

SARAH SHAW: Hello, and good afternoon, everyone! Welcome to the Paul G. Hearne Emerging Leader Award webinar. Thanks for joining us this afternoon, morning, or whatever time zone you're in today. We're so glad you're here with us today. I'm looking forward to talking with each and every one of you as you file into the Zoom room.

To start off, my name is Sarah Shaw. My pronouns are she and her. I am a Black woman. A visual description of me, I'm a Black woman, I am wearing a tan head wrap, glasses. I have black hair that is in braids, and I'm wearing, I think I would call this a chartreuse sweater with black arthritis gloves.

I'm the program director for the American Association of People with Disabilities. I'm just really excited to dive into the webinar today to tell you all about the Emerging Leader Award.

So, let's go ahead and get started, and we'll go over any housekeeping items that we have.

This webinar is recorded and will be available within the next week or so. The recording will include this webinar as well as the PowerPoint slides, a transcript, and a summary of the Q&A asked during this webinar, so you'll be able to review it at your convenience.

We also have closed captioning and Streamtext available for this webinar. For closed captioning, please make sure you hit the "closed captioning" button at the bottom of your screen. It will pop up, or you can click the Streamtext in a separate window. The Streamtext link will be dropped in the chat if it hasn't already been already.

We also have ASL interpreters with us today. They are spotlighted in this webinar.

We will have a Q&A at the end of the webinar. If you have any questions throughout the call, please feel free to put them in the Q&A box only, and any questions that you have, you can feel free to put those questions in the Q&A as well for anybody who's working on the back end of chat with us.

Let's go over the agenda. So, we're going to talk through the history of Paul G. Hearne, some new and exciting changes for 2025, important timeline updates, the application process, and some resources, and finally, time at the end for your questions and answers.

So, let's get started on why we are here today. We're going to talk through the history and legacy of Paul G. Hearne.

So our award is named after Paul G. Hearne, who was a lifelong disability advocate and leader. He is pictured on the right-hand side in black and white. He is a person with

osteogenesis imperfecta. He is a man with curly brown hair, a mustache, and is wearing a blazer and tie.

Paul established the One Break and Dole Foundation for employment of people with disabilities. He was truly a revolutionary, and as I've had the wonderful opportunity of learning -- as I've had the wonderful opportunity to learn from a few of Paul's close friends over the past few months, he was truly a revolutionary.

Paul's two passions in life were to create a national association of people with disabilities and to cultivate potential future leaders to carry on the disability rights movement.

Paul did that by being one of AAPD's co-founders, which is exactly why we named this amazing award in his honor. And also helped accomplish his second goal of cultivating future leaders.

Next up, some new and exciting changes for the Hearne Award for 2026. In recognition of the 25th -- that's right, 25 -- anniversary establishing the Paul G. Hearne Emerging Leader Award to honor AAPD's co-founder Paul, AAPD is thrilled to announce an increase in this award. The award program has maintained the same level of funding since the year 2000. Every recipient of the Hearne Award in the past 25 years has received \$10,000.

The expansion of the award now includes \$10,000 in recognition of the recipient's outstanding contribution to disability rights, and \$15,000 dedicated to furthering a new or existing project or initiative that increases opportunities for people with disabilities.

The expansion of the award will allow for Paul G. Hearne recipients to make a bigger impact in their communities. This will also allow and takes into consideration things such as costs of living and things like project implementation, which have all increased over time.

AAPD wants to ensure that recipients receive meaningful compensation in recognition of their time, efforts, and outstanding leadership.

So now let's talk about the timeline, which we all know can move very, very quickly.

So the application is due on Monday, October 20th, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. Eastern. Please make sure to note the time zone. This will be 2:00 p.m. Pacific.

When the application closes, AAPD board members and past Hearne Awardees will be reviewing your application and participating in the interviews.

This will take place October through December. As you can imagine, this is a process that can take a while, so we appreciate your patience with us as we navigate through that process!

In December 2025, we will give everyone a notification regardless if you are recognized as an awardee or not.

Then, come January 2026, two awardees will begin their project and work on it throughout the year.

Another important thing to note is that the awardees will also be recognized at AAPD's National Community Event. This will be fully virtual in the spring of 2026.

Moving right along to the application process. There are five different sections to the application process. We have created a Google document where you can look at all of the materials that you will need for your application on one page, instead of going through SurveyMonkey, because it is broken down into multiple sections when you go through the application on SurveyMonkey, and that does not allow you to review or view them until you answer those questions on the application.

But in the Google Document, you should be able to preview everything ahead of time.

