

## VT Community Health Equity Partnership Community Project Funding to Address Health Inequities: Funding Application

**Deadline: Midnight on September 9, 2022**

Funding is intended to assist **NEK Prosper! Caledonia + Southern Essex Accountable Health Community** to address health inequity(s) experienced in the St. Johnsbury District which were exacerbated during COVID-19, and which are described in a **Data Driven Problem Statement** as: *Due to stigma, marginalization and systemic inequalities, not everyone in Caledonia and Southern Essex Counties has fair and just opportunity to prosper (be financially secure, mentally healthy, physically healthy, well-housed and well-nourished), nor safe, accessible and inclusive opportunities to participate in planning and decision-making about the health and well-being of themselves, their families and their communities. This is true particularly for those experiencing stigma, marginalization and avoidable systemic inequalities associated with socioeconomic status; race, ethnicity and culture; sexual orientation and gender identity; visible and invisible disabilities; trauma, mental health and substance misuse disorders, and justice-involvement.*

**NEK Prosper!** is interested in supporting projects which help us achieve a Vision of prosperity for *all* and our Aspiration to build our collective and community capacity to dismantle systemic inequality and marginalization, foster community leadership and community-driven solutions and ensure fair and just opportunity to health and prosperity.

1. Type of Applicant:

Non-profit Organization  Group/Association<sup>^</sup>  Individual\*  Other (please describe):

2. Name of Applicant (organization, group, individual): Sophia Shippee

<sup>^</sup>If you operate under the umbrella of a larger organization (for example, [the Hub](#) operates under Umbrella), please provide the name of the organization:

\*If an individual, please provide the name of your fiscal sponsor organization:

St. Johnsbury Academy

3. Applicant's (organization or fiscal sponsor as applicable) **Street Address** (Street/Road, City, State, Zip Code): 1000 Main Street, St Johnsbury VT 05819

4. **Primary Contact Person Name** (for project): Sophia Shippee

5. **Primary Contact Person** (for project) **Email Address**: Sophia.shippee@stjlabs.com

6. **Primary Contact Person** (for project) **Preferred Phone Number**: 802-397-8666

7. **Tax Identification Number** (organization or fiscal sponsor as applicable): 03-0181215

8. **Amount Requested** (no less than \$2,500 or more than \$50,000): \$14,100

9. **Schedule of Work:**

- Start Date: November 1, 2022
- End Date (no later than May 31, 2023): March 31, 2023

10. **Project Name** – Provide a one-line name for your project: **Power Up!**

11. **Project Purpose Summary** – Provide a short three to four sentence summary of the purpose of your project:

There is a population of women in the Northeast Kingdom who are recovering from domestic violence-related trauma, substance abuse, and/or mental illness. Research has shown that exercise can be a valuable tool for recovery, improved mental health, and a healthy coping mechanism. Unfortunately, the women who need this most face barriers to access and inequities such as expensive membership/class fees, stigma, lack of exercise knowledge, and fear of entering a space that, for these women in particular, can feel unsafe. This project will identify and eliminate these barriers for a group of participants, introducing them to the benefits of physical fitness.

12. **What Vermont town(s) will be directly served by your project?**

I am offering this program to all towns in the NEK. But since programs will take place in St. Johnsbury and Lyndonville, I expect most participants to come from these towns and those nearby.

13. **Describe the Project** - the work you'll do, the overall timeline, and how you'll use the requested funds (will also need to attach a Project Budget – see example on Page 3) (funded portion must be complete by May 31, 2023) (no more than 1,500 characters):

This program will run for 8 weeks (Jan - Feb), including 3 planned workouts each week. One will be weight training with a partner gym, one will be yoga with a partner gym, and the last will be individual (optional group) cardio (walk, bike, or run) that will be shared with the group via an app. The app will be used to provide a source of connection between participants as well as to help them visualize their progress. The gym workouts will be in group format for all participants but will be semi-private in that only the participants will be in the space during this time.

Prep work will be from Nov-Dec. The class instructors will receive trauma-informed training prior to programming. There will be a meet/greet prior to the start of the program so that everyone (participants and instructors) is comfortable with each other. There will be a motivational 'check-in' prior to the start of each class. Care will be taken to make sure participants feel safe, using questionnaires to inform the instructors of triggering actions or words. Surveys will be done periodically for both trainers and participants to provide insights and to track progress.

March will be information gathering on the successes and lessons of the program. It will also be used to transition participants to maintain their fitness programs on their own, helping them navigate how to do this.

14. **Describe the Focus Population** (who will benefit?) (no more than 500 characters):

Females recovering from domestic violence, trauma, and substance abuse. Ideally women out of crisis but still in contact with Umbrella, who are in the process of finding new coping skills that will support their recovery as they form new lives. However, I am open to this program benefitting women who have not been connected with Umbrella who are also facing challenges in building a healthy life due to trauma, and socioeconomic inequities.

**15. Describe how this project was identified or designed by the intended beneficiaries (no more than 500 characters):**

I am working with Umbrella to ensure the program is designed with input from participants and those that know them. I am having conversations with people who run similar fitness programs, to get their advice. The participants will have an entrance questionnaire to help us understand the barriers that they face. We will have regular group meetings, surveys to understand their needs throughout the program course. Group communication through an app will create a sense of community and engagement.

