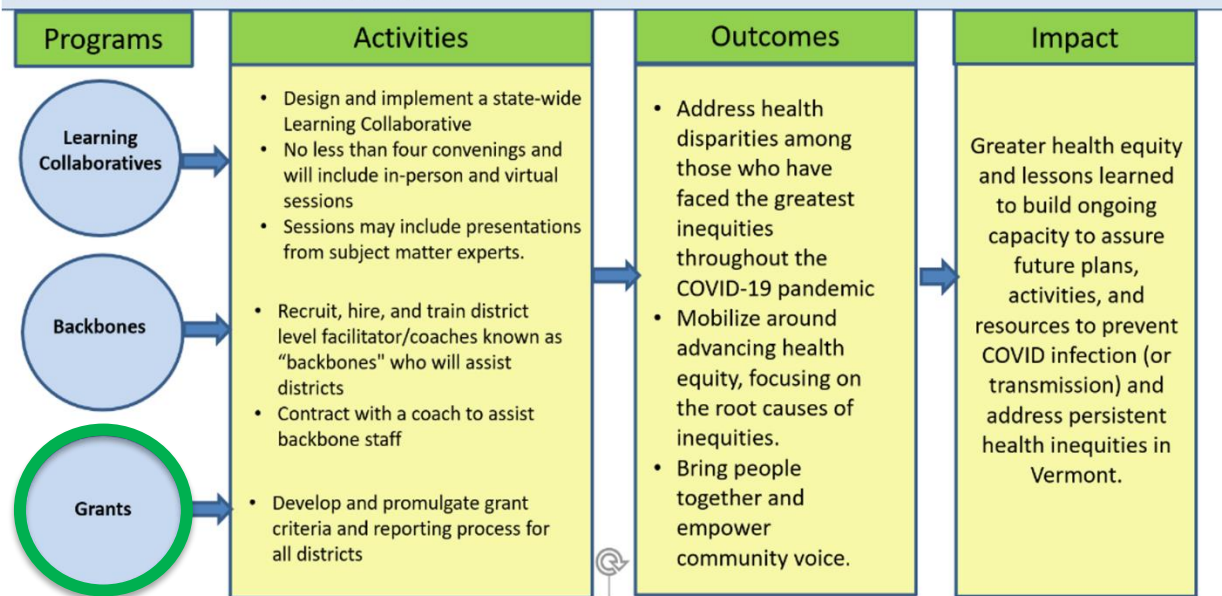# VT Community Health Equity Partnership

Community Project Funding to Address Health Inequities

The VT Community Health Equity Partnership is excited to partner with the local District Offices and Backbone organizations to fund local initiatives by local entities intended to address health inequity(s) experienced in their region which were exacerbated during COVID-19.

Process Guidelines

Purpose: Local Collaboratives (NEK Prosper!) will invite proposals from local entities in their VT Department of Health District (St. Johnsbury) intended to reduce health inequities the Collaborative has described in its:

- Data Driven Problem Statement
- Community Health Equity Self-Assessment
- Telling the Story Slides

Funds Available and Use of Funds

- NEK Prosper! in the St. Johnsbury VT Department of Health District will have $150,000 to support local initiatives. NEK Prosper! may allocate funds in collaboration with other Local Collaboratives; this is permitted and funds will be prorated appropriately.

- Subject to initial funding, NEK Prosper! plans to have two project funding cycles, one for projects beginning *October 1, 2022*, and a second one for projects beginning *December 1, 2022*. A second round will only be offered if there are remaining funds available after the first round.

QUESTION: What entity will contract with local recipients for the awarding of community project funds? Will it be either the local Backbone organization or the Vermont Public Health Institute (VtPHI)?

ANSWER: Northern Counties Health Care (NCHC) as the NEK Prosper! Backbone organization will.

Funding Review and Decision-Making: The NEK Prosper!/St. Johnsbury District Community Health Equity Project Funding grant proposal review, evaluation and decision-making opportunity has been offered to community members with a history of participation in NEK Prosper!, NEK Prosper! leadership (Leadership Team and Collaborative Action Network Chairs) and additional community members identified by NCHC. *If you are interested in participating in the application review, evaluation and decision-making process, please contact Kari White (kariw@nchcvt.org) by September 2nd at 5:00pm.*

A. **Project Review Timeline**
- August 22nd – Draft Request for Proposals application, guidance and post-award forms published/sent out
- August 29th and September 1st – NEK Community Health Equity grant funding Q & A meetings via Zoom, noon-1:00pm
- September 9th – Round 1 applications and budgets due to Kari White
- September 12th – Round 1 project summary details populated into yellow parts of Reviewer Evaluation Spreadsheet Tool (by Kari) then sent back out to you with copies of the full applications
- September 19th – All reviewer evaluations sent back to Kari White via e-mail by 5:00pm
- September 20th – Evaluation Summary tool (populated by Kari) and Zoom link sent back out to the reviewers who sent in project evaluations to form basis of funding decisions
- September 21st – Meeting to discuss and finalize Round 1 funding decisions (9:00am-noon via Zoom)
- September 23rd – Applicants notified of decisions by Kari White

