

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. Only electronic grant applications are 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 located and providing services in Chester County

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 located in Chester County, PA
- 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. Religious entities with social & human service outreach programs must provide 501 (c) (3).
- 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 ###





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

Contact Information

Nonprofit Org Name: Association for the Colonial Theatre	ED/CEO Name: Ken Metzner
Address: Mail - P.O. Box 712 Street - 227 Bridge Street	ED/CEO E-mail: ken@thecolonialtheatre.com
City, State Zip: Phoenixville, PA 19460	Board Chair Name: Suzanne V. Norris
Phone: 610-917-1228	Grant Proposal Contact Name: Emily Simmons
Website: https://thecolonialtheatre.com	Grant Proposal Contact E-mail: emily@thecolonialtheatre.com
EIN: 23-2846336	Grant \$ Amount Requested: \$20,000
Year Founded: 1996	

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: Ken Metzner	Date: November 11, 2020
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Nonprofit Field/s of Interest

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Arts, Culture & Historic Preservation	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Health
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Development	<input type="checkbox"/> Environment & Animal Welfare	<input type="checkbox"/> Human Services

Figures	Current	PRE-COVID (as of 1/1/20)
Annual Operating Budget	\$509,714	\$1,127,032
Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff	7	9
# Board Volunteers	14	15
# Committee Volunteers	15	17
# Active Direct Service Volunteers	0	89
Annual Volunteer Hours	0	967

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.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ChesCo Comm Fdn	<input type="checkbox"/> Brandywine Health Fdtn	<input type="checkbox"/> United Way ChesCo	<input type="checkbox"/> ChesCo Dept Comm Devel
<input type="checkbox"/> ChesCo Fund/W&Girls	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Phoenixville Comm Health Fdtn	<input type="checkbox"/> United Way S ChesCo	<input type="checkbox"/> ChesCo Dept Health
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other significant funders: <i>NOTE: Grants pledged or received prior to the pandemic are not listed here.</i> Archie W. and Grace Berry Fdn. - \$50,000 * Arthouse Convergence/Michigan Theatre Fdn. - \$5,235 * COVID19 Arts Aid Fund/Grtr. Phila. Cultural Alliance - \$15,000 * SBA PP Loan - \$103,000 * Vanguard - \$20,000 * PA Council on the Humanities - \$7,500			<input type="checkbox"/> ChesCo Dept Human Svcs

No	Yes	Federal Single Audit
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<i>Is your nonprofit subject to a federal single audit (formerly known as the OMB Circular A-133 audit)?</i>
n/a		<i>If yes, did your nonprofit's most recent federal single audit disclose any issues?</i>
n/a		<i>If yes, have these issues been adequately addressed?</i>

Narrative: In a few concise paragraphs, please explain:

1. **Mission**
2. **What geographic area is served?** *(If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served)*
3. **What population is served? How have your service numbers been impacted by COVID?**

The Colonial Theatre's mission is to nurture community by celebrating the power of film and the performing arts to entertain, inform, and reveal meaning. Survey data shows that Colonial Theatre film programs (in-person and virtual) draw patrons from across the region (Philadelphia, Delaware, Chester, Montgomery, and Bucks counties) and counties beyond. Live arts events attract a greater number of out-of-town and out-of-state visitors, often drawing arts lovers from NJ, DE, NY and other states. The Colonial operates from two large historic buildings in the heart of Phoenixville's walkable downtown business district. Therefore, its patrons support local businesses and restaurants.

In our last 'typical' fiscal year (Sept. 1, 2018 to Aug. 13, 2019), over 73,000 people visited the Colonial Theatre for daily films and regular live arts or community events. Colonial patrons could enjoy a minimum of 9 film screening times per day before COVID/March 2020, with additional live arts and special events peppering daily schedules.

Despite being one of few theatres in the region offering in-person, indoor arts programming, attendance at the Colonial is trending down nearly 90%. Most of the patrons who *have* chosen to return to theatergoing during the pandemic are renting our smallest theater for private screenings and are members.

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

Because the Colonial's mission is to deliver in-person programming and it falls under the umbrella of entertainment venues as a theatre, COVID-19's impact on our nonprofit has been significant. COVID has decimated revenues from in-person programs, eliminating ~70% of the Colonial's annual income since its initial closure on March 13. The pandemic has made the Colonial entirely dependent on donations and grants.

