



28 W. Market Street, Lincoln Biography Building
West Chester, PA 19382
610.696.8211 www.chescof.org



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

Contact Information

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| Nonprofit Org Name: Trellis for Tomorrow | ED/CEO Name: Jennifer Anderson, ED |
| Address: 30 Hall St, Suite 302 | ED/CEO E-mail: janderson@trellis4tomorrow.org |
| City, State Zip: Phoenixville, PA 19460 | Board Chair Name: Ray Schneider |
| Phone: 610-886-4901 | Grant Proposal Contact Name: Hannah Davis, Grants Manager |
| Website: https://trellis4tomorrow.org/ | Grant Proposal Contact E-mail: hdavis@trellis4tomorrow.org |
| EIN: 27-0268541 | Grant \$ Amount Requested: \$10,000.00 |
| Year Founded: 2009 | |

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.

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| Agreed by: Jennifer Anderson, Executive Director | Date: October 26, 2020 |
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Nonprofit Field/s of Interest

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|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------|
| 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 | \$527,787 | \$ 486,681 |
| Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff | 6 | 5 |
| # Board Volunteers | 8 | 7 |
| # Committee Volunteers | 3 | 1 |
| # Active Direct Service Volunteers | 10 | 6 |
| Annual Volunteer Hours | 330 | 152 |

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.

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|---|---|-------------------------------|--|---------------------|---|------------------------|
| ChesCo Comm Fdn | | Brandywine Health Fdtn | | United Way ChesCo | X | ChesCo Dept Comm Devel |
| ChesCo Fund/W&Girls | X | Phoenixville Comm Health Fdtn | | United Way S ChesCo | | ChesCo Dept Health |
| Other significant funders: Bader Philanthropies Leo & Peggy Pierce Family Foundation NBC Comcast Project Innovation Grant Nelson Foundation Pottstown Area Health and Wellness | | | | | | ChesCo Dept Human Svcs |

Narrative: In a few concise paragraphs, please explain:

1. Mission:

Trellis for Tomorrow fosters resilience and compassion in individuals and inspires them to build sustainable communities. We do this by delivering experiential programs in organic gardening, environmental education, and food security that provide practical and behavioral life skills for youth and adults.

Our work is considered "essential" due to our focus on food security through our two community-based, local garden programs--Food for All (FFA) and Youth Seed Enterprise (YSE). In 2019, these programs jointly provided

over 32,000 pounds of organic, fresh produce for food banks, pantries, and food insecure households. This equates to added nutritional content for over 128,000 meals. The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically heightened the issue of food insecurity as unemployment has soared and it has become increasingly difficult for even those who have not struggled previously to afford basic needs. Since Spring 2020, Trellis' programs have become even more essential as we work to simultaneously address food insecurity and offer developmental, experiential, learning opportunities to youth at a time when their anxiety and stress levels are extraordinarily high.

Youth Seed Enterprise (YSE) is a highly impactful "earn as you learn" youth development and food justice program. In YSE, youth age 13-18 years old use gardens as living classrooms to gain crucial 21st century skills practical and behavioral skills and address food insecurity. As they grow organic vegetables, YSE teens develop enterprises and methods to distribute produce into the areas of the community that need it most. Through cross-sector partnerships, expert facilitators, and guest speakers, YSE teens learn about systems change and how they can succeed personally and in changing in their communities.

Trellis' Food for All (FFA) program also operates across the Greater Philadelphia region in Chester, Montgomery, Delaware, and Philadelphia counties. FFA is an innovative organic garden program that provides life-giving, high-impact opportunities for corporations, universities, faith communities, and other organizations looking for meaningful community engagement. Trellis staff work with these partner organizations to design and install attractive raised-bed gardens on site. Trellis also provides a full stewardship plan for the garden and education to participants on gardening and food insecurity in our region. FFA partner gardens must donate at least 50% of all food grown at their site to help communities who are experiencing food insecurity and food access issues. FFA relies on participant gardeners to aid with garden preparation, planting, harvesting, and overall maintenance, including food production and distribution. In 2019, over 460 participant gardeners at 17 FFA sites donated over 90% of the food they grew to local community food pantries and food banks. In 2020, due to closures and COVID restrictions, our participant-base for FFA was greatly diminished, even while the need for healthy food increased.

