

The Chester County Nonprofit Innovation & Resiliency Fund

Administered by the Chester County Community Foundation

In cooperation with regional funders, donors, united funds and County government departments

Recognizing the importance of the nonprofit sector to the high quality of life throughout Chester County, the Chester County Commissioners have allocated \$3.5M to help nonprofits recover with innovation and resiliency. This funding is from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

Per the CARES Act, grants must cover unforeseen financial needs and risks created by the COVID-19 public health emergency. **This includes grants to implement and publicize the safe resumption of programs and services.** The Community Foundation seeks proposals to support innovative, resilient COVID recovery needs, such as:

- Program and service redesign, in light of social distancing and public safety requirements
- Innovative technology to support virtual, mobile and/or pop-up programs and services
- Redesigned and reconceived marketing, fundraising and special events
- Strategic planning pivoting, refinement and revisions in light of COVID-19
- Partnership, merger, consolidation and/or acquisition activities due to COVID-19 impacts
- Infrastructure improvements due to COVID, including plexiglass dividers, technology upgrades, etc.
- Higher operating costs related to cleaning and social distancing requirements
- Other one-time or increased expenses incurred related to COVID-19.

This is a competitive, time-sensitive grants process. Grant decisions will be made weekly, on an ongoing basis. Electronic grant applications are only accepted by e-mail. No paper applications are accepted.

Eligibility

- Nonprofit 501 (c) (3) organization formed and active in 2017 or earlier
- Nonprofit must be headquartered and providing services in Chester County, as evidenced by legal address in Box C of IRS 990

Priority Preference for Grant Funding

- Nonprofits that provide clear evidence of how they aim to/are reshaping their programs, services, administration, marketing and fundraising, to safely provide services and thrive in light of COVID impacts
- Nonprofits with substantial costs to comply with COVID public health requirements
- Nonprofits that serve a diverse constituency, and are governed and managed by diverse leadership

Ineligible Entities

- Nonprofits NOT headquartered in Chester County, PA, as evidenced by the legal address in Box C of the IRS 990
- Nonprofits NOT delivering services in Chester County
- Nonprofits that did NOT experience revenue loss due to the coronavirus pandemic and/or nonprofits that have no additional costs associated with the coronavirus pandemic
- Nonprofits that were NOT operational as of December 30, 2017
- Government or government-owned or controlled entities
- Churches or religious organizations with respect to their primarily religious activities and/or their activities which limit participation to members of the church or religious organization
- For-profit businesses
- Private clubs/organizations that limit membership for reasons other than capacity
- Nonprofits primarily engaged in lobbying or political activities
- Nonprofits NOT compliant with all federal, state, & local laws, including taxation
- Nonprofits NOT compliant with current public health guidelines, including coronavirus pandemic phased reopening restrictions ###





**Chester County Nonprofit
Innovation & Resiliency Fund
Grant Request Form**

Contact Information

Nonprofit Org Name: Orion Communities	ED/CEO Name: Kris Keller
Address: 237 Bridge Street	ED/CEO E-mail: KKeller@OrionHope.org
City, State Zip: Phoenixville, PA 19460	Board Chair Name: Keith Burress
Phone: 610-415-1140	Grant Proposal Contact Name: Kris Keller
Website: OrionCommunities.org	Grant Proposal Contact E-mail: KKeller@OrionHope.org
EIN: 23-2074061	Grant \$ Amount Requested: \$50,000
Year Founded: 1977	

In filing this application, the nonprofit certifies that it complies with all federal, state & local laws, including taxation; complies with current public health guidelines; and complies with coronavirus pandemic phased reopening restrictions.

Agreed by: Kris Keller	Date: 10/15/2020
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Nonprofit Field/s of Interest

Arts, Culture & Historic Preservation	Education	Health
Community Development	Environment & Animal Welfare	x Human Services

Figures	Current	PRE-COVID (as of 1/1/20)
Annual Operating Budget	\$951,000	\$ 892,000
Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff	8	7
# Board Volunteers	10	10
# Committee Volunteers	15	20
# Active Direct Service Volunteers	27	75
Annual Volunteer Hours	3100	7360

Funding: Please indicate if your nonprofit has received funding from any of these regional sources over the past few years. We will invite them to review this funding request.

x	ChesCo Comm Fdn		Brandywine Health Fdn	x	United Way ChesCo	ChesCo Dept Comm Devel
x	ChesCo Fund/W&Girls	x	Phoenixville Comm Health Fdn		United Way SChesCo	ChesCo Dept Health
x	Other significant funders: The Philadelphia Foundation, WW Smith Charitable Trust, etc					ChesCo Dept Human Svcs

Narrative: In a few concise paragraphs, please explain:

1. Mission

Orion offers hope for individuals and families experiencing hardship due to poverty, disability, or illness by building bridges that lead to self-reliance. Orion believes that every person deserves shelter, food, clothing, transportation, access to healthcare and respectful human interaction. Orion listens at the street level and responds to the unmet needs of our most vulnerable neighbors with creativity, compassion and collaboration.

