

# CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

**One page only.** This page will be shared electronically with Grant Panel Members & Fund Advisors.

Note: If Philanthropy Network's Common Grant Application is used, CCCF's **Summary Sheet MUST accompany application.**

To obtain an electronic version of this application, visit [www.chescocf.org](http://www.chescocf.org)

**Date** August 23, 2021

## **Contact Information**

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Year Incorporated: 2010 Primary Contact Name: Hallie Romanowski  
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## **Organization Information:**

### **Field/s of Interest:**

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

**Mission:** To build a community that empowers the un- and under-employed to stabilize their households and build toward self-sustainability.

**Geographic Area Served** (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served): Our financial assistance is limited to the West Chester zip codes. Anyone in the county can shop for groceries at our Community Cupboard.

**Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served:** We serve the un- and under-employed. In 2020 we provided services to 523 unduplicated households - 853 adults and 453 children.

<b>Annual Budget</b> \$226,000	2.4 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
74 % of budget for program expenses	8 # of Board Volunteers
16 % of budget for administrative expenses	24 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers
10 % of budget for fundraising expenses	2651 # of Volunteer Hours
<i>100 % total</i>	

## **Top 3-5 funding sources:**

**Is this grant proposal for:** Capacity Building **X** or General Operating \_\_\_\_?

## **If Capacity Building Proposal, the focus is:**

Mission, Vision & Strategy  Governance & Leadership  Partnerships & Collaborations  
 Fundraising, Development & Marketing  Technology Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation:** \$5,000\_\_

**Proposal Summary:** We are requesting funds that will help us expand our services and our collaborative efforts with partner agencies. In Spring of 2022, we will relocate to larger space at a new location. These funds will fund a new dedicated ACT in Faith entrance, outdoor signage, moveable cubicle walls and information display kiosks for both our waiting room and Community Cupboard.

## II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

*Provide clear, concise information. 3 pages maximum.*

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

ACT in Faith was created in 2010 by members of the Religious Council of Greater West Chester in response to the growing needs of the community. They found that many of those in need: 1) did not meet the criteria to qualify for support through other social services, 2) were facing a crisis that was not addressed by any other organization, or 3) had no idea what resources were available, where to go for support, or how to navigate the services available. As an interfaith collaborative organization, we believe that by working together we build a stronger community. We provide support in 3 basic program areas: Basic Need (e.g. groceries, medical expenses, clothing) Employment Support (e.g. photo ID, car expenses, job search/resume support, childcare, work clothing, cell phone, bus tokens) and Housing Stabilization (e.g. eviction prevention, security deposits, utility expenses.) The services through which these programs provide support are: Client Emergency Fund - emergency financial assistance, Community Cupboard - grocery cupboard with a significant focus on personal care and household items (not covered by SNAP/FoodStamps) and perishable and non-perishable foods to supplement what people can afford to purchase, receive via SNAP, or obtain at another area cupboard. In addition, our ACT Now Network - in an email network for people willing to be informed when there is an urgent need (e.g. clothing, home goods, ride to doctor) for the population described.

This organization was created with the intent of helping people navigate the social service system and providing "gap services" - services that lie beyond the scope of other social services but present as barriers to self-sustainability. This also includes services to those who may have exhausted support through other resources but still need additional support in order to stabilize their household.

While we cannot predict the types of requests we will receive, the number of people served has increased every year and we have seen trends in the types of needs each year. Over our first four years we were preventing and average of 44 evictions per year and 28 utility shut-offs per year. As other agencies grew their rental and utility assistance programs that number dropped to approximately 32 and 15 respectively, per year. As those numbers dropped, our employment support services increased. This can be attributed to our strengthening relationships with agencies that serve populations, such as the homeless, who need very basic support in order to gain employment and begin earning an income. (i.e. bus tokens to get to interviews, photo IDs to start work, cell phone minutes to contact potential employers, work clothing, and car expenses) With the pandemic the need for our support with housing stabilization spiked on 2020. In 2021, as sociality resumed "normal" activity and county funds became available for those experiencing COVID life-disruptions we are seeing our employment support number spike to an all-time high.

Over our 10 years we have developed relationships and often formal referral processes with a wide variety of Chester County social services, such as but not limited to; Safe Harbor, Salvation Army, Friends Association, North Star, Gaudenzia, St. Agnes Outreach Services, Hope Ministries, Human Services, Open Hearth, Domestic Violence Center, CVIM, Family Services, and Home of the Sparrow. Many people in their programs, and some who merely reach out to them for support, are in need of services that fall beyond the scope of these agencies. We have become a relied-upon resource for these organizations and receive client referrals daily. A recent review of our referral sources revealed that 65% of our client referral come to us from another social service organization. Faith communities, public utilities, local government officials, the local school district and university, and previous clients make up the remaining 35%.

Prior to the pandemic, we had determined that we would need to relocate to a larger space if we were to grow our programs to better support of the community, and to accommodate the amount of work space and supplies that it now takes to operate. Talks were stalled by the pandemic but resumed late last summer and arrangements have been made for us to relocate to larger space in a building on Barnard St. owned by our current "landlord", Church of the Holy Trinity. We will share the space with Holy Trinity's thrift store and the non-profit, Parish Hall Kitchen(PHK), both of with whom we currently partner in a variety of ways. The thrift store will be expanding both product space and days of operation and PHK will be opening a new social enterprise cafe. A graphic depicting the partnerships is included with the Funding budget.

