



2026 Paul G. Hearne Emerging Leader Award Webinar

Tuesday, September 30, 2025
4:00pm – 5:00pm ET

Housekeeping Items

- Recording available by the end of next week
 - *Includes PowerPoint slides, transcript, and FAQs*
- Closed captioning and StreamText
- ASL Interpreters pinned
- Questions and answers at the end of the webinar
 - *If you have questions, please put them in Q&A box only*
 - *Chatbox is only for to communicate with hosts/tech support*

Agenda

- AAPD and Paul G. Hearne
- New and Exciting Changes for 2026
- Timeline
- Application Process
- Questions and Answers

Paul G. Hearne

- Award named after a lifelong disability advocate and leader
- One of AAPD's co-founders
- One Break and The Dole Foundation for Employment of People with Disabilities
- Two passions:
 - *Create a national association of people with disabilities*
 - *Cultivate potential leaders to carry on the disability rights movement*



New & Exciting Changes for 2026!

- In recognition of the 25th anniversary establishing the Paul G. Hearne Emerging Leader Award to honor AAPD's co-founder, AAPD is pleased to announce an increase in the award beginning in 2026!
- Program has maintained same level of funding since 2000 - every recipient of the Hearne Award in the past 25 years has received \$10,000.

New Changes for 2026

- Award now includes \$10,000 in recognition of recipients' outstanding contribution to disability rights and \$15,000 dedicated to furthering a new or existing project or initiative that increase opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Expansion of the award will allow for PGH recipients to make a bigger impact in their communities.
- Ensure Recipients receive meaningful compensation in recognition of their time, efforts, and outstanding leadership.

Timeline

Timeline

- Deadline: Monday, October 20, 2025 at 5pm ET
- Review and interviews: October - December 2025
- Final notification: December 2025
- Project timeline: January 2026 – December 2026
- AAPD National Community Event: Spring 2026



Application Process

Application Sections

1. Application Scoring Criteria
2. Applicant Information
3. Project Information
4. Resume
5. Letters of Support
6. Optional demographics

- Preview the Google Document copy beforehand
- Not all suggestions/tips may apply!

Section 1: Applicant Information

- You are eligible if you self-identify as:
 - *Emerging Leader*
 - *Person with a disability*
- Emerging leader is not tied to:
 - *Age, education status, employment, specific experience or involvement with disability community*
- Do not need to disclose your disability
- A pair (2 people) can apply
 - *Everyone still must identify as an emerging leader with a disability*

Section 1: Applicant Information

- Name
- Email
- Phone Number
- If applicable: Group Member names



Section 2: Project Information

- Relate your project to AAPD's mission
 - *Focus must be within the United States and territories*
- Welcome new ideas!!
- Provide enough background to make sure all reviewers have the same understanding of your project
- Share specifics if you have them

Section 2: Project Information

- Preview the Word document
- Ask questions!
 - *Email, set up calls*
- Know that AAPD is here to support
- Word counts for each essay question
 - *If there is a higher word count,
it means reviewers will pay closer attention*



Section 2: Project Information

- Overview Information
- Specific Outcomes or activities
 - *Focus on the activities that you will do in a 1-year period in 2026*
- Share why your project is important to the disability community

Section 2: Project Information

- Common questions
 - Does it have to be a brand-new project? **No**
 - Can it be a part of a larger project? **Yes**
 - I am not sure how much things cost. Is it okay to share broad ideas of how I want to use this funding? **Yes**

Section 2: Project Information (New Changes for 2026)

- Prior to 2026, Recipients received \$2,500 in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the disability community and \$7,500 to further a new or existing project or initiative that increases opportunities for people with disabilities.
- 2026 and on: Recipients will receive \$15,000 dedicated to furthering a new or existing project or initiative that increases opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Recipients will receive \$10,000 for their outstanding contributions to the disability community

Section 2: Project Information

- AAPD disburses the funds to wherever the recipient chooses. Two main options include:
 - *501(c)3 entity, can be either self or fiscal intermediary*
 - AAPD cannot serve as a fiscal intermediary
 - *Directly to the recipient*
 - If directly, it will be counted as taxable income
 - Consider taxes as part of the budget planning process

Resources

- We encourage people to explore different resources related to taxes and managing their personal finances, to discuss with a financial advisor or tax preparer.
 - *AAPD **cannot** give any financial advice.*
- We recommend checking out these websites and free resources such as the National Disability Institute: Taxes and Preparation, IRS System: Files a Tax Return, etc.
- Be sure to preview the Hearne Award Information and Resources page to go over additional information and resources

Section 3: Resume

- List activities and experiences that directly relate to your project
- Can include all kinds of experiences:
 - *Volunteer*
 - *Internship / fellowships*
 - *Temporary, part-time, full-time*
- If applying as a pair, both applicants must provide their current resume.

Section 4: Letters of Support

- Two letters required
- People who can speak to your leadership style and your project
- *Conflict of interest:* AAPD Board members, AAPD staff, or a relative of any of these individuals. If submitting in a pair, both members cannot write letters for each other.

Section 5: Demographics (Optional)

- Helps AAPD get a better sense of our outreach efforts to diverse communities
- Demographic questions include, but not limited to:
 - *Race/Ethnicity*
 - *Gender*
 - *Pronouns*
 - *Religion*
 - *Sexual orientation*
 - *Disability*
 - *Age*
 - *Veteran Status*

Questions?

Email Sarah Shaw at programs@aapd.com with any questions!



AAPD

American Association of People with Disabilities