

GRANT PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

- We **connect people who care with causes that matter, so their philanthropy makes a difference now & forever.**
- We are a **collection of Field of Interest & Donor Advised Funds** with **@\$3.5M granted annually** to nonprofits in Chester County & beyond.
- **99%** of our grants are made by our generous Fund Advisors, who make grant decisions all year.

Proposals submitted by nonprofits are considered for 2 types of grants:

Field of Interest & Donor Advised Funds (No Deadline)

- ◇ Grants **focus on Chester County** causes & issues, but are not limited to Chester County.
- ◇ Charitable nonprofits working **in all fields of interest** are considered for grant awards. (I.e. arts, culture, & humanities; education; community improvement; environment; religion; health; & human services)
- ◇ **General operating** grants are encouraged. Nonprofits should be specific about their mission, goals, & measurable outcomes.
- ◇ Proposals can be submitted **anytime all year.**
- ◇ Grant decisions are made **intermittently** all year, as Fund Advisors desire.
- ◇ Grant **awards** typically range from **\$500-\$7,500.**

Fund for Chester County Capacity Building Grants (Due 9/15)

- ◇ For eligibility in this grant program, nonprofits must be **located in & serve Chester County.** NPO's with budgets of \$500,000 or less are given preference.
- ◇ The goal of capacity building grantmaking is to **strengthen the effectiveness of NPO's serving the Chester County region,** in areas including:
 - Mission, Vision & Strategy
 - Governance & Leadership
 - Partnerships & Collaborations
 - Operations & Technology
 - Fundraising, Development & Marketing
- ◇ Proposals must be submitted by **September 15** to be eligible for consideration.
- ◇ Grant **awards** typically range from **\$500-\$5,000,** with monies distributed by **February.**

- Use this form @ www.chescocf.org to apply online for grants from all Community Foundation Funds.
- **Email proposals to grants@chescocf.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)-698-8211** or grants@chescocf.org with any questions.

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: 11/18/2021

Contact Information

Organization Name: Orion Communities
Address: 237 Bridge Street Phoenixville, PA 19460
Phone: 610-415-1140
Website: www.orioncommunities.org
Year Incorporated: 1977
FEIN: 23-2074061

ED/CEO Name: Kris Keller
ED/CEO E-mail: KKeller@OrionHope.org
Board Chair Name: Keith Burress
Board Chair Approval (check here):
Primary Contact Name: Yvette Blanding
Primary Contact E-mail:
YBlanding@OrionHope.org

Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

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

Mission: Orion offers hope for individuals and families experiencing hardship due to poverty, disability, or illness by building bridges that lead to self-reliance. Orion believes that every person deserves shelter, food, clothing, transportation, access to healthcare and respectful human interaction. Orion listens at the street level and responds to the unmet needs of our most vulnerable neighbors with creativity, compassion, and collaboration.

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

75% came from Chester County and most of those are from the Greater Phoenixville area but also include individuals from North Coventry, Coatesville, West Chester, and Malvern.

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served:

Orion serves our most vulnerable neighbors, those who fall through the cracks of the social service safety net and/or don't know where to turn to address their pressing needs for life's basic essentials. Orion worked with over 1400 households assisting 3500 unique individuals in 2020. 95% of Orion's clients live below the Federal Poverty Line, 40% are differently abled and 20% were homeless for all or part of the preceding 12 months.

Since the hold on evictions and utility shutoffs has ended, Orion has seen an increase in the number of households asking for rental and utility bills assistance. Some folks do not qualify for government assistance, do not meet government qualifications, or are embarrassed to ask for government aid. Requests for car repairs and payments/insurance have grown as some people received government assistance for housing but now struggle with reduced hours, lack of PTO for quarantining, increased complexity of daily logistics and need help with transportation to get back and forth to work, school, and childcare facilities. Storage unit requests have expanded also as more folks become homeless; they do not want to lose all their possessions as well. The stress, trauma, grief, and layers are more complicated for Orion's clients. Case Managers are needing more time with folks asking for help because of emotional stress/trauma. As we have slowly opened the office back up with limited capacity, some people have expressed how much they miss the social interaction with our staff. The pandemic has been lonely for a lot of our folks, and we are concerned about their well-being.

