

I. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

One page only. This page will be shared electronically with Grant Committee Members & Fund Advisors.

Note: If Philanthropy Network of Greater Philadelphia's Common Grant Application is used, the Community Foundation's Summary Sheet **MUST** accompany application.

To obtain an electronic version of this application, visit www.chescocf.org

Date

Contact Information

Organization Name: Chester County Historical Society

Executive Director/CEO Name:
Elizabeth Laurent

Address: 225 North High Street, West Chester PA 19380

Executive Director/CEO E-mail:

Phone: 610-692-4800

Board of Directors Chair Name:

Website: chestercohistorical.org

James Sargent, Esq.

Year Incorporated: Founded in 1893

Primary Contact Name: Allison Snavelly

Primary Contact E-mail:

Development@chestercohistorical.org

FEIN: 23-1371942

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): All of Chester County is served.

Describe Population Served and Annual Number of People Served: CCHS serves **36,000** annual visitors. We reach over **9,000** students with 18% eligible for free or reduced lunches. Our population is 55% female and 45% Male. The ethnicity breakdown is 80% Caucasian, 10% African American, 5% Hispanic/Latino and 5% Asian.

Mission: The Chester County Historical Society (CCHS) inspires, informs, and builds community identity by preserving and sharing the remarkable story of Chester County and its people.

Proposal Summary: General operating funds further CCHS's mission by supporting; innovative educational programs for all ages including our regional National History Day contest; exhibitions that link collections with contemporary life; staff resources and expertise for our museum, library, and archive visitors; and stewardship of an unparalleled local history collection of artifacts, manuscripts, and photographs of 300 years of Chester County heritage. CCHS preserves to educate. Funding helps CCHS continue and expand to reach a wide range of community groups, positively impacting social fellowship. These included a variety of religious and secular organizations, diverse populations, and families who gather to learn more about their heritage. Our visitors have moments of recognition when they see themselves in the larger picture of other people who live here. CCHS is committed to being and an active

II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Provide clear, concise information. 3 pages maximum.

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

History

- CCHS has been the county's resident story teller since its **founding in 1893**. CCHS is responsible for **300 years** of history through rare documents, photographs, and newspapers in our research library, seven galleries filled with engaging exhibitions, and special school and public programs year round. In **1942, CCHS moved into historic Horticultural Hall**. This building was the last West Chester commission of renowned architect **Thomas U. Walter** before he became the Architect of the Capitol where he oversaw the construction of that building's dome. Horticultural Hall was modernized in **1979** to improve collections management and increase exhibition space. In the early **1980s, CCHS initiated a joint project with Chester County government to administer the Chester County Archives**, adding 300 years of public records to its care, one of the finest and most complete collections of historic county records in the nation. The **Historic Vision capital campaign launched in 1992 enabled the renovation of the adjacent YMCA building**. The resulting **56,000 square-foot** History Center has been a vital complex for exhibition, collection storage, and research. CCHS's assets were a pivotal component of the National Register of Historic Places naming West Chester as one **"America's Dozen Distinctive Destinations" in 2006**. The new facility also allowed for an increased emphasis on educational programming, making CCHS one of Pennsylvania's premier history museums and educational centers with an expanded library and research area, a 250-seat auditorium, and seven exhibition galleries.
- **Goals, Key Achievements**
- **Education-** We reach over **9,000** students through onsite museum programs and offsite outreach programs. Students also learn from our thematic "travelling trunks" filled with lesson plans and three-dimensional artifacts that can be used either on or off-site. We connect with 300 Chester and Delaware County 6th-12th grade students through our regional National History Day contest. Over **18 % of children** we serve are eligible for free or reduced price lunches.
- **Adult Programing-** We engage adults with our museum exhibits and lively events, including a speaker's bureau, lectures, and exhibit-related entertainment. Our staff delivers adult programming to clubs, senior centers, community organizations, etc. Groups reserve special-subject tours of our museum, linked either to our permanent exhibits or our slate of changing exhibits. We educate college students through specialized programming and internships, many with nearby West Chester University.
- **Library and Archives-** CCHS cares for a remarkable repository where local and regional citizens explore topics of genealogy, history, architecture, biography, industry and cultural development using reference materials of over **100,000 photographs** dating from 1841, **500,000 documents** (maps, letters, diaries, newspaper clippings, business and church records dating from the 1700s) and **20,000 reference books**.
- **Preservation-** Our mission is to care for and conserve our amazing buildings and collections, so future generations can learn from the past. Our museum artifact collection has over **80,000 objects** from the 17th - 21st centuries (furniture, silver, paintings, prints, ceramics, textiles, needlework and more) made or used in Chester County.

- **Community Anchor**-CCHS is committed to being a community center and cultural hub for downtown West Chester. We specialize in helping people connect the issues and concerns of their own lives to those of people who lived long ago. Our auditorium space enables our educational mission while also participating in the active life of the borough.

