

## 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.*

The RSU 84 RREV Innovation is responding to student, staff, and community desires by further developing a small business pathway for our students, which would include a yet-to-be determined partnership with an established community business for students to practice and hone innovation, and entrepreneurial skills. We are specifically seeking funding to investigate and potentially purchase a thriving hardware store in downtown Danforth, which abuts school property. In addition, this grant will fund a second-stage feasibility study to determine an operational business structure and plan, curriculum development support for k-12 teachers, and legal council to identify viability and feasibility of the yet-to-be-determined community business/school partnership.

After the initial RREV design course, the school partnered with the Cooperative Development Institute to conduct a pre-feasibility study with the current store owners. Through this work, we found that the business could more than support a store manager and store employees (students).

The current owners are ready to retire, and the closure of the Hardware store would be a devastating hit to the community, leaving residents with a 45+ minute drive to service centers either north, south or west of the Danforth region. This presents an amazing opportunity for the school to enter into the entrepreneurial space that would offer a broad array of educational experiences for k-12 students to access. It would be a natural progression of the amazing work East Grand has been doing over the past 7 years.

Since 2014 East Grand School has been working in conjunction with local non-profits Citizens Organized for Rural Education (CORE) and the Greater East Grand Region Economic Development Council (GEGR-EDC) to explore ways to sustain the community and school vitality.

*"In 2014, concerned local citizens, teachers, and the district administration came together to form a group called CORE - Citizens Organization for Rural Education - to explore ways to engage the school's current students, and draw new students to EGS for unique opportunities that only could be offered because of our unique surroundings and community resources. CORE is also committed to increasing the economic capacity of the community so as to retain students in the area to live, work and raise families." Sarah Strickland, CORE Consultant*

In 2015-2016 the first outdoor classroom was developed.

In 2017-2018 the school began working with Rural Aspirations, to build a proficiency based system that would support multiple pathways to graduation. The vision was to have students in grades 9-10 explore career options so that in grades 11-12 students could individualize their learning pathways. Since then, the Outdoor Education Pathway has become a well-established option for high school students.

The 2018-2019 school year saw middle school staff develop a three-year rotational, placed-based curriculum. It was meant to address “Habits of Mind” skills utilizing content and process curricula to explore a sense of self and sense of place. Students explore historical perspectives, and connect self to community through project-based experiences. Middle-level teachers continue to follow the design process to develop a responsive project each year that meets academic and social-emotional needs of the current cohort of students.

In 2019-2020 the middle school students and staff were recognized by the Maine DOE with the SETDA Award. This award acknowledged the work completed through the placed-based curriculum; field guide and student led teacher workshop for Maine DOE. The culminating activity was four students going to Washington D.C. to present at the National SETDA conference. In the same year the middle school team also won the Exemplary Practice Award from the Maine Association of Middle Level Educators for the work done through the place-based curriculum.

Between 2018-2021, the elementary school has defined Science and Social Studies sequences with a place-based focus, increasing the amount of time students spend outdoors. The elementary also adopted the Outdoor Adventure program to increase student autonomy around learning in the outdoors, and the k-12 Physical Education teacher has incorporated outdoor skill development into the PE programming starting in kindergarten.

Since 2018 East Grand School has had 43% of our students attend Region 2 their 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> grade years to learn a specific trade, 46% of our students started Early College classes and only 14% have been involved in on-the-job training. Our small community feels we are preparing our students to move away from the region as opposed to staying in the community and building for the future. Most EGS graduates, whether they move away or stay, lack employability skills, either in urban/suburban areas, or within their own community, due to a lack of exposure and work experience. Since 2014, 40% of graduates have remained in the EGS region.