- Our nonprofit was completely closed from March 13 to July 2. We immediately pivoted to virtual, at-home streaming and other forms of online engagement as we launched a crisis fundraising appeal.
- The Colonial was one of few theaters in the Philadelphia region to reopen for significantly reduced audiences in early July. Mask requirements, social distancing protocols, and special cleaning procedures were developed, along with temperature screenings for staff. (See the Support Materials attachments.) We brought back repertory (older) films to our two largest venues for audiences of up to ~23 and dedicated the smallest to private screening rentals for audiences of twelve.
- On October 9, audience size grew to 20% of the total for each venue in the two largest venues.

As mentioned, in March, we immediately launched a crisis fundraising appeal and sought emergency grant support, as well as an SBA PPP loan. This funding helped temporarily stabilize the Colonial, delaying staffing and other cuts enacted by peers at other arts organizations last spring. Funding covered basic monthly expenses, like the upkeep of sensitive projection equipment. Concessions and box office staff were paid a final check the week after our closure, but office staff have continued to work remotely.

While we worked to contain financial impacts of the pandemic, we also undertook the following activities to mitigate risk and develop resiliency in the face of COVID-19:

- We redesigned our signature annual event, Blobfest, as a completely virtual festival and offered only virtual films from March to July 3. Blobfest weekend drew thousands to the Borough of Phoenixville last year and netted over \$30,000; the 2020 'At-Home' edition brought in less than a third of that usually dependable revenue. Additional adjustments were made to other longtime programs, like a Summer Shorts Jewish Film Festival that has been hosted at the Colonial for years by Kehillah of Chester County. (While a necessary part of our pivot, virtual films are challenging because attendance is low. And, since patrons access content via distributor's platforms, patron information is inaccessible.)
- Concessions were temporarily redesigned as a curbside offering, with limited interest.
- Infrastructure improvements like plexiglass dividers were installed at the box office and concessions, and an electrostatic air purifier installed to improve safety in the office.
- Disinfecting protocols outlined in the Reopening Guide (see attachments) were developed. These not only required one-time expenditures, they have increased payroll for front of house staff. Periods of ~45 minutes between films are required to fog theatres with Peroxy HDOX disinfectant.

- Private screenings of already-programmed films have supplanted traditional, revenue generating rentals and, in many cases, replaced individual theatergoing experiences for patrons, who seem to seek comfort in their quarantine circles. Members overwhelmingly seek out private screenings.
- Marketing was reconceived from March through July. A quarterly program newsletter was suspended along with traditional screen advertisements and focus shifted to [social media engagement](#), which we generated through a punny marquee contest that garnered national recognition from [Vanity Fair](#) and a new virtual happy hour series.
- In light of both our closure and attendance restrictions, programs like Edible Cinema, Illuminating Cinema, Young Audiences, and the Sparks Project were indefinitely suspended. Funding was converted for operating expenses with permission.
- Partnerships with new content creators in the Philadelphia region are being sought for mutual survival and conservation of resources. For example, [FirstGlance Films](#), which has had difficulty finding an available venue, will host their annual short film festival at the Colonial for the first time in November.
- The Colonial is prioritizing funding for equal access to the arts through a new ticket subsidy called Ovatons. The program will cover admission for clients of local social service providers like Orion Communities and Alianzas or cover expense of free film screenings. This may help stem the loss of audience members due to the pandemic, assist existing audience members facing difficulty, and increase audience diversity.
- While we were forced to suspend strategic planning activities that began last winter, we continued to work on a new website with Practice Creative that will launch in December. The launch will provide another opportunity to publicize safe resumption of programs at the Colonial, and a more effective virtual marquee and fourth theatre for virtual viewing. (Our current website is over a decade old.)
- We have investigated the expense and logistics of mounting a drive-in or walk-up theatre in Phoenixville, as well as a 35mm Film Fund.
- Vendor contracts have been modified or suspended. A six-month interest payment deferral on the Colonial's building expansion loan was made by Mid-Penn Bank for November through April. A line of credit was also secured but has not been utilized.

