Mino Bimaadiziwin Education, Culture and Business Centre:

Building culture, capacity and a future for young adults in Island Lake by incubating social enterprise to ensure Anishiniiwuk basic needs are met   
  
  
Wasagamack First Nation, Manitoba  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Submitted by: Roxanne Harper with Trenton Harper, Ernie Harper, Shirley Thompson and others  
on behalf of Wasagamack First Nation  
  
February 1, 2019

**SUMMARY**  
 Young adults with elders and leadership of Wasagamack First Nation and Island Lake are seeking to reclaim its education system, culture and economic development through a college that is also a business incubator and cultural museum. We, Anishiniwuk, ( Oji-Cree), in the Island Lake community, are located 600 km northeast of Winnipeg on Treaty 5 Territory. Wasagamack is a remote community without its own airport and so requires boat travel, as well as plane travel. However, during the coldest months of the year we can travel by winter roads. Without roads we need to advance our own culture, education, housing and food to survive well. The practice of living well is something the Elders call mino bimaadiziwin, which explains the name for the education centre for this business incubator, museum and college, which will be located first in Wasagamack before it expands to all of Island Lake.

Young adults are now learning in our community with the 15 month Boreal Home Post-secondary Program and learning what a difference post-secondary education programming can make to increase education opportunity, culture and industry. This is a special program here in Wasagamack (and maybe anywhere) and we worry that we will lose it due to Anokiwiin Training Institute shutting down to the death of the proprietor. Wasagamack young people need this program to continue as well as more training and education to be available in the community for youth in areas of food, land-based education, recreation, health and business. With all the suicides in the area, college programming, cultural pride and business creation in our community and in our language provide the antidote to hopelessness and economic poverty. The business incubator aspect ensures that the community college will grow Anishiniwuk capacity over time with knowledgeable expert instructors and student trainees to help support not-for-profit businesses serving the community needs and employing people.  
 On November 2018 federal government announced funding for four brand new schools for students in kindergarten to Grade 12 in Northern Manitoba which includes Wasagamack First Nation; meaning that our old George Knott School will be available for us to use for our Mino Bimaadiziwin Education, Culture and Business Centre. This request for $998,350 will ensure that the proper renovation, credentials and personnel to support youth development, cultural revival and business development in our community. This centre will prepare youth and business to meet community needs, and provide mino bimaadiziwin for all community members and the future.

**INTRODUCTION**Imagine if Island Lake had a postsecondary applied education program to build the youth and business capacity in every area that is needed. This is a formula to provide mino bimaadiziwin. People would be able to have a good life and a future of hope if postsecondary funding and worker training dollars could be used to meet the needs of this economically poor community. To turn this dream into reality we need to have a licence to operate as a college or post-secondary vocational training in our community, some infrastructure for the education and business programming.

For a healthy future Wasagamack must gain access to healthy, affordable food, good quality housing and educational opportunities for young adults to learn about and express their own culture. There is a housing crisis in Wasagamack and food insecurity is high. Part of the reason we are so economically poor is that Wasagamack First Nation is located on the western shore of Island Lake, 600 km northeast of Winnipeg, Manitoba, without all-weather roads or its own airport.

The barriers for Wasagamack young adults to achieve higher education require postsecondary and business programming in our community. The hardships caused by the lack of post-secondary education in remote communities, were filmed: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAXgKPxCIT0&feature=youtu.be. No post-secondary school exists in Wasagamack, with the exception of the recently started Boreal Homebuilding (BH) 15 month Certificate Program in 2018, which shows it can be done. Normally the only training programs in our community are very short-term programs, lasting a few days or a week or sometimes a month but never long enough for major skill and knowledge development to obtain a career but this one will help people reach their career goals of interior designer, architect, carpenter or other trades people. Many young adults in the community will not go out for training and only 5% succeed when we do, as the cost is too great in terms of cash but also missing family and facing racism with only $770 funding per month to live on in Winnipeg. Staying in the community allows post-secondary students to be near their families and raise their own children in the local community, which results in better success rates.

