

# The Teaching Horse: Training, Retention & Support for Early Learning Teachers, Students, & Families

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*FY2021 Early Childhood Grants*

## ***Heart of Horse Sense***

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# Application Form

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## ***INSTRUCTIONS***

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Buncombe County requests proposals for community based projects to enhance outcomes for young children and their families in our community. Grants made through the Early Childhood Education and Development Fund will be focused on access to quality early childhood care and education.

Please refer to the Grant Guidelines published on the Early Childhood Grants website at [buncombecounty.org/grants](http://buncombecounty.org/grants) for complete information about the grant program, including: Purpose; Funding; Eligibility; Timeline; Grant writing workshop; Review process; Awards; and more.

**Applications are due by 5:00 pm on February 14, 2020.**

## ***BASIC INFORMATION***

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**BASIC INFORMATION – Before completing the application, please tell us a little about the request.**

### **Project Name\***

The Teaching Horse: Training, Retention & Support for Early Learning Teachers, Students, & Families

### **Strategy\***

Recognizing that some projects will use more than one strategy, select the strategy that most closely applies to this project:

Implementing workforce development strategies to recruit and retain qualified teachers

### **Funding Request\***

How much funding is this project requesting for FY2021?

\$273,368.00

### **Grant Guidelines\***

Have you read and understand the information presented in the FY2021 Grant Guidelines for Early Childhood Grants (Grant Guidelines)?

If no, please contact County staff to request assistance: Rachael Nygaard, (828) 250-6536 or [rachael.nygaard@buncombecounty.org](mailto:rachael.nygaard@buncombecounty.org).

Yes

## APPLICATION

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS – Responses to these questions will be scored by the grant committee. Each question is worth 10% of the final score.**

### Organization\*

Give a brief history, including date of founding, focus, services, and record of success.

Heart of Horse Sense (HOHS) is a non-profit founded in 2014 to support Trauma-Focused Equine Assisted Psychotherapy & Learning at no cost to At-Risk Youth in WNC. Horse Sense of the Carolinas (HSOTC) is the partner/contractor delivering the equine therapy services. HOHS Founder Shannon Knapp is a published expert in the field of equine therapy (2 books and 3 curriculums). The most relevant track record is the success HOHS has had collaborating over the last 6 years with Children First/CIS to serve elementary school children showing signs of trauma & other risk factors associated with living in public housing. Positive changes are made by these children as they gain self esteem & self-regulation with the horses. Our experience has convinced us that we need to reach children earlier if possible & their teachers as well. For several years HOHS has consulted with Early Childhood Education specialists about an equine assisted approach in regulating very young trauma-affected children & its potential for addressing burnout & vicarious trauma in their teachers. In 2019 we piloted "Teacher Tuesdays" in which teachers came for group equine therapy sessions. 29 teachers from 9 schools attended, experiencing healing with horses for themselves, learning about developmental trauma, & preparing to support students back in their classrooms. From one teacher: "We had come to the farm after a day of teaching stuck in high gear thinking of the million things we did that day and the million things we still needed to do. As soon as we got to the farm we took a 'horse breath' and just were in the process of slowing down and filling our cups. As we continued on through the sessions, we could feel ourselves making connections and 'living in the moment'. We have also been able to share these techniques with the students and school staff we work with each day. Therefore, the benefits of Teacher Tuesdays reach well beyond participants to the students, co-workers, and administrators."

### Need for the Project\*

What is the main issue this project is established to address? What data or qualitative factors/stories are available to show that need?