Despite its robust response to the pandemic, the Colonial continues to also grapple with external volatility in the film and live arts industries: volatility that might last until fall of 2021 or 2022, depending on the course of the pandemic. Since March, we have not been able to host any live performances and have refunded over \$30,000 in tickets to cancelled shows. Our largest audience (and the resulting concessions, alcohol, tickets, fees, and spending at local restaurants and business) may not return for months to a year. As if that were not enough, titanic and potentially long-lasting changes to the film industry have been triggered by COVID. New feature film release dates have been systematically delayed by distributors, leaving the Colonial to choose only from a catalog of old titles and making the high-wire act of balancing cost and profitability much more difficult. The second wave of COVID now coursing through Europe and the UK will probably further delay release dates. Film distributors have also bypassed theaters entirely in some cases, taking new titles straight to virtual and prompting concerns about shrinking theatrical windows (the length of time that distributors will make new titles available for in-theatre viewing). Finally, the trickle of revenue coming into film distributors is resulting in mergers and reorganization that could make films more difficult to obtain by smaller theaters including the Colonial.

We are endeavoring to raise at least \$150,000 by December 31st to maintain current operations and staffing. This will make up for the unchanged loss of (1) program revenues and (2) a large grant that did not materialize this fall from the COVID-19 Cultural and Museum Preservation Grant Program. A multi-channel winter campaign launched at the end of October includes our first GoFundMe Charity effort, leveraging our considerable social media following. The Colonial's persistence is entirely dependent on contributed revenue and grants until normal programming and audience levels resume.

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?

Funding provided via this CARES Act opportunity will support the necessary expense of an upgraded website. What began as a leisurely rebuild last winter quickly became a necessary technology innovation when our theater had no choice but to offer virtual programs because of the pandemic. The site's launch will draw waning attention back to the

Colonial, helping to publicize the safe resumption of services. Designed for sales conversions and ease of use, it will better reflect the program and service redesigns necessitated by COVID, as well as future pivots. Our current, outdated website is extremely limited in its design and capabilities, and it no longer reflects our nonprofit’s branding or vision. Since websites are the new temporary marquees of arts organizations including our own, and ours serves as a fourth venue for virtual viewing, it was imperative that we continue the work to launch the new site.

Prior to COVID, the Colonial Theatre and our peers were struggling to understand how to reach at-home audiences. The pandemic and aforementioned changes to film distribution (which may be here to stay) have forced indie theatres to adapt by marketing virtual opportunities to viewers. Website experience, branding, and our ability to keep these audience members coming back for in-person programs will differentiate us from other theatres – and help to keep the Colonial Theatre in business. Virtual viewing seems unlikely to disappear and, with case counts rising above spring levels at this time, it is important to complete this work now.

The Colonial, like other arts venues, is an essential but often overlooked part of the local economic ecosystem. Arts programming not only generates business at local retailers and restaurants (something that we need now more than ever), it provides direct human connection. The emotional release and shared experience we have at film and live arts events has positive physical and mental health impacts. Nonprofit cultural organizations are also associated with higher levels of civic engagement (which can be seen in Phoenixville’s voter turnout and voting record). The Colonial Theatre is Phoenixville’s forum. Aside from houses of worship – where attendance is dwindling – theaters are one of the last vestiges of communal experience and continue humanity’s ancient storytelling tradition, which transcends every culture.

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?

We are respectfully requesting \$20,000 in funding through this opportunity and expect to use the funds immediately. This is roughly 3% of expenses itemized in the six-month budget (see grant attachments) and represents the out-of-pocket costs of the new website – but not the hundreds of hours of staff time committed to the website project.

The total projected deficit for this fiscal year ending August 31, 2021 is \$644,468. The Colonial’s board approved, six-month budget is based on actual expenditures between March and December 2020 (see grant attachments). In light of the impacts outlined and the current level of attendance, our Board of Directors passed a six-month budget.

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

X	This Innovation & Resiliency Fund Grant Request cover sheet & brief narrative
X	Current annual operating budget & most recent audit
X	501c3 determination letter
X	Current strategic plan. If none, explain why your nonprofit doesn’t have a plan. <i>In 2019, we revised our Mission, Vision, and Values. Staff and board members participated in a SWOT activity. A formal strategic planning process led by former Vanguard employee and pro-bono consultant, Mary Beth Simon, with community stakeholders as participants was planned for April 2020. The pandemic has indefinitely postponed our strategic planning process.</i>
X	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.)