

SARAH: Hello. So today we are here to talk about the Paul G. Hearne Emerging Leader award. And good afternoon. Good morning wherever you're joining us from today.

Thank you so much for joining this webinar today. We're so glad that you are here today.

And I'm looking forward to talking with each and every one of you.

To start off, my name is Sarah Shaw. My pronouns are she and they. For a quick visual description, I am a Black woman. I am wearing a head wrap.

I have black curly hair, I wear glasses, and I'm wearing a blue and white striped long sleeved shirt with a gray shirt underneath and my background is blurred.

I am the programs director at the American Association of People with Disabilities, and I'm so excited to talk to you today about the Paul G. Hearne Emerging Leader Award. Let's go ahead and get started. I'll first start by going over any housekeeping items.

Next slide, please.

This webinar is recorded and will be available within the next week or so. This recording will include the webinar as well as the PowerPoint presentation, a transcript, and a summary document 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 CC button at the bottom of your screen, and it will pop up or you can click the StreamText in a separate window.

We will also have ASL interpreters today. They are spotlighted in this webinar. We will also 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. The chat box will be enabled only to communicate with the host and needs if there's any needs of tech support. Next slide please.

Here's a brief agenda of what we're going to discuss today. We will talk through the history of Paul G. Hearne. Important timeline information, the application process, Q&A with two previous Hearne Awardees. And finally, time for your questions.

Sorry one second.

I thought there was a raised hand.

Okay. I'll keep going.

Next slide please. So let's get started on why we are here today. We are talking 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 side in black and white. He is a person with osteogenesis imperfecta. He is a man with curly brown hair and 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 in the disability space and a huge dreamer. 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 accomplish that by being one of AAPD's co-founders, which is exactly why we named this amazing award in his honor and also helps accomplish his second goal of cultivating future leaders.

Next slide please. The Paul G. Hearne Award now includes \$10,000 in recognition of recipients outstanding contributions to disability rights and \$15,000 dedicated to furthering a new or existing project or initiative that increases opportunities for people with disabilities, totaling the amount of the award to \$25,000.

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

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

Now we're moving on to the timeline. We will talk about timeline, which we all know can move very quickly.

Next slide please. So the application is due on Wednesday, September 23 at five p.m. ET.

Please make sure to note the make sure to note the time zone.

This will be 2:00 p.m. on Pacific Time. 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 from October through December of 2026. As you can imagine, this is a process that can take a while. So we appreciate your patience with us as we navigate through this process.

In December of 2026, we will notify everyone who has applied for the award, regardless if you are recognized as an Awardee recipient or not. At the bottom of this slide, there is also a warning sign that says deadline ahead.

Then, come January 2027, two awardees will begin their project and work on it throughout the year with support of AAPD.

Another important thing to note is that awardees will also be recognized at AAPD's National Community Event.

This is an event that is fully virtual and will be held in the spring of 2027. Next slide, please.

Moving on 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 the SurveyMonkey application, because it can be broken down into multiple sections, that does not let you review or view them until you answer them.

But in the Google document, you should be able to preview everything ahead of time. Next slide, please.

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

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, AAPD Board of directors, and/or past Hearne Awardees, as well. Each reviewer will receive all application materials and use a scoring rubric to help guide their decision on who will move forward to the interview round.

Essay section. There will be seven essays for a total of 25 points. Each essay is scored based on recommended word count. A higher word count means the essay is more important to us.

The next aspect is the resume. The resume is not based on how many activities you did or how long you've been working there.

Your resume should reflect why you are the person to carry out this project. The other aspect of the Paul G. Hearne Award is letters of recommendation.

Next slide, please.

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. For a 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 different for different people, which was why it was intentionally set up broadly.

You 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 with as a person with a disability, then you are recognized and eligible for the award.

You do not need to send any documents 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 yourself or you can apply as a group. In this case, a group means a total of two people. Each person from the group of two must also identify as an Emerging Leader and a person with a disability.

Next slide please.