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| **Wasagamack First Nation’s Economic Poverty (Statistics Canada, 2016)** | |
| Population | 1,403 |
| Average age of population | 24.4 |
| Language | 65% of population speak Anishiniimowin (Oji-Cree) |
| Number of dwellings | 285 |
| Major repair needed | 82.45% |
| Employment rate | 28.1% of labor force (15 years and older) have a job |
| No Certificate, Diploma or Degree (15 years and older) | 76% |
| Obtained Secondary (High) School Diploma or Equivalent Certificate (15 years & older) | 15% |
| Obtained apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma (15 years and older) | 0.1% |
| Health amenities | Nursing Station |
| Grocery | No business buildings in Wasagamack. Northern Store Inc. on separate provincial island requiring an expensive boat trip |
| Water/sewage supply | Piping system or water cistern (75% fecal contamination) or buckets (approx. 20%) (CBC, 2019). |
| Waste disposal | Open garbage dumps and burning |

The statistics show the extremely limited infrastructure in Wasagamack and that young people have little or no chance for employment or education unless something changes. Things have to get better. Youth want to change things in our community for the better, for a good life, which is termed mino bimaadiziwin in our language. However, youth have no resources or even a place for young people to go in Wasagamack. Currently, no recreation facility or programming exists in the community to promote healthy activities like physical activity, healthy eating, outdoor skills, and sports recreation, which has resulted in a lot of diabetes in kids as young as 8. Our Elders say that diabetes was not present when they were young and people need to learn their culture to build their self-esteem and self-respect. Suicide rates among young people in Wasagamack are high but providing opportunities for further education, cultural learning and employment will reduce these suicides and prevent youth from turning to gangs or drugs. Applied training through a project-based education program offers many solutions for youth and the community.

The young adults here love our community and want to stay here, but we need to see hope for a positive future. For that we need opportunities for education, meaningful work, adequate housing and recreational activities. A place for Indigenous youth is needed to speak their own language and learn from our Elders and educated people. Traditional knowledge and culture are being lost as fewer community members have the skills and knowledge to spend time on the land.

**This proposal was a group learning effort building on what has been done**

Being only eighteen years old I sought help to work on this proposal with a team of Elders, BH students, particularly Trenton Harper, Employment and Training Director - Ernie Harper, managers, University of Manitoba’s Dr. Thompson and others. These people were interviewed to get their ideas on video and off.

I met this team through the BH program and they agreed to work with me and other BH students on this proposal to help myself and other BH students learn and succeed*.* The partnerships are already involved in developing the BH program. We did design work with University of Manitoba architects, architect students, interior designers, natural resource and education people, as well as Dr. Alex Wilson from Idle No More to design and build houses over the next five years. These many experts have committed to work with Wasagamack for at least five years to ensure BH and this proposal I write is successful. With all this commitment and skilled people, Wasagamack has all we need to succeed but needs some start-up funding to move ahead.

**Building Capacity while building housing: the Boreal Homebuilding post-secondary model**

My experience with Boreal Homebuilding (BH) shows Wasagamack can get post-secondary education, community development and business where it is most needed - -in our community. Wasagamack and maybe every community should apply all its resources to build its community and youth. Wasagamack leadership is showing great leadership by creating this BH education in our community that grows youth capacity but also business capacity – registering a not for profit housing and sawmill corporation business called Mitik 299 Corp. Mitik means wood in our language and by using local wood for all aspects of housing including either stick wall, log or timber frame as well as panelling, flooring, siding and furniture Wasagamack can have beautiful healthy houses and keep the housing dollars in our community for our people.

Since October 2018, I and others in the program have received our forestry management certificate, wilderness survival certificate, my chainsaw safety certificate, small motors course, job readiness certificate and conducted design workshops about housing. We will be learning lumber grading and have a professional lumber grader to come in to grade our lumber needed for structural materials for housing. So local lumber can be used for structural and all parts of housing. We, BH students, are ready to learn to log and sawmill and build two houses and get our apprenticeship level 1 in carpentry. As young people we want to do our part to make a better community and build the houses that are so needed in our community but need skills and opportunities to do so.

Being a remote community, Wasagamack struggles with limited funding and infrastructure. Our community leaders with others are racing to apply for funding to bring things up during the short window of opportunity of the winter road. I see how Wasagamack’s leadership is meeting every week trying really hard to make our BH program is working and brining in University of Manitoba and others to help. The students in this BH program and I want to help too. We want this BH program and other college programs to grow and be available to other young people in Wasagamack. College provides the resources, expertise and training to not only employ youth and build houses but offers a post-secondary business model applicable to food enterprises and to meet other community needs.

