

I. **CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET**

One page only. This page will be shared electronically with Grant Panel Members & Fund Advisors.

Note: If Philanthropy Network's Common Grant Application is used, CCCF's **Summary Sheet MUST accompany application.**

To obtain an electronic version of this application, visit www.chescocf.org

Date 9/4/20

Contact Information

Organization Name: ACT in Faith of Greater West Chester
Address: 212 S. High St, West Chester, PA 19382
Phone:484-324-8492
Website: www.actinfaithwgc.org
Year Incorporated: 2010
FEIN: 27-4033006

ED/CEO Name: Hallie Romanowski
ED/CEO E-mail:hallieromanowski@me.com
Board Chair Name:Denise Antonelli
Board Chair Approval (check here):
Primary Contact Name:Hallie Romanowski
Primary Contact E-mail: hallieromanowski@me.com

Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

Arts, Culture & Humanities Environment/Animal Welfare Education
 Health Human Services Religion

Mission: To build a community that empowers the un- and under-employed to stabilize their households and build toward self-sustainability

Geographic Area Served (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served): We serve the West Chester zip codes.

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served: We serve the un-and under-employed. In 2019 we see served 516 unduplicated individuals/households. In the 1st 18 weeks of the pandemic, we served 350 unduplicated individuals/households.

Annual Budget \$181,000	2.5 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
72 % of budget for program expenses	8 # of Board Volunteers
12 % of budget for administrative expenses	48 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers
16 % of budget for fundraising expenses	2,651 # of Volunteer Hours
100 % total	

Top 3-5 funding sources:

Individual donors
Fundraiser(usually Chef's Best, this year Fund the Mission)
Faith Communities

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

If Capacity Building Proposal, the focus is:

Mission, Vision & Strategy Governance & Leadership Partnerships & Collaborations
 Fundraising, Development & Marketing Technology Other: _____

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

Proposal Summary:

We are requesting \$5,000 to assist with expenses which are new or have increased due to COVID-19 as well as for expenses related to a new fundraising initiative that we wish to launch this fall. The program funds are needed in order for us to sustain our level of service to those who need our support. The development funds are needed to help us launch a new a giving program that is inviting to our donors while providing a steady level of monthly income which will help ensure program sustainability during these uncertain times. The technology funds will help provide better ergonomics for our staff/volunteers.

II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Provide clear, concise information. 3 pages maximum.

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

ACT in Faith was created in 2010 by members of the Religious Council of Greater West Chester in response to the growing needs of the community. They found that many of those in need: 1) did not meet the criteria to qualify for support through other social services, 2) were facing a crisis that was not addressed by any other organization, or 3) had no idea what resources were available or where to go for support. As an interfaith collaborative organization, we believe that by working together we build a stronger community.

We provide support in 3 basic program areas: Basic Need (e.g. groceries, medical expenses, clothing) Employment Support (e.g. photo ID, car expenses, job search/resume support, childcare, work clothing, cell phone, bus tokens) and Housing Stabilization (e.g. eviction prevention, security deposits, utility expenses.) The services through which these programs provide support are: Client Emergency Fund - emergency financial assistance, Community Cupboard - grocery cupboard that focuses on personal care and household items (not covered by SNAP/FoodStamps) and supplemental dry food goods, & the ACT Now Network - an email network of those willing to be informed when there is an urgent need (e.g. clothing, home goods, ride to doctor) for the population described.

Year over year we cannot predict the types of requests we will receive but the number of people served has increased every year. In 2019 we provided assistance for 516 different individuals/households. Over the last 10 years we have prevented close over 500 people from becoming or remaining homeless and close to half of those were children. In 2019, our Community Cupboard served as a much needed grocery resource for 392 unduplicated individuals/households.

In 2019, 72% of the 526 financial requests we filled were to assist people with things that are necessary to obtaining/maintaining employment. This said, Housing Stabilization was not the most frequently requested type of support but it did account for 40% of the financial support we provided.

Over our 10 years we have developed relationships and often formal referral processes with a wide variety of Chester County social services, such as but not limited to; Safe Harbor, Salvation Army, Friends Association, North Star, Gaudenzia, St. Agnes Outreach Services, Human Services, Open Hearth, Domestic Violence Center, CVIM, Family Services, and Home of the Sparrow. Many people in their programs and some who merely reach out to them for support are in need of services that fall beyond the scope of these programs. We have become a significant resource for these organizations and as a result, we receive client referrals from these organizations on a daily basis. A recent review of our referral sources revealed that 65% of our client referral come to us from another social service organization.

The year 2020 has drastically altered how we execute our program operations. As our community struggles with COVID-19 life disruptions, we are seeking your support to help us respond to this unprecedented crisis. In mid-March, as a result of COVID-19, we had to relocate, reinvent, and expand our operations to meet the increased needs and number of people counting on us. At the same time, our day-to-day village shrank by 75% as most volunteers had to stay home. The graphic below provides insight as to the impact the pandemic has had on our community and our mission. Our request herein includes expenses that are imperative to our capacity to continue to both thrive and to serve the at-risk community.

