

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.*

1. Type of Applicant:

Non-profit Organization Group/Association^ Individual* Other

2. Name of Applicant (organization, group, individual): Kingdom Trail Association (KTA)

3. Applicant's (organization or fiscal sponsor as applicable) Street Address (Street/Road, City, State, Zip Code): PO Box 204 East Burke, VT 05832

4. Primary Contact Person Name (for project): Lukas Ray

5. Primary Contact Person (for project) Email Address: lukas@kingdomtrails.org

6. Primary Contact Person (for project) Preferred Phone Number: 802-626-0737

7. Tax Identification Number (organization or fiscal sponsor as applicable):
03-0353477

8. Amount Requested (no less than \$2,500 or more than \$50,000): \$35,925.28

9. Schedule of Work:

- Start Date: **October 3rd, 2022**
- End Date (no later than May 31, 2023): **May 31st, 2023**

10. Project Name – Provide a one-line name for your project: KTA Healthy Community Initiative

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

The KTA Healthy Community Initiative seeks to strengthen our local community through numerous coordinated programming and healthy living initiatives that seek to provide outdoor recreational opportunities for all youth in the NEK. Collaborating with local partners to create and implement youth STEM recreation-based educational and engagement programs was identified in Kingdom Trail's Strategic Plan in 2018. This project's focus on building staff capacity and addressing program costs allows KTA to further our mission and strategic plan, along with benefitting already established children and youth programming with area partners and stakeholders. Benefiting established programs gives growth towards expanding capacity and programs for years to come in one of the most economically and socially challenged regions of Vermont.

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

Essex County's East Haven and Caledonia County's Burke, Kirby and Lyndonville.

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):

KTA generates tremendous economic impact throughout the region and is a remarkable recreation resource, one that the KTA staff and board of directors have worked to make accessible to all NEK community members. Through numerous conversations, engagement, and community efforts, KTA has been able to partner with many diverse organizations to make our trails more accessible to children and youth in the local communities. KTA also worked to establish event programs specifically geared towards youth to promote healthy living and STEM outdoor environmental education, please see examples listed below. Through our own growth and understanding, we've come to know that outdoor recreation educational programs are vital to the children and youth of today. KTA, and its partners, seek to break down the structural and economic barriers that prohibit youth from participation in biking, hiking, walking, and just staying active on the KTA trail network.

We can accomplish this through partners such as Lyndon Economic opportunity AmeriCorps program at Northern Vermont University (LEAP AmeriCorps), who provides us an AmeriCorps member each year to help lead, build, and expand community education and outreach. This member focuses on STEM educational outreach through expanding and promoting environmental education and outdoor living. Northwoods Stewardship Center provides support through educational outreach, programs such as KT Kids Ride, and scholarship programs for youth memberships at KTA. Kingdom East School District provides support through hosting numerous opportunities to local school students to participate in afterschool bike club or summer camp mountain biking. More information on each specific program is listed below.

KTA-Mission Driven Events: Kingdom Trails hosts two events each year that help address STEM outdoor recreation and environmental education, along with support from local partners and the LEAP AmeriCorps program member serving with KTA. These events utilize staff capacity during the planning and implementation process.

- **Race Back to School:** a walk-run-bike-a-thon that serves as a fundraiser for all local schools, a fitness activity to motivate students to lead a healthy lifestyle and incorporates "fun-stations" to encourage kids to learn more about healthy living and their environment.

Participants run in three different loops to build points, and ages are broken down into three different groups to create equality in competition. Fun Stations include

- **Torchlit Trail Experience:** For the past 3 years, Kingdom Trails has provided a nighttime ski, snowshoe, or fat-bike opportunity over the winter months. Using DIY fairy lights and mason jars, on a designated multi-use route on the ridge, participants have enjoyed the lantern and moonlit trails as well as an activity provided by local educational organizations. Fairbanks Museum and Northwoods provide trivia and tree facts, along with donations for participants.

