



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 **\$1,000-\$7,500**.

Fund for Chester County Capacity Building Grants (Due 9/10)

- ◇ For eligibility in this grant program, nonprofits must be **located in & serve only 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. 10** are eligible for consideration.
- ◇ Grant **awards** typically range from **\$1,000-\$5,000**.

- Use this form @ www.chescocf.org to apply online for grants from all Community Foundation Funds.
- **Email proposals to 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** 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

Date 6/24/2025

Contact Information

Organization Name: **Mitzvah Circle**

ED/CEO Name: **Fran Held**

Address: **435 Doylestown Rd.**

Lansdale, PA 19446

ED/CEO E-mail: **Fran@mitzvahcircle.org**

Phone: **267-649-7610**

Board Chair Name: **Jody Katzner**

Website: **https://mitzvahcircle.org**

Board Chair Approval (check here): ☒

Year Incorporated: **2009**

Primary Contact Name: **Joe Cimasky**

FEIN: **26-3705891**

Contact E-mail: **joe@mitzvahcircle.org**

Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

☐ Arts, Culture & Humanities

☐ Environment/Animal Welfare

☐ Education

☐ Health

☒ Human Services

☐ Religion

Mission: Mitzvah Circle meets the needs of people in crisis. We provide basic material goods, case management, coaching, and referrals to individuals and families facing poverty, homelessness, serious illness, and difficult circumstances. Our unique approach delivers personalized support and facilitates self-sufficiency for the entire family.

Geographic Area Served (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served): Mitzvah Circle serves all of Chester County.

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served: Over 95% of the families we serve live below the poverty line. The families we serve are often the most vulnerable in Chester County, and generally live paycheck to paycheck and are dependent upon government assistance. We serve people regardless of age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and religion, and we offer a customized approach to address the needs of each person in the household. In 2024, Mitzvah Circle provided enough basic essentials to have served 597,162 people throughout the Greater Philadelphia region, including 67,204 in Chester County alone.

Annual Budget \$8,280,227 _____ 13 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff

92.6 % of budget for program expenses 11 # of Board Volunteers

2.3 % of budget for administrative expenses 3,620 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers

5.1 % of budget for fundraising expenses 34,048 # of Volunteer Hours

100 % total

Top 3-5 funding sources:

U.S. Health and Human Services

Vanguard Charitable

AmeriCorps

Nemours Children's Hospital

Zeigler Family Foundation

Is this grant proposal for: Capacity Building ____ or General Operating _X_?

If Capacity Building Proposal, the focus is:

____ Mission, Vision & Strategy ____ Governance & Leadership ____ Partnerships & Collaborations
____ Fundraising, Development & Marketing ____ Technology Other: _____

Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: \$5,000 _____

Proposal Summary: People can't engage in everyday life without ready access to the basic necessities most of us take for granted, thus we distribute free diapers, menstrual products, clothing, toiletries, and much more, to our network of 345 partners and through home delivery by way of our team of volunteer drivers. Over 95% of the families we serve live below the poverty line, despite the fact that 70% are working. Our internal social work staff also provide case management, coaching, and referrals, so we ensure families throughout Chester County receive both immediate and long-term support. This support results in significant progress, as families are empowered to go to school and work and participate in their communities with dignity and hope. We want kids to succeed, and working families to regain self-sufficiency, and our programs – *Critical Needs for Healthy Families*, *Diaper Bank*, and *Period Supply* – offer straightforward solutions to the problem of poverty.

II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Nonprofit's history, goals, key achievements & distinctiveness

Our founder and executive director, Fran Held, established Mitzvah Circle out of her garage in 2009. With no seed money, sponsorships, or monetary donors, Fran enlisted friends and neighbors to join her in serving the most vulnerable members of our community with kindness and compassion. These early activities soon attracted a number of calls from local families in need, and with increasing numbers of committed donors and volunteers, Mitzvah Circle began expanding its programs.

