

## GRANT PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

- The Chester County Community Foundation **connects people who care with the causes that matter**, so their philanthropy makes a difference **now & forever**.
- We are **a collection of Field of Interest & Donor Advised Funds** with **\$5M + granted annually** to nonprofits in Chester County & beyond.
- **99%** of our grants are made by our generous Fund Advisors, who make grant decisions all year.

**Proposals submitted by nonprofits are considered for 2 types of grants:**

### Field of Interest & Donor Advised Funds (No Deadline)

- ◇ Grants **focus on Chester County** causes & issues, but are not limited to Chester County.
- ◇ Charitable nonprofits working **in all fields of interest** are considered for grant awards. (I.e. arts, culture, & humanities; education; community improvement; environment; religion; health; & human services)
- ◇ **General operating** grants are encouraged. Nonprofits should be specific about their mission, goals, & measurable outcomes.
- ◇ Proposals can be submitted **anytime all year**.
- ◇ Grant decisions are made **intermittently** all year, as Fund Advisors desire.
- ◇ Grant **awards** typically range from **\$500-\$7,500**.

### Fund for Chester County Capacity Building Grant (Due 9/11)

- ◇ For eligibility in this grant program, nonprofits must be **located in & serve Chester County**.
- ◇ Nonprofits **budgets** must be **\$500,000 or less**.
- ◇ The goal of capacity building grants is to **strengthen the effectiveness of NPO's serving the region**, see page 4 for more details on the areas including:
  - Mission, Vision & Strategy
  - Governance & Leadership
  - Partnerships & Collaborations
  - Operations & Technology
  - Fundraising, Development & Marketing
- ◇ Proposals submitted between **July 1 - Sept. 11** are eligible for consideration.
- ◇ Grant **awards** typically range from **\$500-\$5,000**, with monies distributed by **February**.

- Use this form @ [www.chescocf.org](http://www.chescocf.org) to apply online for grants from all Community Foundation Funds.
- **Email proposals to [grants@chescocf.org](mailto:grants@chescocf.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** or [grants@chescocf.org](mailto:grants@chescocf.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.chescocf.org](http://www.chescocf.org)*

Date

**Contact Information**

Organization Name: Girls Spark  
Address: PO Box 383, Kennett Square, PA 19348  
Phone: 484-604-9303  
Website: [girlsspark.org](http://girlsspark.org)  
Year Incorporated: 2019  
FEIN: 83-2403933

ED/CEO Name: Kim Yacoubian, ED  
ED/CEO E-mail: kim@girlsspark.org  
Board Chair Name: Laura Kasper  
Board Chair Approval (check here): X  
Primary Contact Name: Laura Kasper  
Primary Contact E-mail: laurak@girlsspark.org

**Organization Information:**

**Field/s of Interest:**

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

**Mission:** To provide middle & high school girls with a safe, supportive empowering environment where they can learn, collaborate and overcome adversity in facing today's social issues.

**Geographic Area Served** (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served): Chester County and the Greater Delaware Valley region.

**Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served:** Girls Spark empowers and educates middle and high school girls ages 11 to 18. Building on remarkable growth during the 2023-24 program year, which reached 456 teen girls, Girls Spark has already surpassed that milestone in the 2024-25 program year, engaging 467 girls and counting.

**Annual Budget** \$112,505 \_\_\_\_\_ # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ 33% of budget for program expenses \_\_\_\_\_ 36 \_\_\_\_\_ # of Board Volunteers (Adult and Teen Boards)  
\_\_\_\_\_ 58 % of budget for administrative expenses \_\_\_\_\_ 47 \_\_\_\_\_ # of Active Non-Board Volunteers  
\_\_\_\_\_ 9 % of budget for fundraising expenses \_\_\_\_\_ 295 \_\_\_\_\_ # of Volunteer Hours  
100 % total

**Top 3-5 funding sources:**

**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:**    \$ 7,500 \_\_\_\_\_

## Proposal Summary:

### Girls in Crisis: Addressing the Mental Health Emergency

Girls across the U.S. are facing a profound mental health crisis marked by unprecedented levels of violence, sadness, and suicide risk. Today's teen girls are navigating a complex and often precarious set of challenges that contribute to their declining mental health and self-esteem like never before. Challenges such as intense social pressures, unrealistic beauty standards fueled by social media, the impact of cyberbullying, earlier onset of puberty, academic stress, and more.

