

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](http://www.chescocf.org)

Date

Contact Information

Organization Name: West Chester Dance Works  
Address: 315 Westtown Rd, STE 9  
West Chester, PA 19382  
Phone: (610) 692-3398  
Website: www.westchesterdanceworks.org  
Year Incorporated: 1983  
FEIN: 30-0080438

ED/CEO Name: Diane Matthews  
ED/CEO E-mail: director@wcdw.org  
Board Chair Name: Donna Hymes  
Board Chair Approval (check here):   
Primary Contact Name: Diane Matthews  
Primary Contact E-mail: director@wcdw.org

Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

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

Mission: West Chester Dance Works (WCDW) provides opportunities for the discovery and development of intergenerational dancers and the pursuit of excellence while giving back to reach, teach, and enrich the artistic experience of our community.

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

WCDW serves Chester County and the greater Delaware Valley.

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served: WCDW serves community members via live performance at regional festivals, events hosted by businesses looking for our artistic contributions, and in-house performance events. The company also reaches students in various school districts, the elderly in nursing homes/senior centers, and patients in hospitals via educational outreach/artistic residencies. Dancers serious about their craft and with the desire to serve the community are attracted to the mission of the company. Membership is open to anyone nine years of age and older, amateur or professional, interested in participating after acceptance through the completion of an audition process meeting all commitment criteria set forth by the artistic director. WCDW has 34 members this season, and it is estimated that approximately 5,000 individuals are reached annually from the variety of engagements the company partakes in.

Annual Budget \$ \_\_\_\_\_ \$214,357 \_\_\_\_\_ # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff  
\_\_\_ 50 \_\_\_ % of budget for program expenses      \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_ # of Board Volunteers  
\_\_\_ 30 \_\_\_ % of budget for administrative expenses      \_\_\_ 35 \_\_\_ # of Active Non-Board Volunteers  
\_\_\_ 20 \_\_\_ % of budget for fundraising expenses      \_\_\_ 280 \_\_\_ # of Volunteer Hours  
100 % total

Top 3-5 funding sources: Program fees, Donations, Performing fees, Sales, Fundraisers

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:** In partnership with local schools and community organizations, WCDW’s “Relevate Youth” Campaign seeks to address barriers in youth development while affirming and building feelings of self-worth through interactive dance programs. In ballet, the term “relevé,” literally meaning “lifted,” refers to rising up on one’s toes. Similarly, “elevate” means to raise something to a higher level or position. By “relevating” our youth in collaboration with community partners, West Chester Dance Works promises to:

- Help to improve self-esteem and peer-to-peer support
- Encourage an increase in healthy lifestyles through physical activity and education
- Create a link between artistic expression and advocacy for participating youth
- Build leadership skills with a focus on community service and team building

As we all are reeling from the aftermath of a global pandemic, we reflect on how best to heal and grow in our mission to reach those who need to receive our message of finding strength and resilience through dance! Now more than ever before, people are looking for guidance and tools to foster a sense of security and well-being, particularly our youth. Please consider us as a candidate to receive funding through a Capacity Building Grant as we enter our 40<sup>th</sup> year with a refreshed commitment to bringing live dance to our audiences, and a growing focus on partnering with schools and community organizations to empower those facing barriers to healthy and productive lifestyles.



*Diane Matthews, Executive Director*

## **II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE**

Chester County Community Foundation,

West Chester Dance Works (WCDW) is reaching out to you with hope and continued gratitude for your ongoing contributions to Chester County. Please consider us as a candidate to receive funding through a Capacity Building Grant as we enter our 40<sup>th</sup> year with a refreshed commitment to bringing live dance to our audiences, and a growing focus on partnering with schools and community organizations to empower those facing barriers to healthy and productive lifestyles, particularly our youth.

