

CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
Direct Service Programs & General Operating Support

I. Grant Proposal Summary Sheet

Contact Information

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- **FEIN:** 27-2497163

Fields of Interest

- Arts, Culture & Heritage
- Education
- Health
- Human Services
- Religion
- Animals/Environment
- Social Justice & Civic Engagement
- Other: Youth Development, Justice-Involved Youth, Anti-Violence

Mission

Rock to the Future fosters thriving youth and economic empowerment through free, student-driven music programs for Philadelphia youth. Through music, students build confidence, leadership, and workforce skills that support lifelong well-being. We serve 1,300+ youth annually in schools, community locations, and juvenile justice facilities.

Geographic Area Served

Rock to the Future works with youth throughout Philadelphia County, partnering intentionally with under-resourced schools and community organizations in neighborhoods affected by poverty and violence.

Population Served

We work with 1,300+ young people and children from preschool to age 21 (with a focus on middle and high school youth) in Philadelphia neighborhoods affected by poverty. Our students experience challenges such as homelessness, foster-system placement,

justice-system involvement (diversion, incarceration, and re-entry), and other adverse childhood experiences. Our students identify as 79% Black, 12% Latino, 5% White, 3% Multi-racial, 1% Asian; 40% female, 58% male, 2% non-binary; and 99% in high-need communities based on income levels, crime rates, and adverse childhood experiences.

Organizational Snapshot

- **Annual Budget:** \$1,831,550
- **Budget Allocation:** 79% Program | 4% Administration | 17% Fundraising
- **Full Time Staff:** 16
- **Board Members:** 14
- **Non-Board Volunteers:** 6
- **Volunteer Hours:** 586

Top Funding Sources:

- Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD)
- City of Philadelphia Community Expansion Grant
- William Penn Foundation

Overall Aims

Rock to the Future works with young people in Philadelphia neighborhoods that lack access to high-quality youth development and music opportunities due to systemic inequities and underinvestment. Through consistent access to music education, mentorship, and holistic support services, we build emotional wellness and life skills to support graduating, pursuing college or trades, and entering professional careers.

Through our programs, many students experience their first opportunity to learn, create, and perform music while gaining the academic, social, and career skills needed to thrive beyond the stage. To ensure equitable access, there are no costs for youth to participate. We provide all instruments, supplies, meals, and transportation support, and no auditions or prior experience are required. Programs take place in safe, inclusive locations throughout Philadelphia, including public schools, community centers, and juvenile justice facilities.

Key Initiatives

Students build musical skills through student-driven, engaging instruction in guitar, bass, drums, piano, music production, and songwriting while collaborating with peers in a supportive group environment. Through creative collaboration and original songwriting, youth develop confidence, communication skills, and leadership while sharing their voices and perspectives. These experiences culminate in free community performances that celebrate student achievements and strengthen connections across Philadelphia neighborhoods.

Accessible and engaging programs bring young people through our doors, where our culture of care and community builds trust. Through this foundation of trust, we provide support beyond music education, including mentorship, social-emotional learning, exploration of professional pathways, and connections to resource partners who support youth and family stability such as housing, food security, legal support, and mental health services.

Students also gain exposure to educational and professional pathways through tutoring, career workshops and panels, paid skill-development opportunities, financial aid guidance, college and trade school visits and preparation, and post-secondary scholarships. These experiences help youth build confidence, expand their sense of possibility, and develop the skills needed to pursue meaningful educational and career pathways.

We also work to provide a continuum of care for youth in diversion, incarceration, and re-entry, and to build pathways to continued enrollment in our community locations following their court-mandated referrals.

Program Overview

Rock to the Future delivers its work through three core programs. **MusiCore** provides comprehensive and individualized afterschool and summer programming for middle and high school students, combining music instruction with mentoring, academic support, social-emotional learning, and workforce development. **MobileMusic** provides weekly music

classes in schools, community partner locations, and juvenile justice facilities, expanding access to music education for students who would otherwise have limited opportunities.