This project has been established to address teacher turnover rates & the effect that has on young children in Early Care & Education facilities. In 2018 the turnover rate for full time early learning teachers in Buncombe was 28% compared to a statewide rate of 19%. In addition the rate of teachers leaving the field in three years was 32% compared to the statewide rate of 19%. These teachers are facing burnout, past traumas of their own & vicarious trauma as they struggle to meet the needs of children who live in poverty or are experiencing neglect, physical or sexual abuse, loss of a parent, and/or exposure to drugs & violence. Studies continue to show that consistent attachment partners or primary caregivers are essential to the healing process for children, & that early intervention is key. It is essential that we help educators & administrators develop emotionally responsive school routines, curricula, & adult-child interactions that support all children, including those with a traumatic history. The funding requested would benefit the retention of teachers and the healing of children and their families. In addition, HOHS staff would develop the advanced skills that would allow us to provide ongoing support for Early Learning Education in Buncombe County. In 2018, a challenging child in a Kindergarten classroom put a stuffed horse named Lucky on her teacher's desk on the last day of school, saying "Thank you. You need Lucky more than I do." Eight months later, during Teacher Tuesday, without any knowledge of this teacher-student relationship, Lucky (the real horse) walked with purpose to a new teacher in the arena. She asked, "Is this Lucky?" Through tears of amazement & joy, this

teacher met the horse of the child had so deeply connected with during the previous school year. The stuffed horse was given to the little girl during her last session at Horse Sense. The teacher came to see for herself what had so powerfully changed this traumatized little girl.

## Project\*

Explain the project and how it will work. Include the overall purpose and any models or evidence-based practices that will be included. What specific activities and milestones are included in the project plan?

The purpose of this project is to improve retention of Early Childhood Education Teachers, using equine therapy to address their own childhood/vicarious trauma & to train them in the brain science behind developmental trauma so they can better support trauma-affected students & their families. Further, equine therapy will be offered to youth/families in acute distress, to facilitate their healing & hence smooth the classroom experience for all involved.

The therapy practice is Natural Lifemanship (NL), a trauma-informed approach that builds healthy relationships with the assistance of horses. This is a social, emotional, & mental health experiential approach, & has been proven to be effective with all ages and abilities--from very young children to adults. The model of brain development on which it is based is the Neurosequential Model of Education & Therapeutics of Dr. Bruce Perry of the Child Trauma Academy.

The project will last three years. In each of the first two years HOHS staff will pursue more advanced training with NL, focusing on work with very young children & feeding the project results back to NL to advance the national understanding of NL's effectiveness with Early Childhood students & teachers. Each year we will hold afternoon sessions for early learning teachers to address their own issues of handling trauma & stress, providing them with strategies for better emotional self-regulation, coping & communication skills, & more effective boundaries. The sessions will be held at the farm in an indoor or outdoor arena with mental health professionals, horse professionals, & trained rescue horses. In addition, we will provide similar therapy sessions for acute children from the teachers' classrooms, engaging the whole family when possible.

The key milestones will be the engagement of more teachers & students each year, retention & job satisfaction of early childhood teachers, & a curriculum for other equine therapy programs around the country.

## People Served\*

Who will be served by this project? Include demographics for children and families served, workforce, and/or any other relevant groups.

This project will primarily serve teachers in Early Childhood Ed. There are +/- 80 child care centers in BC with +/- 750 teachers. With a turnover rate of 28%, over 200 teachers are leaving the classroom (and the children they teach & care for) each year. Development in children from birth to 5 is both partner- & experience-dependent, meaning they need secure, connected relationships & safe, enriched environments for optimum learning. When caregivers/teachers leave, attachment is disrupted & trauma is the result. At the same time, teachers, who are often not paid a living wage, are part of the "underserved" demographic, are often affected by poverty & racism, & are also often experiencing both their own trauma & vicarious trauma associated with the work they do. These are the factors that most impact the recruitment & retention rates of early educators.

Similarly, most of the youth we plan to reach are affected by poverty & racism. According to the 2018 NC Child data report, nearly half of the 50,000 children in BC are growing up in/near poverty, increasing factors that can impair brain development & lead to poor outcomes. We are also becoming increasingly aware of serious mental health issues in younger & younger children. A recent CDC statistic: the suicide rate for kids aged 10 to 14 has nearly tripled in the last decade, and the pace is accelerating. HOHS recently met a low income 8 year old child from an area housing development who had made a serious suicide plan before someone intervened. Our belief is that we can best serve these children by reaching them before elementary school, while there is still time to partner with their teachers & parents in healing developing brains. Our

primary strategy is to strengthen teachers so they can support all the youth they teach. Early Educators can understand & learn, through The Teaching Horse, how to create safe, healthy and connected classrooms that will be better environments for children and teachers alike.

