

**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 9/21/2023**

**Contact Information**

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Year Incorporated: 1994  
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**Organization Information:**

**Field/s of Interest:**

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

**Mission:** Home of the Sparrow partners with women facing homelessness to secure housing, achieve long-term stability, and chart new paths for their futures.

**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:** 100% of the women we serve live in Chester County and have incomes of 150% or less of the Federal Poverty Level. Approximately 50% reside in an "Opportunity Zone" qualified census tract (Coatesville); 1/3 have children; 47% are African American, 31% Caucasian and 22% Hispanic. 98% have a high school diploma or GED, 73% have a diagnosed mental health issue; 79% report a history of personal trauma. Annually, we serve over 900 women and children

<b>Annual Budget</b> \$ <u>1,454,130</u>	<u>10.5</u> # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
<u>78</u> % of budget for program expenses	<u>15</u> # of Board Volunteers
<u>87</u> % of budget for administrative expenses	<u>92</u> # of Active Non-Board Volunteers
<u>15</u> % of budget for fundraising expenses	<u>1,898</u> # of Volunteer Hours
<i>100 % total</i>	

**Top 3-5 funding sources:** Individuals (33%), Foundations (32%), Government (11%), Corporations (7%)

**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:** \$ Grants of any size

**Proposal Summary:** The US Census Bureau concludes poverty rose to 12.4% in 2022 – the largest one year jump on record, and childhood poverty doubled. The women we serve reflect this data as they struggle with rising costs and the end of critical pandemic-related emergency programs. Your investment in our comprehensive homelessness prevention programming will help us meet increasing and urgent need in the community.



## **Proposal to Chester County Community Foundation, September 2023**

### **ORGANIZATON SUMMARY**

**History:** Home of the Sparrow (HOS) was founded in 1994 by members of the Paoli Presbyterian Church to help local women and mothers who were facing homelessness. Soon after receiving non-profit status that same year, we moved our first families into a rented home in Paoli. Two years later, we purchased a building and, with the help of 400 volunteers, transformed it into our first agency-owned Transitional Housing facility. That home in West Chester, plus another facility in Coatesville, are now dedicated to serving pre-senior women. In 2007, Home of the Sparrow adopted the Shared Housing Program that matches homeowners who have rooms to rent with women seeking affordable housing solutions. In 2017, HOS entered into an agreement with Chester County Adult Probation, Parole and Pretrial Services office to serve women re-entering the community after incarceration who need housing and other basic assistance. Today, Home of the Sparrow serves over 800 local women and children annually and is a critical partner in Chester County's social safety net.

**Mission:** Our mission is to partner with Chester County women facing homelessness to secure housing, achieve long-term stability, and chart new paths for their futures.

**Goals and Objectives:** Our overall goal is to **prevent** homelessness. All our programming and services are designed to reach the following objectives in pursuit of that goal:

- Participating women maintain their housing
- Participating women progress towards controlling their futures
- Participating women achieve a long-term housing solution

### **Key Achievements**

- Since 1994, we've helped over 8,000 women and children avoid the trauma of homelessness.
- We continuously maintain low administrative to programming costs, about 7%.
- A diversified funding base supports us annually, including individuals, corporations, and foundations.
- Excellent recruitment and stewardship efforts, as well as our deep community engagement, results in nearly 1,900 hours of volunteer support annually and significant in-kind donations (exceeding \$113,000 in value) to meet the additional needs of our program participants.
- We successfully raised one year of operating costs in a savings account to mitigate a catastrophe.
- We maintained services without interruption throughout the pandemic.

