

2026 WOMEN UNITED GRANT APPLICATION FORM

Organization Information

Organization Name

Utopia- The Equinox Project

EIN

33-2977449

Project Name

Utopia Equinox Project

Address

309 Union Street
Columbia, Pennsylvania 17512
United States

Contact Name

Kimberly Contes

Contact Phone

6813145770

Contact Email

utopiaequinox2026@gmail.com

Executive Director / President (If different)

Kimberly Contes

Eligibility Criteria

Is your organization a registered nonprofit organization with an official letter of determination of 501c3 status from the Internal Revenue Service?

Yes

Has your organization operated in Lancaster County for at least one year (operating in Lancaster before July 1, 2025)?

Yes

Does your organization or program you are requesting funding for in this application serve primarily women and/ or teen girls?

Yes

Does your organization provide services to families at or below the ALICE threshold in Lancaster County?

Yes

Is your organization delinquent on any state or federal debt?

No

Does your organization share United Way's view of collaborative and inclusive service to the entire community, without excluding anyone on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, ethnicity, national

origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, or any other factor not relevant to a person's eligibility for service or ability to contribute?

Yes

Has your organization update your listing with PA 211 in the last 12 months?

Yes

Application Elements

Executive Summary

Utopia - The Equinox Project is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization working to address housing instability in Lancaster County through a community-based transitional living model. The project aims to create a supportive environment that combines small housing units, community gardens, life-skills training, and wellness-focused programming to help individuals and families regain stability and independence. By collaborating with local shelters, social workers, and community partners, Utopia seeks to provide pathways to long-term housing and self-sufficiency while strengthening community connection and resilience.

Organization Description

Utopia - The Equinox Project is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing housing instability and homelessness through community-based, holistic solutions. Founded in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the organization seeks to create supportive environments where individuals and families can regain stability, develop practical life skills, and rebuild a sense of belonging and independence.

The vision of Utopia is to develop a land-based transitional living community that integrates small housing units, community gardens, educational opportunities, and wellness-focused programs. This model is designed to support individuals who are experiencing housing instability or transitioning out of difficult circumstances by providing a structured, supportive environment where they can grow and move toward long-term housing and employment stability.

Utopia works to build partnerships with local shelters, social workers, volunteers, and community organizations to identify individuals who can benefit from these supportive programs. Through collaboration and community engagement, the organization aims to create sustainable pathways toward independence while strengthening the social fabric of Lancaster County.

Commitment to Equity

Utopia - The Equinox Project is focused on serving individuals and families in Lancaster County who are experiencing housing instability, economic hardship, or barriers to stable housing and employment. This includes individuals transitioning from homelessness, families facing financial crisis, young adults aging out of foster care, and individuals who have experienced trauma, displacement, or limited access to stable support systems. Many of these populations are disproportionately impacted by housing shortages, rising costs of living, and systemic barriers that make it difficult to achieve long-term stability.

Our organization is committed to creating an inclusive and supportive community model that values dignity, access, and opportunity for all individuals regardless of race, background, or socioeconomic status. Utopia seeks to remove barriers to stability by providing supportive housing models, community food resources, skill-building opportunities, and wellness-focused programming that empower individuals to rebuild their lives.

As a community-driven initiative, Utopia prioritizes collaboration with local service providers, volunteers, and individuals with lived experience to help shape programs and solutions. By listening to and elevating the voices of those directly impacted by housing instability, the organization works to build equitable pathways toward independence and long-term well-being.

Proposal Details

Main Priority Area

Women's and/ or Teen's Health

Grant Dollar Amount Requested

\$10,000.00

What percent of the overall project budget is covered by the Women United grant?

40

Will this program/project start or continue to operate if you do not receive 100% of the funding requested?

Yes

Project Description

Utopia - The Equinox Project is proposing a community-based wellness and stability initiative designed to support women and teenage girls in Lancaster County who are experiencing housing instability, financial hardship, or transitional life challenges. Many women in the region face barriers to stable housing, employment, and access to supportive environments that promote long-term health and well-being. This project seeks to address those challenges by creating a safe and supportive community-centered program focused on stability, skill-building, and personal empowerment.