Partner Sponsored: Kingdom Trails works with numerous local organizations to help promote youth access to recreation, outdoor skills, and leadership development through participation in mountain biking on Kingdom Trails, along with associated outdoor education pursuits. KTA views programs offered by partner organizations as vital to inclusive opportunities and the health of local youth.

- **KT Kids Ride:** A summer weekly bike ride hosted by Northwoods Stewardship Center for children and youth ages 7-14. This ride is free to KTA members and offered at the low cost of \$5 for non-members. Participants provide their own bike and helmet. The program is a wonderful educational tool for youth to learn the trails at KTA, learn more about their environmental impact, and participate in healthy outdoor exercise. These are hosted each summer for two months and paid for by Kingdom Trails.
- **Northwoods Mountain Bike Camp:** Summer camp program for students with a passion for exploring and understanding the natural world, while developing technical mountain biking skills in a safe, fun, and adventurous environment, along with sharing the Ride with Gratitude campaign for sustainable trails and communities. KTA supports a scholarship program to give more youth the opportunity to participate in Northwoods bike camps.
- **Kingdom East School District (KESD) Bike Club and Summer Camp:** KESD offers the bike club afterschool program during the school year and a bike camp summer program. This is offered free to all youth who participate, and Kingdom Trails donates all memberships towards this effort, along with purchasing and maintaining a bike trailer KESD uses to move bikes purchased with grant funding for Burke Town School. KTA contributes each year to help the program prosper, and it's one that keeps opening the doors to youth who don't have access to bikes or the trails.
- **St. Johnsbury Forestry Class:** Each year the St. Johnsbury Academy Forestry Class work alongside KTA learning about and removing non-native, invasive species found within a conserved area KTA owns and conserves in conjunction with the Vermont Land Trust. The KTA Trail Director leads this effort to teach teenagers about their environmental surroundings, along with biking through the forest with the students.
- **Outside NEK opportunities:** KTA continues to work with 1PVD Cycling, an inner city group from Providence, Rhode Island that gives high schoolers from all backgrounds the opportunity to participate in competitive cycling by helping students overcome the numerous barriers to entry; be they financial, technical, or cultural. This group volunteers with KTA's Trail Crew before riding the trail network. Breaking down barriers to give youth the experience of coexisting together while experiencing what the NEK offers them in outdoor recreation.

We also work with Northwoods Stewardship Center, placing conservation education signage along our trails for local-residents and visitors to learn about our surrounding habitat and wildlife.

KTA even supports mechanical education by working with Lyndon Institute and their new Bike Tech Certificate program, allowing each student who finishes the program to graduate high school as a certified Bike Mechanic. Every year, KTA partners with NEK Prosper! to host a Story Walk on the trail network! This walk encourages children through healthy living and learning while they hear a story in nature.

LEAP AmeriCorps: Inherent to reaching this project goals is the LEAP AmeriCorps member who will serve at KTA as the Community & Outreach Education Coordinator. AmeriCorps members serve to “get things done”, serve the community to provide healthy and safe opportunities, and take action to improve the community they serve. The AmeriCorps member will lead and expand efforts with assistance from KTA staff such as the Community Outreach & Partnership Director and the Executive Director. The AmeriCorps member will work to create educational STEM programming on the benefits of outdoor recreation and education to local school groups, creating educational materials and hosting popup tents around the KTA network and during larger events. Pop up tents and branded material is needed to help accomplish the visual task in the local community.

This project aims to continue such efforts, expand them through future opportunities, and incorporate successful programs into new strategic planning in 2023 to grow community engagement and end systemic inequalities. Continued funding of the projects helps contribute to a healthy and thriving community.

Project Budget included at end of application. Timeline featured below.

