

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 ###





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

Contact Information

Nonprofit Org Name: Willistown Conservation Trust	ED/CEO Name: Jeanne B. Van Alen
Address: 925 Providence Road	ED/CEO E-mail: bva@wctrust.org
City, State Zip: Newtown Square, PA 19073	Board Chair Name: Elizabeth Hucker
Phone: 610-353-2562	Grant Proposal Contact Name: Kate Etherington
Website: www.wctrust.org	Grant Proposal Contact E-mail: kwe@wctrust.org
EIN: 23-2841453	Grant \$ Amount Requested: \$50,000
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: Kate Etherington	Date: 11/13/2020
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Nonprofit Field/s of Interest

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

Figures	Current	PRE-COVID (as of 1/1/20)
Annual Operating Budget	\$ 1,991,000	\$ 2,551,000
Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff	# 25	# 25
# Board Volunteers	# 21	# 22
# Committee Volunteers	# ~100	# ~100
# Active Direct Service Volunteers	# ~75	# ~200
Annual Volunteer Hours	# ~4,600	# ~4,700

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 Fdtn	United Way ChesCo	ChesCo Dept Comm Devel
ChesCo Fund/W&Girls	Phoenixville Comm Health Fdtn	United Way S ChesCo	ChesCo Dept Health
Other significant funders: William Penn Foundation, Richard King Mellon Foundation			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)?
		If yes, did your nonprofit's most recent federal single audit disclose any issues?
		If yes, have these issues been adequately addressed?

Narrative: In a few concise paragraphs, please explain:

1. Mission

Willistown Conservation Trust's mission is to preserve and manage the open land, rural character, scenic, recreational, historic, agricultural and natural resources of the Willistown area and nearby communities, and to share these unique resources with people of all ages and backgrounds to inspire, educate and develop a lifelong commitment to the land and the natural world.

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

The Trust's focal area is Willistown Township and portions of surrounding townships comprising approximately 28,000 acres; however, our programming and public preserves attract individuals, schools and groups from across Chester County and beyond.

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

The Trust has a variety of programs that serve people of all ages and backgrounds.

Ruston Nature Keepers is a nature education program running from April through December, open to youth ages 7-12. In 2019 this program served 57 individuals but was cancelled in 2020.

Rushton Farm is a 6-acre organic farm that is part of the 86-acre **Rushton Woods Preserve**. It grows over 130 varieties of fruits and vegetables for a 125 member CSA as well as for area food banks. In addition, Rushton Farm serves as a field study site for the University of Pennsylvania where students study the impact of agricultural practices on the ecosystem of the surrounding preserve. Rushton Farm typically sees thousands of visitors a year such as school, university and corporate groups, farm volunteers, and visitors to the Rushton Bird Banding station. These group and individual visits were largely cancelled. The Farm program worked with a reduced staff but saw an increase in volunteers (from 24 to 45) once Chester County moved into the Green Phase.

The **Rushton Conservation Center** is an education center with programs such as farm to table culinary demonstration dinners, lectures, film screenings, and yoga and wellness retreats. The RCC is also a rental facility, open to corporate groups, universities, garden clubs and other nonprofit organizations wanting to add a conservation component to their retreats, meetings or events. In 2019, the inaugural year of the RCC, we hosted approximately 1900 visitors and program participants. In 2020 we projected an increase to 2750 visitors based on a full calendar of events. All in-person programming and rentals have been cancelled since March 2020.

The **Watershed Protection** program, located in the headwaters of Ridley, Crum and Darby Creeks, ensures the long-term health of these streams through monitoring, restoration and best management practices. The Trust is a designated Field Study site for the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University. All water quality monitoring has been suspended. Macroinvertebrate sampling has been suspended this spring and fall. The 2020 spring tree plantings were closed to volunteers and completed entirely by staff. The fall tree planting was cancelled.

The Trust owns and maintains three, soon to be four, nature **Preserves** open to the public 365 days a year that attract thousands of visitors per year. We have seen a significant increase in visitors to our preserves since March 2020, putting additional wear and tear on our network of trails and an additional burden on our Stewardship department who has had to work with limited volunteer support, especially before Chester County entered the Green Phase.

The Trust's two major annual fundraising events, **Barns and BBQ** and **Run-A-Muck**, attract 300 and 500 attendees respectively, to celebrate the preserved open space in Willistown and raise critical funds for the Trust's programs. Both events were cancelled in 2020.