Distinctiveness

- CCHS has the unique position and responsibility as the official history museum, repository and education center for Chester County. This includes nationally known collection of unique artifacts, manuscripts, and photographs that tell the story of Chester County and its people.

2. Funding request

CCHS respectfully requests \$5,000 of General Operating Support to help fund ongoing expenses.

- **Description of key initiatives**

Overview of Organizational Signature Programs and Key Initiatives

1. National History Day

Brief Description:

National History Day (NHD) is a year round academic program for 6th through 12th grade students across the nation. The Chester County Historical Society is the coordinator for National History Day in Chester and Delaware Counties, PA. Each year, over 2,000 local students participate in their schools, 300 advance to compete at the regional level (our contest), and many continue on to the state and national competition. NHD helps develop skills lasting a life time by building self-confidence, increasing test scores and enhancing analytical thinking and problem solving. Students learn from doing their projects, but also from sharing their knowledge with judges and peers. Students learn that they are the next great history makers.

2. School Programs

Brief Description:

Our History Connections program include museum visits, outreach programs and traveling trunks including lesson plans for use by the teacher. Through the lens of local history, CCHS tells the story of America's past. We teach through the power of historic objects - the primary documents, letters, diaries, tools, toys, photos, and furnishings of the past to enhance history education for students of all ages. Students learn about the American Revolution for instance, asking questions like, "What was it like for soldiers as well as residents when the war was fought in our back yards?" Our skillful staff urges students to think bigger by encouraging role playing and decision-making activities to understand the complexities of history. Whether exploring our museum or welcoming CCHS staff into the classroom, our programs help fulfill Pennsylvania curriculum standards and provide an enjoyable stimulating learning experiences.

3. Adult Education

Brief Description:

CCHS provides adult learning through exhibits, museum visits, library research, genealogy, book club, volunteer training, public programming and speaker's bureau. Our diverse programming allows community to connect and fosters intellectual growth. We believe that neighborhood outreach is vital to our mission to build community identity. For example, CCHS hosts a new history book club meeting bi-monthly.

We are committed to providing high quality programming fostering thought, discussion and connection.

4. Core and Changing Exhibits

Brief Description:

CCHS is about to begin a major phase one renovation of our **core exhibit space, having raised 74% of our \$3,700,000 goal**. Years of extensive research, focus groups, and design CCHS will result in "Chester

County - A Place in Time.” Interactive story telling highlights seven great stories of Chester county including: Pre-Nationhood, American Revolution, Nationhood, Social Change, Innovation and People in Action.

Changing exhibits reflect our past while making ties to our current lives and future. Our changing exhibit space includes examples like the 2018/2019 exhibit “**Many Nations Chester County,**” an exhibit celebrating 300 years of diversity, a huge community success not only pulling objects from our collection but also many items lent from Chester County residents. Opening May 23, 2019 is, “The Art of Industry,” in collaboration with The National Iron and Steel Heritage Museum in Coatesville. The gallery features black and white photographs of Lukens Steel workers and their oral histories. The exhibit also includes sculptures from the CCHS collection made of wooden industrial patterns.

i. Specific needs and issues to be addressed

CCHS at its core is a customer-service educational organization. We serve the local, regional and national audience through gifted staff and trained volunteers. We preserve to teach. Our ability to serve is contingent upon the resources needed to maintain a safe building, develop quality programming, and highly trained staff.

ii. Why it is important to fund this now

CCHS is a valued cultural resource. Object-based learning brings people face-to-face with objects as a way of bringing them in touch with people across time, across space, whose lives may have been different but who, like us, had hopes and dreams, frustrations and achievements in their lives. Museums ensure understanding and appreciation for various groups and cultures. We promote better understanding of our collective heritage and foster dialogue, curiosity and self-reflection. Our collections are the keys to understanding not only our past but our future as well. CCHS speaks our collective humanity.

How impact and results will be demonstrated

An example of how our impact is demonstrated is through our customer’s experiences. For instance, CCHS borrowed Polish travel documents for our Many Nations Exhibit. We received the following comment proving the immediacy of the topic to visitors: “I think this is a brilliant exhibit. It was very exciting to see Polish travel documents. -Lukas Seymanski is only 7 years older than me. I am immigrant from Poland and my kids are first generation Polish Americans. Thank you for this experience.” Another example is the accolade about our book club posted on Trip Advisor January 16, 2019, “Frederick Douglass and much more! The book discussion group at the Chester County Historical Society was a well-attended and conducted affair. I had not been to the Society in decades and found both exhibitions and premises greatly improved. The book discussed, FREDERICK DOULGASS, PROPHET OF FREEDOM was well led by Dr. James Trotman who clearly knew his subject and was generous in allowing his well-prepared group their chance to air opinions, feelings and questions. A special bonus was allowing said group to see the several intriguing Douglass mementos in the library. This was a great shared learning experience and much enriched my understanding of Frederick Douglass.”

