

JONAS C., MARIAN D., & ROBERT H. ERB CHARITABLE FUND REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

I. SUMMARY SHEET

(One page only. This page will be shared with Grant Committee Members.)



Date:

Contact Information:

Organization Name: **CHESTER COUNTY HISTORY CENTER**
Address: **225 NORTH HIGH STREET, WEST CHESTER, PA 19380**

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Year Incorporated: **1893**

Has your nonprofit previously applied to the Community Foundation: Yes ☒ No ☐

Field/s of Interest:

☒ Arts, Culture and Humanities ☐ Environment/Animal Welfare ☐ Health
☐ Human Services ☒ Education ☐ Religion

Organizational Information:

Geographic Area Served: **CHESTER AND DELAWARE COUNTIES**

Annual # of Clients & Description of Population Served:

OVER 15,000 CONSTITUENTS SERVED EVERY YEAR, INCLUDING 9,000 STUDENTS.

Gender: 56% Female | 40% Male | 4% Other

Ethnicity: 20% African American | 10% Asian-American | 49% Caucasian | 11% Hispanic/Latino | 5% Native American | 5% Other

Mission Statement:

LINK THE PAST TO THE PRESENT TO INSPIRE THE FUTURE.

Organization Description:

The Chester County History Center (CCHC), established in 1893, stands as the cornerstone of historical preservation in Chester County, PA. This multifaceted institution functions as a history museum, research library, historical photo archive, and educational community resource, safeguarding three centuries of local heritage through its comprehensive collections of documents, photographs, newspapers, and artifacts. Beyond preservation, CCHC serves as a vibrant educational hub offering programs to constituents of all ages, abilities, and circumstances. The organization leverages its vast collection to foster historical literacy among K-12 students and adults alike. As administrators of the Chester County Archives—one of the nation's most complete collections of historic county records—CCHC connects the community to its roots through year-round educational programming. By linking the past to the present and inspiring the future, the History Center



remains essential to understanding Chester County's unique place in the American narrative while fostering connections among its diverse residents.

Annual Budget **\$1,438,670**

75 % of budget for program expenses
15 % of budget for administrative expenses
10% of budget for fundraising expenses
100 % *total*

10 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
15 # of Board Volunteers
84 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers
5,116 # of Volunteer Hours

Top 3-5 funding sources:

JOHN & HOLLY STOVIK
BENTLEY SYSTEMS
FRED BEANS
AQUA PENNSYLVANIA
PECO

Proposal Information:

Grant Amount Requested: **\$50,000**

Summary Description of Grant Purpose:

Chester County History Center seeks funding to expand its educational programs addressing the critical decline in historical literacy among K-12 and college students. With only 15% of eighth-grade students performing at proficient levels nationally, CCHC will leverage its unique position as an Act 48-certified educational partner to provide curriculum-aligned, accessible historical experiences through multi-modal delivery methods. The requested funds will enable CCHC to increase student participation by 30% (reaching an additional 2,700 students), with particular emphasis on removing financial barriers for underserved communities.

The 2025-2026 implementation timeline aligns strategically with the America 250 commemoration, creating a once-in-a-generation opportunity to connect students with Chester County's pivotal role in American history. By supporting this initiative, fundes will not only address immediate educational inequities but also help develop informed, engaged citizens with improved critical thinking skills. CCHC's comprehensive evaluation framework will track both increased participation and meaningful improvements in historical literacy, ensuring measurable outcomes that extend beyond the grant period to benefit our community for generations to come.



HISTORY CONNECTIONS
IN-PERSON, OUTREACH, DIGITAL, AND VIRTUAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS
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ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

Founded in 1893, Chester County History Center (CCHC) serves as the county's primary historical institution with the mission to **Link the Past to the Present, to Inspire the Future**. CCHC preserves and interprets three centuries of local history through extensive collections including documents, photographs, newspapers, and artifacts housed in our research library, photo archives, and museum.

CCHC occupies a 56,000-square-foot complex in West Chester, featuring seven exhibition galleries, expanded research facilities, and a 250-seat auditorium. The Center administers the Chester County Archives, one of the nation's most complete collections of historic county records. CCHC has been recognized by the Pennsylvania Historical Museums Commission for exhibition excellence and educational programming, including recent recognition for our Juneteenth 2024 initiatives.

