

**CFDA 84.282B**

**Charter Schools Program (CSP)**

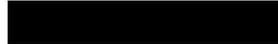
**Federal Non-SE Grants to Charter School Developers for the Opening of New Charter  
Schools**

**Proposal From:**

**Snow Pond Arts Academy**

**8 Goldenrod Lane**

**Sidney, ME 04330**



**[www.snowpondartsacademy.org](http://www.snowpondartsacademy.org)**

## Table of Contents

COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 1: SERVING HIGH-NEED STUDENTS BY INCREASING ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATIONAL CHOICE .....	1
COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 2: DUAL OR CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS AND EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS .....	11
APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS .....	13
(a) Roles and Responsibilities of Applicant, Partner Organizations, and Charter Management Organizations.....	13
(b) Relationship and Quality Controls Between the Charter School and the Authorized Public Chartering Agency .....	19
(c) Input from Parents and Community.....	23
(d) Project Activities and Expenditure of Funds .....	24
(e) Parent and Community Engagement Strategies.....	35
(f) Student Transportation Needs .....	37
(g) Student Retention and Discipline Practices.....	38
(h) School Autonomy over Budget, Operations, and Personnel Decisions .....	40
(i) Recruitment, Enrollment, and Retention of Students, Including Children with Disabilities, ELs, and Other Educationally Disadvantaged Students.....	44
(j) Compliance with IDEA .....	45
(k) Charter School Definition, Autonomy and Flexibility .....	50
(l) Single-sex Educational Program .....	50

(m) Waiver Requests .....	50
(n) Logic Model .....	50
(o) Audited Financial Statements .....	50

***Note: Selection Criteria are referenced throughout this document.***

**COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 1: SERVING HIGH-NEED STUDENTS BY INCREASING ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATIONAL CHOICE**

Snow Pond Arts Academy is located in Sidney, Maine, and meets the definition of ***High Poverty School, Rural Local Education Agency, and Underserved Community***, as indicated by Secretary DeVos in the priorities for funding of new public charter schools, Non-SE Notice Inviting Applications (84.282B) FY 2018.

1) *High Poverty School* - Snow Pond feeder schools have a Free and Reduced Price Lunch rate of 52.3 % (ME Dept of Education, 2017);

2) *Rural LEA* - Snow Pond is located in a rural district (NCES code 42), and 73% of feeder schools are also classified as rural (NCES codes 41, 42, and/or 43 (US Dept of Ed, 2018);

3) *Underserved Community* - There are no other educational opportunities for rural students (see also ***Lack of Educational Choices***, below).

Also, see attachment ***Snow Pond Arts Academy Student Poverty Information*** for feeder schools data showing that Snow Pond meets the criteria of these important definitions.

**Snow Pond Arts Academy Background**

Snow Pond Arts Academy, is a new public charter high school (grades 9 - 12) in its second year of operation, dedicated to providing high quality academics, instruction in the Performing, Visual, and Creative Arts, and access to a wide variety of opportunities in a nurturing and inclusive learning experience for all students, especially for those typically underserved and underexposed to the arts. The educational model is designed to support academic achievement, high school graduation, and preparation for, and enrollment in, post-secondary institutions, specifically within the context of the challenges students, families and

public schools face in rural education.

*Mission Statement: Snow Pond Arts Academy aims to transform students' lives and contribute to the cultural capital of Maine by providing high quality, comprehensive, college preparatory Academic and Arts education in an inclusive, nurturing, and culturally rich environment for high school age students.*

The *Paideia Philosophy* serves as the foundation for the educational program. Paideia is a teaching philosophy based on the belief that all children can learn and all children should be given the best education possible. Instruction is active and engaging, and gives students opportunities to explore deeply the ideas and values in a text or other medium. With Paideia as a unifying approach, the school provides an education based on the following principles: integrated curriculum, core knowledge, inquiry-based and individualized learning, and cultural competence. The core academics, combined with the arts, reflects a commitment to provide children the opportunity to learn and access opportunities that are unavailable in rural settings.

Snow Pond works with young people to develop a range of cognitive skills (e.g., imagination, critical thinking, reasoning, analysis, synthesizing information), interpersonal skills (e.g., oral and written communication, public speaking and presenting, listening, decision making skills) and intrapersonal skills (e.g., self-regulation, motivation, perseverance, work habits) to be successful in school, in post secondary environments, and in life. The goal is not necessarily to create great artists and performers, although that will likely occur in some cases; instead, the goal is to create an environment in which children and families are productive members of a community and have the knowledge and skills to do ANYTHING they choose.

To provide additional context for the balance of this narrative, one of the essential questions that frames the culture at Snow Pond is: *How do rural schools, with very limited*

*resources provide the same quality of education and exposure to opportunities as great schools do in suburban and urban locations?* It is a given that each student needs core knowledge, however, in rural locations in particular, effective education needs to have a much broader focus, as most students have very limited exposure to opportunities outside of the school. Emphasis is also placed on creating an environment where the students feel safe (to express, to imagine, to explore, etc.) and that they are important contributing members of a vibrant learning community that extends well beyond the boundaries of the classroom. The primary purpose for teaching the arts is to cultivate all of the essential skills, traits, and confidence needed to be successful.

### **Supporting High Needs Students**

Snow Pond incorporates evidence gained from scientific research conducted throughout the past two decades that indicates the important effect that music, the performing arts and creative arts have on human growth and development, and how they foster skill development. Music and the arts have been shown to stimulate the prefrontal cortex region of the brain, which improves executive functioning (Zuk, Benjamin, Kenyon & Gaab, 2014)—the very growth center that supports critical thinking and other cognitive skill attainment necessary for children to reach higher levels of achievement. In short, participation in music and the arts supports the brain's ability to apply knowledge in complex situations AND supports the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills—right brain work supports left brain work.

The Arts Education Partnership has compiled numerous program-related studies that prove the positive impact that music and the arts play in preparing students for success in *Preparing Students for the Next America* (2013). Arts involvement taught alone, as well as its integration into academic subjects, have been found to improve a host of important skills and reinforce academic concepts, such as: boosting literacy and English Language Arts skills

(Podlozny, 2000; Walker, Tabone & Welsek, 2011; Ingram & Riedel, 2003); improving math proficiency (Harris, 2007; Kinney & Forsythe, 2005; Courey, Balogh, Siker & Paik, 2012; Smithrim & Uptis, 2005); and developing other important skills, such as increasing engagement and motivation (Barry, 2010; Ingram & Meath, 2007; Walker, Tabone & Weltsek, 2011); and, fostering critical thinking (Heath, Soep & Roach, 1998; Montgomerie & Ferguson, 1999).

