

# CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

Date September 12, 2021

## Contact Information

Organization Name: Phoenixville Women's Outreach  
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Phone: (484) 302-8151  
Website: <https://phxvillewomensoutreach.org/>  
Year Incorporated: 2014  
FEIN: 47-227-0202

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## Organization Information:

### Field/s of Interest:

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

### Mission:

To help single homeless and low-income women from crisis to independence by providing housing with a structured program of stability; resources and support to break the cycle of dependence and poverty; a savings program to aid in becoming financially independent; skills training empowering self-sufficiency, confidence, and independence; and job placement assistance, interviewing practice, and employment guidance.

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

We serve the greater Philadelphia area. Our clients are predominantly from Chester County with some from Montgomery, Bucks and Delaware County.

### Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served:

We serve single women who are experiencing homelessness. Our clients do not have dependents. On average, we house and support 12-14 people a year in our 6-bed home. Our second site has 5 beds.

**Annual Budget** \$ 202,366      1 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff  
86 % of budget for program expenses      12 # of Board Volunteers  
7 % of budget for administrative expenses      35 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers  
7 % of budget for fundraising expenses      2750 # of Volunteer Hours

### Top 3-5 funding sources:

Our top funding sources are individual donors and foundation grants. In 2020, we received just over \$65,000 from individuals and \$170,000 in grants. Our Foundation funding in the last year:

**Phoenixville Community Health Foundation** general operations (\$10,000); **Westminster Presbyterian Church** purchase and install windows (\$10,000); **100 Women of Phoenixville** general operations (\$17,000); **Phoenixville Community Health Foundation** restricted mortgage money (\$50,000); **Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation** general operations (\$5000).

**Is this grant proposal for:** Capacity Building  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:** \$ 3,325

**Proposal Summary:** We aim to improve our technology that has not been upgraded since our start over 6 years ago. Upgrades include computers available for our clients and our website.

## II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

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

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

In 2014, after decades of serving meals to those in need, our founders Cheryl and Barry Messere were surprised to come upon women living in tents by the river in the winter's cold. Feeling an immediate calling, they discovered the town had a men's shelter and a family shelter; but nothing for women. The Messere's began to spread this news to other inspired volunteers who rallied support of agencies, churches, and organizations. They committed to establishing a transitional housing program for single women. "The House" welcomed its first participants in January 2015. Purposely near the bus route, and in walking distance to many community resources, The House is a shared living experience which houses 6 women at a time. Unlike other shelters which require women to vacate after 8 weeks, our regulations allow stays for 9 -12 months as long as participants are employed, following house rules and saving money. Time at The House includes personal goal setting and small group workshops on life, social and health skills. We have a unique mandatory savings program that helps create a nest egg for our clients. A commitment to save 60% of their income is made by our participants. Motivation comes from a matching grant program we have with BB&T Bank.

A few years after we began offering health and healing, it became clear that affordable housing in the area was extremely limited. After working towards self-sufficiency, our participants were having a hard time finding a feasible 'next step.' In response, Phoenixville Women's Outreach created a second program at a new site. Our 'Next Step House' (opened in 2020) is a shared living arrangement for women that offers independence and affordable rents. Subsidies are available to eligible residents with a new partnership with the Housing Authority of Chester County. The program has been established somewhat as a pilot program creating a living situation that does not exist anywhere else nearby. The Next Step House has created a safe, comfortable home in the community where women from our transitional home have established jobs, health networks, spiritual communities and social bonds.

