

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

Date 9/27/2024

Contact Information

Organization Name: Valley Forge Educational Services
Address: 1777 North Valley Road, Malvern
Phone: 610-296-6725
Website: www.vfes.net
Year Incorporated: 1959
FEIN: 23-6050757

ED/CEO Name: Tom Quinn
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Board Chair Name: Bill Hennessey
Board Chair Approval (check here): X
Primary Contact Name: Kate Mullen
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Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

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

Mission: Valley Forge Educational Services prepares children and adults with special needs to realize their potential as contributing members of society.

Geographic Area Served (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served): VFES serves all of Chester County. Vanguard students come from 15 school districts in Chester County. In addition, our Customized Workforce Solutions program serves 80 adult participants, 26 of whom live and work in Chester County.

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served: The Vanguard School serves approximately 240 students with special needs, 4–22 years of age. Our Customized Workforce Solutions (CWS) Program serves 80 adults with special needs. CWS participants range in age from 20-60 years. Currently, 37% of CWS participants come from Chester County.

Annual Budget \$ 20,535,102 _____ # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff 260 ___
84 % of budget for program expenses 12 ___ # of Board Volunteers
15 % of budget for administrative expenses 128 ___ # of Active Non-Board Volunteers
1 % of budget for fundraising expenses 697 ___ # of Volunteer Hours
100 % total

Top 3-5 funding sources: Pennsylvania Department of Education; Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation; Program Fees; Foundations/Corporations and Individuals.

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

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: \$ 10,000 _____

Proposal Summary: In 2017, VFES launched [Customized Workforce Solutions \(CWS\)](#). CWS provides supported employment for adults with disabilities, including career assessments, job development, and individualized job support in the communities where they reside. CWS has afforded hundreds of individuals with disabilities access to competitive, integrated employment so they can lead productive and meaningful lives. **CWS enables close to 100 individuals with disabilities to expand skills and experience so that they may secure high-quality and personally satisfying careers and jobs.** Currently, all of CWS participants make at least minimum wage or higher. The CWS approach is two-fold: advocating for people with disabilities to be employed in the community by working closely with and educating businesses, and providing participant led job coaching and support on-site. Many CWS participants qualify for government funding to pay for employment services; however, these payments do not fully cover program expenses. For this reason, VFES relies on individual donors, foundations, and corporations to fill critical funding gaps.

II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Provide clear, concise information. 3 pages maximum.

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

Founded in 1959, Valley Forge Educational Services (VFES) has evolved into a premiere provider of educational, employment-related and recreational programs for individuals with disabilities in southeastern Pennsylvania. Through an individualized and holistic approach, VFES educators and clinicians nurture the abilities and strengths of each child and adult, helping them realize their full potential as contributing members of their communities.

Valley Forge Educational Services currently serves approximately 400 children and adults from 11 counties--the largest populations coming from Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery Counties. VFES is most well-known for The Vanguard School. The Vanguard School is a Pennsylvania licensed, approved private school serving approximately 250 students, 4–21 years of age, who require a high degree of individualized attention and intervention. Our student population includes those with autism spectrum disorders, developmental disabilities, and speech-language deficits. Many Vanguard School students experience social-emotional, executive functioning, and behavioral difficulties. The Vanguard Transition Center provides students, 18–21 years of age, with continuing education, counseling, self-advocacy training, and career exploration and community-based vocational experiences. Rounding out our continuum of services is our Adult and Recreation Services (ARS). ARS oversees the operations of our Customized Workforce Solutions (CWS) program. CWS provides adults with disabilities (age 18 and older) personalized work plans and individualized job supports and coaching so they can maintain competitive, integrated employment in their home communities.

VFES's Customized Workforce Solutions (CWS) program experienced significant growth over the last two years, growing from approximately 40 adult participants in the fall of 2022 to close to 100 adults who currently receive job development, training and on-site support through CWS. This growth demonstrates the significant need for employment programming for adults with disabilities. VFES is committed to sustaining this critical program, yet navigating the delicate balance between revenue and expense.

In December of 2022, the VFES Board of Directors formed a steering committee, consisting of 4 Board members and 5 members of VFES administration, charged with identifying the strategic needs of the organization for the next 3 years. In January of 2024, the following three strategic objectives were identified: Brand Awareness; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; and Advancement. With the seating of each strategic workgroup in January, year one of our three-year Strategic Plan officially commenced.

Finally, VFES recently purchased a 3-acre lot adjacent to our campus in Malvern. This was an important acquisition, as space on our campus for new or expanded programming is very limited. This lot will be the subject of much discussion over the next 12 – 18 months, as VFES Leadership and the Board consider the best strategy for expanding the footprint of Valley Forge Educational Services.