Timeline

Timeline	Task	Lead	Status
August 2022	Application for LEAP AmeriCorps position, awarded from LEAP at NVU.	KTA	Complete
October 3 rd , 2022	Anticipated start date for LEAP AmeriCorps position and payment due.	KTA	
October 13 th , 2022	Race Back to School Event	KTA and area partners/schools	
September-October 2022	KESD Afterschool Bike Club	KTA and area partners/schools	
February 2023	MOUs drafted and signed for KTA programming partnerships, including Northwoods KT Kids Ride/Bike Camp and KESD Bike Club/Summer Camp	KTA and area partners/schools	
Feb/March 2023	Torchlit Trail Experience 2023	KTA and area partners	
Feb/March 2023	Purchase new KTA branded Tents and Tables for LEAP AmeriCorps work	KTA	

May 2023	KT Kids Ride announced, registration for summer camps open, upfront costs to program partners due.	KTA and area partners	
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14. Describe the Focus Population (who will benefit?) (no more than 500 characters):

Students from local schools in the NEK, and all those who wish to participate in KTA programming, partner programming, and events! In 2021, coordinated with numerous local partners to engage in over 300 local youth. These programming partners work with KTA to help break down several barriers to give underprivileged youth access to bikes and trails. These programs include KT Kids Ride with Northwoods Stewardship Center, Afterschool and Summer Bike Club with Kingdom East School District, Forestry Class with St. Johnsbury Academy, and adaptive programs with Adaptive Sport Partners. KTA hosts two events each year that encourage participation from local students, such as Race Back to School and the Torchlit Trail Experience. Kingdom Trail recognizes mountain biking is an expensive sport and establishes programs so all have the fair and just opportunity to prosper through physical and mental health.

Simply, our target audience is everyone and anyone who wishes and is willing to recreate and learn at Kingdom Trails. This includes students, children, teenagers, local community members, business owners, simply everyone in our rural community. Kingdom Trails offers free trail access to anyone under the age of 7 years old, and a 33% discount to all NEK residents. Youth receive a discount on month and day memberships between the ages of 8-15. Encouraging youth will always be the focus population for the KTA Healthy Community Initiative and a core strategic initiative as the organization grows, thrives, and seeks to become engaged in more community growth initiatives.

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

Kingdom Trail Association (KTA) is a world-class trail system deeply intertwined with the local community. It was Northeast Kingdom community members who banded together to develop the 100+ mile multi-use system in 1994, while now 105 private landowners allow trails to cross their properties. The user experience extends beyond the network, to the community fabric and tourism infrastructure that surround and help sustain it. In 2021, Kingdom Trails experienced over 1,440 purchased individual annual Memberships, with 598 coming directly from NEK residents through purchased family memberships. Over 1,436 trail users are under the age of 15. KTA believes, with a LEAP AmeriCorps member, local partner support, and greater staff capacity dedicated to educational outreach efforts, our reach can be even greater!

In 2018, KTA developed a five-year strategic plan to address growth, expansion, and goals for the organization as we grew and expanded the mission and core values of who Kingdom Trails is and wants to be. Goal 3 focuses on connecting with people through promoting a healthy lifestyle and creating accessibility to a diverse population. Kingdom Trails recognizes the impact the organization has on the local community, both economic and social. Mountain biking is an expensive sport that creates an economic barrier towards children and youth participation that come from underprivileged backgrounds. Understanding the role KTA undertakes in the local community, as

our organization is a community built, led, and based non-profit organization, we find the KTA role in providing opportunities to youth participants is vital to the growth of a healthy community. From the strategic plan came scholarship programs for youth, discounts for NEK residents, and partnerships with schools/organizations to develop programming opportunities for all.

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

All youth living and thriving in the NEK, without any obstacles that prohibits them from living a healthy lifestyle and getting outdoors, with the just opportunity to thrive and prosper! KTA believes we have the shared responsibility to embrace outdoor recreation and health in our local community through our shared goals with local community partners. These goals will be assessed through community engagement and both subjective and statistical observations with KTA staff and our partners.

