

Please contact Grants Administrator **Kevin Baffa** at **(610) 696-8211** or grants@chescofcf.org with any questions.

**I. 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.chescofcf.org

Date

Contact Information

Organization Name: ACT in Faith of Greater West Chester	ED/CEO Name: Hallie Romanowski
Address: 10 W. Barnard St	ED/CEO E-mail: hallieromanowski@me.com
Phone: 484-324-8492	Board Chair Name: Sara Bleemer
Website: www.actinfaithgwc.org	Board Chair Approval (check here): <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Year Incorporated: 2010	Primary Contact Name: Hallie Romanowski
FEIN: 27-4033006	Primary Contact E-mail: hallieromanowski@me.com

Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

<input type="checkbox"/> Arts, Culture & Humanities	<input type="checkbox"/> Environment/Animal Welfare	<input type="checkbox"/> Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Human Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion

Mission:

To build a community that empowers the un- and under-employed to stabilize their households and build toward self-sustainability.

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

We serve the un- and under-employed, providing financial assistance for residents of West Chester zip codes and to those experiencing homelessness in Chester County. Our Community Cupboard serves residents of Chester County.

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served:

In 2023 we served 652 unduplicated households – 1038 adults and 620 children. In 2023, support for Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) households represented 30% of our entire program budget. Also in 2023 of the households that received financial support 45% were experiencing homelessness, 61% were single adults, and 33% of the households served in 2023 were households with children. Our clients identified racially as: 34% white, 34% black, 22% Hispanic, 4% Other, .2% Asian. Our clients are diverse in racial and cultural backgrounds, sexual orientation, religious affiliations, and housing and income levels, with all at, on the cusp of, or well below federal poverty guidelines. The vast majority of our clients are in the 24-64 age range but 19% were seniors.

Annual Budget \$391,965

81 % of budget for program expenses

11 % of budget for administrative expenses

8 % of budget for fundraising expenses

100 % total

2.7 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff

8# of Board Volunteers

82 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers

4459 # of Volunteer Hours

Top 3-5 funding sources: Individual donors: Individual donors: \$112,886, Fundraising: \$81,798, and Grants: \$90,500

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: ACT in Faith is requesting \$5,000 towards rebranding facilitation and implementation. This would include expenses related to an external resource facilitating sessions with all key stakeholders, as well as expenses related to new communication and marketing materials.

II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Provide clear, concise information. 3 pages maximum.

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

History

Established in 2010 in response to growing needs in our community, ACT in Faith's (AiF) mission is to build a community that empowers the un- and under-employed to stabilize their households and build toward self-sustainability. AiF was created to help meet the needs of those who: do not qualify for support through other agencies, are facing a hardship that is not supported by another agency, or need help navigating services. AiF helps people navigate the social service system, connects them to other resources as appropriate, and provides "gap services" to meet needs that lie beyond the scope of other resource agencies, but are barriers to self-sustainability.

AiF provides support in 3 Program areas: Basic Need (e.g. groceries, medical expenses, clothing) Employment Support (e.g. photo ID, car expenses, job search/resume support, childcare, work clothing, cell phone, bus tokens) and Housing Stabilization (e.g. eviction prevention, security deposits, utility expenses.) The services through which these programs provide support are: Client Emergency Fund - emergency financial assistance, Community Cupboard - grocery cupboard with a significant focus on personal care and household items (not covered by SNAP/ FoodStamps) and perishable and non-perishable foods to supplement what people can afford to purchase, receive via SNAP, or obtain at another area cupboard. In addition, AiF provides System Navigation as it relates any of the above Programs (e.g. information and referral, benefit/housing enrollment and recertification assistance, and job search/application support).

Key Achievements

In spring 2024 AiF embarked on, perhaps, the most significant milestone to date when the organization relocated to a larger facility. Programmatically, larger space has begun to allow for program enhancement and growth such as: expansion of our Community Cupboard, a computer station(s) for client use for job/housing searches and benefit enrollments, a dedicated "satellite" space for partner agencies to use when serving the homeless or West Chester clients, a large group space for meetings, community events, and trainings, as well as space for more volunteers who can focus on routine client support—enabling staff to dedicate their attention to helping people with system and resource navigation, employment support, and overall case management.

