

I. 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

Date 8/20/21

Contact Information

Organization Name: Valley Forge Educational Services
Address: 1777 North Valley Road, Malvern, PA 19355
Phone: 610-296-6725
Website: www.vfes.net
Year Incorporated: 1959
FEIN: 23-6050757

ED/CEO Name: Grace Fornicola
ED/CEO E-mail: grfornicola@vfes.net
Board Chair Name: Robert Weaverling
Board Chair Approval (check here):
Primary Contact Name: Carla Zajac
Primary Contact E-mail: cazajac@vfes.net

Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

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

Mission: Valley Forge Educational Services prepares children and adults with special needs to realize their potential as contributing members of the community.

Geographic Area Served (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served): VFES and The Vanguard School serve all of Chester County. Vanguard students come from 9 school districts including: West Chester, Coatesville, Kennett Square, Avon Grove, Owen J. Roberts, Tredyffrin/Easttown, Phoenixville, Oxford, and Octorara.

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served: The Vanguard School serves approximately 250 students, 4–21 years of age, who require a high degree of individualized attention and intervention. Our students include those with autism spectrum disorders, developmental disabilities, speech-language deficits, and students who experience social-emotional and executive functioning difficulties.

Annual Budget \$17,020,145	<u>240</u> # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
<u>84</u> % of budget for program expenses	<u>9</u> # of Board Volunteers
<u>15</u> % of budget for administrative expenses	<u>49</u> # of Active Non-Board Volunteers
<u>1</u> % of budget for fundraising expenses	<u>709</u> # of Volunteer Hours
<u>100</u> % total	

Top 3-5 funding sources: Pennsylvania Department of Education; Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation; Program Fees; Foundations/Corporations and Individuals.

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: \$5,000

Proposal Summary: There are several important benefits of swinging for students with special needs including aiding in self-regulation, sensory input, focus and stress reduction. Swinging also provides our socially challenged students a safe and natural setting to congregate with their peers. Currently, our 195 Upper School students have no designated swing-set. A \$5,000 grant from the Chester County Community Foundation will have lasting impact at The Vanguard School. Installing a 6-seat swing-set at our Upper School will meet the important therapeutic needs of current and future students as well as enhance their social and emotional well-being.

II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Provide clear, concise information. 3 pages maximum.

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

Over the past sixty years, Valley Forge Educational Services (VFES) has evolved into a premiere provider of educational, recreational and employment-related programs for individuals with disabilities in southeastern Pennsylvania. VFES educators and specialists, through an individualized and holistic approach, nurture the abilities and strengths of each child, adolescent and adult with special needs. The mission of VFES encourages all individuals with special needs to realize their full potential as contributing members of their communities.

Valley Forge Educational Services currently serves approximately 400 children and adults from 11 counties--the largest populations coming from Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery Counties. VFES is most well-known for The Vanguard School. The Vanguard School is a Pennsylvania licensed, approved private school serving approximately 250 students, 4–21 years of age, who require a high degree of individualized attention and intervention. Our student population includes those with autism spectrum disorders, developmental disabilities, and speech-language deficits. Many Vanguard School students experience social-emotional, executive functioning, and behavioral difficulties. The Vanguard Transition Center provides students, 18–21 years of age, with continuing education, counseling, self-advocacy training, and career exploration and community-based vocational experiences. Rounding out our continuum of services is our Adult and Recreation Services (ARS). ARS oversees the operations of our Customized Workforce Solutions (CWS) program. CWS provides adults with disabilities (age 18 and older) personalized work plans and individualized job supports and coaching so they can maintain competitive, integrated employment in their home communities.

2. Funding request

• Description of key initiatives

One goal of occupational therapy is to teach individuals how to safely regulate their own body's vestibular stimulation needs. Swinging helps enable our students to better regulate their sensory needs by providing functional movement input, resulting in improved ability to attend and focus. In addition to enhancing focus and attention, swinging is a calming and much needed therapy for students on the Autism spectrum, regardless of age, in order to meet daily challenges and expectations. VFES would like to install a new swing-set area outside The Vanguard School's Richard D. Mierley Building (Upper School) to provide students a safe, sensory-friendly outdoor area exclusively for older students.



Proposed Upper School Swing-set Space



Upper School students enjoying our Elementary School swings

VFES plans to install an 8' arched, painted metal swing-set with six swings. The protective surface under the swings will consist of cost-effective engineered wood fiber known for its ability to absorb high impacts, excellent slip resistance, and accessibility. We will also install WoodCarpet Mats® on top of the wood fiber surface under the swings to keep the area level and eliminate kickout. Installation of WoodCarpet Mats ensures maximum accessibility and fall protection where it is needed most.

