



CFMC Grant Application

COMPLETE THIS APPLICATION FOR FUNDING REQUESTS FOR THE Community Foundation of Middlesex County Competitive Cycle.

Instructions: Complete the application on the website. You may "Save and Continue Later" - the site will email you a link which is active for 30 days. Review instructions document for full details before completing. Complete all questions.

Section V requires certain documents to be uploaded to the form - see the Application Instructions Document for a list of the required items. All items must be uploaded as PDF Files. The CFMC Budget Summary form is available on the website in Word. This document must be submitted as PDF file as well.

I. Application Information

Legal Name of Organization

High Hopes Therapeutic Riding, LLC

Division or Department Name (if applicable)

Other Tax Exempt Entity?

Are you a 501(c)3 Organization

Yes

EIN #

06-0987749

If your organization is not a 501(c) 3 tax exempt entity or division/department of a 170(c)1 government agency or religious organization, please contact Thayer Talbott, 860.347.0025, for further information before completing the application.

Total Cost associated with request \$

\$296,834

Dollar Amount Requested \$

\$5,000

Summary Statement

This grant will support High Hopes' One Health Initiative, help fund the participation of youth and adults from Middlesex County in High Hopes' equine-assisted services and programs, and will help eliminate finances as a barrier to participation.

II. Funding Request Information

1. Proposal / Purpose

High Hopes is one of the oldest and largest therapeutic riding centers in the county and will celebrate 50 years in 2024. At the center of all programming, High Hopes' One Health Initiative emphasizes the interconnectedness of environmental, personal, and community health. The benefits of equine-assisted services (EAS) have been recognized for a long time – social, emotional, cognitive, and physical. Partnering with horses can have a significant physical and emotional impact on people with a wide variety of physical disabilities, cognitive delays, or emotional challenges. High Hopes provides an environment where participants flourish with outcomes including an increase in basic horsemanship skills (i.e., riding, carriage driving, horse care); an increase in verbal and non-verbal communication through appropriate social interactions with instructors and volunteers; and an increase in confidence and self-esteem because of participation.

The benefits of EAS have been recognized for a long time. Studies have found that youth are experiencing higher rates of depression (Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 2020), and 84% of adults report increased levels of stress, loneliness, and anxiety (American Psychological Association, 2021). Research indicates that equine-assisted services are effective at decreasing behavioral, physical, and psychosocial challenges for a range of audiences (Health Psychology, 2012), and are beneficial for individuals with post-traumatic stress disorder and mental health issues, with clinically meaningful improvements and symptoms and overall functioning (Lanning, 2016). Studies show that equine-assisted services reduce cortisol and increase the release of oxytocin (Yorke, et al, 2011). Interactions with equines require a mindful presence and help mitigate external stressors, providing an opportunity for enhanced well-being, benefitting participants with cognitive impairments, veterans and their families, seniors with dementia or debilitating neurological conditions, youth-at-risk, and individuals with mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

High Hopes and its One Health Initiative and activities strive to promote inclusivity and create an environment in which participants explore new experiences. For example, during the summer program, horsemanship skills were taught with deliberate integration of the principles of equine health. This included group activities searching the environment for hazards (bad) and healthy (good) things and listing them so that the children develop increased awareness and observation skills. This then allowed for a larger group discussion about the environment.

Equine interactions require a mindful presence and help mitigate external stressors and worries. The calming presence of the horse allows for an easing of anxiety and worry for participants and volunteers alike. As participants interact with the horses and people, they build resilience, skills, and pride in their accomplishments.

A key component of High Hopes' One Health Initiative is the relationship that develops between a rider, horse, volunteer, and instructor. Research has shown that working with horses can help youth at risk gain a sense of personal control and learn stress management skills that help them make good decisions (Human-Animal Interaction Bulletin, 2014). When children and adults learn to interact with and trust their horses and instructors, they acquire skills that can transfer and benefit home, school, and community settings. High Hopes provides an environment where participants flourish with outcomes including an increase in basic horsemanship skills (i.e., riding, carriage driving, horse care); and an increase in confidence and self-esteem because of participation in programs focused on groundwork.

Equine-assisted activities include but are not limited to:

- Therapeutic riding and carriage driving which combine the healing power of the human-animal bond with targeted goals;
- Equine-assisted learning which consists of unmounted activities, pairing participants and horses to support specific needs and skills;
- Programs for target audiences, including participants living with Parkinson's Disease and their caregivers, families recovering from domestic violence, and veterans to name a few; and,
- Experiential Field Trips adapted for different audiences, including senior centers and social service organizations, allowing individuals to experience the benefits of EAS in accessible formats.

