I. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

**Contact Information**

**Organization Name:** Volunteer English Program in Chester County  
**Date:** 9.15.19

**Address:** 790 E. Market Street, Suite 215  
West Chester, PA 19382

**Phone:** 610-918-8222 ext. 5

**Website:** [www.volunteerenglish.org](http://www.volunteerenglish.org)

**Year Incorporated:** 1986

**Executive Director:** Terri Potrako  
**E-mail:** terri.potrako@volunteerenglish.org

**Board of Directors Chair:** Theresa Marran

**Primary Contact Name:** Terri Potrako  
**Primary Contact E-mail:** same as above

**FEIN:** 22-2685077

**Organization Information:**

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

**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.

**Geographic Area 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 (27%), Coatesville (12%), and Phoenixville (16%). VEP also mobilizes core services in the western and northern regions.

**Describe Population Served and Annual Number of People Served:**  
In 2018-19, VEP served 318 adult immigrants and refugees, ages 18 to 80+ years, representing 38 countries and speaking 21 different languages, all needing to learn English and U.S. cultural, which is essential for achieving goals that include sustainable employment, financial stability, navigating health and educational systems, and affordable housing for themselves and their families. Some work towards resuming education and career paths they left behind in their native countries, and others are on the path to U.S. citizenship.

**Annual Budget:** $358,200

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Expenses</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Expenses</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising Expenses</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>12,897</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

100% total

**Top 3-5 funding sources:**
- Phoenixville Community Health Foundation - $45,000 Requested
- United Way of Chester County - $15,000 Committed
- The McLean Contributionship - $15,000 Committed
- Robert and Jennifer McNeil Fund - $12,500 Committed

**Is this grant proposal for:** Capacity Building _X_ or General Operating ____?

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

- Mission, Vision & Strategy  
- Governance & Leadership  
- Strategic Relationships  
- Fundraising & Development  
- Technology  
- Other: Operations & Technology

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

**Proposal Summary:** VEP respectfully requests a Capacity Building Grant of $5,000 to pilot an online, webinar component to our tutor training. Volunteer tutors, VEP’s most valuable asset, are asked to remain with the program for at least 12 months. VEP aims to extend this voluntary commitment time to 18 months. To do so, VEP will design a customized, 5-part professional development workshop and webinar series – facilitated by ESL professionals, and supplemented with additional ESL online tutor training seminars hosted by ProLiteracy (a leader in professional development for literacy organizations). As an education-based organization, VEP depends on the strength of our tutors’ skills. Relying on best practices in the field of online education, as well as our in-house research into tutor and student needs, this innovative program will help tutors increase our students’ rate of language acquisition (as measured by standardized testing). It will take 2-3 years to fully implement the online program, gauge tutor responsiveness to it, and evaluate its overall effectiveness.
II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

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

History: In 1986, while investigating the need for a literacy program for the homeless, members of a local church discovered a growing need for teaching English to immigrants in Chester County. A grassroots effort led by community members resulted in the creation of a free, English as a Second Language (ESL) tutoring program that eventually evolved into the Volunteer English Program in Chester County (VEP), an independent, secular 501.c.3 organization. Through the successive leadership of just four executive directors over the course of three decades, VEP has become the only non-profit organization in Chester County exclusively dedicated to the mission of connecting community volunteers with adult English Language Learners (ELLs).

Goals:
- Optimize tutor engagement and experiences by providing ongoing professional development for tutors with the goal of increasing tutor retention rates and the number of tutors.
- Enrich the experiences of English Language Learners by improving the cultural competence and responsiveness of all those involved with VEP to promote student confidence.
- 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 2018-19:
- In FY2019 VEP provided free, one-to-one tutoring for 318 adult immigrants/refugees (78% women) paired with 269 volunteer tutors, many of whom work with more than one student, for a total of 8,757 self-reported hours of instruction.
- On average, VEP students improved their English proficiency one level (based on standardized assessment) after 144 hours of self-reported instruction.
- Staff piloted a 5-part, peer-to-peer professional development workshop series for tutors. A total of 35 tutors participated in the three workshops offered to date.
- Five Conversation Groups were conducted weekly by seasoned VEP tutors for an additional 250 hours of service at libraries throughout the county. Approximately 60 individuals participated weekly to further develop their listening and speaking skills in English.
- VEP successfully increased financial reserves to provide for 10 months of operations, an increase over the 4 months of reserves that were available at the end of FY2018, highlighting our focus on sustainability.
- VEP was named by the Chester County Human Resource Association as their fundraising beneficiary, recognizing the work being done to create a literate, employment ready immigrant workforce.