This BH program shows what a postsecondary program can do to build youth and community economic development. Imagine if Wasagamack, Island Lake and every First Nation had a postsecondary applied-education program to build the youth and business capacity to meet the needs in the community. This directs all the resources of the community to provide mino bimaadiziwin in the community. People would be able to have a good life and a future of hope if postsecondary funding, worker training dollars and housing funding could be used to meet the needs of this economically poor community.

**Realizing mino bimaadiziwin in our community**

To turn this dream into reality Wasagamack or Island Lake needs to have a licence to operate as a college or post-secondary vocational training in our community, some infrastructure for the education and business programming.

1. **A college or private vocational institute** who will commit to our community. Anokiwiin Training Institute (ATI) is the only post-secondary education that has come into our community to do project-based training but now has to close its doors due to the proprietor dying. Due to a sudden death of the owner, either BH will have to fold or needs to be purchased within the year. Island Lake needs its own private vocational institute license to retain its post-secondary institute funding in the community and build its own capacity and culture. This is not cheap at $80,000 for purchase, which does not include lawyer’s and accountant’s fees, which will be another $20,000 and an educated full-time academic director, as well as a computer laboratory. However, although this is expensive, getting UCN or another college here for a few weeks or a month, as provincial colleges are fee-for-service on reserve, would be a much higher cost than buying and running our own college at much more than $100,000. So even in the short term having our own post-secondary institute will be cost-effective.

2. **Support systems for key businesses**. To successfully start and run key businesses of housing and food as well as other areas.

* Sawmill and housing business needs equipment and infrastructure - As Wasagamack has a sawmill but no building to house it our community leadership worked with University of Manitoba to write a beautiful 80 page business plan for a sawmill and housing corporation. Our teachers shared this non-profit business plan for MItik 299 with us students to show the budget and cash flows and the process and governance by chief, band manager, housing manager, employment training director.

This business plan itemizes the building blocks needed to provide what the community is missing in our BH program and to build durable, healthy houses out of wood in the community. For example, our BH program could build those houses for the community from local wood but our community lacks a skidder or dozer to help us bring trees back to our community. Wasagamack got a timber permit from the government and so much beautiful boreal forest in our territory but we need to have the ability to use it in our community to build our houses and furniture, which requires a building for our sawmill. The community got $226, 000 on February 06, 2018 as kind contribution form community futures.

2b. **An Indigenous food system education program**

* An Indigenous food system education program that provides modern solutions to the food crisis (healthy affordable food store and food restaurant but also traditional answers with on-the land activities. Victor and Emma Harper, led a community education program in 1987 to reclaim their land-based education system, which they called *nopimink,* meaning on-the-land education. Families were invited as were local Island Lake teachers. Through the Brandon University Native Teacher Education Program (BUNTEP) aspiring teachers could earn a university credit courses in *nopimink* at Island Lake, towards their teaching degree. *Nopimink* education is practical and spiritual training, in which students learn to “be out in the bush where there are no people, where one must learn to live in harmony with the environment in order to survive. This is as much a learning of values as it is a learning of skills” according to teacher and elder Emma Harper. In these programs, students shot and butchered a moose, learned about herbal medicines, snared rabbits, set nets and preserved fish. Although the school building is still there for training it needs some refurbishing. Young adults would benefit so much from this camp to learn their culture and food ways and so it is important to revitalize this on-the-land component for certain programs, such as food and teaching.

**3. School building to house college and museum**

* Many elders want a museum as part of the post-secondary school building as well as on-the-land training as part of the school. An Elder, Victor Harper, mentioned a water drum on the land and that when it is brought back from its hiding place to the community we would not live the way the old people do – but spiritually we can live like them and lead a good life. The Elders feel we have hidden our culture and ceremonies for too long and that we need to display these to guide our future.

Museum status of this building is also strategic as museum buildings get on-going operational new funds. This will help to make this building and institution economically viable and of great cultural importance in our communities. Being surrounded by our culture will also help guide students in our learning to incorporate in our designs, building and businesses.