2. Funding request

• Description of key initiatives

Far too often, individuals with disabilities are unemployed, underemployed, or employed at low wages because society often views their potential with low expectations. In Southeastern Pennsylvania, the number of people with disabilities employed in integrated, competitive employment is still very low.

The 2019-2020, Pennsylvania's Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) *Comprehensive Employment Report* cited that only 17% of people with disabilities were working in competitive, integrated employment in the Southeast region (including Chester, Montgomery, Delaware, Bucks, and Philadelphia counties). In addition, according to the 2021-2024 Southeast Regional Workforce Innovative and Opportunity Plan, unemployment is three times higher for those with a disability compared to those without a disability.

Our Customized Workforce Solutions program helps fill this deficit by providing individuals with disabilities access to individualized and customized workforce placement. CWS enables individuals with disabilities to expand skills and experience so that they may secure high-quality and personally satisfying careers and jobs. The CWS approach is two-fold: advocating for people with disabilities to be employed in the community by working closely with and educating

businesses, and providing participant led job coaching and support on-site. This is accomplished through the following key services areas:

Community Based Work Assessments: Individualized employment assessments conducted at community business sites to help identify employment options, interests and strengths of the participant. *Job*

Finding/Development: A service that helps participants develop interview, resume and application skills, and establishes employer connections within the participant's community to help the participant gain competitive, integrated employment.

Job Coaching/Support: On-the-job training for the participant, periodic follow-up, and ongoing support for participants and their employers. This also includes education for employers and co-workers about how to best support the participant.

CWS has partnered with many employers who are very supportive of our mission to provide competitive employment experiences that may not have been previously explored. Open-minded employers work closely with our Employment Specialists to find a participant's hidden potential and to provide opportunities for growth, skill building, relationship building, and the opportunity to be a contributing member of one's community. These employment opportunities foster friendships, provide a means to live independently, and most of all provide a person with a sense of purpose.

• Specific needs & issues to be addressed

Despite encouraging efforts for the past 15 years to advance employment for autistic adults, a low percentage of autistic adults are employed at any given point in time. These gains have not yet significantly impacted employment rates and widespread hiring patterns. Low levels of employment persist among individuals on the autism spectrum as compared with the overall population. Nationwide, adults with autism have an unemployment rate of around 40% according to a 2021 study published by the National Library of Medicine. Some private estimates go even higher, suggesting that 85% of adults with autism are unemployed. In Southeastern Pennsylvania, the number of people with disabilities employed in integrated, competitive employment is still very low. The 2019-2020, Pennsylvania's Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) Comprehensive Employment Report cited that only 17% of people with disabilities were working in competitive, integrated employment in the Southeast region (including Chester, Montgomery, Delaware, Bucks, and Philadelphia counties).



When students with special needs turn 22 they lose all legally mandated special education services. Families must help their adult son or daughter navigate a world of adult services that is uncoordinated, plagued by long waiting lists, and unprepared to meet his/her unique needs. This has a direct impact on an individuals' ability to work and become independent. Employment — paid work — leads to economic opportunity, equity, and independence. Individuals with disabilities optimize their ability to enjoy these benefits of employment through careers and jobs available to all individuals that provide competitive earnings. Individuals with disabilities also strengthen their economic security through employment that provides health insurance and paid leave. Finally, the employment of individuals with disabilities benefits our communities and our nation as they maximize their skills and talents and contribute fully to our economy.

Our Customized Workforce Solutions (CWS) program helps fill this deficit by providing individuals with disabilities access to individualized and customized workforce placement. According to Next for Autism, 51% of neurodivergent employees have quit or want to quite due to lack of support. Data indicates, with the right support and practice people with disabilities have many strong and employable characteristics. CWS enables individuals with disabilities to expand skills and experience so that they may secure high-quality and personally satisfying careers and jobs. The CWS approach is two-fold: advocating for people with disabilities to be employed in the community by working closely with and educating businesses, and providing participant led job coaching and support on-site. Therefore, we respectfully ask the Triumph Group Foundation for \$7,000 in general operating support for Customized Workforce Solutions.