## Results\*

What results do you hope to achieve with this project? Be specific about how much impact the project will have in line with the goals of the fund, and how many people will be served.

For projects requesting funding for slots, also please include:

- Total new slots created
- Total slots maintained
- # of Subsidy slots created
- # of Subsidy slots maintained
- # of teachers/staff positions created
- # of teachers/staff positions maintained

Teachers will have increased professional quality of life and overall job satisfaction and therefore there will be increased retention rates. This will ease the teacher shortage in Buncombe County. Teachers will be equipped to support children and families who are experiencing trauma in an emotionally responsive classroom environment every day. Teachers, families and children will have tools for resiliency to carry with them for life, giving them the ability to have successful, meaningful relationships, long term job satisfaction and deeper connections with themselves, their co-workers, their students and the world around them. The project will support the mastery of supportive techniques for building safe and nurturing school communities.

The project will help to decrease the number of children being disruptive in the classroom and/or dismissed from early education centers due to extreme behaviors related to trauma and will contribute to increased successes in development. There will be an overall increase in school readiness and an overall increase in all future learning success.

The project will work with 200+ early education teachers in 80 group sessions and 20 children/families in roughly 90 individual/family therapy sessions each year. In 3 years this grant will allow us to serve of 600+ early education teachers in roughly 240 group sessions, and 60 youth/families in roughly 270+ individual therapy sessions.

## Evaluation\*

How will you know you have succeeded? Explain the project evaluation process, including specific measures that will be tracked.

The key measures are teacher retention, teacher compassion satisfaction and teacher professional quality of life. The project will increase the retention rates by 25% or more at each school. It will increase the compassion satisfaction by 20% and the professional quality of life by 10%.

Retention percentages will be reported at the beginning of the project, monthly throughout and at the end of each project year. Screening tools will be administered both pre and post project, and monthly throughout. Heart rate variability will be measured during each individual therapy session for identified clients, and possibly for families as well. For all Teachers and Influencers, we will gather ACE(Adverse Childhood Experiences) scores at project entry. The project evaluator will administer the Self-Compassion Long Form and the Professional Quality of Life Scale(Pro-QOL5), both pre and post project. In addition, the Pro-QOL5 will

be administered every 30 days throughout the project, possibly dropping to quarterly, if appropriate, after Year 1. The Pro-QOL5 will inform project processes.

For all acute youth, we will gather ACE scores at project entry, from parents or guardians. The project evaluator will gather additional information from parents/guardians using the Traumatic Events Screening Inventory (TESI). During each session with youth, an evaluator will use the CSEFEL feelings wheel along with the emWave Heart Math that measures Heart Rate Variability. When parents/family are present, the Revised Childhood Anxiety and Depression Scale(RCAD)-Parent and BASC (Behavior Assessment System for Children) Parenting Relationship Questionnaire will be used.

## Equity\*

Describe your approach to racial and socio-economic equity, both inside and outside the organization. What are some specific examples of practices that are in place or to be put in place with this project?

HOHS serves children of varied races and ethnic backgrounds through extensive experience with our diverse local public housing developments. In addition, HSOTC (the organization that provides direct services) has had an effective history of addressing the diverse groups involved in juvenile crime and gang violence, and has staff fluent in Spanish and of different ethnic backgrounds. Further, horses do not react to race, gender, or signs of social status. HOHS provides equal access and equal service to all comers without reference to race, ethnicity or gender, or ability to pay. We are also aware of the need for culturally-specific services to clients. Because the lead therapist at HSOTC is a bilingual Puerto Rican, we are able to reach Spanish-speaking students with special effectiveness. Because many of the children we serve are African-American, we have been working with an African-American therapist from the local consulting firm "A Therapist Like Me". She is familiar with equine assisted therapy and is able to observe our sessions and make suggestions for more effective communication. We are currently raising funds to continue this consulting arrangement long-term and over time we hope to add African-American staff.

