


GRANT PROPOSAL GUIDELINES as of 10.1.25


Direct Service Programs & General Operations

No deadline for DAF proposals.
Deadlines announced thru the year
for Directed Funds.

Capacity Building: Coping with Cutbacks

No deadline.
Proposals accepted anytime.
Reviewed 15th bi-monthly.

- ◇ Grants **focus on Chester County** causes & issues; **but** are not limited to Chester County.
 - ◇ Charitable nonprofits working in **all fields of interest** are considered, such as:
 - Arts, Culture, Heritage
 - Education, Libraries
 - Environment, Animals
 - Health
 - Human Services
 - Social Justice, Civic Engagement
 - ◇ **General operating** grants are encouraged. Clear, succinct, compelling descriptions are appreciated: mission, aims, results & impact.
 - ◇ Nonprofits with **higher GuideStar ratings** receive stronger consideration. Update yours for free at <https://www.guidestar.org/>
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- ◇ Proposals can be submitted **anytime all year**.
 - ◇ Grant decisions are made **intermittently** all year, as Fund Advisors desire.
 - ◇ Grant **awards** typically range from **\$2,500-\$10,000**.

- ◇ Nonprofits must be **located in & primarily serve Chester County**.
 - ◇ Nonprofit annual **budget** must be **\$1M or less**.
 - ◇ The goal of capacity building grants is to **strengthen organizational ability to effectively achieve mission and become more sustainable** over time. Priority will be given to proposals that help nonprofits shift their paradigms to cope with challenges and changes. Areas of focus include:
 - **Scenario & Contingency Planning**
 - **Financial Modeling**
 - **Partnerships, Collaborations**
 - **Merger**
 - **Closure**
 - **Resource Development, Revenue Diversification**
 - Mission, Vision, Strategy
 - Board Engagement, Leadership
 - Marketing & Communication
 - Operations
 - Technology
- 
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 - ◇ Proposals are reviewed the 15th bi-monthly.
 - ◇ Grant **awards** typically range from **\$2,500-\$10,000**.

As you are aware, there is ongoing uncertainty around federal and state funding that significantly impacts nonprofit organizations. The Community Foundation is committed to supporting a strong and resilient sector, and we encourage all organizations to be proactive in their planning. We strongly encourage every nonprofit to engage in scenario planning, examine cash flow projections and assess funding risks. We have seen nonprofits explore a variety of pathways forward, such as adapting program design, reducing or merging operations and significantly diversifying revenue streams.



Please contact Kevin Baffa, Grant Administrator or Stephenie Stevens, Grant Officer at (610) 696-8211 or grants@chescocf.org with questions.

*Connecting people who care with causes that matter,
so their philanthropy makes a difference, now & forever.*

HOW ARE GRANT DECISIONS MADE AT THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION?

The Chester County Community Foundation **connects people who care with causes that matter**, so philanthropy makes a difference **now & forever**. With **400+ charitable funds** housed under one umbrella, a single proposal provides multiple pathways for nonprofits to be considered for funding. Nonprofits are encouraged to submit proposals **throughout the year**. Grant funds are awarded from multiple funding pools:

1. GRANTS FROM CCCF DONOR ADVISED FUNDS (DAFS)

- **Families and individuals** establish Donor Advised Funds—endowed charitable funds invested to provide a perpetual stream of earnings to fund nonprofit grants.
- Most DAF grants support **direct service programs and general operations**.
- DAF grant decisions are made independently by donors, sometimes with guidance from Community Foundation staff, and are awarded on a **rolling basis throughout the year**.

2. GRANTS FROM CCCF DESIGNATED ENTRUSTED FUNDS

- CCCF Designated Entrusted Funds are stewarded by volunteer grant panels and Community Foundation staff.
- We accept **Operating & Program Grants proposals year-round**; and from time-to-time issue special, focused Calls for Proposals as new funding becomes available.
- We accept **Capacity Building Grant Proposals year-round**; and from time-to-time issue Calls for Capacity Building Proposals as new funding becomes available. Capacity building grants are intended to strengthen the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of nonprofits serving Chester County.
- Grant panels review proposals and deliberate **monthly**.

