

I. GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

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Date: 9/9/26

Contact Information

Organization Name: Orion Communities
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Phone: 610-415-1140
Website: www.orioncommunities.org
Year Incorporated: 1978
FEIN: 23-2074061

ED/CEO Name: Ellen Scott, Interim
ED/CEO E-mail: escott@orionhope.org
Board Chair Name: Ellen Scott
Board Chair Approval (check here): ☒
Primary Contact Name: Ellen Scott
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Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

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

Mission: Orion provides essential resources, guidance, and support at critical moments in people's lives to remove barriers and open pathways to self-reliance.

Geographic Area Served (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served): Orion serves Chester County and surrounding areas of Montgomery County, with our core service areas in Phoenixville, Coatesville, and Pottstown.

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served. (Include Chester County # &/or % served.) Families come to Orion because they are struggling and unable to have their needs met elsewhere – and Orion is often their last chance at getting back on track. In 2025, Orion worked to stabilize 1,799 under-resourced households, or approximately 4,500 unique individuals. Last year, 68% of our clients lived in Chester County.

Annual Budget \$1,186,790 _____ 8_ # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
_____ 91% of budget for program expenses _____ 13_ # of Board Volunteers
_____ 5% of budget for administrative expenses _____ 150_ # of Active Non-Board Volunteers
_____ 4% of budget for fundraising expenses _____ 3,600+ # of Volunteer Hours

100% = total

Top 3-5 funding sources: Phoenixville Community Health Foundation, Pottstown Regional Community Foundation, W.W. Smith Foundation, along with individual, corporate, and community donors

This grant proposal is for: ☒ Direct Service Programs & General Operating &/or _____ Capacity Building
Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: \$10,000

Proposal Summary: (a few sentences, please): Orion's goal is to strengthen our community as a whole by assisting individuals and families in crisis, getting them back on track as they work toward a more self-reliant, stable future. Funding will support Orion's programs that provide professional case management services, emergency direct aid, and enrichment programs to assist with long-term stability.

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

Nearly 50 years ago, Orion Communities was founded to help individuals with disabilities secure housing, find employment, and build connections within the community. As community needs evolved, we expanded our services to support individuals and families experiencing poverty and illness, while remaining committed to those who too often fall through the cracks of the social service safety net.

Today, our goal is to help families in crisis achieve stability and self-sufficiency, with the majority of those we serve being families with children. Through professional case management, emergency financial assistance, and enrichment programs that promote long-term success, Orion provides immediate support during times of crisis while equipping families with the resources and tools they need to build a more secure future.

Orion's **Bridge Case Management program** is the foundation of our work, offering critical aid to families in crisis.

Our dedicated professional case managers provide personalized, hands-on support to individuals and families navigating complex challenges. They begin by assessing urgent needs and connecting clients to available community resources, such as partner nonprofit organizations, government programs, or other community services. Our strong partnerships with other organizations and agencies strengthen our ability to respond quickly and effectively to families in crisis. By working collaboratively across sectors, we help ensure individuals and families can access coordinated support, reduce barriers to services, and receive the resources they need before their situation escalates.

When no other options exist, we provide emergency financial assistance. This may mean helping with a security deposit to secure housing, paying a month's rent to prevent eviction, filling a heating oil or propane tank during the winter, covering a utility or phone bill to prevent shutoff, or providing bus passes to get to the doctor or maintain employment. This financial assistance often serves as the difference between temporary hardship and long-term destabilization.

In 2025, nearly 70% of all support requests were housing-related, including rent assistance, security deposits, and other eviction prevention measures. Our work reflects the housing crisis affecting our communities, where rising rents and stagnant wages leave families with little room to absorb an unexpected challenge such as a car repair, medical bill, or reduced work hours.

In addressing immediate housing or other essential needs, our Bridge Case Management program helps lay the groundwork for long-term stability, empowering individuals to regain control of their lives.

To assist our clients with essential personal items, Orion's **Resource Distribution program** provides clothing, hygiene products, tents, and other needed items to our vulnerable neighbors.