Additionally, arts education has been shown to positively affect school culture and climate, including decreasing challenging student behaviors (Stevenson & Deasey, 2005; Barry, Taylor, Walls & Wood (1990), which reduces the reliance on more punitive measures, such as removal of students from the classroom; and improving teacher satisfaction and retention (Bellisario & Donovan, 2012), which is a particularly important concern in rural communities frequently challenged with attracting and retaining high quality teachers (Player, 2015; Barton, 2012).

The link between arts involvement and achievement for *high needs youth* is especially promising, and is particularly impactful for children from low-income households. Four longitudinal studies that examined the academic and civic behavior outcomes of children and young people involved with the arts, in or out of school, explored the impact on children of differing socio economic characteristics (Catterall, Dumais & Hampden-Thompson, 2012). For example, graduation rates of disadvantaged youth who participated in a music program was 93%. This result occurred in a neighborhood where the dropout rate was typically at 50% and the graduation rate was under 30% (Kraus, Hornickel, Strait, Slater, & Thompson, 2014).

These findings are especially relevant for rural schools, as these communities frequently serve large numbers of children whose families have limited economic means, are geographically isolated, and have little to no access to, or experience with, arts and cultural institutions of any kind. Coupled with limited financial resources of rural communities, music

and art instruction in schools has suffered greatly, because of budget cuts.

Snow Pond Arts Academy is located on the campus of the New England Music Camp, which provides summer programming to middle and high school students from all areas of the U.S. and abroad since 1937. Through observations of its summer programs, it has been apparent that students from Maine and other rural areas are generally not at the same level musically, culturally and socially as their peers from other areas. However, when exposed to the same opportunities, rural and high needs students make astounding progress in a very short period of time. For all youth (low needs and high needs) who participate in this programming, parents consistently describe their child's experience as "magical" and "transforming".

It is these outcomes, as well as those achieved in similar programs around the U.S., in addition to consistent and extensive programmatic and scientific research that has served as the catalyst to test, refine and implement this approach in a school setting—Snow Pond Arts Academy, a public charter school for rural high school students, located in central Maine.

### **Rural Maine - The Challenges**

Snow Pond Arts Academy has a learning approach designed with the specific purpose of cultivating the depth and breadth of cognitive, inter- and intrapersonal skills of high needs children located in rural areas in a school-based setting. Maine is an ideal location for a school model intended to support student academic growth and other skills achievement for high needs children in rural schools. The extreme rural nature of the state, high poverty, and limited access to and availability of educational and other opportunities underscore the need for rapid response by the public education system to better support student achievement and development.

**Rural Isolation.** U.S. Census data (2010 and 2017 estimates) indicate *Maine is the most rural state in the nation*. As a primarily small-town and rural environment, 61.3% of the

population lives in rural areas of less than 2,500 people (U.S. Census, 2010), compared to national rates of rural living at 13.7% (U.S. Census, Rural America, 2010).

**Lack of Educational Choice.** Charter schools are new to Maine, with the first school established in 2012, and only nine charter schools statewide, two of which are virtual schools. Present charter school law only allows a maximum of ten schools to operate within the first ten years (up through the year 2022), with one exception—districts are allowed to open a charter school, but none have done so to date. The only other educational choice in rural Maine is to enroll in a private school and pay tuition, or to home-school, and for most families neither are viable options. In addition, the transportation infrastructure is nearly non-existent, and children and families simply do not have access to a variety of choices educational or otherwise.

**Economic Status - High Poverty.** More than 50% of Maine's population is low-to-moderate income (Maine Dept of Labor, 2001-2016), a risk factor directly linked to decreased student academic performance. Central Maine, where Snow Pond is located, is a high poverty area. Data of Snow Pond's feeder schools have a combined average FRPL rate of 52.3% (FRPL data for individual feeder schools is provided in the attachments to this application). If the three feeder schools located outside of central Maine are removed from the calculation (Westbrook, South Portland and Yarmouth), the rate jumps to 58.5%.

**Achievement Gap.** The achievement gap between economically disadvantaged students and those from families with higher household incomes is significant nationally and in Maine. The most recent *statewide* data of standardized test scores indicate that Maine students have below average academic proficiency in critical subjects; less than 33% of low-to-moderate income students are proficient in math and reading (Maine Dept. of Education, 2013-14), whereas the scores for higher income students are double this rate (Educate Maine, 2015).

Students representing all income levels from Snow Pond's surrounding school districts also scored low on state standardized tests versus the total state population (see Table 1, below) (Maine Dept. of Education, 2015-2016). The graduation rates on Table 1 look promising, with most averages at above-national levels. However, what is concerning is that proficiency rates remain low while graduation rates are high. Unfortunately, postsecondary achievement outcomes are bleak—less than 50% of Maine graduates obtain any kind of post secondary degree / certification. Children from low-to-moderate income households fare much worse; only 20% obtain any type of postsecondary degree (Educate Maine, 2015).

**Table 1: Student Achievement Data Comparisons District, State and National Data**

School District	Reading Proficiency	Math Proficiency	Graduation Rate
Snow Pond Arts Academy <sup>1</sup>	85.5	73.0	Not yet available
<b>Surrounding District Schools (2013-2014)</b>			
1. Augusta	41.5	43.0	81.6
2. RSU 9	44.8	35.6	85.7
3. RSU 11	44.7	45.4	87.5
4. RSU 18	42.9	48.2	90.9
5. RSU 38	42.5	36.8	90.2
6. RSU 49	38.5	38.5	90.2
7. Waterville	53.8	43.8	79.0
8. Winslow	37.7	42.9	88.6
9. Winthrop	51.0	46.9	92.5
Maine (ME DOE)	47.6	48.5	87.5
U.S. <sup>2</sup>	34 (2013)	33 (2013)	83.0 (2015) <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Snow Pond's proficiency data is based on 2017 9th and 10th grade NWEA testing.

**Lack of Other Opportunities.** Because of the widespread lack of awareness of the arts' positive influence on development, and the lack of resources in many rural schools and communities, music and arts education in elementary schools is almost absent (generally less than 24 hours of music/art per school year), and is only offered as an elective in middle school and high school (where less than 30% of students participate). Additionally, there are little to no after-school programs that incorporate music/arts education into their programming and no community music schools within a 50-mile radius of Snow Pond. Snow Pond is the only public performing and visual arts high school in the entire state. The reduction / elimination of music and arts in schools and after-school programming affects children from low-income households disproportionately, as these programs and activities are likely to be the ones that are most needed to help students, especially high-risk students, reach new heights of achievement.

