RREV's Innovative Pilot Template

As part of the **Innovative Mindset and Pilot Development** courses being offered through several of Maine's institutions of higher education, the RREV project uses a consistent template for the creation of all future pilots. Because every pilot created and tested with RREV funds WILL BE published in EnGiNE, we want all of Maine's educators to have the assurance of consistency.

This template provides an outline of the components required of an Innovative Pilot. The information in this template will serve as the basis for requests for school/district level project funding.

Section 1: Define the Need

A. Describe your innovation.

Consider what evidence supports the need for an innovation, and the evidence that suggests your innovation will improve the current situation.

Lee Academy has been in the process of planning an experiential program that allows for students to participate in authentic and relevant learning experiences, develop goals for being successful in school and post graduation, and work to achieve these goals. This experiential program will have two pathways, and students may participate in one or both. The first pathway will focus on alternative education strategies for students that struggle in the traditional school setting. Students following this path will work with instructors to develop education and career goals, learn more about career opportunities through real-life experiences, including job-shadowing and internships, and create and complete a learning plan to prepare for the careers that they may be interested in. Students in this pathway will be provided with a strong network of academic, social and emotional support to help them overcome the challenges they have been encountering with school. For the remainder of this document, this pathway will be referred to as the alternative pathway.

The second pathway will be an immersive outdoor and environmental educational experience. Students participating in the Outdoor Leadership pathway will meet for a full day, every other day, similar to a vocational-technical program. Participants will complete a series of service-learning based outdoor projects, ranging from trail work to community gardening. In addition to strengthening problem solving, communication, collaboration, and leadership skills, students in this pathway will build resilience. They will also develop applicable work skills, from using equipment to budgeting and reporting. In this pathway, students will also be connected to career opportunities and discover how they can contribute to Maine's flourishing outdoor economy and contribute to their local communities. Lee Academy is already in the process of seeking out partnerships with local non-profit organizations to provide outdoor internships and volunteer experiences for students. For the remainder of this document, this pathway will be referred to as the Outdoor Leadership pathway.

Lee Academy is located in a small, rural community, which has suffered economically as the paper mills in nearby towns were shuttered and families lost their jobs and often relocated to find new opportunities. Young people in our community do not see future opportunities in the local area and this leads to hopelessness and low motivation to be successful at school, which they often feel disconnected from. These issues are compounded by poverty, substance abuse, and the ongoing impacts of a global pandemic. It is critical that we find new pathways to connect with our students, excite them about learning, and show them that there are opportunities locally, particularly through outdoor careers in the forest, recreation, and hospitality industries.

Lee Academy's innovative experiential learning program is needed to help struggling students overcome these obstacles and find goals and the motivation to be successful. We have observed initial success through our Environmental Science, Natural Resource Management, and Outdoor Education courses, where students have been excited to participate in hands-on experiential learning and proud of the work they have completed on projects such as trail building and garden work. Piloting the experiential learning program that allows for more intensive and unique learning opportunities in outdoor education and career development will allow students to realize their potential and find greater connections to their education and community.

Evidence showing that the innovation will help alleviate the problems encountered by students includes the initial success of an alternative graduation pathway. This pathway was implemented in December 2020 to address the needs of students struggling with meeting graduation requirements during extended periods of remote learning and the increased stresses they were experiencing during the pandemic. Due to this program, 12 students graduated that might not have. The graduating class of 2021 was 53, 22% of the class was at risk of not graduating. All enrolled seniors graduated in 2021.

Additionally, Lee Academy has offered Environmental Science classes for several years and has added Natural Resource Management and Outdoor Education classes over the past three years. These classes are popular with students, with up to 40% of the student population taking part in past years. There is also a Community Service Club, the Envirothon Team, and the Outing Club, all of which have attracted a large number of students. Through these classes and extra-curricular programs, students have been immersed with hands-on, innovative, service-learning experiences that include establishing a school-community garden, creating new trails in the school forest, and building a bridge on the trails. Students have also actively participated in service-learning projects and the Katahdin Learning Project, Downeast Lakes Land Trust, Greater Lincoln Regional Food Cupboard, and MSAD#30 Food Cupboard establishing critical relationships with these organizations. These classes and groups serve a wide range of students with diverse learning needs and styles. The success of these programs emphasized both the potential for and the need to develop the Outdoor Leadership Program and the importance of experiential learning and community connections.