In fourteen years of operation, AiF has developed relationships, and often formal referral processes, with a wide variety of social services in the County. In addition to supporting unmet needs of the community, ACT in Faith has become a much-relied-upon partner for many of the areas social service agencies with 56% of 2023's first-time clients being referred by other agencies whose scope precludes them from assisting. Over the last two years AiF has strengthened their relationships with agencies that provide street outreach to people who are unsheltered and have a variety of basic needs that present as significant barriers to obtaining housing and employment. These relationships have enabled AiF to better serve those experiencing homelessness by providing bus tokens to get to interviews, photo IDs to start work, birth certificates needed to qualify for housing programs, cell phone minutes to contact potential employers, work and non-work clothing, and car expenses.

Goals

AiF's goal is to continue to identify support gaps and pursue the growth that our new space allows. We were recently approved by the Chester County Food Bank as a Tier 1 providers, allowing us to stock a much more robust selection of perishable and non-perishable foods. The "visiting agency" work station is already being used weekly by several agencies and we've only just begun to communicate this opportunity to our partners. The new office space allows for 3 additional work stations that new volunteers have begun to utilize daily. Currently, a client survey is underway to assess areas of suspected need, the results of which will be evaluated and new services developed as appropriate. In addition to program/service expansion, AiF will continue to nurture and cultivate our relationships across the County's continuum of care as well as with the Chester County Reentry Coalitions (2 staff members are members of the Coalition) and West Chester University (we are currently working with multiple professors and departments – having 23 students supporting AiF to fulfill volunteer hours and/or internships this fall). Program growth will require funding and we feel rebranding is a key factor in our ability to appeal to a wider audience to secure those funds.

Distinctiveness

AiF addresses immediate and short term needs and works towards long-term solutions that helps individuals and families establish sustainable household stability. As an approachable, low barrier resource that addresses the disproportionate burdens placed on the underserved, AiF is uniquely-positioned to act as a “bridge” for underserved community members to transition them to engagement with a broad array of Chester County anti-poverty services such as HACC, Open Hearth Inc, Home of the Sparrow, North Star, and Human Services Inc. Conversely, many social service resources have a more narrow scope. When their clients experience needs that lie beyond the scope of their programming they can often refer the client to AiF. AiF’s focus on providing “gap services”, coupled with a holistic approach leads, to daily collaborative opportunities with many of the social service and resource agencies across the County. For these reasons they have become a much-relied-upon resource for both client and social service peers.

2. Funding request

• Description of key initiatives

ACT in Faith is planning to launch a rebranding initiative in an effort to re-establish its presence in a way that creates a more independent identity and more accurately reflects its role in the County’s continuum of care. In an effort to rebrand in a responsible, intentional way, we hope to secure funds that will allow us to afford an external consultant to help facilitate discussion among a group of key stakeholders-board, staff, clients, volunteers, founders, and donors. The goal of the discussions will be to find a name/brand that serves to

- re-establish our identity and
- better represent our role of being a provider of gap services and a much-relied-upon resource for both the un/under employed and other social service resources in Chester County

In addition to the facilitation expenses, rebranding will result in a flurry of other marketing and communication expenses such as, but not limited to new: web domain, name change fees, logo design, signage, stationary, marketing materials, and donor and volunteer communications.

• Specific needs & issues to be addressed

Separate and distinct identity: Since its inception, ACT in Faith’s identity has been confused with that of its landlord, the Church of the Holy Trinity. Because we operated from space within the church our physical location has created and perpetuated a very blurred line between ACT in Faith program/service and that of Holy Trinity’s ministry. Despite constant attempts to clarify, clients, peer organizations, and even volunteers at times still struggle to differentiate. And while there is absolutely nothing “wrong” with being confused with a faith community, we are and have always been an organization that represents all people to come to us for assistance or to serve so we feel it important for the distinction to be made. ACT in Faith is comprised of people from all walks and traditions, including those who have no religious/spiritual affiliation.

A name accurately reflective of who and what we represent: At the time of our founding in 2010, the specifics of the mission were unclear, even to the founders. The founders, most of whom were members of Greater West Chester faith communities, had identified that many people had needs that were beyond the scopes of existing resources or they simply didn’t know what resources were available. Filling these “gaps” was the premiss upon which the organization was established. The assumption was that they could be stronger together, than individually, in their efforts to assist. While the mission has become more clear over the years, the name has become less pertinent. ACT in Faith, Assisting the Community Together in Faith, was chosen merely because it was an organization created by the faith communities to “act” on behalf of their neighbors in need. There were never any religious overtones to the programs and services provided. The name was chosen to represent the intention to live by the Golden Rule of treating others how we want to be treated - to care for those in need. For the founders, that appropriately translated to “faith”.

