

Instructions

QUINNIPIAC RIVER FUND GRANT AWARD - FINAL REPORT QUESTIONS

This form is to be completed by all nonprofit organizations that received a grant through the Quinnipiac River Fund.

Grant Details

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Organization Name

Canal Dock Boathouse, Inc.

Grant Description

to support boating and environmental programming that bring New Haven area residents in contact with New Haven's waterfront.

Total Grant Amount

20,000.00

Report Questions

1. List the specific objectives/outcomes of the project and tell how they were met during the grant period. Also, provide an update on any special conditions of the grant (if applicable).

Youth Engagement

OBJECTIVE: Serve 30 high school students at no charge in a year-round development program, and recruit 50 students for summer camps with 30% of slots at nominal or no cost.

PROGRESS: Between September of 2023 and November of 2024 we served a total of 34 high school aged youth that attend 7 different New Haven Public Schools. The summer program enrolled 45 high school aged students, and 39 middle school aged youth in week long programming. All but 5 participants participated at no cost (85%). Additionally, we worked with an additional 56 high school aged youth that are "water-wary" and conducted programming on land or while tethered to the dock at the Boathouse at Canal Dock.

Community Engagement

OBJECTIVE Host 5 Community Days, engaging 150 unique individuals in waterfront activities, with at least 50% from priority communities (Black, Latine, low-income).

PROGRESS Canal Dock held 5 Community Days, exceeding 200 individuals in attendance many of whom were from New haven neighborhoods. Activities included sailing, kayaking and dragon boating, all provided at no charge.

Boathouse Memberships

OBJECTIVE: Engage an additional 50 individuals in sailing, rowing, and kayaking activities, for a total of 248 participants.

PROGRESS We reached 248 members. Much of increase came in participation in Sail Haven, which was launched in 2023.

2. Please share your successes, challenges and any lessons learned through the implementation of your project. Were there any unintended consequences or lessons learned that may affect how you operate your program moving forward?

SUCSESSES:

Increased Community Engagement: Our Community Days and expanded youth programs successfully engaged over 200 individuals, providing access to the waterfront and fostering a sense of community.

Strong Partnerships: Collaboration with local schools and other non-profits helped to enhance our outreach and diversify program offerings. This increased awareness of Canal Dock's mission and led to a broader impact.

CHALLENGES

Maintaining a comprehensive year round youth program:

Funding for Community Events: While our community-focused events were successful in increasing participation, funding these programs remained challenging as they often do not align with the priorities of funders.

Balancing Free and Paid Programs: Maintaining a balance between offering no-cost programs to ensure accessibility and developing fee-based services to achieve financial sustainability has been a delicate balance. This requires careful planning and a deeper understanding of community needs and pricing strategies.

Lessons Learned:

Focus on Fee-for-Service Models: A key takeaway is the importance of placing a greater emphasis on fee-for-service activities, such as paid memberships and classes, to support financial stability. These activities can help generate revenue that offsets the costs of free community programming.

Adjusting Program Scale to Demand: We learned that scaling certain programs, such as our youth programming, based on funding and increasing other programs based on high demand can help manage resources more efficiently while meeting community interest.

Flexibility in Program Delivery: Adapting our program delivery based on participant feedback allowed us to create more engaging and relevant experiences, leading to better program outcomes and satisfaction.

Unintended Consequences:

Increased Interest from Adults: While youth programming remains a priority, the popularity of our adult Learn-to-Sail programs led to an unexpected rise in interest from adults looking for affordable recreational activities. This has opened up a new audience that we can engage through memberships and workshops, supporting financial sustainability.

3. What are the opportunities and needs of your organization as it continues to move forward with its work to positively impact the Quinnipiac River?

OPPORTUNITIES

A) New Audience Engagement Through Adult Boating Programs:

The rise in interest from adults for our Learn-to-Sail and membership offerings presents an opportunity to expand our fee-based programming. This can help generate additional revenue that supports both our free

community access initiatives and our youth development programs.

