



I. GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

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Date: Sept. 18, 2026

Contact Information

Organization Name: Crescendo Phoenixville
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Year Incorporated: 2018
FEIN: 82-4766526

ED/CEO Name: Elizabeth Grimshaw
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Board Chair Name: Sarah Cervino
Board Chair Approval (check here): ☒
Primary Contact Name: Liz Grimshaw
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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: To provide high quality music education to children who otherwise might not receive it.

Geographic Area Served (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served): Phoenixville Area

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

Annual Budget	\$122,291 (last completed fiscal yr)	1	# of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
87%	% of budget for program expenses	7	# of Board Volunteers
8%	% of budget for administrative expenses	25	# of Active Non-Board Volunteers
5%	% of budget for fundraising expenses	300	# of Volunteer Hours

100% = total

Top 3-5 funding sources:

Paul M. Angell Family Foundation: \$35,000

Justamere Foundation: \$25,000

Presser Foundation: \$12,000

This grant proposal is for: ☒ 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: \$7,500

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

Crescendo Phoenixville's Mission & Vision

Crescendo Phoenixville's mission is to provide high quality music instruction to children who might otherwise not receive it. We serve young musicians at Barkley Elementary School, the Phoenixville Area School District's only majority non-white elementary school and one of its Title I schools. We provide free violins, year-round group instruction, and performance opportunities. Every student who walks through our doors gets what they need to play, learn, and grow.

We take an expansive view of what it means to support a child's musical education. Many of the students we serve face food insecurity. Hungry kids don't learn. So before we teach a single note, we make sure every student is fed. We partner with Phoenixville Area Community Services for snacks at every afterschool rehearsal. This year, we worked with Ann's Heart Kitchen to supplement those snacks with refrigerated items like fresh fruit and yogurt. In addition, Ann's Heart Kitchen provided full lunches for our half-day clinics, Classic Cinema classes, and summer camp and we have plans to continue this partnership. Food access is part of our program design.

Our partnerships with the Phoenixville Area School District and Ann's Heart make all of this possible at a scale we could not otherwise achieve. The district provides us space at Barkley Elementary at no cost. When a boundary shift moved some of our students to Hares Hill Elementary, the district offered to bus them to Crescendo for the full school year. The district worked with us this year to redesign our dismissal procedures for both safety and efficiency. Significantly, we are one of only two outside programs invited to use Manavon Elementary for summer programming in 2026 so that students in the district's English Language summer program can get bussed to Manavon in the morning, stay for lunch and camp with us in the afternoon, and have a full day of safe and supervised activities over 4 weeks. This is a deep, functional partnership. It allows us to meet kids where they are.

Our vision is simple. Every child who wants to learn an instrument should be able to do so regardless of their family's resources. Music education is an intrinsic good that everyone deserves to be able to access. Our students are learning to do hard things, master challenging repertoire, and build the confidence and persistence that serve them well beyond our program.

Not every child thrives in a competitive environment. Crescendo gives driven, talented kids a place to pursue excellence without rankings or tryouts. They work together to teach and learn from each other. They see how their individual effort contributes to something larger than themselves. They explore music that reflects the cultures represented in their group. They talk each other through performance anxiety. They step into leadership roles. They claim their places as valued members of this community. These are the skills that last. They are also discovering that their community values them and invests in them. That matters, especially now.

Key Achievements

There is no other program in the area that provides free, intensive, high quality access to music education.

Students are choosing to be here. Of the 43 students enrolled in the previous 2024/25 school year, 38 were eligible to return and 31 did. That's an 82% retention rate among students who had the option to stay. Enrollment is currently still open, but right now, our retention rate continues to hold steady above 80%.

What stands out is how many chose to come back, including five Crescendo alumni who rejoined through the Camerata after previously aging out of our elementary program. Notably, we didn't recruit them. Their friends did.

Word of mouth filled our 2nd grade class by the second week of the school year. Families are talking to each other about what we offer. That tells us something important about trust.

