



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.)

Contact Information:

Organization Name: Wissahickon Valley Public Library
Address: 650 Skippack Pike
Blue Bell PA 19422
Phone: 215-643-1320 x 11
Web Address: www.wvpl.org

Date: 2/13/2025

Contact Name: Anne M. Frank
Contact Title: Director
Contact E-mail: afrank@wvpl.org
Fax: 215-643-6611
Year Incorporated: 1923

Has your nonprofit previously applied to the Community Foundation: Yes ___ No X

Field/s of Interest:

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

Organizational Information:

Geographic Area Served:

The Wissahickon Valley Public Library directly serves 39,216 residents in Whitpain Township, Lower Gwynedd Township, and Ambler Borough. Through interlibrary loans and programming, it also supports communities across Montgomery, Chester, Bucks, and Delaware counties.

Annual # of Clients & Description of Population Served:

The library serves 14,995 active cardholders of all ages, providing access to a wide range of resources. Community demographics include:

- Ambler: 4% Asian, 6% Hispanic, 13% Black, 74% White
- Lower Gwynedd Township: 4% Hispanic, 5% Black, 15% Asian, 73% White
- Whitpain Township: 4% Hispanic, 8% Black, 12% Asian, 74% White

Mission Statement:

Our mission is to “Welcome, connect, and inspire our community.” Guided by our vision—“The place where you are always welcome”—we are renovating our facility and training staff to promote equity and inclusion.

Organization Description:

The Wissahickon Valley Public Library offers access to physical materials, online databases, educational programs, and community services. Patrons can ask a reference librarian a question or for help with research. They borrow eBooks, audiobooks, educational games, and museum passes. Through interlibrary loan, patrons can request books from across the state. The library provides free Internet access, computer use, and Wi-Fi, along with meeting, conference, and quiet study rooms. Programs cater to all ages, including children’s activities, cookbook clubs, live concerts, AARP Tax Aide, ESL classes, and author events, often in collaboration with other organizations like the Montgomery County Community College (collaborated on author events and a library fundraiser).

Annual Budget: \$1,452,248

31 % of budget for program expenses
67 % of budget for administrative expenses
2 % of budget for fundraising expenses
100 % total

19 ___# of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
9 ___# of Board Volunteers
43 ___# of Active Non-Board Volunteers
77 weekly ___# of Volunteer Hours

Top 3-5 funding sources:

1. Local Real Estate Tax
2. PA State Aid
3. Library Operations
4. Fundraising
5. Grants

Proposal Information:

Grant Amount Requested: \$100,000

Summary Description of Grant Purpose:

The Wissahickon Valley Public Library seeks funding for a critical renovation to modernize its facilities, improve accessibility, and expand community services. Last renovated 30 years ago, the library faces urgent infrastructure needs, including plumbing repairs, parking lot repaving, and interior upgrades. In 2024, the 40-year-old leaking roof was replaced.

Planned improvements come from the 2022-2027 strategic plan (attached) goal to create a safe, accessible, welcoming and comfortable environment. The requested \$100,000 in grant funds will go towards the creation of a multi-purpose room, 2 conference rooms and 2 study rooms. In addition, the library plans to re-paint, re-carpet, and add furniture that is more comfortable. Additional upgrades include a breastfeeding room and an adult changing table for individuals with disabilities.

As a vital community hub, the library provides essential resources, educational programs, and cultural enrichment. However, outdated facilities and limited technology hinder its ability to meet evolving needs. This renovation will enhance accessibility, support growing demand, and ensure equitable access to resources. A modernized library will foster innovation, collaboration, and engagement—offering a free and inclusive space where the community can connect and thrive. For a society that is becoming increasingly polarized and fractured, a free and accessible space where people can gather is an important and necessary community-building tool.

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II. GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Please provide the following information clearly and concisely. Proposals of 1 or 2 pages are strongly encouraged.

