



## 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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West Chester, PA 19382  
610.696.8211 www.chescof.org



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

**Contact Information**

Nonprofit Org Name: Thorncroft Equestrian Center	ED/CEO Name: Tiffany Meyer
Address: 190 Line Road	ED/CEO E-mail: tiffany@thorncroft.org
City, State Zip: Malvern, PA 19355	Board Chair Name: Richard Johnston
Phone: 610-644-1963	Grant Proposal Contact Name: Mikaela Potrako
Website: www.thorncroft.org	Grant Proposal Contact E-mail: mikaela@thorncroft.org
EIN: 23-2218431	Grant \$ Amount Requested: \$50,000
Year Founded: 1969	

*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: Tiffany Meyer <i>Tiffany Meyer</i>	Date: 10/30/20
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**Nonprofit Field/s of Interest**

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

Figures	Current	PRE-COVID (as of 1/1/20)
Annual Operating Budget	\$ 1,503,400	\$1,503,400
Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff	# 8	# 8
# Board Volunteers	# 15	#15
# Committee Volunteers	#42	#42
# Active Direct Service Volunteers	#35	#115
Annual Volunteer Hours	# 2,143 (YTD 10/30/20)	# 6,895 (2019)

**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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> United Way ChesCo	<input type="checkbox"/> ChesCo Dept Comm Devel
<input type="checkbox"/> ChesCo Fund/W&Girls	<input type="checkbox"/> Phoenixville Comm Health Fdtn	<input type="checkbox"/> United Way S ChesCo	<input type="checkbox"/> ChesCo Dept Health
Other significant funders: Caroline A Buck Fdtn, Goshen Hill Fdtn, Herman O West Fdtn			<input type="checkbox"/> ChesCo Dept Human Svcs

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

**Narrative:** In a few concise paragraphs, please explain:

**1. Mission**

Thorncroft's mission is to develop the physical and emotional well-being of all people regardless of their individual challenges. We are committed to personal growth and education in an equestrian environment of respect, love and inclusion.

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

For 51 years, Thorncroft has proudly served riders of all abilities and challenges throughout Southeastern, PA, primarily the residents of Chester County.

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

Thorncroft uses horsemanship to develop the physical and emotional well-being of our riders in an environment of love and respect, helping them grow and excel in ways never believed possible. 50% of Thorncroft's ridership is comprised of therapeutic students having at least one cognitive, physical, or psychosocial disability. Our therapeutic student body represents over 50 different types of specialized needs including challenges like autism, Down Syndrome, generalized anxiety disorder, PTSD, and many other diagnoses.

Riding lessons take place in a mainstreamed environment- no separation between those with and without special needs. Thorncroft encourages an atmosphere of cooperation and respect, allowing riders of all abilities to collaborate in the common interest of riding. Our mission impacts all who walk through our doors and fosters our growth as individuals and as a community.

Pre-COVID, Thorncroft welcomed over 300 riders per week, many of whom rode multiple times per week. At the onset of COVID19 in March, Thorncroft was not considered an essential service under the stay-at-home orders in Pennsylvania, aside from the basic care of our horses. Due to these restrictions, Thorncroft temporarily suspended its riding program and creatively shifted the service of its mission because to our community, Thorncroft is essential. Thorncroft continued to impact the lives of 300+ riders and their families in innovative virtual ways from March through June. Since June, we increased the number of traditional riding lessons and participants progressively to ensure the health of our community and Thorncroft's adherence to all CDC, state, and federal guidelines. As of today, 231 students receive services on site. This ridership includes 12 United States military veterans, and 32 individuals participate in our new unmounted program, "Pony Tales".

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

##### Financial Implications of COVID19 on Thorncroft Equestrian Center

COVID19 driven regulations (stay at home orders, social distancing, etc.) eliminated program generated revenue from March through June and, drastically reduced this income in subsequent Months due to reduced ridership and limited capacity. Under normal circumstances lesson revenue partially off sets the cost of maintaining a 70-acre farm and caring for approximately 40 horses. While our lesson fees are minimal, we expect to generate approximately \$47,000 a month to subsidize our \$58,000/month cost of operation. From March to present, Thorncroft has lost over \$271,000 in lesson revenue due to the temporary suspension of the lesson program and limited capacity after reopening in June due multiple COVID19 related factors.

Social Distancing requirements limits the number of riders we can serve on site at given time. Pre-COVID, Thorncroft easily hosted groups of 6 riders in a lesson and up to 8 horses in our main arena at a given time. Respecting health and safety guidelines, Thorncroft no longer hosts more than 3 riders in the arena at a given time. Additionally, social distancing requirements limit the amount of staff, volunteers, and riders able to occupy the barn preparing horses for lessons, further limiting the capacity for logistical reasons.

Virtual school creates unique childcare situations for families leaving it almost impossible for adult recreational riders to return for daytime lessons reducing revenue normally generated during that time. Additionally, school programs who traditionally made up a large portion of our daytime ridership have also discontinued external trips due to funding and health concerns.