Different designs have already been discussed for this building made out of wood. It would not be much larger than a five or six bedroom house and be made out of durable materials with a large multi-use room that would be the classroom and a smaller classroom as well as kitchen area and bathroom as well as an office for administration. Bjornson has visited our community many times to discuss building with us and showed this environmental design as a starting point to us at <https://youtu.be/8dLtNsjeQVQ>. AS well he provided smaller classroom building that had mainly classroom space but also a service area and office space, which was estimated to cost about $300,000 to build. However, ideally the centre would be twice as large to support the different functions and allow two classrooms to operate at the same time at about $550,00. However, this shows a sustainable northern house is possible to be built in Wasagamack. Mr. Bjornson who built the only Passivhaus that meets net zero energy standards in Manitoba, is working with us and architects to design the building we want. He hopes with some funding to supervise local FN students, instructors and trainers to build the first sustainable house built in Wasagamack, to preliminary open-source design .



In these classrooms some areas would have climate controlled showcases for museum artifacts requiring careful preservation.

**PURPOSE**  
 The purpose of the Mino Bimaadiziwin Education, Cultural and Business Centre is to build youth capacity with postsecondary education, culture and community economic development in Wasagamack to realize mino bimaadiziwin (a good life).

**OBJECTIVES**

* To increase capacity, hope and meaningful post-secondary opportunities, entrepreneurship and employment opportunities for Wasagamack youth.
* To stimulate community economic development through having the college start the businesses to meet community needs (housing, food co-op store, restaurant, recreation, on-the-land education, etc.).
* To create a post-secondary education model and program that serves the needs of the community for housing, food, land-based education, etc. and fosters business development.
* To train local community members to become instructors for the program through a train-the-trainer model and apply locally adapted educational materials in Anishiniimowin.

**SCOPE OF WORK**

The scope of the work includes as final deliverables

1. Transfer of Post-secondary Vocational Institute Training Licence to an Island Lake Tribal Council or Wasagamack Education Authority.

* Wasagamack and others have already started negotiations with Anokiwiin Training Institute (ATI) to not stop the program and end BH immediately. Wasagamack would have a lawyer and accountants to develop a plan and purchase for post-Vocational licence to allow Wasagamack and Island Lake to offer post-secondary education in the community.

1. Continue 15 month projects-based training of the Boreal Homebuilding program.
   1. Finish teaching logging, sawmilling, and then house construction/carpentry. We will build two houses for the community as part of this program with the housing manager providing the materials and using existing facilities. Different funding has been submitted to obtain a sawmill and housing steel building and required equipment. Submit the curriculum from this BH program to province for recognition as a provincial diploma program.
2. Expand BH programming to include a second year of Boreal Homebuilding program to build further student trades or get last year students having their second level of apprenticeship and to further develop the economic success and building power of Mitik 299.
3. Develop Indigenous food systems program with teaching resources and other business programs.

- Adapt existing curriculums and/or create new curriculum to include Anishiniimowin and cultural elements. Curriculum development is focused on meeting local needs, culture and language but as well on developing business models and skills to support the community as part of the education program.

5. Develop a business plan for Anokiwiin Training Institute in the Mino Bimaadiziwiin Education, Culture and training institute that can be applied in other communities considering possible on-going funds, such as INAC to Wasagamack Education and employment training as well as projects-based grants programs, such as Post-secondary partnership program, and business development, such as Community Futures -Churchill.

6. Construct Community College Building that serves as a classroom, business incubator and museum

* This building will be scaled appropriately to hold two classrooms and some offices and a computer lab, as well as a service area (washrooms and food production counter). It will be designed to be built with local wood and by staff and students from BH program, which includes a Red Seal carpenters, architects, and electricians.
* Design review in the community, including with local business people to ensure the building can also help support local business incubation
* Purchasing of building materials including local lumber from Mitik 299 Corp with roofing and plumbing, electrical to shipped on winter road in 2020.
* Construction of building using locally trained carpenters, plumbers, electricians from the Boreal Home Builders Training program would start and finished in 2020.

7. Expand programming to at least four programs over five years. .

* Develop diploma programs through the Province of Manitoba.
* Purchase needed classroom equipment and curriculum educational materials
* Goal is to offer entry-level 1-2 year certificates in food, housing, business, land-based education, health and recreation.