B. **Expectations of Project Evaluators**: The expectation/request of those who are part of the review, evaluation and decision-making process is:
- You read the NEK Prosper! Data Driven Problem Statement, Community Health Equity Self-Assessment and Telling the Story Slides
- You familiarize yourself with the grant opportunity (Guidance, Request for Proposals Application and FAQs),
- You agree to use the Reviewer Evaluation Spreadsheet Tool to read through and respond to the applications (between September 12th and September 19th),
- You recuse yourself from evaluation and discussion for any projects with which you are associated directly as an applicant or as staff, consultant, advisory committee/Board member or relative of someone who is staff, consultant or advisory committee/Board member to the organization/entity,
- You send your completed Reviewer Application Evaluation Tool back to Kari White via e-mail by 5:00pm on September 19th and,
- You attend a three-hour meeting via Zoom on September 21st from 9:00am – noon to discuss the evaluations and make the decisions*. ***Please put a hold on your calendar now if you intend to participate in this meeting. Only reviewers sending back evaluation forms by the deadline will receive a Zoom link to the meeting.***

*Even if you can't make the meeting on the 21st, you can review and evaluate the proposals and your notes will be useful to decision-making.

C. Project Review and Evaluation Criteria: As prompted by the Reviewer Evaluation Spreadsheet Tool, NEK Prosper! grant proposal evaluators will use the following considerations when reviewing applications. NEK Prosper! is seeking to fund projects which:

1. Fit within the guidelines,
2. Were created in the NEK,
3. Will support meaningful interactions with community/residents,
4. Will build capacity and/or make positive system, policy or environmental change,
5. Will advance health equity/address health disparities,
6. Will support communities to make positive change to advance health equity,
7. Will directly benefit people who have lived or living experience with health inequities,
8. Were designed/identified by intended beneficiaries,
9. Were put forth by organizations/entities that may have been excluded in public health-oriented funding in the past,
10. Align/coordinate with other community resources seeking to advance equity and address the social contributors to health,
11. Align with the NEK Prosper!
    a. Vision of prosperity (everyone in Caledonia + Southern Essex is financially secure, mentally healthy, physically healthy, well-housed and well-nourished) and/or
    b. Problem/Opportunity Statement: 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 and/or
    c. 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.
12. Outline a reasonable and achievable project within the 8-month timeline, and
13. Outline a suitable budget for the project.

D. Evaluation Review Tool: The Reviewer Evaluation Spreadsheet Tool includes:
- Column A - a project number
- Columns B—D - three columns of project summary information
- Columns E – Q - 13 columns which correspond to the questions listed above with three dropdown response options for each column question (3-Yes, 2-Maybe, 1-No)
- Column R – a column for you to record any questions (yellow flags) and/or concerns (red flags)
- Column S – a column for you to record your overall impression and strengths of the proposal and helpful feedback to the applicant
- Column T – a column for you to record your last name (you only need to do this in the first row)
- Column U – any other notes for the review team (like a potential conflict of interest)

E. Evaluation Notes

- Please do not evaluate any project applications with which you are associated directly as an applicant or as staff, consultant, advisory committee/Board member or relative of someone who is staff, consultant or advisory committee/Board member to the organization/entity.
- Please do not evaluate a project based on grammar or how "well" it is written.
- Please try your best to evaluate each project by the criteria listed above rather than any past negative experiences you may have had with the organization/entity or people associated with the organization/entity.
- The minimum score for an application is 13 and the maximum score for an application is 39.
- Each reviewers' scores for each application will be totaled and divided by the number of reviewers to get an average score. These average scores will be populated into an Evaluation Summary document which will form the basis of our discussion on September 21st.
- Not all funded projects are going to succeed in the ways that are originally designed – and that's okay. We can take some risks here that other funding opportunities may not allow for.
- Your notes and comments will be summarized (and kept anonymous) and sent back to each applicant as feedback.

F. **Decision-making:** Many times the evaluation discussions naturally lead to agreement about which projects to fund and which are not quite ready or do not align with the grant purpose. If it comes to it, those present at the discussion would follow the NEK Prosper! decision-making process described in the Memorandum of Understanding (Leadership Team) and adapted to this purpose:

The preferred method of decision-making among the NEK Prosper! Grant Committee members shall be by consensus which aims for complete agreement and support on community grant funding applications being considered by NEK Prosper!. However, when this is not possible, decisions will be made through "qualified consensus." In this instance, the Grant Committee will be empowered to move ahead with a decision when there is clear support among a majority of members, when not more than two members are totally opposed to the decision, and when those opposed agree not to hinder the majority from proceeding to implement the decision. (Adapted from the Irish Network for Nonviolent Action Training and Education). In the final instance, decisions may be made by a majority vote of all the present members of the Grant Committee.