DUE DILIGENCE

The Community Foundation is committed to making thoughtful, informed grantmaking decisions. To do so, our staff, donors, and grant panel volunteers:

- Review organizational and financial data via **GuideStar** (<https://www.guidestar.org>) and IRS Form 990.
- Review all submitted proposals, which are **publicly available** at <https://chescofcf.org/receive/find-active-grants/>.
- Conduct site visits, community research, and online research to better understand mission and impact.

Please note: In compliance with IRS regulations, applicants must be charitable, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organizations; funding cannot be awarded to individuals.

TO APPLY

- To learn more, visit www.chescofcf.org
- Proposals are only accepted electronically. The format is online at <https://chescofcf.org/receive/apply-for-grants/>
- **E-mail proposals to grants@chescofcf.org**
- Proposals are considered “complete” when CCCF has **confirmed** receipt of the **Grant Proposal Summary Sheet, Narrative & Attachments**. Budgets and financials are important. Please include them.
- Proposals are shared electronically and on-line with Fund Advisors, Donors & Grant Panels.

Please contact Kevin Baffa, Grants Administrator or Stephenie Stevens, Grants Officer at **(610) 696-8211** or grants@chescofcf.org with questions.

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I. GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

To obtain an electronic version of this application, visit www.chescocf.org

This page will be shared electronically with Grant Panel Members & Fund Advisors + posted online.

Date

Contact Information

Organization Name: Girls Spark
 Address: PO Box 383, Kennett Square, PA 19348
 Phone: (484)604-9303
 Website: www.girlsspark.org
 Year Incorporated: 2019
 FEIN: 83-2403933
laurak@girlsspark.org

ED/CEO Name: Laura Kasper
 ED/CEO E-mail: laurak@girlsspark.org
 Board Chair Name: Laura Kasper
 Board Chair Approval (check here): Yes
 Primary Contact Name: Melissa Dupre
 Primary Contact E-mail: mkdupre3@outlook.com

Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Arts, Culture, Heritage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Education, Library	<input type="checkbox"/>	Environment, Animals
<input type="checkbox"/>	Health	<input type="checkbox"/>	Human Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social Justice, Civic Engagement
<input type="checkbox"/>	Religion	<input type="checkbox"/> If other, please describe:			

Mission: To provide middle and high school girls with a safe, supportive, empowering environment where they can learn, collaborate and overcome adversity in facing today's social issues.

Geographic Area Served (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served): Chester County and the Delaware Valley Region.

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served. (Include Chester County # &/or % served.) Girls Spark is dedicated to empowering and educating middle and high school girls, ages 11 to 18, by providing a safe and supportive environment where they can learn, collaborate, and overcome adversity. Building on the remarkable success of the 2024-25 program year—which reached 467 teen girls—Girls Spark has already exceeded that milestone in the 2025-26 program year, engaging 1,041 girls and continuing to grow its impact.

Annual Budget \$203,600 _____ # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff _____ 1 _____
 _____ 40 _____ % of budget for program expenses _____ 31 _____ # of Board Volunteers
 _____ 31 _____ % of budget for administrative expenses _____ 256 _____ # of Active Non-Board Volunteers
 _____ 8 _____ % of budget for fundraising expenses _____ 1000 _____ # of Volunteer Hours
 100% = total

Top 3-5 funding sources: Girls Spark receives funding through fundraising initiatives, corporate funding, grants and community events such as our annual Gala.