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

Orion served over 4000 unique individuals in 2019, 65% came from Chester County and most of those are from the Greater Phoenixville area but also include individuals from North Coventry, Coatesville, West Chester, and Malvern.

3. What population is served? How have your service numbers been impacted by COVID?

Orion serves the most vulnerable in the community, those who fall through the cracks of the social service safety net and/or don't know where to turn to address their pressing needs for life's basic essentials. In 2019, over 95% of Orion's clients lived below the Federal Poverty Line, 40% identified as having a disability and 20% were homeless for all or part of the year.

Since the pandemic, our client population has changed in a number of ways:

- Increasing number of people who have never asked for assistance before;
- Triple the number of households speaking languages other than English - primary languages are Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic and regional dialects;
- Four-fold increase in requests for housing and shelter assistance;
- More people who do not qualify for government assistance or other programs.

Orion expects to work with 10-20% more households in 2020 as compared to last year and expects each household will average 40-60% more case management time and at least a doubling of financial assistance. This trend is expected to continue or increase in 2021 as the holds on evictions and utility shutoffs are lifted.

Apart from the increase in the quantity of clients and the amounts of financial assistance needed, there has also been a change in the quality of the requests and the "climate" in our client population. There is more trauma, uncertainty, embarrassment, and increased levels of complication. While there is more government assistance available, there is confusion about what is available, who qualifies, and what to do when you can't get through the access points or don't qualify for Covid relief funds. And each request for help simply takes more time with our caseworkers given the changes mentioned above and in the working environment imposed by the pandemic. In addition, due to the lack of office sociability, we are seeing our 'regulars' less frequently – people who had limited social supports outside of Orion – and we are concerned about their isolation.

A man called whose unemployment checks had been delayed – he was behind on the family rent but, even more importantly to him, he was behind on his car payments. If his car were repossessed, he would not be able to continue with his job search and interviews. Orion helped with the pressing bills and a plan for next steps.

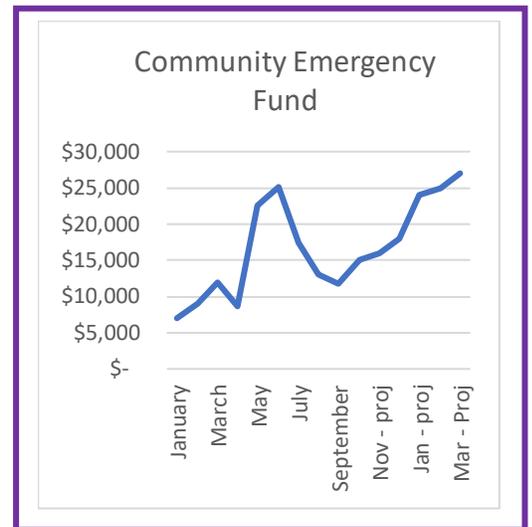
4. What has been the impact of COVID-19, and how has your nonprofit responded?

Orion was immediately declared a 'critical and essential business by Phoenixville's Mayor so we never closed down. However, service delivery changed dramatically. Rotating teams of staff work from home and office to reduce potential Covid exposure. Clients are seen at a new reception desk in the front display window via baby monitor and our open-air sidewalk internet café that provides computers to apply for jobs, unemployment and more. Orion's client database and phone system are secure and accessible through the Cloud so the staff has seamless access to files and each other. Our neighbors in need can still see a smiling professional who then connects them with services and case managers who are working from home or office.

Over the spring and summer, new funds came to Orion because of our history of demonstrated success at providing bridge case management and distributing critical resources for basic needs. Foundations, corporations, and private donors contributed essential funds which has made it possible for Orion to meet the increased needs. As a result, Orion was able add another bi-lingual case manager for the summer, contract with Language Line for additional interpreting needs and increase our Community Emergency Funds by 200-300% each month to keep families in their homes (2019 averaged \$7500/month in emergency assistance; since the pandemic Orion has distributed \$13,000 - 25,000/month to meet the need).