### **Central Maine - Regional Characteristics**

As a rural community, central Maine, where the school is located, is reflective of the characteristics of the majority of Maine, and is unlike more urban/suburban areas across the country that tend to have more resources and opportunities to support student growth. All of the district schools directly surrounding Snow Pond (nine districts) have: 1) a high percentage of lower income and/or low performing students, as reflected by a free/reduced price lunch rates that range from 34% to 68% (*compared to feeder schools, that have a FRPL rate averaging 52.3%*); 2) a rate of English Language learners ranging from 0 to 4% (a direct reflection of the

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<sup>2</sup> National Assessment of Education Progress, *The Nation's Report Card*, 2013, 8th grade proficiency in Reading and Math, retrieved 4/4/18.

<sup>3</sup> Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Public Education*, Public High School Graduation Rates, 2014-2015, retrieved on 4/4/18.

lack of diversity in Maine); and, 3) a special education rate of 11% to 23% (Maine Dept of Education, 2016). (Please see attachment for detailed feeder school data for FRPL.)

During the first year of operation, Snow Pond Arts Academy enrolled 105 students in grades 9 - 11, and had no students receiving free/reduced price lunches (as the school was not enrolled in the National School Lunch Program). In Year 2, 145 students in grades 9-12 are enrolled, and 58 students (40%) are participating in the free/reduced price lunch program. It is important to note that 72 students (50% of **all** enrolled students) HAVE NOT returned their school lunch eligibility forms, and it is impossible to determine the exact FRPL rate. A more accurate measure of student income is the FRPL rate of feeder schools, which is 52.3%.

**Special Education.** In year 1, the school had a special education rate of 12.4% and presently has a special education rate of 16.6%. The school is aware of the enrollment rates and achievement disparities for students with disabilities who are served by charter schools in Maine and nationwide. Maine charter schools continue to serve higher than average rates of students with disabilities, with rates varying for each of Maine's nine charter schools (from a low of 14.5% to a high of 36.5%) (ME Charter School Commission, 2018); compared to the statewide average of 16.7% (ME Dept of Ed, 2015-16), and the national average of 12.9 % (US Dept of Ed. 2013-14) for all public schools.

Based on the experience of other Maine charter schools, Snow Pond expects to see a continued increase in the number of students with special education service needs, as enrollment grows and awareness of this educational option becomes more widespread. Charter schools in Maine have worked together to find joint solutions for serving students, including students with disabilities, such as partnering to share services to increase efficiencies and reduce costs (i.e., school nurse services, psychological testing, and OT and PT services, when needed), and sharing

educational approaches that indicate promising outcomes for special education students. For example, Snow Pond is presently partnering with the Maine Academy for Natural Sciences (a FY 2013 CSP Non-SEA grant recipient) in a shared services model funded by a grant from the Maine Department of Education, in which hands on learning is the focal point. This charter school serves the highest rate of special education students in Maine at 36.5%. Baxter Academy for Technology and Science (a FY 2016 recipient of a CSP Non-SEA grant), another of Maine's charter schools, uses a project based learning (PBL) approach and has seen significant gains in achievement for students with disabilities. One of the activities requested within the scope of this proposal is to work with Baxter Academy to share their PBL model and conduct staff training in the use of the model, to assist Snow Pond in designing its own PBL approach via the Capstone experience. The skills and experience Snow Pond students practice within the scope of their arts-based activities also foster similar achievement goals for students as a project based learning model—focusing on cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal competencies.

**English Language Learners.** Snow Pond does not presently serve any students with English Language learning needs, but is equipped to do so when these students enroll.

**Other Student Characteristics.** The majority of students are coming to Snow Pond with little to no music or arts experience; they are typically not advanced musically and/or artistically and the same could be said for their academics; in general, students are simply not meeting their full potential, or are just not engaged in learning in their local school. *For Example:* Tim arrived at the Arts Academy out of desperation. He was failing all of his classes at his local public school and was considering dropping out of high school. Today, Tim is an advanced guitarist and is earning A's and B's in core classes, and is excelling at writing his own music. He has participated in many of the Performance Recitals and plays, has established a solid group of

friends, and has gained the confidence he was lacking. His parents have said, “his smile is back, he is engaged and happy, we couldn’t be more grateful.”

The distances that families must travel to get to Snow Pond is remarkable. Students traveled from 37 towns in year 1, 47 towns in year 2, and a projected 63 towns in year 3. Students are traveling an average of 31 miles and as far as 71 miles, (from a 11,300 square-mile radius), a landmass larger than the size of Vermont. This is a testament to the determination of these families and underscores the lack of opportunities available within their own communities. To these families, Snow Pond offers a future of possibilities, and they sacrifice much in terms of time and resources for the opportunity to attend a school of this caliber.

## **COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 2: DUAL OR CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS AND EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS**

As stated previously, graduation rates for Maine students are good, however, *proficiency levels remain low*. Only 20% of high school students from low-to-moderate income households earn any type of a post-secondary degree or training, resulting in poor long-term outcomes, reduced earnings, and poorer health for individuals; more stress on government systems; and, decreased economic growth (e.g., employers can’t find the talent they need to grow.)

As research has clearly shown, students who are exposed to college from an early age are more likely to envision attending and accessing higher education (Task Force on Expanding Early Postsecondary Access for High School Students in Maine, 2012). Snow Pond is committed to providing concurrent enrollment opportunities for high school students to access college courses while completing their high school education, and works to provide real-world learning experiences, to help provide a bridge to success between high school and post-secondary education and training. To date, Principal King has established dual enrollment arrangements

with Colby College, The University of Maine, and Kennebec Valley Community College. Students then work with their parents, the Snow Pond guidance department and the principal to choose courses that match their ability. Students must hold a “B” average at the time of application and also must have achieved a “B” average the previous semester. Successfully completed, these courses count as both high school and college credit. Snow Pond students currently have access to 12 college credits each year at no cost, meaning that each student can earn up to 24 college credits by the time they graduate from high school. This is incredibly important to students from low-income households. This year 37 (62 %) of Snow Pond’s juniors and seniors are enrolled in 40 early college classes through the three partner institutions. Classes range from mathematics, sociology, to criminal justice, and website design. The Maine Dept. of Education supports early college programming and recognizes the value for our rural students.

With early access, it is entirely possible for a student to have two semesters of college classes completed before graduation. This opportunity builds student confidence and saves families money. Guided college tours serve as a method to introduce students to the college environment well before they attend post high school. This raises comfort levels as students realize that college or other types of post secondary options are within reach.

Snow Pond’s principal recently established a program called *Forward Thinking Fridays*. During this once-a-week 45-minute session, the school hosts guest speakers including college admissions experts, professors, state representatives, arts professionals, financial experts, and other career-minded individuals, to illustrate and share with students possible paths for their future. Additionally, three of Snow Pond’s faculty work at area colleges and their expertise with the college process provides a tremendous learning advantage for students.