## 2. Funding request

### • Description of key initiatives

Larger space will provide:

- A separate entrance for ACT in Faith
- More storage
- Increased space for more volunteers
- The ability to maintain the recently enlarged physical space for our Community Cupboard
- Increased privacy for those seeking our support

This new space will allow for program enhancement and growth such as:

- Expansion of goods offered in our Community Cupboard
- Computer station for client use
- A dedicated “satellite” space for partner agency to use when serving their West Chester clients
- Large group space for meetings, small events, & trainings
- More volunteers to assume a greater portion of the routine client support which will enable staff to dedicate their attention to helping people with system and resource navigation, employment support, and overall case management

### • Specific needs & issues to be addressed

These funds will help provide a new dedicated ACT in Faith entrance that will afford our clients the privacy they deserve when coming to us for assistance. Preserving dignity is of the utmost concern for us as we serve a population who often feels marginalized, embarrassed, and afraid. In our current location people enter a church to get downstairs to our offices, while not direct access to our offices, is far better than entering as public cafe or thrift store entrance to get to us. The new entrance will allow clients to enter directly into our office space. Similarly, our work stations in our current location are in a fairly small space making it a constant challenge to maintain privacy. Our new space will be larger and afford us space for mobile cubical walls to heighten the privacy. They will also accommodate the creation of space designated for other agencies, based in other areas of the county, who serve residents of West Chester. “Visiting” agencies can use our space as a satellite for client meetings and document drop-offs which will make it easier for them to service people in this area. We have had discussions with several agencies who are very excited about this new opportunity to collaborate. Mobile walls, as opposed to constructed walls, also allow for flexibility in workspace design and are more cost effective. The addition of signage on the outside of the building will allow people to locate our new office entrance, and a resource information kiosk is needed so we can offer clients current information on a wide variety of other resources.

### • Why it is important to fund this now

Prior to the pandemic our need for larger space had become quite evident. The pandemic has only served to affirm our convictions.

Over our 10 years we have come to realize that “system navigation” was a never ending challenge for the population we serve. Unemployment, Social Security, county benefits, subsidized housing programs, and the online job application process are invaluable resources/benefits/services but can be seemingly insurmountable hurdles for those in crisis. Every year we spend more and more time assisting people navigate these systems. And while our staff has the experience and relationships to help people work through these challenges we’ve found that these situations take a significant investment of time. Space for additional volunteers would allow staff to spend more time working on complex client scenarios and off-load other more general tasks to the new volunteers.

When the pandemic caused the church to close we were able to move our Community Cupboard upstairs into their Parish Hall and expand it to keep-up with growing needs. While the pandemic prompted us to expand our Community Cupboard it is the stronger relationships that we have forged with the West Chester Food Cupboard and Chester County Food Bank, the fact that our Cupboard will no longer fit in its pre-pandemic space, and the need for us to offer a wider variety of personal care and household items, that makes more space necessary sooner as opposed to later.

This larger space will provide ample room to meet our current and future needs by allowing us room for more volunteer work stations, storage, and better distanced work space as well as space available for other agencies to use as a satellite for meeting with West Chester clients.

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

A dedicated ACT in Faith entrance and cubical walls will allow for a higher level of privacy and display of respect that people deserve. "Visiting" agencies will be able to provide better service and a level of convenience for people who are struggling because this new space and cubical walls will allow them to meet with West Chester clients in a professional office setting and have a place their clients can get documents copied, mailed, or held for pick-up - thus removing barriers that often lead to people not getting the support they need to stabilize their households. Our ability to share as much of the most current resource information is an "unsung" service we provide. Part of filling gaps is making sure people are aware of every resource available to them and their families. And while we are only moving around the corner, signage on the outside wall will make it easier for new and existing clientele to find us.

- ***How will this capacity building initiative impact your nonprofit?***

The founders of this organization knew it would take years to make a noticeable impact and gain credibility. They also knew that their initial intent of helping people connect to resources, and in the absence thereof attempt to meet the need themselves, was only the beginning. We have not only become a relied-upon resource and socials service partner but we have learned an amazing amount about the journey of the un- and under-employed. And as a result, have identified new opportunities for us to provide services that can help reduce the amount of time a household remains unstable and vulnerable. The items for which we are requesting your support are crucial to our ability to help more people in a more effective way as they strive to become self-sustainable.

- **How will this impact be measured?**

We have always tracked the number of households/individuals, they types of service, and the amount of financial and in-kind requests we've filled. In 2019, we implemented a new CRM database which is giving us the ability to track and measure data in a whole new way. In 2021, realizing that a growing amount of our time is invested in non-monetary support (e.g. job search/resume, housing voucher assistance, unemployment system navigation, and online job application) we have begun tracking the number of households that we assist in this manner and we believe strongly that this number will grow significantly once we have space to support more volunteers and dedicate staff time to these more complex scenarios.

We already have 2 organizations awaiting the new satellite space and expect that number to grow, thus helping them enhance their services. This data will also be tracked. How people feel regarding the level of privacy and respect we show may be less easily tracked but client testimony will be solicited in the future as it has been in the past via short paper surveys.

- **Include a description of the expected activities; timeline & costs to implement the initiative. If external consulting services are required, include the anticipated costs & expertise of the consultants to be hired. Include external consultant proposals if applicable.**

See attached budget and timeline.