**Innovation:** Home of the Sparrow mitigates the risks of homelessness. We are the only Chester County organization dedicated solely to assisting single women and single mothers who are experiencing housing insecurity. Our innovative approach begins **before** a woman is homeless. We are not a shelter; rather, we **prevent** homelessness through a combination of financial assistance and case management. This approach is crucial in Chester County, where affordable housing stock is virtually non-existent. The average rent for a 2-bedroom Chester County apartment is \$1,470/month – four full-time jobs at minimum wage are required to afford this rent (Out of Reach Report 2023). Once housing is lost, it is nearly impossible to re-enter the housing market. Focusing our resources on homelessness prevention keeps women out of a costly, overburdened shelter system and avoids the traumatic experience of

homelessness that has devastating, long-lasting effects. Once homeless, women lose educational and economic opportunities, are more likely to experience chronic medical and behavioral health issues, and their children are more likely to become homeless themselves as adults. Since our launch, we've empowered over 8,000 Chester County women and children, helping them maintain their stability and rewrite their future.

## **FUNDING REQUEST**

Home of the Sparrow is eager to partner with Chester County Community Foundation. Your general operating investment will prevent as many as 900 vulnerable Chester County women and children from experiencing homelessness.

**Community Need:** While the wealthiest county in Pennsylvania, Chester County has little to no affordable housing for much of its low-income workforce. According to PathWays PA, Chester County's Self-Sufficiency Standard – the annual income needed to meet basic needs without public subsidy or private assistance, is \$62,028 for a single parent with one child. The women we serve have an annual salary of \$19,647 – they are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed (ALICE). They have no savings, retirement, or real estate; their education and job training are limited leaving them stuck in low-wage jobs; they are employed full-time but not making enough to meet their basic needs. They most often work in healthcare, childcare, food service, cleaning, or retail, industries that don't routinely provide upward mobility, training, substantial raises, or benefits. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, many of these jobs were disproportionately affected by the COVID 19 shut down and were slower to return. Black and Latino workers experienced the slowest job recovery. Most of the women we serve are BIPOC: 22% identify as Latina and 47% identify as Black/African American. Many experienced disruptions to their employment during COVID, including layoffs and reduced hours from which they are continuing to recover. Further, one-third of the women we serve have children who were home during school closures, creating another disruption to employment and significant financial strain. Even prior to the pandemic, the cost of living in Chester County was challenging for economically marginalized single women and single mothers – over the last seven years, the median rent in Chester County has increased by 35% (US Census), while wages have remained mostly stagnant.

**Program Description:** Often, the difference between a woman being evicted and remaining housed is only a few hundred dollars, individualized case management services, and additional community programs. After nearly thirty years of service in Chester County, HOS has developed a comprehensive set of unique services that provides the safety net needed to maintain housing and progress beyond housing insecurity. Services include:

1. **Supportive Housing:** In addition to eviction prevention via direct rental payments to landlords, HOS provides 12 to 24 months of case management and rental subsidies as needed to help women acquire the skills, resources, and the confidence they need to achieve housing and fiscal stability. Once stably housed, HOS provides up to 3 years of on-going financial and budgeting counseling, as well as access to the many in-kind donations HOS receives from the community, including household goods and products, holiday gifts and meals, gift cards, and back to school supplies.
2. **Pre-Senior and Shared Housing:** HOS annually provides 11 women, aged 55-62 years old, up to two years of safe, affordable housing in one of our two homes while they wait for their name to rise to the top of the subsidized housing list. While housed, HOS provides budgeting assistance, including helping them eliminate debt. Additionally, HOS annually facilitates up to 10 matches

between home seekers and home providers (of any age over 18) to support housing stability of both parties.

3. Women returning from incarceration: HOS provides wrap-around services in partnership with the Chester County Parole and Probation Office for non-violent offenders being released from incarceration, including case management and financial assistance.

All programs are delivered via **trauma-informed case management practices** and are buoyed by our deep community partnerships. Chester County has a solid network of basic needs and benefit providers. However, the women we serve are rarely aware of how to make contact or are simply too overwhelmed by their crisis to navigate an often-complex system. Through resource coordination and working with more than 25 collaborative partners, we connect women and children with what they need, including community and government-based benefits, food cupboards, domestic violence support, free medical/dental care and behavioral health services, clothing, and school supplies, among other basic supports. We also maintain vital collaborative partnerships with several landlords. Because of our organization's longstanding reputation in homelessness prevention, many landlords contact our office first before serving an eviction notice.