On this slide, there is a clip art version of a stick art person with a pencil with a checklist on the right.

Applicant information. We'll be asking for basic information including your name, address, phone number, email and if applicable other people's names in this group that might be applying for this award. Next slide please.

Section 2, project information. Section two is really where we get into the heart and more thorough parts of the application. We'll dive into the project information and this is 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/or the work that we do.

It can include a lot of different things. We are always focused and excited to be continuing to push the disability movement forward, as well as being inclusive.

Another thing to note is we welcome any new ideas. A big reason why we do this award is because it's a wonderful opportunity for us to hear from all of you and all the wonderful ideas that you have, and we know you have 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 be sure that you are sharing information that you 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 that you are planning to do, how many people you want to involve, and the whole reason behind why you're doing it.

When it comes to submitting a project, having it come down to a specific example is best. Having ideas be too broad, such as "I want to bring together people with disabilities," doesn't have a lot of specifics.

Next slide, please.

Reminder again to please preview the Word document, and I'll make sure to drop the links before we get to the Q&A section. It includes the essay questions so you can see ahead of time to start working on your answers in a separate document. If you still have any questions, please feel free to ask them at the end of the webinar, or you can 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 throughout this application process. When you are looking at the essay questions, you might recognize that the that the different essays have different word counts. If there's a higher word count, this means there's a higher score associated with that essay. So you want to pay more attention or spend more time on those questions.

Next slide, please.

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'll be doing in 2027 in a one-year period if you receive the award.

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

Some tips to think about are making sure you're thinking about what the project could look like in a month-to-month breakdown and what is feasible for you to do in one year, in addition to all of your other commitments that might come up.

We certainly do not want you to be burning yourself out while you're trying to do this project. Next slide please.

Some questions 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 maybe to make it happen on a different level so you can see it to its full potential.

This is a place where AAPD can help with that.

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

What if you're not sure how much things will cost? It's absolutely okay to share ideas of how you want to use the funding, and to not have the minute details down yet broken down into specific numbers. The answer is yes. Next slide please.

AAPD will give a total of \$25,000 for the award. Recipients will receive \$15,000 dedicated to furthering a new or existing project or initiative that increases opportunities for peoples 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 to attend, the \$10,000 will be split amongst the group.

However, you determine that you want to split that up, that is up to your discretion.

Next slide, please.

Some things to go over regarding disbursement. AAPD disperses the funds to wherever and whoever the recipient chooses. Two main options include a 501(c)(3) entity. It can either be self or a fiscal intermediary. Because of a conflict of interest between AAPD giving you the funds, we, the AAPD cannot serve as that fiscal intermediary, since we are the ones giving you the funds, you would need to look for a different organization who could help support you with that. Next slide, please.

The second option would be for AAPD to give you the funds directly. If directly, it will be counted as taxable income and you would receive a 1099 the following year in January.

When it comes to the financial aspects, you will want to consider taxes as part of your budget planning. We recommend talking to a financial advisor if this may have impacts on you, your taxes, or benefits.

We encourage you to explore many different resources, advisors, and websites that 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, Internal Revenue Services to file a tax return, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau guide to file your taxes. We will share those links at the end of the webinar, as well. Some key information:

If a Hearne Awardee chooses to receive the funds as taxable income, the general rule of thumb is that a person will pay 25 to 33% of their income for taxes. The IRS has a free tax withholding estimator. The IRS recommends people to pay in quarterly installments to avoid underpaying taxes and then owing later. People pay their taxes in two places: In federal and state. The Awardee will be responsible for figuring out taxes for both places next slide, please.

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

It includes things that you've learned doing for others, maybe in classes or seminars, workshops, caregiving, volunteering, speaking opportunities, 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 need the resumes of each member of your group. Next slide.

Moving on to letters of support. For our application, we require two letters of support. Please make sure to pick to pick someone who can speak to your leadership skills in relation to your project.

You'd want to make sure that this person knows you and can lift up your experiences and speak to the person you are. We go through every part of your application very seriously and thoroughly, and we read through 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 a review committee to get to know you.