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

Nature doesn't stop during a global pandemic, and our programs continue operating at limited or full capacity. The **Land Protection** program continues to identify and actively work towards permanently protecting open space from future development. The **Land Stewardship** program continues to work on preserve and trail maintenance, as well as monitoring over 100 properties under conservation easement. The **Bird Conservation** program continues to study and monitor bird migration to inform scientific research and open space planning, banding over 1000 birds at our federally licensed banding station this fall. Despite the suspension of water sampling research, the **Watershed Protection** program worked with one intern and two Drexel Co-op students to complete independent research projects, engage the community through virtual events and educational webinars, and participate in streamside restoration through activities such as planting 690 trees along Ridley Creek in Ashbridge Preserve. The **Community**

Farm program worked with a limited staff to farm 27,000 pounds of fresh food from the 6-acre Rushton Farm for 125 families, as well as donating an additional 3,000 pounds to local food banks including the West Chester Food Cupboard.

The **Rushton Conservation Center**, in its second year of operation, was forced to close, and with that closure we lost the ability to host in person programming, especially revenue generating programming that helps offset the cost of owning and maintaining a building, as well as our educational programming. The organization's major fundraising events were cancelled, further reducing our fundraising opportunities. This decrease in revenue was coupled with an increased demand for our nature preserves, adding additional maintenance to our preserves and network of trails.

We also discovered that people still really wanted to learn about and connect with nature, which led to the launch of our virtual learning series - **Lunch and Learn** and **Nature at Night** - free, virtual educational programs led by our talented staff. In lieu of our major fundraising events, we hosted a week long, virtual **Conservation Celebration**, highlighting the importance of open space and land protection. This virtual experience included daily communications complete with articles, videos, and live virtual events celebrating the history and future of land conservation in our region. The Trust added additional virtual or self-guided events with a minor fundraising component including **Wildflower Week**, a self-guided wildflower tour, **Art on the Trails: Gallery Walk**, a self-guided tour of art throughout the preserves, **Cruise for Conservation**, a virtual bike race on a course traversing our conserved lands, the **Halloween Hike**, a nature walk at Kirkwood Preserve for families, and the recent launch of our **Community Supper Series**, a monthly meal pick up or picnic at Rushton partnering with local restaurants, growers, and other food suppliers with a focus on local, seasonal ingredients. These events have fostered engagement with our constituents, but did not make up for the revenue loss as most have been offered to the community free of charge or at a nominal fee.

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 would be used to enhance and expand our virtual and COVID safe programming including virtual lectures, safe community events, and virtual or outdoor educational programs so that we can continue to connect with and educate our community on important issues in conservation. Further, funds would be used to support necessary purchases for Rushton Farm that are required by the USDA including metal tables and a poured concrete floor in the farm shed where vegetables are harvested, processed, and distributed for the CSA.

The funds would help cover the cost of relevant staff salaries, guest speakers and other partners to continue to develop excellent virtual programming and redesign a safe Rushton Nature Keepers or other educational program. Funds will also assist with the purchase of unexpected items such as a Zoom subscription, hand sanitizers, wipes, signage and other COVID related infrastructure required to host staff and participants at outdoor or other COVID safe events. Additionally, the funds would help cover the costs of building maintenance and expenses for the Rushton Conservation Center, which remains closed, and the Rushton Farm Shed and Greenhouse for a safe working environment for staff and volunteers.

People staying home are looking for opportunities to learn and socialize safely, as well as outdoor spaces to safely exercise and find respite. Willistown Conservation Trust is in a unique position, with our access to open space and experts in the field of conservation. The Trust's virtual educational programming has attracted 510 participants since May. Our in person, self-guided events attracted 338 attendees. Further, our nature preserves remain a popular space for hundreds of individuals and families. These free or low cost virtual events have provided a beneficial service to our community, an opportunity for the Trust to reach a new audience, and educate people about the many important issues in conservation.

With no end in sight for COVID, especially as we move into the colder months, we feel an obligation to continue virtual programs for our community as well as continue to develop safe, experiential activities and events. These popular programs have helped people stay connected to one another as well as develop deeper connections to and appreciation of the natural world. In order to meet our mission "...to share these unique resources with people of all ages and backgrounds to inspire, educate and develop a lifelong commitment to the land and the natural world", we must innovate and find new ways to connect with and teach our community.

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?

The Trust is respectfully requesting \$50,000 from the Chester County Nonprofit Innovation and Resiliency Fund. The cancellation of events due to COVID resulted in the loss of gross budgeted revenue of \$220,000 in fundraising event revenue and \$95,000 in Rushton Conservation Center programming and rental revenue, as well as the lost opportunity to engage constituents, local businesses and community partners in our mission. Additionally, Rushton Farm must implement safety measures in their food processing facilities to ensure that food is processed safely, totally \$5,900 worth of infrastructure, including a new concrete floor, stainless steel sink, steel processing tables, sanitized storage cabinets, hygienic wall coverings and safety partitions for staff. We anticipate these funds will be put to use immediately and used within 6 months, as we are actively developing additional virtual and experiential programming for the remainder of 2020 and early 2021 as well as preparing for the 2021 Farm season.

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.
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. This grant form is available at <https://chescocf.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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grants@chescocf.org 610.696.8211