

I.

CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

Date 9/33/25

Contact Information

Organization Name: ACT in Faith of Greater West Chester ED/CEO Name: Hallie Romanowski
Address: 10 W. Barnard St., West Chester, PA 19382 ED/CEO E-mail: hallieromanowski@me.com
Phone: 484-324-8492 Board Chair Name: Jacqueline Rothera
Website: www.acrinfaithgwc.org Board Chair Approval (check here): ☒
Year Incorporated: 2010 Primary Contact Name: Hallie Romanowski
FEIN: 27-4033006 Primary Contact E-mail: hallieromanowski@me.com

Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

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

Mission: To build a community that empowers the un- and under-employed to stabilize their households and build toward self-sustainability.

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

We serve the un- and under-employed, providing financial assistance to residents of West Chester zip codes and to those experiencing homelessness in Chester County. Our Community Cupboard serves residents of Chester County.

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served:

In 2024 we served 767 unduplicated households – 1490 adults and 909 children. In 2024, support for Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) households represented 34% of services we provided. Also in 2024 of the households that received financial support 55% were experiencing homelessness, 40% were single adults, and 33% of the households served in 2024 were households with children. Our clients identified racially as: 34% white, 36% black, 25% Hispanic, 4% Other, 1% Asian. Our clients are diverse in racial and cultural backgrounds, sexual orientation, religious affiliations, and housing and income levels, with all at, on the cusp of, or well below federal poverty guidelines. The vast majority of our clients are in the 24-64 age range but 20% were seniors.

Annual Budget \$ \$317,000 (\$417,000 with In-Kind) 3 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff

82 % of budget for program expenses 6 # of Board Volunteers

9 % of budget for administrative expenses 137 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers

9 % of budget for fundraising expenses 5270 # 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: \$ 5,000

Proposal Summary: ACT in Faith is requesting \$5,000 towards implementation of a new brand. This would include expenses related to formalizing the name change, logo design, stationary, as well as expenses related to new communication and marketing materials. The word “faith” has become a deterrent for some potential funders and volunteers. This grant will open doors for both funders and volunteer engagement, as well as allow us to direct funds to programming and not rebranding.

II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Provide clear, concise information. 3 pages maximum.

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

Established in 2010 in response to growing needs in our community, ACT in Faith's (AiF) mission is to build a community that empowers the un- and under-employed to stabilize their households and build toward self-sustainability.

AiF was created to help meet the needs of those who: do not qualify for support through other agencies, are facing a hardship that is not supported by another agency, or need help navigating services. AiF helps people navigate the social service system, connects them to other resources as appropriate, and provides "gap services" to meet needs that lie beyond the scope of other resource agencies, but are barriers to self-sustainability.

AiF provides support in 3 Program areas: Basic Need (e.g. groceries, medical expenses, clothing) Employment Support (e.g. photo ID, car expenses, job search/resume support, childcare, work clothing, cell phone, bus tokens) and Housing Stabilization (e.g. eviction prevention, security deposits, utility expenses.) The services through which these programs provide support are: Client Emergency Fund - emergency financial assistance, Community Cupboard - grocery cupboard with a significant focus on personal care and household items (not covered by SNAP/FoodStamps) and perishable and non-perishable foods to supplement what people can afford to purchase, receive via SNAP, or obtain at another area cupboard. In addition, AiF provides System Navigation as it relates any of the above Programs (e.g. information and referral, benefit/housing enrollment and recertification assistance, and job search/application support).

Accomplishments & Goals: We address immediate and short term needs and work towards long-term solutions that help individuals, and families, establish sustainable household stability. As an "approachable" resource addressing the disproportionate burdens placed on the underserved, we are uniquely-positioned to act as a "bridge" for underserved community members to transition them to engagement with a broad array of anti-poverty resources. As a result, we have become a relied upon resource for both the un- and under-employed and area service agencies whose scopes do not meet all needs with 43% of 2024 new clients referrals coming from other agencies. When household stability is not attainable for everyone ultimately the impact goes beyond the households in question - effecting the entire community. Systemic issues as well as factors such as household composition, mental health/addiction, employment status, housing conditions, and access to resources can all be prohibitors to sustainable household stability. In addition, living in poverty has an adverse impact on the health and well-being of the entire family. We strive to meet people where they are, build a relationship with them, and empower them with knowledge, tools, and resources.