Today, Mitzvah Circle is the only organization in southeastern Pennsylvania serving the entire family – from infants to seniors – delivering items directly to doors. Mitzvah Circle fills a huge, unmet need without barriers or bureaucracy. From grassroots to groundbreaking, Mitzvah Circle's services are often the only way families in deeply impoverished communities can access basic necessities, and these essential items enable people to not only survive, but empower them to flourish and thrive. From its humble origins in Fran's garage to its current 25,000 square-foot warehouse facility, Mitzvah Circle's impact in Chester County cannot be overstated. Last year, Mitzvah Circle and its 13 full-time staff members and 3,620 volunteers served 67,204 people in Chester County alone.

While many organizations focus exclusively on children, working adults, or seniors, Mitzvah Circle aids the entire family. If a child lacks the essentials needed for healthy daily living, then the parents are going without too. Many of the families requesting support are propelled by fear of eviction or loss and are sustained by the hope our services provide. In addition to our deliveries of basic necessities, our holistic approach includes case management, coaching, and referrals, thus we ensure Chester County families members receive the support they need.

Mitzvah Circle enjoys a long history of connecting local families with the basic essentials – clothing, diapers, menstrual products, toiletries, and much more – needed to go to school and work and participate

in their communities. Our social workers speak directly with families struggling to make ends meet every day, and our intake process lowers the barriers to entry. Personalized service, social work support, and direct delivery have been a cornerstone of our organization since its founding in 2009. In 2024, we provided enough basic necessities to serve 597,162 people throughout southeastern Pennsylvania. Simply put, Mitzvah Circle's services allow people to go to work and school, transform their lives, and achieve lasting change.

Mitzvah Circle's staff hail from a variety of backgrounds. Our team features both a Physician's Assistant and Licensed Practical Nurse, in addition to both a current and former AmeriCorps fellow, a military veteran, college professor, statistician, and first-generation immigrant. Diversity in education, ethnicity, and experience enable us to approach our work from multiple perspectives, think through possibilities, and amplify our impact accordingly. We are a lean and nimble organization, capable of pivoting swiftly when circumstances change, while maintaining our mission of meeting the needs of people in crisis.

Poverty is very personal. Many members of the Mitzvah Circle team know from lived experience of the difficult circumstances families face every day, so we approach our work with the rigor, discipline, and passion necessary to fulfill our mission. A tour of our warehouse facility will make this abundantly clear.

Funding request

Description of key initiatives

Specific needs & issues to be addressed

A grant from the Chester County Community Foundation would increase access to basic necessities in times of crisis for the most at-risk populations in Chester County. As the only organization in the region delivering basic necessities directly to people who need them most, Mitzvah Circle's work is critical, filling a huge void for families in difficult circumstances. Any funding received will sustain our services and outreach in Chester County.

Among the critical unmet needs our programs address are clothing insecurity, diaper need, and period poverty. Supplying basic necessities and social work support to struggling families throughout Chester County promotes equitable communities and empowers families to participate in daily life with hope and dignity. Our key initiatives include:

Critical Needs for Healthy Families program:

- Clothing insecurity – inadequate access to suitable clothing – presents a multitude of barriers and obstacles for 1 in 4 families. Parents especially struggle to keep up with the shifting clothing needs of their children from season to season.

Diaper Bank program:

- An ample supply of diapers costs about \$100 a month, and licensed daycare facilities typically require parents to provide diapers for their child. Diapers are not covered by government programs, such as SNAP and WIC, and 1 in 2 families can't afford them. Thus, without a ready supply of disposable diapers, working parents cannot utilize childcare services, making regular work and school attendance difficult or altogether impossible.

Period Supply program:

- Pads and tampons are not covered by government programs such as SNAP or WIC, and 2 in 5 low-income women experience period poverty – they can't afford to buy pads and tampons. What's more, 70% of the women we serve report missing school or work because of a lack of menstrual products.

In addition to deliveries directly to the doors of families in need, we also provide bulk supplies to 34 partner organizations in Chester County. Our *Diaper Bank* and *Period Supply* programs provide supplies to Alianzas De Phoenixville, Chester County Hospital, Coatesville Area Public Library, Community Youth and Women's Alliance, Creative Health Services, En Familia, Orion Communities, and the Phoenixville Area School District, among others. Mitzvah Circle also works with Kate's Casa and Phoenixville Refuge; two organizations supporting the immigrant community in Chester County. In addition to diapers and menstrual products, Mitzvah Circle provides our partners with a variety of material goods – clothing, toys, baby gear, books, and more – that they then distribute directly to individuals and families in Chester County.

