

HADLEY GRANT/SPONSORSHIP REQUEST

I. COVER SHEET

Date: 10/7/2021

Contact Information

Organization Name: Chester County Food Bank
Address: 650 Pennsylvania Dr. Exton, PA 19341

Phone: 610-873-6000

Website: Chestercountyfoodbank.org

Year Founded: 2009

EIN: 27-0887311

Contact Person Name: Patti Campbell

Contact Person E-mail

pcampbell@chestercountyfoodbank.org

Board of Directors Chair Name: Robert McNeil

Have you received grant/sponsorship money from the Hadley Presents in the past?

Yes ___ **No x** Not Sure ___

Which of these Hadley priorities are embedded in your program?

___ Cultural Enrichment

___ Diversity/Isms; Bringing Disparate Groups of People Together to Promote Understanding

___ Environmental Justice & Education

x Healthy, Sustainable Practices for Individuals and Communities

___ Peace, Justice & Non-Violence

___ Other:

Who do you envision will primarily be attracted to your program? (approximate percentages, please)

48% Latinos

50% Youth

7% African Americans

___ Families

42% White Caucasians

___ Seniors

___ General Public

50% General Public

3% Other:

___ Other:

100% Total

100% Total

How many people from the Kennett region will be served by this program?

___ less than 25

___ 26-100

x 101-999

___ over 1,000

___ over 5,000

Personnel

33 # of Paid Staff

15 # of Board Volunteers

1175 # of Non-Board Volunteers

Timing

Proposed Program Date: 1/1/2022

Hadley Funding/Sponsorship Decision Desired by the first day of what month:

___ Jan ___ Feb ___ Mar ___ April ___ May ___ June ___ July ___ Aug ___ Sept ___ Oct ___ Nov ___ Dec

Finances

\$5,000 How much grant/sponsorship funding do you seek from The Hadley Fund?

\$144,405 What is your overall budget for this program?

\$7,011,565 What is your overall budget for this year?

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III. DESCRIPTION

1-What is your nonprofit's mission?

Chester County Food Bank (CCFB) mobilizes our community to ensure access to real, healthy food. We serve more than 40,000 residents through **food** distribution and **education and wellness** programs. We provide diverse distribution outlets and varied forms of food access to maximize outreach in culturally appropriate ways. We prioritize nutritious and local foods by growing at partner farm sites and supporting raised bed gardens. Our programs include Fresh2You Mobile Market, Fruit and Vegetable Prescriptions, EatFresh cooking classes, Seed to Supper gardening courses, children's cooking and gardening programs, and FRESHSTART Kitchen workforce development program.

2-What are you trying to achieve with this program?

Garden Support and Education Programs

Through our **Garden Support Program**, we provide growing education, thousands of seedlings, and construction support to 85 partner sites throughout the county. We prioritize gardens frequented by those at risk of food insecurity and work to uplift community gardens to promote equitable access. Our Kennett Square raised bed garden partners include the Kennett community garden, KACS, Kennett Middle School, and Bancroft Elementary School. As a garden partner site of CCFB, we provide: consultations for site selection and building, material sourcing support, on site "build day" support, seeds and seedlings, continual mentoring and information and educational workshops.

COVID-19 had many effects on our gardening programs. Many partners reported that they grew and harvested more this year than ever before, while other sites were prohibited from accessing their gardens due to property closures. With many food cupboards unable to safely host volunteers and accept produce donations, our partner gardens found unique ways to distribute produce within their communities such as home deliveries. Despite the limitations of the pandemic, we built 38 new in response to a growing interest in gardening. We also welcomed 9 new partners with existing gardens into the program.

In response to the pandemic, we introduced a new initiative: grow at home kits. As gardens were temporarily closed, we supplied hundreds of grow at home kits so community members could safely garden at home. The container gardening kit included seedlings, soil, pots, gloves, and instructions on how to grow produce on your back porch. Due to the success of grow at home kits, we have continued to expand this initiative so gardening is accessible to all. We work with Tick tock Early Learning Center, Creative Play, First Baptist Church, and Maternal Child Health Consortium to provide Grow at Home Kits to the Kennett area.

Seed to Supper – In partnership with [Penn State Extension Master Gardeners of Chester County](#), CCFB offers *Seed to Supper*, a beginning gardening course for growing vegetables at home on a budget. Available in both English and Spanish, the free classes highlight practical, low-cost techniques for growing and celebrating the harvest of a successful vegetable garden. Classes include onetime 2-hour sessions on vegetable gardening for beginners and an in depth 6-week course. Teams of facilitators support participants as they learn about the gardening fundamentals of soil preparation, garden planning, planting, maintenance, and harvest. Classes are provided indoors and outdoors, making the most of hands-on activities and virtual learning. The course book and other supplies are provided to

each student free of charge. The program improves participants' access to fresh produce and overall food security. As we support individuals in home gardening, there are benefits for the family, community, and environment. This past year we provided two introduction classes in Kennett Square.