This grant proposal is for: Direct Service Programs & General Operating &/or Capacity Building

If Capacity Building Proposal, the focus is:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Contingency Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	Partnerships, Collaborations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Merger, Closure
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mission, Vision, Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Board Engagement & Leadership	<input type="checkbox"/>	Marketing, Communication

<input type="checkbox"/> Resource Development	<input type="checkbox"/> Operations	<input type="checkbox"/> Technology
<input type="checkbox"/> If other, please describe:		

Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: \$ 10,000

Proposal Summary: Girls Spark is dedicated to empowering and educating middle and high school girls, ages 11 to 18, by providing a safe, supportive environment where they can learn, collaborate, and overcome adversity. The need for our work has never been greater: the United States is facing an unprecedented youth mental health crisis, with teen girls disproportionately affected.

The Crisis

- **Nationally, 29.2% of adolescent females experienced a major depressive episode in 2021—nearly three times the rate for males (11.5%).**
- **57% of high school girls report symptoms of depression, compared to 31% of boys.**
- **Nearly 40% of high school students report ongoing feelings of sadness or hopelessness.**
- **20% of youth seriously consider suicide; among girls, the risk is even higher.**
- **80% of Pennsylvania high school girls surveyed reported their mental health was not good (1.5x higher than boys); 45% felt sad or hopeless (1.8x higher than boys); 22% seriously considered attempting suicide (1.8x higher than boys).**

Contributing factors include intense social pressures, unrealistic beauty standards fueled by social media, cyberbullying, academic stress, and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many girls face social exclusion, peer conflict, self-esteem struggles, identity development challenges, emotional vulnerability, and social anxiety.

Girls Spark's Response

Girls Spark is committed to reversing these alarming trends by equipping teen girls in Chester County and the Delaware Valley with preventive and protective tools to navigate today's world with confidence and resilience. Our programming includes:

- **School-based clubs and workshops** focused on social-emotional learning, mental health, and personal development.
- **Annual summits and leadership opportunities** that foster agency, self-confidence, and healthy communication.
- **Peer support and mentorship** from women leaders and a Teen Leadership Board.
- **Evidence-based curriculum** addressing mental health, anti-bullying, coping strategies, and self-esteem.

In the 2024-25 program year, Girls Spark engaged 467 girls, with 75% participation from Chester County. Our programs received a 4.5/5 satisfaction rating, and testimonials highlight increased confidence, resilience, and a sense of belonging among participants.

Request for Support

To sustain and expand our impact, Girls Spark requests grant funding to hire a dedicated part-time coordinator and enhance outreach, ensuring more girls can access our life-changing programs. Funding will allow us to:

- **Expand participation** in summits, workshops, and school clubs.
- **Strengthen support** for existing clubs and launch new ones.
- **Foster empowerment and growth** by providing girls with the knowledge, tools, and resources they need to thrive.

Measuring Impact

We will track key performance indicators, including:

- Growth in program participation (target: 20% increase).
- Improvements in self-confidence and agency (target: 20% average improvement).
- Expansion of school clubs and outreach.

Standardized surveys, feedback from teachers and parents, and participant testimonials will be used to assess outcomes and share success stories with stakeholders.

Girls Spark is uniquely positioned to address the teen mental health crisis by fostering resilience, connection, and hope for girls in our community. With your support, we can continue to make a meaningful difference—now and for the future.

II. GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Provide clear, concise information in 1-3 pages. Please be brief.

1. Nonprofit's overall aims, key initiatives, key achievements & distinctiveness

Founded in 2018 by a group of teen girls, Girls Spark is a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving girls ages 11 to 18 in Chester County and the Delaware Valley region. Our mission is to provide middle and high school girls with a safe, supportive, empowering environment where they can learn, collaborate and overcome adversity in facing today's social issues.

The inception of Girls Spark was inspired by Julia Kasper, who, at just 16 years old, faced various struggles and challenges similar to those of her peers. Observing her mother, Laura Kasper—President & CEO of Monarch Staffing and Girls Spark Board President—attend numerous women's conferences featuring inspiring leaders, Julia sought a similar platform for teen girls but found none. This realization led her to create Girls Spark. Girls Spark envisions an equitable world where all girls are supported, connected, and thriving. Our programs create interactive learning experiences that bring together women speakers and girls to discuss pressing and relevant topics.