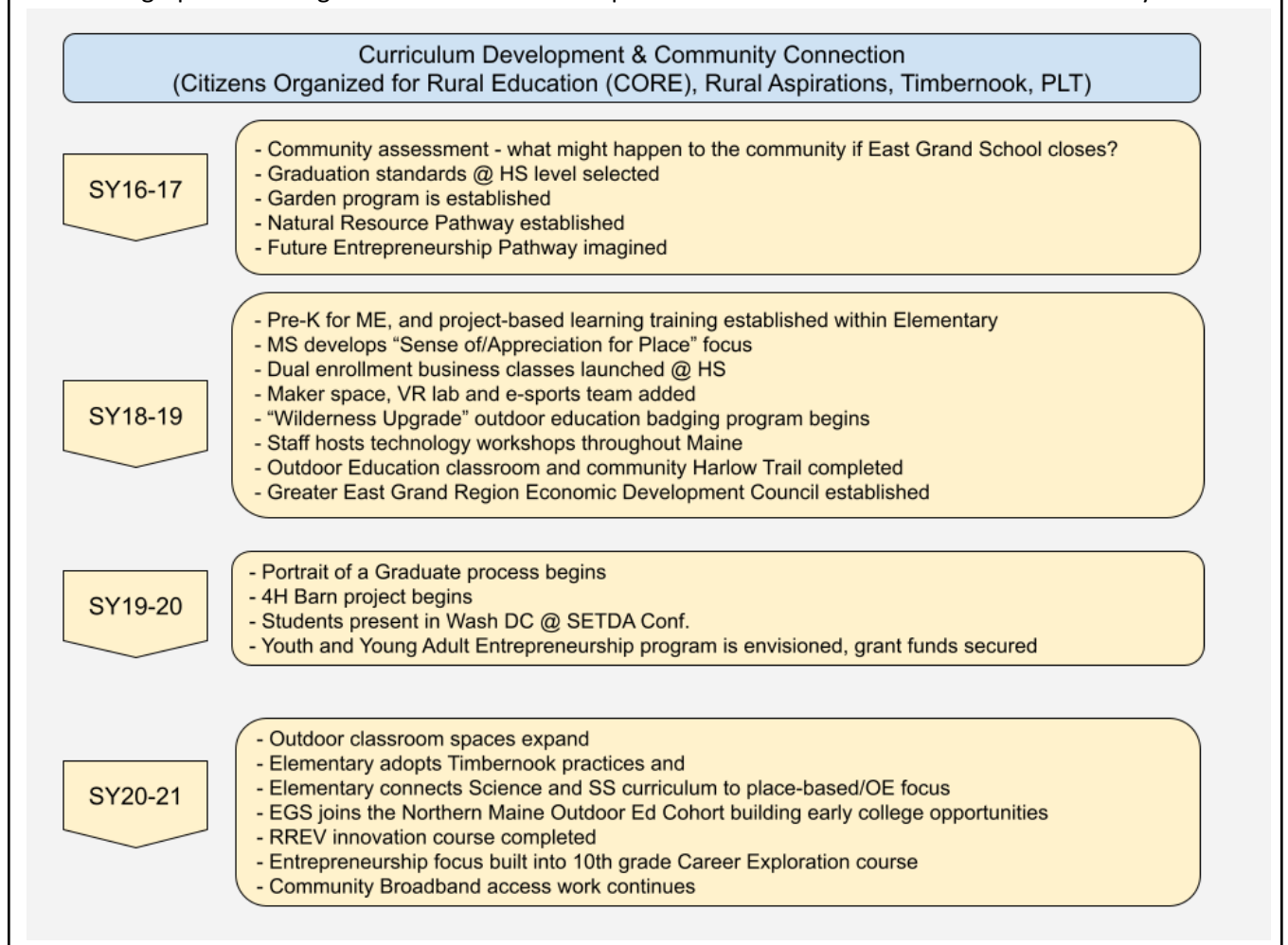
Our current curricular opportunities related to business and career/life readiness include:

- Middle school experiences around Design Thinking, Habits of Mind, and Sense of Place projects,
- A Career Prep graduation requirement for 10th grade,
- 4-H barn and courses
- Dual Enrollment College Business and College Accounting through NMCC as well as an Analytical Thinking course for 11th and 12th grade students, and
- Self-selected, credit-bearing On-the-Job Training for 11th-12th grade students

Although the school envisioned an Entrepreneurial Pathway back in 2016, it has not been developed due to a lack of resources and timing. A yet-to-be-determined partnership with an established community business, particularly one with deep and existing community connections, would provide a school/community partnership where students can learn “Real World” content and context to build an understanding of the value of work, increase employability skills, develop a deeper sense of belonging, and adopt innovative problem-solving skills. By exposing East Grand students to an authentic work experience in a community setting, our students will learn how to develop their own career interests and pathways for future employment through “real-world” connections with the local community.

This k-12 community partnership curriculum will incorporate Career and Life Ready, Guiding Principles, Personal Finance, Economics, and Literacy/Math standards appropriate to each developmental level, k-12, and will be designed, with support, by classroom teachers who have recently completed an assessment of both their Social Studies and Science curricular sequence.