- Create equal opportunities for all youth in the Northeast Kingdom through KTA event offerings and partner programming.
- Grow youth participation in all KTA hosted events and support programming partners efforts to expand participation.
- Expand educational programming through LEAP AmeriCorps STEM programming to better educate the surrounding youth in the NEK.
- Developing programming efforts to incorporate DEI programming at KTA for future work, growing 1PVD Cycling team and others around the region that supports the KTA mission. Funding current projects will allow KTA to invest in many opportunities.
- Expand current programming with partners to better understand supplemental work we could incorporate in future funding requests.

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 500 characters):

Currently Kingdom Trails tracks our impact through many methods. We collect data on the number of trail user visits and demographics. We track our economic impact through an economic impact study where users were surveyed to collect direct spending data within our region. Kingdom Trails also collects data on trail-building and maintenance regarding costs and labor. KTA even distributes employee evaluations to seasonal staff to collect data on their work experience with Kingdom Trails, which allows us to improve and progress. KTA tracks volunteer hours from each programming effort to help garner grant funding to improve future projects and events. KTA regularly sends survey's out after events to better learn how each event could improve when implemented in the future to better serve community members and those who participate.

KTA hosted events have seen an increase in participation when multiple partners are incorporated. KTA encourages all local partners to join in program planning when we host community-based events. For example, Race Back to School registration is sent to numerous schools in the NEK area, who in turn, push out the event to all local students and encourage participation. The races's Fun Stations are hosted by local organizations and businesses who incorporate environmental and

healthy living aspects. Local partners and community members will help gauge our success and give light to milestones as we accomplish them through event reports and surveys. KTA engages in community talks through outreach programs such as our Community Chat series, where local community members engage with KTA leadership team members to give feedback and thoughts to how KTA is addressing community needs and efforts.

Kingdom Trails has processes in place to manage and collect the above data. KTA can confirm we participate in the LEAP data collection process and work collaboratively with LEAP staff and the members to facilitate at our service location. LEAP members will deliver curricula units and capture data surrounding the number of youths they serve and the impact their programming has on youth participants' attitude and enthusiasm for education and outdoor recreation. Federal and State AmeriCorps programs such as LEAP require such reporting information and KTA can use this data specific to the AmeriCorps member who served at KTA.

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):

Kingdom Trails works with all willing partners and organizations who wish to work with us. KTA recently invested in staff capacity and added two new leadership positions to help lead community driven efforts, a key core value that continues to emerge in the forefront of the communities' thoughts and wishes for the future of KTA. For this project, numerous staff and key partners will be involved. While staff and partners in this project are listed below, it's important to note that KTA will work with any willing partners and acknowledges that there may be some partnerships that we aren't privy to yet! Part of the role of the Community Outreach & Partnership Director with the LEAP AmeriCorps member involves community engagement to broaden community reach and growth. KTA events always seek new engagement that could further our mission and core values, all integral to a healthy organization.

KT Staff: Executive Director, Community Outreach & Partnership Director, Trails Director, Director of Communication & Education, Development Director, Membership & Experience Director, and the LEAP AmeriCorps Community Education & Outreach Coordinator. Each Director has years of experience in their role and work to live the KTA mission and core values in all they do.

Partners and Organizations: Northwoods Stewardship Center, Kingdom East School District, St. Johnsbury Academy, Northern Vermont University LEAP AmeriCorps program, Fairbanks Museum, and any new partnerships that may form. Each organization focuses on community development in their own specific roles, and all work to improve the lives of local youth through outdoor recreation and healthy living, along with breaking down systemic inequalities.

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):

According to the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, there is a growing body of evidence that suggests contact in nature is a practical method for promoting better

physical, emotional, mental, and overall health for children as young as 10 years. Studies have found that increased childhood nature contact is positively associated with increased physical activity. Furthermore, more studies have found greater physical and mental health benefits from green exercise (outdoor physical activities in natural settings) rather than traditional forms of exercise. Further studies on physical activity indicate that proximity to recreational facilities, such as trails, is a predictor for physical activity. When there are walking and biking trails nearby, residents are more likely to use them and therefore be healthier. Access to trails also correlates with a higher quality of life, thus making the community more desirable.

