

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.

- ◇ 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/>



Capacity Building:

Coping with Cutbacks

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

- ◇ 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



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
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.chescocf.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.

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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: Happy Noises
Address: 147 Harvey Road, West Chester, PA 19382
Phone: 215-530-4530
Website: happynois.es.org
Year Incorporated: 2026
FEIN:42-2402060

ED/CEO Name: Sonya Huffman
ED/CEO E-mail: sonya@happynois.es.org
Board Chair Name: No established board yet
Board Chair Approval (check here): ☐
Primary Contact Name: Grace Li
Primary Contact E-mail: grace_li@happynois.es.org

Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

Arts, Culture, Heritage		Education, Library		Environment, Animals
Health	X	Human Services		Social Justice, Civic Engagement
Religion		If other, please describe:		

Mission: To empower neurodiverse individuals transitioning from school to adult life by providing financial assistance, community connection, and vocational opportunities—ensuring no individual or family navigates this critical period without support.

Geographic Area Served (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served): Entirely of Chester and Delaware County, extending into the larger Southeast PA region.

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served. (Include Chester County # &/or % served.)

Neurodiverse individuals aged **18 and older** who are transitioning from school-based Individualized Education Program (IEP) services to adult services, as well as their families and caregivers. The term neurodiverse encompasses, but is not limited to, individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), learning disabilities, and other neurological differences that profoundly impact daily functioning and social participation.

•

Annual Budget \$5,000 _____ # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
_____25_____ % of budget for program expenses _____3_____ # of Board Volunteers
_____10_____ % of budget for administrative expenses _____3_____ # of Active Non-Board Volunteers
_____65_____ % of budget for fundraising expenses _____10/wk_____ # of Volunteer Hours

100% = total

Top 3-5 funding sources: As we are a new nonprofit which has existed for under a year, we are largely operating out of pocket and based upon donations from individual supporters.

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

If Capacity Building Proposal, the focus is:

	Contingency Planning		Partnerships, Collaborations		Merger, Closure
	Mission, Vision, Strategy		Board Engagement & Leadership		Marketing, Communication
	Resource Development		Operations		Technology
	If other, please describe:				

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

Proposal Summary: *(a few sentences, please)*

Funds allocated to Happy Noises will be utilized to:

Make direct grants to families of neurodiverse individuals who are actively awaiting Medicaid waiver funding or other state-administered adult services to reduce financial hardship, prevent skill regression, and maintain therapeutic services during times of change.

Support facility, staffing, and programming costs for community gatherings in partnership with local businesses that promote the building of friendship and community between neurodiverse individuals as well as life skills.

Establish sustainable vocational opportunities for neurodiverse adults with local businesses, fund secondary education for vocational training, and the potential acquisition of a franchise or social enterprise business model.

Cover personnel and operation expenses.

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

2. Funding request

- What specific needs & issues are being addressed, via what programs and services?
- Why is it important to fund this now?
- How will results & impact be demonstrated?

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
 2. List of **Board** of Directors, with their affiliations **URL: We are a young company without an established board**
 3. Most recent **annual report** **URL: We have not been in operation for a year**
 4. Audited or reviewed recent **financial statement** **URL: See above**
 5. Itemized **organizational operating budget** with actual results for prior fiscal year & current fiscal year to date See above
 6. If capacity building initiative, **itemized budget** (including external consultant's proposal, if applicable) See Above
 7. Current **strategic plan**. 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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CHESTER COUNTY
community
FOUNDATION

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@chescof.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

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Grant Purpose Document

Empowering neurodiverse individuals to thrive in adult life

Draft · Version 1.0

Foundation Overview

Happy Noises Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting neurodiverse individuals as they navigate one of the most critical and underserved transitions in their lives: the shift from school-based services to adult services. By providing direct funding, community infrastructure, and vocational opportunities, the Foundation bridges the gap that too many neurodiverse individuals and their families face after the age of 22.

Our work is grounded in the belief that every neurodiverse person deserves the resources, community, and opportunity to live a full, meaningful adult life — and that the systems currently in place leave too many families waiting, isolated, and without support.

The Needs We Address

The transition from school-based services to adult services represents a significant and well-documented challenge for neurodiverse individuals and their families. Known colloquially as the ‘services cliff,’ this transition often means:

- Loss of structured therapeutic, educational, and social supports that have been in place since early childhood
- Lengthy waits — often months to years — for Medicaid waiver programs and other state-funded adult services
- Social isolation as peer networks built through school are disrupted without replacement
- Limited pathways to meaningful employment that accommodate neurodiverse needs and strengths
- Financial strain on families who must privately fund care while awaiting public program eligibility

Happy Noises Foundation exists to fill this gap — offering real, tangible support while families await formal funding and establishing long-term community infrastructure to sustain neurodiverse adults.

Mission Statement

OUR MISSION

To empower neurodiverse individuals transitioning from school to adult life by providing financial assistance, community connection, and vocational opportunities — ensuring no individual or family navigates this critical period without support.

