Theory of Change for College and Career Readiness

Our vision for Educational Pathways
All students have meaningful opportunities to pursue post-secondary education, career training, and pathways to gainful employment and fulfilling lives.
Adirondack Foundation
Theory of Change for College and Career Readiness

**Problem**

Access, awareness and propensity to take advantage of resources for college and career readiness by students and families are not universal across the region.

**Primary Goal**

All students and families have equitable access and propensity to pursue post-secondary education and meaningful employment.

**Barriers**

- Lack of aspiration, confidence and/or financial resources by students and families
- Limited resources to address social/emotional needs of students and families
- Navigating applications, SATs, interviews, financial aid is difficult
- Limited scope of possibilities and experiences
- Interventions are not started early enough – need to start in middle school
- Counseling and mentoring need to be more intensive
- Parent reluctance to send children away in age 18+ earning years
- Technical schools are undervalued
- Lack of support for students who enter post-secondary but do not finish - “summer melt” is 40%

**Assumptions**

- Parent engagement can be increased such that they value the post-secondary experience
- Funding and support can increase involvement of schools/guidance counselors, BOCES, mentoring programs, private sector engagement
- ADK Foundation and partners can increase the regional value proposition around college and career readiness
- Support and development of innovative programs will increase the reach and impact of post-secondary experiences
- ADK Foundation can convene orgs doing this work to increase impact and foster collaboration
### Adirondack Foundation
Theory of Change for College and Career Readiness

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<th>Assumptions</th>
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<tr>
<td>#1: Identify and support organizations that create a culture of post-secondary success</td>
<td>Identify and build relationships with organizations that influence students’ and parents’ choices in college and career-readiness so we can encourage and make more game-changing applications and partnerships. <em>(Impact)</em></td>
<td>There are many organizations that do this well, but they may not be connected to one another.</td>
<td>Every school district in our region has greater capacity to support and prioritize college and career readiness and families understand the array of post-secondary options.</td>
<td># of students reached</td>
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<td>Identify organizations and funding that provide better social and emotional support for students to help free up guidance counselors <em>(Impact)</em></td>
<td>Grant funding can strengthen these groups, our discretionary and DAF grantmaking will grow.</td>
<td>A region-wide pipeline connects schools, groups and businesses that create a sense of hope for families and students.</td>
<td># of students enrolled in college</td>
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<td>Prioritize funding to groups working to support parents and families as a crucial component of the readiness process for post-secondary and career success <em>(Impact)</em></td>
<td>Guidance counselor capacity is severely strained. The provision of life skills will increase post-secondary success.</td>
<td>The Adirondack region is on the cutting edge of rural education success.</td>
<td># of students that graduate from college</td>
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<td>Make connections to similar groups across the region and with other sectors including private, government and other funders. <em>(Influence)</em></td>
<td>The provision of life skills will increase post-secondary success.</td>
<td>Funding from national foundations, state and federal sources increases.</td>
<td># of residents with degrees in higher education increases</td>
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<td>Identify organizations and schools that provide funding for life skills to students <em>(Leverage)</em></td>
<td>There are local organizations doing this work.</td>
<td>The Adirondack region is on the cutting edge of rural education success.</td>
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<td>Identify national foundations and state and federal funding for programmatic opportunities. <em>(Leverage)</em></td>
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# 2: Support technical and vocational training for immediate transition to skilled workforce

**Identify & build relationships with orgs and schools that expand direct-to-career options through technical training and apprenticeship programs** *(Impact)*

**Provide financial support for orgs that understand intergenerational family poverty and work to build the self-efficacy of students so they can successfully access and sustain career opportunities.** *(Impact)*

**Identify how other rural areas in the US address youth unemployment to better understand promising career approaches** *(Influence)*

**Share information about funding needs and granting opps with fundholders & funders to bolster support for this strategy, including expanded job placement services in schools.** *(Influence)*