We achieved a great deal in our short history. Acquiring a second property and opening our Next Step House was a tremendous achievement for our organization. We were able to commit to the project with support from both the Phoenixville Community Health Foundation and the Affordable Housing Task Force. Our second site doubled the number of women that we can help at a time. In 6 1/2 years, we have helped 78 women, of which 40% have been elderly. Clients leave The House with a job, savings, renewed hope, increased self-esteem, and pride. Throughout the time of Covid-19, we stayed open and continued serving women in need. From the middle of March 2020 until now, throughout the pandemic, we brought in 20 women and gave them respite to prepare for the next step of their life. In January of 2021, we welcomed our first, full-time paid Executive Director. With this hire and restructuring, we find ourselves moving from the infancy of our organization to adolescence. As we move from our start-up phase to one of growth, our top priorities are focused on greater stability, effectiveness and efficiency in delivering our mission. With on-going strategic planning, we assess our outcomes and the way we measure success to strengthen our service model to better serve our clients. We work to continue to improve fiscal management and reporting to ensure transparency and compliance with current IRS and nonprofit standards. Our Board of Directors is committed to ensure the staff and volunteers have the support needed to do their jobs effectively. We are cognizant of the importance of the quality of our facilities which require continued maintenance and improvements. Upgrades are needed at the old farmhouse apartments. We assume the responsibility of the utility costs to run both our homes which includes electric, trash, water, internet and security.

### 2. Funding request

Phoenixville Women's Outreach has accomplished a great deal in less than 7 years and for that we are proud. As with anything, sustainability, success and growth need continued maintenance. All organizations are challenged to keep up with technology needs. We have not upgraded our client computers or our website since we began in 2015.

## CLIENT COMPUTERS

Since 2015, our transitional program allows women experiencing homelessness to heal and connect to essential services and opportunities. We often say that our program works for you if you *work* the program. While in our program, we encourage each participant to learn, produce and connect:

- We offer workshops and individual consultation on a variety of issues from job searching, interviewing, physical and medical health. We encourage the women to continue their learning beyond our workshops and meetings.
- Our Housing Director and volunteers help our clients work through a number of systems including social security, housing applications, voucher eligibility, disability and health insurance. Most of these agencies require online research and forms.
- We encourage our participants to create and/or strengthen their support networks. This can include spiritual communities, hobby circles and social engagement. If the pandemic has taught us nothing else, it gave us confidence in staying in tune with many groups via the web.

All of these aforementioned individual goals, plus others, are possible with access to the internet and printers. At our start we offered 3 new laptops in the common areas of our home for client use. Today, these 3 computers are antiquated and unreliable. We are hoping to replace our 7-year-old computers with new Chrome books.

We would like to supply 3 new Chrome books at \$260 each along with 3 wireless mice at \$15 each. Total expense \$825.

We love the idea of installing the new computers as a Holiday gift! At the very latest we would hope to have new computers in by the end of Winter 2022.

## PWO WEBSITE

Like our client computers, our website is 7 years old. It is a simple and free WordPress work up. We are hoping to upgrade to a more modern, user-friendly and appealing site.

An upgraded site will include Google Analytics code to monitor traffic and provide insights to use behavior. The new site will also be lined to our social media, have the capacity to host a blog, store video content ad a sitemap that will properly index and crawl our site.

Our website is so important for the connection it creates between us and the community:

- Clients- Many of our participant's find us through web searches. The first step of our intake involves an online application on our website.
- Volunteers- On our website, we offer explanation of the many service opportunities that we offer. Prospective volunteers can find our online Volunteer Application on our website.
- Donors- Our website is crucial in drawing people closer to our mission. On our website, we can validate the need for our services, showcase our accomplishments, and demonstrate our need for help. The website can make it simple and appealing to donate to our work and easily find our Wish List.
- Foundations- Our website is often a funder's first interaction with our organization. It benefits us to be able to put our best foot forward on our home page.
- Global community- Our intention is to broaden our scope by becoming a content provider. We are currently working on an *Ask Column* that will respond to questions on the landscape of homelessness. For example, a weekly post on this blog can answer the questions, "Why are we encouraged to say 'a person experiencing homelessness' as opposed to 'a homeless person?'" These efforts, of course, will be housed on our site.

We have met with Virtual Vista Media who are ready to work with us to create the site we need. They have quoted their work for the build for \$2,500. We would like to launch our new site Spring 2022.