Contact Information
Organization Name: Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities
Executive Director/CEO Name: Barbara Wilhelmy
Address: 57 N. Franklin Street
Phone: 610.970.5995
Website: www.pottstowncluster.org
Year Incorporated: 1971
FEIN: 23-1977722
Has your nonprofit ever applied to the Community Foundation? Yes _X_ No__ Not Sure__
Has your nonprofit ever received funding from the Community Foundation? Yes _X_ No__ Not Sure__
Fund for Chester County _X_ Donor Advised Fund(s) ___Dont’t know/Not sure
Field/s of Interest:
___ Arts, Culture & Humanities ___ Environment/Animal Welfare ___ Education
___ Health _X_ Human Services ___ Religion
Organization Information:
Geographic Area Served (if not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served):
Northern Chester County and surrounding areas of Pottstown, PA
Describe Population Served and Annual Number of People Served:
Primarily serve low-income individuals and households of all ages. Population is racially diverse, representing our area of service. We serve approximately 3,500 unduplicated individuals annually.
Mission:
Through interfaith cooperation, the PCRC provides tangible services, support and spiritual guidance to address the basic needs of persons within and beyond the Greater Pottstown area. We coordinate our programs and referrals to help clients improve their overall stability.

Proposal Summary:
We are seeking general operating funds to support our overall operations.

If Capacity Building Proposal, the focus is:
___Mission, Vision & Strategy ___Governance & Leadership ___Strategic Relationships
___Fundraising & Development ___ Technology Other: ____________________________

Annual Budget $3,094,509 16 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
88 % of budget for program expenses 13 # of Board Volunteers
5 % of budget for administrative expenses 200 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers
7 % of budget for fundraising expenses 14,399 # of Volunteer Hours

Top 3-5 funding sources:
Federal Office of Housing and Community Development
Montgomery County Office of Housing and Community Development
Private donations from Individuals, Worship Centers and Businesses
Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation
Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburg – Home4Good

Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: $5,000
1. Nonprofit’s history, goals, key achievements and distinctiveness

History and Goals:

The Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities (PCRC) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization located in Pottstown, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. The Pottstown Ministerial Association formed a Council (later to be known as the Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities) in 1967 with the purpose of providing services to the community that were either missing or being handled by individuals and congregations, who were acting independently of each other. PCRC became a non-profit corporation in 1971 and organized over 150 volunteers to provide food, clothing and furniture distribution, and a hot meals program.

Since that time, PCRC has continued to address the basic needs of persons in and around the Pottstown community. The Cluster Outreach Center, located at 57 N. Franklin Street Pottstown, is our main facility for direct services.

PCRC provides programs primarily for Pottstown residents, with several also serving individuals throughout Montgomery County. All programs address overall stability and these service areas:

- **Food Security** – assuring access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Specific programs include:

- **Food Pantry** – provide food, infant formula, personal care items and household products to households that meet the Federal poverty guidelines. Through our work as a Redistribution Organization (RDO), we also support several other local pantries with food resources for distribution across Montgomery County.

- **Community Meals Program** – provide five complete lunches and dinners weekly.

- **Housing Stability** – through our work as a Housing Resource Center, as part of Your Way Home Montgomery County, PCRC provides case management and support in finding safe, affordable housing for individuals and families facing homelessness or possible eviction. Services include housing location, housing stabilization and eviction prevention. Services are provided to clients across Montgomery County who meet eligibility requirements for the program.

- **Supportive Services and Education** – provide referrals, education and support to help individuals and families improve overall stability. Specific programs include:
  - **Understanding Poverty to Plan and Persevere “UP3”** – a workshop for individuals who receive public assistance and who wish to investigate poverty and establish a plan for future stability.
  - **Chaplaincy** – Chaplains provide spiritual relief to anyone requesting such support.
  - **Bridges Out of Poverty** – an educational program for the community. Offers a comprehensive approach to understanding the dynamics that cause and maintain poverty from the individual to the systemic level.
  - **Case management/Coaching Services** – as a complement to our educational programs, participants interested in improving their overall stability are provided individual and group support in creating individual stability plans and in addressing and achieving goals.
Key Achievements:

- We provide food resources to approximately 465 households in our pantry and another 500 households in our region as part of our food redistribution work. This allows households easier access to much needed food resources in their own community.
- In 2018, we served 3,513 unduplicated persons in all of our programs. 36% are children age 18 and under; 59% are adults age 19-64; and 5% are adults age 65 and older.
- 90% of pantry households report that without our pantry, their resources for food from all sources would not last the entire month.
- In our housing programs, 81% of households participating in our rapid rehousing program exited our program with permanent housing and in our eviction prevention program, 76% those households facing eviction were able to resolve their eviction, therefore maintaining housing.
- Our UP3 program is in its seventh year, with 94 graduates to date. 50% of recent graduates remain actively engaged in coaching opportunities, continuing to advance their own stability goals.
- PCRC engages over 200 volunteers annually whom provided 14,399 hours of service to our total work in 2018.

