

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 21, 2023

Contact Information

Organization Name: ACT in Faith of Greater West Chester ED/CEO Name: Hallie Romanowski
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Phone: 484-324-8492 Board Chair Name: Sara Bleemer
Website: www.actinfaithgwc.org Board Chair Approval (check here):
Year Incorporated: 2010 Primary Contact Name: Hallie Romanowski
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Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

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

Mission: To build a community that empowers the un- and under-employed to stabilize their households and build toward self-sustainability.

Geographic Area Served: We serve the un- and under-employed, providing financial assistance for residents of West Chester zip codes and to those experiencing homelessness in Chester County. Our Community Cupboard serves residents of Chester County.

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served: In 2022, we served 567 unduplicated households – 925 adults and 465 children. In 2022, support for Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) households represented over 55% of our entire program budget. Also in 2022 of the households that received financial support 46% were experiencing homelessness and 59% were single men or woman. Our clients identified racially at the following percentages: 40% white, 41% black, 16% Hispanic, 3% Other, 1% Asian.

Annual Budget \$373,700	2.45 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
81% of budget for program expenses	7 # of Board Volunteers
8% of budget for administrative expenses	58# of Active Non-Board Volunteers
11 % of budget for fundraising expenses	3856 # of Volunteer Hours
<i>100 % total</i>	

Top 3-5 funding sources: Individual donors: \$89,000, Fundraising: \$74,000, and Grants: \$46,500

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

If Capacity Building Proposal, the focus is:

X Mission, Vision & Strategy _____ Governance & Leadership _____ Partnerships & Collaborations
_____ Fundraising, Development & Marketing **X** Technology Other: _____

Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: \$4,145

Proposal Summary: The funds requested herein will allow us to begin implementation on several long-awaited program enhancements. The funds will help us improve the quality of our communication with clients, remove the barrier of computer access for clients, and better track our grocery inventory, which will in turn help us forecast spending and manage supply and demand. We are requesting funds to purchase pantry inventory software and the computers and scanners needed to utilize the software. In addition, we are looking for funds to start a subscription for EZText, a mass communication platform that will allow us to keep our clients and donors informed. We are also requesting funds for a computer for our client workstation.

II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Provide clear, concise information. 3 pages maximum.

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

History

Established in 2010 in response to growing needs in our community, ACT in Faith's (AiF) mission is to build a community that empowers the un- and under-employed to stabilize their households and build toward self-sustainability. AiF was created to help meet the needs of those who: do not qualify for support through other agencies, are facing a hardship that is not supported by another agency, or need help navigating services. AiF helps people navigate the social service system, connects them to other resources as appropriate, and provides "gap services" to meet needs that lie beyond the scope of other resource agencies, but are barriers to self-sustainability.

AiF provides 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.

Goals

In the late fall of 2023 AiF will be embark on, perhaps, the most significant milestone to date when the organization relocates to a larger facility. Programmatically, larger space will allow for program enhancement and growth such as: expansion of their Community Cupboard, a computer station(s) for client use for job/housing searches and benefit enrollments, a dedicated "satellite" space for partner agencies to use when serving the homeless or West Chester clients, a large group space for meetings, community events, and trainings, and space for more volunteers to focus on routine client support, enabling staff to dedicate their attention to helping people with system and resource navigation, employment support, and overall case management.

Key Achievements

In 2022, AiF served 567 unduplicated households – 925 adults and 465 children. Of those households, 444 households shopped at our Community Cupboard. AiF also filled 395 requests for financial or system navigation support. One third of the households supported in 2022 were households with children and 88% of the children whose households benefited from food and groceries from our Cupboard. In addition, AiF prevented 58 adults and 46 children from being evicted, funded car repairs for 31 working households, thus preventing them from losing their employment, and, funded security deposits to enable 17 households to move from homelessness to stably housed. To date in 2023, AiF has served 370 unduplicated households: 797 adults and 461 children.

In 13 years of operation, AiF has developed relationships and often formal referral processes with a wide variety of social services in the county. In 2022, 75% of new client referrals came from social service agencies, rehabilitation centers, and county agencies, with social services representing 48%. Over the last 2 years AiF has strengthened their relationships with agencies that provide street outreach to people who are unsheltered and have a variety of basic needs that present as significant barriers to obtaining housing and employment. These relationships have enables AiF to better serve those experiencing homelessness by providing bus tokens to get to interviews, photo IDs to start work, birth certificates needed to qualify got housing programs, cell phone minutes to contact potential employers, work and non-work clothing, and car expenses. Between January and May of 2022, AiF's partnership with the street outreach programs made it possible for five households, experiencing homelessness, t become stable housed.

Distinctiveness

AiF's overarching goal is to address immediate and short term needs and work towards long-term solutions that helps individuals and families establish sustainable household stability. As an "approachable service", low barrier resource that addresses the disproportionate burdens placed on the underserved, AiF is uniquely-positioned to act as a "bridge" for underserved community members to transition them to engagement with a broad array of Chester County anti-poverty services including HACC, Open Hearth Inc, Home of the Sparrow, North Star, and

Human Services Inc. Conversely, many social service resources have a more narrow scope. When their clients experience needs that lie beyond the scope of their programming they can often refer the client to AiF. AiF's focus on providing "gap services", coupled with a holistic approach leads, to daily collaborative opportunities with many of the social service and resource agencies across the County. For these reasons they have become a much-relied upon resource for both client and social service peers.