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

Next slide, please.

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 is a Google document where you can preview everything if needed.

This webinar is also recorded in case you wanted to review any of the information that was shared, along with the transcript and slides that we will be putting together during the Q&A at the end.

Next slide please.

Now, I would like it to transition us to the panel part of the webinar. I would like to introduce our two previous Paul G. Hearne Award recipients, Elijah Armstrong, 2021 Paul G. Hearne Award recipient, and Emily Ladau, 2018 Paul G. Hearne Award recipient.

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First off, I'd like to start off introductions for both of you. Elijah can you give an introduction of yourself first, please?

ELIJAH: Hi, I'm Elijah Armstrong, I'm a lighter skinned Black male with locs down to my shoulders. I won the Hearne in 2021 and I created the Heumann-Armstrong Award. So a scholarship for students with disabilities.

And I am happy to be talking to you all today.

SARAH: Thank you so much, Elijah. Happy to have you here. And Emily.

EMILY: Hi, everyone, I'm Emily Ladau. I'm a white woman with curly brown hair in my photo, but it's pulled to the side in a bun right now. I'm wearing glasses.

And I'm wearing a black and yellow floral dress.

My pronouns are she/her. And did I say I'm a 2018 Hearne Awardee already? My goodness, I'm so old I can't even remember when it happened.

But happy to be here with all of you.

SARAH: Thank you so much. Thank you so much Elijah and Emily, we're thrilled to have you here to speak to your wisdom, to share with the upcoming applicants for this cycle. Emily, could you provide a summary of the project that you worked on during your year as a Paul G. Hearne Award recipient?

EMILY: Yeah. Absolutely, I used to be the founding editor-in-chief of Rooted in Rights. It was a multimedia project and a blog that focused on amplifying authentic and intersectional perspectives from the disability community. It was really a passion project for me, but I knew that what would make it even better is if I had the opportunity to bring in some fellows to support them for much longer than just a one or two off kind of collaboration, and really provide mentorship and support, help them build a portfolio, help them create connections within the community.

Help them, you know, develop a body of work on their own lived experiences and on disability topics more broadly.

So I did the Rooted in Writing Fellowship, and I brought on two incredible writers who I worked with throughout the course of the year.

And then the funding that I received from the Hearne Award, I used to provide a stipend for their efforts.

SARAH: Thank you so much, Emily, for going over that with us. So insightful and jealous that I was not around when your award was happening.

Similar question to you, Elijah. Could you go through your project?

ELIJAH: Yeah. So I started the Heumann-Armstrong Award. It was a scholarship for students with disabilities in the sixth grade and up for students who had experienced and fought against ableism in education. We selected six students.

We ended up running it for three years, and then we stopped because I started law school.

But we selected six students a year. Each one of the six winners got a \$1,000 monetary award.

And then we shot a series of video interviews with them. The video interviews would be illustrated by a group of disabled artists out of Colorado, and then they would be used at like different schools and things so that people would actually be hearing the voices of disabled people when talking about accommodations, which is super important because that doesn't happen so often in education spaces.

We also selected between six and 12 semifinalists a year, who each received \$100 gift certificate, worked very closely with Judy up until she passed.

And we worked with a lot of other people in the disability community. Emily Ladau helped to teach the students how to tell their stories our third year. Yeah.

So also got the opportunity to introduce the students to a lot of cool people in the disability community: Jim Lebrecht, Maria Town. So yeah. So that's essentially what, we were doing.

SARAH: Thank you so much for sharing, Elijah.

And I love to see how our Hearne Awardees get to impact and be involved and support one another. And something that I hope we hope can continue as this award goes year after year.

My next question, I'll pass back to Elijah for the scope of work. Many applicants worry that they need to develop a really focused scope of work.

How did you decide on your project and ensure the scope of the scope of the project was feasible for you?

ELIJAH: I think the biggest thing is to have an understanding of your budget and to at least look at what things are so you can have a ballpark.