In the application process, we ask for application information, project information, your resume, letters of support, and demographics. As we talk about tips, keep in mind that they might not all apply to you.

There's also an application scoring criteria. Each section of the Paul G. Hearne application will be scored. There will be a group of reviewers reviewing your application materials, and this includes AAPD staff, board of directors, and/or past Hearne Awardees. Each reviewer will receive all application materials and use this scoring rubric to help guide their decision on who will move forward to the interview round.

Each section has -- sorry, the essay section includes seven essays and has a total score of 25 points. Each essay is scored by recommended word count. Think, a higher word count means the essay is more important to us.

The resume section is worth 3 points. Now, note, it's not based on how many activities you did or how long you've been working there, whether that resume reflects why you are the person to carry out the project that you are proposing.

And then finally, the letter of recommendation is worth 3 points.

Remember, again, to preview the Google Document beforehand, and that not all suggested tips may apply to you.

You are eligible for the Hearne Award if you self-identify as an emerging leader and a person with a disability. Those are the two main criteria in order to be eligible for the award.

A common question that comes up is what does an emerging leader mean? It is not tied to age, education status, employment, specific experience, or even your involvement in the disability community. Rule of thumb here: If you identify yourself as an emerging leader, well, then you ARE an emerging leader.

We recognize that this can look differently for different people, which is why it was intentionally set up broadly.

You also do not need to disclose your disability. We recognize that disability is a very personal thing, and we know that experience can look a lot of different ways, including or not including your formal diagnosis.

So if you self-identify as a person with a disability, then you are recognized and eligible for the award!

You do not need to send any documentation or even proof of disability to AAPD during the application process.

When applying for this award, you can either apply as an individual, which means you apply as yourself, or you can apply as a group. In this case, a group means a total of two people. All two people also must identify as an emerging leader AND a person with a disability.

Moving on to Section 1, applicant information. On the right side, there is a clip art version of a little white image of a person with a pink/purple pencil with a checklist.

We will be asking for basic information, including your name, address, phone number, email, and if applicable, other people's names in the group that might be applying for this.

Section 2 is really where we get into the heart and bones of the application. We'll dive into the project information and where we get to learn the most about you and your application.

One thing to always remember is to make sure that your project relates to AAPD's mission and the work that we do. It can include a lot of different things. We are always

focused on continuing to push the disability movement forward and being inclusive. And remember, the focus must be within the United States and its territories.

Another thing to note is that we welcome any new idea. A big reason why we do this award is because it's a wonderful opportunity for us to hear from all of you and the wonderful ideas that you have! And we know you've got a lot!

All that being said, please make sure that you take the time to break down and explain your ideas. Our reviewers will come from all different backgrounds, areas, and expertise. Everyone is going to be reading your application, so you want to make sure that you're sharing information that can get all of us on the same page.

Sharing any specifics of your project is helpful. It can include if you have any ideas about activities you are doing, how many people you want to involve, and the whole reason why you're doing it.

When it comes to submitting a project, having it come down to a specific example is best. Ideas that are too broad, such as "I want to just bring people together with disabilities" doesn't include a lot of specifics and doesn't give us as much information that we would need to work with the application.

So, always try to be as specific as possible.

Reminder again that that Word document is going to be your best friend, so please be sure to refer back to it frequently. It contains the essay questions so you can refer to them ahead of time and start working on your answers in a separate document as well.

If you still have questions, please feel free to ask them at the end of this webinar, or you can also email me at any time, and I'm happy to talk about the ideas with you so you can learn more. We want to make sure you feel supported through this application process.

When you are looking at the essay questions, you might recognize that the different essays will have different word counts. Like I mentioned earlier, if there's a higher word count, this means that there's a higher score associated with that essay. So you're going to want to pay more attention or spend more time on those specific essay questions.

One of the essay questions talked about an overview question. This will give us a broader understanding of your project. There's a second question in there that also asks about specific outcomes or activities. You want to focus on the activities that you will be doing in 2026, in a one-year period, if you receive the award.

Breaking it down into bite-sized pieces is easier for you during -- easier for you to do during the whole process.

Some tips to think about are making sure you're thinking about month to month, what is feasible for you to do in one year, in addition to all of your other commitments. We certainly do not want you to be burning yourself out. And obviously, sharing why your important relates back and is important to the disability community.

Some questions that we sometimes get... does it have to be a new project? In fact, it does not. You could have been working on this project over the last few years on and off, but needed extra support to make it happen so you can see it to its full potential. This is a place where AAPD can help with you that.

If you've been working on your project for a long time, but you're also focusing on one specific aspect of the project, we can also support that.