COVID19 health concerns forced Thorncroft to cancel summer camp in 2020 as it presented a health risk to the staff and our community. Thorncroft did not feel it could responsibly conduct our annual summer camp during the health concerns of COVID19. Traditionally, summer camp programming host 10 weeks of campers ranging in ages from 8-13 years old. Typical campers are beginners who require a leader and side aide while riding along with close supervision and physical assistance during unmounted horse related tasks. We did not feel that we could provide a safe, equestrian educational experience for these beginners while remaining socially distant. The decision to keep our riders and community safe by suspending summer camp in 2020 eliminated \$47,000 of anticipated revenue.

Lost program revenue diverted financial reserves away from addressing imperative capital repairs to fund the most basic needs of the horses and the organization. Thorncroft postponed two essential capital improvements, addressing arena footing and stormwater erosion concerns, due to the redirection of financial

reserves. To ensure the health and well-being of our horses, as well as return our service capacity to pre-COVID levels, Thorncroft must replace the footing in both arenas and mitigate the serious stormwater management concerns. These two essential initiatives constitute our funding request as they are critical to our success as an organization moving forward.

#### COVID19's effect on Thorncroft's ridership and community

COVID19 created feelings of isolation, exacerbated existing mental health issues, and prevented our riders from accessing the physical benefits of horseback riding. For our riders, Thorncroft plays a key role in their lives and circle of support. During times of great stress, we provide our riders and families with a safe, loving environment of inclusion and support. During the great stress of a global pandemic, providing Thorncroft's support remotely was an obstacle we had to address as an organization. In addition to their physical, cognitive or emotional challenges, many Thorncroft riders have additional health concerns that would put them at high risk for COVID19, further limiting their interaction with others during this time. Additionally, a portion of our therapeutic ridership come from group living facilities eliminated all outside visitors, including the family members, during this pandemic. More than ever our riders needed the social interaction, stimulation, and emotional support which Thorncroft provides.

#### Thorncroft's financial and programmatic resilience and innovation in the face of COVID19.

Upon realizing restrictions on larger gatherings were imminent and Thorncroft shifted its largest fundraiser of the year, the 35th Annual Victory Gallop, to a Virtual weeklong event and silent auction. We used this opportunity to share mission-oriented content with supporters and articulate the impact of Thorncroft's work within the community. Thorncroft also recognized an opportunity to support our for-profit partners within Chester County who were impacted by COVID19. During the first night of the virtual Victory Gallop we supported Carlino's of West Chester via a "Gala" Take-a-way dinner option. This innovative idea improved the experience of a virtual event and drove revenue directly into an impacted Chester County business by engaging our generous network of supporters.

Thorncroft replicated its unique, altruistic, environment of service remotely by engaging students and their families in a Giving Tuesday in June campaign to raise money for the Chester County Food Bank. Although we physically could not be together, Thorncroft served its mission of personal growth and well-being by helping families and individuals combat the isolation caused by COVID19 through participating in a group endeavor to steward change within our community.

Thorncroft addressed the isolation experienced by our therapeutic population through a letter writing and engagement campaign. In this initiative, staff members ensured that each of Thorncroft students received a letter and a phone call at least once a week from their instructor. To further connect with our students, Thorncroft staff scheduled "zoom meetings" with the horses, where a rider could Zoom with their favorite horse, chat with their instructor, and connect with the daily activity at the farm. For younger and/or developmentally challenged riders, Thorncroft began weekly, virtual story time with the horses connecting with these individuals in a fun and educational way. Based on feedback from parents and caregivers, these activities and small touches made a profound impact on the emotional and cognitive well-being of their child(ren) during this difficult time.

Thorncroft shifted clinics and other continuing education opportunities to a virtual platform allowing more participants and broadening the reach of our educational opportunities. One such virtual opportunity was an animal reiki clinic, which provided participants with a holistic education and the tools to remain resilient during this difficult time.

For over 10 years, Thorncroft welcomed members of our military community to participate in Veterans programming and Equine Assisted activities. We are proud that at Thorncroft, all veterans of the US armed services receive a full scholarship for their lesson expenses. Recently, Thorncroft created a new 6 week-long program designed to welcome new members of the veteran's community to our farm and address their specific needs and desired outcomes. This camaraderie-based program directly targeted the isolation issues

exacerbated by COVID19. Thorncroft's innovative veterans program emphasizes foundational principles of horsemanship including understanding herd dynamics, rounding penning and other groundwork requiring a close emotional connection with the horse. At the conclusion of the 6-week program in September, all the participating veterans chose to become weekly riders at Thorncroft.

To meet the needs of riders who could not ride safely while adhering to 6-foot social distancing guidelines because of their specialized needs Thorncroft created a new unmounted, educational program called "Pony Tales". The Pony Tales Program allows Thorncroft to begin serving the almost 300 individuals on our waiting list for traditional riding lessons. Thorncroft's innovative "Pony Tales" program is a 30-minute unmounted session with an instructor and horse which specifically addresses needs of the individual. Whether the desired outcomes for a participant are psychosocial, emotional, physical, or educational. Thorncroft's experienced instructors tailor each session to foster the personal growth and well-being each student. The Pony Tales program has allowed Thorncroft to serve a wide range of abilities while remaining in compliance with all COVID best practices and generate program revenue for the organization.

