

**I. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET**

Date: 4/19/2023

Contact Information

Organization Name: Chester County Food Bank
Address: 650 Pennsylvania Drive, Exton, PA 19341

Phone: 610-873-6000
Website: chestercountyfoodbank.org
Year Incorporated: 2009
FEIN: 27-0887311

ED/CEO Name: Andrea Youndt
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Board Chair Name: Brad Dyer, MD
Board Chair Approval (check here): x
Primary Contact Name: Michelle Berger
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Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

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

Mission: We mobilize our community to ensure access to real, healthy food.

Geographic Area Served: All of Chester County

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served:

We serve over 40,000 people experiencing food insecurity in Chester County.

Annual Budget \$8,109,161	30 Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
84% of budget for program expenses	19 Board Volunteers
10% of budget for administrative expenses	2000 of Active Non-Board Volunteers
6% of budget for fundraising expenses	12,000 Volunteer Hours

Top 3-5 funding sources:

Lasko Family Foundation, Claneil Foundation, Deerbrook Charitable Trust

Grant proposal for: General Operating

Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: \$10,000

Proposal Summary:

Chester County Food Bank (CCFB) serves over 40,000 people through access to **real, healthy food** and **education & wellness** while ensuring long-term **sustainability**. We have cultivated a **community**-centered and holistic approach to not only address emergency needs but also the root causes of chronic food insecurity for households facing exceptional challenges in Chester County such as high cost of living, transportation barriers, and insufficient government resources. Our approach as a food bank is unique as we offer programming and food distribution services at **zero cost to our agency partners**.

II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION: GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

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

Founded in 2009, Chester County Food Bank's (CCFB) mission is to *mobilize our community to ensure access to real, healthy food*. CCFB was established as a response to escalating hunger in the county during the recession. Today, we provide food support for immediate nutritional needs in addition to education & wellness opportunities to address the root causes of food insecurity. Despite our existence as a "young" organization, we have evolved to be a leading food bank in the areas of nutrition, locally sourced foods, and education.

From the onset, improving access to fresh, nutritious food was accomplished through strategic food production and procurement as well as optimizing the use of the incredible resources and partnerships of our area. Our Agriculture Department supports us in providing the freshest food for our programs with the help of an industrious volunteer base on the farm and in the processing kitchen. We have built a food distribution network that is purposefully diverse and includes food pantries, hot meal sites, shelters, healthcare providers, schools, residences, senior centers, and other outreach organizations who serve as varied food access points throughout the county.

After establishing ourselves as the central hunger-relief organization in the county, we recognized the link between poverty, hunger, and food insecurity as well as the need for sustainable change. We cultivated a holistic approach with the development of programs using a food justice model. Our programs were designed to improve healthy food access, offer opportunities for quality education, and promote peer support and community engagement to strengthen self-sufficiency as well as improve health. We have seen success in our programs as we evaluate changes in health behaviors, quality of life, social support, and employment.

Throughout the pandemic, CCFB worked collaboratively and strategically to respond to a growing need. We have worked closely with our partners to increase their capacity to provide not just more food but healthier food, establishing new partners along the way. Despite the limitations of rising food costs and the temporary lack of a volunteer force, we increased our food output by 10% and increased the proportion of fresh fruits and vegetables to half of our total distribution. This increase in healthy perishable foods required us to support our agencies in improving infrastructure needs with the addition of cold storage units in order to store more food and reduce waste. Additionally, we expanded our outreach and added new distribution partners to reach as many as possible. We successfully introduced Sunshine Meals, pre-made microwavable meals provided to our distribution network. Our concentrated efforts on Sunshine Meals allowed us to increase our ready-to-eat meal output by five times, to provide nearly 100,000 meals annually.

Now more than ever, we see families struggling to put food on the table due to the recent reduction in SNAP (food stamps) benefits and high cost of living. It is a uniquely challenging time as food insecurity continues to worsen and we face increasing food costs. Despite these challenges, we envision a food secure Chester County as we are committed to our holistic and sustainable approach.

2. Funding request

Description of key initiatives

Chester County Food Bank (CCFB) serves over 40,000 people through access to **real, healthy food** and **education & wellness** while ensuring long-term **sustainability**. We have cultivated a **community**-centered and holistic approach to not only address emergency needs but also the root causes of chronic food insecurity for households

facing exceptional challenges in Chester County such as high cost of living, transportation barriers, and insufficient government resources. Our approach as a food bank is unique as we offer programming and food distribution services at **zero cost to our agency partners**.

