Innovation Grants from the Peninsula Endowment are required to submit an IGA. Prospective grantees may obtain an IGA by simply sending a message to the Peninsula endowment at [peninsula.endowment@gmail.com](mailto:peninsula.endowment@gmail.com) and requesting an IGA.

In the IGA, a prospective grantee will describe the single project they would like funded and respond to a few basic requests for information about the organization and the specific proposed project to be funded, Of particular importance will be a description of how the project aligns with the funding priorities of the Peninsula Endowment. Organizations who have applied to the Peninsula Endowment in prior years may use a streamlined application approach without resubmitting basic organizational documents if they have not changed since the last submission, whether or not the organization has received an Innovation Grant in the past.

# Question 6: What types of projects are funded with an Innovation Grant?

We at the Peninsula Endowment would like to be thought of as the “Special one time, nonrecurring, Innovative Project” funding source for nonprofits operating principally in Northern California. We simply are not large enough to take on the funding of projects which need annual funding, projects which are of a capital, facilities, building, infrastructure, operational, general equipment purchase, or similar funding nature, projects which do not demonstrate meaningful innovation enabling access to written materials for persons who are visually disabled, and the like.

Innovation Grants should be requested to fund a specific new and innovative project which aligns with the funding priorities of the Peninsula Endowment. See below for additional information on the funding priorities of the Peninsula Endowment, but in short projects will need to demonstrate innovations enabling access to written materials for persons with visual disabilities that are designed to educate, enhance, and enrich the lives of persons with visual disabilities principally residing in Northern California.

IGAs should not be submitted to request any type of capital, building, infrastructure, general programming, recurring programming, general operational support, general administrative support, equipment purchases (unless in the context of a larger innovative project), or to fund existing projects of the organization. IGAs should be focused on single project support, not for support of multiple projects. A goal of the Innovation Grant Program is to stimulate new ideas about how to facilitate access to written materials for persons with visual disabilities, generate new solutions to existing problems concerning such access, and motivate applicants to think critically about such access needs and propose a project which expands or extends the applicant’s product or service offerings pertaining to such access. All to say that an IGA which requests funding for a project which encompasses the entire breadth of the operations of the applicant will not be viewed favorably, nor will an IGA which requests funding for projects which merely involves the purchase of mobile and or desktop computers to be used in the applicant’s existing programs or general operations. Similarly, IGAs which request funding to teach program participants how to use basic adaptive technology will not be viewed favorably as such projects typically do not align well with the current grant cycle funding priorities that projects be innovative in nature.

As noted below in the description of the Peninsula Endowment current grant cycle funding priorities, a concerted effort has been made not to provide sample lists of projects or categories of projects which might be funded as such a list would stifle the collective imagination of those organizations best suited to develop ideas to enhance the lives of persons with visual disabilities. Appropriate innovative projects might be large or small, have a budget of $50,000 or just $5000, involve the creation of a product, service, or neither, involve adaptive technology running on mobile and or desktop computers or not, .

# Question 7: What projects have been funded with Innovation Grants in the Past?

Innovation Grants have been awarded to support the following projects. This list should be considered merely illustrative of the scope and breadth of projects which have been funded. The list should not in any way limit the imagination or creativity of prospective applicants.

For example, a project was funded to incorporate artificial intelligence into the process of scanning a physical book with STEM equations into electronic form to expedite the electronic scanning and review process.

For example, a project was funded to develop personalized / customized braille contraction transcriptions to allow persons with a visual disability, targeting K through 12 students, to access custom braille contractions to any book or written materials.

For example, a project was funded to provide new and specialized accessible tools and resources which did not exist such as tactile maps of the waters in San Francisco Bay to enhance the experiences of sailors with visual disabilities while sailing on San Francisco Bay.

For example, a project was funded which will produce visual and audio descriptions of the entire permanent collection of the Anderson Collection at Stanford University, one of the most distinguished collections of modern and contemporary American art housed on a university campus. These descriptions will be available in text and audio form within the museum and on its website. The museum also plans to develop a small catalog for the 10th anniversary in 2025 and produce braille copies for visitors. This project will allow the blind and low-vision community to experience this world-class collection in person and online more fully. The museum is admission free and welcomes tens of thousands of visitors annually.