Kids Gardening and Cooking Program – Our Kids Gardening and Cooking Program provides hands on learning opportunities for children to practice growing and cooking delicious fresh vegetables. Through our partners, we target the highest need children of our county. Pairing healthy food access with educational opportunities encourages children to try new foods and find enjoyment in the process. Through gardening and cooking programs, children develop a taste for fresh fruits and vegetables and the foundation of life-long skills. This helps support parents in making healthy food approachable for their children.

“We are so incredibly proud of the amount of food our garden was able to produce during our first full year. It's even more amazing considering we did it though the pandemic. I am so grateful for the support we received from the CCFB, we could not have supported our community without your assistance!” -Kennett Middle School Giving Garden

3-How you will discern the impact and results of this program?

Through our Garden Support and Education Programs, we provide the expertise and resources needed to maintain and cultivate community gardening as well as the education to expand interest, knowledge, and skills related to growing. We improve overall food security by supporting garden maintenance and installations at partner sites, providing community education on growing your own food, and fostering community around food and gardening. Through this holistic approach, we build confidence and skills while improving access to ultimately improve food security status, health, and quality of life.

We evaluate our programs with both quantitative and qualitative methods. We survey our partner sites and participants and consistently incorporate opportunities for feedback. Seed to Supper results indicate an increase in knowledge and confidence in growing food at home. This year many more partner sites reported that being outdoors for exercise and health was a major benefit of participating in the program. We share our evaluation results through an annual report and social media posts.

4-Why is it important to fund this now?

The households we serve are not only hungry, but also lack the quality and diversity of nutritious foods needed to sustain a healthy lifestyle, leaving them at an elevated risk for stress and chronic diseases. Without access to healthy foods and other resources, there are impacts on health, nutrition, and academic development as the cycle of poverty continues. Barriers to food insecurity are complex and intertwined with wealth inequality, systemic oppression, and generational poverty, making it nearly impossible for a family to break the cycle on their own.

The pandemic has exacerbated the issues of families who were already facing an uphill battle. Though some of the challenges of the pandemic were universal, low-income households faced disproportionate burdens. Research from the United Way showed that throughout the pandemic, low-income households were more concerned with the personal economic impacts of COVID rather than contracting the illness. With the pandemic now waning in our region, we recognize that the ripple effects persist. Food insecurity has increased from 6.3% to 8.9% and pantry usage has increased in our county.

Prior to the pandemic many families were struggling silently. The experience of food insecurity in Chester County has always been masked by high median incomes and favorable health statistics. However, what cannot be seen with surface level statistics are those burdened by generational poverty and high cost of living. The wealth inequalities in Chester County are vast. For every household in Chester County with an annual income below \$25,000, there are approximately 5 households with an income above \$100,000.

MIT's Living Wage calculator estimates that a family of four with two working adults needs an annual income of \$87,817 to pay for the basic living costs in Chester County while the eligibility threshold for SNAP (food stamps) for a family of four is \$33,480. Due to this "benefits cliff," many will forgo taking a promotion or working more hours because the loss of benefits would be detrimental. With the high cost of living in Chester County, many household incomes fall below the living wage but above the threshold for assistance. Because eligibility for SNAP does not consider local living costs, Feeding America estimates that 57% of the food insecure households in Chester County are ineligible for food assistance because their income is deemed "too high." When compared to neighboring counties and states, food insecure Chester County residents are much less likely to receive government assistance making our services in the community more impactful.

Incorporating the voices of community members is the foundation of our work and essential to conveying the unique needs of Chester County. Our programs are designed to include communication and feedback with participants which helps to inform our future program planning. Recently published in the Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition, "Addressing Community Needs through a Participatory Food Security Assessment" was a research project conducted in partnership with Drexel University and CCFB. The assessment was implemented using a participatory mixed methods design to gather quantitative and qualitative data from food insecure households, positioning us to have pertinent localized data. We have used this research, program evaluation, and communication with participants to create collaborative solutions. Through our research and communication, we know there is a rising interest in fresh, local foods and understand the key food access barriers including high cost of living, low wages, transportation, documentation fears, and stigma. Food insecure families in Chester County experience many barriers to healthy food access, some that are not easily addressed through the traditional food pantry model. Study participants expressed interest in gardening access and education as a community solution to food insecurity. Funding for our Garden Support and Education programs ensures we continue to provide this community driven solution.