Real, Healthy Food

Each year, we distribute **3.5+ million pounds of food and 100,000 ready-to-eat meals** prepared on-site. We strategically procure foods that are culturally familiar, nutritious, and locally sourced. We offer varied food distribution channels to reach target populations such as **children, seniors, and veterans**. Examples of our diverse distribution strategies include produce pop-up markets, summer meals for kids, backpack food packs, senior grocery boxes, prenatal grocery boxes, and double dollars for those shopping at Fresh2You with SNAP (food stamps).

Of our total distribution, over 50% is fresh fruits and vegetables. During growing season, **80% of produce is PA grown and 20% is grown here in Chester County.** We accomplish this with local farm partnerships, on-staff farmers and volunteers, and by supporting the construction and maintenance of 90 raised bed gardens throughout the county. In addition to strengthening diverse food access points, we also work to connect residents to SNAP (food stamps) benefits and other resources.

Education & Wellness

Our programs improve food access, offer opportunities for skills-based education, and promote social support and community collaboration. These programs include:

Fresh2You Mobile Market travels throughout Chester County providing fresh foods from local farmers paired with education on healthy cooking. Fresh2You offers a variety of financial incentives known as Veggie Bucks so that the market is affordable for all. **Fruit and Vegetable Prescriptions** redeemable at Fresh2You and are provided to those who screen positive for food insecurity by their healthcare providers.

Eat Fresh is a series of cooking classes available in English and Spanish that emphasize whole foods, local produce, cultural traditions, and community. Each week, students take home a “CSA” style box of local produce with the items they learned about in class.

Seed to Supper is a class provided in English and Spanish that focuses on growing a successful vegetable garden at home on a budget.

Kids Cooking and Gardening programs provide hands on learning opportunities for children to practice growing and cooking delicious fresh vegetables.

FRESHstart Kitchen is a culinary arts workforce development training program providing a pathway out of poverty by helping students gain confidence and skills to begin a career in the restaurant industry.

Sustainability

We also support our partners through capacity building and culturally adaptive solutions to ensure our county has the infrastructure to support food security for years to come. We use local research and collaboration with our network to strengthen communities with a strategic focus on sustainability.

Community

We reach as many as possible through our diverse network of food pantries, hot meal sites, schools and child focused organizations, senior focused organizations, healthcare providers, residential facilities, and other community-based organizations. Food insecure families in Chester County experience many barriers to healthy food access, some that are not easily addressed through the traditional food pantry model making multiple food access channels essential.

- **Specific needs and issues to be addressed**

The neighbors in Chester County who are experiencing food insecurity are not only hungry but also lack the quality and diversity of foods needed to support a healthy lifestyle. CCFB has established a set of strategies that provides a holistic approach to the unique needs of each community and household we serve. Supporting our organization ensures we continue to support families, fostering a healthier and more resilient community along the way.

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

With the termination of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency designation earlier this year, poverty relief programs such as SNAP and summer student feeding have been eliminated or reduced. This has required CCFB to fill this gap in government assistance by providing more food to the households who have been hit hardest by these changes. The reduction in government assistance has exacerbated the challenges of the families who were already struggling with high cost of living. MIT's Living Wage calculator currently estimates that a family of four with two working adults needs an annual income of \$106,038 to pay for the basic living costs in Chester County which includes expenses such as rent, medical, and childcare. In contrast, the eligibility threshold for SNAP (food stamps) for a family of four is just \$55,512, leaving many households with incomes that fall below the living wage but above the threshold for assistance. Because eligibility for SNAP does not consider local living costs, Feeding America estimates that 50% of the food insecure households in Chester County are ineligible for food assistance because their income is deemed "too high." When compared to neighboring counties and states, food insecure Chester County residents are much less likely to receive government assistance making our services in the community more prominent and impactful. As a food bank, we serve a much higher percentage of clients who are unable to receive government assistance when compared to other food banks throughout the country.

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

CCFB strives to positively impact food security status, health, and wellness through access to nutritious food and educational opportunities. Collecting data and consistently communicating with our partners allows us to measure the scope of our efforts. Direct feedback with those we serve is an integral part of our planning and evaluation process as well. Our programs incorporate both quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure we are providing services that are effective at alleviating hunger and show the improvement of health indicators. Using tracking software, participation counts, surveys, focus groups, testimonials, and observations we provide an in depth look at the effects of our work. Each of our programs has unique indicators to show its efficacy and uses metrics that align with our mission and strategic direction to ensure we are having the greatest impact possible.