B. Identify which students would be impacted, targeted, or supported by the innovation.

Review the evidence – quantitative and qualitative data and research – that indicates this group of students is considered the most vulnerable and would benefit from the described innovation.

Data you can use to inform your innovation, rationale, and targeted student population include the performance of various groups of students (e.g., students in rural locales, students from low socio-economic conditions, students with disabilities, students who are Els, students at risk for dropping out, student who are homeless) with regard to academic achievement, graduation rates, social emotional and mental wellness, economic data, and/or workforce participation.

It is apparent that the student population in Northern Penobscot, Southern Aroostook and Northern Washington counties are challenged to develop interest, motivation, and resilience. The COVID pandemic has exacerbated these needs and challenges. Students have struggled to meet graduation requirements, earn credits for courses, maintain acceptable attendance, and be interested in pursuing post secondary opportunities.

Attendance records, grade reports, and anecdotes from administration, teachers, students, families, and community members have highlighted the issues that have been identified. In addition, test scores, free and reduced lunch numbers, and matriculation data will show the need for additional ways to reach students and provide both a more structured and authentic learning experience.

The alternative pathway of the experiential learning program will focus on at-risk students: those who are at risk of not graduating, struggling with attendance, maintaining passing grades, and seeing the connection of education to post secondary success. The Outdoor Leadership pathway will provide opportunities for all students. Certainly at-risk students may connect with outdoor learning and be interested in outdoor careers. Additionally, there may be students that while they have been successful in the traditional academic setting or who are "getting by", but would feel more connected to their learning through an hands-on immersive learning experience and are interested in the outdoors. We want to develop programs that can benefit *all* of our students, expose them to opportunities, and help them develop and work towards life goals. This is especially important in our rural, isolated community.

Evidence for the need of the Lee Academy pilot has been demonstrated by students struggling to be successful at school. This includes poor attendance, an increased need for credit recovery, students not meeting graduation requirements, and low motivation and interest, which ranges from students who may be struggling in school to students who have traditionally excelled in an academic setting. School counselors have also seen an increase in requests from students and families for mental health support over the last two years.

Members of the innovation planning team have met with board members repeatedly over the past two years to discuss the challenges that have been encountered and the need to adapt and develop new robust programming to better meet the students' needs. This includes administration and guidance meeting with the board in December 2020 to propose an alternate graduation path which was approved and has been implemented. Discussions have continued between administration, the board, and staff, regarding the need for an alternative education program throughout the 2021-22 school year. Support and an understanding of the need for alternative education has been expressed by all of these stakeholders. The Outdoor Leadership program was set to begin in the Fall of 2022 with several students signed up. The program had to be postponed due to staff shortages.

Section 2: Describe the Innovation

A. Describe the goals of your innovation.

Consider how your innovation will meet the needs of the identified target student population(s) and how you plan to achieve your goals. Additionally, consider any changes in policy, practice or structures you expect as a result of the innovation.

The goals of Lee Academy's innovation are to provide an experiential approach to education that offers a personalized and student centered pathway towards graduation and beyond.

The primary goal of Lee Academy's innovation is to help students find success in school, as community members, and in the future by providing an experiential approach to education that offers a personalized and student centered pathway towards graduation and beyond. While the intended outcomes of the innovation include improved attendance rates, academic achievement, graduation rates, and setting and reaching post-graduation targets, success means much more than this. If the Lee Academy experiential program meets its goals, students will find the need for personal growth. They will want to learn both in and out of school and will understand the connection between learning and self-development. Students will want to come to school to participate in relevant and authentic learning experiences. They will develop goals for their lives and want to take steps to achieve these goals. Students who successfully complete the experiential learning program at Lee Academy will understand the importance of and will be working towards becoming happy and healthy adults and contributing community members.