Historical Timeline of Goals & Achievements:

- 2018:
 - Girls Spark founded by teen Julia Kasper.

- 2019:
 - Hosted our inaugural Annual Summit to address key social issues impacting high school girls.
 - Achieved 501(c)(3) nonprofit status.
- 2020-2021:
 - In response to the pandemic, transitioned to virtual workshops providing high school girls with sanctuaries of connection, empowerment, and support.
- 2022:
 - Reinstated Annual Summit at West Chester University.
- 2023-24:
 - Expanded programming to include middle school girls.
 - Established two School Clubs, starting in Chester County with Kennett High School.
 - Developed a formal training program for the Teen Leadership Board.
 - Thanks to funding from the Phillies, built sustainable infrastructure by hiring first paid staff.
 - Overall participation in Girls Spark programs—including our Annual Summit, Teen Leadership Board, Girl Talk Workshops, and School Clubs—rose by 59%.
 - Virtual Girl Talk Workshop participation increased by 64%.
 - Programmatic impact was significant, with participants reporting an average 24% increase in empowerment, knowledge, and agency.
- 2024-25:
 - Launched ten additional school clubs.
 - Hosted our first fall summit in Kennett Square engaging an additional 30 teen girls.
 - Hosted 46 tailored summits, workshops, and programs to schools and businesses in the community.
 - Recruited, launched and onboarded our new Teen Leadership Board.

With an established network of partnerships with schools, workshop speakers, and organizations in Chester County, Girls Spark differentiates itself from other organizations in the three following ways:

- Only area nonprofit devoted to improving the social, mental, economic, and overall well-being of girls through educational summits and workshops led by expert women speakers in and out of school, in-person and virtually.
- Overseen by a passionate Teen Leadership Board of high school girls (in cooperation with an Adult Board of women leaders) who share a common vision of:
 1. Helping girls at-large navigate challenges and obstacles they face in today’s society,
 2. Building social awareness to advance girls issues and needs, and
 3. Providing teen insights and trends to steward the direction of our organization.
- Connecting girls from public and private schools with women role models in unprecedented ways to foster an active, engaged community. Our Adult Board, staff, and women speakers guide girls in overcoming life’s obstacles and challenges to achieve their goals, develop strong relationships, and forge meaningful connections through three key approaches:
 1. Imparting Knowledge: Providing expertise, skills, and tools to help participants succeed in life
 2. Fostering Agency: Empowering young women to gain greater influence and control over their lives and futures.
 3. Modeling Healthy Communication: Demonstrating effective communication and social skills.

Description of Key Initiatives

We accomplish our mission to educate and empower teen girls by offering educational summits, workshops, and programs that take place both in and out of school, as well as in-person and virtually. Our Girls Spark programs, designed to inspire, educate, and empower, include:

- **Signature Annual Summit:** Our Annual Summit is scheduled for April 25, 2026 at Penn State Brandywine bringing together 200-250 teen girls across the Delaware Valley for expert-led workshops, panels, and interactive sessions.
- **Teen Leadership Board:** Recruited annually, Teen Board members shape our programs, lead outreach initiatives, and build leadership skills while serving as peer mentors and driving the organization forward.
- **Girl Talk Workshops:** Free ongoing virtual and hybrid workshop series featuring small-group discussions focused on social-emotional learning and personal development.
- **School Clubs:** Established within local schools, clubs provide year-round engagement and social support fostering leadership and community.
- **School & Community-Based Programs:** Tailored summits, workshops, and programs delivered to schools and local businesses expanding our reach and amplifying our impact on girls.