After 12 years of serving the community we had built relationships with peer organizations, donors, faith communities, businesses, and our service population and we had established our role in the County's continuum of care and identified areas in which we could be of more service. Positioned for growth, we were limited by physical space in our rent-free space inside the Church of the Holy Trinity. As a result we embarked on a three year journey to raise capital to fund the renovation of much larger space in an adjacent properly owned by the church. In March 2024, we relocated to our new, street-level space that accommodates 4 additional workstations, a larger waiting room and grocery cupboard as well as a cupboard storage room. Since moving, we've added 12 new regular volunteer shifts and can now accommodate volunteer partnerships with both the Chester County IU and West Chester University. All of which has allowed us to serve more people every week.

Four of our current PT paid staff are past clients and two are WCU students.

Our goals are to continue to: identify gaps in service and work to provide services to address those needs, build relationships and cultivate collaborative partnerships across the community, provide employment and volunteer opportunities for those who want to engage, past client in particular, and diversify our funding streams.

2. Funding request

- **Description of key initiatives**

ACT in Faith is comprised of people from all walks and traditions, including those who have no religious/spiritual affiliation. At the time of our founding in 2010, the specifics of the mission were unclear, even to the founders. The founders, most of whom were members of Greater West Chester faith communities, had identified that many people had needs that were beyond the scopes of existing resources or they simply

didn't know what resources were available. Working together to fill these "gaps" was the premiss upon which the organization was established. The assumption was that they could be stronger together, than individually, in their efforts to assist. While the mission has become more clear over the years, the name has become less pertinent - and sometimes a hurdle. ACT in Faith, Assisting the Community Together in Faith, was chosen merely because the organization was created by the faith communities to "act" on behalf of community members in need. There were never any religious component or overtone to the programs and services provided. The name was representative of the "Golden Rule" - to treat as we want to be treated - to care for those in need. For the founders, that appropriately translated to "faith". Unfortunately, for a growing number of potential funders and volunteers, the word faith is a deterrent. The need to explain, re-explain, and even convince funders and potential supporters that we are not a religious organization has become a common occurrence. Potential volunteers at volunteer fairs avoid eye contact upon reading our name on a poster and we have become painfully aware that not everyone wants to engage with, what appears to be, a faith based organization.

In March of 2025, ACT in Faith launched a rebranding initiative to address - what has increasingly become a barrier for potential funders and volunteers alike- the misconception that we are a faith-based organization. In an effort to rebrand in a responsible, intentional way, a group of key stakeholders were gathered under the facilitation of a pro-bono, non-profit organizational development professional. This resulted in the decision to rename the organization, focusing on the acronym "ACT" which has always stood for "Assisting the Community Together " and to drop the "in Faith of Greater West Chester." The new name selected was "Assisting the Community Together" and we will go by "ACTnow." The need for a logo refresh was also agreed upon. The only step taken to date, has been to secure this new name via the state of Pennsylvania. All remaining key steps to the rebranding process require funds. We are hoping to secure these funds via this request in order to allow us to afford the primary expenses that will be incurred in the implementation of our new brand so we can complete the rebranding as soon as possible. These expenses include, but not limited to new web domain, name change fees, logo design, signage, stationary, marketing materials, and donor and volunteer communications.

- **Specific needs & issues to be addressed**

Our name has become a deterrent to engagement with the organization as it implies that AiF is a faith based non-profit when, in fact, there is no religious component to our services. We have taken some initial steps toward changing the name but the remaining steps towards thoroughly implementing the name change require funds. The implementation is best executed in a timely fashion so as to eliminate confusion and the need to teeter between two names. This name change will open doors to new funders and new volunteers but in order to fully execute the name change we will have to use funds that could be spent by our programs that serve the community. Simply put, we need to spend money in order to expand our capacity to raise more money and attract more volunteers. We are hoping to secure these funds for rebranding expenses which will allow us to free \$5,000 to be spent providing services to those in need.

