



I. GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

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Date: 9.17.2026

Contact Information

Organization Name: Tick Tock Early Learning Center
Address: 1694 Baltimore Pike, Avondale, PA 19311
Phone: 610-268-8134
Website: www.TickTockELC.org
Year Incorporated: 1964
FEIN: 23-1646698

ED/CEO Name: Susan K. Czerwin
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Board Chair Name: Patrick Manahan
Board Chair Approval (check here): ☒
Primary Contact Name: Susan K. Czerwin
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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:

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

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

<u>Annual Budget</u> \$1,530,200	<u>22 - 26</u>	# of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
<u>92</u> % of budget for program expenses	<u>11</u>	# of Board Volunteers
<u>7</u> % of budget for administrative expenses	<u>40</u>	# of Active Non-Board Volunteers
<u>1</u> % of budget for fundraising expenses	<u>1,000+</u>	# of Volunteer Hours
100% = total		

Top 3-5 funding sources: Child Care Works (State Subsidized Child Care Program); Foundations/Grants; Program Fees; Fundraising Events/Donors; Child and Adult Care Food Program (federal food program).

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: \$10,000

Proposal Summary: At Tick Tock, investments work overtime. Support from the Community Foundation helps children build strong foundations, parents remain in the workforce, families find stability, local businesses succeed, and our entire community thrives. We invite you to invest in high-quality educational child care today to support today's workforce, prepare tomorrow's, and build a bright future for us all.

Tick Tock Early Learning Center

Supporting today's workforce while preparing the next.



Purpose, Initiatives, Achievements, and Distinctiveness

Tick Tock Early Learning Center serves the dual purpose of supporting today's workforce while preparing the next. Located in the heart of Southern Chester County's agricultural community, Tick Tock provides high-quality early childhood education and dependable child care for working families. The generous support of foundations, businesses, and individual donors makes our income-based tuition model possible. With qualifying discounts of up to 70% off the true cost of care, Tick Tock aims to ensure that child care costs do not force parents out of the workforce or require families to choose care that does not adequately support their children's development.

Open year-round from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, Tick Tock's operating hours are designed to meet the needs of working families. Program facilities include seven age-appropriate classrooms, a literacy center, a commercial kitchen, administrative offices, multipurpose rooms for individualized developmental and behavioral support services, and recently renovated playgrounds that provide substantial outdoor space for children to run, climb, explore, and play.

Currently, 90% of enrolled families earn below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level, and 98% meet the United Way's definition of ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). All parents and guardians are employed, enrolled in school, or participating in both. Approximately 75% of our qualified teaching professionals are bilingual in English and Spanish, making Tick Tock uniquely positioned to serve Southern Chester County's Hispanic community. Eighty-four percent of the families we serve identify as Hispanic.

Tick Tock's whole-family approach to services includes:

- High-quality toddler, preschool, and pre-kindergarten education utilizing a curriculum aligned with Pennsylvania's Early Learning Standards;
- Before- and after-school care and full-day summer enrichment for children in kindergarten through fifth grade;
- Income-based tuition assistance providing qualifying discounts of up to 70% off;
- Developmental screening through Ages & Stages Questionnaires and ongoing observational assessment through Teaching Strategies GOLD;

- Individualized support across cognitive, language, literacy, social-emotional, physical, and school-readiness skills such as self-regulation, initiative, curiosity, attention, persistence, flexibility, and problem solving;
- On-site speech, occupational, physical, and behavioral support services delivered in partnership with early intervention professionals;
- Breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack provided daily at no additional cost, following the Child and Adult Care Food Program nutritional guidelines;
- Comprehensive family support, including bilingual assistance, food access, referrals, assistance navigating social services, flexible payment arrangements, and individualized crisis support.

Tick Tock is distinguished by the depth and continuity of this support. As a Keystone STAR 4 center, Tick Tock combines exceptional early learning standards along with a strong commitment to affordability, inclusion, and family stability. Children receive intentional teaching, purposeful play, nutritious meals, developmental monitoring, and individualized support all delivered in a safe, nurturing, and enriching environment.

Our year-round school-age program further distinguishes Tick Tock. During a typical school year, we provide 15 to 25 full days of care for our 30 school-age students when public schools close for conferences, in-service days, holidays, emergencies, and inclement weather whenever conditions allow. When the school year ends, the program transitions over one weekend into an enriching full-day summer camp that offers the variety of experiences found at traditional camps but with the extended hours that working parents need.

During the most recently completed program year, Tick Tock served 78 families, including 104 children and 129 working parents or guardians. One hundred percent of children in our toddler and preschool programs demonstrated measurable growth across all domains of early childhood development. All twenty-two Pre-K students (our very large class of Covid babies!) graduated from Pre-K prepared for kindergarten, and nine children received identified developmental or educational intervention support services.

Funding Request and Needs Addressed

Tick Tock respectfully requests \$10,000 in general operating support. Funding will help sustain the qualified personnel, educational programming, nutritious meals, facility operations, tuition assistance, and family services necessary to provide reliable, affordable care throughout the year.

Frequently described as the “workforce behind the workforce,” child care is essential infrastructure for Chester County’s economy. However, the cost of providing quality care has risen significantly while many families’ wages have not kept pace. Tick Tock’s annual operational expenses have increased more than 40% over the past six years. It now costs

approximately \$20,000 annually to care for and educate each toddler or preschool child and approximately \$11,000 for each school-age child.

The widening gap between household income, child care costs, and public assistance eligibility leaves many working households without a viable option. According to MIT's Living Wage Calculator, updated in February 2026, a Chester County family with two working adults and two children needs approximately \$156,000 in annual income to meet its basic needs, yet must earn less than \$66,000 to qualify for Pennsylvania's subsidized child care program – a gap of roughly \$90,000. Approximately half of Tick Tock's families fall within this gap and rely on our income-based tuition assistance. General operating support helps preserve both affordability and program quality without shifting rising costs to families who are already financially stressed.

Why Funding Is Important Now

Without reliable and affordable child care, parents may be forced to reduce their work hours, leave employment, rely on inconsistent or inadequate care, or move in search of a lower cost of living. These effects extend beyond individual households. Employers have difficulty recruiting and retaining dependable employees, children experience instability, and schools receive students who may not have benefited from strong early learning opportunities.

At the same time, children are entering early learning programs with increasingly complex developmental, behavioral, and family needs. Quality early education helps identify concerns, connect children with appropriate services, and build the developmental skills needed for success in school. Without these opportunities, the effects can follow children throughout their education and into adulthood.

Results and Impact

Tick Tock will demonstrate the impact of this funding through child, family, and organizational outcomes. We will track the number of children and working families served; tuition assistance awarded; continuity of enrollment; developmental progress documented; kindergarten readiness; referrals to early intervention and other support services; meals served; family employment or educational participation; and our ability to maintain stable enrollment and qualified staff.

While Tick Tock cannot solve the broader affordability crisis alone, we can address one critical piece. Continued investment in Tick Tock will sustain a proven program that keeps parents working, prepares children for future success and opportunity, strengthens local businesses, and benefits the entire Chester County community.

When we invest early, we strengthen everything that comes after.