

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^ Individual* Other (please describe):

2. Name of Applicant (organization, group, individual): *East Burke School*

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

Physical Address: *611 VT - 114, East Burke, VT 05832*

Mailing Address: *PO Box 228, East Burke, VT 05832*

4. **Primary Contact Person Name** (for project): *Megan Durling, Co-Head of School*

5. **Primary Contact Person** (for project) **Email Address:** *megan@eastburkeschool.org*

6. **Primary Contact Person** (for project) **Preferred Phone Number:** *802-626-8317*

7. **Tax Identification Number** (organization or fiscal sponsor as applicable): *03-0497257*

8. **Amount Requested** (no less than \$2,500 or more than \$50,000): *\$36,899*

9. Schedule of Work:

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

10. Project Name – Provide a one-line name for your project:

EBS Student Resilience Project

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

East Burke School seeks NEK Prosper! funding to provide mental health counseling services and community-based learning opportunities to our students as complements to the many ways in which our Experiential Learning Program (ELP) develops students' mental, emotional and physical well-being.

Too often the families that EBS serves are described by what they lack: generational wealth, stable incomes, healthy diets, adequate housing, affordable health and mental health care, experience with post-secondary education, exposure to diversity, strong social networks, etc. For many of our students, these descriptors are true, but they are not the full story. Our ELP offers campus-based hands-on learning and off-site enrichment opportunities that draw on our students' many assets—curiosity, imagination, resilience, love of the outdoors, and openness to new ideas, people, and perspectives. From foraging expeditions at Northwoods Stewardship Center to community service visits at Dog Mountain and Lake Willoughby, and from harvesting and preserving fruits and herbs grown in the school's Food Forest to college and university trips across the state, the ELP reinforces our students' sense of agency; improves their physical, mental and emotional well-being; provides them with diverse pathways beyond high school; and demonstrates to them and their families that they have what it takes to fulfill their potential.

The ELP's on-campus and off-site activities have a track record of helping our students "get outside of themselves" and gain new perspective on their lives and the options for their future. In more ordinary times, ELP experiences might be enough in themselves to promote strong mental and emotional health for EBS youth. Regrettably, like virtually all other school children around the country and the world, our students have experienced unprecedented challenges to their social, mental and emotional well-being over the past 2+ years of the COVID crisis. Contracting with a trained and experienced mental health professional to provide counseling and mental/emotional wellness programming for our students that complement our ELP will ensure that EBS offers as many pathways possible to help the youth we serve cope with the myriad challenges they face.

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

East Burke School primarily serves students living in East Burke, West Burke, Lyndonville, Newark, Sutton, East Haven, Wheelock, and St. Johnsbury, though Vermont law permits students from other towns to opt into our program with the approval of the sending district.

- 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):

We intend to have a licensed mental health counselor (LMHC/MSW/LICSW or equivalent) on-site at East Burke School one day per week to meet with students one-on-one, as well as two additional days a month to provide small group or all-school sessions designed to help students develop healthy self-care habits that promote mental and emotional well-being. As part of their contract, the counselor will provide one half-hour morning mental wellness activity on campus once per week. We will seek a mental health professional who has experience providing individual counseling to high school students, as well as a track record of developing programming that responds to the particular challenges that face lower-income rural youth.

Though the counselor will be the one to design the program (in consultation with EBS teachers), topics to be covered in small group or all-school sessions may include how to respond to bullying, how to form healthy relationships with peers; how to manage anxiety; how to stay safe online; how to develop a healthy approach to alcohol and drug use; and how to communicate effectively with parents/care-givers and siblings, etc. Whenever possible, the counselor will suggest additions or modifications to both on-campus and off-site ELP activities so that those experiences reinforce the healthy self-care and mental resilience habits that are the main focus of the counselor's work.