This national crisis has unfortunately reached Pennsylvania deeply impacting the lives of girls in our state. According to the 2019 Pennsylvania Department of Health Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBSS):

- **80%** of Pennsylvania high school girls surveyed reported their mental health was not good (1.5x higher than boys).
- **45%** of Pennsylvania high school girls surveyed reported feeling sad or hopeless (1.8x higher than boys).
- **22%** of Pennsylvania high school girls surveyed reported seriously considering attempting suicide (1.8x higher than boys).

### Girls Spark: Empowering Teen Girls in Chester County

Girls Spark is dedicated to reversing these alarming statistics by equipping teen girls in Chester County with the preventive and protective tools they need to navigate today's world with confidence and resilience.

Teen girls in Chester County shared with Girls Spark in 2024 that they face a variety of personal and social challenges including: social exclusion, peer conflict, self-esteem struggles, identity development, emotional vulnerability, coping difficulties, social anxiety, as well as social stereotyping.

Following an academic-year model, Girls Spark's 2024-25 programming has already made a significant impact, engaging *467 girls*—a number surpassing last year's total participation. *75% of participation hails from Chester County*, reflecting our growing presence of Girls Spark Clubs in local schools and the success of our in-school programs at Villa Maria Academy High School. Currently, *we have four active Girls Spark Clubs in the following Chester County schools* with discussions to possibly expand into more schools such as Lionville Middle School:

- Kennett Square High School
- Downingtown West High School
- Downingtown Middle School
- Bayard Rustin High School

In 2024, Girls Spark programming received an impressive 4.5/5 satisfaction rating from our participants. Read firsthand testimonials about the impact Girls Spark programming has had on the *girls of Chester County* this year:

- "Girls Spark has changed something in me - I now know how to grow and love myself more."
- "The motivational speakers had a relatable aspect that now gives me confidence for whatever it is I need to do."
- "It helped me to understand that everyone is scared and you are not alone."
- "I have gained more confidence and the ability to be proud of myself and what I've overcome."
- "It feels like my eyes have opened to the things I couldn't see about other girls before."

## **A Request for Support**

To sustain and expand participation among Chester County girls in our programs, Girls Spark is requesting \$7,500 in general operating funds to hire a dedicated part-time coordinator. This funding will allow Girls Spark to deepen its focus on Chester County, dedicating essential resources to establish, enhance, and sustain our initiatives, while ensuring effective oversight and fostering meaningful engagement with the girls who need it most.

With your maximum contribution, we can continue to address this critical need in Chester County, providing teen girls with the tools and resources they need to thrive. Securing funding to hire a coordinator is crucial to meet the needs of girls in Chester County and ensure their participation in our programs. Our goal is to fill this position as soon as possible, no later than the start of the 2025-26 programming year in September 2025.

## **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 2018 by a group of teen girls, Girls Spark is a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving girls ages 11 to 18 in Chester County and the Delaware Valley region. Our mission is to provide middle and high school girls with a safe, supportive empowering environment where they can learn, collaborate and overcome adversity in facing today's social issues.

The inception of Girls Spark was inspired by Julia Kasper, who, at just 16 years old, faced various struggles and challenges similar to those of her peers. Observing her mother, Laura Kasper—President & CEO of Monarch Staffing and Girls Spark Board President—attend numerous women's conferences featuring inspiring leaders, Julia sought a similar platform for teen girls but found none. This realization led her to create Girls Spark.

Girls Spark envisions an equitable world where all girls are supported, connected, and thriving. Our programs create interactive learning experiences that bring together women speakers and girls to discuss pressing and relevant topics.

#### Historical Timeline of Goals & Achievements:

- 2018: Girls Spark founded by teen Julia Kasper.
- 2019:
  - Hosted our inaugural Annual Summit to address key social issues impacting high school girls.
  - Achieved 501(c)(3) nonprofit status.
- 2020-2021: In response to the pandemic, transitioned to virtual workshops providing high school girls with sanctuaries of connection, empowerment, and support.
- 2022: Reinstated Annual Summit at West Chester University.
- 2023-24: Girls Spark experienced remarkable growth:
  - Expanded programming to include middle school girls.
  - Established two School Clubs, *starting in Chester County with Kennett High School*.
  - Developed a formal training program for Teen Leadership Board.
  - Thanks to funding from the Phillies, built sustainable infrastructure by hiring first paid staff.
  - Overall participation in Girls Spark programs—including our Annual Summit, Teen Leadership Board, Girl Talk Workshops, and School Clubs—rose by 59%.
  - Virtual Girl Talk Workshop participation increased by 64%.
  - Programmatic impact was significant, with participants reporting an average 24% increase in empowerment, knowledge, and agency.