And then also in terms of being flexible, in terms of what the demand for the project is, because I know the first year I ran the project we had a bit over 200 applicants, which was significantly more than we were expecting. So this is sort of a just a tip for people who are applying, especially if you do something that is like very public facing, there is a very solid chance you will receive significantly more demand and interest in the project

than you, than you previously realized so in that sense, it wasn't really a challenge nearly as much of deciding like who to serve because we knew who the population would be, but more of getting a team together that would help us figure out how to select the award winners. That's something else that I would that I would suggest if you're doing a project like that.

Figuring out or at least thinking about different places that you could go and people that you would trust to help you sort through the sort of people that are that are applying to you.

But yeah, that is a real challenge that a lot of Hearne Award winners face, is once the project launches, there's generally a lot of interest in it from the disability community, which is ultimately a really good thing.

SARAH: You're absolutely right, Elijah. It is. I don't want to say it's a double-edged sword. There's the good and also the good that comes with just a lot of visibility that comes with being a Hearne Awardee.

Similar question to you, Emily. How did you decide on your project and ensure that the scope was feasible for you?

EMILY: So I actually went back and read my application again before this, and I have open in front of me, just kind of looking at how I laid out the scope.

And I talked through what my vision for the project was. So I explained that I would run an application process. I explained.

And what that application process would look like for the fellowship program. I talked about what I was hoping to accomplish in the period of the fellowship program. So I said that it would be a six month fellowship and there would be, you know, six pieces written by each person.

And I talked through how I intended to break down the budget. And at the time, because this was, you know, the olden days at this point, I think the award amount was 7000 and not 10,000.

So AAPD has really increased their commitment and investment.

But I broke down how much I would be paying the fellows, how much would be going to the behind-the-scenes administrative costs.

So I tried to be as detailed as possible, but also recognizing that, you know, it's a general accounting for budget.

I didn't go dollar for dollar with what I was going to do, but I made sure that it was very clear. This is my intention and this is how I intend to lay out the program and where the

funding will go. So it wasn't as though I had like the budgetary spreadsheet, just the vision.

SARAH: Thank you for going through all of that with us, Emily and Elijah. That was really helpful and very, very insightful.

My next question is kind of going to shift into what happens when plans change. Elijah, for example, sometimes life can get in the way, plans change.

I want our applicants to know that it's okay if not everything goes perfectly, or as planned. What were some of the ways your project had to change direction?

And how did you do so?

ELIJAH: Yeah. So essentially, pretty much as soon as soon as we went live with the applications we received far, far more interest than we were anticipating.

So actually, that was one of the things is that we were able to get additional funding from the Coelho Center.

They were they were very helpful as we were working with them.

But also like even the working with the semifinalists and being able to award semifinalists as well was something that we hadn't initially planned, nor was working with the Disabled Artists Access Gallery out of Colorado. I think that's the biggest thing that I would say about this, which is like -- my biggest piece of advice, and I'm not sure because I haven't talked to Emily about it but I know at least in my case, the first year running and starting this project, it was essentially a full-time job. It was a very serious, time-intensive thing that in very positive ways really changed the course of my life in some very meaningful ways because of the work that I was doing and things like that.

Really being in a space where you're open to that kind of flexibility and available for it, but ultimately also, like I would say specifically from a project perspective, understanding that you have a goal in mind but the means of getting there may need to change and also understanding that the need that you're serving may also change over time.

So not necessarily being married to just the vision, but, but being more responsive to the needs that you're hearing from people, I think is really important in this process.

SARAH: Thank you. Emily, same question for you. What were some ways that your project had to change direction?

EMILY: So I think the important thing to remember is that we're all showing up as people who are disabled and or chronically ill, and to give yourself grace, because I know that, you know, we have to honor our capacities for our own minds and bodies.

But if your project is something where you are bringing in other people, especially in my case, where it was a fellowship, not only did I have to think about my own capacity and the capacity of the team at Rooted in Rights, I also had to think about the capacity of the fellows. And as we were working together, there were things that came up where the fellows were like, I cannot submit you a piece on this schedule.