Despite challenges, our staff adapted to the uncertainty and challenges caused by the pandemic and we were able to successfully plant, maintain, generate, harvest and distribute vegetables to local communities that need it most, while offering high-quality learning opportunities to youth and adults.

2. **What geographic area is served?** *(If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served)*
Trellis for Tomorrow primarily serves communities positioned in the northern section of Chester County. Our Youth Seed Enterprise and Youth Environmental Stewardship programs operate in Phoenixville and Spring City, at Fairview Village Apartments and Parks Spring Apartments communities respectively. Our Food for All (FFA) program includes garden partnerships with various businesses, organizations, and institutions across Chester County and in the broader 5 county area. Within Chester County, corporations such as Vanguard, Saint Gobain/Certainteed, and QVC and institutions such as Chester County Prison and Chester County Youth Center foster both personal health and resilience while improving awareness of and tackling issues of localized food insecurity that have only intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic. Organic, nutrient dense produce grown in FFA sites is donated to food banks and pantries located across the County.
3. **What population is served? How have your service numbers been impacted by COVID?**
Trellis works is at the nexus of positive youth development and food security, which results in our work impacting several populations as follows:
 - 1) Trellis for Tomorrow engages diverse sets of youth ages 13-24 who reside in low income communities. In the age of COVID-19, these young people are eager for social interaction, hands-on learning, and an opportunity to make a difference in their communities. In 2020, we had to cap participation to 10 youth per site to ensure we could operate in accordance with COVID-19 safety protocols. Despite this, we were still able to double the number of YSE sites from 2 to 4 and engage with 52 youth through multiple programs. In a normal year, we would have been able to accommodate 70-80 youth.

- 2) Our Food for All program operates at 17 garden sites across four counties, including Chester County, which is the home of a majority of our garden partners. In 2019, FFA engaged over 400 participant gardeners, but in 2020, we experienced greatly diminished participation because many garden partner sites were closed due to COVID-19 and no one was allowed on site. We estimate that fewer than 50 gardeners participated in the 2020 growing season versus 425 or more the prior year. Trellis staff stepped in to bear most of the responsibility, which still enabled over 95% of our partner gardens to be planted, maintained and harvested to meet increased demands for healthy food. We anticipate that Food for All will generate close to 20,000 lbs. of produce for the community, which is equivalent to approximately 80,000 meals.
- 3) In addition to our food insecurity and organic gardening programs, we also place Chester County youth in paid internships in non-profit organizations in the area. This summer, we were able to place 12 youth in 4-8 week, paid internship programs with partner organizations. One youth received a full-time job offer and another had her internship extended. All hosts said they are interested in continuing to host youth interns going forward.
- 4) Through program partnerships with communities, neighbors and food security organizations, Trellis for Tomorrow serves households that are suffering from food insecurity. We specifically target the communities of Fairview Village, Phoenixville, and Park Springs, Spring City, to proactively grow healthy vegetables in those communities to feed food insecure families and residents. Food grown at FFA garden sites benefits food bank and pantry recipients who live across the County. In 2020, we anticipate donating close to 25,000 pounds of produce to local food banks and pantries across all programs.

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

Amidst soaring economic hardship and rising unemployment rates, local food banks, pantries and social service organizations have had to ramp up services to respond to the immediate and growing number of financially challenged households during the pandemic. Trellis' programs provide a critical and substantial local source of fresh, organic, food of high-caloric value produce to communities in a manner that is community-based, dignified, and sustainable. In anticipation of the increased demand, we quickly ramped up our garden production efforts in March, despite dwindling volunteer engagement due to safety concerns. In addition, as virtual and hybrid education has increased social isolation, contributed to stress, and negatively impacted social and emotional learning opportunities, our youth programming was also a critical resource for the youth during this time. Our adaptability to a new youth-focused programming approach highlights our organizational resiliency in the face of challenges - the same resilience that we hope to cultivate in the young people we serve. Trellis youth program staff quickly pivoted to a highly effective, hybrid learning program that combined experiential and virtual opportunities so the teens in our programs would experience no interruption in their learning.