B) Strengthened Partnerships:

As we continue to work closely with schools, community groups, and other local organizations, there is potential for deeper collaboration. This includes joint events, educational initiatives, and resource-sharing, which can further our mission of increasing waterfront access and ecological awareness.

C) Potential Partnership With The Boathouse's New Tenant, The University of New Haven: We have the opportunity to further integrate environmental education opportunities into our youth and community programming. With the increased interest in this area, we can build partnerships with local schools, universities, and environmental organizations to offer educational programs that focus on New Haven Harbor and the Quinnipiac River's ecology and conservation.

NEEDS

A) Diversified Funding Streams: To achieve greater financial stability, Canal Dock needs to diversify its funding base beyond grants and individual contributions. This includes developing more fee-for-service programs and seeking corporate partnerships or sponsorships to support community events and environmental education initiatives.

B) Investment in Infrastructure: To continue providing quality programming, we need investment in equipment, including boats. This will ensure that our programs remain safe and appealing to participants of all ages and abilities. Moving to an all volunteer and seasonal staffing model during the 2025 program year, we will be able to better invest in equipment, technology, marketing and member services.

C) Marketing and Outreach Support: Increased marketing efforts are needed to raise awareness of our programs, especially the newer adult membership options. Effective communication strategies will help attract a wider audience, ensuring both our paid and free programs are well-utilized.

D) Capacity Building: As our organization grows, there is a need for additional volunteer support, particularly in program management and outreach roles. This will help us maintain the quality of our offerings while expanding our reach into new areas and activities.

MOVING FORWARD

Primarily what we learned in the last year that we can not sustainably offer a year round, holistic youth program. Prompted by this realization as well as the loss of a major funding source, the Canal Dock board of directors voted to greatly reduce staffing and to rely more on volunteer resources and to hire temporary staff to manage specific programs, such as youth rowing, summer camps and learn to sail/row courses. Canal Dock will offer a six week after school youth rowing program that will focus on fitness, rowing skills and team building. We will also plan to hold at least two week long summer camp programs for high school and middle school students.

Also, we are now looking to build on the success of our Sail Haven program to increase membership in all Canal Dock boating memberships and to increase membership involvement in managing recreational activities and community engagement activities, such as Community Days and Dragon Boat Regatta.

We are also exploring new partnership opportunities to enhance community awareness of Canal Dock and New Haven harbor as well as our impact. This includes engaging with area private schools, such as Hamden Hall, youth programs looking for off site activities, such as LEAP and Solar Youth, and in the future with the University of New Haven, which is moving its marine biology program to Canal Dock.

Attachments

Financial information (required): Please provide a detailed accounting of how the specific grant dollars were spent based on the budget submitted in the grant application.

Detailed Accounting

CanalDockQRFExpenses2024.xlsx

Pictures (optional): Please attach one to three pictures in JPEG format, in the highest resolution possible, of activities that have occurred throughout the grant period as a result of grant funding. By providing pictures, your organization is consenting to unlimited use of the pictures by The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven and/or the Valley Community Foundation in publications in print and online (including www.thequinnipiacriver.com). Please include a description of each photo and, when known, the photographer to be credited.

Picture 1

Screenshot 2025-03-27 081318volunteers.jpg

Description and Photo Credit

Canal Dock Boathouse relies on volunteers to maintain its fleet of kayaks, rowing shells, and sail boats. Affordable and member-run, Sail Haven and New Haven Community Rowing provide an opportunity for area residents to appreciate New Haven Harbor and the Quinnipiac River.

Photo Credit: Canal Dock Boathouse Inc.

Picture 2

Screenshot 2025-03-27 081213dbr2024.jpg

Description and Photo Credit

Community Events such as the Annual Dragon Boat Festival bring people from across Greater New Haven to enjoy New Haven's harbor. Photo Credit: Canal Dock Boathouse, Inc.

Picture 3

Screenshot 2025-03-27 203343launchingashell.jpg

Description and Photo Credit

Canal Dock's affordable and no charge youth programs for high school and middle school students provide instruction in rowing water safety, fitness training, and equipment handling care. Novices and "water wary" welcome.

Photo Credit: Canal Dock Boathouse, Inc.