In a few brief paragraphs, please explain:

1. **What geographic area is served? (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served)**

   Friends Association serves all of Chester County, PA.

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

   Friends Association serves low-income families who are experiencing or at-risk of homelessness in Chester County. Each year the organization serves approximately 100 families/350 individuals through our Emergency Shelter (Family Center) and Homelessness Prevention Programs. With the outbreak of COVID-19, we are facing an unprecedented challenge to our work as we strive to continue substantive programming while meeting the amplified and critical needs arising from the ongoing crisis. Since March 1st, we have served an additional 11 families in our homelessness prevention programs and have an approximate 30% increase in our call volume for services. Amidst the backdrop of the pandemic, we have moved 6 families out of our Family Center and into permanent housing, while supporting 47 additional families residing throughout Chester County who face housing instability and/or the likelihood of eviction proceedings. In our current model, Friends is providing rental subsidies that average $676 per client each month with an average of 17 families per month receiving this assistance.

   According to the Associated Press, data projects that 28 million renters are at risk of eviction because of the impact of COVID-19. It is reported that almost one-third of all Americans could not pay their full July housing expenses. Tenant advocates expect that number to increase significantly unless protections are put in place, and project that many of those affected will be African Americans and households led by women, both of which are historically more likely to be evicted. The Commonwealth recently extended the eviction moratorium until August 31st of this year at which point even more people in our county will be at risk of homelessness. Individuals that have never needed support services before are finding themselves unable to make ends meet because of financial hardships resulting from COVID-19. With appropriate supports in place, including legal counsel and payment plans for catching up on rent, research shows that nearly two-thirds of tenants facing eviction will remain housed.

   Friends Association aims to launch the county’s first Eviction Prevention Court (EPC) Pilot Program and will serve individuals as well as families to prevent eviction and assist with long-term housing stability.

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?**

   Friends Association seeks funding for an Eviction Prevention Court (EPC) Pilot Program to mitigate the significant and devastating impact that evictions have on vulnerable populations and those living in poverty. There is currently no program in Chester County that can provide both financial assistance and legal representation to prevent evictions.

   The EPC is designed to stabilize vulnerable families and individuals in Chester County who are facing eviction by providing them with free legal and social services support on the day of their eviction hearings. Additionally, the program will provide
financial assistance to prevent evictions and connections to long-term financial and social supports needed to stabilize housing.

Essential components of the EPC Pilot Program, based on successful court-based programs across the country, will include: On-site professional legal services day-of-hearing; access to staff trained in local landlord-tenant law; and access to financial assistance. The initial program will be piloted in one Magisterial District Court and the target population will be individuals and families at or below 50% of the Area Median Income who lack the resources or support networks needed to maintain permanent housing. The pilot will be scaled to additional Magisterial District Courts in a phased process.

In 2019, there were 2,504 Landlord Tenant filings across Chester County and 899 Orders of Possession Entered. The moratorium on evictions will expire on August 31, 2020 and we will face a wave of evictions that will ultimately place an enormous burden on social service agencies and the community at large. We anticipate that with the implementation of the EPC Pilot Program, over time, we will see a reduced number of eviction cases filed, resulting in improved use of county and court resources and improved community confidence in the Justice System. We also anticipate Chester County will see a strong return on investment as studies show up to $12+ savings per every $1 invested in eviction prevention programs and will stabilize community members as they rebuild from a devastating financial crisis.

Funding from the Chester County Community Foundation in the amount of $20,000 (total proposed operating budget FY21 $1,087,489) will substantially increase Friends Association’s ability to serve some of the most vulnerable individuals in our county through implementation of this EPC Pilot Program. Funding will be utilized to support staff positions and financial assistance for rent and utilities to eligible participants. We expect to start the program on 9/1/2020 and funds will be used within twelve months.

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.