Alongside this resource coordination, our Program Coordinators (case managers) take the time to build trusting relationships with the women we serve to learn the root causes of her housing insecurity so a plan can be constructed leading to long-term self-sufficiency and permanent housing.

**Your support is urgent:** On September 12, 2023, the US Census Bureau reported that poverty rose to 12.4% in 2022 from 7.8% in 2021, the largest one-year jump on record, and poverty among children more than doubled. The women we serve reflect this data, as critical emergency programs provided throughout the pandemic end, including emergency rental assistance, SNAP extensions, the expanded Child Tax Credit, and free school meals. Single women and mothers who were living paycheck to paycheck prior to the pandemic, many of whom had interruptions to their employment, today are facing a financial cliff. They are not only struggling with rent, but also transportation and childcare. We are also seeing an uptick in the need for mental health supports alongside lag time in receiving behavioral healthcare benefits and wait times for an available mental health counselor. Similarly, there has been a recent escalation in the number of single mothers unable to take a job because they do not have adequate funds to pay for the initial childcare fees – the County cannot enroll a woman for subsidized childcare benefits until a pay stub is available for review. These financial gaps in the county's social safety net create devastating circumstances for the women we serve – they are literally stopped in their tracks.

Given rising need, we expect our service numbers to increase between 7% and 9% in FY2024, making your support critical.

**Measuring our Impact:** With your support, we expect to meet the following outcomes:

900 women and children will receive services; of these,

1. Approximately 188 will receive rental assistance to avoid imminent eviction.
2. Approximately 9 will be matched through our Shared Housing service to maintain stable housing.
3. Approximately 14 pre-senior women will remain stably housed for up to two years.
4. Approximately 52 will progress towards housing stability through ongoing case management and financial assistance as needed.

5. Approximately 270 will maintain their housing stability with the support of budget counseling and access to basic goods, as needed.
6. Approximately 242 women returning from incarceration, many with children, will receive specialized case management and financial assistance, leading to lower recidivism rates in the county.
7. Approximately 121 children of women returning from incarceration will improve their chances of housing stability.

As a member organization of Decades to Doorways, Chester County's Coordinated Entry System for people experiencing a housing crisis, we participate in a shared tracking system that provides county-wide data for systems improvement. In addition to tracking the number of women and children served, demographic information, and type of service provided through our county evaluation system, we track progress towards the individual stability goals each woman develops with the help of her case manager. Examples of individual indicators of success include:

- Informed understanding of the factors and experiences that led to their housing crisis
- Creation of long-term strategies for housing stability that maximize and/or increase income through access to training and/or education
- Obtaining financial literacy skills and a positive relationship with money
- Gaining connections to mainstream and community services and supports, for example food, healthcare, clothing, and benefits
- Becoming or staying current on mental and physical health needs for themselves and their children

The combination of aggregate data gathered through our county tracking system and individual outcomes provides valuable information about our impact in the community and on the individual lives of the women we serve.

**CONCLUSION** Home of the Sparrow prevents homelessness by intervening before an eviction takes place. Prevention stops a woman and child from experiencing the trauma of homelessness and mitigates the long-term risks and poor outcomes that result from an episode of homelessness. With virtually no stock of affordable housing available in Chester County, it is imperative that we keep a woman stably housed while she works with us to increase her income, decrease her expenses, improve her credit score, and develop the self-confidence, empowerment, and resources to progress towards economic self-sufficiency. Your investment will sustain critical programming that offers an innovative solution to the affordable housing crisis in Chester County, PA. Together, we will prevent homelessness and help as many as 900 vulnerable women and children secure their housing so they can thrive.

**ATTACHMENTS**

- 501c3 Letter
- Board List
- Annual Report
- Audit
- FY2024 Operating Budget with FY2023 Actual Comparison
- Strategic Plan