For example, a project was funded focusing on Braille Production and Training Program to provide Braille transcription and production of text books, manuals, playbills, business cards, and other written materials for people living with vision loss and blindness. In addition, the program will offer an employment training program in which current and former clients of Society for the Blind and other individuals who are blind can become Certified Braille Transcribers and/or learn the production and sales side of the Braille Production and Training Program.

For example, a pilot project was funded to provide Assistive Technology (AT) mobile smart phone stand sourcing and instruction to low income, elderly people living with sight loss to better utilize existing mobile smart phone applications that allow users to take an image of the document and then have the application convert the image to audio and read aloud using the screen reading technology native to the mobile smart phone device.

For example, an expanded project was funded by the Vista Center for the Blind and visually Impaired to provide wider scope Customized Braille Transcription Services for persons with visual disabilities to access custom braille contractions to any book or written materials and as a result enhance and enrich lives of participants, primarily school aged clients through increasing their access to study materials digitally, learn at speed, therefore accelerate opportunities to succeed academically.

For example, a project was funded to integrate AI driven learning tools to work with Bookshare to empower students with visual impairments and provide them with a personalized and accessible learning environment as if they had their own personal tutor to help the student review and understand the written materials involved. The project will build a proof of concept of the interactive interface with Bookshare content that will give students a whole new way to interact with their educational content and get feedback from users in California.

For example, a project was funded to host a series of in-person and virtual workshops on AI as a resource and tool for people who are blind or low vision, and to post the recordings of such workshops online so that others might benefit from the contact for years to come. The project will involve professionals and community members who will participate in discussing Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its future implications for persons with visual disabilities.

For example, a project was funded to provide learning, language and reading skills for children ages 3-10 who are blind or have low vision. The ABCs Project engages the child, their parents and service providers in a collaborative and comprehensive approach to increase the child’s readiness for school and capacity to achieve academic success.

For example, a project was funded to create a Student Summer Program aimed at introducing braille to at least 15 children and teens in rural areas of Northern California who are blind or have low vision and who may have been negatively affected the covid 19 Pandemic in their educational careers.

Note that these are merely illustrations of innovative special projects funded by Innovative Grant Program awards in the past. Prospective nonprofit applicants should think critically about the needs of their program participants, the general public, etc. to develop appropriate special projects to be described in submitted IGAs.

# Question 8: What is the target implementation period for a project described in an IGA?

The discrete projects supported by the Innovation Grants can be of any duration (i.e., one month, 6 months, 1 year, 2 years, etc.). Given the annual grant cycle of the Peninsula Endowment, however, it is presumed that projects described in submitted IGAs will have a target completion period of 12 months. Having said that, the Peninsula Endowment Board will strive to be flexible based on the nature of submitted IGAs. Thus, if a submitted IGA describes a very worthwhile innovative project which might have an implementation period other than 12 months, the Board will keep an open mind in evaluating the merits of the project.

# Question 9: How and when will Innovation Grants be Disbursed?

The one-time non-recurring Innovation Grants will be awarded in one lump sum at the beginning of the project. This upfront grant funding model is why the creation of an implementation budget for the project described in the IGA is so important. It is recommended that projects target a duration of roughly 1 year or less, given the annual grant cycle of the Peninsula Endowment and to facilitate the analysis of the likelihood of success of the project within the forecasted budget.

## Question 10: What are the funding priorities of the Peninsula Endowment Innovation Grant Program?

Qualifying applicants must adequately describe in their IGA a project to be funded which aligns with the Peninsula Endowment funding priority for the current grant cycle. The current grant cycle funding priority is as follows:

***To support projects which demonstrate innovations enabling access to written materials for persons with visual disabilities, and as a result, be designed to enhance and enrich the lives of those persons with visual disabilities who become participants in the project.***

The Peninsula Endowment is open to a wide spectrum definition of what types of projects will demonstrate innovations enabling access to written materials for persons with visual disabilities, but key factors to be considered include, but are not limited to, the following: the extent to which the project applies new processes, introduces new techniques, adapts new or existing technology, or establishes successful ideas to create new value for persons with disabilities in terms of enabling access to written materials.

