

# Chester County Community Foundation Grant Proposal Summary Sheet

Date 11/21/17

## Contact Information:

Organization Name: West Chester Food Cupboard  
Address: 431 S. Bolmar St, West Chester, PA 19382  
Phone: 610-344-3175  
Website: westchesterfoodcupboard.org  
Year Incorporated: 2012

Executive Director Name: N/A  
Executive Director Email:  
Board of Directors Chair Name: Joseph Fratinardo  
Primary Contact Name: Kim McNicholas  
Primary Contact E-mail: wcfood@gmail.com

Has your nonprofit ever applied to the Community Foundation? Yes  No  Not Sure   
Has your nonprofit ever received funding from the Community Foundation Yes  No  Not Sure   
 Donor Advised Fund(s)  Fund for Chester County  Don't know/Not sure

**Field/s of Interest:**  Arts, Culture & Humanities  Environment/Animal Welfare  Education  
 Health  Human Services  Religion

## Organization Information:

**Geographic Area Served:** West Chester Area School District

**Describe Population Served and Annual Number of People Served:** The West Chester Food Cupboard is a nonprofit organization providing food assistance to West Chester area residents in need. We serve children, adults and the elderly who suffer from food insecurity and whose income falls at or below 150% of the federal poverty level. In 2017 we served 1,095 households, representing 2,498 low-income individuals including 1,328 adults, 262 elderly and 908 children. Total client visits were 6,556. We assist low income families and individuals regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity or affiliation.

**Mission:** We believe that there is nothing more basic than food security and it is our mission to empower the community to work together to assure that all West Chester residents receive the food they need in order to live a healthy, active life. To that end, the West Chester Food Cupboard commits to provide a variety of fresh and non-perishable food items to West Chester residents in need, "...because no one should go hungry!"

**Proposal Summary:** We respectfully request funding to support the WCFC in furthering its mission to alleviate hunger in West Chester by increasing the quantity of food we are able to provide, expanding the nutritious options we offer, and serving a greater number of low income, food insecure residents. We are very grateful for the support of the community whose generosity embodies a core value of the WCFC of working together to help our neighbors in need.

**Annual Budget:** \$575,000 \_\_\_\_\_ # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff  
\_\_\_\_\_ 100% of budget for program expenses \_\_\_\_\_ 8 # of Board Volunteers  
\_\_\_\_\_ 0% of budget for administrative expenses \_\_\_\_\_ 140+ # of Active Non-Board Volunteers  
\_\_\_\_\_ 0% of budget for fundraising expenses \_\_\_\_\_ 17,344 # of Volunteer Hours

**Top 3-5 funding sources:** David R. Clare and Margaret C. Clare Foundation - \$25,000; The Meyers Family - \$24,729; Benjamin R. Bibler Memorial Fund - \$20,000

**Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation:** \$7,500

We are appreciative of gifts in any amount that help us feed the food insecure in West Chester

# WEST CHESTER FOOD CUPBOARD GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

## 1. Organization's history, goals, key achievements and distinctiveness

### History

The West Chester Food Cupboard was founded in 2009 when Chester County Cares, which for many years ran a food cupboard in West Chester, ceased to exist. With the initial support of the County, a small group of volunteers, who strongly believed that a food cupboard was still critically important to West Chester families, took over the running of the Cupboard. In 2012 WCFC incorporated as a non-profit 501(c)(3).

The West Chester Food Cupboard is the largest hunger relief agency serving low income residents in Chester County. Since its inception the WCFC continues to serve more clients each year, reaching 2,498 individuals in 2017. We serve economically disadvantaged residents struggling with a wide variety of challenging circumstances: single parents and their children, individuals with ill health, the elderly on fixed incomes, people existing on inadequate benefits, the unemployed and the working poor. All are economically disadvantaged, falling at or below 150% of the poverty level.

We are proud to be an all-volunteer organization, staffed entirely by caring and dedicated community members who are committed to treating our clients with friendliness, dignity and respect. These dedicated volunteers perform a variety of tasks including: qualifying new clients, assisting clients with shopping, sorting donations, stocking shelves, picking up donations at local stores and various administrative duties. Last year we had 140+ volunteers who logged a total of 17, 344 hours. We operate under the direction of an eight member Board of Directors and twelve Lead Volunteers. The Lead Volunteers are uniquely experienced in both the work of the WCFC and the clientele we serve, and are the governing body making decisions regarding day to day operations.

### Goals

The primary objective of the WCFC is to provide supplemental food assistance for low income residents who suffer from food insecurity. Central to this is our goal of offering a variety of the high quality fresh foods that are essential for the good health of our clients.

### Key achievements and distinctiveness

- Over the past five years we **have doubled the number of households served**, currently providing supplemental food to 546 households per month
- Throughout the past year we **increased food choices and quantities** available to our clients. We enhanced our protein choices by adding frozen fish, chicken and pork, and doubling the amount of eggs and dairy products that our clients receive.
- We **distributed 948,000 pounds of food to 546 households per month** in 2017
- In 2014 we established the only **Summer Food for Children Program** in the West Chester Area School District to assist client families during the summer months when critical school meals are not served. In 2017 we completed our fourth successful summer of this program, distributing approximately 32 pounds of food per month for each school age child during June, July and August. In total, we distributed approximately 22, 400 pounds of food to 700 families through this program in 2017.
- The West Chester Food Cupboard has always been **100% volunteer run with no paid staff**. This is clearly a defining characteristic of the Cupboard, an organization filled with committed people who care about their neighbors.
- We are a **client choice cupboard**. Once a month our clients select the groceries they need and want based on personal preferences. Providing choices, rather than a predetermined box of groceries, fosters a sense of independence and allows our clients to control any dietary preferences or restrictions. Quantities distributed are commensurate with the size of a client's household.