MusiCommunity provides music programming during critical out-of-school hours at trusted community organizations that offer additional support services for youth. By embedding programs within these spaces, students can access music education while also connecting to mentoring, resource support, and other services that promote stability and well-being.

Distinctiveness

Rock to the Future's model is distinguished by its ability to engage youth through culturally relevant music while integrating creative expression with youth development, education, and career pathways. Music serves as the entry point, attracting young people, particularly those who may not connect with traditional academic or youth programs. Our programs are intentionally student-driven, giving youth the opportunity to create original music, collaborate with peers, and contribute to decisions that shape their program experience.

Our programs are completely free, provide meals, transportation passes, and each student receives their own instrument to keep, plus there are no auditions or prior experience needed.

Rock to the Future operates through a strong partnership network across schools, community organizations, and juvenile justice facilities. This model allows us to meet young people where they are while leveraging the resources and expertise of trusted community partners. By embedding our programs within existing youth-serving organizations, we expand access to music education while connecting students to additional supports and opportunities.

Needs Being Addressed through Rock to the Future

Due to persistent funding inequities, many public schools in Philadelphia have reduced or eliminated music and arts programming. As a result, many young people lack opportunities to explore creative expression, develop artistic skills, and participate in positive youth development activities that build confidence, emotional resilience, and peer relationships. Youth in under-resourced Philadelphia neighborhoods also face limited access to safe out-of-school spaces and workforce development opportunities. Many experience high levels of adverse childhood experiences, including community violence, housing instability, family incarceration, and school disconnection. These conditions increase risks of academic disengagement, justice system involvement, and long-term economic instability.

Rock to the Future addresses these challenges through free, student-driven music programs that integrate creative expression, mentoring, social-emotional learning, academic support, and workforce readiness. By eliminating financial barriers, we ensure equitable access for youth who may otherwise be unable to participate in arts programming.

Youth we work with in the justice system face additional barriers to education, employment, and community connection. Rock to the Future's programs within the juvenile justice system provide a space where youth can heal through creative expression, build trusting relationships

with mentors, and develop skills that support successful reintegration into their communities.

Use of Funds

Funding will support the continuation and expansion of Rock to the Future's integrated youth development programs, ensuring that young people most impacted by systemic inequities have consistent access to safe, empowering, and high-quality music education opportunities.

General operating support will sustain free programming for youth, expand instructor capacity and retention, purchase instruments and program supplies, and strengthen wraparound services, such as transportation, meals, and mentorship. These resources allow Rock to the Future to remove barriers to participation while maintaining high-quality programming and individualized support for the students we serve.

Why now?

Demand for safe, high-quality out-of-school programming continues to grow across Philadelphia, particularly in neighborhoods where schools and community organizations have limited resources for arts education and youth development. Rock to the Future regularly receives requests from schools and community partners seeking music programming, but current resources limit our ability to meet the full demand. Our recently completed strategic plan outlines a responsible path to expand programs, strengthen instructor capacity, and deepen the support services available to youth. Immediate investment will help stabilize staffing, maintain program quality, and ensure that more young people can access consistent music education, mentorship, and workforce development opportunities. By supporting Rock to the Future at this moment, donors can help scale proven programs that are already demonstrating strong outcomes for youth and communities.

Impact and Evaluation

Our team reviews key performance indicators monthly to evaluate program participation, student retention, and stakeholder feedback. Site observations and program evaluations help identify opportunities for improvement, ensuring that programs remain high-quality and responsive to student needs. We track several core outcomes, including:

- Program participation and retention rates
- Student involvement in culminating performances and showcases
- Growth in social-emotional learning competencies, such as confidence, communication, and responsible decision-making
- School engagement indicators and academic progress
- Post-secondary enrollment and completion (college or trade programs)
- Participation in paid skill-development and workforce readiness opportunities

Our results demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach. Since inception, 100% of MusiCore seniors have graduated from high school and pursued post-secondary education. Each year, 90% or more of participants report growth in key social-emotional skills and positive program experiences. To date, Rock to the Future has distributed over \$107,550 in post-secondary scholarships and \$313,315 in paid skill development earnings to students.