

I. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION - GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

Date August 25, 2026

Contact Information

Organization Name: Oxford Area Historical Association
Address: 119 S. 5th Street, Oxford PA 19363
Phone: 610-467-0339
Website: <https://oxfordhistorical.org/>
Year Incorporated: 2000
FEIN: 23-3045756

ED/CEO Name: Krys Sipple
ED/CEO E-mail: ksipple@oxfordhistorical.org
Board Chair Name: Jenifer Warren
Board Chair Approval (check here): Yes
Primary Contact Name: Krys Sipple
Primary Contact E-mail: ksipple@oxfordhistorical.org

Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

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

Mission: The Oxford Area Historical Association (OAHA) serves as a vibrant hub for area history by inspiring curiosity, fostering understanding of the past, and strengthening our community while being the story-keepers of the Oxford region.

Geographic Area Served (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served): OAHA serves Southern Chester County, with a primary focus on Oxford Borough and the five surrounding townships that comprise the Oxford Area School District.

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served: OAHA serves residents of all ages throughout the Oxford region, as well as visitors to Southern Chester County. Oxford Borough is a diverse community of approximately 5,900 residents and serves as the population and commercial center of the surrounding rural region. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's most recent data, 23.7% of Oxford Borough residents live below the poverty level. More than 28% of residents are under age 18, and nearly one in five residents age five and older speaks a language other than English at home.

Annual Budget <u>\$158,600</u>	<u>.5</u> # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
<u>68</u> % of budget for program expenses	<u>11</u> # of Board Volunteers
<u>26</u> % of budget for administrative expenses*	<u>35</u> # of Active Non-Board Volunteers
<u>6</u> % of budget for fundraising expenses	<u>4591</u> # of Volunteer Hours
<u>100</u> % total	

*26% fundraising expenses represents an intentional push to complete the funding to purchase our building.

Top 3-5 funding sources: The State of Pennsylvania, The Oxford Area Foundation, The James S. Herr Family Foundation

Is this grant proposal for: Capacity Building ☐ or General Operating ☒

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

Proposal Summary: OAHA respectfully requests \$10,000 in general operating support to help sustain the expanded programming, staffing, preservation, and community engagement made possible by our new History Center. The past several years have been transformational for OAHA. What began as a small, all-volunteer historical organization operating from less than 1,000 square feet has grown into a staffed community institution occupying the historic 1868 Union School Building. In April 2026, OAHA purchased the building with the assistance of a transformative \$700,000 Pennsylvania Local Share Account grant. The capital investment has created something much larger than a building. OAHA now has the space to expand partnerships with the Oxford Area School District and Lincoln University, welcome researchers and visitors, preserve a growing collection of local historical materials, develop exhibits, host volunteers, and serve as a gateway to the history and heritage of Southern Chester County.

II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

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

History:

The Oxford Area Historical Association was founded in 2000 by Dr. Faye Robinson Doyle to preserve and share the history of Oxford Borough and the five surrounding townships. For more than 25 years, OAHA has collected and preserved documents, photographs, artifacts, and oral histories; presented educational programs; organized tours and historical trips; assisted researchers; and connected residents with the stories of the place they call home. We describe ourselves as the story-keepers of the Oxford region.

Over the past several years, OAHA has undergone an extraordinary period of growth. For much of its history, the organization operated entirely through volunteers and had very limited space for its collections and activities. By 2023, OAHA had outgrown its former location and moved into the historic Union School Building at 119 S. 5th Street in Oxford.

Built in 1868 as one of Oxford's first public schools, the building was particularly well suited to OAHA's vision. Its approximately 6,000 square feet provided room for collections, exhibits, researchers, volunteers, school groups, meetings, and programs. Its location within walking distance of several Oxford Area School District schools created opportunities for educational partnerships that simply had not been possible before.

Rather than asking the community to imagine what a History Center might become, OAHA was able to show them. Schoolchildren came through the doors. Researchers used the archives. Volunteers had room to work. Exhibits welcomed new audiences. Teachers began incorporating OAHA into student learning. Community organizations used the space. The building became not simply a place where historical objects were stored, but a community resource. That vision inspired remarkable public and private investment. In April 2026, OAHA purchased the Union School Building with the assistance of a \$700,000 Pennsylvania Local Share Account grant secured with the advocacy of Representative John Lawrence and Senator Carolyn Comitta and through a partnership with West Nottingham Township.

The purchase was part of a larger approximately \$1.2 million effort to purchase, preserve, improve, and fully activate the History Center. Funding has now been secured for nearly every major component of the project, including preservation work, building improvements, signage, and welcoming outdoor gathering spaces. OAHA is now completing fundraising for an elevator that will make all levels of the historic building accessible. On July 15, 2026, more than 100 community members gathered to formally dedicate the Oxford Area History Center. Founder Dr. Faye Robinson Doyle cut the ribbon, marking both the culmination of more than two decades of work and the beginning of OAHA's next chapter.

2. Funding request

OAHA respectfully requests \$10,000 in general operating support from the Chester County Community Foundation's donor-advised funds. The successful purchase of the History Center represents a tremendous organizational achievement, but owning a building is not the finish line. It creates both opportunities and responsibilities.

Over the past several years, OAHA has grown from an all-volunteer organization with an annual budget of approximately \$15,000 into a staffed organization with an annual budget of approximately \$150,000. We now manage a historic property, care for an expanding collection, coordinate volunteers, develop exhibits and educational programming, cultivate community partnerships, and welcome a growing number of visitors and researchers.