The Center distinguishes itself through its unique combination of extensive primary source collections, curriculum-aligned programming, and Act 48 certification from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. This multifaceted identity—simultaneously a steward of irreplaceable historical artifacts, a catalyst for historical literacy, and a community anchor—positions CCHC as an essential educational resource within the regional cultural landscape.

NEED STATEMENT

Chester County History Center addresses a critical educational gap by developing accessible programs that combat the documented decline in historical literacy. The National Assessment of Educational Progress reveals that only 15% of eighth-grade students perform at proficient levels in historical knowledge, with an even more concerning 12% proficiency rate among high school seniors (NAEP, 2018). The American Historical Association's research found that 71% of states do not require comprehensive history assessments, leading to diminished curricular emphasis on historical literacy (AHA, 2018).

This knowledge gap extends beyond K-12 education, with history bachelor's degrees declining by 30% between 2012 and 2016 (American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2018). Meanwhile, only 39% of American adults could correctly identify all three branches of government (Annenberg, 2019), demonstrating persistent civic knowledge deficits.

CCHC is uniquely positioned to address this educational crisis through our collection, expertise, and established educational infrastructure. Our approach provides teachers with ready-to-use historical literacy resources that enhance existing curricula while engaging students directly with primary sources and artifacts. Most importantly, our model ensures that socioeconomic circumstances never prevent access to quality historical education.

STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

CCHC employs a comprehensive approach to implementing our educational mission through several key strategies. First, we develop curriculum-aligned historical experiences where our education team works directly with teachers to identify curricular gaps and design experiences that reinforce classroom learning while introducing primary source analysis and historical thinking skills. Second, we utilize multi-modal program delivery through in-person museum experiences, outreach programs, digital learning modules, virtual interactive programs, and self-guided resources to ensure that physical distance, transportation limitations, and scheduling constraints never prevent access to our resources.

Additionally, our programs deliberately incorporate inclusive historical narratives by presenting multiple perspectives on historical events, highlighting the experiences of historically marginalized communities, and providing age-appropriate exploration of challenging historical topics. Finally, CCHC maintains a sustainable access

model by striving to waive fees for Title I schools, procuring transportation subsidies, providing cost-effective digital options, and offering professional development for educators.

WHY NOW

Three converging factors make funding CCHC's educational programs urgently necessary. First, the documented crisis in historical literacy has reached a critical threshold when misinformation proliferates and civic discourse increasingly lacks historical context. Second, the economic aftermath of recent years has exacerbated educational inequities, with vulnerable schools eliminating "non-essential" experiences like field trips. Third, the upcoming America 250 commemoration in 2025-2026 creates a once-in-a-generation opportunity to engage students with our nation's founding principles through Chester County's pivotal revolutionary history.

CCHC has developed the infrastructure, expertise, and community relationships necessary for immediate, high-impact implementation. This is not a proposal for future development but an opportunity to expand existing, effective programs to meet an urgent educational need during a significant historical moment.

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

By June 2026, our expanded programming aims to achieve several significant outcomes. We project a 30% increase in student engagement, reaching an additional 2,700 students beyond our current 9,000 annual participants. We will establish partnerships with 15 new schools and deepen relationships with existing educational partners. Our work will lead to a 40% increase in repeat program participation and resource utilization by educators. Perhaps most importantly, we will transform students from passive consumers of historical information to active interpreters and creators of historical narratives, with 70% of participating students demonstrating increased civic engagement and community connection.

These outcomes directly advance our mission by connecting more young people to the historical narratives that shape their community and nation during the momentous America 250 commemoration.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

CCHC will implement a comprehensive evaluation framework measuring three key dimensions. First, we will track engagement patterns for both new and repeat participation, with targets including a 40% increase in multi-program participation, 30% overall increase in student participation, and 50% retention of new Title I school relationships. Second, we will evaluate student active participation using structured observation protocols. Program staff will assess indicators of active engagement including student-initiated questions, artifact analysis engagement, and historical connection-making behaviors. Third, we will measure historical literacy development through pre- and post-program assessments that evaluate specific competencies including primary source analysis, historical contextualization, recognition of multiple perspectives, and connection-making between historical events and contemporary circumstances.