**Facilitate the convening of work-readiness orgs to identify collaborative resources and foster strong business partnerships** *(Leverage)*

**Research and identify funding for micro-credentialing/accreditation programs for trade skills** *(Influence)*

**There are groups already doing this work in the region E.g., Upward Bound, SWIPE; Ready4Real**

**The perceived stigma & viability by families & students of direct-to-career options can be overcome**

**Identify how other rural areas in the US address youth unemployment to better understand promising career approaches** *(Influence)*

**Share information about funding needs and granting opps with fundholders & funders to bolster support for this strategy, including expanded job placement services in schools.** *(Influence)*

**Facilitate the convening of work-readiness orgs to identify collaborative resources and foster strong business partnerships** *(Leverage)*

**Research and identify funding for micro-credentialing/accreditation programs for trade skills** *(Influence)*

**Coordination & effectiveness between schools, apprenticeships & workforce dev. programs**

**Student self-efficacy & worthiness grows as families & students embrace technical/vocational pathway**

**Evidence-based career pathways are promoted as schools offer direct job-placement assistance**

**Living wage jobs increase and residents can find skilled trades-workers**

**There are job placement services in place within the school environment**

**# of students reached & participation in programs grow**

**# of grants and funding to support tech/vocational programs grow**

**# of apprenticeship programs grow**

**Apprenticeship programs build pipeline of skilled workers.**

**# of regional businesses embrace importance of and increase participation in these programs**
### Strategy

**#3:** Improve and increase mentoring support for all students

- **Provide financial support for organizations that help mentor students for future success, have an awareness of intergenerational poverty and the importance of involving families in educational pathways including financial planning. (Impact)**

- **Share information about funding needs and granting opportunities with fundholders and other funders. (Influence)**

- **Advocate for government funding and stronger business partnerships. (Leverage)**

- **Support mentoring programs that train and support mentors. (Leverage)**

### Assumptions

- Mentoring increases student outcomes through high school and college and there are organizations that do this well.

- Generous Acts and DAF granting grows as more people turn to our foundation to guide philanthropic decisions.

- Gov’t investment is available to accelerate mentoring programs. Private philanthropy is not enough.

### Outcomes

- Mentoring programs are strengthened through partnerships and financial support.

- Families & students value education as a foundation to stronger, more equitable communities.

- Increased funding to support mentoring programs.

- Government resources help expand local mentoring programs.

### Measures

- # of students reached
- # of jobs secured
- # of grants supporting mentoring programs
- # of families receiving mentoring support
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### Strategy

**# 4:**

**Strengthen impactful scholarship support for local students**

### Steps

1. **Define and expand impactful scholarships** by articulating the unique challenges and opportunities for college and technical school access. *(Impact)*
   - Work with fundholders and other funders, to explore the option of setting up a “promise” scholarship, savings accounts, or baby bonds program. *(Influence)*
   - Work with funders to create an incentivized financial reward for students who stay in post-secondary school. *(Influence)*
   - Pair scholarship benefits with financial aid programs to combine private and public support of low-income students. *(Leverage)*

### Assumptions

- Scholarships support students from families with limited income
- Crary Foundation at ADK Foundation accounts for bulk of scholarship dollars dispensed each year.
- Fundholders & other funders look to AF for reliable info about scholarships and strategies to break barriers
- Gov’t investments have the greatest potential to help students with limited resources

### Outcomes

- Financial standing will not be a barrier to college and career success due to an increased # of scholarships and the amount of renewable scholarship dollars available
- Increasing the number of education related grants will increase the number of students who successfully complete post-secondary schools
- Students with the greatest need will be able to secure scholarships

### Measures

- Scholarship levels increase to a minimum of $X
- X % increase in number of scholarships available
- X % increase in number of renewable scholarships
- X % of scholarships reach students with greatest need
- # of students who reapply each year
- Increase percent of students who graduate
- $X toward incentivized completion of school award

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