

Barre Health District Community Projects

August 21, 2023

Backbone Organization: Central Vermont THRIVE

Barre’s Data Driven Problem Statement:

Prior to and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, substance use and co-occurring disorders increased as evidenced by higher levels of anxiety, depression, and substance use among the entire population, with disproportionately high levels among the BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities. In 2021, there was a 33% increase in opioid-related fatal overdoses and a twenty-fold increase in stimulant overdoses, with 70% of the overdoses occurring among the Medicaid population. While there has existed a mobile team to people experiencing an acute crisis, this team has traditionally lacked the training capacity to adequately and with cultural sensitivity identify, assess, triage, and refer individuals in crisis with co-occurring disorders, including substance use disorder, to the right kinds of services, at the right time, in the right place.

Barre’s Community Goal/Vision:

Crisis outreach services must be bolstered to include a diversified, well-trained team of responders who can provide immediate, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive support for a range of crisis issues, including substance use disorder. The current regional service provider workforce must become more inclusive and diversified to be more welcoming and relatable to the BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and other communities experiencing inequities.

[See Revised Problem Statement and Areas of Focus for Additional Community Funding:](#)

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All Brains Belong

This funding will support the 2nd Annual Community Health Education Fair organized by All Brains Belong. Originally scheduled for 8/12/23, the event has been rescheduled due to flooding and will now take place on October 1st, Sunday, from 12-4pm, at the State House Lawn in Montpelier.

The fair aims to improve access to community resources, health information, and peer support for individuals with neurodiverse disabilities, particularly those with limited income. Attendees can expect informative organization booths, insightful panel presentations, engaging activities for both children and adults, and enriching musical performances.

Through this event, All Brains Belong aims to cultivate a sense of community, alleviate isolation, and bolster the availability of resources for the target audience.

Community Resilience Organizations (CRO)

The Community Wellness Program aims to increase access to wellness services for marginalized individuals, effectively removing upfront financial barriers. A diverse range of healing modalities, including bodywork, herbalism, acupuncture, yoga, music and movement, as well as hair care and food as medicine, are acknowledged and embraced within this initiative. The core aspiration is to empower individuals to explore new healing methods or rekindle existing practices, thus enabling them to seamlessly incorporate these modalities into their daily routines.

The guiding principle of climate justice underscores our commitment to fulfilling the fundamental requirements of those most affected by systems of domination and those deeply entrenched in justice-oriented trajectories.

This program endeavors to introduce individuals to tools for self-care and self-regulation, essential for sustaining positive transformations. In our interactions with wellness providers, a sense of mutual aid is fostered through the offering of their unique talents to the movement. In unity, we aspire to cultivate a culture of community care.

In 2020, CROs initiated the Community Wellness Program to establish connections between community activists, organizers, and caregivers with wellness services, recognizing their embodiment of resistance within the climate justice movement. This grant will facilitate the program's expansion throughout central Vermont, ensuring that underserved populations, vital to our community's strength, are reached. This initiative simultaneously fosters a network of wellness providers committed to enhancing accessibility, while respecting their roles as small business owners.

Ed Justice Coalition

The Vermont Educators of Color Association and the Education Justice Coalition of Vermont (Ed Coalition) have been coordinating retreats for educators of color since 2020. These retreats have proven to be valuable occasions for educators to connect, heal, and engage in enjoyable experiences. During these gatherings, conversations frequently turned to the idea of organizing a summer camp for BIPOC students, offering them the opportunity to connect, heal, and enjoy themselves in a supportive environment. Past limitations in collective capacity prevented the realization of this idea.

In January 2023, The Ed Justice Coalition took a significant step by hiring a youth organizing staff member. This addition aimed to empower youth organizers in driving impactful and strategic campaigns for tangible improvements within schools, particularly in support of historically marginalized students. With this newfound support, the concept of a BIPOC summer camp began to take shape. A select group collaborated with the staff at the Common Ground Center, who enthusiastically embraced the idea. They extended their support by offering facility discounts and logistical assistance.

Scheduled for August 11-14, 2023, the VT Educators of Color Association and Ed Coalition intend to bring together BIPOC youth from across the state for a BIPOC summer camp. This endeavor is envisioned to become an annual tradition. The camp will serve as a space where youth of color can engage with and learn from adults who share their cultural backgrounds. Leveraging our established rapport with BIPOC youth, we will enlist a stipended group of young individuals to contribute to the camp's planning.