The Peninsula Endowment specifically does not want to provide prescriptive language which might have the effect of limiting the imagination and ingenuity of prospective applicants in designing innovative projects. Thus, projects may be large or small, elaborate, or simple, involve the development of software / hardware or not, involve the production of a product or not, involve the preparation for and presentation of clinics/ seminars/ presentations or not, etc. Much more important than any specific category of project is the innovative nature of the project, the benefits to be achieved by participants in the project, the likelihood of success of the project, the due diligence performed by the applicant that persons with visual disabilities will actually benefit from the project, the financial needs of the applicant organization, and how the grant funds will be used to achieve project success.

The Peninsula Endowment believes that there is no limit to the imaginative power of humans to overcome their limitations and wants to support this belief with loose guidelines around its funding priority for the current grant cycle. See above for information on what types of projects are funded with Innovation Grants.

## Question 11: How large are Innovation Grants?

Innovation Grants can be requested for any amount between $5,000 and $50,000, without any priority given to the amount of funds requested. That is, larger grant requests will not be considered more or less favorably than smaller grant requests. Much more important than the dollar amount requested is the innovative nature of the project, the benefits to be achieved by participants in the project, the likelihood of success of the project, the financial needs of the applicant, the due diligence of the applicant to confirm that persons with visual disabilities will actually achieve the intended benefits, and how the grant funds will be used to achieve project success. Projects may not be aggregated to increase the amount of the IGA funding request. That is, an IGA should not describe more than 1 project in the IGA and the funds requested should focus only on supporting the project described within the IGA.

Note that applicants will be asked to describe how they will use any funds granted by submitting a budget for the project described in the IGA. For this purpose, template budgets are provided in the IGA and accompanying Microsoft® Excel file. The project budget should be limited to just the project described in the IGA and should not include the entire operational budget of the applicant, nor the budget for an entire department which might be responsible for implementing the project. Developing a simple, but discrete budget for just the project described in the IGa will not only assist the applicant with understanding how to implement the discrete project if funded, but also increase the likelihood of success of the project within the budget constraints.

## Question 12: How many Innovation Grants may be awarded during any grant cycle?

The specific number of Innovation Grants the Peninsula Endowment may award in any given grant cycle will depend on a number of factors including, but not limited to, the number of IGAs submitted, the amounts requested in submitted IGAs, the quality of the IGAs submitted, and the amount of funds available to distribute during a given grant cycle. Thus, there is no specific target number of Innovation Grants to be awarded during any given grant cycle. Also note that no Innovation Grants may be awarded in any given grant cycle if the quality of the submitted IGAs does not warrant the award of any Innovation Grants, all to be determined in the sole discretion of the Peninsula Endowment.

## Question 13: Where can I get a copy of an IGA Package?

One can request an Innovation Grant Program package for the current grant cycle which will include an IGA, FAQ document and a template budget spreadsheet by emailing us a request for such documents at [peninsula.endowment@gmail.com](mailto:peninsula.endowment@gmail.com). Alternatively, one can go to our [Innovation Grant Program Documents – PENINSULA ENDOWMENT](https://www.peninsulaendowment.org/innovation-grant-program-documents/) Webpage to download the current grant cycle documents which are in Microsoft® Word format for ease of completion. .

## Question 14: How do I submit an IGA?

IGAs should be completed by typing appropriate responses into the IGA itself which is a Microsoft® Word document. Given the acknowledgments in an IGA, they must be signed by an appropriate person at the submitting organization. The signature may be digital or wet, and the completed IGA may be submitted in PDF or Microsoft® Word document form. Completed IGAs should be submitted by sending the completed IGA along with relevant attachments to the Peninsula Endowment at [peninsula.endowment@gmail.com](mailto:peninsula.endowment@gmail.com). IGAs and attachments thereto must be submitted on or before the due date indicated in the IGA, typically March 31 of each year.

