

## 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](http://www.chescocf.org)

**Date: September 12, 2019**

### Contact Information

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FEIN: 81-3227808

Has your nonprofit ever applied to the Community Foundation?    Yes \_\_\_ No x  
Not Sure \_\_\_

Has your nonprofit ever received funding from the Community Foundation?    Yes \_\_\_ No x 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    X 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 (within the larger service area of the Delaware Valley).

**Describe Population Served and Annual Number of People Served: 2500**

**The general population to be served is children from low-income families as measured by their eligibility for the federal free and reduced lunch programs. These will include children from urban and rural communities in the Delaware Valley.**

**Mission: To make literacy a possibility for every child, in every community.**

**Proposal Summary:** Literacy Access Fund plans to build a consortium of 10-12 libraries in Chester County and other Delaware Valley communities where children have the greatest literacy needs. In this unified approach to program development and grant seeking, we acknowledge that we would need a strong administrative structure and strategic plan. Our grant request is to hire a consultant with extensive experience in strategic planning.

**If Capacity Building Proposal, the focus is:**

Mission, Vision & Strategy     Governance & Leadership     Strategic Relationships  
Fundraising & Development     Technology    Other: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Annual Budget</b> \$ <u>293,045</u>	<u>1</u>	# of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
<u>74.2</u> % of budget for program expenses	<u>2</u>	# of Board Volunteers
<u>20</u> % of budget for administrative expenses		# of Active Non-Board Volunteers
<u>5.8</u> % of budget for fundraising expenses	<u>25</u>	# of Volunteer Hours
<i>100 % total</i>		

**Top 3-5 funding sources: Pitney Bowes Foundation (\$20,000); Univest Bank (\$15,000) Republic Bank (\$10,000)**

**Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: \$5,000**

**LITERACY ACCESS FUND  
GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE  
TO:  
CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**

**1. HISTORY, GOALS, KEY ACHIEVEMENTS; DISTINCTIVENESS**

AWE Acquisition, Inc., (dba as AWE Learning), a leading provider of digital learning solutions discovered in its work that many public libraries had experienced significant budget cuts, which diminished their attempts to strengthen the education components of their operations. In support of these efforts, AWE Learning created a nonprofit entity – Literacy Access Fund (LAF) – to raise money through foundations, corporations and individual donors to support libraries. AWE Acquisition contributed \$25,000 in September 2016 to initiate LAF. The strategy is to secure funding to award grants to those libraries with the greatest needs, according to an evaluative process established by Literacy Access Fund staff.

Inspired by its work with the Free Public Library in Philadelphia, AWE Learning created the first Early Literacy Station in 2002. Since then, we have provided comprehensive digital learning and literacy solutions for early childhood education to public libraries. AWE Learning has created and refined early literacy solutions and is presently used in 47% of the public libraries nationwide. As a result, our widely recognized literacy workstations are very much in demand by public libraries, as libraries have acknowledged their important role in supplementing the educational efforts of schools in their communities.

In order to ensure LAF fulfills its purpose of awarding grant funding to libraries most in need, we hired a highly experienced staff. Our President/CEO was a classroom teacher in New York City, and earned a master's degree in Elementary Education/ Reading Specialization and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership. She also has extensive experience in sales, marketing and operations in educational publishing. Our grants professional has extensive experience in all facets of grant development and has raised upwards of twenty-five million dollars for school districts, universities, hospitals and a host of nonprofit organizations. Our CFO is a senior level financial professional who has served organizations with up to \$1.5 billion in assets.

Overall, our combined experience in education and grant development as well as the skills of our product development staff will ensure that our grantmaking supports libraries with the most compelling need and greatest potential to benefit.

**2. Funding request for Capacity-Building**

- **Key Initiative**

Located in Chester, Pennsylvania, LAF plans to build a Delaware Valley Library Consortium (DVLC) of 10-12 libraries that have the greatest literacy needs in their communities. This pilot project would include both rural and urban libraries to ensure that we gain an understanding of literacy needs, regardless of local conditions. Our goal is to address literacy through a unified approach to program development and grant-seeking. In the process, we acknowledge that we would need a strong administrative structure and strategic plan, because our long-range goal would be to extend this model to meet literacy challenges throughout the

country. Our grant request is to hire a consultant with extensive experience in strategic planning.

- **Specific Needs to be Addressed by the Consortium**

The target population served by the DVLC will be children ages 2-12 from low-income families in the Delaware Valley. As a community hub for education, and a vital extension of the classroom, the public library helps provide a learning continuum that is critical to the connection between home, school, and the community. Through discussions among board members and staff, a consensus has been reached that a community needs assessment and strategic plan must be undertaken to ensure that Literacy Access Fund, in conjunction with the DVLC, identifies the most vulnerable population of children who exhibit literacy deficits. The needs assessment would be an important step in this process and would be invaluable information for the development of a strategic plan.

The important question we expect to answer is what strategies our Consortium should adopt and what instruments should we develop to measure that impact. While grant funding is not a blanket solution, it can help to support those libraries with the greatest need. We view libraries as pillars of each community and a powerful lure to attract children and families. We believe in the importance of libraries in expanded learning opportunities for children. In our technology-driven world, the public library has become less of a destination and more of a portal for young people to discover cultural and worldly experiences.

A strong incentive for children to use libraries is access to technology. This is especially important in low-income communities, where children have less access to digital learning technology than their more affluent peers. Yet even as libraries continue to evolve as valuable community resources - a 2015 Pew survey found that [almost two-thirds of adult Americans say that closing their local library would have a major impact on their communities](#) - public libraries across the nation are facing budget cuts. Ultimately, we believe that our work will enhance libraries as community hubs for expanded learning and important extensions of the classroom.

- **Demonstrating Impact and Results**

The formation of a project steering committee of Literacy Access Fund and Consortium Library staff will establish these benchmarks of progress:

- Determine the scope and framework of the needs assessment.
- Develop tools for the needs assessment, such as community surveys, focus groups.
- Present the results of the needs assessment to the LAF and library board of directors.
- Hire a consultant to create a framework for a strategic plan in partnership with LAF Director of Grant Development, which will explore the avenues of interaction between libraries and Literacy Access Fund staff.
- Identify a working committee to: (1) Establish a timeframe for the completed of a 3-year strategic plan; and (2) complete a draft of a draft plan for board review.
- Approve the final strategic plan by LAF and Library Board of Directors.

- **Why it is Important to Address this Issue Now**

This project is important now because literacy is an urgent national problem. According to *ProLiteracy*, the largest adult literacy organization in the nation, more than 30 million adults cannot read or write above a third-grade level. In Philadelphia, approximately 75% of third and fourth grade students did not read at grade level in 2017. In the same year, 65% of fourth graders read at or below grade level nationally, according to the *National Children's Book and Literacy Alliance*.

The combined experience of Literacy Access Fund staff in education and grant development will ensure that our grantmaking supports libraries with the most compelling need and builds a strategy to help rectify our literacy problem.

### **Grant Request**

Literacy Access Fund requests a grant of \$5,000 to contribute to hiring a consultant to facilitate the development of a 3-year Strategic Plan for the Delaware Valley Library Consortium. As a result, the consortium - with guidance from the LAF Director of Grant Development - will pursue additional funding through government funding, foundations, corporations and individuals to acquire cutting edge literacy solutions for the children in the consortium communities.