Good vs. Great in Equine-Assisted Therapy Programs

Area	Good EAP Program	Great EAP Program
Mission & Vision	Helps clients heal using horses	Inspires a movement for trauma-informed, holistic care through equine partnership
Client Impact	Clients see improvement in symptoms	Clients experience deep transformation – healing trauma, improving relationships, finding purpose
Clinical Approach	Uses recognized models (e.g., EAGALA, PATH)	Integrates models strategically, tailors sessions creatively, and leads evidence-based innovation in EAP
Program Reach	Serves local clients with consistency	Builds regional or national visibility; serves clients AND trains providers
Horse Herd	Safe, gentle, well-cared-for horses	Diverse, intentionally selected and developed therapy herd matched to client needs and therapeutic goals
Staff	Certified and caring team	Highly trained, deeply aligned team, actively growing through mentorship, research, and professional development
Culture	Supportive and functional	Mission-driven, resilient, and visionary culture that retains top talent and prevents burnout
Facilities	Functional space for sessions	Healing-centered environment designed for comfort, safety, and inspiration – indoor arenas, sensory trails, calm zones
Sustainability	Relies on grants, some private pay	Blended revenue: grants, private pay, sponsorships, training revenue, and long-term partnerships
Outreach	Promotes through word of mouth	Strategic visibility: public speaking, partnerships, content creation, brand trust in the community
Results	Measures symptom reduction	Measures AND communicates powerful outcomes – including client stories, PTSD reduction %, family reunification, etc.
Innovation	Adopts best practices	Leads best practices, trains others, publishes, and contributes to the future of mental health care

What Makes a Great Equine Therapy Program?

1. **Transformational Outcomes**
   o PTSD reduction rates, trauma healing, family restoration — documented and communicated with power and purpose.
2. **Clinically-Integrated, Equine-Responsive Model**
   o Not just "horses helping people," but a research-informed, trauma-attuned, relational model grounded in neuroscience, attachment theory, and horse behavior.
3. **Leadership That Builds Legacy**
   o Great programs train others, create replicable systems, and contribute to the field (workshops, certifications, consulting).
4. **Purpose-Driven Storytelling**
   o A great program doesn't just *do the work* — it tells the story in a way that draws in funders, families, and future collaborators.
5. **Sustainable Infrastructure**
   o Multiple revenue streams, a reliable donor pipeline, a succession plan, and a clear vision for 5–10 years down the road.
6. **Wellness Culture**
   o Burnout is prevented with team wellness practices, horse care prioritization, and leadership transparency. People and horses thrive together.

Moving from Good to Great

- **Scale & Train your model** → What makes *your* sessions unique? Document and train others on what makes your programs work and your style creating consistency.
- **Collect outcome data** → Use symptom tracking, testimonials, and video to build evidence.
- **Tell your story** → Use grants, press, keynotes, social media, and your website to build trust.
- **Invest in culture** → Train your team, create wellness supports, build long-term staff retention.
- **Expand strategically** → Partner with funders, schools, veteran orgs, or mental health systems to grow intentionally.