• Specific needs & issues to be addressed

The Vanguard School's Upper School teachers have identified an ever-increasing need for older students to congregate, socialize, and have sensory input opportunities. Teachers and clinical staff have requested a designated swing-set for our older students. Currently, our older students must use our Elementary School swings which have limited availability and is not located near the upper school. Most of our 195 Upper School students choose extra swing time as a reward from the positive behavior program.



Upper school students taking a sensory break

Many of our students have a hard time filtering and organizing sensory input. This overflow of information puts stress on the nervous system, causing sensory meltdowns. Students with Autism and sensory needs find vestibular stimulation, which is input the body receives from rhythmic and predictable movement, to be calming. Many teachers and therapists believe our students need and benefit tremendously from vestibular stimulation that swings and swinging activities provide. The Vanguard School's Upper School teacher Cindy Watkins sums it up when she says, "I have seen the benefits of taking a break to use the swings in many of my students over the years. A short time swinging, and they are ready to come back to class and focus on the lesson." The Upper School swing-set will provide the critical sensory breaks our older students need, as well as foster peer interactions in a natural, fun, and personal way.

• Why it is important to fund this now

VFES is committed to providing important physical and occupational therapy opportunities for our older students through the Upper School Swing-set Project. This past year has been extremely difficult for our students. Covid-19 and prior remote learning has presented many challenges to our students resulting in increased anxiety and depression. A priority of The Vanguard School staff is helping to mitigate students struggles and reduce increased student anxiety caused by the pandemic. Recently, VFES received a \$10,000 match grant from CCRES for our swing-set project. This grant funding is contingent upon us securing \$10,000 in match funds. VFES will actively promote this match challenge on social media, in eblasts to the VFES community, on our website and in our FY21-22 Annual Report. We are half way to funding our \$20,000 project. We are hoping the Chester County Community Foundation participates in this match challenge and help us make this project a reality for our very special Upper School students.

• How impact & results will be demonstrated

Based on research and past experience, VFES anticipates many positive outcomes associated with the new swing-set area. For children with special needs, swinging has the potential to impact the brain's ability to process sensory information. Swinging can strengthen specific sensory experiences at any age, and the swinging movements can help children with special needs relax, ease their anxiety and calm their minds. Because swinging helps to meet our students' sensory needs, they are also more likely to pay attention in class rather than seek sensory seeking behaviors like fidgeting. Also, for many of our students, socialization is challenging. Spending time on the swings will help our older students interact with their peers in a more informal setting and practice communication skills.

Vanguard Occupational Therapist Jeanne-Marie Heighton describes the impact swinging has for students with special needs: "The technical benefits of swinging are vast: swinging helps you know where your body is in space; develops eye-head coordination, muscle tone, body awareness, balance and coordination, develops an upright trunk posture, hand-strengthening and overall sensory integration. It is said that 15 minutes of swinging can have positive and lasting effects of up to 6-8 hours."

Results from the installation of the swing-set can be demonstrated both individually and as school community. Upper school students will have the ability to swing, separate from elementary aged students, socialize, and relieve stress. The Vanguard School community will benefit long term from the swing-set installation.

In closing, a \$5,000 grant from the Chester County Community Foundation will ensure VFES provides our adolescents with special needs a safe, sensory-friendly outdoor area where they can be physically and socially active. We are incredibly grateful to the Chester County Community Foundation for its 2020 \$10,000 grant in support of our Covid-19 Response Campaign. The support of the Foundation continues to impact the health and well-being of our students and staff during a very challenging year. VFES is grateful for the possibility of continuing the partnership with the Foundation.

- *For capacity building grant proposals:*

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

III. ATTACHMENTS

E-mail or mail this support information

1. Copy of 501 (c) (3) federal tax-exempt letter
2. List of Board of Directors, with their affiliations
3. Most recent annual report & financial statement, audited if available
4. Itemized organizational operating budget with actual results for prior fiscal year & current fiscal year to date
5. If capacity building initiative, itemized budget (including external consultant's proposal, if applicable)
6. Current strategic plan. If your nonprofit does not have a current strategic plan, explain why.

- Use this form @ www.chescof.org to apply online for grants from all Community Foundation Funds.
- **Email proposals to grants@chescof.org**
- Proposals are considered "complete" when CCCF has **confirmed** receipt of the **Grant Proposal Summary Sheet, Narrative & Attachments**.
- Proposals are shared electronically and online with Fund Advisors, Donors & Grant Panels.
- Per IRS Regulations, applicants **must be** charitable, tax exempt organizations with 501(c)(3) certification & **cannot** be individuals.

Please contact Grants Administrator Kevin Baffa at
(610) 696-8211 grants@chescof.org with questions.



*Connecting people who care with causes that matter,
so their legacies make a difference.*