Distinctiveness: VEP’s approach to adult English language instruction is unique in several ways:
1. The individualized and community-based model of instruction increases participation and therefore student success, as traditional barriers to classroom-based instruction, such as time, income, and transportation, are reduced. 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.
2. VEP’s program is inclusive, as all English language learners, regardless of their native literacy or residency status, are welcome to apply.
3. VEP’s program is flexible as 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.
4. The VEP “Without Walls” program including the mobilization of staff to conduct core services, including new student intake interviews, assessments, tutor matches, tutor training, and ongoing support to targeted communities.
5. Proficiency leveled instructional materials and online subscriptions are provided cost-free for students and their volunteer tutors.
6. VEP engages civic-minded volunteers, representing a variety of professional careers and levels of advanced education, who participate in a customize, 9-hour tutor training workshop and learn evidence-based strategies for instructing adult, English language learners with an emphasis on understanding and respecting cultural differences.
7. The exchange of information in real time between tutors and staff via a customized Tutor Portal provides a platform for immediate feedback and evaluation, resulting in improved support to hundreds of working pairs throughout the community.
2. **Funding request**  
**Description of key initiatives**  
The purpose of this grant is to build upon the 5-part, peer-to-peer professional development workshop series for tutors that VEP successfully launched last year. The workshop series was created to increase opportunities for tutors to participate in professional development in order to improve their effectiveness (as measured by student success) and increase tutor support and engagement (as measured by tutor retention.) With this funding request, VEP will continue to offer the in-person, 5-part workshop series, and will include offering the workshops online as a webinar, which will even further increase tutor accessibility to participating. These workshops are intended to supplement VEP’s customized, 9-hours tutor training that each volunteer must participate in before they become an active tutor. On average, VEP prepares 100 new tutors annually.

In addition to the workshop series, VEP will collaborate with ProLiteracy and offer VEP tutors access to their membership only, online tutor training seminars, further increasing professional development opportunities.

The online learning opportunities will take 2 to 3 years to fully implement. During this time, VEP will collect the appropriate data to conduct a three-year longitudinal study to evaluate and compare the effectiveness of each format to gauge VEP tutor interest in participating in future professional development opportunities and measure student impact.

** Specific needs and issues to be addressed for capacity building grant**  
The specific need to be addressed is increasing tutor accessibility to professional development which will further strengthen tutor instructional skills, and increase the rate of language acquisition for VEP students. Currently, there are over 150 individuals who are waiting upwards of 12 months to be matched with a tutor. VEP will be able to meet the needs of the ever-growing immigrant population in Chester County, who urgently need effective English language instruction in order to reach their full potential and become successful members of their community by increasing active tutor retention. Tutors with additional support then become in-house ESL experts and available to help new students.

**How will this capacity building initiative impact your nonprofit?**  
Offering online professional development for tutor’s will increase the organizations capacity to:  
- a) Increase the rate of English language acquisition for VEP students by way of improved instructional skills and effectiveness of VEP tutors.  
- b) Extend voluntary tutor commitment from 12 months to 18 months.  
- c) Further strengthen VEPs position as the leading organization in Chester County providing individualized English as second language instruction through community engagement.  
- d) Allow VEP to conduct a longitudinal study to determine the effectiveness of combined in-person and online professional development as it pertains to volunteerism, at increasing volunteer tutor retention and ultimately student success, and to measure tutor interest in online learning.

