

I. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

Date 1/23/2024

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 fiscal year we served 986 individuals from over 486 households, including 556 children and 97 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: As the only furniture bank in Chester County, CWP has a critical role in addressing homelessness in the County. Your investment will support general operating costs of our programming that will reduce the likelihood of a repeat episode of homelessness for as many as 600 Chester County households this fiscal year.



Community Warehouse Project of CHESTER COUNTY

Proposal to Chester County Community Foundation, January 2024

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW As a staff member of a Chester County, PA housing/shelter provider, founder Glenda Brion witnessed first-hand the incredible challenge economically marginalized individuals and families have moving from homelessness to housing. In addition to Chester County's exorbitant housing costs, the majority of individuals transitioning from homelessness move into homes with no furniture, no household goods, and no beds or bedding. It can take months or even years to acquire these items, leaving families with no place to share a meal and children to sleep on the floor. It also increases the likelihood of a repeat episode of homelessness. Launched in 2017 with a mission to provide household goods and furniture to Chester County families and individuals in need – at no charge, Community Warehouse Project (CWP) has quickly become a critical partner in the County's work to end homelessness.

Goals and Objectives: CWP's overall goal is to support homeless families and veterans as they transition from homelessness to stable housing. Objectives of our critical service includes:

1. Fill every request for furnishings – leave no referral unanswered.
2. Provide enough furnishings to completely furnish a home or apartment.
3. Provide enough household goods (pots, pans, plates, utensils, bedding, linens, etc.) to make every home fully functional.
4. Provide all furnishings in a timely manner.

Accomplishments: 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 program, 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. Once housed, a lack of furnishings can contribute to ongoing stress and poor self-esteem that keeps an individual from progressing towards long-term stability.

CWP alleviates this burden and 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 – beds, bedding, dressers, desks, couches, lamps, kitchen tables and chairs, dishes, pots and pans, utensils, glassware, and more.

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 program partners, CWP supports long-term stability and prevents homelessness in our community, especially among women – 79% of the adults we served in our most recently completely fiscal year were women. We served 486 households, comprised of 986 individuals, including 556 children – nearly double the number served the previous year, and 97 veterans, compared to 72 the previous year. We provided 620 beds to needy families along with other basic furnishings and household goods, up from 530 previously. We typically complete 6-10 deliveries per week. As need has increased, we are more recently completing 15 deliveries per week.

Our exceptional work in the community is gaining recognition – we received the Community Service Award from Greater West Chester Chamber of Commerce in 2021 and the AAUW Gateway to Equity Award in 2023, which is presented annually to a group, organization or individual that has shown by action and philosophy the promotion of the AAUW mission to advance equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy and research.

FUNDING REQUEST CWP is eager to partner with The Chester County Community Foundation. Your support will provide at least 500 struggling households with the furnishings they need to create a safe and secure home during a challenging economic time for too many Chester County households. 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). In Exton, average rent is \$2,151. Over the last 7 years, median rent in Chester County has increased by 35% (US Census). According to Chester County Department of Community Development, 40% of county renters are cost burdened, spending 30% or more of their income on rent, leaving them with too little for other necessities, like food, medications, transportation, or childcare. High rental costs alongside the end of emergency programs put in place during the pandemic, including SNAP extensions, child tax credit, free school meals, and rental assistance programs, is creating an untenable situation for many. Like neighboring towns and cities across the nation, homelessness is increasing in Chester County and people are staying homeless for a longer period. At any one time, there are 436 people experiencing homelessness – an 8% increase since last year; 25% of these individuals are children (2023 Point in Time Count).