What if you're not sure -- another question we get is, I'm not sure how much things are going to cost. It's absolutely okay to share broad ideas of how you want to use the funding, and to not have the minute details down just yet, for example, how much X is going to cost.

Okay, moving into a little bit more details of new changes for 2026. As we mentioned earlier in the webinar, there are some exciting changes to the 2026 award cycle, and I wanted to take a moment to cover them.

AAPD used to give a total of \$10,000. \$7,500 for the project, and \$2,500 for your contribution to the community.

Starting from 2026 and beyond, AAPD will give a total of \$25,000. Recipients will receive \$15,000 dedicated to furthering a new or existing project or initiative that increases opportunities for people with disabilities. And then recipients will receive \$10,000 for their outstanding contributions to the disability community.

One thing I will note is that if you are a part of a group, the \$10,000 will be split among the group however you determine that you want to split that up. That is up to your discretion.

Some things to go over regarding disbursement.

AAPD disburses the funds to wherever the recipient chooses. Two main options include a 501(c)3 entity, which can either be self or a fiscal intermediary. Because of a, I will note, because of a conflict of interest between AAPD giving you the funds, we, AAPD,

cannot serve as a fiscal intermediary since we're the ones giving you the funds. So you'll need to look for a different organization that can help.

Something else to note is that if directly, it will be counted as taxable income, and then you would need to consider taxes as part of the budget planning process. I'll talk a little bit more about this in the resources section on the next slide.

The second option will be to give you the funds directly. If directly, it would count as taxable income and you would receive a 1099 in the following year, in January of 2027. So you will want to consider taxes as part of your budget planning. We recommend talking to a financial advisor. This may have impacts to you, your taxes, or even your benefits.

Given that there is an increase to the amount for 2026, we encourage you to explore many different resources, advisors, and websites to guide you as you navigate this process. AAPD has created a Resources page that includes helpful websites and resources such as the National Disability Institute Taxes and Preparation, the Internal Revenue Service "file a tax return," Consumer Financial Protection Bureau guide to filing your taxes, and more. And this is all listed in the resources section that we're dropping in the chat.

Some key information if the Hearne Awardee chooses to receive the award as taxable income. The rule of thumb is to set aside 33% for taxes. The IRS has a free withholding calculator, and the IRS recommends paying in quarterly installments to avoid underpaying in taxes and owing later.

People pay taxes in two places: Federal and state. Awardees will be responsible for figuring out taxes in both places.

Moving right along to Section 3, which is the resume. Remember when you're including your resume, we want you to think of your experience very broadly. It's not about how many internships or jobs you've had. It could really be about anything that includes unpaid and paid work.

It includes things you've learned doing for others, in class, perhaps caregiving, volunteering, clubs, etc. Putting things like this on your resume helps us learn about who you are and what experience you bring.

If you're applying as a group, we will also need resumes for each member of your group as well.

Moving right along to letters of support. For an application, we require two. Please make sure to pick someone who can speak to your leadership skills in relation to your project. You'd want to make sure that this person also knows you and can uplift your experiences and speak to the person you are.

We go through every part of your application very seriously, and we read these as another opportunity to get to know you. If it's too broad of a letter, it can also make it more difficult for the review committee to get to know you.

Just a reminder about conflict of interest: Board members, AAPD staff, or any relatives of the individual are not available to write a letter of recommendation.

The last part of the application is demographic information. It is optional to fill out, but it does help AAPD get a better sense of our outreach and also to ensure that we are reaching diverse communities.

As a reminder, there's a Google Document where you can preview everything if needed. Remember that this webinar is recorded in case you wanted to review any of the information that was shared, along with the transcripts and slides that we will be putting together, and a Q&A at the end.

Now we can transition -- I know I spoke for a lot, I put out a lot of information, I'm sure you're digesting a lot of what I just said, but let's transition to the Q&A portion of the webinar. We encourage you to drop your questions in the Q&A box if you haven't already.

I'm going to take a moment to pause and see what is happening over in the Q&A box.

One moment...

Okay, so, one of the questions that we received was would it be possible to receive the award money in someone else's name? If the applicant is on SSI and the amount would mess up their benefits? Yes. AAPD can disburse the amount to someone you designate, and can also break up the amounts. The project fund of \$15,000 can be deposited all at once, or up to monthly amounts starting in January 2026. The cash amount of \$10,000 can be given monthly or at once in December 2026. That's a great question. Thank you for asking.

Another question that we received was, can you share more examples on the level of specificity in the project information? Can we attach or link related documents, or keep only to plain text?

