

## GRANT PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

- The Chester County Community Foundation **connects people who care with the causes that matter**, so their philanthropy makes a difference **now & forever**.
- We are **a collection of Field of Interest & Donor Advised Funds** with **\$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**.
- ◇ Nonprofits **budgets** must be **\$500,000 or less**.
- ◇ 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](http://www.chescocf.org) to apply online for grants from all Community Foundation Funds.
- **Email proposals to [grants@chescocf.org](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://www.chescocf.org)

**Date November 23, 2022**

## **Contact Information**

Organization Name: VisionCorps

Address: 244 North Queen Street Lancaster PA 17603

Phone: 866-876-6550

Website: <https://visioncorps.net/>

Year Incorporated: 1926

FEIN: 23-1352349

ED/CEO Name: Dennis Steiner

ED/CEO E-mail: [dsteiner@visioncorps.net](mailto:dsteiner@visioncorps.net)

Board Chair Name: Emily Bomberger

Board Chair Approval (check here): X

Primary Contact Name: Gail Rittenhouse

Primary Contact E-mail: [gailrittenhouse@comcast.net](mailto:gailrittenhouse@comcast.net)

## **Organization Information:**

### **Field/s of Interest:**

Arts, Culture & Humanities

Environment/Animal Welfare

Education

Health

Human Services

Religion

**Mission:** Empowering individuals with vision loss to attain independence.

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

All of Chester County

**Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served:** Individuals of all ages who are vision impaired, and preventative screenings for children. More than 10,000 people served annually.

**Annual Budget** \$20 mil (\$122,726 in ChesCo)

138 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff

86 % of budget for program expenses

16 # of Board Volunteers

5 % of budget for administrative expenses

55 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers

9 % of budget for fundraising expenses

2000 # of Volunteer Hours

100 % total

**Top 3-5 funding sources:** Enterprise Group (employment program), Individual Donors, and Foundations. VisionCorps is not a government agency.

**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:** \$5000

### **Proposal Summary:**

Since 2010 VisionCorps has served individuals in Chester County through Rehabilitation Services, Prevention Services and Support Groups. Recognizing the need in Chester County as well as the lack of services for the visually impaired population, VisionCorps has implemented a strategic initiative to increase agency presence, further develop community partnerships and substantially grow service delivery to Chester County. This proposal is to help support these initiatives designed to provide significant positive impact to this underserved and growing population.

## II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

*Provide clear, concise information. 3 pages maximum.*

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

In 1926, a group of six people developed a small workshop in a storefront with the goal of helping Veterans of WWI who had lost their vision in combat. In the workshop, a shop supervisor taught the employees how to make baskets and cane chairs. These tasks were naturally very tactile, and the employees picked up production and were able to sell their goods in a store.

Over the past 95 years, that workshop has grown into VisionCorps and continues to empower individuals with vision loss to attain independence through rehabilitation, employment and preventative services. Over the years, the philosophy of providing services to people with vision loss has shifted from a hand-holding approach to providing the tools and training necessary for its clients to meet their individualized goals autonomously.

VisionCorps originated in Lancaster County and currently serves Adams, Chester, Lancaster, Lebanon and York counties.

VisionCorps first began providing services in Chester County in 2010. Initially, these services were contracted by the state to include transportation to critical appointments, support groups, and life skills training. As time progressed, VisionCorps began to subsidize these services with other types of support needed by Chester County residents who are blind, including Orientation and Mobility Instruction, Case Management, and Occupational Therapy.

Presently, VisionCorps continues to grow its rehabilitation services, employment opportunities for people who are blind, and capabilities in the business and industry sector. VisionCorps is focused on continuing its mission of empowering individuals with vision loss to attain independence and moving towards a world where vision loss is not a barrier to personal nor economic independence.

### 2. Funding request

#### Description of key initiatives

##### REHABILITATION SERVICES

**Case Management** - Case Managers and Licensed Social Workers are the first point of contact when services start at VisionCorps. Their role is to meet with the individual to assess their current needs, set goals and coordinated needed services.

**Low Vision Occupational Therapy** – The Occupational Therapists (OT's) teaches the individuals how to make the most of their remaining vision. This can include things such as selecting the right magnifier, learning to use a video magnifier, adjusting household lighting, modifying appliances, medication management, home safety, and general access technology.