Or I am going to need to shift how we are working together in this moment.

And I think this is true of all of the work that we do as disabled and chronically ill people.

But, you know, keeping in mind that there's humanity behind these projects and that it is okay if you need to be flexible on your scope.

At the end of the day, my project was still done, I still went through a successful fellowship with two incredible writers, and I'm really, really proud that we were able to do that.

But the outcome looked a little different at the end because we had to modify and adapt as we were going. That saying of building the plane while flying it, and I think that is okay. And in fact, I think that is, you know, disability culture in action in a way, just figuring out how we could adjust and meet everyone's needs as we were going.

So whatever your scope of work might look like, especially if you have a multitude of people involved, just know that you're probably going to plan and replan.

And that's okay because that's what being disabled is all about.

SARAH: Wonderfully said the both of you. I'll pass it back on to Elijah for my next question. Reflecting back, you know, it's been a while. What were some things you would have done differently regarding your award?

ELIJAH: It's not necessarily something I wish I had done differently, but something that was, I think, very important, especially that third year after Judy passed away, was realizing just how important the connections in the disability community are. So -- did I disconnect just now? I'm sorry. I'm in Tennessee right now and I'm in the middle of a storm, so the internet might be lagging.

But yeah, no, the connections within the disability community are like super, super important, both because, you know, we're all, you know, disabled. So we all have times where we can't do exactly what we are intending on doing.

And then also because of the fact that we all have different skill sets.

And especially after Judy died, because Judy played a very big role in meeting with and mentoring all of the winners of our of our award.

But obviously after she passed away, there was a huge gap there.

But seeing so many people who were able to and willing to step up and tell stories about Judy and fill that role, and then also like meeting those artists out of Colorado and, and seeing like people from the World Institute on Disability and the Starkloff Institute and other winners, like I'm very close with Ola, who won in 2017, who is also ran a scholarship program. And like having her also go through and help select winners as well.

Like I think one of the most important things that would have made it a lot easier had I thought like this earlier on, is because disability is such a collaborative space, thinking of ways that you can loop in other people and ways that you can, be collaborative, because that is one of the really the only way sort of at least that I was able to get through my project, especially considering. Especially when we're looking at the budgets that we have, even though the money does go quickly, the scale and impact that you have is, is very large. So making sure that you know that you are doing things in community rather than just doing it all yourself with no feedback or support.

SARAH: Thank you, Elijah, and it was very, very insightful, and great advice.

And Emily, same question to you. What were some things you have maybe reflected on that maybe you would have changed or switched or moved around?

EMILY: Yeah. So in thinking about your project. Remember that funding that you receive only goes so far.

And if you want to continue your project and not have it fall off a cliff, think about how some of what you can do with the money that you've received from the award could be looking ahead to plans to keep it going.

It may very well be a one time one off project, but for me, I would very much have liked to been able to have yet another round of the fellowship, but that requires another round of funding, and I think at the time I was so interested in doing it as a pilot and getting it off the ground with the AAPD Hearne Award funding that I wasn't thinking of how do I make this sustainable moving forward?

And, you know, as it turned out, I was able to kind of not continue the fellowship, but find other ways to provide that mentorship while I continued my role at Rooted in Writing, but I do wish looking back, that I had thought beyond simply, what am I going to do with the funding that's provided in this limited amount of time? And how can I continue to make this a more sustainable project?

And that's a big ask for sure, and not something that I think people necessarily need to be thinking about from an application standpoint, but more so from a, how do you fulfill this project in the way that you truly want to, as you move forward with it?

SARAH: Great advice, Emily. Two more questions before we end this panel. Elijah, what were some new skills or connections you gained as a Hearne Awardee?

ELIJAH: I think that budgeting on this scale, and then also fundraising on this scale, especially because you're, you know, if you do want it to continue, that's something that you're going to have to do. It's a really good insight into really like nonprofit leadership and philanthropy.

