

I. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

One page only. This page will be shared electronically with Grant Committee Members & Fund Advisors.
Summary Sheet MUST accompany application.

Contact Information

Date 11/19/2018

Organization Name: Volunteer English Program in Chester County
Address: 790 E. Market Street, Suite 215
West Chester, PA 19382
Phone: 610-918-8222 ext. 5
Website: www.volunteerenglish.org
Year Incorporated: 1986

Executive Director: Terri Potrako
E-mail: terri.potrako@volunteerenglish.org
Board of Directors Chair: Valerie Rozek
Primary Contact Name: Terri Potrako
Primary Contact E-mail: same as above

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 (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served):

Volunteer English Program (VEP) serves adults who live and /or work in every community of Chester County. The highest concentration of active students live in West Chester (24%), Coatesville (15%), and Phoenixville (16%). VEP provides outreach services to meet demand in the western and northern regions by mobilizing core services.

Describe Population Served and Annual Number of People Served:

In 2017-18 VEP provided free, one-to-one tutoring for 325 adult immigrants and refugees, ages 18 to 80+ years, needing a non-classroom, community-based approach to learning English and U.S. cultural understanding. Adult learners were 75% female and 25% male. They represented 50 countries and 37 different languages. Civic-minded volunteers receive training in evidence-based techniques to serve as tutor-mentors, helping adult English language learners achieve personal goals that include sustainable and meaningful employment, financial stability, educational degrees or certifications, accessing healthcare services, and for some, becoming naturalized citizens.

Mission: The Volunteer English Program connects volunteers with English language learners to provide one-to-one tutoring and cultural enrichment that empowers immigrants to be successful.

Proposal Summary:

VEP respectfully requests \$4000 to help us grow the Meredith's Loving Connections Fund, a scholarship fund to support adult immigrants and refugees in their search for meaningful employment, citizenship, continuing education, or professional credentialing as a result of their commitment to learning the language and culture of English. This fund was established in 2017 to memorialize Meredith Huffman, a dedicated philanthropist and longtime champion of VEP's mission. As the fund's capacity grows, a portion will be distributed annually for one or more qualified VEP adult learners to defray expenses associated with achieving their personal goals.

Annual Budget \$ 300,000

71 % of budget for program expenses
5 % of budget for administrative expenses
24 % of budget for fundraising expenses
100 % total

3.4 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
14 # of Board Volunteers
305 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers
15,175 # of Volunteer Hours

Top 3-5 funding sources:

Phoenixville Community Health Foundation - \$20,000 Committed; \$5,000 - 1:2 match
United Way of Chester County - \$18,000 Committed
Springbank Foundation - \$10,000 Committed
Chester County Fund for Women and Girls - \$10,000 Committed

Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: \$ 4,000

II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Provide clear, concise information. 3 pages maximum.

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

History: VEP evolved from a small, grassroots effort by a church group in West Chester to administer a literacy program for the homeless, and recognizing the need for new immigrants to learn English. Their passion for helping others through education led to establishing VEP as an independent, secular 501.c.3 organization in 1986. Through the successive leadership of just four female directors over the course of three decades, VEP has become the only nonprofit organization in Chester County exclusively dedicated to the mission of connecting community-invested volunteers with adult English Language Learners.

Goals:

- Enrich the experiences of English language learners by improving the cultural competence and responsiveness of all those involved with VEP to promote student confidence.
- Optimize tutor engagement and experiences by providing ongoing adult-centered English language learning training for tutors to improve their retention rate and increase the number of tutors.
- Position VEP as a leading advocate for immigrant literacy and cultural engagement in the region.
- Increase VEP's visibility in the community by establishing effective and consistent public relations.
- Strengthen VEP's infrastructure and financial sustainability by increasing and diversifying funding sources.