**How will this impact be measured?**  
Impact of this initiative will be measured in several ways. The impact of the professional development series offered as a webinar will be measured through a three-year longitudinal study that will track the rate of participation in the workshops (in-person and webinar) and retention rate of tutors, and compare it to tutors who did not attend the workshop series. VEP will also measure the impact of the workshop series on VEP students by way of rate of English acquisition as measured through proficiency level. VEP uses a CiviCRM data management system, which allows for the collection and tracking of necessary data. Specifically, VEP will measure the impact as follows:  
1. Tutor engagement will be measured by the number of tutors who attend the workshops (in-person or webinar).  
2. Tutor retention will be measured as the number of months a tutor is actively instructing a student.  
3. Retention rate of tutors who attend workshops will be compared to tutors who do not attend workshops.

**How impact and results will be demonstrated**  
1. 50 active tutors will participate in at least one of the five workshops. An average of 10 participants are expected to attend each workshop, 5 in-person and 5 on webinar.  
Measurement tool: CiviCRM reports on event participation.
2. Tutor retention will increase from 12 to 18 months after two years of full implementation. Measurement tool: CiviCRM tutor retention report.

3. The proficiency levels of students working with tutors who participated in workshops will increase. Measurement tool: CASAS Standardized Assessments and CiviCRM Proficiency Report.

**Include a description of the expected activities**

- Program staff, executive director, and seasoned tutors will plan 5-part workshop series by selecting topics, securing presenters, and confirming dates, times, and locations of workshops.
- Conduct 5-part workshops series, which includes public relations and administrative promotion to publicize workshops and recruit participants.
- Interview and hire a videographer to film events for webinar.
- Secure ESL professional to facilitate workshops.
- Purchase membership to access ProLiteracy online ESL tutor training seminars. Promote this series to VEP tutors and track their participation.
- Purchase and learn webinar platform, which includes hiring a webinar facilitator to cross-train VEP staff for first webinar.
- Analyze data and report results for longitudinal study.

**Timeline and costs to implement the initiative**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Anticipated Costs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec 2019</td>
<td>1. Hire videographer to film 5 workshops</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. ESL professional to conduct workshops</td>
<td>$1,625</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Purchase webinar software for 12 months</td>
<td>$215</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Hire Webinar facilitator to train VEP Staff</td>
<td>$240</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Purchase ProLiteracy Online Tutor Training access</td>
<td>$250</td>
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<tr>
<td>In progress Jan - Dec 2020</td>
<td>Plan, promote, publicize, and conduct 5-part workshop series.</td>
<td>$1,875</td>
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<td></td>
<td>VEP Program Staff</td>
<td>$1,750</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public Relations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 2021 - 22</td>
<td>Conduct interim data analysis after 12 month intervals. Partner with local university for project.</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
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</tbody>
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**Why it is important to fund this now**

Following the success of last year’s Capacity Building Grant – evaluating program effectiveness and facilitating improvements with data analysis – VEP is ready to launch this 5-part workshop and webinar series. VEP’s innovations with web-based platforms are a vital next step to solidifying our most valuable asset – dedicated volunteer tutors, highly sought-after by similar organizations. With this new workshop and webinar series, VEP will help tutors develop breadth and depth of knowledge, will impart the significance of our mission, and will inspire them to see the value of extending their volunteer time in service to this mission. Doing so allows VEP to continue to provide uninterrupted services to over 300 adult ELLs in Chester County, yearly. In this urgent and timely field of work, where there is so much competition for quality volunteers, these innovations will allow VEP to remain the leader in the county for this evidenced-based model of individualized ELL instruction.

**III. ATTACHMENTS**

1. Copy of 501 (c) (3) federal tax-exempt letter
2. List of Board of Directors, with their affiliations
3. Most recent annual highlights FY2018
4. Audited financial statement
5. VEP Statement of Financial Position August 2019
6. VEP Profit & Loss budget vs. actual
7. Itemized budget for Capacity Building
8. Current strategic plan