Distinctiveness:

- In 2013, PCRC initiated our educational program, UP3. We were the first in Montgomery County to provide such a program and several of our partner agencies have since replicated that program.
- In 2014, PCRC joined Your Way Home Montgomery County in providing a county-wide system to reduce the occurrence of homelessness in the County. We remain a strong partner and have diversified our funding and program services to address the comprehensive challenges of this work.
- Since 2016, PCRC has been the only organization in Montgomery County to serve as a redistribution organization (RDO), allowing PCRC to not only serve the food security needs of households in our area, but to support other organizations across the county with food resources to address food security on a broader basis. As part of this process, PCRC was also the first organization in the County to implement an on-line food ordering and inventory system. Several other food security providers have since begun to use that same system.
- In 2019, PCRC began participating in three pilot collaborative programs to explore innovative opportunities to improve access and the overall experience of utilizing safety net services. Two pilots focus on improving food security. The first is a collaboration with two other organizations, combining financial literacy education; coaching for both financial planning and overall stability goals; and the provision of food resources; to test the idea that such a combination could provide the needed assistance to eliminate future need for the use of food security programs. The second is working with four collaborative partners to reach specific isolated food-insecure populations, using our on-line food ordering system, to bring pantry services, which had previously been unable to access, to them. The third program is a collaboration with a leadership program as part of our local Chamber of Commerce, to build community leaders from individuals with lived experience with the safety net system. We are testing a theory that those individuals can have a positive and powerful effect on improvements to the overall delivery system of safety net services.

2. Funding request

PCRC is requesting general operating support to assist our food security and supportive services programs. Such support will allow PCRC to continue to provide the tangible resources to the 3,008
unduplicated individuals we served in those programs in 2018. Funding would also support opportunities to continue building relationships with those individuals to encourage greater stability. Funding would be used to support infrastructure needs of those programs including basic operational costs, staff/volunteer development to support operations, and improvements to programs, based on program evaluations.

Description of key initiatives

Our food security and supportive services programs are described above, in the section on History and Goals.

Specific needs and issues to be addressed

Beyond the data provided above, we provide the following evidence of need: Food insecurity is an economic and social indicator of the health of a community. Poverty and unemployment are frequently indicators of food insecurity in the United States. A survey commissioned by the Food Research and Action Center found that one in four Americans worries about having enough money to put food on the table in the next year. In addition, the degree of hope an individual has over his or her ability to improve household stability has an effect on that individual’s ability to overcome obstacles. PCRC’s food security and supportive services are designed to improve access to resources, improve hope and encourage individual abilities for self-sufficiency.

Why it is important to fund this now

City-data.com provides 2016 data from Pottstown indicating 25.3% of residents living in Pottstown in 2016 had income levels below the poverty level, compared to 16.8% for the entire state. Similarly, 36.9% of children living in Pottstown in 2016 were below the poverty level, compared to 18.1% in the state. Our own data demonstrates that 465 households seek food resources from our pantry on a monthly basis, with 45% representing households with children. We cite this data as evidence of the need for resources and opportunities for hope and support. PCRC has a diverse source of funding, including private donations, public donations, grants, United Way support and in-kind donations. We recognize the importance of continuing to grow all of those funding sources to sustain these services and are continually exploring new partner opportunities.

How impact and results will be demonstrated

For each of our program impact strategies, we collect data, either through our database or through surveys measuring progress towards impact indicators. We track outcome measures for all our programs. Since 2016, we have provided performance measure training to all staff to establish consistent understanding and practice in attention to such measures. Our on-line food ordering system has the ability to create and implement surveys to regularly gather data from participants utilizing our food pantry. Such surveys have solicited feedback from participants on services and value thereof, to demonstrate improved knowledge, health and/or improved perceived sense of stability from participation in our program, to name a few. We adapt programming based on participant and staff feedback. We share such results in our publications and as requested by funders, through specific grant reporting.