

RREV School Snapshot – Wayfinder Schools

Background

In June 2020, the Maine Department of Education (MDOE) was awarded a \$16.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Rethink K–12 Education Models program to implement the Rethinking Responsive Education Ventures (RREV) program. The overarching purpose of RREV is to support Maine educators to create, implement, and disseminate responsive and innovative educational models that help all students learn and thrive.

Pilot Description

In September 2022, Wayfinder received an award from RREV to implement its pilot *PREP – Passages Responsive Education Project*. This pilot is in the Multiple Pathways category.

The goals of this pilot are to:

- Provide individualized instruction to youth involved in the justice system
- Expand the Wayfinder School PREP model to Hancock County
- Increase high school retention and graduation rates of all students in the service region through outdoor education, arts education, and career exploration activities.

Key activities of this pilot include:

- Individualized, student-centered, strengths-based education provided in students’ own homes.
- Increased focus on arts, outdoor education, and CTE by connecting students with opportunities in their communities.
- Weekly in-person and online connections with Wayfinder staff to build relational trust and improved learning engagement.

Exhibit: RREV Award Summary

Budget

Category	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Personnel Services – Salaries and Stipend	\$112,500	–	\$112,500
Employee Benefits	\$27,089	–	\$27,089
Purchased Professional Services	\$7,000	–	\$7,000
Purchased Property Services	\$1,000	–	\$1,000
Other Purchased Services	\$14,000	–	\$14,000
General Supplies	\$12,911	–	\$12,911
Property	\$62,500		\$62,500
Miscellaneous – administrative staff time	\$13,000	–	\$13,000
Total	\$250,000	–	\$250,000

- 65 students served
- Youth aged 14-22 served
- 8 teachers directly involved

Responsiveness of the pilot

Wayfinder's pilot is responsive to local needs and/or assets because:

- **It builds the resilience of students by creating community connections.** One integral aspect of Wayfinder is providing support to court-involved youth through mentoring supports and other community connections. For example, students are taught how to make doctor's appointments, open bank accounts, and how to budget their money and give back through community service. Learning these skills while making real life connections with the community is intended to increase students' chances of success after graduation. Additionally, Wayfinder hopes to build relationships with businesses in the area who may employ program participants after graduation.

Innovativeness of the pilot

Wayfinder's pilot is innovative because:

- **It centers each student's lived experience.** Roughly 90% of Wayfinder students live at or below the poverty line. Therefore, having the means and materials to pursue their interests does not always come easily to them. As a result, Wayfinder intentionally designed its core curriculum to allow students to pursue their specific interests. By traveling to student homes for instruction, teachers are offering individualized instruction while serving as a caring and trusted mentor in students' lives.
- **It is planning to partner with local land trusts, businesses, and arts organizations to include outdoor activities, career exploration and arts integration.** The implementation team at Wayfinder discussed how one goal of the pilot is to instill lifelong learning by connecting students to outdoor, career, and arts resources in their own communities across the state so that they can utilize them beyond school. As for outdoors, one team member said the program will "allow kids to see how easy it is to be outdoors." Activities will include hiking, museum visits, and worksite tours. Wayfinder will increase their collaboration with organizations like the Center for Maine Contemporary Art and 317 Main, as well as with local land trusts and businesses.

Sustainability of the pilot

Wayfinders's pilot model's strategy for sustainability includes:

- **Expand the donor pool to secure more funding for the program.** The implementation team discussed how Wayfinder recently received a multi-year grant from the Sewall Foundation for continuing services in Hancock County. They are also planning to apply for additional foundation grants throughout the school year as well as to spread the word about the program through press releases to help expand the donor pool and support for the program.
- **Exploring the possibility of changing the designation of Wayfinder to a Special Purpose Private School (SPPS).** According to Wayfinder staff, being an SPPS would create an easier path for public schools to partner with them in supporting students who continue to struggle in public school.