All assessment instruments will be developed in partnership with educators and aligned with established frameworks from the National Council for History Education. Evaluation data will be analyzed quarterly and used for continuous program refinement.

CONCLUSION

The Chester County History Center's educational programs directly address the documented crisis in historical literacy through accessible, evidence-based approaches that guarantee equitable access regardless of socioeconomic status. Funds granted will support not only increased participation in historical education but also the development of informed, engaged citizens with the critical thinking skills essential for our democracy. The impact of this investment will extend far beyond the grant period, creating a foundation for historical literacy that benefits our community for generations to come.

HISTORY CONNECTIONS

IN-PERSON, OUTREACH, DIGITAL, AND VIRTUAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

PREPARED FOR THE CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

1. ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION

A. History and Mission

Chester County History Center (CCHC) has been Chester County, PA's resident storyteller since its founding in 1893. CCHC is a nonprofit historical institution with the mission to Link the Past to the Present, to Inspire the Future while engaging, preserving, educating, connecting, and imagining with our community. CCHC is responsible for three centuries of history through the preservation of documents, photographs, and newspapers in our research library and photo archives, and artifacts in the museum. These primary historical materials are central to the recent interactive core exhibition *Becoming Chester County*, the first visible storage space, and year-round youth and adult education programs.

In 1937, CCHC moved into West Chester's historic Horticultural Hall. The building was modernized in 1979 to improve collections management and increase exhibition space. In the early 1980s, CCHC initiated a joint project with the Chester County government to administer the Chester County Archives, adding 300 years of public records to its care. It is one of the finest and most complete collections of historic county records in the nation.

A capital campaign was launched in 1992 to enable the renovation of the adjacent YMCA building. The resulting 56,000-square-foot History Center became a vital complex for exhibition, collection storage, and research. The new facility also allowed for an increased emphasis on educational programming, making CCHC one of Pennsylvania's premier history museums and educational centers with an expanded library and research area, a 250-seat auditorium, and seven exhibition galleries.

Chester County History Center is central to the preservation of Chester County's history. Exhibits and educational programs serve the community by connecting diverse residents and ideas that illustrate how this place is unique and relevant in our National landscape.

B. Key Achievements and Distinctiveness

The Chester County History Center stands as a uniquely positioned cultural institution that bridges historical preservation with contemporary educational innovation. CCHC functions as an active learning space where Chester County's distinctive heritage and diverse community narratives intersect with modern, engaging educational methodologies. The Center's singular combination of extensive primary source collections, curriculum-aligned programming, and deep community roots enables it to illuminate local connections to important national events. As an Act 48-certified educational partner recognized by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, CCHC transcends the typical museum experience by providing professional development for educators while delivering transformative historical literacy experiences to students across socioeconomic boundaries. This multifaceted identity—simultaneously a steward of irreplaceable historical artifacts, a catalyst for historical literacy, and a community anchor—positions the Chester County History Center as an essential educational resource within the regional cultural landscape.



In 2023, Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission (PHMC) recognized CCHC for its core exhibit “Becoming Chester County” and its visible storage. CCHC educational programs and events for Juneteenth 2024 also received an Achievement Award by PHMC.

The History Center partners with several organizations in the region to expand access to its collection, broaden offerings for community members, and to better serve the constituency of Chester County. Our strategic partnerships include:

Cultural & Arts Organizations: Brandywine Ballet, Casa Guanajuato, Chester County Arts Association, Historic Yellow Springs, Kennett Symphony, LGBT Equity Alliance of Chester County, Longwood Gardens, NAACP, People's Light Theater, The Brandywine Singers, Uptown! Knauer Theater, Voices Underground, West Chester Film Festival

Historical Partners: Brinton Association of America, Chadds Ford Historical Society, Chesco250, Conestoga Area Historical Society, Delaware Nation, Delaware Tribe of Indians, Hagley Museum, Historic Sugartown, Historic Trappe, Historic Waynesborough, Independence National Historic Park, Joseph Priestly House, Pennypacker Mills, Pottsgrove Manor, Wharton Esherick Museum

Environmental & Conservation Partners: Natural Lands, West Chester Green Team, Willistown Conservation Trust

Governmental & Educational Partners: Chester County Planning Commission, County of Chester, Hibernia Mansion (Chester County Parks), Springton Manor, West Chester Public Library, West Chester University

These partnerships enhance our ability to deliver comprehensive historical education while connecting Chester County's past to broader regional and national narratives.

