



1. Describe your program start up, date, location

- a. New England Science & Sailing Foundation was created in 2002 by members of the Stonington Harbor Yacht Club, when the club was forming, with the mission to develop sailing and educational programs that benefit the community at large. That first year, there were just 14 children, 8 tiny boats, and a big dream of being inclusive of those who love or want to learn about the water. A catalyst for this initiative was the initial donation by Syd Rogers just before he passed away, who embodied all the principles that our community sailing programs are based on: seamanship, sportsmanship, safety, and fun.

In 2004, we became a nonprofit 501(c)(3), separate from Stonington Harbor Yacht Club, and adopted the SHYC Sailing Foundation name. We continued our mission of inclusiveness as we grew to serve more and more children each year with instructional sailing programs. In 2008, we added a marine science program to expand options for getting on the water to those children not keen on sailing. That year, we also began renting our current location, 70 & 72 Water Street in Stonington Borough, to give us more teaching and dock space to accommodate our expanding classes and fleet of boats.

2010 saw the addition of our first full time staff member as well as our popular surfing program, which began our adventure sports program. In 2011, we ceased renting and purchased our Stonington facility to secure our permanent home on the harbor. That same year, we were selected by US Sailing as one of the first nine Community Sailing Centers in the country to be recognized under their new accreditation program.

In 2012 we started to focus on using our water based programs to support education in the classroom especially STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) initiatives for at risk children in inner cities like New London. We changed our name to New England Science & Sailing Foundation to note the large role science education was now playing at NESS. We also committed to year-round operations by hiring full-time, year-round program directors, and we were chosen by US Sailing as one of a handful of centers around the country to help develop the US Sailing REACH lesson plans.

Today, NESS teaches over 4,700 students annually, 56% of whom will receive some form of financial aid to participate. NESS has a home-base in Stonington, CT, and 6 satellite locations: New London, CT (Ocean Beach, New London Community Boating at Greens Harbor Beach, Mitchell College, Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School, Science and Technology Magnet High School of Southeastern Connecticut), and Westerly, RI.

Despite our growth over the years, a key to NESS's success is that we have been true to our four core values that were identified at inception:

- **Inclusiveness:** Getting as many people out on the water as possible, learning and making new friends, regardless of financial means
- **Experiential “Hands-on” Learning:** Actively engaging students in the subject matter through doing, seeing, and feeling first hand
- **Personal Growth:** Empowering students to do things they have never experienced before and to discover their personal best
- **Stewardship:** Connecting students with their communities and natural environment

2. Describe your venue, service area, include wind, water conditions, environmental setting, etc.

- In Stonington, our location enables novice students to take advantage of the protected water of Stonington Harbor and advanced students to challenge themselves on the more open water of Fishers Island Sound.
- In New London, students explore the Thames River from Greens Harbor Beach.
- As our strategy is to establish satellite operations to be closer to our students we expect to experience a wide variety of conditions.

3. Describe your facilities, & services provided at your location(s):

- NESS has a home-base in Stonington, CT, and 6 satellite locations: New London, CT (Ocean Beach, New London Community Boating at Greens Harbor Beach, Mitchell College, Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School, Science and Technology Magnet High School of Southeastern Connecticut), and Westerly, RI. Two of these locations offer sailing instruction, all six locations engage students in ocean adventure education.
- Stonington: In the winter of 2015-2016, we renovated our Sailing Center (formerly Garbo Lobster). This renovation included raising the floor to make room for fleet storage, changing the location of the entrance for easier access to sails and other supplies, and making the building ADA-compliant. In addition to the renovation of the Sailing Center, we also installed floating docks and ramps on the pier to create safer access to the water and in turn got NESS one step closer to installing handicap-accessible ramps for adaptive sailing. In Stonington, NESS offers a variety of programs suited to sailors of all abilities and aged 4 through adult. As a US Sailing recognized Community Sailing Center, we offer the highest standard of quality instruction and facilities. Whether a student is a beginner, intermediate or even a seasoned racer, interested in dinghies or keelboats, NESS has an experience for every student. NESS has a two ton (4,000lbs) hoist at our Stonington facility, which supports our sailing and powerboat education and use. The hoist enables dry-sailed boats, including Vipers and J70s, access to Fishers Island Sound for regattas/day sails and is available for all hoist and storage needs.