Below is a graphic outlining initiatives from 2015 to present between the school and the community:



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 EIs, 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.*

Although East Grand students have the potential and academic support needed to succeed, and the school has made incredible progress over the past 10 years, there are societal considerations, such as generational poverty and drug abuse, that act as a counterpoint to student success. These challenges impinge on students' motivation, resilience, and sense of belonging and self-confidence that impacts their ability to reach full potential.

Between 2015 and 2021, 71 students graduated from East Grand, 42 students went on to post-secondary

training. Of those 42, 20 are still enrolled, 15 completed and 7 did not complete. 26 of those graduates still live in the community.

One setback is the school's size and staffing structure. It limits opportunities for students to explore broad elective offerings beyond core content. Over the 4 years of HS, students have only 4 electives to choose from.

The number of economically disadvantaged students at East Grand School increased by 4% in the past year. In Washington County, "the median household income was over \$10,000 less than the state overall (2019 MIYHS study). In 2018-2019, 12.8% of EGS students were chronically absent. 10 students were truant. The Free and Reduced Lunch rate is 76%, with more than half of students benefiting from the monthly school-run food pantry. The special education rate is 26%. The percentage of students living in foster care is 6%, and in SY20-21,

Close to 100% of students, when surveyed in 2021, indicated a lack of job opportunities as the number one reason they could not return to live in the East Grand region after graduation, and their responses indicate a passive expectation that "someone else" would create those jobs for them. This was a revelation for the school, realizing that students are not seeing how their efforts contribute to a viable future for themselves. They struggle to see how their contribution could make a difference. Students do not push themselves to achieve their potential, and often settle for mediocrity, in grades and in life. Building innovative learning opportunities and employability skills connected directly to the community will help students see how their actions, and their school, contribute to the overall vitality of the community.

Limitations in course offerings due to school size as well as the impacts of generational poverty could be addressed through the addition of a small business pathway, particularly through a strong connection with a community business. East Grand students need support to reach high expectations, and to have access to real world experiences in order to build self-value. Working in, and connecting to the community, are not current options for many students due to the distance between "urban" areas. Through the setbacks all students face, they could have an increased opportunity to change the systemic deficiencies around them by learning, but most importantly, by practicing real world life skills within their school and community.

The Greater East Grand Region Economic Development Council has identified Workforce Development as a focus goal, working with the school to develop "an educated, reliable workforce for local businesses". Their future work will focus on:

1. Investing in East Grand School and its graduates.
2. Creating incentives and internship opportunities for young adults to be a part of the economic and community development activities across the region.
3. Partnering with local non-profit service organizations to develop workforce development services in order to establish an increased pool of candidates for local jobs.

East Grand is located on the eastern border with Canada and is far away from many of the products and services community members need. Its remote location puts a strain on families to have to travel to receive fundamental amenities. The East Grand Region of Maine is rich in heritage, recreational opportunities, and natural resources, but lacks many of the basic elements a community needs to thrive. This region is sparsely populated encompassing over 780 square miles which makes it difficult to have a reliable workforce and a substantial amount of businesses to sustain the needs of the community. The population consists mostly of elderly people which also impacts the workforce. The local economy has historically been, and still is, based around the harvesting of trees for lumber and timber-based products. The market for wood products is fluctuating and unless the need for wood products increases, many of the local forestry businesses will not be able to sustain themselves. One of the major necessities for the region is the need for infrastructure. The local towns lack sites for brick and mortar stores, viable homes into which families from outside can move. Because the area is so remote, many of the residents don't have a connection to the internet. The broadband lines are

not yet in place. Potential residents get scared off because of these inadequacies. (source - <https://www.eastgrandregion.org/>) Socio-economically disadvantaged families have difficulty advancing their education and/or potentially developing online businesses.

A partnership between the Greater East Grand Region Economic Development Council and the East Grand School has been percolating since the Council's inception in 2018. This partnership will be integral to this innovation's success, offering community connections that will be invaluable to the success of the yet-to-be-determined community business.

The goal of adopting a year-round yet-to-be-determined community business is to offer students the opportunity to gain work experience through an established curricular framework. This will help students build confidence to explore their specific skill sets, as well as helping them formulate their plans for post-secondary education or training. Students will be better equipped with the skills needed to be successful in the workplace, enhancing student employability and giving them the background knowledge and practice needed for them to be successful employees or to start their own businesses. This raises the possibility of them becoming successful innovators and entrepreneurs of the greater East Grand region and beyond.