General operating support is particularly important at this stage of OAHA's development. Capital funding has allowed the community to create the History Center; operating funding allows OAHA to make it come alive.

A. Preservation

Preservation remains at the heart of OAHA's work. We collect, catalog, protect, and make accessible documents, photographs, objects, and oral histories representing the Oxford region. The History Center gives OAHA substantially greater capacity to accept and care for materials that previously could not be accommodated. We are also working with municipalities and local historical commissions to preserve records that might otherwise be lost as volunteer capacity changes. At the same time, we are intentionally broadening the stories represented in our collections. Oxford's history includes agriculture and industry, schools and churches, longtime families and newer residents, Black history connected to nearby Lincoln University, immigrant communities, music, commerce, and everyday community life. Preserving this fuller record ensures that future generations inherit a history that reflects the community more completely.

B. Education

Education has become one of OAHA's fastest-growing areas of work. The History Center sits within walking distance of Oxford Area School District schools, creating an unusual opportunity to make local history an extension of the classroom. OAHA has welcomed hundreds of kindergarten students for an immersive "100th Day of School" experience exploring what school was like a century ago, worked collaboratively with sixth-grade classrooms, hosted teachers during new-teacher orientation, and developed other opportunities for students to encounter history where it actually happened. Our partnership with the school district is particularly meaningful in a community where nearly one-quarter of Borough residents live in poverty. OAHA provides experiences that do not require families to travel to Philadelphia or other distant cultural institutions. Students can walk from their schools into a historic 1868 school building and discover that their own community has stories worth knowing. OAHA is also developing opportunities for collaboration with Lincoln University and continues to expand public programs, exhibits, research opportunities, tours, and other educational experiences for adults and families.

C. Community-Building and Heritage Tourism

OAHA increasingly sees history not simply as something to preserve, but as a tool for building community. Oxford has always been a crossroads, a place where agricultural, commercial, educational, cultural, and community life intersect. The History Center gives residents a place to understand those connections and gives visitors a starting point for exploring Southern Chester County. OAHA is working with community and regional partners to position the History Center as a gateway to the area's historic and agricultural resources. Through heritage tourism initiatives, partnerships, walking tours, signage, and digital tools, visitors can begin at the History Center and then discover historic sites, farms, landscapes, businesses, and communities throughout the surrounding region. OAHA's annual Crossroads Music Festival provides another example of this approach. The Festival celebrates the rich musical traditions of Southern Chester County while introducing new audiences to OAHA and creating an event where history, music, and community intersect. These efforts take on particular significance as Chester County and the nation commemorate America's 250th anniversary. OAHA is helping ensure that Southern Chester County's stories are part of that larger conversation while creating resources and partnerships that will continue well beyond 2026.

Specific needs & issues to be addressed

OAHA has successfully completed one of the most difficult transitions a small nonprofit can undertake: moving from a volunteer-led organization operating in borrowed and rented spaces to a staffed organization responsible for its own permanent facility. The next challenge is sustainability. The History Center has increased OAHA's ability to serve the community, but greater capacity also brings increased operating responsibilities: utilities and building maintenance, insurance, collections management, technology, staffing, volunteer coordination, educational materials, exhibits, communications, and program development. At the same time, OAHA remains committed to keeping its programs broadly accessible. This is especially important in Oxford Borough, where 23.7% of residents live below the poverty level. Unrestricted operating support gives OAHA the flexibility to meet these responsibilities while continuing to respond creatively to opportunities emerging from schools, municipalities, community organizations, residents, and visitors.

Why it is important to fund this now

For several years, OAHA's central question was whether the community could create a permanent History Center.

That question has been answered. The community has invested significantly in this vision. OAHA has purchased the historic Union School Building, secured funding for nearly every major component of the larger \$1.2 million project, and opened the building to students, residents, researchers, volunteers, and visitors. The question now is what we do with that investment. The next several years will determine whether OAHA simply owns a historic building or successfully establishes a sustainable community institution that will serve Southern Chester County for generations. General operating support at this moment helps bridge that transition. It allows OAHA to invest not only in preserving a building and a collection, but in the people, programs, partnerships, and organizational infrastructure that transform those assets into meaningful community impact.

How impact & results will be demonstrated

OAHA will measure both the reach and the quality of its work. We will track attendance at programs, exhibits, events, and the History Center; participation by school students and teachers; archives and research use; volunteer participation and hours; new collections and oral histories; and partnerships with schools, municipalities, nonprofits, and community organizations. For educational programs, OAHA will continue gathering feedback from teachers and students and using that feedback to improve future programming. We will also track the growth of repeat school partnerships and the number of students who engage with OAHA over multiple years. Some of OAHA's most important outcomes, however, involve something harder to count: connection to place. During OAHA's strategic planning process, one community member described the organization's role this way: while other organizations provide essential services such as food and healthcare, OAHA helps make Oxford "a community, rather than simply a place to live." That is ultimately the impact OAHA seeks to create. By helping people discover the stories beneath familiar streets, buildings, landscapes, and communities, OAHA creates opportunities for residents, particularly young people, to understand that they are not merely living in Oxford's history. They are part of what comes next.

III. ATTACHMENTS

1. Copy of 501 (c) (3) federal tax-exempt letter
2. Charitable Registration
3. List of Board of Directors, with their affiliations
4. 2025 annual report
5. 2025 financial compilation
6. 2026 organizational operating budget
7. 2026-2029 strategic plan goals