We expect our experiential program to collaboratively incorporate graduation requirements, outdoor education, and regional career development.

During the COVID pandemic, we adopted a 21 credit diploma option. This diploma option was the first actionable step towards this experiential pathway. When implementing this option, students were required to also take a career readiness and financial literacy course as part of the diploma requirements. This step allowed us to see the need for further development in offering specialized career development.

Throughout the pandemic, our outdoor education options have grown in popularity, interest, and school focus. We have seen students who often struggle in other areas of academia find success in the hands-on approach of our outdoor education offerings.

Our innovation, the experiential program, blends the successes we were able to find during a very tumultuous time in education. We look forward to being able to create a stand alone experiential program which will allow for student success through personalized learning, outdoor education, and career development.

B. Describe activities included in your plan for each stage – preparation (P) or implementation (I) – of your innovation.

- *Preparation includes building stakeholder awareness, establishing routines and processes, and coordination of logistics.*
- *Implementation includes planned implementation activities, as well as professional development for the educators participating in the innovation.*

	Activity	Purpose	Stage (P or I)	Date of Completion	Person Responsible
1.	Meeting and discussion with all Lee Academy education faculty and staff	Identify needs and come to consensus on program mission and develop details of pathway curricula.	P	Ongoing and beginning in March 2022	RREV team members
2.	Student focus group session	Hear from potential participants what would be engaging for them	P	Spring 2022	RREV team members
3.	Meeting and discussion with board members	Develop needed support	P	Ongoing and beginning in October 2021	RREV team members
4.	Meeting and discussion with facilities staff - site analysis	Develop strategic plan for any needed facilities work	P	April 2022	RREV team members
5.	Meeting with "critical" administration, faculty, staff, and board members	Develop budget, determine staffing needs, assess program mission and goals, and refine pathway curricula.	P	March 2022	RREV team members

6.	Meeting and discussion with neighboring and sending school districts	Hear from potential sending districts and get feedback on our proposed program and transportation plans	P	Ongoing and initiated in Spring of 2021(?)	RREV team members
7.	Meeting and discussion with local businesses and non-profit organizations	Continue to generate partnerships for internships, job-shadowing, and work-study opportunities	P/I	Ongoing for several years	RREV team members
8.	Meeting and discussion with parents, guardians, students, and potential students - recruitment	Share plan for program, gauge student interest, and share expectations enrollment information	P/I	Spring 2022	RREV team members
9.	Work time for "critical" administration, faculty, staff	Recruit and hire any necessary staff	I	Spring 2022	Program administration, faculty, and staff
10.	Work time for "critical" administration, faculty, staff - Execute on curriculum specifics	Continue to refine curricula and plan for upcoming school year	I	Beginning in the Spring of 2022 and ongoing	Program administration, faculty, and staff
11.	Work time for "critical" administration, faculty, staff	Complete any necessary facilities work	I	Summer 2022	Program administration, faculty, and staff
12.	Work time for "critical" administration, faculty, staff	Review applications and meet with potential students	I	Beginning in the Spring of 2022 and ongoing	Program administration, faculty, and staff
13.	Meeting and discussion with local businesses and non-profit organization	Develop implementation plans and timelines for internships, job-shadowing, and work-study opportunities	P/I	Beginning in the Spring of 2022 and ongoing	Program administration, faculty, and staff and representatives from local businesses and non-profit organizations
14.	Work time for "critical" administration, faculty, staff	Order, receive, organize, and prepare needed supplies and equipment	I	Summer 2022	Program administration, faculty, and staff
15.	Professional development and training for all involved administration, faculty, and staff	Provide professional development and training for each program as needed: social/emotional support, working with at-risk students, curriculum development, working outdoors with students, safety training (wilderness first aid, CPR)	I	Beginning in the Spring of 2022 and ongoing	Program administration, faculty, and staff

