

2022 Venture Grants Guidelines

Venture Grant Purpose: United Way of Berks County utilizes Venture Grants to provide one-time funding opportunities in support of innovative projects or programs that address a specific community issue(s) that is identified based on community need. Applications this year should address:

- **Health Inequities/Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)**
- **Workforce Development**

Health Inequities/Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)

While Health Inequities have long existed in our country, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought these issues to the forefront. Lower, socio-economic black and brown communities were often hit the hardest – with the most reported cases and COVID-related deaths. People of color often “live in crowded conditions, to work in service jobs that put them in close proximity to others, to have to go to work because they can’t afford to miss it, to take public transportation, and to lack access to protective gear at work” (Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health).

In addition, limited resources including lack of transportation or lack of insurance make it challenging for individuals from lower socioeconomic background to access quality health care. Such factors are known as Social Determinants of Health (SDOH). The World Health Organization (WHO) describes SDOH as the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. “They are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life.” (WHO) These include such factors as socioeconomic status, food access, education, living conditions, social support networks as well as health care access (CDC). According to Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF), “there is extensive research that concludes that addressing social determinants of health is important for improving health outcomes and reducing health disparities.

Proposed programs addressing one or more of following issues are highly desirable:

- Digital Divide
- Food insecurity and access to healthy food
- Identifying developmental delays in children
- Increased drug and alcohol issues due to the pandemic
- Lack of cultural competence in providers
- Mental Health
- Safe, affordable housing
- Violence Prevention
- Barriers that make healthcare access challenging including childcare, education, language, providers’ hours of operation and transportation

Workforce Development

“Now Hiring” signs continue to blanket Berks County. Nation-wide there are more jobs available than candidates looking for work. To attract job applicants, employers are changing hiring practices by eliminating barriers like drug screens and high school diploma requirements while offering increased starting hourly wages. The changes made by employers have not resulted in the desired outcome and the demand for employees remains high. Unemployment peaked in April 2020 at 18%, as reported by the Department of Labor & Industry, while CareerLink experienced a low demand for services. The unemployment rate has since recovered and as of September 2022 was 4.3%. Though the unemployment rate has significantly declined, the community’s employment challenges have not been solved.

The Berks County Workforce Development Board’s local plan recognizes the labor force is facing significant challenges—many of which existed prior to the pandemic and have been exacerbated by it. The challenges and opportunities include an aging population and workforce, integrating a more diverse workforce, addressing barriers faced by disconnected young adults, and educational attainment. (Berks County Workforce Development Board, 2020)

Proposed programs addressing one or more of the following workforce development challenges are highly desirable:

- Aging Population and Workforce
- Disconnected Young Adults
- A More Inclusive Workforce
- Low Adult Literacy and Numeracy
- COVID-19 Impacts on Women

Applications that foster collaboration among providers/businesses to better ensure the continuity of the innovative solution beyond the one-year funding provided by the Venture Grant are also highly desirable.

Grant Conditions: Venture Grants are intended for one of the following purposes:

- To provide short-term support for the start-up and development of new programs or services;
- To provide financial support that can enhance effectiveness or expand the capacity of an existing program.

Receipt of a Venture Grant does not entitle a recipient organization to receive Agency Partner status with United Way of Berks County (if not already) or to receive ongoing funding of any kind. Organizations who apply for this grant must be aware that they will need to find other sources of funding to continue their project efforts after Venture Grant funding expires.

Eligibility Criteria:

- Any 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization providing health and human services to Berks County residents is eligible to apply.
- Grants must support the delivery of new, expanded or enhanced programs and cannot simply fund existing programs.
- Priority will be given to programs that demonstrate meaningful and ongoing engagement with participants over an extended period of time, and that provide an opportunity for participants to apply new knowledge or skills to achieve the desired outcome.
- Stand-alone, one-time events or large group presentations will NOT be eligible for consideration.

Award Amount: A maximum grant of up to \$50,000 may be requested, with United Way reserving the option to award a lesser amount based on demonstrated need and available resources.

Funding Period: January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023. Funds must be spent within a 12-month period after the grant is awarded. A final report will be due at the end of the 12-month period.

Application: Applications need to be submitted via e-Clmpact; access available at United Way of Berks County's website www.uwberks.org listed in the top right-hand corner. e-Clmpact is a comprehensive grant and performance management software tool that helps simplify the grant application, evaluation, and reporting processes for success. The following information will be addressed during the application process:

- Overview of the lead organization, including current organizational programs, numbers of clients served, and how the proposed program is consistent with the organization's mission and history.
- Overview of the need for the program, the target population to be served, and estimated client numbers.
- Description of the proposed program, including its activities, staffing, and a specific timeline and benchmarks for implementation of the program.
- Identification of any research or best practice experience that supports the proposed program's effectiveness.
- Description of any collaborative partners and their roles in either planning and/or implementation of the program.
- Identification of key staff/volunteers providing direct service, and their qualifications and experience.
- Projected outcomes/outputs.
- One-year operating budget for the program.
- Plans for ongoing operation of the program, including potential future funding sources.



United Way of Berks County

Application Process: Venture grants will be awarded through a competitive proposal process after review and evaluation by a panel of community volunteers and approved by the United Way Board of Directors. **Interested applicants should submit their applications via e-ClImpact by Tuesday, November 29, 2022, at 5:00PM.** Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.

Review Criteria: Fully completed applications will be evaluated based on the following:

- How well the program matches the purpose of the Venture Grant.
- A clear understanding of the community issue to be addressed and the demonstrated need for the program.
- The strength of the program to effectively address the identified community issue.
- The reasonableness and appropriateness of the budget for the proposed program.
- Demonstrated ability and capacity of the organization (and collaborating partners, if applicable) to ensure timely implementation and successful achievement of desired outcomes.

Timeline:

Monday, November 7, 2022	Applications opens in e-ClImpact
Tuesday, November 29, 2022	Applications due in e-ClImpact, by 5:00 pm
By December 19, 2022	Applicants receive notice of funding
February 2024	Final Report due in e-ClImpact, with photos.

Questions or Support:

- For technical assistance with e-ClImpact, contact **Jennifer Tinsman** at **610-685-4576** or jennifert@uwberks.org.
- For any other grant-related questions or assistance, contact **Kristin Gehris** at **610-685-4567** or kristing@uwberks.org.