This can vary, but we at least want to know the activities you will do in 2026. We will only look at the plain text. If you have concerns about this, please feel free to reach out, please feel free to email us to talk about this more.

Another question that we received: Who is reviewing the applications? How do we ensure there is no conflict of interest and it is screened fairly?

The application review committee is comprised of AAPD board members, staff, and past Hearne Awardees. When they are confirmed to join, we share potential conflict of interest and what it looks like and ensure a diverse community of different disabilities and lived experiences. We also debrief as a full committee as we go through the application process. Our review committee also tends to be a majority, if not all, people with disabilities.

Thank you for these questions. These are really, really good questions, and I'm glad that we're able to help answer them for you live in real time.

Okay, the questions are coming in. I am working my way through them.

Another question that came in is: Do the funds need to be spent in full by the end of 2026?

So this is actually on a case by case basis, depending on your project. We have had Hearne Awardees allocate a small portion of their project funds for sustainability, or if plans have changed. The Hearne Award is focused on the year of 2026, so we'd really like to hear how you will use the funds for 2026.

Okay. I see another question that has popped up. Are there restrictions on what funding can be used for? For example, can they be used to fund stipends?

Your project funds can be used for whatever purpose related to your project. Past Hearne Awardees have used project funds for mutual aid or even scholarships.

Another great question has popped in through the Q&A. Can the funding be used towards a nonprofit startup? Would we need to -- sorry, let me say that again.

Can the funding be used towards a nonprofit startup? Would we need to already be established as a 501(c)3? If I founded an organization, can the project take place under my org?

You do not need to already be established as a 501(c)3. You can use the funds to start up the organization, and it can take place under your org. Y'all are full of questions tonight, I love it.

Another question we received: Are we required to travel for the project? No! No, you are not required to travel for the project.

Let me take a pause and see what else is happening in the Q&A.

Okay, another question we received: Do all the documents have to be submitted together at the time of applying?

The answer is no. If your letter of recommendations, for example, are emailed separately, that is okay. They can be emailed to programs@aapd.com.

Another question that I just saw come through the chat: How many recipients of this award will be selected? So for the Paul G. Hearne Award 2026 cycle, there will be two recipients of the award. A recipient can be an individual or a pair, meaning two people, meaning a group of two.

You guys are just coming through with the questions! All right, next up. Is it okay to have an alum of AAPD's program provide a letter of support? Yes.

Another great question just popped up in the chat. Is there engagement with AAPD beyond the gathering in the spring? The answer is yes. We actually meet, and by "we," it will be myself, Sarah, AAPD meets quarterly with the Hearne Awardees. We help you set up connections. We give you feedback. We brainstorm to kind of help support you throughout your project process.

We also connect you to other professional development opportunities, and we set this up to provide you as a great measure of success to make sure you feel supported throughout the entire process.

Just checking the Q&A...

I think I saw a question about what kind of projects have you previously funded? That's a great question. And actually, I believe Christine just dropped it in the chat, of a list of our past Hearne Awardees and their work. You're able to browse that and see the different projects that they've been able to kick off thanks to the Paul G. Hearne Award cycle.

I also definitely recommend, if you're able to spend time doing research on how they kicked off their projects, and also, we are here as a resource to talk to you about those things as well.

Okay! I see another question. Is the project specifically for nonprofit work, or is it okay if it is a creative project? Great question! Creative projects are okay. One of our past Hearne Award projects included writing a book, hosting the first Disability Pride Parade, or an educational documentary. I'd say the sky is the limit!

The sky is the limit in the year process, I should say! (Laughing).

Another question we received is who can write letters of recommendations? Anyone who is NOT an AAPD staff or board member. We recommend that it is someone who can write to your leadership skills and expertise to carry out the proposed project, and then I think we also mentioned earlier that can cannot be a relative.

We received a question that is asking, if we want to involve other orgs but have not received their approval before we are awarded the funds, will this be an issue? The answer is no, it will not be an issue.

A great question just popped in through the Q&A. How many applications do you expect to receive? This is a really good one! I think because this is the first year since we are increasing the amount, I expect that we're going to have the application be fairly competitive. Usually it's not about the quantity of the applications, but the quality of them, and the impact that the project has on the community.

Just perusing through, I think we might have a few more questions that are coming through. And any that we are not able to answer live tonight, just know that we will be able to follow up over email to get any other questions that we're not able to answer over the webinar.

Okay, I am looking over the Q&A...

One of the questions we received was, will social media presence be a factor in judging? And the answer is no, that will not be a factor for judging for us.

Sorry, a question that came up is: While my organization is based in the U.S., and we do some work here, our main focus is data collection in the developing world. Is this an issue?