16.	Student orientation for both pathways	Meet with students, introduce them to each other and staff, participate in relationship building and communication exercises, share expectations	I	August 2022	Program administration, faculty, staff, and participating students
17.	Begin first pilot cohort for both pathways		I	September 2022	Program administration, faculty, staff, and participating students

Section 3: Define Innovation Outcomes & Measure to Assess Outcomes

A. Identify the outcomes *(i.e., student outcomes, changes in instructional practices, changes in student practice)* that you expect to see as a result of your innovation.

   Consider both short-term and long-term outcomes, at different points in the time (e.g., at 6 months, 12 months, 2 years and 3+ years).

---

6 months: Fall 2022
- Our innovation opens to the inaugural cohort of students in grades 10-12.
    - The alternative pathway cohort will have 20 students.
    - The Outdoor Leadership pathway will have 10-15 students, which may include students from the alternative pathway.
- As part of the experiential program, we plan to run a full day alternative pathway that allows students to find and pursue career interests while also achieving academic standards through hands-on authentic learning experiences, including job-shadowing, internships, and service-learning.
- We will also implement a second pathway, which is the Outdoor Leadership pathway. This pathway will meet for a full day, every other day, similar to a vocational-technical program. Participants will complete a series of service-learning based outdoor projects that will help them to improve executive functioning skills while also developing applicable work skills, meeting academic standards, and strengthening community connections.

12months: Spring 2023
- The first graduates of this experiential program, including the alternative and outdoor leadership pathways, will earn high school diplomas.
- Graduates will have employment, education, and or training plans upon graduation.
- The alternative pathway will have an attendance rate of 75%, understanding that this includes students that have traditionally struggled with attending school.
- The Outdoor Education pathway will have an attendance rate of 90%.

2 years: Spring 2024
- We will have fostered additional partnerships that will result in strengthened workforce development opportunities .
- Our experiential program will continue to develop new opportunities and experiences for students connecting them to local non-profits organizations and businesses that will expand their post secondary network and opportunity for internships.
- The alternative pathway will have an attendance rate of 85%, understanding that this includes students that have traditionally struggled with attending school.
- The Outdoor Education pathway will maintain an attendance rate of 90%.

3 years: Spring 2025

- By the Spring of 2025 we will have implemented successful Internship opportunities for students to work with local economic needs and have articulation agreements with the higher education partners established in 2022.
- The program will have badging or credentials of value a part of our assessment structure so that students who graduate will have educational/training artifacts that are valuable for the workplace and higher education.
- The enrollment of the alternative pathway will have increased to 30 or 40 students for the Fall of 2026.
- The alternative pathway will have an attendance rate of 90%, understanding that this includes students that have traditionally struggled with attending school.
- The Outdoor Education pathway will maintain an attendance rate of 90%.

B. Describe your plan for collecting and reviewing data to assess your innovation outcomes.

Potential data to collect includes qualitative and quantitative data (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus groups, observations, exit tickets, and on-demand assessment(s) that can be considered.

	Data Type	Baseline (B) Interim (I) Summative (S)	Frequency of Data Collection	Person(s) Responsible for Collection and Data Quality
1.	attendance records	Baseline, Interim, Summative	Quarterly	Registrar
2.	grade reports	Baseline (application), Interim, and Summative	Quarterly throughout the school year (progress reports, semester grades, etc.)	Registrar
3.	student surveys on aspirations	Interim, and Summative	At the end of each semester	Teachers or Panda Time Instructors
4.	anecdotals	Baseline and Summative	Before entering the program and at the end of the program.	Teachers, Guidance Counselor and/or Program Director
5.	participation in and completion of service learning and volunteer projects	Interim and Summative	As students are completing projects and at the end of the program	Teachers, program director, and partner organizations
6.	Graduation Rates	Summative	Annual	Registrar
7.	Post Graduation Follow-up	Summative	Annual	Guidance Counselor and/or Program Director
8.	Evaluations from coordinating and partnering organizations, businesses, etc.	Interim and Summative		Program Director

C. Describe how you will **scale and sustain** your innovation, including necessary policy changes, changes in mindsets, capacity-building activities, and **long-term financial sustainability**.