Key Achievements for 2017-18:

- In FY2018 VEP provided free, one-to-one tutoring in English and U.S. culture for 325 adult immigrants/refugees (75% women) paired with 269 volunteer tutors for 12,093 hours of instruction.
- Through 817.5 hours of pro bono support provided by 2 independent IT consultants, VEP developed a series of data reports to coordinate with key performance indicators (KPIs), moving us closer to the target of achieving outcomes-based evaluation required of all non-profit organizations.
- In July 2017 VEP was honored to receive the first Meredith's Loving Connections Award from Capacity for Change, in memory of Meredith Huffman, a champion of nonprofit organizations dedicated to creating sustainable changes that impacts those most vulnerable and helps them build a better future.
- VEP was recognized by the Chester County Board of Commissioners, receiving the first-ever appropriations award in April 2018 in recognition of our service in Chester County.
- The Philadelphia Inquirer (11/20/17) highlighted a VEP student while examining the plight of today's immigrants facing the language barrier. (<http://www.philly.com/philly/news/immigrants-english-spanish-language-american-tutor-volunteer-chop-chester-20171120.html?arc404=true>)

Distinctiveness: VEP's approach to adult English language instruction is unique in several ways:

1. The flexible, individualized approach eliminates barriers posed by cost, time, or location.
2. VEP's Outreach Program mobilizes staff to conduct core services, including new student intake interviews, assessments, tutor matches, tutor training, and ongoing support within the Phoenixville and Coatesville communities.
3. Instruction is tailored to meet each student's current level of English proficiency and to help them identify and work toward personal goals such as personal safety and empowerment, education, healthcare access, employment, financial stability, and eventual citizenship.
4. Instruction takes place year-round, at safe, public locations, close to where learners live and/or work and at times that take into account commitments to home and work, making the program accessible and achievable for all who need it. Students must commit to a minimum of one year in the program, but may continue for several years in which case they will be assigned successive tutors. VEP recognizes that, depending on a learner's prior educational experiences and exposure to English, it may take years to become proficient.
5. Proficiency-leveled instructional workbooks and online subscriptions are provided cost-free for students and their tutors.
6. VEP engages civic-minded volunteers, representing all walks of life, who learn evidence-based strategies for instructing adult, English language learners with an emphasis on understanding and respecting cultural differences.

7. The availability of a customized Tutor Portal online reporting system facilitates real-time communication between tutors and VEP staff, providing a platform for immediate feedback and evaluation and resulting in improved support to hundreds of working pairs throughout the county.

8. VEP's comprehensive scope of service assessment includes a custom-designed oral comprehension component to determine functional conversational skills for adult English language learners.

2. Funding request

- **Description of key initiatives**

VEP is entering its 33rd year of service to the immigrant community in Chester County and remains committed to sustaining our legacy of advocacy. The establishment of the Meredith's Loving Connections Fund is one initiative for providing support for adult English language learners well into the future. The fund was established through a \$1,000 seed grant from Capacity for Change, Inc. to honor Meredith Huffman, philanthropist and passionate VEP supporter. During her lifetime, she inspired VEP to create sustainable changes that would impact those most vulnerable and help them build a better future.

The scholarship fund will support adults who demonstrate a strong commitment to learning English and U.S. culture in order to achieve their personal goals. As the fund's capacity grows, a portion will be made available for distribution to one or more qualifying VEP adult learners each year to defray expenses associated with career advancement, professional development, education, or citizenship.

Applicants will qualify based on completion of a minimum of 144 hours of instruction with a VEP tutor, completion of the scholarship application, and a written recommendation from their tutor. Award decisions will be based on a review process conducted by the executive director and the scholarship fund team.

We anticipate that the fund needs to grow to a minimum of \$5,000 before the first award (a 1% allocation) can be awarded. Additional fundraising efforts for the Fund will include an appeal at the Annual Global Gathering attended by students and tutors, the Annual Tutor Summit, the Annual Gala, the Annual Appeal, and informal social events.