In addition to serving participants and families, One Health is also integral to the recruitment and retention of volunteers, who represent 90% of High Hopes' workforce. In FY2023, 387 individuals ranging in age from teens to older adults served as side-walkers, horse handlers, or unmounted coaches, and donated more than 12,679 hours of service. Based on the Federal rate for volunteer services (\$34.56), their service to High Hopes equates to \$438,186. A Volunteer Engagement Manager will be added to the High Hopes professional team to further enhance our commitment to volunteer engagement. This strategic role will focus on optimizing the volunteer experience, fostering a sense of community, and implementing innovative initiatives to ensure that our dedicated volunteers continue to play a crucial role in the success of the One Health Initiative. Strengthening our volunteer base is vital for sustaining and expanding current programs and increasing our community presence and impact. Attracting and retaining a qualified and talented team of staff is also vital to this success, with plans for new professional development opportunities and ensuring a positive work environment and culture for individual and organizational growth. High Hopes' new Workforce Development initiative aims to engage, develop, and retain a relevant workforce to foster the successful execution of its mission and respond to the evolving needs of the organization.

2. Sustainability and Assessing Impact

High Hopes is currently reviewing its programs as part of a new strategic plan and will continue to respond to the changing needs of participants and to evolve and expand programs and services in its effort to serve the community. High Hopes actively seeks feedback about its programs from participants about their individual experiences through ongoing dialogue and conversation as well as with the use of surveys. In addition to individual dialogue and conversation, a survey of all participants is taken annually with responses used to identify and remedy poor client service experiences, enhance positive service experiences, make fundamental changes to our programs and/or operations, and inform the development of new programs. Surveys are also used to identify where we are less inclusive or equitable across demographic groups and to strengthen relationships with the people we serve.

For weekly participants, High Hopes tracks progress through observable behavior, participation in activities, affect, interaction with others, and progress toward set goals. Weekly participants benefit from individual riding plans established at the beginning of each fall/spring program and that are used to evaluate levels of accomplishment and progress towards goals. Staff also use participation satisfaction results and informal feedback from partner organizations' staff and parents.

In addition, High Hopes uses the standardized goal attainment scale (GAS) to measure progress. GAS goals are targeted to each participant and include outcomes such as improved communication skills and increased self-esteem. High Hopes evaluates success based on 1) how effectively participants meet their pre-determined goals, and 2) increases in each participant's self-confidence. Each participant is assessed at the program start and conclusion.

High Hopes uses different criteria to measure success for short-term programs, such as camps and experiential field trips. Examples include improvement in a child's demeanor and confidence, interest expressed in continuing participation at High Hopes, and satisfaction surveys. When applicable, staff use tools like the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale.

High Hopes is a recognized leader in the therapeutic riding community but sometimes impact can only be measured in the smiles on the faces of a participant or a family member when they see their loved one achieve something they never thought would be possible. However, in its commitment to continuous improvement and evidence-based practice, High Hopes is taking part in a ground-breaking research study – The Therapeutic Riding Assessment of Impact Network. TRAIN utilizes goal attainment scaling. We will use this space in the future to increase the number of measured outcomes we can provide through TRAIN and other quality measurements such as trainee and participant satisfaction and quality surveys.

Continuing to carry out the mission of High Hopes is vital to not only those we serve directly but also the families, loved ones, other social service and healthcare providers, and the volunteers who work with us. Sound operational and fiscal management and a robust commitment to fundraising are critical to the long-term sustainability of mission delivery. The Finance Goal for the 2024-2026 Strategic Plan is to create a robust and sustainable operating model to support future program innovation and growth through diversification and expansion of funding sources, with the following key objectives:

- Analyze revenue and expenses to increase efficiency and potential cost savings.
- Actively engage staff and trustees in fund development efforts through ongoing education, preparation, and training.

- Address funding gaps by optimizing income generated through the fee structure, (inclusive of a sliding scale/scholarship program), expanding fundraising efforts, and identifying and implementing new revenue-generating opportunities.

High Hopes continues to engage in thoughtful stewardship of grants, donations, and earned income. An organizational principle remains to ensure that finances are not a barrier to participation and, therefore, High Hopes has a sliding payment scale. High Hopes provides aid depending on the need and funds available. With fixed overhead costs and increasing material costs, the true cost of all programs is higher than what is charged. If requested funding is not received, there will be fewer dollars to allocate, and unfortunately, fewer participants able to be served.

High Hopes envisions a future where equine-assisted services and programs transform and enrich the lives of our participants and volunteers, promoting a more engaged, resilient, and fulfilled life.

III. Grant Program / Project Information

Organization Area of Impact (choose ONE)

Public / Social Benefit (Civic Improvement/ Social Service)

Grant Type (choose ONE)

Program Development/Implementation

Target Demographics (Select all that apply):

- Adults
- Young Adults (ages 18-25)
- Youth (ages 13-17)
- Children (ages 6-12)
- Families
- Parents / Guardians
- Retirees
- Students
- Veterans
- Women and Girls
- At Risk Boys and Young Men
- Animals

Geographic Area(s) Served By This Application:

- Chester
- Clinton
- Deep River
- East Haddam
- Essex
- Killingworth
- Middletown
- Old Saybrook
- Westbrook

Total Number of People in Middlesex County Personally Impacted

69

IV. Organization Information

Board of Directors / Trustees Information

Percent (%) of Directors/Trustees who contribute annually to Operations

100%

Total Number of Directors/Trustees:

17

Average number attending in person:

15

Total Number of Board meetings held last year:

4

Year of Return:

2022-2023

Date most recent IRS Form 990 was filed:

11/15/23

Organization's Total Operating Budget

2054137

Organization's Fiscal Year

July 1 - June 30

Division Operating Budget Information

National Organization Chapter Information

Did you RECEIVE a competitive process grant in the:

- 2020-2021 process
- 2021-2022 process
- 2022-2023 process (fall 2022 or spring 2023)

Brief Background Statement of the Organization:

The mission of High Hopes is to foster a vibrant community where horse and human interactions improve lives. One of the oldest and largest therapeutic riding centers in the country, High Hopes is a Premier Accredited Center by the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl), with a herd of 17 therapeutic horses and ponies. High Hopes celebrates 50 years in 2024, and at the center of all programming is High Hopes' One Health Initiative which emphasizes the interconnectedness of environmental, personal, and community health.