## Collaboration\*

List any formal and/or supportive partners. Describe their roles in the project. How will they make it stronger?

The groundwork for this project was laid over the last several years as HOHS Director Shannon Knapp and Early Learning Specialist Christine Tucker dreamed about providing mental health assistance thru equine therapy for teachers and acutely traumatized early learners and their families. Heart of Horse Sense has partnered with Horse Sense of the Carolinas since inception, and also with Meadows Town Ranch, where the equine therapy services take place. Shannon Knapp will serve as Program Director and Christine Tucker will serve as Program Coordinator & Lead Equine Specialist in program delivery, working together closely to manage the project. We will also partner with The Natural Lifemanship Institute in advancing the training and skills necessary to serve very young children, sharing pre-post data with them as we seek to perfect this program delivery.

We have already started Teacher Tuesday as a pilot program, working with and training teachers and caregivers from several early learning centers, including Verner, Asheville City Preschool, Children and Friends, YWCA, and Buncombe County Schools preschool program. We are offering a 7 session training series through the Buncombe Partnership for Children and have also contracted to offer trainings in Equine Assisted Psychotherapy through MAHEC. We currently also work with Children First/Communities in Schools and Asheville Parks & Rec, learning about families in need of our services through these agencies. Last, we are engaging with Caring For Children to collaborate on programming for their caregivers, administrators, families and children. Each of these programs are eager to find funding to be able to offer our services to more of their caregivers/teachers, build their teams, and strengthen their resiliency and programming in the Early Education community here in Buncombe County. These collaborations will serve as the backbone of this program and help us to build and recruit more participants.

## Budget\*

Download a copy of the budget form [HERE](#). Complete the form, and upload it using the button below.

Explain how grant funds will be used, specifically what type of expenses will be covered by County funds. Describe other sources of revenue, including type of funding, source, restrictions and status.

Teaching Horse FY21\_ECE\_Grant\_Budget\_Form (1).xlsx

County funds will be used primarily for staffing and service delivery; HOHS, HSOTC, Meadows Town Ranch and collaborative partners are all offering in-kind support. Further, we have received verbal approval from various private donors for the trainings, transportation, and supplies needed to implement the program in year one, with some funds available now. We have already turned to private donors and other foundations to meet capital needs, including a vehicle to transport the acute youth/families, who are often without reliable transportation to the farm, as well as to offer necessary support for Teacher Tuesdays. Both HOHS volunteers and several of the schools we partner with will also donate, in-kind, supervision of youth in transport to the farm and also in transportation of teachers to the farm as needed. A small amount of funds will support the teachers that participate in the project in creating and maintaining emotionally responsive classroom environme

In Year 1, we will begin by offering onsite trainings at schools on the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics and Education; we will pursue advanced training from HeartMath Institute, Eagala and the Natural Lifemanship Institute, and begin to fill all group and individual slots at the farm towards capacity for teachers and acute youth/families. In years 2 and 3, service delivery will reach and maintain capacity, and some Training/Professional Development will continue yet overall will decrease each year.

## Sustainability\*

How will the project continue to succeed after the funding of the grant? Explain your plan for making this an ongoing effort.

