

**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

Date 9/16/2024

Contact Information

Organization Name: Home of the Sparrow (HOS)
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Website: www.homeofthesparrow.org
Year Incorporated: 1994
FEIN: 23-2775004

ED/CEO Name: Michelle Venema
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Board Chair Name: Kelly Besack
Board Chair Approval (check here): X
Primary Contact Name: Kathleen Sanger
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Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

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

Mission: Home of the Sparrow's mission is to partner with women facing homelessness to secure housing and achieve long-term stability.

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: 100% of the women we serve live in Chester County and have incomes of 150% or less of the Federal Poverty Level. Approximately 50% reside in an "Opportunity Zone" qualified census tract (Coatesville); 2/3 have children; 47% are African American, 31% Caucasian and 22% Hispanic. 98% have a high school diploma or GED, 73% have a diagnosed mental health issue; 79% report a history of personal trauma. Annually, we serve over 900 women and children.

Annual Budget \$ <u>1,554,407</u>	<u>8.5</u> # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
<u>78</u> % of budget for program expenses	<u>14</u> # of Board Volunteers
<u>7</u> % of budget for administrative expenses	<u>111</u> # of Active Non-Board Volunteers
<u>15</u> % of budget for fundraising expenses	<u>1,377</u> # of Volunteer Hours
<i>100 % total</i>	

Top 3-5 funding sources: Individuals (35%), Foundations (26%), Government (18%), Events (11%)

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: \$ Grants of any size

Proposal Summary: Affordable housing stock in Chester County is virtually non-existent for our lowest-wage workers. Worsening the situation, funding for the County's housing voucher system has run dry while the cost of living remains high. Your investment in our comprehensive homelessness prevention programming will help us meet an increasing and urgent need in the community and will prepare 925 single women and single mothers for long-term economic self-sufficiency.



Proposal to Chester County Community Foundation, September 2024

ORGANIZATON SUMMARY

History: Home of the Sparrow (HOS) was founded in 1994 by members of the Paoli Presbyterian Church with a goal of helping local women and mothers facing homelessness. In pursuit of that goal, we moved our first families into a rented home in Paoli soon after gaining non-profit status in December 1994. Two years later, we purchased a building and, with the help of 400 volunteers, transformed it into our first agency-owned Transitional Housing facility. That home in West Chester, plus another facility in Coatesville, are now dedicated to serving pre-senior women. In 2007, HOS adopted the Shared Housing Program that matches homeowners who have rooms to rent with women seeking affordable housing solutions. In 2017, we began a partnership with Chester County Adult Probation, Parole, and Pretrial Services to secure housing and offer basic assistance to women re-entering the community after incarceration. As need in our community evolves, HOS continues to respond with distinct services and programs that harness available community resources and fill service gaps, so single women and children have an opportunity to thrive.

Mission: Home of the Sparrow's mission is to partner with women facing homelessness to secure housing and achieve long-term stability.

Goals and Objectives: Our overall goal is to **prevent** homelessness. All our programming and services are designed to reach the following objectives in pursuit of that goal:

- Participating women maintain their housing
- Participating women progress towards controlling their futures
- Participating women achieve a long-term housing solution

Key Achievements

- Helped over 9,000 women and children avoid the trauma of homelessness since 1994.
- Maintain low administrative to programming costs, about 7%.
- Increasing community engagement across all giving types with 1,377 volunteer hours donated last year via 111 unique volunteers for a value of \$46,116 in addition to \$170,000 of gifts-in-kind that helped meet the additional needs of our program participants.
- Successfully raised one year of operating costs in a savings account to mitigate a catastrophe thanks to a strong and wide funding base.
- Maintained full services without interruption throughout the pandemic and was one of the first nonprofits in Chester County to have all staff back in the office just four months after the nationwide shutdown.
- Launched two pilot programs last year to address the worsening affordable housing crisis.

Innovation: Home of the Sparrow mitigates the risks of homelessness. We are the only Chester County organization dedicated solely to assisting single women and single mothers who are experiencing housing insecurity. Our innovative approach begins before a woman is homeless. By focusing on homelessness prevention, we keep women and children out of a costly, overburdened shelter system and avoid the traumatic experience of homelessness and its long-term, devastating consequences. Once homeless,

women lose educational and economic opportunities and are more likely to experience chronic medical and behavioral health issues. Their children are more likely to experience mental illness and PTSD related behavioral health concerns, early academic challenges, learning disabilities and future academic failure, including dropping out of school. They are also more likely to become homeless themselves as adults.

Affordable housing stock in Chester County is virtually non-existent for our lowest-wage workers. Once lost, it is nearly impossible for the women we serve to re-enter the housing market. They have no savings; their education and job training are limited leaving them stuck in low-wage jobs; they are employed full-time but not making enough to meet their basic needs. They most often work in industries that don't provide upward mobility, training, substantial raises, or benefits, leaving them at serious risk of continual housing instability. Our innovative approach keeps women and children safely housed while guiding them towards economic self-sufficiency – this approach is critical in Chester County.

FUNDING REQUEST

Home of the Sparrow is eager to partner with Chester County Community Foundation and your donors who care deeply for the residents of this county. Your general operating investment will prevent over 925 vulnerable Chester County women and children from experiencing homelessness.

Community Need: Over the last seven years, the median rent in Chester County has increased by 35% (US Census), while wages have remained mostly stagnant and critical pandemic-era emergency programs that lifted thousands of families out of poverty have ended, including emergency rental assistance, SNAP extensions, the expanded Child Tax Credit, and free school meals. The results have been tragic. Chester County has one of the highest eviction rates in Pennsylvania, and it has surpassed the pre-pandemic level. Of the county's 50,031 renter households, 3,239 faced evictions between 7/2022 and 6/2023 (Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania).