V. Additional Information To Be Included with the Application

Please Note: Additional information requested below MUST be uploaded in PDF files. Other document formats will not be accepted by the application form. Attempts to upload other file formats could result in a loss of all application data entered.

A. Current Organization Operations Budget (Required)

- Approved-FY-23-24-Budget-Summary-4-26-2023.pdf

B. Board of Directors and Officers List (Required)

- 2023-2024-Officers-and-Trustees.pdf

C. IRS Tax Exempt Determination Letter

- 501c3-January-2018.pdf

D. For Program/Project Requests only - CFMC Budget Summary Form:

- CFMC-Summary-Budget-Worksheet-Final.pdf

E. Organizations serving a region greater than Middlesex County - county-based budget summary:

Approved-FY-23-24-Budget-Middlesex.pdf

F. America Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

No

ARPA Funding detail

Additional financial documentation, including the organization's most recent audit, annual report, and IRS Form 990 may also be required. Only provide this information if requested.

For programs or projects which are collaborations among two or more organizations or where an organization provides in-school or after-school programming for schools, the Community Foundation requires a list of organizations or schools partnering with your organization as well as Letters of Support.

For the purposes of this application, collaborations are defined as partnerships where two or more agencies are committed through staffing, funding, and resource allocation to the goals and objectives of the program described. Because the nature of the collaboration requires two or more entities to work together, for the purposes of funding, only one organization may complete the application, and in doing so, accepts responsibility for all evaluative and fiduciary reporting.

For all collaborations, the Community Foundation requires letters of support from the non-applicant organization(s) and/or from the school(s) and school district(s) at which the applicant organization is the program.

Is this application in collaboration with a School(s) or School District(s)?

No

Is this application a collaboration of two or more nonprofit organizations (NOT schools)?

No

If this is an On-Going Collaboration, how long has the collaboration existed?

If Yes, is this a New or On-Going Collaboration?

List of Collaborators

Letters of Support (if a collaboration with schools or other nonprofits))

VI. Organization Contact Information

Are you a new nonprofit applicant to the Community Foundation?

No

Title

Interim Executive Director

Executive Officer's Name

Alison Zack Darrell

Executive Officer Email

adarrell@highhopestr.org

Phone

(860) 434-1974

Title

Contact Person

Application Contact Email

Phone

Mailing Address

36 Town Woods Road
Old Lyme, Connecticut 06371
United States

Street Address

Connecticut
United States

Website

www.highhopestr.org

Social Media Channels

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/highhopestr/>; Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/highhopestr/>; LinkedIn: [linkedin/company/highhopestr.org](https://www.linkedin.com/company/highhopestr.org)

VII. Non-Funding Needs

In 2024, High Hopes celebrates its 50th anniversary. The staff and supporters of the Community Foundation of Middlesex County are invited to join High Hopes in this year-long celebration. As appropriate, please share its story, programs, and services with those who might benefit and those who may wish to get involved as a volunteer.

VIII. Marketing and Public Relations

Organizations receiving grants from the Community Foundation of Middlesex County must promote their funding awards according to the marketing and public relations guidelines established by the Community Foundation. By signing the application below, the CEO/Executive Director understands the Community Foundation's marketing and public relations requirements if awarded a grant. The Community Foundation will host a seminar on marketing guidelines and tips for grantees annually. The Community Foundation's Grantee Communications Kit may be downloaded on our website in the Nonprofit Resources section, middlesexcountycf.org/nonprofits/resources/forms-pr-guidelines/.

IX. Tax Exempt Standing and Use of Grant Funding Certification

By signing this application, the CEO/Executive Director/Board President is certifying that your organization is a qualified 501c3 organization or other charitable organization recognized and currently in good standing with the IRS, or 170(c)(1) governmental agencies. Should a grant be approved by the Community Foundation of Middlesex County, these funds may only be used for the purpose outlined in your original application; you must notify us if you are unable to do so. If grant funding is provided, you may only use these funds for charitable purpose as described in Section 170(c)2 of the IRS code, and funds may not be used for any political or lobbying activity. In addition, no tangible benefits, goods or services may be received by our donors or by staff members of the Community Foundation of Middlesex County in exchange for grant funding.

Signature Certification

I certify that my printed name as stated and assigned below constitutes my signature and may be accepted as such.

Title

Interim Executive Director

Printed Name

Alison Zack Darrell

Date

03/07/2024