

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 August 12,2022

Contact Information

Organization Name: ACT in Faith of Greater West Chester ED/CEO Name: Hallie Romanowski
Address: 212 S. High Street, West Chester ED/CEO E-mail: hallieromanowski@me.com
Phone: 484-324-8492 Board Chair Name:Denise Antonelli
Website: www.actinfaithgwc.org Board Chair Approval (check here):
Year Incorporated: 2010 Primary Contact Name:Hallie Romanowski
FEIN: 27-4033006 Primary Contact E-mail: hallieromanowski@me.com

Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

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

Mission:

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

We serve the West Chester zips codes.

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served: Over the last 3 years we have served an average of : 478 unique households, 680 unique adults and 383 unique children.

Annual Budget \$260,400	2.3	# of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
71 % of budget for program expenses	8	# of Board Volunteers
20 % of budget for administrative expenses	45	# of Active Non-Board Volunteers
9 % of budget for fundraising expenses	3,500	# of Volunteer Hours
<i>100 % total</i>		

Top 3-5 funding sources:

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: \$7,500

Proposal Summary:

This request is for items necessary for our upcoming move to a new facility. This new space will enable us to expand our capacity to serve the community in many ways.

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, or had exhausted available benefits before their need was met 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.

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.

While we cannot predict the types of requests we will receive, the number of people served has increased every year. In the last 10 years we have prevented over 1000 evictions of residents in the West Chester zip codes. In the first 7 months of 2022, the number of Employment Support services that we had provided were already 110% of what we provided in 2021. And our Community Cupboard is currently serving an average of 83 adults and 45 children per week.

Over our 10 years we have developed relationships and often formal referral processes with a wide variety of social services in the county. 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 referrals 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%.

Over the last 2 years we have strengthened our relationships with agencies that provide street outreach to people who are unsheltered who need very basic support in order to gain employment and begin earning an income. This relationship has given us the opportunity to better serve those experiencing homelessness by providing bus tokens to get to interviews, photo IDs to start work, birth certificates needed to qualify for housing programs, cell phone minutes to contact potential employers, work clothing, and car expenses.)

In 2019, we implemented a Sales Force records management database which has allowed us to more effectively track both client and donor data. This database has allowed us to streamline our processes and better evaluate both services and fundraising.

In 2022 we embarked upon, what stands to be, our most impactful milestone yet - that of moving to new, larger space which will allow us to provide more effective and comprehensive support, create new volunteer opportunities, and enhance our ability to collaborate with our many social service agency partners – impacting our community in a far greater way than ever. We will be sharing the building with two social enterprise non-profits (Parish Hall Kitchen and Trinity Treasures) that share our mission of serving the community's most vulnerable, making the building a hub for community support.

2. Funding request

Description of key initiatives

Throughout our 12 years of building relationships across the community, we continue to identify areas where support is needed. We have come to the realization that there are numerous opportunities for us to be of better service to the community, however, at this juncture our programmatic growth is limited by our physical space. We have secured a new location, in a very close proximity to our current office, and now need to fit the new space to accommodate our programs and services. If awarded, these funds will be used to purchase: computers for the additional volunteer and staff work stations, a computer for a client computer station, cubical walls to afford more privacy, signage for both our new street-facing entrance and the exterior wall of the building, and new communication materials to reflect our new location and hours. In addition, these funds will be used to purchase

paint to finish all new walls in our office space and our portion of the room dividers needed to separate our Community Cupboard from our building mate, Trinity Treasures Thrift Store.

Specific needs & issues to be addressed

The impact of the initiatives for which we seek funds is multifaceted because it extends to the both tangible (marketing, public education/awareness, aesthetics, technology, and physical design of our office space) and intangible (privacy and preservation of dignity, professional/welcoming environment, and respectful space sharing with organizations that share the building.)

Once fitted, the new, larger space will provide a variety of programmatic benefits but only those that directly correspond to this request are explicated below. Programmatically, the space will allow for the enhancement and growth of services such as:

- 1) **Computer station for client use for job search, benefit enrollment, etc...** - Almost all applications for work or benefit resources require the use of a computer. It is rare that those we serve have computer skills, much less own a computer. These applications are often not "user friendly" and completing them on a "smart" phone can be a nightmare. Sending people to the library is an option but even then their time is limited and very often, sending them away to explore something foreign results in surrender on their part. Having a computer dedicated to client use and a volunteer designate to assist with navigation will allow us and the client to take the necessary action, in real-time, to ensure the applications are completed accurately.
- 2) **Computers for 2 additional volunteer** - Once we move, volunteers will assume a greater portion of the routine client support, enabling staff to dedicate their attention to helping people with system and resource navigation, employment support, and overall case management. Many routine/simple requests such as photo IDs, birth certificates, and cell phone minutes can be handled by our volunteer Client Advocates. Our staff has developed a level of expertise that puts them in position to provide a much deeper level of support to those in need of assistance navigating the housing, unemployment, social security, and public assistance benefit systems.
- 3) **Mobile cubical walls to increased privacy for those seeking our support** - Our current space is small with low ceilings and having truly private conversations is challenging. Mobile cubical walls will provide more privacy, which will help preserve the dignity that is often compromised when someone needs to seek help. In addition, walls will allow staff additional privacy when working on things sensitive in nature.
- 4) **Mobile cubical walls to create a dedicated "satellite" space for partner agencies** - Founded via a collaborative effort across all walks of the West Chester faith communities, we have always been very partnership focused. Over the years we have cultivated partnerships with countless social service agencies with whom we collaborate on a daily basis. One observation has been that agencies that serve the entire county, but are headquartered outside of West Chester, often seek places to meet with their clients in our area. With transpiration being a barrier for so many in our service population, having space dedicated to use by other agencies will be a huge asset. Those who work with the unsheltered homeless population will benefit from this space and have a safe place to meet, out of the elements. Over the years, we have made and are currently "making space" to accommodate this need but not without disruption to our own operations. Having a dedicated cubical for visiting agencies also cultivates knowledge sharing amongst us and visiting service providers which enhances the County's efforts to provide holistic support for the under-resources population.
- 5) **Door and exterior wall signage to create awareness and inform the community** - For our entire 12 years people have confused us with our "landlord", Church of the Holy Trinity because we reside in the church's lower level. The addition of the new entrance at our future address will facilitate the physical separation. Signage is now needed to create awareness that we've moved and to communicate our hours of operation.
- 6) **New client-focused rack cards, business cards, and stationary to reflect our new location, hours, and services** - We have been refrained from re-stocking these items in light of our pending move. It is important that we restock all of these items as soon as possible to ensure we are communicating accurate information to clients, donors, and the community at large.
- 7) **Room dividers to separate our Community Cupboard from Trinity Treasures thrift store** - The space to be shared with the thrift store is being preserved as one large space to 1) reduce construction costs and 2) maintain the ability for both entities to literally roll their wares out to allow the space to be used for events. By utilizing "soft" dividers, as opposed to dry wall, we have the potential to save on external venue rental costs down the line and allow us to hold large group meetings/trainings on site.
- 8) **Paint to finish our new space in a manner that will make it both welcoming and professional** - The look and feel of our space is very important to the work we do. When working with our communities marginalized individuals it's important for our space to be clean, inviting, and well kept - to show respect for the often disrespected. We do not desire to create a "fancy showplace", but our new walls will need primed and painted. We have saved on demolition costs by enlisting volunteers. We have saved on furniture costs via the generosity of several local business donors who have provided new/gently used office furnishings. We will save

on costs because volunteers will help us clean, move, and paint. We are hoping to fund the purchase of that paint with this grant.

Why it is important to fund this now

We have secured a new location, in a very close proximity to our current office, and now need to fit the new space to accommodate our programs and services. We have also secured funding for the internal and external renovations necessary to fit the space to accommodate our programs. These renovations started with minor demolition in April, our new dedicated entrance was installed in July, and final scope of all remaining work is being finalized in September to allow for the work to begin in October. We are hopeful to be inhabiting the space by early first quarter of 2023. All items requested herein will be needed to finish the project and allow us to start realizing the program expansion as explained above.

How impact & results will be demonstrated

- *How will this capacity building initiative impact your nonprofit?*
- *How will this impact be measured? **Items requested to facilitate this impact is in parenthesis being the measure.***

Impact 1) Expanded capacity to serve and be accessible to the under-resourced

Measure 1) An increased number of volunteers (computers) to meet routine needs more quickly, expanded hours of client activity, to accommodate client availability (volunteer computers), improved visibility and effective communication in the community (signage, business cards, stationary), more effective communication with those we serve (new rack cards) and a computer with volunteer support dedicated to client use (computer) are ways we will measure the impact of these funds. Utilization of the client computer station will be tracked by frequency and reason for use. The reason for use - housing, employment, benefits - will be recorded in our Sales Force data base so the increase in those services will be measured accordingly.

Impact 2) Expanded system navigation and employment support services

Measure 2): An increase in the number of people we assist with resource identification and navigation, SNAP and benefit enrollment, housing voucher support, resumes and online job application completion, and Unemployment and Social Security support means that we are walking with people longer and on a deeper level to help remove the barriers that are preventing them from being self-sustainable. (volunteer computers, cubical walls for privacy) Our Sales Force data base will allow us to accurately track/measure this data.

Impact 3) Expanded partnerships and new social services initiatives

Measure 3) The existence of space dedicated to partner agency utilize (cubical walls), the ability implement initiatives to involve and better serve the community will make a tangible impact on the community (room dividing curtain). Further down the line, having ACT in Faith grow into the role of being a driving force to Bridges Out of Poverty for West Chester would also fall under this goal.

Impact 4) Create a welcoming facility that reflects our respect for all who come to our doors

Measure 4) Having a professional appearance in newly constructed space (painted), the ability to create private space for clients and staff (cubical walls), and external visibility to the community (signage) will all reflect a new level of respect for the community we serve.