- 2024-25: In alignment with Girls Spark’s Strategic Plan, the goals and achievements for our 2024-25 programming year currently underway are as follows:
  - Accelerate Engagement: Serve 570 girls reflecting a 25% growth. Girls Spark has already made great strides with our programs engaging 467 girls—surpassing last year’s total participation. *75% of participation hails from Chester County*, and we’re well on our way to reaching our goal of 570 girls.
  - Establish School Clubs: Launch five additional student clubs. Of the four new clubs established, which includes *Downingtown West High School, Downingtown Middle School, and Bayard Rustin High School in Chester County*, we’re quickly approaching our target.
  - Launch School & Community-Based Programs: Host five tailored summits, workshops, and programs to schools and businesses in the community, with two already completed *in Chester County* at Villa Maria Academy High School.
  - Increase Girl Talk Workshop Participation: Expand the reach of workshops by engaging more middle schoolers and introducing a hybrid format in collaboration with new partners, making the program more accessible to a broader audience of teen girls. This fall, participant attendance in our Girl Talk workshops has tripled compared to last year.
  - Community Outreach: With community outreach conducted each fall and spring, Girls Spark attended two new outreach opportunities in Kennett Square and Downingtown, strengthening support for the newly established clubs in both communities.
  - Teen Leadership Board: Recruited, launched, and onboarded our new Teen Leadership Board.
  - Program Satisfaction: Participants have given Girls Spark programs an impressive 4.5/5 rating for overall satisfaction.

*With an established network of partnerships with schools, workshop speakers, and organizations in Chester County*, Girls Spark differentiates itself from other organizations in the three following ways:

- *Only* area nonprofit devoted to improving the social, mental, economic, and overall well-being of girls through educational summits and workshops led by expert women speakers in and out of school, in-person and virtually.
- Overseen by a passionate Teen Leadership Board of high school girls (in cooperation with an Adult Board of women leaders) who share a common vision of: 1) Helping girls at-large navigate challenges and obstacles they face in today’s society, 2) Building social awareness to advance girls issues and needs, and 2) Providing teen insights and trends to steward the direction of our organization.
- Connecting girls from public and private schools with women role models in unprecedented ways to foster an active, engaged community. Our Adult Board, staff, and women speakers guide girls in overcoming life’s obstacles and challenges to achieve their goals, develop strong relationships, and forge meaningful connections through three key approaches:
  1. Imparting Knowledge: Providing expertise, skills, and tools to help participants succeed in life
  2. Fostering Agency: Empowering young women to gain greater influence and control over their lives and futures.
  3. Modeling Healthy Communication: Demonstrating effective communication and social skills.

## 2. Funding request

- Description of key initiatives
- Specific needs & issues to be addressed
- Why it is important to fund this now
- How impact & results will be demonstrated

### Description of Key Initiatives

We accomplish our mission to educate and empower teen girls by offering educational summits, workshops, and programs that take place both in and out of school, as well as in-person and virtually. Our Girls Spark programs, designed to inspire, educate, and empower, include:

- Signature Annual Summit: Our 5th Anniversary Annual Summit is scheduled for May 31, 2025 at Penn State Brandywine bringing together 200-250 teen girls across the Delaware Valley for expert-led workshops, panels, and interactive sessions.
- Teen Leadership Board: Recruited annually, Teen Board members shape our programs, lead outreach initiatives, and build leadership skills while serving as peer mentors and driving the organization forward.
- Girl Talk Workshops: Free ongoing virtual and hybrid workshop series featuring small-group discussions focused on social-emotional learning and personal development.
- School Clubs: Established within local schools, clubs provide year-round engagement and social support fostering leadership and community.
- School & Community-Based Programs: Tailored summits, workshops, and programs delivered to schools and local businesses expanding our reach and amplifying our impact on girls.