The early definition of ‘affected by the pandemic’ was the loss of a job or income reduction when comparing income before and after the mandated shutdown on March 13th, 2020. Now Orion is also seeing individuals and families who have challenges that are due to a secondary round of impact from the pandemic; this includes individuals who were not working or who lost their job for non-Covid reasons but are now not able to find a new job due to higher unemployment. To meet the growing need of neighbors with direct and indirect Covid related requests, Orion has redirected staff from other programs. Additionally, Orion has been an active participant with government, community, and school district meetings to share information on what we are seeing at the economic front line for those who are struggling to secure life’s basic essentials.



New government programs and a continued hold on evictions/utility shutoffs has helped many households. But for those who don’t qualify for these resources and for those who are confused by the options and processes, Orion provides case management support to help our neighbors identify and navigate available resources and we provide critical funds when other sources cannot meet the need.

5. What would this funding be used for? How does this demonstrate innovation and resiliency in dealing with COVID impacts? What would be the community impact of this anticipated funding? Why is it important to fund this now?

Orion’s mission is to help stabilize the most vulnerable in our community without duplicating services and without government funding. Building on past experience, Orion has assisted community leaders in assuring that Chester County residents have had the information and resources they need during the early stages of the pandemic. There has been no break in service, outdoor computers have been installed, and wifi access has been made available on the sidewalk. Orion has been fortunate to solicit and receive additional funding during the first 6 months of the pandemic to provide support to over 2200 Chester County residents already this year.

Orion has demonstrated effective and efficient use of funds to help those in immediate need of basic essentials. Orion acts as a ‘pass-thru’ for funders to get critical resources to those most in need. Orion’s case managers hear the need, evaluate the circumstances, identify existing resources for which their household would qualify, assists with applications, and provides additional resources. Orion would use an Innovation and Resiliency Fund grant to assure that we have professional case management staff and provide financial assistance directly to our clients to address their pressing needs during the 2020/2021 winter when the need is expected to be greatest.

6. How much funding is sought? How does this compare to your annual operating budget and this years’ projected deficit? What is the expected timeframe for use of funds?

\$50,000 is requested. Orion’s reforecast budget for 2020 is \$951,000 and we anticipate no deficit this year because of the increased fundraising and distribution from partners to support those most in need in our communities. However, we are concerned about donor fatigue as well as increased need in early 2021 due to the scheduled lift on evictions, high unemployment, expected retail layoffs after the holidays and the reports of increasing unpaid bills.

There continues to be changes to the medical and government understanding and response to Covid-19. Orion is anticipating a continuing up-tick in clients and the need for emergency funding to keep households sheltered, fed, and safe during the coming year. Orion plans to continue our innovative approach to service delivery and fund raising to help stabilize individuals and families in need. We are requesting \$50,000 from the Chester County Community Foundation to be spent on case management and direct assistance during the next four to six months while we raise additional funds to meet the needs of our most vulnerable neighbors. Thank you.

Enclosed:

Innovation & Resiliency Fund Grant Request – Cover Sheet & Brief narrative
Orion Communities – 2020 Reforecast Budget
2019 Audit
501c3
Strategic Plan – issued February 2020
Fall Newsletter
2019 Annual Report
Local Heroes article from the Daily Local News
Contract with Carter/Sylvia to build development capacity

Please e-mail all materials as a word.doc and/or pdf to grants@chescofc.org:

This Innovation & Resiliency Fund Grant Request cover sheet & brief narrative
Current annual operating budget & most recent audit
501c3 determination letter
Current strategic plan. If none, explain why your nonprofit doesn't have a plan.
Support materials that strengthen the urgency of this funding request + indicate that your nonprofit is innovative and resilient (ie: COVID best practice research findings, consultant proposal/s, bids for COVID-related materials & equipment, etc.)

- Proposals will only be accepted by e-mail, on this grant form available at <https://chescofc.org/covidgrant/>
 - Receipt of grant proposals will be confirmed by e-mail.
- Grant proposals will be posted on the Community Foundation's website, in order to share with fund advisors, donors, grant panelists, and other funding sources.
 - Grant proposals will be reviewed weekly.
 - We estimate grants awards will range from \$5,000 to \$50,000.
- For awarded grants, a written report on use and impact of this funding will be due within 6 months.

Please direct questions about **ChesCo Nonprofit Innovation & Resiliency Grants** to
Chester County Community Foundation
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West Chester, PA 19382
www.chescofc.org
grants@chescofc.org 610.696.8211