

I. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

Date: 3/27/2024

Contact Information

Organization Name: Lighthouse Vocational Services
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Website: <https://lighthousevoc.org/>
Year Incorporated: 1975
FEIN: 23-1973053

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Board Chair Approval (check here):
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Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

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

Mission: The mission of Lighthouse Vocational Services (Lighthouse) is to provide vocational services, educational enrichment, and community integration experiences for persons with developmental disabilities to promote personal growth, opportunity, and hope for their future. The driving force of the organization is the belief that God created each individual with value and a purpose for life.

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: Lighthouse serves over 265 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities primarily in Lancaster and Chester counties. Lighthouse mainly serves people beginning at age 18 and through retirement, but also extends services to students aged 14-21 through its Student Transition Program.

Annual Budget \$ <u>5,451,858</u>	<u>70</u>	# of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
<u>74</u> % of budget for program expenses	<u>13</u>	# of Board Volunteers
<u>14</u> % of budget for administrative expenses	<u>5</u>	# of Active Non-Board Volunteers
<u>12</u> % of budget for fundraising expenses	<u>2,000</u>	# of Volunteer Hours
<small>100 % total</small>		

Top 3-5 funding sources: Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust - \$74,575; The Donald B. & Dorothy L. Stabler Foundation - \$50,000; High Foundation- \$33,412; Everence Foundation - \$25,000; Ressler Mill Foundation - \$20,000

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

Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: \$ 7,500

Proposal Summary:

Lighthouse is requesting \$7,500 for general operating support to extend program access to more individuals with disabilities in Chester County. As of 11/30/23, a staggering 626 individuals with disabilities in Chester County do not have access to services, as providers in the county have shut down or are no longer taking referrals. This number is increasing each year, and 335 of the 626 individuals are in the emergency category, which indicates critical need for services.

The Big Picture of Lighthouse

History:

Founded in 1975 upon Christ-centered values and principles, Lighthouse Vocational Services (Lighthouse) began as “Light House Rehabilitation Center,” envisioned and realized as a safe place for people with mental illness who needed to rehabilitate and gain skills to obtain jobs. With the help of over 100 volunteers, the old Blue Ball firehouse was converted into a rehabilitation center, and in 1976, Lighthouse opened its doors and provided employment opportunities for individuals both in the facility and community. In 2001, Lighthouse moved to a larger building in New Holland’s Orlan Business Park, a 25,000 square foot facility where it continues operating today. In 2018, Lighthouse expanded programming to include volunteer opportunities. In 2020, Lighthouse discontinued its practice of paying subminimum wages under the Department of Labor 14c exemption. Subminimum wages were previously offered to employ individuals of all abilities, not just those who are high-functioning and can earn minimum wage. To be inclusive of individuals who cannot or choose not to work every day, Lighthouse instead created a life skills training program, with a virtual component for those who want to access classes from home.

Currently, there are approximately 265 program participants, and programming is conducted using a facility-based vocational training program model. This model gives individuals with disabilities a supportive work environment where they can acquire vocational experience and job skills. Lighthouse participants work in the facility in the Vocational Skills Training program, receive daily life skills training in the facility and online in the “Strengthening Pathways” Adult Training program, volunteer in the community in Community Participation Supports, and work in the community through supported and small group employment in the Employment Services program.

Goals:

Lighthouse’s programs are designed to empower and equip participants to meet the myriad of daily employment, social, and emotional challenges confronting them. Care for participants is highly personalized, as one staff person provides support to no more than six individuals at a time.

All of Lighthouse’s services give individuals with disabilities access to customized training and vocational experiences geared to help them meet measurable goals, increase their independence, and enhance their quality of life. The goal is to help individuals with developmental disabilities move forward through Lighthouse’s programs to achieve greater independence and improve their quality of life by helping them develop skills and learn the processes that allow them to earn higher paychecks, increase their self-confidence, enhance their social skills, and enable them to be better citizens as they contribute to and interact with their greater community.

Key Achievements/Distinctiveness:

Amid national and statewide staffing shortages and provider closings, Lighthouse is on a trajectory of growth and serves 265 participants across programs, presenting even stronger numbers than before the pandemic (160 participant average in early 2020). Lighthouse is actively accepting more referrals and is expanding its fleet of vehicles to transport more individuals to and from facility-based and community-based work and activities. Additionally, Lighthouse expanded into Chester County in 2022 and is building a staff base to work with participants in Lebanon and Berks counties.



Lighthouse is thriving because of its innovative and inclusive practices. One area of unique focus is the private pay financial assistance Lighthouse offers to those without government funding. It is one of the only providers in the region to even extend access to these individuals, many of whom are from the Amish and Mennonite communities. Individuals are only charged 30% of the program rates, and Lighthouse fundraises to cover the remaining 70% of their costs. A second unique focus is Lighthouse's program diversity, which promotes individual choice. Due to the conviction to serve all individuals, not just those who are higher functioning and can obtain and sustain community-based employment, Lighthouse offers a variety of facility-based and community-based services that meet the needs and goals of individuals with differing levels of ability. A third area of unique focus is Lighthouse's championship of community partnerships. Lighthouse partners with many organizations, including over 30 businesses in Lancaster and Chester Counties to provide job opportunities, career centers to provide internships for high school and college students, and the Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) for client referrals. A fourth unique focus is Lighthouse's dedication to employees through its Cares Fund, which assists staff facing emergent or otherwise challenging situations in their personal and/or financial lives.