4. Business Incubator Model works with education programming.

* Support local business development, for example, through trainees labour, technical and material support, for housing corporation, grocery stores, restaurant, etc.
* Train students in diverse business models such as cooperatives and social enterprises to help serve community needs
* Sourcing small business start up grant funding, offering technical and material support, etc.

5. Recruitment and Training of College Instructors

* Train-the-trainer of local instructors where possible

5. Student Recruitment

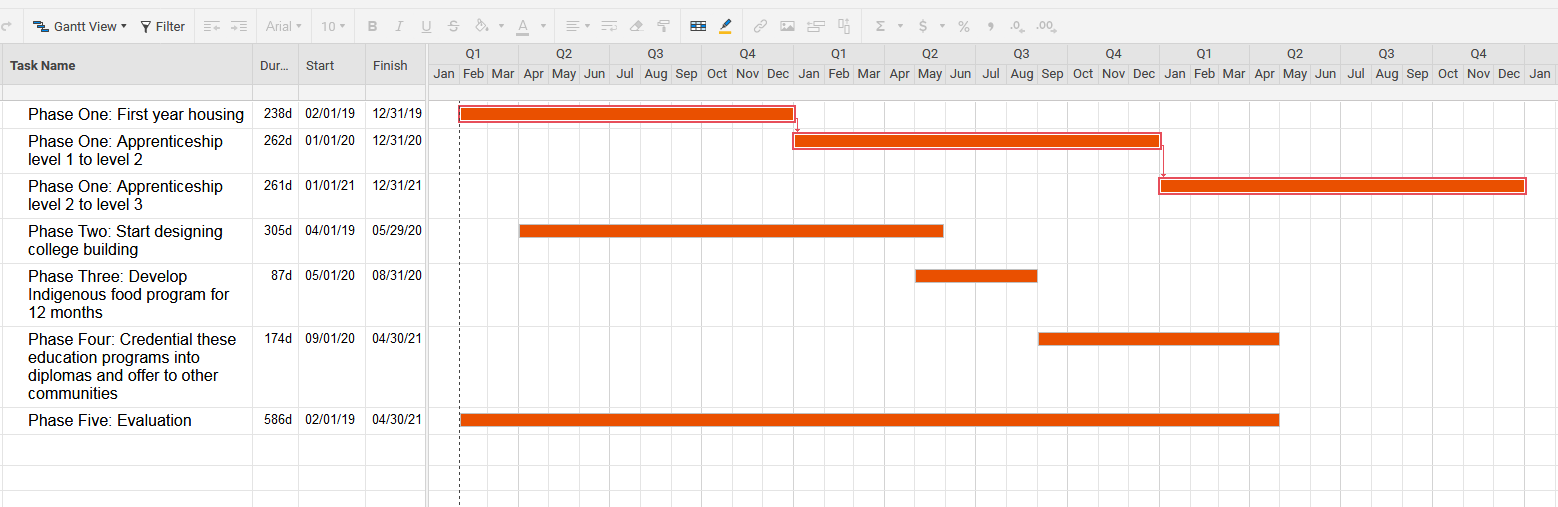
* Advertisement of community college in Wasagamack and surrounding communities through social media, local television, radio and word of mouth
* Hire administrative personnel to manage student registration and other administrative tasks
* Receive funding from Education and Employment training and University of Manitoba to deliver programming

7. Evaluation

* Development of student and teacher surveys based on existing survey models
* Interviews with program graduates, tracking of start up businesses in the community and graduate employment rate

**TIMETABLE**

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|  | **Description of Work** | **Start and End Dates** |
| Phase One | With existing facilities finish first year of housing program to finish two houses and develop sawmill and housing corporation with students passing level 1 apprenticeship and getting into Mitik 299 as apprentices workers into different levels. | Present to Dec. 2019 – BH l  January 2020 to Dec. 2020 – Apprenticeship level 1 to level 2  January 2021 to Dec. 2021.   * Apprenticeship level 2 to level 3 |
| Phase Two | Start designing college building | April 2019- May 2020 |
| Phase Three | Develop Indigenous food program for 12 months and associated businesses the community needs which students can train for and work in to ensure the success and meaningful student work | May 2020-August 2020 |
| Phase Four | Credential these education programs into diplomas and offer to other communities. Providing education will turn into a business that has a priority Indigenous people and learning not profit. | September 2020- April 2021 |
| Phase Five | Evaluation | Ongoing, final report submitted at the end of April 2021 |