- **Specific needs and issues to be addressed**

Immigrants who come to Chester County with great optimism face language and cultural barriers that deeply limit their ability to participate socially and economically in their new country. While many arrive with prior educational experience and skills from their native countries, they find themselves un- or underemployed, and without essential English communication skills, struggling to make ends meet. They seek the services of VEP because they find the flexible schedule, non-classroom approach with a one-to-one tutor/mentor enables them attain the essential English skills and cultural understanding they need to achieve their personal goals.

A grant from the CCCF will help VEP meet the needs of students unable to afford the full costs of attaining credentials or licenses for employment, assessments related to degree completion such as GED or higher education, or citizenship applications.

The issues to be addressed are illustrated by the following statistics of VEP adult learners:

- 55% of adults served report incomes at or below Federal poverty guidelines.
- 56% are employed either full or part-time
- 52% hold college degrees or technical certificates
- 75% hold high school/secondary school degrees

Few are able to resume careers comparable to those they left in their own countries due to the language barriers. As a result, those who worked as teachers and nurses are cleaning houses, former bank managers and technicians take jobs in restaurant kitchens. Many work long hours and at multiple jobs in order to make ends meet. They are focused on getting the skills they need to reenter the fields they left or to find jobs so they can earn sustainable salaries to provide for themselves and their families. VEP

provides them with services and instructional books at no cost. Meredith's Loving Connections Fund is one more way of helping students in need to reach their goals.

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

At a time when immigration policy is threatening our local immigrant friends and neighbors, VEP continues to be a welcoming, safe organization for those striving to learn English in order to achieve financial and personal independence that will benefit themselves and their families. The high demand for our services is unprecedented. The wait list is over 150, even as we receive more requests for help every day. Most of our adult learners are actively working to advance their career or life goals such as finding better jobs, gaining additional credentialing, or becoming naturalized citizens.

Meredith Huffman's vision and support of VEP was invaluable and still has an impact on the organization today. Her own philanthropic efforts focused on promoting social justice and expanding women's resources. She inspired ideas for how to make VEP a lasting organization and not only focus on what we can do for our students today and tomorrow, but a generation from now. She inspired VEP, a leading organization for immigrant advocacy in Chester County and the region, to "think beyond ourselves and envision ways in which we could ensure that VEP would be available for new English speakers in the year 2043 – 25 years from today!"

With your help, we can quickly reach our goal for Meredith's Loving Connections Fund and further support hard-working, talented individuals who exhibit great potential to enhance the economic and social quality of life for all who live and work in the region.

3. How impact and results will be demonstrated

The initial impact of this CCCF Donor Advised grant will be demonstrated through increased interest and support from other donors to help VEP build the Fund and further our advocacy for the immigrant community. When the Fund has reached the capacity to begin the annual scholarship award, it will have a direct impact on the adult learners who receive financial support towards their intended goals and achieve financial stability, increased confidence and personal independence. Depending on their family composition, it could impact the lives of their families as parents improve their English proficiency and engage in their children's education. Tutors and VEP supporters will be impacted by the success of their efforts as the altruistic vision of Meredith Huffman is realized.

Results will be demonstrated by the numbers of adult students motivated to apply for the award, as well as documentation of their progress as measured by standardized English proficiency tests and functional goal attainment data. VEP will track student outcomes with regard to employment, educational goals, and citizenship.

III. ATTACHMENTS

E-mail or mail this support information

1. Copy of 501 (c) (3) federal tax-exempt letter
2. List of Board of Directors, with their affiliations
3. Most recent annual report and financial statement, audited
4. Itemized organizational operating budget with actual results for prior fiscal year and current fiscal year to date
5. Current strategic plan.

If Philanthropy Network of Greater Philadelphia's Common Grant Application is used, the Community Foundation's Summary Sheet MUST accompany application. Available at www.chescocf.org

E-mail completed proposals to grants@chescocf.org

Please contact Kevin Baffa or Beth Harper Briglia at (610) 696-8211 or grants@chescocf.org if you have any questions. Thank you.