C. Programs, Activities, and Services Provided

CCHC is committed to offering accessible and equitable participation opportunities for all community members and to serving and supporting the diverse community of Chester County and beyond including, but not limited to, people of all ages, abilities, and economic circumstances.

The History Center delivers educational programs founded in historical literacy that engage students of all ages with Chester County's rich heritage and national significance, drawing from our extensive collection, research library, and archival resources. Every year, we expand and develop new programs, events, and opportunities for the community. Some of our core programs and events include:

School Visits: CCHC welcomes schools from Chester County for in-person visits and educational programs based on our collection and designed to support the school curricula. Visits are paired with in-house programs and hands-on activities to engage students of various learning styles. Student visits have follow-up activities for the classroom.

Traveling Trunks & Outreach Programs: These age-appropriate programs aligned with school curricula bring the activities, supplemental educational material and study guides, and digital educational assets directly to the schools and classrooms.

Speaker Series: The series hosts 24 virtual talks by renowned historians and experts from around the Country exploring a variety of themes including genealogy, architecture, American battles and wars, history makers, archival records, and more.

National History Day: More than 300 students each year research a topic relating to local, national, or world history based on an annual theme. Entries are judged into two divisions- Junior and Senior. Winners at the county level advance to the state competition and the state winners represent PA at the National History Day contest in Maryland in June.

Walking Tours: These tours are held throughout the year and have different subject focus including Underground Railroad, Chilling West Chester, Fierce: Women of West Chester, Holiday History Stroll, Architecture of West Chester, and Bayard Rustin.

2. FUNDING REQUEST

A. Need Statement

Chester County History Center addresses a critical educational gap by developing accessible programs that combat the documented decline in historical literacy among K-12 and college students. Our evidence-based educational offerings provide teachers and students with essential tools for developing historical thinking skills that extend beyond classroom curricula. CCHC is committed to ensuring these vital programs reach all students by eliminating barriers through low-cost/no-cost virtual, digital, and in-person opportunities—thus guaranteeing equitable access to historical literacy resources throughout Chester County.

The severity of declining historical literacy is well documented by leading educational authorities. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reveals that only 15% of eighth-grade students perform at or above proficient levels in historical knowledge, with an even more concerning 12% proficiency rate among high school seniors (NAEP, 2018). This represents a persistent deficit in historical understanding with no improvement in recent assessment cycles.

The American Historical Association's 2018 report "The State of History in the Schools" identifies reduced instructional time as a significant contributing factor to these outcomes. Their research found that 71% of states do not require comprehensive history assessments, leading to diminished curricular emphasis on historical literacy (AHA, 2018).

This knowledge gap extends beyond K-12 education. The American Academy of Arts and Sciences documented that history bachelor's degrees declined by 30% between 2012 and 2016—one of the steepest drops among all academic disciplines (American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2018). Meanwhile, the Annenberg Public Policy Center found that only 39% of American adults could correctly identify all three branches of government, demonstrating that historical and civic knowledge deficits persist long after formal education ends (Annenberg, 2019).

CCHC is uniquely positioned to address this educational crisis through our collection, expertise, and established educational infrastructure. By expanding our free and low-cost programming through virtual, digital, and in-person delivery methods, we can supplement diminishing history instruction in schools with engaging, standards-

HISTORY CONNECTIONS

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CHESTER COUNTY HISTORY CENTER

aligned programs. Our approach provides teachers with ready-to-use historical literacy resources that enhance existing curricula while engaging students directly with primary sources and artifacts that make history relevant and meaningful. Most importantly, our model ensures that socioeconomic circumstances never prevent access to quality historical education.

The requested funding will enable us to significantly expand program availability throughout Chester County, ensuring that all students—regardless of school resources or personal circumstances—have access to transformative historical literacy experiences.

B. Organizational Impact

Education within a museum environment serves as a critical intervention in the documented decline of historical literacy. The Chester County History Center functions as an essential partner in addressing this educational crisis by offering viable, evidence-based solutions that reach beyond traditional classroom walls.