Annual Budget \$ 963,011 _____ 8 _____ # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
85 _____ % of budget for program expenses 11 _____ # of Board Volunteers
7 _____ % of budget for administrative expenses 164 _____ # of Active Non-Board Volunteers
8 _____ % of budget for fundraising expenses 4525 _____ # of Volunteer Hours
100 % total

Top 3-5 funding sources:

Is this grant proposal for: Capacity Building _____ or General Operating ___x___?

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:

Orion’s mission is to help stabilize the most vulnerable in our community without duplicating services. Bridge Case Management, the cornerstone of our work, allows our professional case management staff to meet with neighbors, hear their challenges, assess their immediate needs, help identify resources and work together to create a plan for moving towards increased self-sufficiency in their lives. Working together, we collaborate with dozens of local agencies to be both effective and efficient in helping to stabilize our neighbors during times of crisis. On a micro level, our goal is to keep family’s safe, sheltered, and connected to basic essentials. On a macro level, our goal is educating and engaging our friends and neighbors about the unmet needs and systemic challenges in our community so we can work together to address these issues. From our street level connections, Orion helps community leaders understand the challenges and barriers of our under-resourced neighbors and collaboratively work to build bridges to create a healthier community for all. A \$5,000 General Operating grant would help our case managers provide financial assistance, resources, and information to our client addressing their immediate needs during the Covid-19 recovery.

II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Provide clear, concise information. 3 pages maximum.

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

Orion originally begun when State Hospitals were closing and people with disabilities were being released with nowhere to go. Orion's approach is grassroots with a commitment to be neighbors helping neighbors and to never receive government funding. For 44 years, Orion has been known for serving the 'poorest of the poor'. Our mission has always been to address unmet needs for the most vulnerable in our community.

In 2014, Orion restructured to better serve our neighbors in need. Since that time, Orion has grown from a budget of \$85,000/year serving 15 families/month to our current budget of over \$900,000 and assisting 200 households each month.

At the start of the pandemic, Phoenixville's Mayor declared Orion an 'essential business' and we never closed. Dramatic changes were required including restricting access to the building, initiating rotating teams of staff working from home and office, creating a reception desk in the front display window with an intercom and setting up a sidewalk Internet café providing critical computer access to guests looking for jobs or applying for government funding. As businesses re-open, Orion is taking a slow and deliberate approach. We now allow guests with masks in the office and provide sanitizer as we monitor the overall head count.

Even with the increased complexity of a pandemic, our staff and volunteers have assisted 2000 households to secure life's basic essentials since the beginning of the pandemic! Our Community Emergency Fund distribution increased from pre-pandemic levels of \$7500/month to \$15,000/month in 2020 to help stabilize our neighbors. In 2021, Orion continues to distribute an average of \$11,000/month and educate community members on the continuing pandemic related needs. Orion's goal is to continue supporting our neighbors to secure basic essentials and move towards a healthier and more sustainable tomorrow.

2. Funding request

• Description of key initiatives

- Provide a safe and welcoming space for neighbors in need to share their pressing concerns, be heard, and feel hopeful.
- Concentrate on strength based, client-centered practice. This includes the active involvement and participation of clients.
- Evaluate and assist in meeting the immediate needs of the clients for basic essentials such as shelter, food, clothing, transportation, and medical care.
- Distribute direct aid from our Community Emergency Fund for time sensitive bills and critical bills or household supplies from our office inventory for immediate demands.
- Create a plan with each client of service that offers support and appropriate referrals.

- Promote and reinforce partnerships between service providers to support the client's plan of service and develop a collaborative approach to meet the needs of our most vulnerable neighbors.
- Provide supportive services that may include one-on-one counseling, emergency funding, and information and referrals.

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

According to the US Census, thirteen percent of Phoenixville residents live below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) of \$26,400 for a family of four. Orion is seeing families for the first time who were solidly middle-class pre-pandemic and have never asked for assistance before. Additionally, rents are going up in southeastern PA by as much as 20% and wages for low-income households remain stagnant. A recent Philadelphia Inquirer article said the average hourly wage for childcare workers in Pennsylvania is just \$10.69. Balancing income and expenses, particularly housing costs, have become more complicated than ever.