Our summits, workshops, and programs are thoughtfully curated around a socio-emotional framework grounded in five key pillars:

1. Self-Management
2. Self-Awareness
3. Social Awareness
4. Responsible Decision-Making
5. Relationship Skills

Our workshops explore a diverse range of topics aimed at enhancing the social, mental, economic, and overall well-being of girls, such as:

- Mental Health & Wellness
- Fear of Failure & Coping with Stress
- Anti-Bullying & Microaggression
- Healthy Relationships, Safe Dating, & Frenemies
- Emotional Intelligence
- Self-Defense & Awareness, Yoga & Mindfulness
- LGBTQIA+ & Unconscious Bias
- Nutrition & Health
- Decision Making
- Financial Literacy/Money Matters 101
- Body Image & Self Confidence

2. Funding request

- **What specific needs & issues are being addressed, via what programs and services?**

Based on 2025 Girls Spark reporting, teen girls in Chester County face a range of personal and social challenges, including:

- Social Exclusion & Peer Conflict: Many girls experience bullying, exclusion from social events, and relational aggression, leading to feelings of isolation and diminished social support.
- Self-Esteem & Identity Development: Struggles with self-worth, negative self-comparisons, and feelings of inadequacy are prevalent among girls, often exacerbated by unrealistic social media portrayals and societal expectations.
- Emotional Vulnerability & Coping Deficits: Girls report feeling emotionally "weak," undeserving of support, and uncertain about how to manage stressors effectively, indicating a need for resilience-building strategies.
- Interpersonal Skills & Social Anxiety: Difficulties in forming new friendships, connecting with peers, and overcoming social inhibitions point to a need for targeted interventions to enhance communication, confidence, and social competency in girls.
- Social Stereotyping & Identity Bias: Gender-based stereotypes and identity biases limit girls' perceptions of their potential, reinforcing restrictive views about their abilities and roles in society.

Girls Spark addresses these challenges by offering preventative programs designed to build resilience, boost self-esteem, and promote social-emotional growth. Through interactive workshops, leadership development opportunities, and school-based programs, we equip girls with the skills to navigate complex social dynamics, embrace their uniqueness, and build supportive communities.

Our targeted workshops on emotional intelligence, anti-bullying strategies, and relationship-building provide practical tools to help girls overcome these challenges and thrive. We encourage girls to recognize their worth, develop strong support networks, and become confident, capable young women by fostering a safe, supportive empowering environment.

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

We are on the brink of a breakthrough in reaching more girls in Chester County. Securing funding is essential to sustaining and expanding engagement amid the influx of Chester County girls into our programs and our significant growth over the past two years. Recent developments, such as the launch of Girls Spark Clubs in local schools and the expansion of in-school programming in Chester County, have created new opportunities for greater impact.

To sustain this momentum in Chester County, we must secure funding to broaden our reach, scale our programs, and support more teen girls. The requested funding of \$10,000 will enable us to:

- Accelerate Engagement: Expand participation in summits, workshops, and school clubs by enhancing outreach efforts and removing financial barriers.
- Establish School Clubs: Strengthen support for our 12 active clubs in Chester County, while capitalizing on the momentum to launch additional clubs.
- Foster Empowerment and Growth: Equip girls with the knowledge, tools, and resources they need to

thrive, with a strong emphasis on nurturing their social and mental health.

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

Girls Spark will measure impact and results through key performance indicators (KPIs), including:

- Program Participation Growth: Increase participation of Chester County girls in Girls Spark programming by at least 20%.
- Empowerment & Self-Confidence: Evaluate the growth in knowledge, confidence, and agency among Chester County program participants achieving at least a 20% average improvement.
- School Club Expansion: Facilitate the successful launch and ongoing support of at least three additional Girls Spark Clubs in Chester County.

Standardized surveys combining quantitative and qualitative measures will be administered at the start and conclusion of programs to assess impact, outcomes, and workshop effectiveness. Feedback from teachers and parents will also be gathered to enrich program evaluation. Comprehensive reports, participant testimonials, and success stories will be shared with stakeholders showcasing the transformative impact of our initiatives. This grant will enable Girls Spark to continue empowering and uplifting Chester County girls, equipping them for bright and successful futures.