Historical literacy—the ability to analyze primary sources, understand historical context, recognize multiple perspectives, and connect past events to present circumstances—forms the foundation for engaged citizenship and critical thinking in a democratic society. When students from diverse backgrounds engage with our museum collections through educational programs, they develop these crucial skills while seeing themselves represented in historical narratives. This representation is particularly transformative for students from historically marginalized communities, who often find their stories absent from standardized curricula. Through our inclusive programming, these students discover their communities' significant contributions to local and national history, fostering a sense of belonging and civic identity that traditional classroom instruction alone cannot provide.

For many students our museum experiences represent their only opportunity to engage meaningfully with authentic historical artifacts, primary sources, and narratives that bring history to life in ways traditional textbooks simply cannot. These encounters with tangible history create memorable learning experiences that research shows leads to deeper understanding and retention.

The multisensory, experiential learning environment CCHC provides creates uniquely effective conditions for historical literacy development. Research demonstrates that engagement with authentic artifacts and immersive historical exhibits produces deeper comprehension and retention than text-based learning alone. As noted in "Early Learning in Museums" (Munley for Smithsonian Institution, 2012), "Museums, with their real artifacts, dioramas, and immersive exhibitions provide a uniquely positive environment to foster learning." While this study references young children, the cognitive benefits extend to learners of all ages, particularly those who struggle with traditional classroom instruction or learn best through visual or kinesthetic approaches. These experiential learning opportunities directly counter the reduced instructional time for history documented by the American Historical Association (2018).

Chester County History Center's educational programs deliberately bridge academic historical content with authentic learning experiences. School visits, outreach programs, and digital and virtual offerings are meticulously aligned with curricular standards and enhanced through deeper subject exploration using primary sources from our extensive collections. Our initiatives provide students with access to tangible historical materials supported by comprehensive study guides and supplemental resources that extend learning beyond the initial museum experience. These programs examine diverse subjects through historical lenses—from the Underground Railroad to Lenape indigenous history to local Revolutionary War experiences—creating multiple entry points for students to develop sophisticated historical thinking skills that transfer to other academic disciplines and life contexts.

Students who develop strong historical literacy skills through our programs demonstrate greater capacity for critical analysis of contemporary issues, enhanced ability to evaluate information sources, and deeper understanding of civic processes—all essential components of informed citizenship in today's complex information environment.

Currently, the History Center serves 9,000 students annually through its diverse educational programs. By removing financial barriers to participation through expanded low-cost/no-cost virtual, digital, and in-person programming, Chester County History Center aims to increase the number of students served by 30% (reaching an additional 2,700 students) while advancing educational equity and combating the well-documented crisis in historical literacy.

The Chester County History Center recognizes that equitable access to historical knowledge serves as a powerful tool for social mobility and civic empowerment. Students with access to quality historical education consistently demonstrate improved critical thinking skills, greater empathy across cultural differences, and stronger civic engagement. These outcomes directly support our mission to promote a more informed and engaged citizenry capable of understanding our shared past and collaboratively shaping our collective future.

C. Strategy

Chester County History Center employs a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to implementing our educational mission that addresses the educational needs of our community, teachers, and students while ensuring accessibility for all. Our strategic implementation framework is built on the foundation that our offerings provide curriculum-aligned historical experiences, offer multi-modal program delivery, present inclusive historical narratives, and create accessible pathways for participation regardless of socioeconomic circumstances.

CCHC develops and delivers educational programs explicitly aligned with state and national history standards to seamlessly integrate with classroom instruction. Our education team works directly with teachers to identify curricular gaps or needs, and design experiences that reinforce classroom learning while introducing primary source analysis and historical thinking skills. This collaborative approach ensures our programs serve as meaningful extensions of classroom instruction rather than isolated field trips. Each program undergoes continuous evaluation and refinement based on teacher feedback and student outcomes to maintain educational rigor and relevance.