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

East Burke School fulfills a dire need in our region, offering a safe, welcoming environment for students in grades 8-12 who feel anxious, bullied, or otherwise marginalized in our area's larger high schools. We are a safe haven for adolescents who need a personal connection with their teachers and classmates in order to thrive, a quality we have found to be present in many of our youth raised in the Northeast Kingdom's more rural, isolated, and low-income communities.

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

At EBS, passion drives education. Our students enjoy the freedom to incorporate their interests and hobbies into their academic work, exploring a wide range of fields from engine repair and wilderness survival to classic mythology and the Ancient Greek language. We also support our students to pursue internships and off-campus classes, outdoor activities, and other learning opportunities of interest to them that can help build their academic, social, and/or physical skills.

EBS teachers are the driving force behind the school's effort to bring on a trained mental health professional at this time. The mental and emotional impacts of the ongoing COVID pandemic are still revealing themselves. Even in a small school such as EBS where teachers can provide a great deal of individual attention to each student, a growing number of students are presenting with mental and emotional difficulties that our teachers are just not trained to address. Having a colleague on site who has the requisite training and

experience to meet the students where they are and provide appropriate support to both students and our staff will be invaluable as the pandemic's consequences continue to manifest.

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

We will gauge the impact on our students' mental health and well-being of the addition of individualized counseling and self-care and mental resilience programming in several ways. First, while strictly guarding students' privacy, the mental health counselor will provide the teachers and, when appropriate, parents/caregivers with reports on improvements to and/or deterioration of students' mental health and well-being. We will also provide students the opportunity to offer confidential feedback to the Heads of School on their experiences with the counselor as well as on the small group and all-school activities offered by the counselor.

We will evaluate what impact the complementary ELP activities have on student's mental health and well-being by having students reflect on each trip through writing and/or creative arts assignments, post-trip whole-class discussions and/or one-on-one conversations with teachers and/or the counselor of new ideas and insights sparked for them by the experiences. Our staff will also solicit feedback from parents or other adults who accompany students on the ELP trips regarding any observations they may have about how the experiences affected students, and what they would suggest to improve the program for the future. In addition, our staff will ask partnering organizations to share any observations they might have regarding student behavior that might need attention from our teachers or the counselor.

17. 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):

In terms of setting milestones to help us assess the efficacy of adding individualized counseling services and self-care and mental health resilience programming to our school, much will depend on how the students respond to the option of meeting with the counselor, and on how they respond to the programming the counselor offers. Within the first 4-6 weeks of the counselor being on site, s/he/they will work with the heads of school to determine a process and a timeline for determining milestones for both individual students and the student body as a whole for assessing the impact of EBS's new mental health and well-being program.

18. 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):

At East Burke School:

Megan Durling: Co-Head of School, Liberal Arts & Sciences Teacher

Nathan Bradshaw: Co-Head of School, Liberal Arts & Sciences Teacher

TBD: Licensed/Certified Mental Health Counselor

Partnering Organizations:

Dog Mountain

Northwoods Stewardship Center

Vermont Institute of Natural Science

Firefly Farm at Burke Hollow

Three Peaks Maple Syrup

Norwich University

Goddard College

Museum of Everyday Life

Bread & Puppet Theater

Sterling College

Fenton Chester Arena

North Country Climbing Center

Clyde River Recreation

Vermont Agency of Natural Resources—Department of Forests, Parks, & Recreation

Whole Systems Design

Various neighbors for apple-picking

Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College

Old Stone House Museum and Historic Village

ECHO Leahy Center

Shelburne Farms

- 19. 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):**

Many students come to feel that they get lost in the crowd at larger schools, but they are able to thrive in smaller settings. East Burke School believes more than ever that our model can serve students who need more attention and individualized opportunity to succeed. By focusing on what captures students' attention, engages their innate curiosity, fosters their empathy, inspires their desire to learn, and builds their academic and practical skills, EBS is helping to nurture the next generation of well-informed and engaged NEK citizens, as well as generous, capable and caring NEK neighbors.

