

I. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

Date 4/16/2021

Contact Information

Organization Name: Kennett Library
Address: PO BOX 730, Kennett Square, PA 19348
Phone: 610-444-2702
Website: www.kennettlibrary.org
Year Incorporated: 1896
FEIN: 23-1547585

ED/CEO Name: Megan Walters
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Board Chair Name: Jeff Yetter
Board Chair Approval (check here):
Primary Contact Name: Wright Horne
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Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

Arts, Culture & Humanities Environment/Animal Welfare Education
 Health Human Services Religion

Mission:

The mission of the Kennett Library is to serve as the center for life-long learning and the destination for the discovery of ideas, the joy of reading, and the power of information throughout our service area in Southern Chester County, PA.

Geographic Area Served (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served):

All of Chester County

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served:

The core service area of the Kennett Library encompasses eight municipalities with about 44,000 residents, and has effectively doubled over the past 60 years. The year-round jobs created in the area's \$2.6B mushroom industry have fueled population growth and accelerated demographic diversification. In particular, Hispanics now comprise about 8% of Chester County's population. Today the population within walking distance of our facility is currently nearly 50% Hispanic, many with minimal English fluency and some even without literacy in Spanish, clearly a heavily disadvantaged group.

Annual Budget \$ 962,830.00 13.5 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
85 % of budget for program expenses 20 # of Board Volunteers
7 % of budget for administrative expenses 1,432 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers
8 % of budget for fundraising expenses 7,717 # of Volunteer Hours

It should be noted that the libraries of the CCLS do not break down expense into these categories. We present figures that are approximations of direct program costs, although everyone in a modern library is involved in program!

Top 3-5 funding sources for this project:

1) The eight municipalities we serve; 2) Commonwealth of PA; 3) Cabot Kjellerup Foundation; 4) Forney Family Foundation

Is this grant proposal for: Capacity Building or General Operating **Neither**. Capital Needs

Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: This is a major (\$18M) undertaking. Gifts of any amount are welcome.

Proposal Summary: The Kennett Library seeks funding for the new Kennett Library and Resource Center scheduled to open late 2022. The current library building was built c.1960, and has outlived its viability several times over. The needs of the community (as evidenced by a Visioning Study) are for a larger, more technologically resourced facility, with parking, classrooms, a multipurpose space for lectures, etc., more room for the highly successful Adult Literacy Program, and a facility that is fully ADA-compliant.

II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Provide clear, concise information. 3 pages maximum.

1. Nonprofit's history, goals, key achievements & distinctiveness

The Kennett Library first opened its doors in 1896. It is the primary provider of public library services and is a major center of learning and gathering for eight municipalities in Southern Chester County, Pennsylvania: Kennett Square Borough and the Townships of Kennett, New Garden, Newlin, Pennsbury, Pocopson, West Marlborough, and East Marlborough.

Given our large immigrant population, much of our programming focuses on their special needs. Since 1979 our robust Adult Literacy Program (ALP) has offered literacy services to 8,000+ adult learners from over 50 countries and five continents. ALP provides English as a Second Language (ESL) and adult literacy instruction through a blended model of classroom-based learning and one-to-one sessions with over 100 trained volunteer tutors, including support for obtaining GEDs and passing American citizenship tests. To reach as many students as possible, ALP offers day, evening, and on-line classes, and a computer-based English Language Lab. As a result of programs like ALP, the Kennett Library has become a unique and critical bridge between our immigrant communities, the employers who rely on them, and the community at large.

Services Provided

As a Chester County regional library, we of course offer many traditional services centered around lending informational and recreational media, providing computers and internet access, and supporting a professional reference desk. More uniquely, our Library also offers a far more extensive set of free community programs than any other Chester County regional branch. These range from author talks to book clubs, musical story times to game nights, and formal instruction to informational seminars. Such offerings bring together families with young children, tweens and teens during out-of-school time, older adults who need help navigating modern technology, immigrants looking to improve their English skills, and people of all ages seeking connections with neighbors. To the extent our currently obsolete and overcrowded facility permits, we also offer free meeting space to a wide variety of community organizations.

2. Funding request

- **Description of key initiatives**

The Community Challenge and Need

The Kennett Library first opened in 1896, and from its beginning, it has served as a major center of learning and gathering for Southern Chester County. In 1960 a new facility was built to better support the growth in the region. Since then, however, our population has doubled to almost 50,000, while the library's role has expanded, incorporating many new technology-driven media and learning tools, and adding a plethora of educational, recreational, and civic activities, some barely imaginable in 1960. As a result, our current facility is now as overwhelmed as the 1896 building once was.