A new program, the Capstone Project, offers a multifaceted bridge between high school and real world application for student learning, ultimately preparing them for post high school experiences, through a year-long project that focuses on a topic of personal interest. Students begin planning their Capstone project in the spring of their junior year, and conduct the project during their senior year. A Capstone class will meet weekly to oversee and support the progress toward the final presentations at the end of the senior year. All projects will involve extensive research and connection to local businesses, nonprofit or civic organizations and community members. Funding is requested to support further development of the Capstone model.

## **APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS**

### **(a) Roles and Responsibilities of Applicant, Partner Organizations, and Charter**

#### **Management Organizations**

As a public charter school in Maine, Snow Pond Arts Academy is a nonprofit 501 (c) 3 organization governed by an all-volunteer seven-member board of directors, is managed by a team of four key administrative staff (Head of School, Principal, Finance Committee Chair, the Director of Music Education), and includes 21 teaching faculty (12 full-time and 9 part-time).

Oversight is divided between two positions where the head of school is responsible for the daily operations and the principal is responsible for oversight / implementation of the academic components. In addition to academic staff, other staff include: Christine Sullivan, Director of Special Education; Jeri Pitcher, Director of Theatre Arts; John Neal, Director of Music Education; Sonja Fraser, Visual Arts teacher, and Holly Gannett Dance teacher.

Management for the activities outlined in this grant proposal will be the responsibility of three individuals: Deborah Emery, Head of School & Project Manager for this grant, an experienced public school administrator; Heather King, Principal; and, James “JJ” Jurdak,

Finance Committee Chairman (all resumes attached).

Snow Pond's 21 faculty teach 40 core courses, electives, and dozens of art and music classes ranging from Business, Creative Writing, Chamber Singers, Theater Directing-From Book To Stage, Guitar, Piano, Film Studies, Art, and Dance. The school works with key arts organizations in the broader community and area colleges for access to college classes, student internships and project mentorship opportunities.

**Board of Directors.** Snow Pond's Board of Directors are responsible for managing finances; establishing policies and programming; overseeing the school's performance; raising funds; and, providing input to, and review of, the head of school. Board members are: 1) **Janna Townsend** (President and Co-Chair) holds a BA in Art, an MA in Learning Disabilities/Reading, and is a certified Mediator, Columbia. 2) **Carl Steidel** (Vice-President and Co-Chair) holds a BA in Music Education and a MA in Higher Education Management and serves as the Associate Dean of Students for Student Support and Community Standards at Bates College in Lewiston, ME. Carl develops programs that support students in all aspects of their college lives, and connects the college's academic and co-curricular missions. **Julie Richard** (Treasurer) - Julie is the Executive Director of the Maine Arts Commission and has worked in numerous other arts organizations across the US. Julie holds a BS in Psychology and Music and a MA in Business. She has extensive experience and acumen in development, strategic planning, arts education and organizational development. 4) **Sherry Gilbert** is certified by the Voice Care Network and studied Early Childhood Music Education. She is a past member of the Maine Education Assoc. (MEA), National Education Assoc. (NEA), Music Educators National Conference, Maine Music Educators Assoc., and American Choral Directors Assoc. 5) **Kathy Moore** holds a BA in Psychology, a MA in Counseling, and a PhD in Experimental Psychology. Her research focus

was Psychology and the Visual Arts. 6) **Michael Thorne**, a retired executive of Yankee Candle, Michael has 20+ years of experience working with people and organizations focused on creating access and opportunity for those in underserved communities. He holds a BS in Economics and a certificate in Executive Development. 7) **Debrah Levenseller** works with The Maine Children's Home where she provides supervision and consultation to the clinical staff, and oversees client diagnosis, case planning, and treatment. She holds a MA in Social Work.

The **Board's Financial Committee** consists of **Janna Townsend, Carl Steidel, James "JJ" Jurdak and Sherry Gilbert**. *This group will be responsible for financial management, oversight and monitoring compliance for all grant activities.* Brief biographies for Janna Townsend, Carl Steidel and Sherry Gilbert are provided above and their resumes are attached to this application. **James "JJ" Jurdak** (Advisory Board Member, Finance Committee Chairman), has a BS in Accounting and a MA in Public Administration. Mr. Jurdak is the proprietor of JJ Professional Consulting of Oakland, Maine, specializing in financial, operational and management consulting to both public and private entities. JJ has a history of working in the education management industry including budgeting, coaching, program evaluation, and volunteer management. Mr. Jurdak has over 40-years of experience in the public school setting, where he has served as VP Administration & Finance, Good Will-Hinckley, the Business Manager, City of Augusta, Dept of Public Schools; and the Director of Business and Administrative Services for Maranacook Area Schools (see resume attached).

**Key Management Positions.** Snow Pond has two key management positions, (CVs are included in the proposal attachments). **Head of School, Deborah Emery** holds a BS in Education and Sociology, an MS in School Administration, and a Certificate of Advanced Study in Educational Leadership. She has served as the Head of School since July 2017. Her

experience includes serving as a school principal for 17 years, and as Interim Superintendent for two years in a district with 2,000 students. Following nine years as a classroom teacher, Deborah completed her Certificate of Advanced Study with a focus on School Administration. In 1999, Deborah was nominated and served as National Distinguished Principal representing Maine, and at the national level in 2006. **Principal, Heather King**, has worked at Snow Pond since the fall of 2017. She previously held the position of Assistant Principal for RSU 12, a public school district, and has held several teaching roles in higher education, including Team Leader of Liberal Arts Online (Southern New Hampshire), English and Liberal Arts (Southern New Hampshire University) and English (Kaplan University). She is a published author of fictional works and presents at writer's conferences throughout the Northeast. She holds a BA in Elementary Education, an MA in English, and has completed advanced courses in Educational Leadership.

**Other Faculty and Staff.** Snow Pond's faculty are highly qualified, in their degrees, certifications, and experiences, both inside and outside of the classroom. They possess solid knowledge and experience in their specific fields of instruction. Snow Pond actively works to recruit and maintain a staff consisting of diverse backgrounds, also inviting experts who represent a broad base of ages, gender and cultures to join in the collaboration. The school distributes information about open faculty positions through *Serving Schools*, an online community where educators can connect throughout the country. Because of the lack of diversity in Maine's population, it is especially important to reach individuals who may otherwise be significantly underrepresented, both on the school's board, among faculty and staff, and the student body.