## 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 this innovation are two-fold. One is to identify mutually beneficial business models that could connect the community business to the school. The second is to connect the k-12 curriculum to Career and Life Ready, Guiding Principles, personal finance and economics standards by creating opportunities for students to build employability and business-mindset skills.

The second goal of the grant would be to expand and further develop a progression of skills leading to a high-school based Small Business Pathway which incorporates a yet-to-be-determined community business into everyday school operations. This extension of classroom learning would serve to connect our student population with a plethora of authentic hands-on learning experiences.

#### Project Goals:

- To deepen school and community partnerships and increase long-term vitality and sustainability by creating measurable outcomes for students in grades pk-12.
- Partner with post-secondary institutions to expand the pathway beyond 12th grade.
- Encourage students to learn and navigate business operations through "real-world" content, in context, developing skills including:
  - Financial literacy
  - Business management
  - Employability skills
  - Product development
  - Trades
- Guide students toward building work ethic and developing a value of work
  - Build curricular opportunities for students to become responsive to ever-changing community needs by becoming:
    - Resilient risk takers who fail forward

- Innovators
- Design thinkers,
- Creative and persistent problem-solvers
- Critical thinkers
- Build students confidence and self-value
- Foster a sense of belonging where students find a place for themselves in the community

A mutually beneficial business model will be collaboratively developed through the second-level feasibility study conducted with grant funds and specific outcomes associated with the community-business partnership will be developed then..

As a result of this innovation, we expect student engagement and career readiness to increase. Career readiness is important because it focuses on teaching the skills students need to succeed in real-world jobs, and by preparing students with the skills they need to live the lives they want to pursue. It closes the skills gap, it makes students ready for the workforce, and it gives them actionable information to use in their careers (Zook, 2018). The working storefront will inspire students to understand and nurture an appreciation for place and self as they gain real-world experience through fostering creativity, innovation and the value of relevant life skills.

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.

	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Stage (P or I)</b>	<b>Date of Completion</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>
1	Meeting with Dave from Dave’s Hardware, Invite Cooperative Development Institute to complete feasibility stage 1	Determine business viability	P	August to December, 2021	Administration
2	Meeting with 5-12 school staff	Propose idea and determine feasibility	P	Aug. 19, 2021	RREV team
3	Meeting with all school staff, school board and community members	Iteration and revision of idea	P	Aug. 24, 2021	RREV team
4	Meeting with the Greater East Grand Region, USDA, NMDC (Jeff), Sunrise	Iteration and revision of idea	P	Early September 2021	RREV team

	County Economic Council				
5	Meeting with all students (day) Meeting with community (night)	Iteration and revision of idea	P	October - December, 2021	RREV team
6	Continue feasibility stage 2 - with Cooperative Development Institute Drummond/Woodsum	Business and legal structure	P	February - August, 2022	CDI, Administration
7	Begin developing curricular sequence pk-12	Curriculum development	P	June, 2022 - June, 2023	Consultants, School Faculty
8	Vote to move forward with developing the yet-to-be-determined community school business structure	Developing the Small Business Pathway	I	July, 2023	CDI, Community partners, Administration, School Board
9	Implement the career readiness/business curriculum	Curriculum implementation	I	September, 2023	Faculty, Community partners
10	Implement the business structure, if feasible	Business Implementation	S	2023	EGS Business team

### 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).*

Curricular Goals → Outcomes:

- To deepen school and community partnerships to increase long-term vitality and sustainability by creating measurable outcomes for students in grades k-12.
  - Each grade will have measurable outcomes connected to State of Maine Learning Results across multiple disciplines

- Clear roles and responsibilities outlined for the connection between the school and yet-to-be-determined business.
- Clear connections between the Greater East Grand Economic Development work and the EGS Small Business Pathway
- Partner with post-secondary institutions to expand the pathway beyond 12th grade.
  - Articulation agreement with Washington County Community College
- Encourage students to learn and navigate business operations through “real-world” content, in context, developing skills
  - Over 5 years, 80% of students will have learning opportunities connected to the Small Business Pathway or the yet-to-be-determined business
  - All gradespans will have curriculum connected to the above skills
  - All students develop an individualized pathway that leads to post-secondary plans
- Guide students toward building work ethic and developing a value of work
  - Build curricular opportunities for students to become responsive to ever-changing community needs
  - All gradespans will have curriculum and assessment tools connected to community development, career development, business and/or innovation and design processes
- Build students confidence and self-value
  - An increased number of students self-report higher confidence and a feeling of self-value
- Foster a sense of belonging where students find a place for themselves in the community
  - An increased number of students self-report higher sense of belonging and connection to community.