- c. New London: In the spring of 2015, NESS brought New London Community Boating (NLCB) under its umbrella to provide an enhanced array of sailing and ocean adventure programs to students of New London. We run an afterschool sailing program for students enrolled in the STEM Magnet Middle School (a school within Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School) from this location during the academic year.

4. Outline your fleets of boats, why you chose them, your rotation schedule for old boats

NESS has an extensive fleet of Optimists, Optimist trainers, Club 420s, O'Pen BIC dinghies, Hartley 12's, Lasers, BIC techno windsurfers, Sonar's and our J-105. The boats that are widely used in the Eastern Connecticut Sailing Association (ECSA) are the optimist and the Club 420, so for many of our classes those boats are used. In 2015 NESS brought the Hartley 12 sailboat into its fleet. The Hartley is a durable, simple, stable dinghy that is the perfect fit for those older students just learning or those who simply want to go sailing. Featuring high freeboard, a deep roomy cockpit with space for 3 or 4 students, a high boom, and open transom, this boat provides a great platform for sailors of all ages and sizes. At only 200lbs., the Hartley 12 is a light weight and great sailing boat that is easy to pull up on a beach, ramp, or dock. The simple sail plan offers an easily reefed main that can be rigged in just minutes. Our Sonars and J-105 provide opportunities for students of all ages to sail a keelboat.

5. Provide a description of the programs your program provides to the sailors in your area.

The sailing program at NESS provides a supportive environment where youth sailors of all ages and abilities can improve their sailing skills and waterfront safety while learning respect for their fellow sailors, boats, and the ocean, all while having fun. NESS is a US Sailing certified community sailing center and all of the instructors on the NESS team are either US Sailing Level 1, 2 (Instructor) or Level 3 (Coach) certified. Students are able to take advantage of NESS's unique and extensive fleet of boats. NESS offers classes on a variety of schedules to fit many needs. Students can choose to take a core course for 4 weeks or choose a different class on a weekly basis. For adults, NESS offers Learn to Sail, Intermediate, and Advanced sailing lessons. Classes in cruising and racing, on a boat like our J-105 or in a dingy are available. NESS offers sailing lessons at our Stonington, CT, facility and at our facility at Greens Harbor Beach in New London, CT.

6. Discuss what obstacles you have faced in getting your program to where it is today

The NESS program has come a long way since starting with 14 students in 2002. The program was originally started by the Stonington Harbor Yacht Club and was run off a floating dock in Stonington Harbor. Securing a location as the program grew was vital to our success. In 2012 the SHYC Sailing Foundation changed its name to New England Science & Sailing Foundation (NESS) to better reflect all of the programs that NESS offers including marine science, sailing, powerboating, and adventure sports. Acquiring the funds to purchase the property NESS currently owns was another challenge. In 2011, through a successful \$1.8 million fundraising campaign, NESS purchased a ½ acre of waterfront property, the former home of a lobster pound and oyster hatchery. This purchase gave NESS 10,000 square feet of teaching space and a 120-foot fixed pier to accommodate its growing programs and fleet. Most recently

NESS needed to renovate the quickly deteriorating building that housed our sailing programs in Stonington. In 2015 NESS took over operations of New London Community Boating in New London, CT, where some necessary upgrades were made to the failing equipment. NESS added eight new Optimist Trainers and four new Hartley 12s to replace the aging JY-15 and Optimist sailboats. Additionally, maintenance was necessary to repair Optimist sailboats; rebuild safety powerboat engines; remove hazards and repair floating docks; and replacing safety equipment. This maintenance was done to take the first steps to bring the facility in line with NESS's safety management plan.

7. Outline successes, awards, commendations, etc. your program has achieved

- Named one of the first nine accredited US Sailing Community Sailing Centers in 2011.
- The NESS 420 Race Team won the 2012 Eastern Connecticut Sailing Association (ECSA) Team Race Championship.
- 2013 Outstanding Community Sailing Program by US Sailing.
- NESS Sailing Program Director Mark Zagol was named the 2015 Outstanding Program Director by US Sailing.
- Mistral Dodson, Program Directors was named one of Southeastern Connecticut top 40 professionals under 40 in 2015.
- Spike Lobdell, NESS Founder and President was awarded the Robert W. Crawford prize by the National Recreation Foundation. This is their highest national. The purpose of the prize is to recognize a living person who has dedicated him or herself to enhancing recreation opportunities for youth, making it possible for more young Americans to live healthy, participatory lives. The NRF donated \$50,000 to NESS in honor of Spike.