Thorncroft seized the opportunities created by COVID19 to maximize our digital footprint and explore innovative ways to improve our fundraising efforts. Following the success our Virtual Victory Gallop and positive feedback from its mission oriented digital content, the Thorncroft team expanded our social media and digital presence. Rather than bi-annual print newsletter, Thorncroft began a weekly e-newsletter. The virtual "new normal" presented the perfect opportunity to touch our entire community and keep people updated on the importance of our mission. Thorncroft also undertook the creation of a new website which streamlines our distribution of information and provides numerous avenues for people to become involved and fosters everyone's unique capacity to give during these unprecedented times. Thorncroft's outbound marketing statistics have improved dramatically compared to pre-COVID, with metrics consistently performing well above industry averages. During COVID Thorncroft built a robust virtual presence will continue to attract supporters and corporate sponsors during fundraising initiatives in the months ahead.

**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?**

Thorncroft was forced to redirect financial reserves away from essential capital improvements to meet the most basic operational expenses of the organization during the onset of COVID19. Through this funding opportunity we are requesting \$50,000 to support two infrastructure improvement projects which will grow our capacity, protect our existing assets, and ensure our organizational stability for decades of future service

Arena Footing Project

Equestrian arena footing provides a working surface that protects the hard and soft tissue structures of the horse during activity. Footing that is too old and compact, does not absorb the landing forces of each hoof fall, compressing the bones of the lower leg and transferring the axial shock upwards to proximal soft tissue structures. This leads to lameness, navicular, and a multitude of other equine injuries. Additionally, compacted footing inhibits the normal biomechanical movement of horse leading to tripping which creates significant hazard for both horse and rider. Unfortunately, both of Thorncroft's arenas are in this dangerously compacted and degraded state. We must undertake this project immediately for the safety of our horses and riders. Out of love and respect for our horses, we currently do not allow have Thorncroft's equine partners to work more than 1.5 hours per day due to the adverse effects of the old, compacted footing.

Due to COVID19, only independent riders are currently participating traditional riding lessons due to social distancing requirements. As a result, there is a limited number of horses that are appropriate for this population. The high demand for limited number of horses paired with health concerns associated with the footing in our arena significantly limits our capacity to increase our ridership and our capacity to serve our community. Not only is this improvement the humane choice for our horses, but it is also necessary to financially protect the organization from lost program revenue and costly veterinary bills. We cannot grow our lesson capacity until we undertake this critical capital improvement. As of

November 1, 2020, Thorncroft has 300 riders on our waitlist who we cannot begin to serve until this project is completed. Growing our capacity will expand our impact on Chester County and financially support our organization. We expect this arena improvement project to cost a minimum of \$51,000.

#### Stormwater management Project

The Stormwater run-off from the roof of the Barn and Main arena has created a serious erosion hazard. The force and magnitude of the water run off created a 150ft long, 17in deep (at max) trench through Thorncroft's corner field. The severity of this erosion concern is progressing at an exponential rate and must be mitigated immediately. Not only does this erosion create a significant hazard for our horses, staff and volunteers who enter the field, the stormwater sweeps sediment and manure run off into protected wetlands on Thorncroft's property. In partnership with French and Pickering Conservation Trust and the Chester County Conservation District, Thorncroft is developing a farm wide plan for addressing all erosion and land management concerns. The Corner field erosion is the primary focus for Thorncroft as we cannot safely utilize that field for turnout at this current time. This is limiting our capacity as Thorncroft cannot acquire new horses to meet the current needs of our needs of our independent riders with this field eliminated from use. To undertake this piece of Thorncroft's larger land management initiative, we expect to spend upwards of \$25,000 in labor, materials and associated soft costs (permits, etc.).

Receiving this funding to support our capital improvements would allow Thorncroft to increase the number of weekly traditional lessons and mitigate the financial impact of COVID19 leading to organizational sustainability.

**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?**

Thorncroft requests \$50,000 to make the necessary capital improvements to grow our capacity for service, protect our existing assets and remain financially resilient during COVID19. This request constitutes 3% of our general operating budget for 2020 and 12% of our anticipated \$368,000 deficit. Because the arena and stormwater management projects are essential to increasing our service capacity and to protecting our horses, each initiative will be undertaken as soon as possible. We expect both projects to be completed before December 31, 2021.

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

<input type="checkbox"/>	This Innovation & Resiliency Fund Grant Request cover sheet & brief narrative
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Current annual operating budget & most recent audit
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	501c3 determination letter
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Current strategic plan. If none, explain why your nonprofit doesn't have a plan.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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. This grant form is 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  
28 W. Market Street, The Lincoln Building  
West Chester, PA 19382  
[www.chescofc.org](http://www.chescofc.org)  
[grants@chescofc.org](mailto:grants@chescofc.org) 610.696.8211