AAPD, for the Paul G. Hearne Award, will prioritize programs focused in the U.S. and territories.

Another question we see in the Q&A is, will there be in-person interviews? So while there will be interviews, there will not be in-person interviews. All the interviews will be conducted via Zoom.

Another question that came up was, does college education impact your application? It absolutely does not. That does not impact your application.

You guys, y'all are coming in really good with the questions, I appreciate asking as many questions as you want. This is what we're here for, to help you navigate this process, for sure.

I think we have just a few more questions left. I think I am going to, if Christine is available, pass it over to my colleague, Christine, to help answer any of the remaining Q&As that we have outstanding.

CHRISTINE LIAO: Hi, everybody. This is Christine Liao. For a visual description, I am an Asian woman with long black and dark brown hair wearing a black sleeveless top. And I am the vice president of programs at AAPD.

I thank you all for joining us this afternoon and for your interest in the Paul G. Hearne Emerging Leader Award. There were a couple questions that I want to make sure that we can touch on, but please always feel free to email us at programs@aapd.com in case we miss our question, or you have a more personal question related to your application.

One person had asked: If I am self-employed and a resume wouldn't be practical, what are some alternative ways I can share my experience?

I think maybe a one-pager document that outlines some projects that you have led on or contributed to, or some activities that you do, your organization.

Other activities could include ways that you are involved in the community. I'm trying to think of another way... if you have a link to your portfolio or something like that, that could also be an option.

If you need help brainstorming some ideas, please feel free to email us. I was not sure what kind of work that you are in, but we are open to alternative formats to a resume.

Another question someone asked is: What is a fiscal intermediary? And I believe that Sarah mentioned this earlier. This means an organization or a person who is willing to receive the funds on your behalf. If you are designating somebody to receive the funds on your behalf, such as a family member or another trusted person, just know that they will be subjected to the taxes related to the award.

But it doesn't really impact you. It would impact that person. But if you have benefits or have concerns about receiving the funds impacting it, you can still designate it to somebody, but they will still be responsible for paying the taxes.

If you choose to do a 501(c)3 organization, this means they are tax-exempt, and you and the organization wouldn't have any responsibilities related to taxes.

But if you are looking for more information, we have listed some resources in the Resources document for you to check out.

As Sarah mentioned earlier, we're not able to give any financial advice on how you receive the funding.

Another question someone asked is: Does the project need to be completed within the year, or at least just have kickstarted if it may expand more than a year?

The project does not need to be completed within a year. Let's say that you have a five-year plan, and this would be year 3. That is okay. It's also okay if you are applying for year 1 or year 5 or any year of your project. We're just concerned with what you will accomplish in the year 2026.

We also will work with you on, if you want to maintain your project long term, what sustainability looks like, and make sure that we can support you by facilitating any kind of connections or facilitating any kind of opportunities for you to sustain your project long-term.

And then, one person asked: Should we link any media features on our resume?

I am not sure if this means, like, artwork or social media or things like that. If it is not directly related to the project, we most likely would not be looking at it. But you can -- sure. But if you have questions on this or how we will be looking at it, please feel free to email us.

Okay. I think that may have been all the broad questions. We can wait a minute or two to see if anyone else has any other questions. SARAH: Thank you all for being so engaging and asking a lot of really great questions and looking really -- I'm looking forward to reviewing your applications and getting excited about it! So, yeah, we'll give you all another minute or two to draft any last burning questions that you have for us. And like I said earlier, and like Christine said, we are a resource for you. So anything that you maybe forgot to ask during the webinar, you can feel free to email us as well. And we can answer it over there.

All right, I was trying to come off of mute!

I'm just looking for any last-minute questions. I think a general one that I just saw in the chat was, who should the letters of recommendation be addressed to? I think you could just address it to AAPD staff, or AAPD Paul G. Hearne Review Committee.

All right, everyone, well, thank you so much for joining us this afternoon, this evening, this morning, whatever time zone you were joining us from.

As I mentioned, we will be sharing out the recording, the PowerPoint, the webinar, and also any of the questions that we answered live tonight with an FAQ. And any outstanding questions that you have regarding the application process, things that come up, please, my email is on the PowerPoint, so that's programs@aapd.com, if you had any other follow-up questions that you wanted to send us to help you navigate this process.

But I'm really excited. We're so excited for the new changes to 2026, and we cannot wait to review your applications and see all the amazing ideas that you all are going to have.

That is it for tonight. So I hope you all have a wonderful and gentle evening, and we will see you next time!

Thanks so much. Take care.