Grant Purpose & Funding Priorities

Grants awarded by or to Happy Noises Foundation are directed toward three interconnected programmatic pillars, each designed to address a distinct dimension of the transition challenge.

● Pillar 1: Family Bridge Grants

A core use of Foundation funds is direct grant-making to families of neurodiverse individuals who are actively awaiting Medicaid waiver funding or other state-administered adult services. These bridge grants are intended to:

- Provide financial assistance to maintain or access critical therapeutic services (behavioral health, speech therapy, occupational therapy, etc.) during the gap period
- Prevent regression in skills and wellbeing during the waiting period between school exit and the initiation of adult waiver services
- Reduce financial hardship on families who are often primary caregivers and who face significant out-of-pocket costs
- Enable continuity of care providers and relationships that have been established and are critical to the individual's wellbeing
- Provide targeted funding for Psychiatric/Medical evaluations for families that lack a means or resources.

Grant eligibility, award amounts, and application processes will be defined in the Foundation's Grant Guidelines document. Priority will be given to families demonstrating financial need and active waiver application status.

● Pillar 2: Community Space & Social Programming

Social isolation is among the most acute consequences of the post-school transition for neurodiverse adults. The Foundation is committed to establishing and sustaining physical community space to serve as a consistent gathering place for:

- Regular social events (i.e. dances, board game nights, arts and crafts, etc.) designed to build peer relationships and community belonging among neurodiverse adults
- Life skills practice in real-world, supportive environments (i.e. cooking, budgeting, public transportation navigation, social communication)
- Family and caregiver support programming (i.e. guest speakers, workshops, etc.), including peer networking and resource sharing
- Partnerships with local organizations (i.e. Heal Therapy and Consulting, Camphill Soltane, etc) to bring therapeutic, recreational, and educational programming into the community

Community space funding may support facility costs, program staffing, supplies, and event operations. The Foundation may seek grants to establish, operate, or expand this community hub, and may also grant funds to partner organizations providing similar programming.

● **Pillar 3: Vocational Opportunities & Employment**

Meaningful employment is a fundamental contributor to quality of life, independence, and dignity. The Foundation is actively exploring pathways to create sustainable employment opportunities for neurodiverse adults, including:

- Potential acquisition of a franchise or social enterprise business model that provides structured, supported employment in an inclusive environment
- Job coaching and workplace readiness programming to prepare neurodiverse individuals for competitive and supported employment
- Partnerships with local businesses to develop inclusive hiring initiatives and internship or apprenticeship programs
- Vocational exploration and skills assessment programming to match individuals with employment that aligns with their strengths and interests

Vocational program funding will prioritize models with demonstrated sustainability and measurable employment outcomes. The Foundation recognizes that social enterprise models, including franchise ownership, may require capital investment and will plan accordingly.

Population Served

Happy Noises Foundation primarily serves the following throughout Southeastern, Pennsylvania

- Neurodiverse individuals aged 18 and older who are transitioning from school-based Individualized Education Program (IEP) services to adult services
- Families and caregivers of neurodiverse adults in the transition phase or recently transitioned

- Neurodiverse adults who are awaiting or enrolled in Medicaid waiver programs and related state services

The term ‘neurodiverse’ encompasses, but is not limited to, individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), learning disabilities, and other neurological differences that affect daily functioning and social participation.

Intended Use of Grant Funds

Funds received through grants to the Happy Noises Foundation will be directed exclusively toward programmatic and operational activities aligned with the Foundation’s mission. Permitted uses include:

- Direct financial assistance to eligible families through the Family Bridge Grant program
- Facility costs for community space, including lease, utilities, maintenance, and accessibility accommodations
- Personnel costs for program staff, including social workers, program coordinators, and job coaches
- Programming supplies, materials, and costs for social events and life skills activities
- Pre-development and feasibility costs related to the evaluation of vocational and franchise opportunities
- Capital investment in approved social enterprise or franchise models upon board approval
- Administrative costs directly supporting program delivery (not to exceed limits set by the funder)

Accountability & Stewardship

Happy Noises Foundation is committed to responsible stewardship of all grant funds. We maintain the following practices:

- All grant expenditures are tracked and reported in accordance with funder requirements and nonprofit financial best practices
- The Foundation’s Board of Directors provides oversight of all grant-funded programs and major expenditures
- Program outcomes are measured and reported, with regular review of progress toward stated goals
- Families receiving bridge grants are required to submit documentation of need and intended use, with follow-up reporting on fund utilization

- All financial records are maintained in compliance with applicable nonprofit regulations and are available for audit

Closing Statement

Happy Noises Foundation is at the beginning of an important journey — one that will make a meaningful difference in the lives of neurodiverse individuals and families who are underserved and often overlooked. This grant purpose document reflects our current programmatic vision and our commitment to thoughtful, mission-aligned use of every dollar entrusted to us.

We welcome the partnership of funders who share our belief that neurodiverse individuals deserve full access to adult life — with the resources, community, and opportunity to make it their own.

CONTACT

For questions about this document or the Happy Noises Foundation's programs and grant opportunities, please contact the Foundation directly at Grace@happynois.es.org.