## Question 15: Can an IGA be submitted on paper?

As a general rule, written IGA submissions on paper will not be considered favorably for a variety of reasons, including the fact that members of the Board may be visually disabled and would find processing pieces of paper very challenging or impossible if in handwriting. If a prospective grantee would like to request a reasonable accommodation to this requirement that IGAs be completed by typing responses in an IGA directly and be submitted via email, please contact the Peninsula Endowment by simply sending an email message to [peninsula.endowment@gmail.com](mailto:peninsula.endowment@gmail.com)) requesting such a reasonable accommodation.

## Question 16: Are Innovation Grants from the Peninsula Endowment restricted?

Yes. It is expected that each Innovation Grant will be awarded on a restricted basis such that the funds may be used only to support the project as described in the IGA which is approved. A short Innovation Grant restriction acknowledgement agreement will need to be executed by each prospective grantee whose IGA has been approved acknowledging these restrictions prior to the disbursement of the Innovation Grant funds.

## Question 17: May any part of an Innovation Grant be used to cover administrative costs associated with or allocable to the implementation of a proposed project?

It is considered acceptable for up to, but not more than, 15% of grant amounts to be allocated to related administrative costs of the grantee nonprofit organization in implementing the proposed project. Note that these administrative costs should be included in the project budget which is part of the IGA.

## Question 18: How will the IGAs be evaluated?

The responses to requests for information in the IGA will be subjectively and objectively evaluated on a few go / no go factors, and quantitatively evaluated based on responses to requested information, with weighting factors as indicated below.

**Go / No go factors**: If any of the following statements are not true for a prospective grantee, the IGA will be deemed unacceptable and not further reviewed. In such cases, the prospective grantee will be informed. If an IGA is rejected, the Board may choose, in its sole discretion, to allow the prospective grantee to cure the defects in the IGA and resubmit it, but as a general rule, all submitted IGAs should be considered final when delivered to the Peninsula Endowment via email.

Factor 1: Prospective Innovation Grantee must be a nonprofit IRC Section 501(c)(3) organization which is principally physically located in Northern California, USA.

Factor 2: Prospective Innovation Grantee must serve a population of persons some of whom are or could be persons with visual disabilities who reside principally in Northern California, USA. For instance, a nonprofit museum open to the general public and nonprofit academic institutions serving the local population could expect that some portion of the persons visiting the museum or attending the academic institution will be persons with visual disabilities, and thus satisfy these criteria.

Factor 3: Prospective Innovation Grantee must complete an IGA and attach requested supporting documentation by the submission deadline.

**Other Factors to Evaluate**: Responses to the following requests for information using the indicated weighting factors in an IGA are to be quantitatively evaluated on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being unacceptable and 5 being excellent.

**50% Weighting. Project Benefits**: The IGA should describe the quality and innovative nature of the proposed project. The application should clearly articulate the benefits of the project for project participants. The application should also describe the importance and relevance of the issues addressed in the project and how the project aligns with the funding priorities of the Peninsula Endowment. Other issues which may be addressed in the application to demonstrate the strength of the project may include: the number and scope of project beneficiaries, the degree of benefit expected to be conferred, the vulnerability of the target group of beneficiaries, any diversity, deprivation effects and/or inequality issues to be addressed, etc.

**20% Weighting. Likelihood of Project Success and Ability to Measure Success**: The application should describe the range of outcomes or outputs expected as a result of implementing the innovative project, how the prospective grantee will define success based on the range of expected outcomes, and the likelihood of achieving those outcomes. The application should describe how the prospective grantee will objectively measure such success. The application should also describe strengths and weaknesses of the prospective grantee in terms of implementation skills to successfully carry through with projects of the type and scope proposed.