## 2. Funding Request

### Description of key initiatives

The West Chester Food Cupboard's Strategic Plan for 2018 identifies the following key initiatives:

**Increase the quality and quantity of food provided for our clients by 5% - 10% per year.** Healthier fresh foods are often cost prohibitive for our clients whose diets typically consist of affordable but highly processed foods. We routinely stock nonperishable items and have, in the past, been able to offer a limited quantity and variety of fresh foods. Currently, we are making a conscious effort to bring as much fresh food as we can into the Cupboard to facilitate our clients' selection of the nutrient dense foods conducive to good health.

We have made great strides in both aspects of this initiative; improving the quality and increasing the quantity.

Thanks to donations from community gardeners, we are fortunate to be able to provide a variety of fresh produce to our clients during the summer months. To ensure that they continue to benefit year-round from the nutrition that these fruits and vegetables supply, we have been purchasing staple fruits and vegetables. Additionally, we have recently increased our offerings of eggs and basic dairy products, and in May 2016 we began purchasing frozen fish. The availability of fish for our clients has proved so popular that it is now part of our standard food purchase budget. In September 2017 we began purchasing family packs of chicken and these have also been well received. During the coming year we would like to add fresh citrus, bananas, yogurt and boneless pork.

All of these foods supply vital nutrients often missing from the diets of our food insecure clients. They are the foundation of a healthy diet and an essential component of our clients' monthly shopping cart. All of our protein choices, dairy products and much of our produce needs to be purchased with the funds we receive through donations and/or grants.

**Increase the number of clients served by 5% - 10% per year** by creating more awareness of the WCFC in the community. We have been addressing this item through collaboration with local social agencies and the West Chester School District, and through use of advertising, news articles and social media.

### Specific needs and issues to be addressed

Quintessential West Chester, a small town in the wealthiest county in Pennsylvania, likely evokes the impression of having an affluent population. The reality is that there is a very wide socio-economic gap and many residents struggle with poverty, finding it difficult to provide basic human necessities for themselves and their families. In fact, statistics show that over 25% of West Chester Borough residents live below the federal poverty level, making it particularly challenging for them to live here. Hunger is a real concern for the economically disadvantaged and many find it hard to put food on the table. Families are faced with making tough choices between paying for a meal or other basic necessities such as rent, utilities, health bills and medications, with food often falling low on the list. For our clients who are eligible, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program funding helps to meet some of their household food needs, but they too have to decide which expenses they prioritize. These are not choices anyone should have to make.

For those suffering from hunger and food insecurity there are the associated health risks of malnutrition and chronic disease such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease and cancer. For children, insufficient quantities and a lack of nutritious foods takes a devastating toll on their physical, psychological, emotional and cognitive functioning, jeopardizing their futures in profound ways. We are striving to alleviate the effects of hunger and a poor diet by providing adequate quantities of food, and by focusing on purchasing as much fresh food as possible, allowing our clients to make healthy choices.

### Organizational impact if initiative undertaken

Funding will enable us to address the hunger and food insecurity arising from poverty in West Chester,

allow us to maintain our commitment to supply the nutrient rich foods essential for the good health of our clientele, and aid us in our capacity to sustain and grow our services. A general operating grant will support us in pursuing key initiatives, with almost every dollar donated going directly towards providing food (except for rent and utilities).

#### **Activities to implement the initiative**

The above stated initiatives are established and ongoing. The extent of their success is dependent on donations received including solicitations from individuals, nonprofit organizations, grants and businesses.

#### **Why it is important to fund this now**

The needs of the WCFC clients are real and current, as they continue to miss meals, go to school hungry, and suffer the issues of poor health that are a consequence of hunger. The current economic climate has disproportionately impacted the economically disadvantaged and has resulted in an increasing number of food insecure individuals and families seeking assistance; bringing people who never imagined themselves in need of food support to the Cupboard.

As the Cupboard provides supplemental food to increasing numbers of our neighbors, the Cupboard itself faces a need for additional resources. We rely 100% on donations from the community. There are no middlemen at the Cupboard, no national or regional organization and, because we are operated entirely by volunteers, we have no paid staff. With no salaries to pay, the vast majority of our funding goes directly towards purchasing food for our clients. We are very prudent about how we spend the money we receive because we know that it has been entrusted to us by funders who are counting on us to make good use of their donations. The West Chester Food Cupboard makes a real difference in people's lives. Our organizations value in the community is reflected in the words of our clients:

"Sometimes I don't know how we'd make it. I have three girls. I don't even know how to be able to put food on the table, but we get to come here and it's a huge assist. The help that this place provides, it can't be quantified, it just can't."

"I was a skilled worker for 35 years, but health problems forced me to retire early. Now I can only get part time work for minimum wage. It's really hard."

"I have three kids, and one is disabled. My teacher's aide salary just doesn't go far enough, and I don't receive food stamps."

"I worked all my life, supported a family, ran a household, but everyone's gone and I'm on my own and I just can't manage."

#### **How impact and results will be demonstrated**

Success will be evident in the greater quantities of food provided to our clients, the improved quality of nutrient rich foods we offer, and in the number of new clients served each month. Due to the reporting capability of the databases and record keeping that we maintain, our goals are objective, trackable items. At the end of our fiscal year we will be able to measure the quality and quantity of food provided and the number of individuals served. Additionally, qualitative data will be gathered through client surveys to ascertain that their needs are being met and their expectations surpassed.

We are enormously grateful to the community, whose generous support allows us to keep our doors open and our clients served.