

I. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

Date 9/13/2023

Contact Information

Organization Name: Community Warehouse Project of Chester County

Address: P.O. Box 218, West Chester, PA 19380

Phone: 484-473-4360

Website: www.communitywarehouseproject.com

Year Incorporated: 2017

FEIN: 61-1658782

ED/CEO Name: Glenda Brion

ED/CEO E-mail:

gbrion@communitywarehouseproject.com

Board Chair Name: Paul LeBuffe

Board Chair Approval (check here): X

Primary Contact Name: Glenda Brion

Primary Contact E-mail:

gbrion@communitywarehouseproject.com

Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

Arts, Culture & Humanities

Environment/Animal Welfare

Education

Health

Human Services

Religion

Mission: The mission of Community Warehouse Project (CWP) is to provide household goods and furniture to Chester County families and individuals in need – at no charge.

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

Chester County

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served:

CWP serves Chester County individuals, veterans, and families who have graduated from a housing program and are transitioning into permanent housing. Last year we served over 600 individuals from over 400 households, including 300 children and 72 veterans.

Annual Budget \$ 430,489 2 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff

85 % of budget for program expenses 7 # of Board Volunteers

12 % of budget for administrative expenses 45 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers

3 % of budget for fundraising expenses 1,961 # of Volunteer Hours

100 % total

Top 3-5 funding sources: ARPA (\$75,000), Chester County Commissioners Fund (\$50,000), Open Hearth (\$61,000), W. W. Smith Charitable Trust (\$50,000).

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: CWP is eager to partner with the Chester County Community Foundation. Your investment will support our website upgrade project that will modernize our website, improve the user experience, and strengthen its security.



Community Warehouse Project of CHESTER COUNTY

Proposal to Chester County Community Foundation, September 2023

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW Despite its affluence, individuals and families living in Chester County, PA, are burdened by an affordable housing crisis that threatens the stability of residents daily. Average rent for a 2-bedroom Chester County apartment is \$1,470/month – 3.9 full-time jobs at minimum wage are needed to afford this rent (2023 Out of Reach Report). At any one time, there are 436 people experiencing homelessness – 25% of these individuals are children (2023 Point in Time Count). Today’s high inflation rates, alongside the end of emergency programs put in place during the pandemic, including SNAP extensions, is creating an untenable situation for many. Meanwhile, transportation and childcare costs are rising, and like our neighbors nationally, Chester County residents are experiencing an increase in mental health issues with few, affordable providers available to help alleviate distress that impacts one’s ability to manage their housing stability.

Launched in 2017, Community Warehouse Project of Chester County (CWP) is a critical partner in Chester County’s work to end homelessness. Working in collaboration with 73 community and government-based agencies that support individuals, families, children, and veterans experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity, CWP fills an unmet, and often overlooked, critical need for those who are poised to rebuild their lives – furniture and household goods. People who have completed the hard work of regaining stability during their time in a shelter or transitional housing, including increasing their income, learning new budgeting skills, attending to physical and behavioral health needs, etc., are slowed in their progress by the high costs of housing and furnishings.

CWP turns an empty house or apartment into a home of hope by collecting and redistributing donated, high-quality furniture and household goods to completely furnish a new home –dressers, desks, couches, lamps, kitchen tables and chairs, dishes, pots and pans, utensils, glassware, and more, as well as new, not used, beds and bedding. As the only furniture bank in the County, CWP has a vital role in Chester County’s safety net. Statistics show individuals moving from homelessness to housing are 70% more likely to maintain their housing if the home is furnished. Along with our housing program partners, including Veterans Administration, Chester County Housing Authority, Maternal and Child Health Consortium, and Domestic Violence Center of Chester County, among many others, CWP supports the long-term stability of over 600 individuals annually and prevents homelessness in our community.

FUNDING REQUEST CWP is eager to partner with the Chester County Community Foundation. Your \$5,000 investment will support our website upgrade project that will modernize our website, improve the user experience, and strengthen its security.

Needs and Issues to be Addressed: Six years ago, CWP was grateful to receive the help of a West Chester University student who developed our website as a volunteer project. While the website initially provided CWP an adequate level of communication with our stakeholders and the community, today, it is no longer meeting our more complex needs.

In addition to describing our services and communicating general information about our organization, the website serves as a critical communication portal with donors who wish to donate furniture, and with our partnering organizations that refer clients to us. Donors access a webform to describe their furniture and upload pictures. With that information, we can efficiently accept or decline the donation and make appropriate plans to receive the donation. Partnering organizations access a webform to request furniture donations for a referred client. Pictures of the apartment or home the client is moving into are uploaded to help us plan appropriately sized furniture for access doorways and hallways. Demographic information about the client is also collected through the webform for internal evaluation and monitoring purposes and to maintain compliance with Chester County funding we receive through Open Hearth, Inc.