Trellis responded to the pandemic in the following ways:

- 1) Expanded existing youth-led gardens at Parks Spring Apartments, a subsidized housing complex in Spring City, with the help of a group of teens who participated in both in-person garden activities and virtual, group learning opportunities through our Youth Seed Enterprise (YSE) program.
- 2) Installed a new community garden, in partnership with Ann's Heart, at the HEART Building in Phoenixville that directly benefits neighbors.
- 3) Maximized planting, maintenance, and harvest schedules for three seasons of plantings at FFA partner gardens to produce the greatest amount of food to distribute to local pantries and neighbors in need. This required significantly more Trellis staff time and resources due a lack of access to program participants as a result of COVID 19.
- 4) Added a new YSE cohort and garden at Fairview Village Apartments, a subsidized housing complex in Phoenixville. A portion of the Fairview Garden was transferred to YSE from the Chester County Food Bank for this purpose. YSE teens expanded the garden significantly to increase production and impact on the surrounding community. This cohort of teens was particularly excited and engaged over the 8 week summer program and then for an additional 10 weeks in the fall.
- 5) Implemented new and extensive safety protocols for all programs and sites. This included hiring a designated staff person to research, design and implement safety plans. In addition, extra expense and time was needed to acquire and purchase PPE to maintain the health and safety of staff, youth participants, volunteers, and food recipients.

- 6) Adjustments were made to bridge the gap of lost special event income. Fundraising staff and volunteers had to re-structure special event planning that was originally planned as in-person events and inspire individual donors despite increased demands due to pandemic-induced needs in order to accommodate COVID-19 fundraising challenges and changes. This restructuring has taken additional staff time that we had not anticipated.
- 7) We continue to build a robust, paid internship program that helps the organization address critical needs both operationally and strategically, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic when volunteerism and participation is impacted by health and safety concerns. Our internship program seeks out the talent and expertise of college students in relevant majors and levels of academic pursuit. Already, the model has assisted the organization significantly in terms of projects that target pandemic challenges and also in other ways that benefit the organization.

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 from the CARE grant would be used to support:

- Further increasing the number of YSE gardens and cohorts that contribute to a more localized, accessible food system and to provide further opportunities for hands on, experiential, youth programming
- Costs associated with online, virtual adaptations such as Zoom charges, staff professional development associated with virtual instruction, and costs associated with hiring more contract instructors to assist with on-line instruction and activities to create engaging youth curriculum and sessions
- Staff costs and time associated with the planning and development of several program strategies that anticipate various COVID-19 scenarios--from virtual to hybrid to fully in-person
- Expenses to maintain safety strategies that enable our program to be offered with the highest degree of safety procedures and PPE in place. Expenses include purchasing of PPE, staff time in developing and implementing safety processes, and increased expenses such as providing ample transportation options that adhere to social distancing protocol but allow for opportunities and elimination of transportation barriers
- Assist with the enhancement of our currently established intern recruitment model in ways that address additional challenges posed by the pandemic.

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 respectfully request a grant in the amount of \$10,000 to assist past and future expenses associated with COVID-19's budgetary impact. For fiscal year 2020-2021, a \$10,000 request would be about a 2% impact to our operating budget. In 2020-2021, we do not anticipate a deficit although we are being mindful that government and philanthropic funding maybe more difficult to access due the pandemic's effect on government budgeting and deficit investment yields which directly impact for philanthropic giving. As the pandemic continues to persist and impact business as usual, we anticipate that funds will be used to defray past COVID-related expenses and expense that maybe acquired into fiscal year 2020-2021. Our fiscal year extends from October 1, 2020-September 30, 2021. The majority of the grant would be used between December 2020-June 2021, as we head into 2021 growing season and have expenses related to growing seedlings for spring planting, installing new and expanded garden sites to accommodate the growing need and health of communities, both in the time of COVID and beyond.

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

- 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

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