More than 50 teachers applied for the first teaching jobs, and the teachers chosen were

rich in education and life experience. The retention rate the first year into the second was 87%. The school began its second year with 21 faculty (full and part time) and expects to increase teaching staff to reach approximately 33 faculty by the fifth year of operation when student enrollment will reach 264 students, and approximately 38 faculty for 320 students within 2-3 additional years. Faculty have been recognized for their work, winning awards and accolades in their fields, and are active outside of their school roles. The musical theater director has won accolades for her own performances, and is an experienced public school educator. The lead dance instructor participates in judging competitions in the Northeast. Snow Pond provides flexible schedules to maintain access to some of the country's most talented artists.

Snow Pond has access to a large number of educators, diverse in their backgrounds and their areas of expertise, from all over the world through their association with the New England Music Camp Association (NEMC) and access to Distance Learning Technology (Snow Pond leases their space from NEMC and is situated on their campus). NEMC, has recently been awarded a USDA Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant, which pays for 50% of all equipment needed for distance learning (this 50% discount is reflected in the budget for the distance learning equipment request). The USDA grant will allow NEMC, and its partners, to purchase and install distance learning equipment intended to provide student access to excellent faculty of universities and many specialty organizations, including music and performing arts educators, as well as to provide a broader range of cultural opportunities to rural students. The project will work to mitigate the challenges in communities by providing a more global exposure to a variety of topics-especially beneficial to students from low-to-moderate income households. This Distance Learning technology solution is a key component in bringing world opportunities and specialty educators to youth in rural regions. This would be an advantage for any school, but

is especially important due to the rural community and the volume of high-needs youth.

**Parent and Student Involvement.** Both groups play an important role in many aspects of the school and are detailed in sections (c) and (e) below.

### **Partnering Organizations**

Snow Pond Arts Academy leases their space through the New England Music Camp (NEMC). The school is located on the NEMC campus, a center for arts and community learning, which provides (via a contractual agreement) the infrastructure and community environment that are integral in achieving the long-term goals of the school, including:

- *Facilities* include classrooms, music/theater practice and performance spaces, and exposure to talented artists via performances, instrumental lessons and master classes.
- The *grounds* include access to: lake frontage, pathways, recreational trails in a woodland and wetland environment suitable for recreation and science learning, and athletic facilities including tennis and basketball.
- *Food service* with chefs who provide nutritional meals and student cooking classes.
- Dedicated land for a *community garden* for student use, that will provide some food for the school.
- Access to the *Distance Learning Hub* providing access to live classes and performances, and a library of recorded material. This resource allows Snow Pond to access institutions, such as the Manhattan School of Music, that offer personalized-live distance learning classes and instrumental lessons to over 80 different public and private schools across the US, and other partnering organizations such as Colby College, University of Maine at Augusta, Thomas College, Kennebec Valley Community College, and the Waterville Opera House.

## **Charter Management Organizations**

There are no charter management organizations connected contractually to the school.

### **(b) Relationship and Quality Controls Between the Charter School and the Authorized Public Chartering Agency**

**Relationship with Authorizer.** In accordance with Maine Charter School Statute, Snow Pond Arts Academy has signed a performance-based agreement with the Maine Charter School Commission, the school's authorizer, which is a body of the Maine Department of Education. The charter agreement was approved in a public meeting and executed by a designated representative of the school's governing board in February 2016 to open in September 2016. This agreement describes performance expectations, defines operational responsibilities and outlines the autonomy and accountability of the school. Annual performance targets in the charter contract address the following indicators: student academic proficiency; student academic growth; achievement gaps; attendance and enrollment; financial performance and sustainability; governance board performance and stewardship; adequacy of facilities maintenance in support of the school program; transportation and food service; school social and academic climate; and, parent and community engagement (see Performance Indicators, Measures and Metrics table located in the attached Charter Contract Document and the section below entitled *School-wide Objectives and Performance Measures*).

**Quality Controls.** Charter schools in Maine must adhere to applicable federal and state accountability requirements. Initial charter school terms are granted by the authorizer for five years, and the charter agreement may be amended as needed, and initiated by either the school or the Commission, and approved by the Commission, after the public school is operating and is pursuant to adequate performance per contract. A charter may be revoked at any time due to poor

performance.

As a part of the oversight process, in each of the first five years of operation, the Commission meets annually with the school to conduct a year-end review that includes a day-long site visit to interview the board, staff, faculty, parents and students; review compliance; assess performance toward all of the school's performance goals and objectives; and, provide direction. Schools must compile and present mandated information prior to the visit. Findings of the visit are made public in a year-end review report and includes success in meeting the school's performance targets, commendations and recommendations. The Commission determines actions warranted based on performance, which may include contract revocation and school closure.

Snow Pond successfully passed mandatory review milestones during the planning and start up phases, including the Pre-Opening Review in August 2016, and the initial 90-day Review in December 2016. Due to leadership changes, and a need to alter the curriculum (the school had initially used a blended learning approach combining an online curriculum with a classroom component), continued monitoring by the commission was warranted, and a School Improvement Plan implemented. With the hiring of the new Head of School, and efforts to redesign the educational approach, the school has successfully transitioned to a second year of operation. Additional monitoring reports produced by the authorizer during this transition indicated successful execution of the improvement plan, in December 2017.

Once a school has reached its fourth year of operation, it must complete an application for re-charter, which involves extensive reporting on all aspects of the school, including providing longitudinal data on the achievement of all performance measures. Successful renewals are granted by the Charter Commission for a 5 to 15-year term, and is based on the performance, demonstrated capacities and particular circumstances of each public charter school.

Snow Pond has approved performance targets outlined in its charter contract that have been reviewed and agreed upon by the Maine Charter School Commission, the authorizing agent. The school uses a range of metrics and methods to monitor progress in achieving these objectives and a copy of these performance measures is included in the attachments as part of the larger charter contract. Below is an abbreviated version of the school-wide performance measures also found in the charter document attached to this application package and project-specific performance measures.

**School-wide Objectives and Performance Measures.** School-wide performance measures are tracked and reported to the authorizer and the results are used to determine the level of compliance and success in operating the school. Measures include indicators of student academic proficiency and growth, financial, operational, and managerial performance, as described below.

- a. *Student Academic Proficiency/Growth* -- as measured by 1) Proficiency on State Assessments in Reading and Math--% of students at proficiency to grow each year after year 1 baseline established, including cohort growth. 2) Growth on School-Selected Assessment--85% of students will meet or exceed individual expected annual growth by RIT score as identified by NWEA testing in Reading and Math; and, 80% of students will meet all of their PLP goals as defined in Student Portfolio.
- b. *Achievement Gaps Between Major Student Subgroups* -- as measured by 1) Various data sources (SAT, PSAT, NWEA) to compare gaps between student demographic groups and areas affected by varying performance; 2) Identify measurable targets for narrowing performance by maintaining and/or accelerating rates of progress for all students and identification of action steps to address these challenges; 3) Assess degree to which

performance gaps have been decreased.