Timeline for the proposed project

**BUDGET**

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| **Category** | **Description of Work** | **Total Amount** |
| Post-secondary institute (Vocational Institute training license | Purchasing of post secondary training licence in order to run Vocational Training Institute. | $80,000 |
| Lawyers and accountants fees | To transfer business and set up books for ATI | $20,000 |
| Building Construction | Planning, materials and labor wages for building of community college | $550,000 |
| Training of Local community members | Train the trainer workshops for educators | $40,000 |
| Teaching materials | Classroom equipment, purchasing and development of curriculum and curriculum materials | $65,000 |
| Business materials for sawmill and food business development | Business development materials | $50,000 |
| Academic director/administrator for first year. | Organizes courses and ensures proper procedures followed, develops programming | $80,000 |
| ATI Insurance and bond | Insurance for students, staff and public and for building | $20,000 |
| Research and Evaluation and building designs/supports (University of Manitoba inkind) | Tracking student outcomes, curriculum research and development, reporting  $100,000 per year | 0 |
| Employment training and education staff, instructors provided for assistant administrator and cleaners (inkind) | $300,000 per year provisioning of staff (administrators, instructors, cleaners, computer expert, etc) from Wasagamack Education department and Employment training | 0 |
| **TOTAL** |  | **$905,000.00** |

**INCOME FOR EDUCATION (NOT COUNTING BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT)**

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| **Category** | **Description of Work** | **Total Amount** |
| Student Tuition to be paid by Wasagamack Education and Employment training and small fee for student (INCOME)  NOTE; fee for service of UCN and others are $5000/month per course. | Annual student tuition to offset instructor wages, building maintenance costs, office supplies | $12,000/student/year for 10 to 12 month course. Anticipated enrollment first year:  20 students x $12,000.00= **$240,000 income/year\*\*** |
| University of Manitoba from partnership grant (2.5 million) (INCOME) | Funding for student training allowances and safety equipment | $100,000-150,000 /year for 5 years (until 2023). |
| ATI funding obtained for Wasagamack for teachers for 2019 (INCOME) | Instructors and materials from INAC PSPP grant, Academic director | $150,000 |
| **TOTAL** |  | **$340,000 to 390,000 per year. (with $490,000 to 560,000 in 2019)** |

\*\*As student enrollment increases, the community college will become self sustaining through student tuition as well as profit from incubator businesses that will be developed through the community college.

**KEY PERSONNEL**

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| **Personnel** | **Job Title** | **Roles and Responsibilities** |
| Ernie Harper and community to hire ATI college director | ATI College Director | Oversee the implementation of the project, community communication role |
| Shawna Kemble | First Peoples Development | Mentor |
| Ernie Harper | Education and Employment Coordinator | Instructor hiring and training, curriculum development support and training of young adults |
| Shirley Thompson | Professor  Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba | Provide research support, logistical planning, curriculum development support and evaluation |
| Nora Whiteway | Elder | Cultural consultant |
| Phyllis Harper | Program staff of Boreal Home Builders Training Program | Support construction and maintenance of building |
| Gary Knott | Chief of Wasagamack First Nation | Oversee Band Council support of the project |

**REPORTING**

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| **Objective** | **Indicator** | **Data Source** |
| Infrastructure Development | Completion of building | Builder and development reports |
| Creation/adaptation of local training materials | % of culturally relevant and local materials in each course curriculum. Benchmark of 50%.  Student and teacher satisfaction with the curriculum | Curriculum documents      Student and teacher focus groups |
| Training of local community members for course instruction | # of community members trained and types of certificates and diplomas  Length of employment with the program  Student Teacher satisfaction and performance reviews | Training and employment records     Exit interviews, performance evaluations |
| Increase education of Wasagamack young adults | # of students enrolled in the college  # of students who partially complete training  #of students who fully complete training  Surveys of student satisfaction with program | Training and employment records  Exit interview with young adults |
| To stimulate community economic development by training skilled and employable young people | # of young adults securing job positions related to their education in the community 0-18 months following program completion.  # of young adults securing job positions related to their education outside of the community 0-18 months following program completion.   # of young adults employed two year post training  # of start up businesses created | Surveys of young adults post- enrollment in program   Select interviews with graduates |