1. Organization's history, goals, key achievements and distinctiveness

The Wissahickon Valley Public Library (WVPL) has served the community for over 100 years and is in its third year of the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan (attached). Recent improvements include the 2020 renovation of the Ambler Branch, funded by a Keystone Grant, a RACP grant, and a bond from the Wissahickon School District. In 2024, a Keystone Grant supported the replacement of the main library's roof. That same year, WVPL received a \$4,000 operating grant from the VNA Foundation of Greater North Penn and secured \$54,500 in EITC donations to support STEAM programs for children at both branches and the Boys and Girls Club. In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, WVPL showed measurable growth:

Key Achievements	% Increase Fiscal Year 22-23/23-24
Library Visits	4%
Electronic Circulation	4%
Print Circulation	8%
Educational Events	26%
Attendance at Events	22%
Questions Answered	23%
Internet Computer Use	29%
Wifi Use	37%

WVPL's distinctiveness is its commitment to equity. The library has received grants to develop an Equity Plan; conduct a diversity audit and expand its collection with diverse materials; and build equity-based summer children's programming. A patron survey in 2021 and a disability-focused survey in 2022 led to the creation of two new programs for individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities at both branches. WVPL also collaborates with Head Start, the Upper Dublin Public Library, and the Ambler Kiwanis Club to expand access to diverse books. Additionally, long-standing summer programs for the Boys and Girls Club have been enhanced through a multi-year EITC donation, providing technology, books, and expanded programming to support underserved youth.

2. Funding request:

A. Specific Chester County and/or Montgomery County needs and issues addressed

The library is working to close the digital divide. Although Montgomery County is generally regarded a wealthy community, there are a number of individuals and households living in poverty. According to the US Census, 14,028 children in Montco under the age of 18 are living in poverty (8.7% of all minors in the county). There are close to 10,000 households in the county that do not own a computer and over 18,000 households that do not have access to the Internet at home. Providing space and resources to bridge those poverty and digital divide gaps is essential work for the library. An Internet connection has become a necessity, and the Internet divide is the greatest for seniors and low-income community members. The library will invest in additional laptop/tablets and Wi-Fi access points for patrons to use, as well as provide support for remote learning, telecommuting, and virtual healthcare consultations. Libraries play a crucial role in promoting digital literacy and raising public awareness about the importance of digital skills in today's society.

WVPL is planning to meet community need for public space and accessibility and community engagement.

COVID-19's social distancing requirements necessitated the reconfiguration of public spaces to ensure the safety of patrons and staff. This will involve redesigning seating areas, study spaces, and conference rooms to allow for greater spacing between individuals, while still facilitating collaboration and engagement. The pandemic has underscored the importance of libraries as community hubs, providing accessible spaces for residents to socialize. The library will support mental health by collaborating with local organizations to offer

services such as mental health support groups. Residents may face barriers to accessing telehealth services if they lack Internet access or digital literacy skills. Internet access is essential for staying connected with friends, family, and community resources, particularly for individuals who may be isolated or have limited mobility.

The library is planning initiatives to meet education and workforce development needs. Residents may face barriers to accessing educational opportunities and workforce development programs, if they lack Internet access or digital literacy skills. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 18 percent of males and 15 percent of females are not digitally literate. The library will offer classes on various aspects of digital literacy, catering to different skill levels and age groups. These sessions will cover topics such as basic computer skills, Internet navigation, email management, online safety and security, using productivity software (e.g., Microsoft Office, Google Suite), social media literacy, and more advanced topics like coding and digital media creation. WVPL currently offers 15 computers, Internet access, free access to Wi-Fi for people with cell phones and tablets/laptops and 8 wireless access points for the public to take home. Through a combination of educational programs, resources, partnerships, and outreach efforts, libraries empower individuals to navigate and thrive in the digital age. Addressing these needs is essential for ensuring that residents have equitable access to educational, economic, healthcare, and social opportunities in the digital age.

B. Organizational impact (for general operating proposals) or project impact (for project proposals)

Enhancing technology, expanding collections, and improving library spaces will boost patronage and increase foot traffic. These upgrades will provide greater access to educational resources, job training, and community programs, leading to higher literacy rates, improved educational attainment, and stronger workforce participation.