The founders had no idea what programs or services they would go on to create, nor did they have any clear vision of how the organization would fit into the social service “system”. After over a decade of learning, creating programs to serve the identified needs, and building relationships across all walks of the community, “who we are, who we serve, what we do, and how we do it” has become vividly clear. Their impact has grown, year over year and their collaborations with other service agencies have flourished, solidifying ACT in Faith’s role in the County’s continuum of care.

• Why it is important to fund this now

The timing is ideal. We’ve recently moved into new, larger space which is street level (previously our offices were located in the basement) and, for the first time ever, we have our own entrance. Prior to the move, only those who knew of us, knew where we were. Now, we are visible to all who walk down Barnard Street. The new location not only elevates our visibility to the community but it affords us the physical separation from our landlord, the

church. We now have the space to grow our services and live into our potential to service this community. Couple that along with a more appropriate name and look and we will have a brand that increases our fundability - opening new funding doors which will in turn help us be of greater service to our clients and social service partners.

- **How impact & Results will be Demonstrated**

The impact of rebranding can be a double-edged sword. It has the potential to both attract and detract. We recognize the risk of losing the support of founders and long-time followers who have become attached to our faith origins. For this reason we have already begun vetting the rebranding concept with those groups and will continue to do so, allowing them to be part of the process if desired. We plan to invest all and any effort needed to ensure our supporters that nothing else is changing with regard to our mindset, methodology, intentions, or values. That said, we are confident that a new brand, free of religious overtones, will do more to engage new individuals, business sponsors and grantors, than detract. And by no longer being confused with the church, preconceptions as to the nature of our work will be eliminated. Eventually people will fail to affiliate us with one particular faith community and view us as the independent organization that we are, an organization that simply treats people with dignity and respect - living the "Golden Rule."

For capacity building grant proposals:

- **How will this capacity building initiative impact your nonprofit?**

Our name was never intended to imply religious overtones or the need for those involved or those receiving services to be religiously affiliated, yet, as we've grown and been in contention for larger grants from a whole new audience of potential funders, our name has been cause for consternation. On numerous occasions we've needed to explain, and re-explain that we are not a religious institution. Even individual donors have expressed concern or hesitance in supporting "a faith based organization", when in fact, we are not. The name, albeit well intentioned, has become a hurdle and we believe rebranding will prevent it from being a liability. We believe rebranding will create a more distinct identity for the organization, broaden our appeal to potential funders, and afford us the opportunity re-invent our public facing image in a way that more accurately reflects the organization - at a time when we have a new level of visibility in the community. Over the shorter term, a new brand will reinforce the recent physical separation from the church and secure a new outward facing identity for the organization, making the firm distinction between ACT in Faith and Holy Trinity. Over the longer term, the impact of a new brand will be seen most evidently via significant growth in our donor base which will in turn allow for organization wide growth.

- **How will this impact be measured?**

New or lost donor engagement will be monitored via our Salesforce database from which reports will be run to help us evaluate an uptick, or loss, of donors. We anticipate the new brand to appeal to a wider space of individuals and funders which will increase and further diversify our funding streams, thus allowing us to grow all aspects of the organization. We are committed to investing all and any effort needed to ensure our supporters that nothing else is changing with regard to our mindset, methodology, intentions, or values. On a more qualitative level, the impact will be observed when clients no longer refer to us as "the church."

Include a description of the expected activities; timeline & costs to implement the initiative. If external consulting services are required, include the anticipated costs & expertise of the consultants to be hired.

Include external consultant proposals if applicable.

The attached Project Budget captures the key expenses related to rebranding and estimated costs. We are in discussion with potential consultants to facilitate the rebranding "workshop" - one of which may be willing to take on this project pro bono. One of our partner agencies that has successfully rebranded in recent years has been kind enough to share tools they created to guide them through the process (comprehensive task lists with estimated timing for execution), therefore the consultant in question will not need to manage the entire project, we will do that in-house. If the consultant is willing to conduct this workshop pro bono, that leaves CCCF funding free for the other items on the Project Budget. We have had informal conversations with a graphic designer who has recommended we budget \$1500 for logo design. Because we feel that external consultation is necessary for the success of this initiative, consulting fees would be the top priority for this award with any remaining funds being used to cover the expenses associated with implementing a new brand. We would launch the initiative as soon as funds are secured. The attached Project Budget accounts for the potential pro bono scenarios mentioned above. Also attached is the comprehensive task list that was shared with us and adapted to our needs.