	2019	March “Stay at Home” to July 24, 2020
Community Cupboard Unduplicated Shoppers	392	311
Community Cupboard Unduplicated Adults Fed	598	505
Community Cupboard Unduplicated Children Fed	385	276
Total Lbs. of Food Distributed	29,647	26,743
Average Lbs. per Shopper per Visit	19	58
Average Number of Shoppers per Week	30	45
Housing Stabilization Financial Requests Filled	56	49

2. Funding request, Key Initiates, Needs Addressed, Why Is Now Important, Demonstration of Impact

In an effort to keep up with both demand and safety measures, we are also incurring both new and increased expenses in order to continue to operate our Cupboard. We seek funding for program costs that are above and beyond our normal, pre-COVID expenditures. We have experienced a significant increase in printing cost for forms needed to accommodate our procedural changes and increased Community Cupboard shopper volume. Instead of in-person shopping we now take orders over the phone for both groceries and prepared meals. This change required us to design never before needed order forms and print them in large quantities. While we are blessed to have a faith community partner print these large quantities for us at a very modest fee compared to an external print service, the new procedures have increased our program spending. In 2019, we incurred \$390 for program form printing. In only 4 months, April through July of 2020, we incurred \$380. The stock/selection of prepared meals that we receive to distribute changes daily so those forms get printed in our office in smaller quantities, but have also had an impact on our paper and ink utilization. For people who often feel marginalized and feel that their station in life limits them, the ability to choose your groceries becomes very important. When you feel that there's not much you can control in your life, the ability to choose which toothpaste you want or which juice, cereal or type of cleaning solution becomes exponentially more empowering than many of us could imagine. Many cupboards have had to resort to distributing pre-packed bags/boxes of groceries for a variety of reasons. This can lead to shoppers getting items that can't or won't use. Our commitment to shopper choice means more volunteers being needed, more steps and work for staff/volunteers, and more forms but that does not lessen our commitment to offering choice.

Pre-COVID, in an effort to be better stewards of the environment, we encouraged shoppers to bring their own shopping bags and most did so. This is no longer the best course for safety reasons and we found the even double-bagged plastic grocery bags was less than efficient for the increased volume of groceries that people need – not sturdy enough, impractical for our many car-less shoppers, and 100% in opposition to our desire to be environmentally responsible. In May, we had a very generous donor deliver 5,000 extra large, handled, brown-paper bags. When double-bagged, they meet all of our efficiency, durability, and environmental “requirements.” We would like to continued to purchase these bags and improved the experience for both shoppers and volunteers until we can return to having shoppers bring their own bags. This is as much about dignity as it is about practicality. Finding yourself in need of utilizing a grocery cupboard is hard enough for most people, walking home with bags ripping and groceries rolling down the street becomes humiliating.

The switch from in-person client interaction to by-phone interaction has brought urgency to some technology needs. Pre-COVID, all shopping and financial-request interviews were done face-to-face. Now we conduct both only by phone and it is bringing to light some ergonomic issues. Our staff and volunteers need to pinch the phone between the head and neck in order to free hands so they can take orders and key data into the computer. For confidentiality and noise reasons, using the speaker is not an option. In addition, our new processes require more phone time for more people. We have needed to add a Spanish speaking volunteers because our Spanish speaking shoppers cannot simply come and pick their groceries, we need to take their order via phone. We are limited in our abilities to accommodate due to a shortage of physical phones. The church is willing to provide an additional phone to help us operate more efficiently but there will be cost involved. Funds being requested will also allow us to purchase head sets, compatible with the phone system, to improve ergonomics and to activate the additional phone. Both of these will prove to be beneficial long after COVID providing healthier work habits and allowing us to accommodate an additional volunteer.

In addition, we are requesting support to assist us in a new fundraising initiative. As part of our annual fall appeal, we will be launching a “sustaining donor” campaign and encouraging donors to commit to a monthly pledge. This campaign will include new bank processes by way of an EFT process which will allow us to pull donations directly from people's bank accounts. Other donors may prefer to set-up monthly credit card transactions to make their contributions. Both of these options will lead to a degree of cost for us. We will also be providing a small token of our appreciation to the campaign participants and are requesting funds to cover that expense.

How will this capacity building initiative impact your nonprofit?

To date, all of the funding we have received specifically for COVID Relief has been spent on filling the needs of people who's lives have been severely disrupted by COVID-19. This funding will elevate the budgetary stress caused by the increased community need that has resulted from these life-disruptions. When the "stay at home" mandate went into effect we changed our "business operations" over night. It took us weeks to find new, steady, sustainable processes/protocols that were safe and effective for all involved. We still tweak things regularly but we have steadied the ship and continue to "do right" by our service recipients, volunteers, and staff. These funds will enable us to continue to give shoppers the empowering option to choose their grocery and meals as opposed to us resorting to filling bags with items that we don't know they will want, need or use. It will also provide year-one support to our monthly giving campaign which is being designed in direct response to feeling the need to fortify our monthly revenue to ensure we do not experience the "slow donation months" that are so typical in the non-profit world. This is being done in an effort to ensure we never have to tell someone we can't help them because we're out of funds at a period in history when the depth of community need runs so deep. All of which allows us to focus our budget on meeting the needs of those who are experiencing the inability to keep up with their bills and provide essential grocery items for their families. In addition, this support will help us improve the ergonomics for our staff and volunteers (essential workers) who have been willing to support our mission and the community since the pandemic started.

How will this impact be measured?

Our ability to continue our current service delivery for our shoppers, improved ergonomics, and being able to implement a COVID-inspired, fall, fundraising campaign all without impacting our program budget for emergency financial assistance will be a measure of the impact these funds will have.

2020 CCCF Capacity Building Request

Items	Projected Costs	Time Frame	Area of Impact
Community Cupboard Print Material: ink, paper, printing	\$1,200	Oct 2020 - June 2021	Program
Community Cupboard: grocery bags	\$2,000	Oct 2020 - June 2021	Program
Additional Phone	\$500	As soon as possible	Administrative
Head Sets	\$500	As soon as possible	Administrative
Monthly Donation Program: Participant "gift"	\$500	Nov. 2020	Donor Stewardship/ Fundraising
EFT Expenses	\$300	Jan-Dec 2020	Donor Stewardship/ Fundraising
TOTAL	\$5,000		