A recent Visioning Study found community participants calling for an upgraded library with more books, better technology and improved amenities, especially spaces for community gatherings, currently in short supply in our area. However, architectural studies have conclusively determined it impractical to sufficiently expand/update our facilities on our current site. Besides the basic lack of space for both materials and activities, the facility's

antiquated core systems - utilities, parking, access, storage, etc. - are seriously deficient, often violating modern building codes.

While these severe limitations affect all our patrons, those least advantaged are most impacted. Our area's growing economy and its uniquely diverse culture are very much due to the efforts of our numerous immigrants. Many of these have minimal discretionary funds, depending heavily on the library for free/low-cost educational and recreational material, literacy and citizenship classes, and technology support, plus a safe, comfortable, welcoming place to read, listen, study and meet. Our obsolete facility makes it increasingly difficult for us to provide this population with the crucial support it needs, a serious impediment for promoting social equity throughout the entire community.

- **Specific needs & issues to be addressed**

Meeting the Challenge

It became clear to the Kennett Library Board of Trustees that a new library had to be built to solve the issues with the current building and site. Negotiations with neighbors for additional space did not bear fruit, so the only solution was to find a new site nearby so current foot traffic patrons could continue to walk to the Library, and to begin a comprehensive community effort to build support for the Project.

The Project includes building and outfitting a new facility, to be called the Kennett Library and Resource Center, designed to fully support the library's key roles in the community while addressing the community's most pressing unmet needs. To do so, the new facility will be highly flexible and sustainable, able to accommodate the likely social and technological changes and challenges both our community and libraries in general will be facing in the coming decades.

Libraries are also upgrading themselves to become active workforce development centers, helping individuals and small businesses acquire new skills and contacts, which can have a big impact on an area's economic growth and well-being. To underline this point, a recent study found that each \$1 invested in libraries overall contributes \$5 to the local economy.

The 2017 Visioning Study pointed out, "Library science continues to search for new resource technologies, always facing the obstacles of older buildings for which these technologies were never anticipated. The only constancy about technology is that it probably won't resemble what it replaces. This is a basic truth that all buildings face, but is magnified in libraries, given their mission."

Given this reality, the Study respondents prioritized what to them were the most important roles of the library in the community, ranked in importance here:

- providing lifelong learning resources for all ages
- supporting digital literacy for all ages
- supporting and promoting basic literacy (reading) for all ages
- serving as a welcoming and safe place for social interaction for everyone

They also provided the five most desired features for any new facility:

- a substantially larger building
- more and free parking
- larger print and digital collections

- need for a far more accessible building (i.e. one where everyone can easily enter and navigate)
- need for state-of-the-art community meeting and study spaces.

In short, the new facility will address all the shortcomings of the current one:

- It will be attractive and light-filled.
- It will be fully ADA compliant and accessible.
- It will have adequate on-site parking.
- It will be energy efficient.
- It will offer additional amenities desired by the community that are expected to attract more patrons and regular users.

- **Why it is important to fund this now**

Our constituents – the residents of the one Borough and seven townships served by the Kennett Library - deserve and need an up-to-date facility so that they can continue to prosper and grow in the many ways that a library can make possible. Our current facility limits their options. And as we noted, the building is too small, is non-ADA compliant, is landlocked preventing expansion, and has a slowly deteriorating infrastructure. By most measures, we are ten years past the point of needing a new library. The Board, assisted by many community leaders and volunteers, has made impressive headway on fundraising goals. There is a real momentum towards the goal of \$18M, with a combination of municipal, state, county, foundation, corporate, and individual donors, and the project will need the efforts of all community members to help make this happen. If not now, then when?

- **How impact & results will be demonstrated**

Our project's most impactful projected Outcomes by impact category are:

Promoting Literacy: Visitation will increase 30% from 110,545 per year to 144,000 in 2023. Items circulated will increase 40%, from 178,076 in 2019 to 249,000 in 2023. Also, 400 more students and adults will visit the new library per week to use the classrooms and meeting rooms. We use library foot traffic and the number of meetings held in classrooms and auditorium to track these Outcomes.

Providing Resources: During 2023, additional meeting room access and new technology capacity will enable unlimited new live and remote connections allowing distance learning for 200 additional programs. Further, the improved free Wi-Fi connection inside and outside on the Library grounds will double Wi-Fi sessions to 24,000, while inside computer sessions will increase by 30% to 10,100 sessions annually for a total of all sessions of 34,100.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity: By 2024 we anticipate a 10% increase in the circulation of specified library materials which have been designated for at-risk populations, plus a 10% increase in library programs for at-risk populations. Further, we will prioritize meeting space availability to community nonprofits that serve these at-risk populations.

Community Investment: In keeping with Chester County's Strategic Plan, building the new library in Kennett Square strengthens the urban center, while promoting land preservation in the neighboring townships. By 2023, the projected increase in the number of local and non-local visitors to the library is anticipated to contribute to \$1.89 million in visitor spending.