HOHS is committed to helping At-Risk Youth and we have learned that reaching their teachers is vital, since the healing we offer needs to be supported back in the classroom and in the home if possible. In our experience, children who have experienced equine therapy and learning have often gone on to be leaders with their peers and even in their families and communities. We continually raise funds for this purpose; if Buncombe County can give us the boost we need to secure staffing and the costs of expanding into the world of Early Learning, we will be able to make our case to a wider field of foundations and individual donors. In our experience, we often find donors eager to help with our work with children and we know they are willing to support younger children. In addition, we are working with the child care centers and schools to allocate training dollars in their budgets to support the training and other benefits that their teachers and administrators can get from us. Ongoing conversations are also happening with other organizations such as Buncombe Partnership for Children and MAHEC to be able to offer this program in its simplest form to teachers, caregivers, mental health professionals and others that work with young children. Our hope is that we get this program off the ground with this grant and are able to continue because of the results it will produce and the support we will continue to seek from collaborations and partnerships we build along the way. We hope that the monies spent on supporting teacher recruitment and turnover will also eventually change over and be money spent on the programs that support and lift up the teachers that come and stay. If BC can help us demonstrate the efficacy of this approach we believe we can find ongoing funding, including offering a curriculum in our work and trainings for others seeking to support teachers/caregivers and very young traumatized and stressed youth/families.

## OPTIONAL INFORMATION

**OPTIONAL INFORMATION – This information will not impact grant scoring but will be helpful to the committee.**

### Partial Funding

If the project were to be offered a grant for partial funding, what factors would need to be considered?

HOHS would gratefully receive any amount offered towards this exciting project, to begin the work at this level and to keep looking for funding to continue it. We have been working towards this creative approach to reaching Early Learning Teachers and very young students for some time, and we would not stop. However, the potential for significant and timely impact across Buncombe County would be lessened if funds were reduced, quite simply because we need the staff to implement this level of work. The need is great and this intervention now would be timely for both teachers under stress and young children suffering acute dysregulation because of early trauma. Plus Buncombe County will have the opportunity to support a model and a curriculum for healing with horses at the Early Childhood Level that is likely to have local and regional as well as national implications.

### Multi-Year Funding

If you would like this project to be considered for multi-year funding (up to 3 years), what amounts would you request for years 2 and 3? What milestones would this funding allow you to accomplish? Explain why more years are needed to accomplish goals.

**YEAR ONE:** In the first year we will begin with teachers and students at 3 early learning centers, among them Verner Centers (which has four Head Start and Early Head Start programs) and Asheville City Preschool. Total projected costs: \$306,020 with \$273,368 from Bunc Co.

**YEAR TWO:** The project will expand to three additional Buncombe County child care/Head Start locations (Locations to consider: Community Action-17 locations/Emma-1 location/Children & Friends-1 location). Support for Verner and Asheville City Preschool will continue in limited ways/as needed. Projected request: \$254,121.

**YEAR THREE:** The project will expand to include 3-4 more Buncombe Country Co locations; same with teachers and students as in past years; continue support for Year 1 and Year 2 schools in limited ways/as needed. By this time a critical mass of teachers will have been trained and students at most area head start and pre-schools will have been served. Projected request: \$252,020.

The dollar amounts requested for Years 2 & 3 would be to continue personnel positions and direct services, with less each year towards training and development.

The project is a request for multi-year funding because it is important that we are intentional with the establishment of the process and training staff in order to bring enough teachers on board to have a significant impact across the county and to gather meaningful data. Knowing that funds are available for continuation will help keep the growth and development going and the impact building through word of mouth. Teachers who observe the success of others in the first year can make plans to participate in the second or third years. The effort that would otherwise go into fundraising for subsequent years can go into the intensive work with teachers and students and with the families whose children need help before more damage is done to their cognitive and emotional lives.



## Resource Support

How can Buncombe County support your organization with this project and in strengthening your work (related to equity, scale, or impact)?

We know the method works because we have already had successful outcomes with many elementary students, teenagers and adults who have been affected by trauma & PTSD, and with therapists and teachers in WNC affected by working with such trauma. The whole-brain, sensory-rich, body-centered approach of equine assisted therapy and learning may be the most effective way to reach people who have experienced trauma, a fact fairly well understood on the national level. Because of WLOS coverage of our work with Children First/CIS and local housing developments, many members of the community are already aware of its effectiveness with children. Similarly, we have repeatedly demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach in working with veterans with PTSD. The questions we wrestle with will be how to connect with administrators and members of the community who have not experienced the work first hand or who do not understand the intervention and the impact it has. If we need help, it will be in making our results with early learners and their families broadly known. But primarily the funding to implement this project at a critical mass of schools is the help we need from Buncombe County.