- **Why it is important to fund this now**

The organization has grown significantly over the last 5 years, more than doubling our budget. We can no longer rely on individual donors, faith communities, and fundraisers to shoulder the lion share of our funding - larger grants have become a necessity. In addition, we need more and more direct service volunteers every year for service delivery and administrative support. If awarded, these funds would allow us to, in a very short period of time, execute every step of the rebranding process, thus eliminating what has become an evident barrier to our organizational capacity. It will also allow us to spend \$5,000 more assisting households in jeopardy of losing their home, utilities, and/or employment.

With the recent onslaught of governmental cuts to jobs and programs that are imperative to the un- and under-employed, we are finding the number of people seeking our support is increasing. On a daily basis we are challenged with trying to determine which needs are most immediate and prioritizing our distribution of financial support accordingly. Rebranding will open new doors for much-needed funding and being awarded these funds will free \$5,000 for use in our efforts to keep up with the growing needs of the community.

- **How impact & results will be demonstrated**

The most tangible impact will be in our ability to fund new logo artwork, legal fees for guidance needed to navigate this rebranding process prudently, stationary, business cards, and appointment cards, and domain purchase and filing fees, sooner as opposed to later. A less obvious but extremely impactful result will be our ability to spend \$5,000 more to fill client requests.

Having recently moved into new, larger space which is street level (previously our office was located in a basement) and, for the first time ever, we have our own entrance. Prior to the move, only those who knew of us, knew where we were. We are now more visible to all who travel Barnard Street. We now have the space to grow our services and live into our potential to service this community. Couple that along with a more appropriate name and logo and we will have a brand that increases our fundability - opening new funding doors which will in turn help us be of greater service to our clients and social service partners. This request includes funds for much-needed, street-facing signage which will make it far easier for people to find us as well as serve to “advertise” to those who may need our services and to potential donors and volunteers.

No longer having the need to prove that the organization is not tied to a religion or spiritual component and that having a religious or spiritual affiliation is not a prerequisite to receiving services will be additional outcomes.

- *For capacity building grant proposals:*

- ***How will this capacity building initiative impact your nonprofit?***

These funds have the ability to expand our organizational capacity in following three ways:

- Covering the expenses outlined on the project budget included in this submission
- Making it unnecessary for us to direct program funds to cover rebranding expenses
- Opening new doors to potential funders and volunteers by removing a deterrent - the misconception that we are a religious organization - to engagement with our organization

The ability to fund key steps required to rebrand the organization, sooner as opposed to later, will allow for a quick, smooth, and efficient elimination of the challenge that the current name has become. Once 100% rebranded, doors will be open for new funding streams, and we will be able to cast a wider net in an effort to engage new volunteers and donors. More volunteers, more donors, and having an appeal for larger grantors are all imperative components to our ability to grow our programming and serve more people, in a more comprehensive manner. The longer it takes for us to roll out this new name, the longer our organizational capacity is hindered. There are many governmental and policy changes in the pipeline that will have an adverse impact on the population we serve. Our ability to direct as much of our funding as possible to our programming is imperative to our ability to help elevate some of this added hardship. By funding our rebranding efforts, this grant will not only open a wide variety of new doors for AiF, it will eliminate the need for us to pull funds from our programming in order to implement the rebranding.

- ***How will this impact be measured?***

The ability to all of the items listed in our attached budget and avoid the need to direct funds from programming is a simple measurement.

Growth in the number of volunteers, donors, and a deeper level of engagement across existing and new walks of the community are ways in which we can also measure the impact of our new brand, which this grant would make possible. Awards from new and larger grantors will also be a means of impact measurement.

In addition, the ability to fund a new logo design, domain and web changes, street-facing signage, business/ appointment cards, letterhead/envelopes, and marketing materials in a timely fashion so as to coordinate the official name change with the state and IRS will be a more abstract measurement, but nonetheless extremely impactful.

- ***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.***

See attached project budget.