Drawing inspiration from the well-established Camp Outright, which supports queer youth, our summer camp model will take shape. The funding in question will be allocated to cover the expenses for three BIPOC youth from central Vermont who have registered for the camp. This will contribute to offsetting a portion of the overall camp expenditures.

Mosaic VT

Mosaic has been granted funding by the Vermont Department of Health to bolster its support for LGBTQ+ community members. Notably, the Mosaic team predominantly consists of individuals who identify as queer. In response to a direct request from clients, friends, and neighbors, Mosaic is enthusiastically organizing a family-friendly event.

Scheduled for Saturday, October 7, the inaugural Rainbow Fair is poised to be a significant endeavor. The event will unfold over the course of a day at the Barre Auditorium, serving as a platform for partner organizations to disseminate vital information concerning services, resources, and programs available to LGBTQ+ community members and their support networks. The event will also feature a marketplace, offering LGBTQ+ artists a chance to showcase their creative works and merchandise. As the day progresses, the atmosphere will transform into a family-friendly dance party, complete with local vendors providing food and entertainment.

The allocated grant funds will be utilized to cover the event's food costs, as state funds cannot be utilized for purchasing food or beverages. While the initial grant request outlined intentions to allocate the grant for space rental fees, the revised funding amount will be channeled toward food expenses. Despite the adjusted funding, Mosaic remains committed to achieving its objectives. This adjusted approach will alleviate the pressure on community partners to provide in-kind contributions or utilize their own precious unrestricted funds.

MRPSPIE - Montpelier Roxbury Public Schools Partners in Education

Montpelier Roxbury Public Schools Partners in Education (MRPSPIE) envisions a world where unlimited mental health support is accessible, ensuring that young individuals are never left to face challenging, distressing, or frightening circumstances alone. Within our community, the focus is on fostering care and empathy through meticulously designed, professionally developed mental health programs. These efforts will also serve as a powerful stance against Hazing, Bullying, and Harassment, conveying a clear message to both students and families.

Recognizing the collective effort required, MRPSPIE sought the support of community funding through THRIVE to address these issues comprehensively. By harnessing these funds, MRPSPIE aims to initiate a transformative impact within our youth community. The objective is to engage expert therapists to collaborate with high school students, who will then take on the role of trainers for middle school students. This cascading effect will facilitate the transmission of knowledge and practices to elementary school students. This approach will contribute to shaping a community deeply rooted in principles of anti-bullying and bystander intervention, ensuring a safer and more compassionate environment for all.

Peer Plus

The initiative involves the reinstatement of a 24/7 peer-run support line tailored for unhoused and low-income individuals within central Vermont. Concurrently, collaboration with local law enforcement and other social service providers will be pursued to find ways to address calls via peer mediation. The allocated funding will be employed to procure a phone and cover monthly phone expenses, essential for orchestrating peer-to-peer conversations and fostering a support framework throughout central Vermont.

Moreover, the funding will facilitate the provision of transportation services, prioritizing travel to medical and social services appointments. Additionally, the project intends to promptly address other immediate needs of the unhoused and low-income individuals within central Vermont as the need arises.

Pride Rides

The allocated funding will be utilized to purchase additional bicycles and bicycle carrying apparatus (car racks), enhancing the support provided to the LGBTQIA+ cyclist community using our bicycle "library" resource. The acquired bicycles will supplement our existing bicycle resource library, while the car racks will extend the capacity of our ride leaders to transport more bicycles to and from rides and events. Furthermore, these racks will enable us to facilitate bike borrowing beyond our structured events, allowing individuals to ride at times and formats that suit their preferences. As a result, the overall accessibility of our resource library will be expanded. This funding will enable the acquisition of 3 bicycles and 2 racks.

Vermont Kindness Project

The Vermont Kindness Project, in partnership with Just Basics Inc. (Food Pantry), will utilize the funding to establish support programs at the recently launched Resource Center in Montpelier. This center serves as a focal point for an array of social justice community resources, encompassing food assistance applications, housing justice, healthcare, mental health services, volunteer opportunities, peer support, and collective healing events. The project's initiatives encompass:

- Cooking/nutrition classes led by a local chef.
- Facilitated workshops centered around Anti-Racism, catering to both BIPOC and non-BIPOC individuals.
- Somatic Healing Offerings.

Washington County Mental Health Services (WCMHS)

Hiring a Project Manager to work with medical responders, mental health workers, and law enforcement. The Project Manager will help expand and enhance regional mobile mental health crisis services, including timely substance use response. There has been an increase in substance use and overdoses, so WCMHS's project will improve timely and appropriate responses for those with substance use disorder and get feedback from those with lived experience to better develop responses.