**16. Describe the Project Goals and Desired Results (what will success look like?) (no more than 500 characters):**

1) Give women in recovery a sustainable tool to cope positively, integrate healthy habits into their lives, realize their own power so they can have the self-confidence to empower their future 2) Gather evidence demonstrating the benefits of physical fitness for this population of women, supporting future funding for such programs 3) Educate gym owners on how to reach this underserved group in our community, bring awareness to changes they can make to create a welcoming and safe spaces for all

**Identifying milestones provides a way to monitor the progress of your project and make course corrections if needed. When and how will you identify milestones for this project? (no more than 1,500 characters):**

I plan to use surveys as milestones and markers throughout the project. Surveys will go to participants and fitness instructors. An early survey to participants will try to identify areas of resistance or barriers to access such as stigma, not having work out clothes, childcare, fear of trying something new, fear around trauma, etc. This will be repeated every 2-3 weeks for course correction and to learn about barriers participants experience. Another survey will gather information on participants' state of mental health, sense of empowerment, physical health, energy, exercise knowledge, etc. This information will serve as the control. There will be repeat surveys every 2-3 weeks to check on the progression of the participants and a final survey at the end to show the outcome of the program. Surveys will also go to fitness instructors through the program. Lastly there will be opportunity for feedback during each exercise session.

These surveys will be done through SurveyMonkey. The surveys at the start and end of the project will be more comprehensive and done in a way to allow data gathering. The other smaller surveys will be to track progress and make adjustments.

**17. Describe your team** (the project champions and any community partners you are working with / intend to work with to achieve these results). **If not yet working with these partners, please describe your plan to outreach and engage these partners** (no more than 1,500 characters):

Umbrella is a primary partner, working with me to find participants, structure a trauma-informed program, produce an accurate budget report, and other key pieces. St Johnsbury Academy is my fiscal partner and research help as I will be presenting this project for my Senior Capstone.

I hope to work with Brad Collins, owner of Kilos gym in Lyndonville. Brad and I have been in contact about the hypotheticals of this project however there has been no formal commitment to work together yet. He and his trainers are equipped with knowledge in teaching group weightlifting classes, and Brad has an interest in bringing fitness to this underserved population as well. Weightlifting is about mindset, digging deep, and growing stronger with each session. It can be very empowering for this group of women. Kilos gym has a Peloton room that could be used for cardio training, which is great for bringing up the heart rate and releasing endorphins. One gym could cover both cardio and strength training.

I also have been in contact with Andrea from Heart Space Yoga. Again no official commitments but I have been communicating with her to find a time to meet to discuss plans, obstacles, and what she would be willing to offer the program. Andrea is wonderful about using empowering language in her classes and is knowledgeable in teaching women how to learn to love and care for their bodies through yoga.

**18. Please explain how the intended work may positively impact the data-driven problem statement and/or help NEK Prosper! achieve our Vision and Aspiration described above** (no more than 1,500 characters):

Due to stigma, marginalization, and systemic inequalities, there are women in the NorthEast Kingdom who do not have access to a key resource that would help them be mentally and physically healthy. It is often the trauma they have experienced that has led them to believe very little in themselves. This has led to drug abuse, the inability to be financially stable, unhealthy relationships, and even violence or crime. These women deserve better and they deserve to have someone see the potential in them and help them access it in a healthy way without barriers.

Learning how to exercise, how to navigate these spaces, and feeling their bodies grow stronger will give them self-confidence to find the power within themselves. It will also give them a tool that they can use for the rest of their lives, which is the ultimate empowerment.

I think most gym owners and fitness instructors would be happy to do more to make their spaces feel safer, more welcoming, and more affordable to marginalized groups of people. They just need to have more awareness of the problem and knowledge on how to be more accessible to the people who could benefit most. I hope this program starts conversations among people in the fitness community about how to support these women (and other marginalized groups) so that a healthier community will be created, even when this program is over.

**19. (Optional) Feel free to provide additional information you think may be useful to the reviewers in evaluating this application. What else should we know about the project that we didn't ask? (no more than 1,500 characters):**

## VT Community Health Equity Partnership Community Project Funding to Address Health Inequities: Project Budget

<b>Organization/Group/Grantee Name: Sophia Shippee / St Johnsbury Academy</b>			
<b>Title of Project: Power Up!</b>			
Expense Category*	Description	Request	Please note any other secured funding or in-kind donation toward expenses for Project
<b>Surveys/ Questionnaires for participants</b>	SurveyMonkey Individual membership \$32/month x 5 months: Nov - March	\$ 160	
<b>Staffing</b>	Training for coaches: 3 hour training for coaches - trauma informed training, taught by Umbrella \$300  Fitness classes 16 x \$150/class Class prep 16 x \$50/class  Meet and Greet for coaches and participants \$400	\$ 3,900	
<b>Materials &amp; Supplies (printing/materials)</b>	Class information, fitness/training information and support materials, waivers, etc	\$ 200	
<b>Travel / Gas</b>	Gas vouchers to offset cost to participants \$10/class x 10people x 16 classes	\$ 1,600	
<b>Other</b>	Babysitting assistance \$1,000 Exercise clothes approx \$500	\$ 1,500	
	<b>Total Request</b>	<b>\$ 14,100</b>	

\*If a category is not applicable, please leave it blank