While these forms collect vital information on the front end, we don't have an automated back end, leaving us open to potential security risks and mistakes. Further, the current website is not user friendly, and the critical media upload function is not reliable, leading to frustration for donors and clients.

Project Description, Timeline, and Costs: With your support, we will retain the services of IT Edge to upgrade the efficiency and effectiveness of our website. IT Edge will build an 11-page website with improved functionality and design. The site will include webforms with advanced media upload capabilities, will be password protected to improve security, and will be attached to an onsite database so we can automate data collection. This feature will further improve security, reduce mistakes from manual data entry, and allow us to streamline our evaluation and reporting capabilities. Further, we will have secure hyperlinks for monetary donations, making online donations simple and safe.

IT Edge is a local Technology Consulting Service located in West Chester. They've been providing a suite of IT services for over 30 years and were recommended by several local organizations. The firm is dedicated to supporting the local community and partner with over 25 local nonprofits. Braedon Swindler, MBA, Digital Marketing Manager, is the consultant with whom we'll be working. Braedon has been with IT Edge since 2020 and specializes in websites, search engine optimization, online branding, graphic design, and online growth strategy. His expertise will drive improved functionality of the site with an eye towards building the site for organizational growth while maintaining a simple, user-friendly interface for our clients and donors.

Per our consultant, the project will be completed within five to six weeks.

The cost of the website redesign and development is \$4,500. With a monthly retainer of \$100, IT Edge will provide ongoing maintenance of the site, including on-call support and troubleshooting, content updates, and compatibility maintenance. This ongoing support is critical to the success of the website and our operations and alleviates our small staff of this task that is beyond our skill set. An additional \$330 in annual fees is required for the hosting plan and domain registration.

IT Edge has generously reduced their costs for this project by nearly 30% as part of their commitment to supporting the local community. Your investment will cover the redesign and development cost (\$4,500), the first month of maintenance (\$100), and the first year of hosting and domain registration (\$330).

Please see the attached proposal from IT Edge for a full description of the work along with associated costs.

Impact and Measurement: Maintaining the security and accuracy of data gathered on our webforms is an arduous and time-consuming task that compromises our operations and threatens the quality of services

we can provide to our clients and partnering organizations. Further, the lack of an automated backend system hampers our evaluation and monitoring process. Secure webforms that are connected to an onsite database will reduce the amount of staff time currently required to manually enter data, will greatly improve our security, and will improve our capacity for program evaluation. Currently, the website is hard for donors and partnering organizations to use – it is not user friendly and photos, that are critical to the quality of our services, are difficult to upload. Improved functionality will alleviate frustrations using the site and will save staff time currently spent on troubleshooting and chasing needed information from donors and clients.

In addition to soliciting feedback from users about the new design and functionality of the site, we will access the Google Marketing Platform, specifically Google Analytics, to measure on-going effectiveness of the website. Google Analytics will allow us to track the number of visitors to our site, the source of the traffic, and how users are interacting with the site. We will also track changes in traffic to our donation pages, both in-kind and monetary donations, and our volunteer page to assess the effectiveness in these pages in driving donations and volunteer support.

As a critical component of our operations, we expect that our redesigned website will support our overall goal to mitigate the risks of homelessness by improving the likelihood that a newly housed family maintains housing. Your support of our project will help us reach the following indicators of success:

- Serve at least 600 individuals, including at least 300 children.
- Provide all requested furnishings for each referred client, including a new bed and bedding as needed.
- Deliver requested furnishings and household goods within 2 days.
- Clients report satisfaction with their furnishings.
- Clients report being treated with dignity and respect by CWP staff and delivery staff.
- Program partners report satisfaction with the service.

CONCLUSION Chester County, PA, residents are burdened by an affordable housing crisis that is leading to an increase in homelessness and housing insecurity. Low-income households are literally being squeezed out. This crisis is reflected in the uptick in demand we have experienced for our services. We are currently providing approximately 15 furniture deliveries every week, up from 6-10 earlier this year. While the county has a network of support services, the lack of affordable housing keeps too many households from being able to maintain their stability. CWP fills an unmet, but necessary need. Households are 30% more likely to become homeless again if their home or apartment is lacking furniture. Our program mitigates risk and improves the chances that individuals, families, and veterans will maintain stable housing and progress towards independent living and long-term self-sufficiency.

Since our launch, CWP has successfully raised funds from a diverse pool of philanthropic partners, including individuals, foundations, and county sources. Our deep roots in the community helped us secure funding throughout the pandemic, including through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). While other organizations had to temporarily halt operations, CWP provided uninterrupted services. We are eager to have Chester County Community Foundation join our pool of philanthropic partners who support our mission, including W.W. Smith Charitable Trust, Chester County Commissioners, Quest for the Best Foundation, and West Pharmaceuticals, among others. Given our successful fundraising track-record, and an expected uptick in online donations with our improved website, we are confident we can easily absorb ongoing monthly and annual costs of the website after your initial investment.