Our broader enrichment programs help individuals and families build the skills and resources necessary for long-term success. **Getting Ahead in a Just Getting' By World** provides adults with mentorship, practical skills training, and tools and resources for creating a more prosperous future. **GLAD** works with single mothers to

strengthen parenting skills, build confidence, and promote greater self-reliance. Our ***STARS after-school program and summer camps*** provide free STEM and literacy programming for at-risk children referred by the Phoenixville Area School District, while our book distribution initiative puts books in the homes of children who may have limited access to them.

Our ***Technology Resource Center*** also gives clients access to computers, internet, phones, and other technology needed to search for employment, apply for benefits, and connect with essential resources.

Working in cooperation, all of Orion's programs form a comprehensive support system that responds to urgent crises, removes barriers to stability, and creates pathways to self-reliance.

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?**

For many families living on the financial edge, a single unexpected expense can quickly become a crisis. A medical bill, car repair, reduction in work hours, or increase in rent can put housing and basic stability at risk. When families have nowhere else to turn, Orion Communities steps in with emergency assistance, individualized case management, and the resources they need to get through the crisis and begin moving forward.

In 2025, Orion helped stabilize 1,799 households, supporting approximately 4,500 individuals, and provided over \$215,000 in direct financial assistance. This support took many forms: a month's rent to prevent eviction, heating oil to keep a family warm, a utility payment to prevent shutoff, or transportation assistance that allowed someone to maintain employment. Nearly 70% of all support requests were housing-related, demonstrating the growing difficulty many households face in keeping pace with rising housing costs in a challenging economic climate.

Our Bridge Case Management program addresses these pressing issues through individualized client support. Case managers help families navigate available resources, connect them with government programs and community partners, and address immediate needs when other assistance is unavailable. By pairing emergency financial assistance with individualized case management, Orion can address both the crisis in front of a family and the barriers that contributed to it.

Dave's story shows the difference this personalized approach can make. At just 31 years old, Dave experienced multiple strokes that left him with significant physical limitations and unable to continue working. Once independent, he suddenly found himself navigating a complex system of medical care and financial uncertainty. When he first came to Orion, he was facing eviction because he could no longer keep up with his rent while waiting for a disability determination.

Orion provided the financial assistance needed to cover his overdue rent and keep him housed. But our case managers also advocated on his behalf, working directly with the CFO of his housing provider to secure an agreement that allowed him additional time while his disability benefits were being resolved. We then contacted the office of his congressperson, whose staff intervened to flag his application as a priority and help move the process forward. With his housing secured and his disability application progressing, Dave could focus on his health and recovery rather than the immediate threat of homelessness.

Priority populations for our core case management services include:

- Rent-burdened households at risk of eviction
- Unhoused clients or households facing homelessness
- Individuals experiencing unemployment or underemployment
- Households with inconsistent or insufficient income
- Families headed by single mothers
- Individuals with chronic health issues or disabilities

Many individuals and families we serve face overlapping challenges tied to economic instability, including housing insecurity, limited employment pathways, and lack of access to financial resources.

To measure outcomes and improve service delivery, Orion uses the Orion Sustainability Assessment Tool (OSAT), an internal framework that tracks client stability from intake through post-assistance. OSAT evaluates progress across five stages: Crisis, Safe but Fragile, Vulnerable, Stable, and Thriving. Clients are assessed on a 1-10 scale at intake, immediately following assistance, and post-resolution, allowing our team to measure both immediate stabilization and longer-term progress.

In 2025, our case managers reported significant average improvements in client outcomes:

- Shelter and housing stability increased from 2.8 to 4.7
- Utility assistance outcomes increased from 2.1 to 5.4
- Transportation support for work and appointments increased from 2.4 to 4.4

Movement of even a few points on this scale represents substantial progress for households often facing multiple overlapping crises.

At a time when families are facing rising costs for housing, food, utilities, and other basic essentials, general operating support is particularly important, allowing Orion to respond to the unique circumstances of each individual or family to find a sustainable solution. It means we can act when an eviction notice arrives, when utilities are about to be shut off, or when reliable transportation is the only thing standing between a client and their paycheck.

With your support, Orion can continue to act as a trusted resource for individuals and families at critical moments, providing immediate relief while helping families with the resources they need to move toward self-reliance.