And that's a skill set that really does help in a lot of other ways, which is really cool.

Really more than just gaining skills, though. It gave me a chance to really hone some of the things like video editing and, you know, some of the things that I had been doing before. It gives you an opportunity to do things in a much larger way than you'd been doing before. It's sort of just a superpower that it sort of gives you to boost the work that you've been doing.

But in terms of the nonprofit skill set and knowing how to navigate a nonprofit space, I think that the work and experience of running the Heumann-Armstrong Award was really invaluable there.

SARAH: Thank you, thank you, Elijah. And Emily, what would you say were some new skills or connections that you gained throughout your time as a Hearne Awardee? And even now?

EMILY: You know, AAPD has been a part of my life and my career for so long. Starting out with the internship program in 2013 and, you know, all the way through to the pipeline, if you want to call it to that, to applying for the Hearne Award.

And then I remain involved in so many other ways.

And I think that what I most appreciated about, you know, my time as a Hearne Awardee is joining a group of other people who are just, as, you know, singularly focused and committed to these, I think, groundbreaking projects.

You know, I'm not calling myself groundbreaking, but just, you know, thinking about what so many other people have done with their awards.

Being in community with a group of people who care so deeply and wants to invest so much in this work, I think has been incredibly powerful.

And I, you know, remain connected with AAPD. I remain connected with other Hearne Awardees. I mean, I think even Elijah, you know, pointing to the fact that, you know, he invited me in to speak with the Heumann-Armstrong Award winners.

And, you know, there are so many other past awardees who I have had the opportunity to either collaborate with or connect with, who have mentored me, who I have provided mentorship for.

So you know, I don't take lightly that this is a community that I'm part of, and I try to remain as active in it as possible. I think that you also get a little bit what you give in the sense that if you want to be engaged and you want to contribute and you want to be a part of the community of past awardees, then they are there for you. So take advantage of that for sure.

SARAH: Thank you so much, Emily and Elijah. My final question, which is probably a big one. I'll start off with you, Elijah. what would be some final advice you have for this upcoming class of applicants for the award?

ELIJAH: So to piggyback off Emily's last answer, this is a really big deal. Like this award is like a really, really big deal. Like the year that I won and they had the whole virtual gala, the keynote speaker was then-president Joe Biden, the top award winner was Stacey Abrams and then Ayanna Pressley, and then was the Hearne. When AAPD announced this back before, like Elon Musk bought and ruined Twitter, like disability Twitter used to be a big thing.

When AAPD announced myself and Noor was the other winner that year was announced on Twitter, like I literally couldn't use my phone most of the day because it was just straight notifications from the Twitter announcement, like the amount of outreach that you're going to get, which again, is very positive because there, there's no one I've ever met since winning the Hearne that is at all involved in disability activism that I thought was interesting, that I haven't been able to like, have a second-degree connection with at most. So like, it's very valuable with networking and with being able to build projects, being able to dive into all sorts of activism in spaces. The other thing about it is it is a very, very serious time commitment. Like I am currently about to start my third year of law school, and I ran the Heumann-Armstrong Award for three years.

And I know that if I had been in law school at the time that I had started this, I wouldn't have been able to do justice to either law school or the project. So really, just making sure that you are in a place where you have you know the time and the ability to give to a project, especially because once starts, it really does sort of take a life of its own because the community really does rally behind these projects and support these projects and want a lot from these projects in a good way because they're doing a lot of support.

, but just making sure that is something that you do have the time commitment for and capacity for is something that I think is really important.

SARAH: That was so much insightful information, Elijah.

Thank you so much for sharing. Emily, will you round us, will you wrap us up with what some advice you would share to this current group of applicants for this year?

EMILY: Yeah. I totally agree. If you are selected for the award, it's a huge deal. It's a big deal.

It's so exciting. I also remember the pomp and the circumstance and the fanfare. That being said, I also have been on the deciding end of the award many times.