**10% Weighting. Description of Due Diligence that Project Benefits will actually Positively Affect Persons with Visual Disabilities**: The application should describe the efforts the applicant performed to confirm that persons with visual disabilities will actually positively benefit from the implementation of the project, as compared to a theoretical benefit. For example, a project which proposes to implement a specific program which only a limited number of, or no persons with visual disabilities would be reasonably expected to actually benefit from would not be considered appropriate, even if the project sounds great from a theoretical standpoint. Also, for example, a project which proposes to generate a specific benefit which persons with visual disabilities would not be reasonably expected to value will not be viewed favorably.

**10% Weighting. Description of Financial Needs of the Applicant to Implement Proposed Project**: The application should describe the financial needs of the applicant organization in terms of funding the proposed project. Greater priority is expected to be given to applicants whose financial needs are greater than others.

**10% Weighting. Budgeted Project Costs**. The application should include a simple budget detailing the revenues expected from and expenses of implementing the proposed project. If the expected project costs are expected to be more than the Innovation Grant amount, the application should describe the sources of the additional funds needed to fully implement the project. If the project is expected to be implemented over a period of longer than 1 year, the application should describe how the Innovation Grant funds will be utilized during the life of the project. A sample template budget is provided in the IGA for the convenience of applicants and may be filled in directly in the IGA. Alternatively, an applicant may submit the requested budget estimate in the form of a text-based document such as Microsoft® Word or Microsoft® Excel as an additional attachment to the IGA when submitted. Note that a template Microsoft® Excel budget document has been included in the application package announcement circulated via email, along with the IGA and this FAQ for the convenience of applicants.

## Question 19: What is the rating scale to quantitatively evaluate IGA responses?

**Rating scale for quantitatively evaluating application responses**. To promote transparency, the following general criteria may be used to guide the Peninsula endowment IGA reviewers concerning any given response on a grant application.

1. Unacceptable response.
   1. No response to request for information provided.
   2. Response demonstrated a significant misunderstanding of the information requested.
   3. Response does not meet the criteria espoused in the request for information even to a minimum extent.
2. Weak response.
   1. Response meets certain aspects of the information request to a minimum extent but fails in several others.
   2. Response demonstrates little evidence of ability to meet or deliver to the proposed criteria espoused in the request for information.
3. Fair response.
   1. Response meets the majority but not all aspects of the criteria espoused in the request for information.
   2. Response demonstrates adequate evidence of ability to meet or deliver to the proposed criteria espoused in the request for information.
4. Good response.
   1. Response meets all aspects of the criteria espoused in the request for information.
   2. Response is comprehensive, providing a demonstration of clear and thorough understanding of the criteria espoused in the request for information.
   3. Response indicates clear evidence of ability to meet or deliver to the proposed criteria espoused in the request for information.
5. Excellent Response.
   1. Response exceeds criteria espoused in the request for information.
   2. Response indicates an approach which materially exceeds the criteria espoused in the request for information through a creative or innovative approach.
   3. Response indicates aspects of the project likely to generate additional added value.
   4. Response demonstrates clear evidence of ability to exceed the proposed criteria espoused in the request for information.

## Question 20: Will applicants receive feedback on their submitted IGA?

It is not expected that applicants will receive any feedback on their submitted IGA other than: (1) that the IGA was received; and (2) that an Innovation Grant will be or will not be awarded to the applicant. Requests for additional feedback should not be sent to the Peninsula Endowment, unless an applicant has a specific question to be resolved concerning the preparation of an IGA.

## Question 21: What is the submission deadline to submit an IGA for the current grant cycle?

For the current grant cycle indicated above, IGAs must be submitted by March 31, 2025. IGAs and accompanying attachments should be submitted to the Peninsula Endowment at [peninsula.endowment@gmail.com](mailto:peninsula.endowment@gmail.com).

## Question 22: How do I contact Peninsula Endowment with additional inquiries?

The Peninsula Endowment may be contacted by sending an email to [peninsula.endowment@gmail.com](mailto:peninsula.endowment@gmail.com). Please be patient for a response from the Peninsula Endowment which has no staff and is directed by a group of volunteers.

End of FAQ.