Crisis Intervention Team Project

- 1) Development of an enhanced systems workflow for multiple emergency responders, identifying roles to streamline communications for optimal response.
- 2) Successful engagement with EMS for trauma-informed safety training in response to substance-related emergencies.
- 3) Reduction in overdoses and increased community engagement, thus decreasing ED utilization; increased engagement, identifying health inequities and developing training and awareness to reduce those inequities.

Working Bridges

The funding allocated to the 185 Fund will be directed towards extending a small-dollar hand up to low-income workers, effectively alleviating immediate financial crises. This aid empowers recipients to regain stability while progressing towards sustainable long-term financial solutions. The fund's name derives from the 185th percentile of the Federal Poverty Level—a threshold at which many public assistance programs, such as food and utility assistance, terminate. The 185 Fund is designed to bridge this crucial gap, often faced by working families.

Within the realm of assistance provided by Working Bridges, a significant portion of clients are low-earning single women who file tax returns as head of household. This demographic comprises working single parents striving to make ends meet. These women frequently confront marginalization, underrepresentation, and the enduring impact of gender-based inequalities in pay and career advancement.

Although the initial funding request aimed to procure gift cards for distribution among fund participants to address their immediate needs, Working Bridges altered its focus after the flood incident. Consequently, this funding will play a pivotal role in offering support to low-earning single women during the post-flood recovery phase.

Revised Problem Statement and Areas of Focus for Additional Community Funding:

Historical evidence and recent testimonials from impacted communities highlight a crucial problem: marginalized communities are discussed instead of invited to participate in designing solutions to improve health equity.

To address this issue, the THRIVE CARES Committee aims to utilize community funding to directly support marginalized individuals and communities in shaping their own health priorities. By funding projects specifically designed to benefit the communities most affected by health inequities, our goal is to provide them with access to resources and support necessary to achieve their health goals and enhance overall well-being. Ultimately, we strive to foster a culture of collaboration where marginalized communities feel valued, respected, and included, leading to tangible progress in the Barre Health District's journey towards achieving health equity.

The THRIVE CARES Committee defines marginalized/underserved communities as follows: Indigenous peoples, Black people, people of color, LGBTQIA+ individuals, people with disabilities, women, refugees, immigrants (with or without documentation), religious minorities, unhoused individuals, and those with low incomes.

Areas of Focus for Additional Community Funding in Barre Health District

For this funding, we identify marginalized/underserved communities as Indigenous peoples, Black people, people of color, LGBTQIA+ individuals, people with disabilities, women, refugees, immigrants (with or without documentation), religious minorities, unhoused individuals, and those living on low incomes.

We recognize that these communities have historically and currently faced mistreatment, prejudice, and discrimination, resulting in worse healthcare outcomes. Therefore, through this funding, we aim to promote the physical, mental, emotional, and community health of the members of these marginalized communities.

We encourage individuals, groups, and organizations considering applying for this funding to prioritize the following areas in their funding requests. In other words, start thinking about how the proposed program/project/event will achieve these goals:

- **Promoting the physical, mental, emotional, and community health of the members of marginalized communities:** Funding requests should focus on initiatives that address the specific health needs of these communities, aiming to improve overall well-being and address disparities.
- **Providing direct benefits to members of these communities:** Proposals should outline how the project will directly benefit and impact the individuals within marginalized communities, ensuring that the funding leads to tangible improvements in their lives.
- **Increasing access to information on available resources and support in the community:** Collaboration with existing projects, programs, and organizations (particularly those led by members of marginalized communities) can help expand the reach and effectiveness of initiatives, making vital resources and support more accessible to marginalized communities.
- **Empowering the members of marginalized communities:** Projects should actively involve community members in decision-making processes, ensuring that their voices are heard and respected. By fostering empowerment, individuals within marginalized communities can become advocates for their own needs and actively participate in shaping their own healthcare outcomes.
- **Supporting community-based mutual aid networks:** Funding requests should consider supporting and strengthening existing mutual aid networks that have been providing vital community support to marginalized communities. By bolstering these networks, the funding can enhance their impact and sustainability.

These areas were identified based on the community outreach conducted by THRIVE's Integrator for this grant. During the outreach, community members shared their testimonies, which were reviewed by the THRIVE Health Equity Committee as well as the members of the THRIVE CARES Committee. These committees have carefully considered the input from the community and

recognized the importance of addressing the specific needs of marginalized communities through this funding opportunity.