- **Additionally, for capacity building grant proposals: N/A**

- **How will this capacity building initiative impact your nonprofit? N/A**
- **How will this impact be demonstrated? N/A**
- **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 proposal/s if applicable. N/A**

III. ATTACHMENTS

Email this support information. If it is on your website, please provide the URL.

1. Copy of **501 (c) (3)** federal tax-exempt letter Attached
 2. List of **Board** of Directors, with their affiliations **URL**: Attached
 3. Most recent **annual report URL**: At this time, Girls Spark does not produce an annual report and our financials are not subject to an audit.
 4. Audited or reviewed recent **financial statement URL**: At this time, Girls Spark does not produce an annual report and our financials are not subject to an audit.
 5. Itemized **organizational operating budget** with actual results for prior fiscal year & current fiscal year to date Attached
 6. If capacity building initiative, **itemized budget** (including external consultant's proposal, if applicable) N/A
 7. Current **strategic plan**. Attached If your nonprofit does **not** have a current strategic plan, **explain why**.
- Visit our website to learn more at www.chescocf.org
 - Proposals are only accepted electronically: <https://chescocf.org/receive/apply-for-grants/>
 - **Email proposals to grants@chescocf.org**
 - Proposals are considered "complete" when CCCF has **confirmed** receipt of the **Grant Proposal Summary Sheet, Narrative & Attachments**.
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- Per IRS Regulations, applicants must be charitable, tax-exempt organizations with 501(c)(3) certification & cannot be individuals.

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CAPACITY BUILDING FOR NONPROFITS:
Coping with Cutbacks



Capacity building is about empowering nonprofits to do **more good, more effectively, and for the long term**. It strengthens an organization's ability to fulfill its mission, enhance sustainability, and better serve its community.

At its core, capacity building focuses on improving a nonprofit's internal systems, leadership, and resources so that impact can grow and endure.

Traditionally, capacity building has included efforts such as **board and staff leadership development, strategic planning, fundraising, and technology investments** to improve operations and organizational effectiveness.

Today, however, nonprofits face a rapidly changing environment. Shifts in federal policies have resulted in rapid changes at all levels and in new directions. Nonprofits must **"meet the moment" and cope with cutbacks— think differently, shift paradigms and transform how we understand and interact with the world around us...adapt how we** plan, lead, fund, and collaborate.

Capacity building can play a critical role in helping nonprofits adapt and innovate. This may include **funding scenario planning, exploring new revenue models, expanding partnerships, pursuing mergers or strategic alliances**, and other adaptive strategies that strengthen long-term resilience.

Capacity building support can take many forms, tailored to each organization's unique needs. Examples of projects that may be funded include:

- **CONTINGENCY & SCENARIO PLANNING**

Scenario Planning – Financial Modeling & Forecasting

- **PARTNERSHIPS, COLLABORATIONS**

Coalition Building – Collaboration - Mergers & Acquisitions

- **MERGER, CLOSURE**

These unprecedented times may present the need for a merger or closure of your organization.

Contact chaya@chescofc.org to confidentially discuss funding to assist in the planning or initial steps.

- **MISSION, VISION, STRATEGY**

Organizational Assessment - Strategic Planning – Strategic Restructuring – Coping With Cutbacks

- **BOARD ENGAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP**

Board Recruitment – Board Engagement – Increasing Networks & Community Support - Leadership Development – Executive Transition & Succession Planning

- **MARKETING, COMMUNICATION**

Nonprofit Business Messaging & Storytelling – Re-branding – Marketing Planning & Re-Positioning – Crisis Communications Planning

- **RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

Major Gift Donor Identification, Cultivation, Development & Stewardship - Development Campaigns (Annual, Capital, Planned Giving) - Earned Income Development - Social Enterprise Feasibility & Development

- **TECHNOLOGY, OPERATIONS**

Business Continuity Planning - Financial Management - Human Resources - Volunteer Management - Industry Certification - Risk Management - Technology Improvements ###