Recognizing that access barriers extend beyond financial constraints, CCHC has developed a strategic mix of delivery methods to reach students where they are. Our implementation strategy includes in-person museum experiences that provide direct engagement with artifacts, interactive exhibits, and guided explorations of local history. It also includes outreach programs that bring primary sources, artifacts, and expert educators directly to schools; digital learning modules accessible through classroom technology for schools unable to visit or participate in outreach; virtual interactive programs facilitated by museum educators for real-time engagement regardless of geographic location; and self-guided resources for teachers and families to extend historical learning beyond structured programs. This multi-modal approach ensures that physical distance, transportation limitations, and scheduling constraints never prevent students from accessing our historical resources and educational expertise.

CCHC strategically implements our educational mission by centering inclusive historical narratives that represent the diverse communities of Chester County throughout history. Our implementation strategy deliberately incorporates multiple perspectives on historical events, including those often omitted from traditional textbooks;

highlights the experiences and contributions of historically marginalized communities; establishes clear local connections to national historical movements and events; and provides age-appropriate exploration of challenging historical topics including slavery, discrimination, and social justice movements. This inclusive approach ensures that all students see themselves reflected in the historical narrative while developing a more complete understanding of our shared past.

Because of our unwavering commitment to accessibility, CCHC has developed a funding model that addresses financial barriers without compromising educational quality. CCHC strives to waive fees for Title I schools and high-need student populations; procures grants to subsidize transportation, admission, and program participation for schools facing financial constraints; provides cost-effective digital options for distance learning; and offers professional development opportunities that empower teachers to independently implement historical literacy strategies. CCHC is an Act 48 organization in Pennsylvania, approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to provide continuing professional education credits that educators can use to fulfill the requirements for maintaining their public school certification. This credential underscores our commitment to professional educational standards and our role as a recognized educational partner within the state system.

Strategically allocating resources to support students and teachers, we maximize our impact while ensuring financial sustainability for our educational programs. Through these interconnected implementation strategies, Chester County History Center advances our educational mission while addressing the critical need for historical literacy programming. Our approach ensures that all students, regardless of socioeconomic status or geographic location, can develop the historical thinking skills essential for informed citizenship and civic engagement.

D. Why Now

We stand at a pivotal moment for historical education in our communities, particularly as we approach the America 250 commemoration. Three converging factors make funding the Chester County History Center's educational programs not merely beneficial, but urgently necessary at this precise juncture:

First, the documented crisis in historical literacy has reached a critical threshold. The most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress reveals not just stagnation but active regression in students' historical knowledge and analytical skills. This decline comes precisely when misinformation proliferates and civic discourse increasingly lacks historical context. Schools—facing their own funding constraints and competing curricular demands—are reducing history instruction hours at the very moment students most need these foundational skills. Without immediate intervention through accessible, evidence-based historical literacy programs, we risk graduating a generation ill-equipped to participate meaningfully in our democracy.

Second, the economic aftermath of recent years has exacerbated educational inequities across the county. Schools serving our most vulnerable communities face unprecedented budget constraints, forcing them to eliminate "non-essential" field trips and supplemental educational experiences. Families struggling with rising costs can no longer afford enrichment activities that were once within reach. This widening opportunity gap in historical education will have long-lasting consequences if not addressed now. By funding accessible historical programming today, we prevent the formation of educational deficits that become increasingly difficult and costly to remediate in the future.

Third, the Chester County History Center has developed the infrastructure, expertise, and community relationships necessary for immediate, high-impact implementation. Our existing programs have demonstrated measurable success in improving historical literacy outcomes, and our multi-modal delivery systems are

operational. Granted funds will allow CCHC to scale programs and increase the number of served students. This is not a proposal for future development but an opportunity to expand existing, effective programs to meet an urgent educational need.

Additionally, the upcoming America 250 commemoration in 2025-2026 creates a once-in-a-generation opportunity to engage students with our nation's founding principles and history. Chester County's pivotal role in the American Revolution provides a powerful local connection to this national celebration. By funding this initiative now, we can ensure that students throughout our region have meaningful engagement with this significant historical milestone through programs that connect local heritage to the broader American story.

The intersection of declining historical literacy, widening economic disparities, proven programmatic solutions, and the America 250 commemoration creates a rare opportunity for transformative impact. By funding the Chester County History Center's educational initiatives, we can address an acute educational crisis while building historical literacy foundations that will benefit our community for generations to come.

3. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

The 2025-2026 implementation of expanded educational programming at Chester County History Center will yield significant outcomes that directly advance our mission to "Link the Past to the Present to Inspire the Future," particularly during the momentous America 250 commemoration.

By June 2026, our expanded programming aims to achieve a 30% increase in student engagement, reaching an additional 2,700 students beyond our current 9,000 annual participants. This expanded reach directly fulfills our mission by connecting more young people to the historical narratives that shape their community and nation. Through these experiences, students will develop measurable improvements in historical thinking skills, document analysis abilities, and contextual understanding—creating meaningful links between Chester County's revolutionary past and their present lives.

The America 250 commemoration creates an exceptional opportunity to deepen educator reliance on CCHC as an essential educational resource. Through our specialized professional development initiatives and customized America 250 curricular materials, we anticipate forming partnerships with 15 new schools and deepening relationships with existing educational partners. This increased institutional trust will manifest in teachers integrating CCHC resources throughout their academic curriculum rather than treating historical education as an isolated field trip experience. As teachers experience firsthand how our resources enhance student historical literacy and meet curricular standards, we expect a 40% increase in repeat program participation and resource utilization.

Our programming will transform how students engage with history. Rather than passive consumers of historical information, students will become active interpreters and creators of historical narratives through research projects, exhibitions, and community presentations. This transformation directly embodies our mission to "Inspire the Future" by positioning students as stewards of community memory and agents of historical understanding. We anticipate 70% of participating students will demonstrate increased civic engagement and community connection as measured through pre/post assessments.

These outcomes extend beyond quantitative metrics to fulfill the deeper purpose of our mission. By linking students to Chester County's pivotal role in America's founding during this significant commemorative year, we create powerful connections between past and present. These connections, in turn, inspire future engagement with both local and national civic life. The concentrated focus on Revolutionary history during America 250 offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to demonstrate the relevance of historical literacy to contemporary democratic citizenship, showing students how understanding our shared past illuminates pathways to our collective future.

4. IMPACT RESULTS

Chester County History Center will implement a comprehensive evaluation framework to measure program effectiveness through three key dimensions: engagement patterns, quality of student participation, and historical literacy outcomes.

CCHC will track both new and repeat engagement to evaluate program reach. We will document the frequency of repeat visits and program participation from schools and teachers, with special attention to tracking sustained relationships that evolve from single visits to ongoing educational partnerships. Our target is a 40% increase in multi-program participation from individual schools and a 30% overall increase in student participation. For Title I schools specifically, we will measure year-over-year participation rates, with a goal of 50% retention of new Title I school relationships established through this initiative.

To evaluate the expansion of our educational footprint, we will document relationships with first-time partner schools, establishing baseline metrics for new institutional engagement. Through targeted outreach to previously unserved districts, we aim to establish relationships with 15 new educational partners during the grant period, with emphasis on regions with limited access to historical resources.

Beyond attendance metrics, CCHC will implement structured observation protocols to assess the quality and depth of student engagement during programs. Using a validated rubric, program staff will evaluate indicators of active participation including student-initiated questions, artifact analysis engagement, historical connection-making, and perspective-taking behaviors. These qualitative assessments will be supplemented by educator observations of student participation during pre-program, program, and post-program activities. Student-created projects will serve as authentic assessment tools for measuring participatory learning.

To measure growth in historical literacy, CCHC will implement, with the participation of educators, pre- and post-program assessments tailored to age-appropriate historical thinking skills. These assessments will evaluate specific competencies including primary source analysis abilities, historical contextualization skills, recognition of multiple historical perspectives, making connections between historical events and contemporary circumstances, and understanding local-national historical relationships.

For programs with sustained engagement, we will conduct longitudinal tracking of historical literacy development through teacher-reported observations and student self-assessments. To ensure evaluation quality, all assessment instruments will be developed in partnership with educators and aligned with established historical thinking frameworks from the National Council for History Education. Program evaluation data will be collected, analyzed quarterly, and used for continuous program refinement.



Through this evaluation approach, Chester County History Center will generate meaningful evidence regarding program effectiveness while creating a foundation for sustainable expansion of our educational impact beyond the grant period. These evaluation methods will document not only increased participation, but also the transformative impact of historical literacy education on students' understanding of both their local heritage and its place in the national narrative during the significant America 250 commemoration year.