Program Activities: CWP provides a cost efficient, innovative service that reduces the likelihood that individuals and families will experience a repeat episode of homelessness. Through a vast network of community partners, and by utilizing the support of dozens of volunteers, CWP redistributes unwanted, yet high-quality, furniture and household goods to pre-screened individuals and families in need, and demand is increasing as the affordable housing crisis worsens. Program activities include:

1. CWP receives donations of new and lightly used furniture and household goods.
2. Our partnering moving companies routinely pick up the donated goods and deliver to our warehouse.
3. Volunteers sort and inventory donated goods and make repairs as needed.
4. Our partners refer pre-screened clients to us, ensuring the people and families we serve are transitioning into stable housing and are unable to meet their furnishing needs elsewhere.
5. With receipt of a client referral, CWP staff and volunteers gather all needed furniture and household goods from our inventory to meet the requested need of the referred client.
6. Within two days of a client moving into their new home, the moving companies pick up the items from our warehouse and deliver them directly to the client, placing them in the home exactly as the client requests. Client feedback indicates that the movers are respectful and courteous.

Constituency Served: CWP serves residents of Chester County who are transitioning from homelessness into stable housing. Despite Black/African Americans making up just 5% of Chester County’s population, they represent approximately 44% of those experiencing homelessness (2023 Point-in-Time Count). The demographics of our clients reflect this data: 65% of our clients identify as a member of the BIPOC community, with 41% identifying as Black/African American. According to the 2022 Blueprint Report published by The Fund for Women and Girls (www.thefundcc.org), single mothers comprise 11.3% of all Chester County families. Single mothers are over-represented in our pool of clients – 57% of the families we serve are headed by a single mother. On average, single mothers pay 43.9% of their income for infant

childcare in Pennsylvania; an additional child raises that percentage to 80.2%. Given the affordable housing crisis in Chester County, high inflation, the end of pandemic-era relief programs, and the exorbitant costs of childcare, low-income, single mother households are hard-pressed to maintain their stability. A large body of evidence indicates that homelessness has devastating and long-lasting social and economic consequences. Children who experience homelessness are more likely to have learning disabilities, poor academic performance, and higher rates of hunger. They are also more likely to engage in risky behavior and are at higher risk for homelessness as an adult.

Reducing the amount of time families remain homeless is critical. As the only furniture bank in Chester County, CWP helps families move into homes faster, without having to wait until they can afford beds for their children and other furnishings. Once housed, furniture plays a primary role in supporting long-term housing tenancy.

Evaluation: CWP aims to mitigate the risks of homelessness by improving the likelihood that a newly housed family maintains their housing. We use the following indicators of success to measure our program impact:

- Serve at least 600 individuals, including at least 300 children.
- Provide all requested furnishings, 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 A 2022 article in Journal of Community Psychology supports previous studies on furnishings, reporting that furnished homes for families transitioning from homelessness to permanent housing contribute to improvements in mental, physical, and social health, as well as their ability to pursue and achieve goals, including employment and academic pursuits. Within this study, beds emerged as the most impactful type of furniture. “Beds allowed participants to achieve restful sleep and experience its restorative mental and physical benefits. The connection between insufficient sleep and poor mental and physical health is well-established in adult samples, with women especially susceptible to its adverse effects. For children, insufficient sleep was linked to poor school performance... [and] a host of other negative outcomes for youth, including decreased physical activity, weight gain, as well as depression, suicidal ideation, and risk-taking behaviors.”

By far the most challenging item for us to provide is beds. All our furniture is donated from community members, including beds and mattresses. However, we do not receive near enough clean, usable mattresses and bedding to fill the need. Despite receiving deep discounts for these items, we expect to spend \$73,000 this fiscal year in mattresses, bedframes, and bedding, including mattress covers, bed bug covers, pillows, sheets, blankets, and comforters, to ensure every child, adult, and veteran that we serve has a quality bed. Further, we will spend \$156,000 on moving costs to transport beds and furnishings to our families. Beds, bedding, and transportation make up half of our total organizational budget. Your \$5,000 investment will support these primary costs, along with operational expenses that support our program.

Together, we can support vulnerable families, women, and children as they build a home of hope.