- c. *Student Attendance* -- as measured by 1) Rates at 95%.
- d. *Recurrent Enrollment* -- as measured by 1) 95% of students will be retained during the school year; 2) Re-enrollment rate of 98%.
- e. *Financial Performance & Sustainability* -- as measured by 1) % variation between budget & actual revenues/expenditures (+/-10%); 2) Quarterly review of Balance Sheet; 3) Presence of management findings of deficiencies on an annual external audit rpt and success in correct findings.
- f. *Governance Board Performance & Stewardship* -- as measured by 1) Frequency of governance board meetings (duly-noticed meetings, monthly); 2) evidence of bylaws and policies in place and regularly reviewed; and 3) approved meeting minutes publicly available via website within 10 days.
- g. *Adequacy of Facilities Maintenance* -- as measured by annual report provided to board of: 1) % of over/under cost projections on facilities (+/-5%); 2) Room utilization; 3) Daily cleaning logs; 4) Maintenance requests and time completed; 5) Updated 1, 3 & 5 year plan for capital improvements.
- h. *Transportation & Food Service* -- as measured by annual report provided to board of: 1) Transportation costs; 2) Number and frequency of students transported; 3) Food service costs; 4) Number and frequency of students served in food program; 5) Free/Reduced Price Lunch Data.
- i. *School Social & Academic Climate* -- as measured by 1) Number of instances of bullying, harassment or other abusive practices, with baseline established and goal to reduce frequency of instances; 2) Participation in state student climate surveys, with data to be

compared to similar schools; 3) Annual School Survey (anonymous) of parents and staff), with goals set after baseline data collected and analyzed.

- j. *Parent & Community Engagement* -- as measured by 1) Parent conferences held 2x/year, with documented evidence of related activities, conversations, and decisions, with goal of 90% participation; 2) Communication sent to parents a minimum of monthly via e-mail and/or web postings to advise of school happenings, etc.; 3) Cultivate and document level of parent/guardian participation in volunteer groups and activities (use baseline data to establish goals), especially within identified targeted activities/events.

Efforts are presently underway by the Maine Charter School Commission to align Maine charter school performance measures with federal standards, while maintaining limited school-specific measures. Implementation of this process is expected to take between one and three years, and Snow Pond can expect to see modifications of its charter contract under this process.

Snow Pond and the Maine Charter School Commission have an outstanding relationship that is based on timely reporting and solid communication from the school to the Commission. The authorizing agent has suggested many excellent recommendations for the school's continued improvement and facilitates sharing of insights and resources among all of the charter schools through monthly meetings that discuss commission business and school-specific actions, and other content specific meetings, as topics arise.

### **(c) Input from Parents and Community**

Support for an arts specialty charter school started in late 2013 thru 2014 with active discussions with all local colleges, area school superintendents, the Baxter and MeANS charter schools (Carl Stasio and Robert Moody, respectively) civic leaders at both the state and federal levels, and with many town and community meetings. Receiving strong encouragement, the

application process was started and lasted throughout 2015.

During the application process, leadership and faculty from the NEMC Assoc., the University of Maine, Husson College, and Thomas College were actively involved, along with Rich Abramson (retired superintendent) and the leadership of the charter schools mentioned above, in the development of the mission, philosophy, and details of the application. Once the framework of the school was clearly established, many informational sessions were held with different groups, including the two Chamber of Commerce organizations, and individual businesses. Endorsement letters were received from superintendents of schools (RSU18, Augusta, Winthrop), Senator Collins and Senator King, and Representative Poliquin, as well as all regional state legislators. All of the groups that had been involved in any way were vital in getting the word out once the application was approved.

While there was parent interest and support during the application process, it was the initial parents that enrolled students who provided the energy to make the school happen. These early parents put together informational packets, gave campus tours, put up posters, used their own social media and personal networks, and organized local meetings. With the support from this engaged group, initial enrollment increased from 30 or so, to over 90 in a five-week period. It was also this group that worked closely with school leadership, on car pools and transportation, as well as overall communications. The reason Snow Pond Arts Academy has so many towns represented, and such wide support, is due to this group of parents. (See also section (e) and (d) Objective 1, for methods of continued input from parents and communities members.)

#### **(d) Project Activities and Expenditure of Funds**

The goal of Snow Pond Arts Academy is to provide for the needs of rural students and to improve student academic achievement and 21st century skills needed to succeed in post-

secondary environments and in life. This is accomplished by providing high quality instruction focused on individualized learning, with project-based real-world application and arts integration, access to opportunities not typically available to students in rural communities, and offering an environment that fosters a sense of inclusion and belonging. The expected outcomes of this approach will result in many more students engaged in learning with the skills and traits needed to be successful, i.e., to be in a significantly better position to reach their full potential. An overview of the goals, objectives, activities and outcomes are presented in the school's **Logic Model** and is attached to this application. Expenditures related to the activities described below are detailed in the **Budget Narrative** and **Budget** attachments. **Sustainability** is addressed in section (h) below. With grant support, Snow Pond will focus on 7 objectives and associated activities, as defined below.

**Objective 1: Provide Exceptional Opportunities in Academics & the Arts**

Snow Pond is part of a vibrant and dynamic community campus/environment, which serves as a major force in cultivating long-term student, family and community engagement. Students have access to learning opportunities on the campus and in the community that are over and above the normal opportunities available in most school settings.

Coordinated by Deborah Emery, Snow Pond will establish the following programs:

1) *Distance Learning* - Outfit the school with distance learning equipment and software to allow students to: a) participate in class from home if they cannot get to school; b) be able to review recorded classes; and, c) have access to live and recorded lessons from educators, teaching artist and institutions from all over the world. This will be approached using a phased in model to allow time to implement and integrate the use of this technology into the academic and arts programming. Additionally, Snow Pond is able to leverage funding from the USDA Distance

Learning grant and obtain equipment for 50% of the total cost. 2) *Community Theater Program* - Jeri Pitcher, Theater Director (see resume attached) will develop and pilot all elements related to this program, with the necessary equipment, materials and supplies. Module 1 is front-stage preparation (acting, costumes, stage sets) and Module 2 focuses on the backstage component (sound, lighting). 3) *Radio Station Program* - Jasen Richardson, English Teacher, will lead the design, purchase, and installation of equipment, prepare usage guidelines to establish a Snow Pond Radio station, and integrate the program into other aspects of the educational model and offer as a club activity. A school radio station operated by students will enhance an inclusive climate where students will learn about communication, teamwork and the commitment needed for successful broadcasts, and understand the value of literacy in a communication world, practice creativity, and report on student performances and school events.