Consider the systems changes that this innovation will require and promote.

> The experiential program will be scaled and sustained by attracting surrounding district populations that do not usually attend Lee Academy to help provide the necessary funding resources to continue the innovation beyond the RREV grant timeline. New policies will have to be put into place on the admissions structure of the program, the daily schedule needs and assessment expectations, and established social and community norms for the program.
>
> Upon start-up of the experiential program, Lee Academy will work with key teaching staff that have experience and success working with our current at risk student population. These educators will help design some of the details of the program and set the tone for the professional expectations of any extra capacity that needs to be brought on. We anticipate that as we attract and scale our experiential program for our surrounding area that we will need to continue to build capacity in our teaching and counseling staff. The increase in number of day students attending will help the long-term financial sustainability of the experiential program, but we anticipate that fostering strong partnerships in the community and developing other revenue streams through philanthropy, student run entrepreneurial programs, and in-kind contributions from key partners will sustain the experiential program in the long term.

D. Describe the feasibility review you engaged in during the development of your innovative pilot plan, including which aspects of the plan for the pilot were reviewed, which stakeholders were engaged, feedback received and revisions made to the plan as a result of the feedback.

> This innovation, the experiential program, was created from progress monitoring of our students throughout the COVID pandemic. During this time, we saw the extreme differences in our students; either students were successful or they were not. Focusing on the needs of our students who are struggling has helped us to design a learning environment and pathway that focuses on student interests, needs, and learning styles.
>
> While the COVID pandemic exacerbated the need for our innovation, the ultimate reasons have been evident for years prior. Lee Academy, appropriately located in Lee, Maine is a private 9-12 town academy that serves a geographic landscape that encompasses 1042 square miles, 3 Maine counties, and 19 towns. In addition, we have students from over 15 countries and states.
>
> This pilot plan was born from the collaboration of the administrative team and Board of Trustees at Lee Academy.

Section 4: Identify Key Expenses

A. Identify the key expenses associated with the preparation, implementation, and ongoing refinement of your pilot.

Expenses could include staff time, materials, professional development activities, facilities, and other related expenses. This section does not need to include specific costs, but rather list out the different costs that should be considered to implement the innovation.

> What specific resources (e.g. money, time, personnel, space, transportation, collaborators) are you going to need to initiate this pilot?

Personnel (1000 & 2000)
- *at least two additional teachers*
- social-emotional professional (social worker or psychologist)
- education technicians
- driver
  - collaboration with Region III transportation?

Professional Services/Consultants (3000)
- social-emotional professional (social worker or psychologist)(contracted if not on staff)
- any modifications/improvements to Alumni building
- consultant for professional installment of ropes course
- professional development for acceptable risk
- outdoor safety training
- non-profit guidance
- collaboration with workforce

Purchased Property (4000)
-

Other Purchased Services (5000)
- professional development
  - cost of attending workshops and/or hosting workshop leaders
- online subscriptions (PLATO, SEL, Naviance?)
- student transportation to internships

General Supplies (6000)
- additional technology
- anything adaptive to meet students' needs
- additional supplies for learning activities

Property (7000)
- purchase van or lease bus to support travel for trips, internships, job shadowing, etc.
- sugar shack
- student furniture
- additional equipment for outdoor activities
  - bikes and safety gear
  - trail maintenance equipment
  - additional ropes course equipment
- additional equipment for outdoor career preparation and projects
  - greenhouse equipment
  - maple sugaring equipment/sugar house
  - trail maintenance equipment

Miscellaneous (8000)
- transportation fuel
- insurance coverage for different/higher risk activities
- membership dues