By expanding our students' educational experience beyond the walls of our little blue schoolhouse, the ELP broadens how they understand the unique place they call home, and engenders in them a commitment to helping ensure a fair, equitable, and prosperous future for themselves and the wider NEK. By offering complementary counseling and mental/emotional wellness programming, EBS will have the expertise on staff to recognize and better address mental or emotional challenges among our students. Importantly, the mental/emotional impacts of the COVID crisis will continue to reveal themselves over time. Having an onsite counselor will also ensure that EBS can access the most up-to-date and relevant research-informed mental health interventions to respond to mental health issues either created or exacerbated by the pandemic's interruption to normal life.

In addition, by having the ELP as a complement to our counseling and our targeted mental/emotional wellness programming, EBS is providing our rural youth with reasons to feel pride in and connection to their

home place and giving them opportunities to build their own, their families', and their communities' well-being. Taken together, EBS's individualized instruction, Experiential Learning Program, and counseling and mental/emotional wellness programming provide our students with the skills and information they need to address challenges in their own lives and to achieve their most ambitious plans for their futures.

20. (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):

Understanding that this NEK Prosper! funding is available for only one year, EBS's board and staff are committed to using the coming year to secure additional and ongoing funding for the counseling and mental/emotional wellness programming described in this proposal. Next year (2023) is the 20th anniversary of the founding of East Burke School. To commemorate this occasion, the school's board and staff are working now on several events, programs, and other undertakings that will not only celebrate East Burke School's many achievements over the past two decades, but also raise significant funds to propel the school into its third decade on a much stronger financial footing. Since, as noted several times in this application, the mental, emotional, and social impacts of the COVID pandemic on children and youth are still revealing themselves (not to mention the academic impacts), EBS will no doubt need to expand our counseling and wellness programming into the future. East Burke School's board and staff are confident about and committed to ensuring the school provides such critical services to our students and their families.

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

Organization/Group/Grantee Name: East Burke School			
Title of Project: Experiential Learning Project			
Expense Category*	Description	Request	Please note any other secured funding or in-kind donation toward expenses for Project
Personnel	<p>LMHC/LICSW/MSW or equivalent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 full day per week (<i>or the equivalent</i>) for one-on-one counseling: 9 hrs./wk. at \$40/hr. for 28 wks. ● .5 hours one morning per week for all-school mental health activities: .5 hrs./wk. at \$40/hr. for 27 days (<i>pro bono offered as match</i>) ● 1 hr./mos. for monthly all-school mental health workshop: 1 hr./mos. for 8 mos. ● 1 hr./mos. for meeting with faculty & parents <p>2 Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chaperoning ELP trips: 9 hrs./trip (<i>including one hour for prep. & clean-up</i>) at \$40/hr. for 8 major trips; 4 hrs./trip at same rate for 16 minor trips (<i>multiplied by 2 faculty members</i>) ● 1 hr. for planning and organizing documentation for all trips (<i>multiplied by 2 faculty members</i>) 	\$23,661	\$540

ELP Off-Site Trip Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated at \$30/person for each of 8 major trips, covering 14 ppl. 	\$3,360	
Materials & Supplies (printing, books, art supplies, building materials, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-on-one counseling supplies Misc. art supplies for art therapy offered by onsite counselor (<i>many in-kind donations already on hand</i>) Supplies for offsite projects integrated with curriculum (<i>still in development</i>) 	\$500	\$460
Transportation Expenditures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bus/van rental: \$2.50/mi. for 8 major trips estimated at 160 mi. roundtrip, 16 minor trips estimated at 40 mi. roundtrip Driver compensation: \$25/hr. for 8 hrs. for 8 major trips., 4 hours for 16 minor trips 	\$8,000	
Grant Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documenting impact, invoicing, and reporting to funder: 4 hrs./mos. at \$40/hr. for 8 mos. 	\$1,378	
	Total Request	\$36,899	\$1,000

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