I'm not doing it this year, but I've been on the selection committee multiple times now, and the amount of incredible projects that are submitted is unbelievable. And being a judge for the awards is one of the hardest things that I've done year over year. You know, I love doing it because I get to learn about all of the incredible work that's happening.

But that's also the problem is that I get to learn about all the incredible work that's happening.

And there are only so many awards to go around.

And that does not mean that your project is not worthwhile. Like, I cannot tell you how many projects I was absolutely floored by and completely wowed by, and they did not get selected.

And it broke my heart to do that every single time.

So I don't want anybody to think that if you submit something that might even be part of your life's work, and it is not selected for the award, that it is somehow a commentary on the worthiness of the work that you are doing, or the contributions that you are making to the community, because that is not true.

The award is prestigious and an honor, but it is not going to be the be-all, end-all of your work.

You can always try again next year. You can always find other ways to get involved with AAPD and with the community. You know, certainly no one is gatekeeping this community.

And I hope that you take away with you the fact that by putting yourself out there, you are already deserving and your worth does not lie in an award.

And I don't say that to diminish the award. I say that so that I'm letting you all know not to diminish the incredible work that you are doing.

SARAH: I could not have said it better myself.

Let's give it up for Elijah and Emily for sharing their knowledge and wisdom with us, and for encouraging you all for the next round of applicants for I cannot believe it, 2027.

This concludes the panel part of our presentation.

And now I'm going to move us into the Q&A aspect. Next slide, please.

Okay. So there have been lots of questions that have been going on in the chat. You all have been keeping me busy while I've been facilitating.

And so now I'm going to take some time to respond to some of them that I was not able to respond through the chat question that we have is: I have a project that I am not the lead on per se, but I'm very, very involved with multiple aspects of the project. Is that okay? I have taken the lead on expanding this project and I am a huge part of the project. Is this something that is okay?

This is something that I would always just make sure to double check with whoever you're working on the project with to make sure that this is something that is okay to submit on getting their permission to submit.

But if you are a part of a project that you're working on that everyone agrees to, this sounds like something that you can absolutely submit for the Hearne Award.

Another question. Does the panel try to select project applications that are different each year?

For example, if one of last year's selected projects focused on the impact of Medicaid cuts on home care, it would be unlikely that a similar proposed project would be selected this year?

That's a really good question. Each year, like Emily and Elijah alluded to, we get a plethora, a variety, of projects that are selected.

Throughout the selection committee and the interview committee, we do try to make sure that each project every year has different aspects of it. So it doesn't look repetitive.

We look for things that are going to move the needle and move things forward for the disability community. While I can't say that we will not, I find it very unlikely that we will repeat a project that had that had been selected in previous years, but we do look at all aspects of the project or not myself.

But like the entire committee does look at that.

Another question that I see here is: does the project being a for-profit endeavor potentially impact the strength of the application versus a nonprofit endeavor? This is a great question. We look at the project from all aspects of it.

When people are applying, the selection committee does not look at it as if it's coming from an individual who maybe is not part of an organization versus someone who is part of a larger for-profit organization. We really look at the bones and the structure and the goals of what the person is submitting, and making sure that it aligns with AAPD's values and it's moving the disability community forward and is impacting the disability community in a positive way.

So it's not saying that someone who is from a for-profit organization is going to get the award over someone who is not part of it.

Another question that I see here is, do all projects have to be connected with funding other programs? Or can it be a podcast that platforms disability and wellness? Your project can be an idea as huge broken down into as many pieces as possible, a podcast, maybe starting off something new. It does not necessarily have to be connected to funding other programs.

There are people who have done books, who have done documentaries, you've heard from Elijah and Emily on the project that they did, that there have been a wide variety of projects that have been awarded over the years.

There was a question here that I was answering. I'm going to answer this one live. I missed the earlier part of this symposium. I'm wondering if there are any resource pages that we can see at least the previous awardees' projects, at least a summary?

One, this webinar is recorded so anyone who not only just registered for this webinar or even if you didn't register, it's going to be on the AAPD website within about a week or two, so you'll be able to review and listen to all of the knowledge that Emily and Elijah shared.