Why it is important to fund this now

The time is now because community need far outstrips our resources. Mitzvah Circle experienced tremendous growth over the past two years. For example, in 2023 we served 25,268 people in Chester County, while in 2024 we provided enough basic goods to have served 67,204 people, and we anticipate serving even more Chester County residents in 2025. The demand for our services is significant – our waitlist for prospective partners continues to grow – but we have determined we cannot expand our network of partners without adequate funding. As the only organization in the region serving the entire family – from infants to seniors – delivering basic necessities directly to people who need them most, Mitzvah Circle's work in Chester County fills a huge void for families facing difficult circumstances.

How impact & results will be demonstrated

Mitzvah Circle's staff has years of experience with our programming and we measure the impact of the support we provide in three ways: (1) direct feedback from families we serve; (2) communication with our network of 345 partner agencies; and (3) a sophisticated, data-driven approach through ongoing surveys and data analysis to ensure we fulfill our mission.

Mitzvah Circle collects data focused on the extent to which Mitzvah Circle's services – referrals, case management, coaching, and material goods – impact recipients. Our Director of Impact and Programs oversees the integration of data collection. We utilize Salesforce to collect client services data, and impact surveys are completed upon receipt of goods via "Quick Response" (QR) decals adhered to the products – diapers, menstrual products, and toiletries – delivered. Families receiving products simply scan the QR code to complete the survey. Collating these data enable Mitzvah Circle to measure progress and answer impact-related questions such as our recipients' mental and physical health outcomes. Impact data is regularly reviewed and informs Mitzvah Circle's practices and avenues for growth.

Mitzvah Circle regularly communicates with our network of partner organizations to monitor changes within the communities they serve and to verify the impact Mitzvah Circle's programming has on those communities as well as the impact on our partners' work. We also utilize Salesforce to track and monitor both the number and frequency of recipients served. In this way, Mitzvah Circle objectively measures our progress, identifies areas for improvement, and optimizes efficiency.

Finally, our internal social work team communicates regularly with the families we serve to assess ongoing needs and changes in circumstances. These calls allow us to substantiate and understand the outcomes of our programming with respect to the community members we serve. On a related note, we have accumulated a significant amount of qualitative data, for example, testimonials, self-reported behaviors, and the like, which confirm the efficacy of our approach.

II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Provide clear, concise information. 3 pages maximum.

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

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

- For capacity building grant proposals:
 - How will this capacity building initiative impact your nonprofit?
 - How will this impact be measured?
 - Include a description of the expected activities; timeline & costs to implement the initiative. If external consulting services are required, include the anticipated costs & expertise of the consultants to be hired. Include external consultant proposals if applicable.

III. ATTACHMENTS

E-mail or mail this support information

1. Copy of 501 (c) (3) federal tax-exempt letter
2. List of Board of Directors, with their affiliations
3. Most recent annual report & financial statement, audited if available
4. Itemized organizational operating budget with actual results for prior fiscal year & current fiscal year to date
5. If capacity building initiative, itemized budget (including external consultant's proposal, if applicable)
6. Current strategic plan. If your nonprofit does not have a current strategic plan, explain why.

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so their legacies make a difference.*



WHAT IS CAPACITY BUILDING?

Capacity building helps bring a nonprofit to the next level of operational, programmatic, financial, or organizational maturity, in order to more effectively & efficiently fulfill its mission.

Capacity building may include (but is not limited to) projects which address:

- **MISSION, VISION & STRATEGY**
Organizational Assessment - Strategic Planning - Financial Planning
- **GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP**
Board Development - Executive Transition/Succession Planning - Leadership Development - Staff Training & Professional Development
- **PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS**
Coalition Building – Collaboration - Mergers & Acquisitions - Strategic Restructuring
- **RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING**
Major Gift Donor Identification, Cultivation, Development & Stewardship - Development Campaigns (Annual, Capital, Planned Giving) - Earned Income Development - Social Enterprise Feasibility & Development - Marketing, Branding & Communications
- **TECHNOLOGY & OPERATIONS**
Business Continuity Planning - Financial Management - Human Resources - Volunteer Management - Industry Certification - Risk Management - Technology Improvements