**Orientation and Mobility** – The Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Specialists empowers the individuals to be independent by teaching them the skills and concepts to travel safely and with confidence. The O&M Specialists work one-on-one to evaluate and set goals that match each individual's specific needs enabling them to move around independently in their home,

neighborhood, and work environments. Skills can include human guide, how to use a white cane, safely crossing streets, and how to use public transit.

**Educational/Peer Support Groups** - VisionCorps offers regularly scheduled education and support groups to give individuals a forum to share feelings, experiences, and information, among others with vision loss. With the pandemic, the number of support groups has expanded, with many offered virtually, providing opportunities to connect with others and address topics such as mobility, recreation, and lifestyle issues.

**Access Technology**- Technology empowers people who are blind or low vision to learn, work, and live independently. Instructors provide training in the use of large print and text-to-speech computer programs, accessible cell phone programs like voiceover or talk-back, optical character recognition (OCR) products, and refreshable Braille displays.

## **PREVENTION SERVICES**

**KidSight Screenings** - The KidSight program is designed to detect potential vision problems in children ages 6 months to 6 years such as myopia (near-sighted), hyperopia (far-sighted), astigmatism (imperfection in curvature of cornea), and amblyopia (lazy eye). If a possible problem is detected at these screenings, VisionCorps makes a referral for a full eye exam with an optometrist or ophthalmologist. Last year, the KidSight program screened 1255 Chester County children and of those screened, 139 were referred for an eye exam. If they could not afford an exam, vouchers are available for a free exam and basic eyeglass frames and lenses.

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

Increase awareness of services through broadened community connections and relationships (doctors, retirement homes, daycares, health centers, other NGO's, Service Groups)

Increase number of individuals served to correlate with growing organizational awareness and connections

Strategically connect in areas of the county where highest need and lowest resources are available. (i.e. - Southern Chester County to address significant migrant population)

Serve as the voice to further enhance Public Policy for individuals with vision loss

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

According to the 2020 Census, there are about 534,413 people residing in Chester County, and of that population about 4.3%, or 22,979 are identified as blind or visually impaired. According to projections based on the most recent census data from studies funded by the National Eye Institute, the percentage of individuals with vision loss or blindness is expected to double by 2050 after the last of the baby boomers turn 65 in 2029. Additionally, Lancaster County demographics mirrors Chester County, however in 2021-2022 508 individuals were served in Lancaster County compared to 108 served in Chester County. The significant growth projections as well as the current unmet needs in Chester County make it of paramount importance to build an infrastructure of resources and support for this vulnerable and expanding population.

An astounding 80% of learning in a child's first 12 years comes through their eyes making visual acuity a critical component in a child's overarching development. Typically about 10% of all preschoolers have a vision-related problem that often goes undiagnosed potentially resulting in permanent loss of

vision. VisionCorps free KidSight program uses the spot vision screener by Welch Allyn, a fast, non-invasive screening device which detects the issues of myopia (near-sighted), hyperopia (far-sighted), astigmatism (imperfection in curvature of cornea) and amblyopia (lazy eye). If a problem is detected, the parents are notified and provided with information on where to get a full exam. For low-income families, a voucher is provided for a free exam and glasses. Again, comparing Chester County to Lancaster County, in 2021-2022, 4292 children were screened in Lancaster County compared to 1255 in Chester County.

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

VisionCorps has a committed and diversely skilled Board of Directors who meet regularly to review the performance of the agency. To best evaluate organizational impact and results, committees have been formed to align with VisionCorps strategic plan's three main areas: Build the Corps, Fund the Corps and Develop the Corps. Reviewing and evaluating progress on the plan is done regularly with updates completed annually by the leadership team.

In the rehabilitation department, clients work with their case manager to develop goals and track them. Meeting these goals is a measure of success for the rehabilitation department. "Mission Moments" are shared by the rehab department regularly with all employees and board members demonstrating the impact VisionCorps has on the community. Mission Moments can be testimonials from clients, as well as recognition from outside partners on the work being performed by VisionCorps.

Additionally, overarching organizational statistics are gathered annually which enable impact to be tracked and evaluated year over year, by specific program, as well as by each individual county of service. This information is used to help drive future organizational growth and impact.

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



## 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