In a few brief paragraphs, please explain:

1. What geographic area is served?

   The Westside Community Center serves youth and families from The West Chester Area School District – primarily in the Borough of West Chester.

2. What population is served, what has been the impact of COVID-19, and how has your nonprofit responded?

   West Chester, PA is a beautiful town; but within it lie pockets of poverty often masked by the fancy town centers, parks and restaurants. The Westside is in its 8th year of serving over 100 disadvantaged, underserved middle and high school aged youth annually. Students served by The Westside are low-income, at-risk youth. The majority of students are minority youth (45% Latino, 27% African American, 16% Mixed Race, 11% White, 1% Other) and living in single parent homes. Additionally, many have experienced trauma (transient housing, homelessness, abuse, domestic violence, food insecurity), are English Language Learners, and are struggling academically. Over 36% will be the first in their families to graduate high school and 68% will be the first in their families to go to college. As a result, our students lack the motivation and guidance needed to reach their full potential.

   The COVID-19 crisis has generated significant hardship for our students and their families. Many parents have lost jobs due to businesses closing and/or lack of available childcare. The Westside also serves a high population of immigrant families who are being hit especially hard as they are ineligible to apply for the financial supports being offered by the government. Additionally, students often come to The Westside to get away from the chaos and stresses of their home. For Westside students, “stay-at-home” orders result in overcrowded homes, food insecurity, neglect and increased exposure to domestic violence and addiction. We are already observing the physical, mental and emotional toll this crisis is having on our students and their families and anticipate it will only get worse.

   Immediately following the announcement of school closures, Westside staff worked hard to restructure our programs to serve students virtually. Staff have also been reaching out to parents to assess need and support families in every way we can (food, financial assistance, etc.).

   Over the past month, Westside staff have been working hard to help coordinate and deliver produce, meals and gift cards to families, provide financial assistance when available (rent, utilities, etc.) and to creatively provide outreach and academic supports for youth virtually. Each week, staff host virtual opportunities for students to attend virtual tutoring sessions, hangout sessions and Bible studies. Staff would much rather be with our students in person but know how critical it is that we stay connected during these closures to ensure students feel loved, supported and safe during these uncertain times.
The Westside has also expanded our community garden with 16 additional beds to help feed our community this summer. As we approach the summer, we remain flexible and prepared to continue virtually connecting with students and hopefully transitioning to in-person small group activities as it becomes safe to do so.

3. How much funding is sought? How does this compare to your annual operating budget? What will the funding be used for? What is the expected timeframe for use of funds?

The Westside’s Annual Operating Budget is $209,342. The Westside respectfully requests a general operating grant of $4,000 to help us respond quickly and effectively to the rising needs of our students and their families. General operating support allows us to remain flexible and innovative as we respond to the ever-increasing needs of our students and their families. Funding is needed immediately for the time frame of 6/1/20 – 12/31/20. More than ever, general operating support is needed to ensure we can seamlessly continue to be flexible and adapt our existing programs (i.e. virtual tutoring sessions, virtual social hangouts, virtual bible studies) and expand services to best meet the needs of our community (community garden, meal delivery, rental assistance, gift cards, etc.). As we move towards re-opening, additional expenses are also required for increased cleaning, masks, etc. to ensure the safety of staff, students and volunteers.

Thank you for the kind consideration.

Please email grants@chescocf.org
- This Brief COVID-19 Rapid Response Mini-Grant Letter of Request
- Copy of annual operating budget or most recent audit
- 501c3 determination letter

Request letters will be posted on the Community Foundation’s website, in order to share with fund advisors, donors, grant panelists, and other funding sources.
Grants will be processed a few times monthly.
We estimate mini-grants will range from $500 to $5000.

Please direct general questions & inquiries about the Rapid Response Mini-Grants to grants@chescocf.org.
Beth, Steph, Cierra or Kevin will answer you.