• Why it is important to fund this now

While CWS is a critical bridge from special education services to inclusive employment, government funding has not matched the costs of providing a program with the level of expertise and services that CWS offers. VFES receives funding from Medicaid waivers from Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services' (DHS) and state funding from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). However, funding from these sources is tied to the CWS participant and leaves the program if the participant no longer receives services. The waivers also do not cover 100% of the expense to support an individual. For example, waivers do not cover staff transportation to

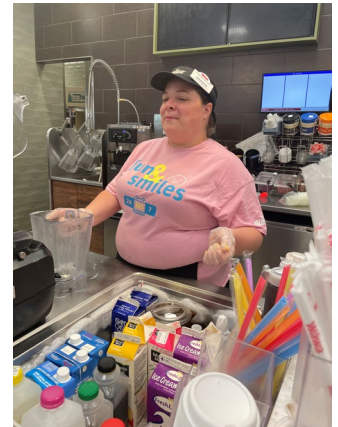
and from the job sites. Government funding covers about 70% of the costs involved in moving a participant from the initial stages of career exploration to the final stages of independent work. Since we choose not to pass on this unfunded expense to the participant, we absorb these costs. Funding from businesses and foundations helps fill this funding gap.

• How impact & results will be demonstrated

Since the program launch in 2017, CWS has tracked several outcome measures, including number of participants, service hours and business partners.

The principal objectives for CWS in 2024-2025 include:

1. Support 80+ adults in achieving integrated, sustainable employment
2. Increase in participant service hours to at least 3,000 hours.
3. All CWS participants securing and/or maintaining employment at minimum wage or higher
4. Score 90% satisfaction or higher on participant surveys.
5. At least 90% CWS participants sustaining employment for 6 or more months.
6. Engaging at least 130 employers.



The CWS model is a move away from individuals spending their days in sheltered workshops or segregated day programs and into competitive, integrated employment. Research clearly shows that this form of employment programs leads to more economic prosperity for individuals with disabilities and with it, greater access to community activities and inclusion, higher quality of life, greater independence, and better overall health. Without programs like CWS, an adult with a disability is often isolated at home, disengaged from the community, and lacking social and personal growth.

Tracking the progress and success of CWS participants drives our program every day. CWS's SET-Works play a major role in tracking metrics and ensuring goal attainment. Employment Specialists track individual participant progress with a monthly report. If a participant shows a lack of progress or develops anxiety or job site concerns, Employment Specialists work in conjunction with the Director and the participant's team to develop an effective strategy to address issues. All changes to services are a team decision—the participant has input with any strategies or decisions before they are implemented.

Participant and family satisfaction with the program are another form of measurement employed by CWS. On average, participants and families rate the program a 4.9 average satisfaction rate (out of 5). These surveys allow CWS staff to evaluate its effectiveness and identify areas of needing improvement. The following is a sampling of what participants and caregivers are saying about CWS:

"My CWS employment specialist pushed me to expand my searching techniques and helped my job application stand out. In the role I was able to secure, I know that I have helped, supported, and played a role in providing a necessary public service. My employment specialist taught me to find roles that maximize strengths and minimize weaknesses, to be bold and daring, and to use every tool you have to find a way to succeed." **CWS Participant**

“We had been searching for a job opportunity for our 26-year-old son's moderate level of skill and ability. We knew he would require extra time to learn new job skills to become successful. The typical job services offered after high school expected him to learn a new job within a two-week timeframe or [be] deemed ‘unemployable.’ CWS was the answer we were looking for. From the initial intake to the job coach assignment, our entire experience has been positive. His job coach has been superb with finding the right ‘fit’ for a workplace and providing us with feedback.” CWS Parent

We recognize and advocate for adults with disabilities to be able to work and live in their communities alongside their neurotypical peers and engage in work that matches their interests and abilities. We believe this integration is essential to a diverse workforce and helps raise awareness about workplace accommodations. Our staff has the highest expectation for our participants. They couple respect and understanding with challenging our participants to reach their full capability. We are asking foundations and corporations to partner with us to ensure this exemplary program continues to help adults with disabilities find fully integrated employment and lead productive and happy lives.

III. ATTACHMENTS

E-mail or mail this support information

1. Copy of 501 (c) (3) federal tax-exempt letter
 2. List of Board of Directors, with their affiliations
 3. Most recent annual report & financial statement, audited if available
 4. Itemized organizational operating budget with actual results for prior fiscal year & current fiscal year to date
 5. If capacity building initiative, itemized budget (including external consultant’s proposal, if applicable)
 6. Current strategic plan. If your nonprofit does not have a current strategic plan, explain why.
- Use this form @ www.chescof.org to apply online for grants from all Community Foundation Funds.
 - **Email proposals to grants@chescof.org**
 - Proposals are considered “complete” when CCCF has **confirmed** receipt of the **Grant Proposal Summary Sheet, Narrative & Attachments**.
 - Proposals are shared electronically and online with Fund Advisors, Donors & Grant Panels.
 - Per IRS Regulations, applicants must be charitable, tax exempt organizations with 501(c)(3) certification & cannot be individuals.

Please contact Grants Administrator Kevin Baffa at
(610) 696-8211 grants@chescof.org with questions.



*Connecting people who care with causes that matter,
so their legacies make a difference.*