Government funds for rental assistance have increased for which we are very grateful. Yet every week we work with families losing their homes and others who are current on their rent but are behind on critical bills not knowing they might have qualified for government rental assistance. The hold on utility shutoffs ended this spring and the hold on evictions was just lifted on October 3rd. Nationally, projections are that we will see an increase in evictions and shutoffs in the coming months while unemployment still exceeds pre-pandemic levels. However, there are needs still not related to the pandemic. A gentleman called the office asking for help with past due rent. He is on a fixed income and after his medication costs, there is little to no money left over. He is one year shy of qualifying for subsidy housing for seniors but in the meantime, more than 80% of his monthly social security check goes to rent. Our case management team enlisted the help of one of our partners who agreed to pay half his monthly rent and connected him to government agencies for long term assistance. He was extremely grateful for the support. He would remain safely housed and had a plan going forward.

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

The requests for assistance today continue to grow in complexity and level of family trauma. Orion anticipates a continuing increase of client requests and the need for emergency funding to keep households sheltered, fed and safe during the upcoming winter season and all of 2022 as we continue to respond to the economic challenges of the pandemic. The biggest challenge is the incredible need for temporary support and affordable housing as we collectively continue to support under-resourced families struggling with Covid and Ida flooding until their economic circumstances stabilize. Eviction proceedings have resumed, unemployment remains high, foreclosures and utility shutoffs have increased, and expected layoffs after the holidays are causes of concern for our most vulnerable neighbors. The Federal Reserve Board projects it will take another 3+ years for the economy to recover for all US citizens with low-income households, women, and People of Color being the last to return to pre-pandemic economic levels. We have said that Orion is not at the medical front line, but we continue to be at the economic front line and CCCF support has been critical to help stabilize individuals and families in need.

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

- A ten-year-old's mother was killed in a car accident this spring, the father now has custody of his son but lost work hours due to Covid cutbacks and trying to coordinate childcare. The landlord evicted them because the son was not on the lease. They were homeless because the father had spent down his savings during their recent crises. Orion provided a hotel stay and summer camp for the son through special funding programs. By the new school year, they were safely housed and connected to supportive services to process their loss. The father and son started homeless and in Crisis, but Orion was able to help them through a difficult transition.
- The family had come here in search of a better life. Mom was a housekeeper. But COVID lockdowns gave her clients enough time to look after their homes themselves. Her work contracted, as did her income. Dad was working multiple jobs, but it wasn't enough to pay the bills anymore. Not knowing English made it even harder. At last, she found Orion and we connected her with our bilingual case manager. We helped the family pay the back rent while the mother secured new employment. When Mom called to thank our case manager, she said, "Most places will not help because I am not documented. Thank you for not making me feel less than. God bless your organization."

It's not just the money, it is the hope- it is the smiles, the thank you cards, the getting back on track. Orion uses a tool OSAT (Orion's Sustainability Assessment Tool) staff reports and feedback from the community help to assess the progress from individual crises to longer term stability. Trends and patterns of community need then guide changes or new programs conscious of the need for both micro (immediate individual/family needs) and macro (systemic community challenges and opportunities) impact for our most vulnerable neighbors.

- *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.

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WHAT IS CAPACITY BUILDING?

Capacity building helps bring a nonprofit to the next level of operational, programmatic, financial, or organizational maturity, in order to more effectively & efficiently fulfill its mission.

Capacity building may include (but is not limited to) projects which address:

- **MISSION, VISION & STRATEGY**
Organizational Assessment - Strategic Planning - Financial Planning
- **GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP**
Board Development - Executive Transition/Succession Planning - Leadership Development - Staff Training & Professional Development
- **PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS**
Coalition Building – Collaboration - Mergers & Acquisitions - Strategic Restructuring
- **RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING**
Major Gift Donor Identification, Cultivation, Development & Stewardship - Development Campaigns (Annual, Capital, Planned Giving) - Earned Income Development - Social Enterprise Feasibility & Development - Marketing, Branding & Communications
- **TECHNOLOGY & OPERATIONS**
Business Continuity Planning - Financial Management - Human Resources - Volunteer Management - Industry Certification - Risk Management - Technology Improvements