Findings also suggested, in the *Journal for Outdoor Recreation*, that integrated outdoor adventure-based programs may enhance participants' intrinsic motivation to engage in both physical activity and science education, provide a novel means of addressing two pressing social issues (sedentary lifestyles, underperformance in social aspect), and supporting positive group dynamics. STEM educational outreach advocates for children and youth to embrace outdoor recreation to complement a healthy lifestyle, an idea that KTA views as a shared responsibility in our core values. KTA seeks to continue event and programming opportunities to address systemic inequalities and give all youth in the NEK the opportunity to openly recreate and feel those positive group dynamics in a unique and inviting environment. Healthy competition and exploration lead to a higher quality of life, in turn leading to a more engaged community that works together to make sure equity is given to all. Small programming interactions can have such a strong effect, and we hope to prove that through the many avenues KTA takes working towards being more openly inclusive and diverse!

(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):

Kingdom Trail Association is a membership-based nonprofit, whose budget is funded largely by purchased memberships for trail usage. Kingdom Trails does offer free trail access to anyone under the age of 7 years old, and a 33% discount to all NEK residents. To better serve our community and help encourage youth participation, all membership fees are waived for youth-based events and partner programming in the NEK, along with outside groups who bring school groups to KTA to ride. KTA consistently promotes this effort to local school and school groups coming to ride at KTA so we can serve our children and youth and help bridge the gap between an expensive sport and those looking to live a healthy lifestyle on our trail network. KTA calculates it offers more than 500 free memberships to children and youth each year, with 330 going towards work with local schools and youth-based events.

We've used the word "community" numerous times throughout this application because it's the way of life KTA embraces. KTA knows NEK Prosper! understands what this term means to KTA, hosting a healthy living Story Walk on our trails each spring. Kingdom Trails is made up of 105 landowners, the staff all live and work in the community, and the health and impact KTA has on the local community is at the forefront of our minds every day. Breaking down barriers and ending systemic inequalities continues to align with KTA's mission and core values

BUDGET:

Organization/Group/Grantee Name: Kingdom Trail Association			
Title of Project: Community Stewardship Initiative (Budget)			
Expense Category*	Description	Request	Please note any other secured funding or in-kind donation toward expenses for Project
Staffing	<p>Community Outreach & Partnership Director: 160 total hours @\$28.64/hour = \$4,582.40 total.</p> <p>Trails Director: 40 total hours @\$28.64 = \$1,145.60</p> <p>AmeriCorps Member: Stipend @\$2,507.50 quarterly + \$4,640.88 (insurance) = \$14,670.88 total.</p>	\$20,398.88	Volunteer Hour match at 160 hours, \$29.95/hour (National Hourly Rate) = \$4,792 in-kind Match
Program Costs	<p>KT Kids Ride: \$1,500 scholarship fund + \$3,150 program cost = \$4,650 total.</p> <p>Race Back to School: Event costs = \$500 total.</p> <p>Torchlit Trail Experience: Event costs = \$400 total.</p>	\$5,550.00	Cash: \$500 and \$400 for RBTS and Torchlit Trail Experience: \$900 total cash match. In-Kind: \$450 per visit to KT staff participation w/ KT Kids Ride, \$900 total in-kind match.
Materials & Supplies	<p>Vaulted Branded Tent: (2) at \$1,125 each= \$2,250 total.</p> <p>Fitted Table Covering, logo: (2) at \$163.20 each= \$326.40 total.</p> <p>KTA branded banner and flags: (4) at \$200 each = \$800</p>	\$3,376.40	
Other (fees for conferences, trainings etc.)	KTA Programming Memberships: 330 participants at \$20 per day. \$6,600 total.	\$6,600	
	Total Request	\$ 35,925.28	In-Kind: \$5,692 Cash: \$900 Total (20% match): \$6,592