WCDW is a 501(c)3 nonprofit entity entrusted to provide opportunities for the discovery and development of intergenerational dancers and the pursuit of excellence while giving back to reach, teach, and enrich the artistic experience of our community. Since the company's inception in 1983, we have provided opportunities for all to receive exposure to the many benefits of dance by training dancers and providing them and the community with access to the fullness of dance with its diversity of ideas, feelings, and styles.

WCDW is a minority-run business operating with a diverse leadership team, serving people of various ages and national origins. WCDW encourages a heart for service through its mission, training, and activities. Company members realize and explore their talents as they share in the enrichment of our world — one community at a time. Through our 40 years of experience in working with Chester County, we have found that society is starving for wholesome and elevating experiences, particularly during these trying and uncertain times.

Some of the company's most recent accomplishments include pivoting during the Covid-19 crisis to optimize dance instruction and continue bringing live dance to the community. Since the start of the pandemic, the company has offered virtual dance classes via Zoom to those unable to attend in person. To support this virtual instruction, cameras, computers, monitors, and amplifiers were installed. The dance studios were re-designed to accommodate smaller groups kept six feet apart with designated spots to move in. When the weather was warm, some instructional classes were taken outdoors. Through careful planning, our performances (both indoor and outdoor) have accommodated all dance routines and audience members safely. Regular cleaning procedures of studios have been implemented, including the mopping of floors and sanitizing of touchable surfaces including ballet barres. All of these unexpected expenses have taken a toll, though allowed us to continue serving during a time when many other organizations were not able to.

As we all are reeling from the aftermath of a global pandemic, we reflect on how best to heal and grow in our mission to reach those who need to receive our message of finding strength and resilience through dance! Now more than ever before, the youth especially are looking for guidance and tools to foster a sense of security and well-being. It is becoming increasingly difficult for families to find activities that are affordable, socially stimulating, physically challenging, and encouraging for their children. The past decade has also seen worrisome increases in self-harm, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts among adolescents. Two new studies from Boston Children's Hospital show that the situation became even more acute with the onset of Covid-19. Patricia Ibeziako, MD, associate chief of clinical services in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Services at Boston Children's, reported the following findings:

In the year before the pandemic, 50% of admitted patients had suicidal ideation or had made suicide attempts. That jumped to 60% during the first pandemic year (March 2020 to February 2021). The proportion making actual suicide attempts rose from 12 to 21% of admissions (*Rising Adolescent Suicidality during COVID-19, 2022*)

A new CDC analyses also shines light on the mental health of U.S. high school students during the COVID-19 pandemic, including a disproportionate level of threats that some students experienced.

According to the new data, in 2021, more than a third (37%) of high school students reported they experienced poor mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic, and 44% reported they persistently felt sad or hopeless during the past year (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2019)

During a time where it has been crucial for people to feel connected with other members of their community, the CDC found that fewer than half (47%) of youth reported feeling close to people at school during the pandemic (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2019). These alarming statistics fuel West Chester Dance Works' mission to share the healing power of dance through its "Relevate Youth" Campaign. Though a staple in our organization for years, "Relevate Youth" will now take front and center for our 2023 season. Past program collaborations have included Stewart Middle School in Norristown, Renfrew Center for Eating Disorders in Philadelphia, and the Boys and Girls Club of America in Chester, amongst others.

### **RELEVATE YOUTH:** *Raising the barre for their futures*

The question we ask prospective partners is: "How can we work together to help overcome the obtrusive barriers to healthy and productive lifestyles that are threatening today's youth?" In partnership with local schools and community organizations, WCDW's "Relevate Youth" program seeks to address barriers in youth development while affirming and building feelings of self-worth through interactive dance programs.