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.*

	<b>Data Type</b>	<b>Baseline (B) Interim (I) Summative (S)</b>	<b>Frequency of Data Collection</b>	<b>Person(s) Responsible for Collection and Data Quality</b>
1	Student surveys before and after delivery of curriculum	B, S	annual	School personnel
2	Attendance data	B, S	annual	Administration
3	Grades/course achievement	B	bi-annual	Administration, Guidance
4	# of students continuing Small Business Pathway into post-secondary	B, S	annual	Administration, Guidance
5	Internship/Work Experience observations - Education Coordinator and worksite mentor	B, S	annual	Education Coordinator



6	Entrance and Exit interviews for students in the pathway	B, S	bi-annual	Education Coordinator
7	# of learning experiences connected to the yet-to-be-determined community business across k-12	B, S	annual	Education Coordinator
8	# of students participating in work experience or internships connected to the yet-to-be-determined business	B, S	annual	Education Coordinator, Guidance
9	Entrance and exit surveys for seniors to better understand their connection to their learning experiences	B, S	bi-annual	School personnel
10	Graduation Rates of pathway students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Full pathway</li> <li>● Partial pathway</li> </ul>	B, S	annual	Administration, Guidance
11	Senior Portfolio Presentations	S	annual	HS faculty

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.*

At the conclusion of this multi-tiered process, the East Grand School will have an established business plan, a strategy for developing the community-school-business partnership, including financial and legal considerations. In addition, the East Grand School will have a comprehensive pk-12 curricular sequence that actively connects developmentally appropriate content to place and community, focused on Small Business development, career and life readiness skills, rural community development, financial and economic literacy, and civic engagement.

The curriculum could serve as a model for other rural schools considering similar models and approaches to connecting rural students to rural community development and vitality.

The yet-to-be-determined community business framework could serve as a model for other rural schools and communities interested in engaging students in real-world application of economic development, financial literacy, civic engagement, business development, career and life readiness, and innovation design skill sets.

The process that we are proposing will ensure scale and sustainability due to the extensive feasibility studies and curriculum development that will be occurring within and across both school and community sectors.

- 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.

To identify a focus for our innovation, our team worked through the Rural Aspirations/RREV design process to examine both quantitative and qualitative data. Fortunately, we were already undergoing the Portrait of a Graduate process which provided us with essential data. We looked at the community, student, and staff empathy maps created during the PoG process and identified “life skills” and “entrepreneurship” as common themes identified by all stakeholders. From there, we examined quantitative school data (attendance, graduation rates, postsecondary placement, etc) to better understand where our graduates go after high school. We also interviewed graduates to better understand their post-secondary experiences and aspirations. From all of this data, our team decided to pursue the challenge of developing a Small Business pathway.

Once we had a focus, we examined potential school/business models across the country and came up with several potential business ideas, finally selecting the purchase of Dave’s Hardware Store as our primary focus. The school Superintendent met with current business owners and the Greater East Grand Region Economic Development Council (GEGR-EDC) Consultant brought Cooperative Development Institute (CDI) associates in for a preliminary feasibility study, to determine if the business was a viable option.

We presented the innovation idea to the school board and school community in the fall/winter of 2021 - generated questions to inform future planning processes.

The design process will continue into the RREV grant process, with CDI working closely with Drummond and Woodsum lawyers, the GEGR-EDC and the school board to determine a structural plan that will ensure long-term sustainability for the community business as well as the school. In the meantime, teachers will be working with community leaders to develop curricular connections between their Economic, Financial Literacy, Career and Life Readiness and Guiding Principles standards at each developmental level from pk-12, and beyond.

#### 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.*

[Budget Worksheet](#)

The budget for this request supports the following:

- The potential purchase of a school/community business @ \$153,000
- Staff stipends for curriculum development pk-12 @ \$8,003
- Legal services to identify potential school/community business structure @ \$25,000
- Professional development for workforce curriculum @ \$25,000
- A comprehensive phase 2 feasibility study to define school/community business structure @ \$35,000
- Instructional supplies @ \$1,990
- middle-level project funds @ \$2,000