As mentioned previously, Snow Pond is part of a vibrant and dynamic community campus/environment, which serves as a major force in cultivating long-term student, family and community engagement. Students have access to learning opportunities on the campus and in the community that are over and above the normal opportunities available in most school settings and serve as a means of student retention. Examples of such projects that are ripe for student participation include: 1) Environmental and Water Quality scientific projects with the lake association (Friends of Messalonskee, located on campus); 2) Snow Pond Youth Symphony and the Augusta Community Symphony; 3) The planning and design of a new Recital/Lecture Hall and Science Center, including design assistance of both the acoustics, lighting and sound, and science lab; 4) The design and building of community recreational trails in a natural wooded and wetland area of the campus (2.5-3.0 miles, including work with DEP and Inland Wildlife); 5) Building and developing a sustainable community and an organic agricultural farm to table space

inclusive of soil testing, planning and garden maintenance; and, 6) Participation in concerts, live shows, community dinners, and author lectures.

All of these projects provide dynamic learning opportunities in a community setting to provide practical applications of the knowledge (science, math, marketing, filming, recording, etc.) learned in the classroom, along with imagination, critical thinking and communication skills to provide students with a sense of being an important and contributing member of a connected and engaged community. Parents can also be engaged in many of these projects. **Outcomes:** Increase academic proficiency in 21st century skills (cognitive, inter- and intrapersonal skills); increase access to opportunities, and increase student engagement and retention.

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Milestone</b>
Distance Learning - Phase 1 Equip. purchase/install/train	Year 1	Emery w/ Vendor	Equipment Functional & Pilot Use
Distance Learning - Phase 2 Equip. purchase/install/use	Year 2	Emery w/ Vendor	Equipment Functional & Expanded Classes
Distance Learning - Phase 3 Equip. purchase/install/use	Year 3	Emery w/ Vendor	Video Library & Broad Use of Tech.
Theater Module 1 Front-stage	Year 1	Pitcher	Front Stage Complete
Theater Module 2 Backstage	Year 2	Pitcher	Back Stage Complete
Radio Station Program	Year 2	Richardson	Station and Guidelines

**Objective 2: Design & Implement Capstone Project Program**

The Principal and Guidance Counselor (TBD-new hire) will create and pilot the year-long Capstone Program for seniors with the goal of using their project-based learning experiences obtained throughout their high school careers and applying the knowledge and skills

in a community setting. Staff will consult with Baxter Academy (a Maine charter high school) to observe their project based Flex Friday program, talk with their students, and receive direct guidance in creating the Capstone model. Work will include a site visit, interviews with staff and students, and consultation on creating the internal and external structures needed, and advice in cultivating community partnerships. **Outcomes:** Increased student engagement, application of learning, connections to community, and school partnerships.

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Milestone</b>
Consult w/ Baxter Academy	Oct '18-Mar '19	King	Baxter Site Visit/Consult
Create forms and manual	Dec '18-Mar '19	King	Documents Complete
Cultivate community partners	Oct '18-June '19	King	Partnerships

**Objective 3: Support Student Health & Wellness**

As part of a comprehensive community health and wellness strategy, that combines student goals in physical, intellectual and social/emotional health, Snow Pond will increase opportunities to engage in the many benefits of physical exercise, support healthy eating, and enhance campus safety. 1) Fitness and Dance Instructor, Holly Gannett (see resume attached) will establish a comprehensive wellness program focusing on recreational and fitness opportunities, including guidelines for use and integration into overall programming to promote wellbeing, including purchasing identified recreational equipment and equipping a fitness center for student use. 2) Overseen by Deb Emery, the school will launch the Garden to Table program with a Master Gardener (TBD), purchase a greenhouse kit (the budget excludes greenhouse assembly, which will be accomplished with other sources of funding), coordinate with food services to incorporate fresh produce grown by students, and work with teachers to provide hands on learning opportunities integrated with the curriculum. Students will use the garden for

school-day and after-school club activities. 3) Supporting the school's health and wellness goals include ensuring safety of the physical environment. Deb Emery will also provide oversight to implement two campus safety activities: a) *Develop a Snow Pond School App* - the Technology Integration Specialist (TBD-new hire), will work with the vendor to build and install a school-wide App for use on smartphones and tablets to provide communication mechanism for school information, upcoming events, rapid notification and response to school closures, weather emergencies, etc.; design user instructions and hold trainings for staff, students and families. b) *Phone/Intercom Installation* - the Technology Integration Specialist (TBD-new hire) will work with a vendor to install intercom phones in classroom spaces for communication and rapid response in emergencies. **Outcomes:** Increase student wellness: student understanding of connections between physical & mental health, food & diet, environment; student understanding of connections between personal wellness & community wellness.

Activities	Timeline	Responsibility	Milestone
Purchase/organize equip, create guidelines, integrate program	Year 1	Fitness Instructor	Equipment in use. Students engaged in activities.
Develop Snow Pond APP	Year 1	Tech Spec.	App Operational
Intercom Capable Phones	Year 1	Tech Spec.	Phones Operational
Purchase & set up fitness ctr	Year 3	Fitness Instructor	Ctr Complete, Students engaged in activities
Purchase (& assemble) greenhouse kit	Year 3	Emery, Gardener	Greenhouse completed
Coordinate with food services	Year 3	Emery, Gardener	Produce used in cafeteria
Garden curriculum planning	Year 3	Emery, Gardener	Garden activities integrated

<b>Objective 4: Purchases to Support Curriculum / Programming</b>
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The purchase of necessary equipment and supplies for high quality curriculum and programming will be coordinated by Principal King who will work with indicated staff. All of these purchases are items found in great schools and none are provided for in Maine charter school funding. *Timeframes are listed individually and milestones include purchase and installation of items listed.* Vans are essential for more cost effective transportation (see also section (f)) and will be used to transport students to activities. The trailer will allow for transport of theater and music equipment for off-site performances. The color copier will support the production of materials for classroom use. **Outcomes:** Increased knowledge and skills to succeed; increased proficiency & aspirations.