Our summits, workshops, and programs are thoughtfully curated around a socio-emotional framework grounded in five key pillars:

1. Self-Management
2. Self-Awareness
3. Social Awareness
4. Responsible Decision-Making
5. Relationship Skills

Our workshops explore a diverse range of topics aimed at enhancing the social, mental, economic, and overall well-being of girls, such as:

- Mental Health & Wellness
- Fear of Failure & Coping with Stress
- Anti-Bullying & Microaggression
- Healthy Relationships, Safe Dating, & Frenemies
- Emotional Intelligence
- Self-Defense & Awareness, Yoga & Mindfulness
- LGBTQIA+ & Unconscious Bias
- Nutrition & Health
- Decision Making
- Financial Literacy/Money Matters 101
- Body Image & Self Confidence

## Specific Needs & Issues to Be Addressed

Based on 2024 Girls Spark reporting, *teen girls in Chester County face a range of personal and social challenges*, including:

- Social Exclusion & Peer Conflict: Many girls experience bullying, exclusion from social events, and relational aggression, leading to feelings of isolation and diminished social support.
- Self-Esteem & Identity Development: Struggles with self-worth, negative self-comparisons, and feelings of inadequacy are prevalent among girls, often exacerbated by unrealistic social media portrayals and societal expectations.
- Emotional Vulnerability & Coping Deficits: Girls report feeling emotionally "weak," undeserving of support, and uncertain about how to manage stressors effectively, indicating a need for resilience-building strategies.
- Interpersonal Skills & Social Anxiety: Difficulties in forming new friendships, connecting with peers, and overcoming social inhibitions point to a need for targeted interventions to enhance communication, confidence, and social competency in girls.
- Social Stereotyping & Identity Bias: Gender-based stereotypes and identity biases limit girls' perceptions of their potential, reinforcing restrictive views about their abilities and roles in society.

Girls Spark addresses these challenges by offering preventative programs designed to build resilience, boost self-esteem, and promote social-emotional growth. Through interactive workshops, leadership development opportunities, and school-based programs, we equip girls with the skills to navigate complex social dynamics, embrace their uniqueness, and build supportive communities.

Our targeted workshops on emotional intelligence, anti-bullying strategies, and relationship-building provide practical tools to help girls overcome these challenges and thrive. We encourage girls to recognize their worth, develop strong support networks, and become confident, capable young women by fostering a safe, supportive empowering environment.

## Why It Is Important to Fund This Now

We are on the brink of a breakthrough in reaching more girls in Chester County. Securing funding is essential to sustaining and expanding engagement amid the influx of Chester County girls into our programs and our significant growth over the past two years.

Recent developments, such as the launch of Girls Spark Clubs in local schools and the expansion of in-school programming in Chester County, have created new opportunities for greater impact.

To sustain this momentum in Chester County, we must secure funding to broaden our reach, scale our programs, and support more teen girls. The requested funding of \$7,500 will enable us to:

- Accelerate Engagement: Expand participation in summits, workshops, and school clubs by enhancing outreach efforts and removing financial barriers. Girls Spark is exploring the possibility of hosting a half-day Summit at Kennett Library.
- Establish School Clubs: Strengthen support for our four active clubs in Chester County, while capitalizing on the momentum to launch additional clubs.
- Foster Empowerment and Growth: Equip girls with the knowledge, tools, and resources they need to thrive, with a strong emphasis on nurturing their social and mental health.

## How Impact & Results Will Be Demonstrated

Girls Spark will measure impact and results through key performance indicators (KPIs), including:

- Program Participation Growth: Increase participation of Chester County girls in Girls Spark programming by at least 20%.
- Empowerment & Self-Confidence: Evaluate the growth in knowledge, confidence, and agency among Chester County program participants achieving at least a 20% average improvement.
- School Club Expansion: Facilitate the successful launch and ongoing support of at least three additional Girls Spark Clubs in Chester County.

Standardized surveys combining quantitative and qualitative measures will be administered at the start and conclusion of programs to assess impact, outcomes, and workshop effectiveness. Feedback from teachers and parents will also be gathered to enrich program evaluation.

Comprehensive reports, participant testimonials, and success stories will be shared with stakeholders showcasing the transformative impact of our initiatives. This grant will enable Girls Spark to continue empowering and uplifting Chester County girls, equipping them for bright and successful futures.

### 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. *At this time, Girls Spark does not produce an annual report, and our financial statements are not subject to an audit.*
  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.
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  - **Email proposals to [grants@chescof.org](mailto:grants@chescof.org)**
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