Funding Request

Description:

In Chester County, Lighthouse serves individuals with disabilities exclusively through its Employment Services program. Employment Services is a personalized, community-based program Lighthouse operates in Lancaster and Chester counties that assists those who are ready to seek work in integrated settings in the marketplace. Individuals are supported by certified Employment Specialists in exploring different types of work and seeking and retaining direct employment based on their career interests and skills. Lighthouse partners with many local businesses to provide paid work opportunities for both individuals (Supported Employment) and groups of 2-3 individuals (Small Group Employment). While earning a prevailing wage, participants gain experience performing a variety of tasks and receive individualized services, ranging from career assessment to job finding to one-on-one job support.

In Chester County, 49 individuals went through the supported employment program in the past year. Out of the 49 participants, 23 phased out of services (no longer needing job coaching support at their workplaces), and 26 are still receiving services (a number that has nearly tripled since Lighthouse expanded to Chester County in 2022). Lighthouse currently has two staff members and partners with 22 Chester County businesses to provide job opportunities. Here are some examples of business partnerships Lighthouse has forged: Longwood Gardens, Kennett Area and West Chester Area YMCAs, Oxford Library, Treetops Kitty Café, Westtown School, Project C.U.R.E., GIANT stores, Kennett High School, etc. Lighthouse staff utilize rented office space in Chester County for documentation and planning purposes. To extend access to more individuals, Lighthouse seeks to hire additional staff who can focus their time and energy on offering services to more Chester County individuals.

Need/Importance of Funding Now:

People with disabilities are increasingly underserved and left without access to services due to providers shutting down or no longer taking referrals and due to systemic worker shortages. Many individuals will wait years before they can obtain critically needed access to services. According to a 2022 survey provided by ANCOR of 130 providers in PA, 34% are permanently closing programs, leaving over 12,000 individuals with disabilities on waiting lists while over 4,000 more are losing their current services. 88% of closures are due to staffing shortages related to systemic underfunding. As of 11/30/23, a



staggering 626 individuals with disabilities in Chester County do not have access to services, as providers in the county have shut down or are no longer taking referrals. This number is increasing each year, and 335 of the 626 individuals are in the emergency category, which indicates critical need for services. These figures for Chester County demonstrate why funding is needed to address these inequities now.

Additionally, employment statistics for individuals with disabilities demonstrate the great need for programs addressing employment inequities for this underserved population. Nationally, during 2023, only 22.5% of individuals with a disability were employed, much lower than the 65.8% of individuals without a disability who were employed (Bureau of Labor Statistics). In PA, according to the Office of Developmental Programs' Independent Monitoring for Quality (IM4Q) 2021-2022 report, only 16% of the interviewed individuals with disabilities participated in community integrated employment. Factors that contribute to unemployment are the limitations of a person's disability, social stigma and employer discrimination, and lack of access to vocational training, one-on-one support, and transportation. 100% of Lighthouse's participants are low-income and rely on job training and support to increase their financial stability.

Impact:

The goal of the Employment Services program is to improve the economic freedom and quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities, by helping them obtain jobs in the community. Lighthouse seeks to extend access to individuals who would otherwise be at home and would not be given the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the workforce and to society at large.

In Chester County, there are two individuals with disabilities who have been improving their leadership skills through coaching from Lighthouse staff. One participant is a teacher's aide at St. Cornelius Catholic School. She is learning to lead the children in her classroom by working with them in small groups. She reads with them, choosing a different book/theme each day and creates some type of craft to go along with the theme. Another individual, a teacher's aide at Penn London Elementary School, leads small groups of students, teaching them their math lessons and Spanish lesson.

Lighthouse expects numerical growth in Chester County and additional success stories, as individuals become more independent and skilled in their jobs. Across the Employment Services program in Lancaster and Chester counties, Lighthouse anticipates that the following outcomes will be met during the grant period:

1. 165 individuals with disabilities will learn the skills needed for long-term employment success.
2. 90 individuals with disabilities will receive support from Lighthouse staff in their direct hire job placements.
3. 60 individuals with disabilities will earn a competitive wage through small group employment opportunities and coaching provided by Lighthouse staff.
4. 15 students with disabilities will develop the skills needed for marketplace employment through intentional one-on-one job training with Lighthouse staff.
5. Lighthouse will partner with 45 work sites to provide employment opportunities to participants.

Individuals served by Lighthouse attend quarterly/annual meetings which include their family members, Lighthouse staff, Support Coordinators from their respective county, staff from the individual's residential home (if applicable), and other support team members. The goals, needs and progress of each client are assessed during these meetings and adjustments are made to support their continued optimal growth. Skill development is tracked and documented in participants' Individualized Support Plans (ISPs).