8. Discuss the establishment of any partnerships you have built in the process of developing your program operations.

Developing effective partnerships has been one of the key strategies for NESS's success. Currently serving over 4,700 students year round, we have formed over 100 partnerships that serves to enhance the quality of our programming.

Some examples of our partnerships:

- Mitchell College has outsourced their waterfront management of programs to NESS. We not only conduct their water based PE and educational programs, but manage their varsity sailing team. This allows Mitchell to focus on their core competencies of providing highly individualized student instruction on land.
- Marine Science Magnet High School of Southeastern CT has a complex simulator where students learn how to drive a boat (of all sizes) and navigate. Our partnership enables students out on the water driving a boat in real life. As you might expect an important learning experience. Actually feeling how a boat reacts to wind, waves and current is something that even the best simulator cannot provide. One class will result in the students receiving their OMPV Captain's license from the US Coast Guard.
- In support of our STEM curriculum, NESS has plans to renovate one of our buildings and is considering partnering with an engine manufacturer, like

Honda, to create an engine maintenance program that will lead to students to build an employable skill. As you know, many of our students in at risk areas will not be able to go to college. NESS wants to provide them with a skill set that can put them in place to have a career.

9. Describe your financial development program. How have you raised money, i.e. community events, grants (don't need to provide your proprietary sources), auctions, raffles, etc.

NESS's 2016 operating budget is approximately \$2.0 million. Of this expense base between 35% - 40% is covered by traditional program revenue. Fundraising makes up the remainder to achieve a balanced budget. This percentage is attributed to our high growth, continued investment in personnel and our core value of making our programs accessible to all regardless of financial means through scholarships. In 2015, over half of our students received some form of financial aid to participate.

Our fundraising program is evenly divided between our annual fund, grants and events. Our annual fund is driven by contributions from individuals who believe in our mission, vision, and values. We have 100 percent participation from our Board of Governors and Advisory Council members. NESS received grants from 22 foundations in 2015. NESS holds between 5 and 7 events throughout the year, most of these are characterized as 'friend raisers'. Our Annual Benefit Gala held on the first Saturday in November, is the major fundraiser generating about 15% of funds to support daily operations. We have a live auction, a paddle raise to support scholarships, and some form of raffle. Most importantly, it is a great party!

10. Describe what your cost structure is for membership or sailing lessons

NESS is truly a community program and has no membership or annual dues structure. One of our most important core values is inclusiveness getting as many people out on the water as possible regardless of financial means. Having a membership structure is inconsistent with that goal. Personnel expenses comprise 65% of our cost structure. NESS employees 20 full time staff members, has 10 AmeriCorps members, and an addition 15 seasonal staff. There is tremendous competition in our region between providers of sailing classes among yacht clubs, independent sailing programs, and other marine related organizations like the Mystic Seaport. NESS works hard to deliver a high quality programs year-round and partners with these organizations to enhance value. That being said, our annual fund is a critical factor in helping NESS breakeven on the delivery of these programs as we cannot charge a high enough fee to truly cover all costs. This is especially true when you consider scholarships.

11. Describe the marketing/outreach strategies you have implemented to bring new members/customers into your program.

NESS recently hired a Director of Marketing as a new position to our staff underscoring the importance of this function. At a very high level, our strategic marketing plan is aimed at supporting the continued enhancement of NESS's brand as not only an award winning community sailing program, but a leading adventure education organization and valuable partner to schools in the enrichment of student's lives, especially those in the inner cities that may not have access to water. We spend a great deal of effort to ensure our website communicates our messages and is user friendly to sign up for programs. We are very active users of various social media outlets. Since a significant amount of our enrollment is through school systems we

have a targeted approach to market to not only teachers to show how our curriculum aligns to what is taught in class, but to the administrators as well. A main area of focus is our outcomes based research. Finally developing strong collateral materials are very important.