Also on the AAPD Paul G. Hearne Emerging Leader Award website, there is a section of the website that links to all of our past and previous award winners' projects, so you can take a look to see the variety of different projects that we have funded and supported, along with the other resources that we shared earlier in the program.

Let me see. I have a few more minutes left. There's a question on here. I have a sole proprietorship, and my idea is a business idea with intellectual property.

How does AAPD ensure our business ideas will not be stolen or claimed by another person? This is something that we take very seriously.

The people who are on our selection committee and that are part of our interviews are respected members of our community, from AAPD board members, previous alumni, AAPD staff. We have never taken anyone's ideas and used them to say, create something that AAPD does by ourselves.

There could be instances where maybe if we see a project that we think is a good idea and we reach out and be like we think you should do something like this and encourage people to do that.

But that is not something that AAPD will do and take and create on our own. So I just want to reaffirm that is not something that AAPD does.

I am just going through the questions.

Okay.

I see a question in here.

What are some of the ways that AAPD supports awardees? I hear the answer about networking. That is amazing to hear.

There are so many different ways that we support our current awardees. Myself, Sarah, I'm the programs director. What we do from the get-go is we meet quarterly with the awardees throughout the year. At a minimum, we meet with them four times a year.

We go over their project, we talk to them about ways that would be helpful to either evolve or grow or make connections with other people in the disability community.

For example, last year with Fabiola Amaya, who did the On the Moov documentary. We connected them with different documentary filmmakers in the community. We gave mentoring for script writing, connections on how to like, like things to consider and think about as they are building out their projects.

They also have connections not only to AAPD's staff as myself; our communications team; Maria Town, our president and CEO. You are built in not only to a network that is within AAPD but also with AAPD alumni. Our Alumni Network is vast and they are full of many different people with many different skills and are always looking to help and uplift the newest members that are coming into the AAPD community.

So I hope that helped answer some of your questions.

A good question right here. If we don't get it this year, can we apply again? Yes, absolutely.

I think Emily had mentioned this. There have been times where people have applied and they don't get it the first year.

Maybe on the second or third try, they do maybe on the third, or fourth time.

The application committee changes, as well as the interview committee changes every year. Maybe your project that you submitted, you expand upon, and then you apply and

you add more features to it and you make it stronger and better. So there's there is no limit also to how many times you can apply for the award.

We have about two minutes left, and I'm seeing wow, a bunch of you just submitted a bunch of different questions. Let me see.

How many applications do we get each year? That's a good question.

It varies. I believe last year, there were over 100 plus applicants that have applied. We wish we could give out more. And hopefully maybe in future years we can.

But right now we can only give two awards each year. That was a great question to ask, though. I think I have time for two more questions.

Someone said my project is a little similar to a 2024 award, but really varies. Is that still worth applying? I would say yes. My recommendation would be to take a look at what the 2024 award project was and add elements to it to make different, to make it stand out, to make it so it's not as similar as a previous award, because we do like to make sure that we're doing and giving projects that are different.

But if it's similar, say, for example, if it's a documentary but there's different elements or parts of the project that are very, very different, then that's something that I would say, go for it, please apply for it.

I have time for one more question.

Okay. There's a question here about any recommendations to ask for letters of recommendation?

I would say whoever knows you and your project best, right. I would make sure that there are people who have seen you out in the community, people who can attest to your work ethic or your partnership or community outreach, or the ways that you are engaged in the disability community talking about your character. Those are definitely things to look out for in letters of recommendations and wow, we are right at 5:00 and there are still so many questions.

So what we're going to do is anything that we didn't get to answer during today's webinar, we're going to take and put them into an FAQ document and either answer them there or we will try and please email them to programs@AAPD.com. I'll write this in the chat.

And that is all that we have time for today. So thank you all for participating. And again, this webinar is recorded and will be uploaded to our website within the next week or two.

Thank you everyone, and good luck.