Participation is deepening, not just growing. In 2025/2026, we hosted 19 concerts and performances. Six were Crescendo productions. Thirteen were community collaborations. Young musicians are performing throughout Phoenixville, at the invitation of partner organizations, and Phoenixville is showing up for them.

Perhaps the most meaningful milestone this year is the progress of our students along a college pathway most of their families didn't know existed. Our first student accepted to Philadelphia Music Alliance for Youth completed her first full year in the program. PMAY prepares students for college music scholarships. For first-generation college students in our community, this is a concrete path to higher education. A second student plans to audition in the Spring.

The culture of giving back is showing up in real ways. Two Crescendo alums are now employed as paid string coaches, earning \$15/hour and building marketable teaching skills. Another Crescendo alum volunteers with us and, received the 2026 NextGen Impact Award from the Phoenixville Chamber of Commerce for her service to younger students in our program. These are young people from our community stepping into leadership and being recognized for it.

Maintaining our multi-layered programming continued to increase overall engagement. In addition to the core after school program, we offer monthly ½ day workshops staffed by professional musicians, our Classic Cinema program in Jan – March, and an intensive Summer Camp program. As in past years, we didn't demand attendance outside of the core after school program. Students chose to attend. Every student in the core after school program attended at least one half-day clinic. Average instructional hours per elementary student remained steady at 160, with a maximum of 175 hours.

Our Classic Cinema program grew from 22 students to 38. We split the class into two groups and made two short films. Every Crescendo student accompanied those films live on stage at the historic Colonial Theatre before an audience of roughly 300, our largest performance to date.

In total, we gave 19 concerts and performances. Six were Crescendo productions and 13 came at the invitation of local organizations for community events including the Dogwood Festival and two multicultural festivals. We now have a fixed place in Phoenixville events, showcasing our students' developing skills as valued contributors to the broader community.

Increased Engagement Requires Increased Staffing

As both programming and participation have increased, so has our staffing. Here's what that looked like in 2025/26:

Bilingual program coordinators: we hired Ricardo Marroquin and his partner Estefany Rodriguez. They handled nearly all fall and summer registrations, tracked RSVPs for supplemental classes and across all 19 performances, and coordinated transportation for Camerata students who are not already on site.

Teaching staff: for the first time in Crescendo's history, our classes are fully staffed. We increased Emily McDonald's hours significantly and hired Alyssa Lahoda and Tom Fitzpatrick, who teaches violin and cello. Each teaching artist was responsible for their own group of students in 2026 Summer Camp. This is one of our greatest successes this year and also represents our most significant funding challenge.

Eight string coaches have supported our teaching artists this year. Three are Crescendo alums who learned violin in our afterschool program.

For us, a fully staffed class is 2 teaching artists and 2-3 string coaches. While the average student received 160 instructional hours last year, the number of combined teaching hours was approximately 1400. Stable staffing allowed us to teach better and expect more from our students. Our group sounded better than ever this year, which also explains why invitations to perform have been increasing.

Funding Context and Case for \$7,500

We are requesting \$7,500 in general operating support.

Our programmatic model is proven: students thrive at school (30% earned school-wide recognition), socially (building friendships), and musically (first PMAY acceptance). But sustainable growth requires more than program success.

Our single greatest asset – and expense – is our teaching staff. The reason kids choose to continue their studies with us over multiple years is because they feel they belong and that they are accomplishing something important. They experience success because of our dedicated teachers who possess a degree in a specialized skill.

General operating funds provide flexibility to institutionalize what works. This includes creating personnel redundancy, documenting systems, and building organizational resilience. We are working to diversify our funding sources to position Crescendo for long-term sustainability rather than year-to-year survival. This ensures the community-centered music education transforming our students' possibilities continues reliably beyond any individual's capacity.

A \$7,500 grant would help us build our capacity to our teaching artists and string coaches and serve the 60 students who will walk through our doors this fall.