Worsening the situation, funding for the County's housing voucher system has run dry. These vouchers greatly reduce a tenant's monthly rent and are vital in the battle against homelessness. With no operational voucher system, even more women and children will face homelessness unless helped by our innovative program that keeps women and children safely housed while they work with our case managers to increase their income, decrease their expenses, improve their credit score, and develop the self-confidence and resources to progress towards economic self-sufficiency.

Program Description: After thirty years of service in Chester County, Home of the Sparrow has developed a comprehensive set of unique services that provides the safety net needed to maintain housing and progress beyond housing insecurity.

In addition to eviction prevention via direct rental payments to landlords, our comprehensive programming includes 12 to 24 months of case management and rental subsidies as needed to help women acquire the skills, resources, and the confidence they need to achieve housing and fiscal stability. Once stably housed, HOS provides up to 3 years of on-going money management counseling, as well as access to the many in-kind donations HOS receives from the community, including household goods and products, holiday gifts, gift cards, and back to school supplies.

All services are delivered via trauma-informed case management practices and are buoyed by our deep community partnerships. Chester County has a robust network of nonprofit organizations working together to meet community needs without duplicating services. However, the women we serve are often too overwhelmed by their crisis to access these services on their own. Through resource coordination and

working with more than 25 collaborative partners, we connect women and children with what they need, including community and government-based benefits, food cupboards, domestic violence support, free medical/dental care, free mental health services through independent, licensed professionals, and basic needs like clothing and furniture, among other basic supports.

Your support is urgent: As the county's affordable housing crisis worsens, and the cost of living continues to grow, community resources and federal benefits programs, like SNAP, are no longer providing enough support. As a result, women are staying in our program for a longer period, even as we increase our monthly supplements to cover a widening gap between their income, the support and benefit programs for which they are eligible, and their rent and living expenses. Previously, women accessed our programming for an average 12 to 18 months, during which time they received about \$350 per month in rental assistance. Today, it is taking at least 24-months to gain stability, and we are providing twice as much per month in rental subsidy.

Further, we are expanding our service platform to address the ever increasing need. We are creating new affordable housing options by leasing apartments from trusted landlords and subleasing them to women in need. We currently have three such apartments located in Phoenixville, West Chester, and Coatesville. We are also filling a critical gap in the safety net by subsidizing mental health services to alleviate long waits for appropriate therapeutic support, and are providing Wawa gift cards for gas purchases to ensure the women we work with have enough funding for transportation to and from their jobs.

We are projecting a 7% budgetary increase in FY2025 as our costs per client climb. However, philanthropic giving is down nationwide, and our government contracts will remain level. Given growing and evolving need in the community, a tightening housing market, and decreasing philanthropic giving, we recently completed a strategic planning process to guide our programmatic approach and long-term sustainability, including expanding corporate and major gift strategies and launching a planned giving program. Your general operating investment is critical as we aim to serve a growing number of women in need, at a higher per client cost, while we work towards these sustainability goals.

Measuring our Impact: Based upon our past performance, we expect to meet the following outcomes:

925 women and children will receive services; of these,

1. Approximately 188 will receive rental assistance to avoid imminent eviction.
2. Approximately 9 will be matched through our Shared Housing service to provide a meaningful win-win (homeowners receive monthly income from renting a room in their homes and single women can access an affordable housing option).
3. Approximately 14 pre-senior women will remain stably housed for up to two years.
4. Approximately 52 will progress towards housing stability through ongoing case management and financial assistance as needed.
5. Approximately 270 will maintain their housing stability with the support of budget counseling and access to basic goods, as needed.
6. Approximately 242 women returning from incarceration, many with children, will receive specialized case management and financial assistance, leading to lower recidivism rates in the county.
7. Approximately 121 children of women returning from incarceration will improve their chances of housing stability.

In addition to tracking the number of women and children served, we track progress towards the individual stability goals each woman develops with the help of her case manager. Examples of individual indicators of success include:

- Informed understanding of the factors and experiences that led to their housing crisis
- Creation of long-term strategies for housing stability that maximize and/or increase income through access to training and/or education
- Obtaining financial literacy skills and a positive relationship with money
- Gaining connections to mainstream and community services and supports, for example food, healthcare, clothing, school supplies, and benefits
- Becoming or staying current on mental and physical health needs for themselves and their children

The combination of aggregate data gathered through our county tracking system and individual outcomes provides valuable information about our impact in the community and on the individual lives of the women we serve.

CONCLUSION Home of the Sparrow prevents homelessness by intervening before an eviction takes place. Prevention stops a woman and child from experiencing the trauma of homelessness and mitigates the long-term risks and poor outcomes that result from even a single episode of homelessness. With virtually no stock of affordable housing available in Chester County, it is imperative that we keep a woman stably housed while she works with us to increase her income, decrease her expenses, improve her credit score, and develop the self-confidence, empowerment, and resources to progress towards economic self-sufficiency. Your investment will sustain critical programming that offers an innovative solution to the affordable housing crisis in Chester County, PA. Together, we will prevent homelessness and help as many as 925 vulnerable women and children secure their housing so they can thrive.

ATTACHMENTS

- 501c3 Letter
- Board List
- Annual Report
- Audit
- FY2025 Operating Budget with FY2024 Actual Comparison
- Strategic Plan