## Scale-up

What is your vision for how the strategies from this project could contribute to a significant scale-up the overall system to collectively address the child care crisis?

We have already demonstrated the effectiveness of equine assisted psychotherapy and learning with children K-12, particularly children living in poverty or with racism or abuse and for the teachers who support them in the classroom. This approach can work for very young preverbal children because it can be used for intervention to regulate the brain and improve the ability of a child to form healthy attachments (for example, a child who is in the foster system and has attachment issues). This is not new information in the field of equine therapy or in trauma-informed therapy but the general public is not aware of the whole body, whole brain approach to therapy with horses. If we can demonstrate the effectiveness of this work with early learning teachers and their students in Buncombe County we can extend it to more schools in this county and in nearby counties. Shannon Knapp teaches and makes multiple presentations nationally each year, so she would be able to promote and teach this approach as a solution to issues affecting early learning teachers and students across the country. Writing a curriculum of our work, available nationally and internationally, with steps to take and results from our program is a goal of this grant. Further we will generate high-quality research data from this work, for submission for publication in a peer-reviewed journal by year 3.

## Other

Is there anything else that you want the committee to know?

Please watch:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=89&v=3Eki6YsH7r8&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=89&v=3Eki6YsH7r8&feature=emb_logo): video of a colleague in the field drawing connections between the work with horses and brain/life development.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kl6QKVruKbQ>; WLOS spot on equine therapy in collaboration with Children First/CIS



## File Attachment Summary

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### ***Applicant File Uploads***

- Teaching Horse FY21\_ECE\_Grant\_Budget\_Form (1).xlsx

## Early Childhood Education and Development Fund Proposed FY2021 Project Budget (July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021)

<b>Organization Name:</b>	<b>Heart of Horse Sense</b>
<b>Project Name:</b>	<b>The Teaching Horse</b>
<b>Grant Amount Requested:</b>	<b>\$273,368.00</b>

FY2021 Proposed Project Revenue	Amount	Notes
Proposed Buncombe County Early Childhood Grant	\$ 266,488.00	
List other sources: Private Donors	\$ 12,880.00	
List other sources: In Kind from Collaborative Agencies	\$ 4,152.00	Transportation of teachers/youth and driver/staff
List other sources: In Kind Volunteer hours	\$ 22,500.00	1500 average volunteer hours, general, at \$15/hour
List other sources:		
List other sources:		
List other sources:		
List other sources:		
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 306,020.00</b>	

FY2021 Proposed Project Expenses	Proposed Grant	Other Funds	Total	Notes
Personnel	\$ 145,000.00	\$ 22,500.00	\$ 167,500.00	
Travel/Training	\$ 37,238.00		\$ 37,238.00	
Technology	\$ 6,880.00		\$ 6,880.00	
Curriculum/Assessments			\$ -	
Licensing/Dues			\$ -	
Nutrition		\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,200.00	
Transportation		\$ 4,152.00	\$ 4,152.00	
Supplies/Materials		\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,200.00	
Building Maintenance/Repair			\$ -	
Rent/Occupancy/Utilities		\$ 3,600.00	\$ 3,600.00	
Furniture			\$ -	
Playground/Outdoor space			\$ -	
Printing/Marketing/Website/Postage			\$ -	
Admin Expenses (Legal, Accounting, Insurance, etc.)			\$ -	
Other (please list in comments section)	\$ 84,250.00		\$ 84,250.00	contracted with HSOTC
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$ 306,020.00</b>	

Overall Organization Budget	Amount	Notes
FY2019 Actual Year-End Revenue	\$ 95,805.00	
FY2019 Actual Year-End Expenses	\$ 75,102.00	
FY2020 Adopted Budget Amount	\$ 104,332.00	
FY2021 Proposed Budget Amount	n/a	We run calendar fiscal year.