The proposed project will provide structured opportunities for women and teenage girls to participate in wellness programming, skill-building workshops, and community-based activities designed to strengthen mental health, self-sufficiency, and resilience. Programming will include life-skills education, mentorship opportunities, wellness and mindfulness practices, and community gardening activities that encourage healthy living and connection.

Community gardening and nature-based activities will play a central role in the program by providing participants with opportunities to engage in hands-on learning, food production, and collaborative teamwork. These activities promote physical wellness, reduce stress, and help build a sense of ownership and pride in the community environment.

Participants will be connected to local resources, social service partners, and mentorship networks that can help them access housing support, employment pathways, and continued education opportunities. The program will collaborate with local shelters, social workers, and community partners to identify participants who would benefit from these services.

Through this initiative, Utopia - The Equinox Project aims to empower women and teenage girls with the skills, confidence, and support systems necessary to move toward greater stability, health, and long-term independence while strengthening community connection across Lancaster County.

Collaboration

Utopia - The Equinox Project is committed to building strong partnerships with local organizations and service providers throughout Lancaster County. Collaboration is essential to ensuring that women and teenage girls participating in the program are connected to a full range of support services that promote long-term stability and well-being.

The project will work alongside local shelters, social workers, and community service organizations to identify individuals who may benefit from the program. These partners can help refer participants who are experiencing housing instability, financial hardship, or transitional life challenges.

Utopia also plans to collaborate with community volunteers, local educators, and wellness practitioners to provide workshops focused on life skills, mentorship, and personal development. Partnerships with community gardening groups and local food initiatives will support the hands-on learning and wellness components of the program.

By working collaboratively with existing community resources, Utopia aims to complement and strengthen the services already available in Lancaster County while helping participants access housing support, employment opportunities, and educational pathways that lead to long-term stability.

Implementation Plan

The proposed program will be implemented through a series of structured activities designed to support women and teenage girls in developing stability, confidence, and practical life skills.

The program will begin with outreach and participant referrals through local shelters, social workers, and community organizations in Lancaster County. Once participants are identified, they will be invited to participate in a series of

small group workshops and community activities designed to promote wellness and skill development.

Workshops will focus on topics such as life skills, goal setting, personal development, financial literacy, and healthy living practices. Participants will also take part in community gardening and nature-based activities that encourage teamwork, hands-on learning, and stress reduction.

Mentorship opportunities will be incorporated into the program by connecting participants with community volunteers and supportive role models who can provide encouragement and guidance. Participants will also be connected to additional resources such as housing assistance programs, employment services, and educational opportunities through local partner organizations.

Throughout the program, organizers will gather feedback from participants and partners to help strengthen and refine the initiative, ensuring that the program continues to meet the evolving needs of the community.

Outcomes & Evaluation

If awarded this grant, Utopia – The Equinox Project will implement a structured program designed to support women and teenage girls in Lancaster County who are experiencing housing instability or transitional life challenges. The program will focus on building stability, confidence, and practical life skills while connecting participants to supportive community resources.

The program aims to serve approximately 20–30 women and teenage girls during the first phase of implementation. Participants will engage in workshops focused on life skills, wellness practices, mentorship, and community gardening activities designed to support personal growth and resilience.

Expected outcomes include increased confidence, improved access to community resources, and the development of practical life skills that support long-term independence. Participants will gain knowledge related to goal setting, financial literacy, healthy living practices, and community engagement. Through mentorship and supportive programming, individuals will also build stronger support networks that can help them navigate housing, employment, and educational opportunities.

Program outcomes will be evaluated using measurable indicators such as participant enrollment numbers, workshop attendance, and completion of program activities. Surveys and participant feedback will be collected to assess changes in confidence, knowledge of available resources, and overall well-being.

Additional evaluation will include tracking referrals to housing services, employment support programs, or educational opportunities through community partners. These metrics will help demonstrate how the program contributes to increased stability and opportunity for women and teenage girls in Lancaster County.

Documents

Required Documents

- [utopia_audit_statement.pdf](#)
- [utopia_board_roster.pdf](#)
- [utopia_organization_budget.pdf](#)
- [utopia_program_budget.pdf](#)