2. Funding request

- **Description of key initiatives and Specific Needs Being Addressed.** This request is heavily focused on new technology, both software platforms or hardware (computers) to support program work.
 - 1) **Pantry Soft** is technology that provides inventory tracking by utilizing the retail grocery industry's bar code system. Inventory flow is recorded by scanning items received and items distributed to each specific shopper received. The funding requested will cover a one-time installation fee, monthly payments for the first year, computers for check-in and check-out stations and scan "guns", identical to the ones used by retailers. Currently Community Cupboard data tracking is a multi-step process, on paper and in Excel, and in far less detail. Cupboard volunteers record, on paper "log sheets", the bulk weights of purchased and donated items, as well as the weight of groceries being distributed to each individual. Once per week, an office volunteer then enters the incoming grocery data into an Excel spreadsheet so it can be totaled, analyzed and sorted electronically. That same volunteer also enters the weight and value of groceries distributed to each shopper for every visit into our Salesforce client database.
Specific Need Being Addressed: Inventory data is necessary for grant and tax filing purposes. This data is also reviewed for trends in purchasing and donation and cost analysis. Personal care, household items, and a variety of foods (condiments and spices) are only allocated once per month per household, therefore, this data is tracked manually as well. Pantry Soft will electronically record what comes in, what goes out, and will allow for the tracking of monthly items by person. The platform allows for ad hoc reporting, allowing AiF to run reports for grant, tax, donor, and shopper data as needed. This grocery-store-like check out system will also make shoppers feel like they are shopping in a retailer grocer and not a "food pantry."
 - 2) **EZText** is the second platform for which funding is being requested. EZText is a text "blast" platform that will allow for the efficient dissemination of vital information, in a timely manner. Updates such as school supply support sign-ups, seasonal utility support program enrollment deadlines, change in AiF hours of operations for holidays, and appointment reminders are a few examples of opportunities where improved communication could be the difference between someone needing our help or averting an emergency. Clients have expressed the desire for updates such as these and AiF has struggled to find an effective solution until now.
Specific Need Being Addressed: As the provider of gap services, AiF never really knows when they will see people who utilize their services. Communicating important resource information, internal to AiF and external support offered by other agencies, has always been a challenge. AiF currently creates print communications that are time consuming to create, require an investment of time/paper/ink, and only reach a fraction of the people who could benefit from the information. For years AiF has witnessed people whose need could have been elevated, if not prevented, if only they'd known about a particular service, program, enrollment window.
 - 3) **A Computer Station** for client use is the final portion of the request. It is not uncommon for AiF to be working with someone in need of financial support, who is also un- or under-employed. While other agencies provide employment support, AiF has found that assisting someone "in the moment" is more effective than giving them a number to call to another resource to make another appointment – an added step that is often inhibited by the person's lack of transportation to get to said resource. Having a computer station will allow clients to look for jobs, enroll in benefit and resource programs, and apply for jobs immediately. The computer station will be staffed with someone to help clients navigate sites, upload documentation, and print as needed.
Specific Need Being Addressed: In this day and age, computers are the means to access almost everything. It is extremely rare that clients have access to a computer. While most have cell phone, online form completion can be exponentially more daunting on a cell phone. Libraries have computers for public use but they have time restrictions. Limited computer skills coupled with a time limit to use the computer, for what are often lengthy, less-than-intuitive forms, becomes a barrier to success. AiF's computer station will be staffed with a volunteer to offer one-on-one navigation support, helping the user learn basic computer skills needed to navigate on their own, with no time restrictions. Overall, this computer station will allow for

more timely outcomes for needs that require a computer and the opportunity for clients to learn empowering skills.

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

AiF will be relocating in the coming months for the purpose of expanding their programs and services. This computer station is a simple service enhancement that can have an immediate, significant impact. EZText is another simple enhancement what will have a huge impact. It will allow for thorough, timely distribution of essential resource information to clients, getting them connected to the support they need – reducing stress on the household and potentially eliminating the need for AiF’s financial assistance. The ability to implement both the computer station and EZText will have an immediate impact on the households served by AiF. Pantry Soft implementation will require front-end work such as: customization to the standard platform to meet AiF needs, data loading, and volunteer training. Funding in the near future will allow AiF to start the front-end work and be able to begin reaping the benefits of the software in early 2024.

- **How impact & results will be demonstrated and measured**

- Pantry Soft** It will also provide accurate, real-time inventory information which will enable AiF to do more informed stock purchasing. By scanning all groceries being distributed, this software will help ensure fair and equitable grocery distribution, further supporting fiscal responsibility.

- EZText** impact will have an immediate measurable impact when AiF runs a campaign giving clients the opportunity to opt-in to this service. The number of people who opt-in will instantly improve AiF’s ability to communicate important information. Once implemented, client surveys will help AiF evaluate the efficacy of these communications and help identify additional communication opportunities.

- AiF anticipates that a **computer station** will lead to an 20-25% increase in delivery of services that require computer use in the first year after implementation. In addition, AiF anticipates that those who use the computer station multiple times will eventually have acquired the basic skills needed to navigate the computer on their own, no longer require volunteer guidance .

- **How will this capacity building initiative impact your nonprofit?**

- Pantry Soft’s** inventory management will improve AiF’s efforts to be fiscally responsibility, maintain consistent inventory, allow for better adherence to distribution guidelines, and reduce duplicate entry of data – eliminating both the paper logging process and manual data entry into the AiF database.

- EZText** will save staff time and office supplies while making AiF more effective in service delivery. It also has the added potential of being used for event communication to AiF’s donor base.

- A dedicated **computer** for client use will allow AIF to empower clients with the ability to apply/search on their own, or with guidance – again, elevating AiF’s level of service and community impact.

If awarded, AiF would immediately resume implementation dialogue with Pantry Soft and begin the pre-implementation work. The campaign to allow clients to “opt-in” to EZText would also be launched upon award. The client computer station would be purchased and implemented immediately. The attached Request Budget provides an itemized breakdown of the cost for each component of this request.