A modernized library benefits local businesses by fostering a more skilled workforce and providing access to business resources. Local schools and colleges gain valuable partnerships, offering students and educators enhanced research materials and study spaces. Additionally, improved library facilities can positively impact local economies by increasing property values, tax revenues, and reducing social costs tied to education and workforce development.

Nonprofits focused on social services and job training can leverage the library's resources to better serve vulnerable populations, expanding outreach and improving program effectiveness. By investing in these upgrades, the library will strengthen its role as a vital hub for education, workforce readiness, community health and engagement.

C. Overall strategies to implement the organization's mission (or project)

This project will ensure the community has access to essential resources, workspaces, Internet access, digital devices, and training for success.

Strategies for planned Improvements:

- Build one large multipurpose room, 2 conference rooms, and 2 study rooms.
- Enhance existing 4 study rooms with windows, soundproofing and comfortable furnishings.
- Renovate 2 existing bathrooms and add a family bathroom.
- Add 6 outlets in seating areas and a charging station at the front desk.
- Purchase 5 laptops, 6 tablets and 6 Wi-Fi hotspots.
- Enclose children's section with glass partitions for natural light.
- Upgrade to energy-efficient LED lighting for safety and sustainability.
- Develop and expand technology-training programs.
- Conduct community surveys to tailor digital literacy and technology classes.

These enhancements will increase library usage and strengthen its role as a vital community center for education, connection, and collaboration.

D. Why it is important to fund this now

The total construction cost is projected to be \$1,437,501. The library already has \$1,158,148 from a RACP Grant reimbursement, ERTC funds and fundraising. With a \$100,000 Erb Charitable Fund Grant the library will only need to continue fundraising for \$179,353 to complete the project. The \$100,000 grant will cover the creation of the multi-purpose room, 2 conference rooms and 2 study rooms.

It is important to fund this now because immediate repairs are necessary to maintain safety and functionality. On a few recent occasions, the library had sewage back ups in the men's bathroom and in a staff area. The parking lot repaving must immediately follow the sewer repair due to the parking lot being excavated. The interior renovation will follow and is crucial to the library providing services for the already existing needs mentioned above. By modernizing facilities and expanding technological capabilities, the library can better adapt to future challenges and attract new patrons. Investing now ensures long-term sustainability, enhances accessibility, and strengthens WVPL's role in the community. This funding will help create an inclusive, resources-rich space that fosters learning, collaboration and digital equity.

3. Timetable, with anticipated outcomes and their relevance to the nonprofit's mission

This project is geared toward the library's mission to welcome, connect and inspire our community. The project will be completed in phases to minimize disruptions to library operations. The estimated timeline is as follows:

- Community Planning & Space Needs Assessment (1-2 months)
- Development of Construction Plans & Bid Documents (2-3 months)
- Bidding Process (1 month)
- Bid Review, Awarding, and Notice to Proceed (1 month)
- Construction Phase (Phased to Maintain Operations) (6-8 months)
- Final Acceptance & Project Closeout (1 month)

The timeline accounts for potential delays due to weather-sensitive exterior work and phased interior renovations to ensure continued library services that enhance the library's mission.

4. How impact and results will be demonstrated

Success will be evaluated through:

- Usage Metrics: Circulation of laptops, tablets, Wi-Fi access points, and study rooms.
- Program Expansion: Number of new technology programs introduced.
- Community Feedback: Digital and paper surveys assessing user satisfaction with renovations.
- Engagement Levels: Attendance at focus groups, interviews, and educational programs.
- Sustainability Indicators: Reduced energy consumption (measured by lower utility bills) and water savings from low-flow fixtures.
- Long-term Maintenance: Assessed through maintenance records and facility durability.

These measures will ensure the renovation meets community needs and enhances library services.

III. ATTACHMENTS

Please attach the following 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 and financial statement, audited if available
4. Itemized organizational operating budget with actual results for prior fiscal year and current fiscal year to date
5. Itemized project budget (if applying for project-specific grant)

In addition:

6. Renovation Drawing
7. Strategic Plan
8. Equity Plan