What does it mean to "Relevate?" In ballet, the term "relevé," literally meaning "lifted," refers to rising up on one's toes. Similarly, "elevate" means to raise something to a higher level or position. By "relevating" our youth in collaboration with community partners, West Chester Dance Works promises to:

- Help to improve self-esteem and peer-to-peer support
- Encourage an increase in healthy lifestyles through physical activity and education
- Create a link between artistic expression and advocacy for participating youth
- Build leadership skills with a focus on community service and team building

Due to the intensely rich component of emotional connection dance incites, dance performance is a vehicle to both impact the performer and the observer simultaneously. Company dancers, active volunteers participating in the program, and audience members all benefit through physical activity, staff and peer encouragement, and uplifting performance opportunities. Using the powerful communicative components of dance and the physicality of the dancers as the conversation starter, students will be engaged observing the artistic expression of issues they are challenged with today, such as poor self-image, lack of confidence, feeling voiceless or isolated, or being afraid. Everyone is given a voice to continue the exchange of ideas via movement and a culminating reflection. Results of this program will include having students recognize they are not alone in their feelings and insecurities, and that through support and encouragement, they can be empowered to live more confident and productive lives.

Participants will learn how to develop movement both as an outlet and a form of expression from our professional-level dancers. In addition to one of our own leadership team members with a certification in Dance Movement Therapy, WCDW is seeking to include more facilitators who specialize in the particular subject matter that is the focus of the “Relevate” event.

This unique program can be executed in various formats to fit different programming needs:

**Single Dance Presentation:**

Enhance an existing program or event with a dance performance that fits the given theme. Whether audiences are children, teens or adult professionals, our dance presentation can help maximize the message or event. Run times range from 4 to 10 minutes.

**Relevate Workshop:**

Our team will use dance as communication in an intimate setting (i.e. classroom, gymnasium, small group setting). Participants will learn from professional dancers how to develop movement both as an outlet and expression as it relates to the area of concern. With a combination of dance performance, dialogue, and audience involvement, participants are directly engaged and taught how dance connects to ideas and feelings experienced universally. Workshops are approximately an hour in length and can be added to an existing event or offered independently.

**Lecture Demonstration/Performance:**

Through a partnership with an organization, this interactive format combines dance and education in a larger setting (i.e. auditorium, lecture hall, large scale venue). Participants will learn from professional dancers how to develop movement both as an outlet and expression as it relates to the area of concern. Lecture demonstrations involve select audience participation, are typically about an hour in length, and can occur within or outside of a scholastic setting.

**Relevate Residency:**

A residency includes follow up workshops/lecture demonstrations with a designated group over an extended period of time at organization’s desired location. The purpose is to intensify understanding with multiple sessions while groups experience movement for personal or future use in a familiar environment. Residencies may close with a presentation from the participants to share what they have learned. The number of sessions and overall duration may vary based on group needs.

We measure our impact through a variety of evaluation methods that serve to discover how participants have reflected on and responded to our presentation. These include journaling, call/response, oral reflection, culminating performances, Q&A sessions, and written surveys to assess what was learned in the session. Selective video recording may also take place to document the event if all parties have given written consent.

WCDW is currently working on securing a minimum of three “Relevate Youth” engagements beginning January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, and seeking funds in the amount of \$5,000. Please see all supporting documents attached.

We appreciate your continued support of West Chester Dance Works, especially during these difficult and unprecedented times. If you require any further information, please call us at (610) 692-3398.

Thank you,

Diane Matthews  
West Chester Dance Works  
315 Westtown Rd, Ste 9  
West Chester, PA 19382

## References

*Rising adolescent suicidality during COVID-19.* (2022, May 26). Boston Children's Answers.

<https://answers.childrenshospital.org/adolescent-suicidality-covid-19/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, March 31). *New CDC data illuminate youth mental health threats during the COVID-19 pandemic.* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved September 9,

2022, from [https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/p0331-youth-mental-health-covid-](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/p0331-youth-mental-health-covid-19.html#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20new%20data,hopeless%20during%20the%20past%20year.)

[19.html#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20new%20data,hopeless%20during%20the%20past%20year.](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/p0331-youth-mental-health-covid-19.html#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20new%20data,hopeless%20during%20the%20past%20year.)