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Milestone</b>
Buy Textbooks/literature	Year 1 & 2	Office Manager	Textbooks In Use
Buy Electronic Library	Year 3	Office Manager	Elec. Lib. Complete
Science Lab Setup	Year 3	Office Manager	Lab Complete
Install Smartboards	Year 1 & 2	Tech Specialist	Use of Smartboards
Technology Lab Setup	Years 1–3	Tech Specialist	Tech Lab Complete
Recording Supplies	Year 1	Tech Specialist	Supplies In Use
Purchase Musical Instruments	Years 1–3	Neal, Office Mgr	Instruments In Use
Choral Risers	Year 1	Neal	Set up & In Use
Vans and Trailer	Years 1–3	Emery, Office Mgr	Vehicles In Use
Color Copier	Year 3	Office Mgr, Tech Spec	Copier In Use

**Objective 5: Support Instructional Staff Growth & Professional Development**

Snow Pond Arts Academy will support its staff with the tools and opportunities they need to be highly effective educators. To achieve this goal, two activities will be implemented: 1) *Design a Performance Evaluation and Professional Growth (PEPG) System* as required by the Maine Dept. of Education (MDOE) for all Maine public schools. This activity will include working with Learning Science International using the Marzano system to create policies and procedures for an effective principal and teacher evaluation and growth system; submitting it to MDOE for approval; and training teachers in the PEPG System over three years, as the school scales up and adds new staff each year. This system will provide opportunities to work with teams to obtain regular formalized feedback, engage in peer and supervisor coaching, and obtain professional development to improve knowledge and skills. 2) *Targeted Professional Development*: a) *Assessment* - Snow Pond will collaborate with University of Maine, Farmington to provide a graduate level course on campus for core instructional staff on assessment. Teachers will learn what assessments are most effective in different learning situations, and how to use the data to inform learning and develop effective programs. Teachers will obtain knowledge, skills and tools in how to align an assessment to the appropriate rigor of the learning target. b) *Competency Based Education (CBE)* - through focused professional development, teachers will further develop skills that focus on student learning and accomplishments. Three modules will be designed and delivered by Head of School, Deb Emery. In *Module 1*, 20 teachers will receive two days of training (summer) to discuss the book *Delivering on the Promise* by Richard DeLorenzo, to examine research and analyze best practices in teacher effectiveness. During the school year teachers will have 2 dedicated days to work in small teams, visit classrooms, watch video of teacher practice and share professional

growth. In *Module 2*, 25 teachers will read *The New Art and Science of Teaching* by Robert Marzano in preparation for two summer work days focused on teaching strategies and instructional models, followed by 2 days of work in small teams, conduct classroom visits to observe practices and share strategies during the school year. In *Module 3*, 25 teachers will read *Inevitable: Mass Customized Learning* by Bea McGarvey and follow the Fieldbook *For and From the Field*, to cultivate a clear sense of what is important to assure student learning. During the dedicated 2-day school year sessions, teachers will work in teams to reach a deeper understanding of teaching and learning through collaboration and academic research. Teachers will be added in Years 2 and 3 as scale up progresses, and participation figures account for some staff being unavailable during summer sessions. Modules will be used in subsequent years for new teachers. **Outcomes:** Teachers are equipped to use feedback for professional growth, provide quality instruction, use data to inform instruction, and document student learning; increase student proficiency; improve teacher retention.

Activities	Timeline	Responsibility	Milestone
Create PEPG System	Year 1	Emery, King	System Approved by MDOE
Train Staff in PEPG	Years 1–3	Emery, King	Training Complete, System in Use
Assessment Course	Year 1	King	Course complete, techniques used
Develop CBE Mod 1	Feb–June '19	Emery	PD curriculum mod 1 complete
Train Staff Mod 1	Aug 2019	Emery	Training mod 1 complete
Implement Mod 1	Sept 2019	Emery	Classrooms, practice observations
Develop CBE Mod 2	Feb–June '20	Emery	PD curriculum mod 2 complete
Train Staff Mod 2	Aug 2020	Emery	Training mod 2 complete
Implement Mod 2	Sept 2020	Emery	Classrooms, practice sharing
Develop CBE Mod 3	Feb–June '21	Emery	PD curriculum mod 3 complete

Train Staff Mod 3	Aug 2021	Emery	Training mod 3 complete
Implement Mod 3	Sept 2021	Emery	Collaboration/research complete

**Objective 6: Student Academic Achievement Tracking System**

Lead Staff, Principal Heather King and John Neal, Music Director (see CVs attached) will work with Empower to purchase initial license and set up of Empower student academic tracking system, and train all staff onsite in the use of the system. Fees include initial annual membership with the Maine Consortium for Customized Learning (MCCL), which eliminates the need for custom design fees related to standards design and input into the Snow Pond application, as well as the need for stand-alone server fees. Stipend is included for staff to design user friendly access instructions for students and parents and provide training. **Outcomes:** Student, family, and faculty awareness of proficiency and achievement of goals.

Activities	Timeline	Responsibility	Milestone
Empower System Setup	Year 1	King, Neal	Access Complete
Membership MCCL	Year 1	King, Neal	Membership
Empower Access Instructions	Year 1	King, Neal	Instructions
Develop Instructions & Trng	Year 1	Tech Specialist	System Fully Operational

**Objective 7: College & Career Readiness**

Guidance Counselor (TBD) will: 1) develop a handbook to guide students in postsecondary planning to access training and educational experiences, and; 2) cultivate community relationships, establish internal procedures for student access and tracking, develop forms for reporting, equipment and supplies, technology needed to fully implement the early

college program. **Outcomes:** Increase College and Career readiness (21st century skills), post-secondary enrollment, aspirations, purpose and community connections.

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Milestone</b>
Develop Handbook	Year 1	Guidance Counselor	Handbook
Develop Procedures	Year 1	Guidance Counselor	Procedures
Develop Tracking System	Year 2	Guidance Counselor	Tracking System

**Project-Specific Faculty and Staff.** Grant-specific project staff and their project related roles are listed in more detail below, to highlight the background, knowledge and skills that each individual brings to this work. Resumes / CVs are included in the grant proposal attachments.

**Head of School, Deborah Emery** (see brief biography in section (a) *Roles and Responsibilities of the Charter School*, and full CV in application attachments), will serve as the Grant Manager on this project, and provide oversight and guidance to all operations activities.

**Principal, Heather King**, (see brief biography in section (a) *Roles and Responsibilities of the Charter School*, and full CV in application attachments), will lead several activities, as defined in the work plan, and provide general oversight to all activities related to student learning. She will be supported by the Office Manager and others depending on the activity.

*Travel to Washington - the Head of School and the Principal will travel to Washington DC annually and participate in required project meetings, with costs included in the budget.*

**Music Director, John Neal**, (see CV in application attachments) holds a BA in Music Education and a MA in Conducting Performance. Mr. Neal will oversee the installation of Empower and the purchase of musical instruments. Prior to Mr. Neal’s current position as Director of Music at Snow Pond, he taught at several of Maine’s public schools, and institutions of higher education (University of Southern Maine, Bates College).

**Theatre Director, Jeri Pitcher**, (see CV in application attachments) will manage all aspects in regards to theatre, including purchasing and setup. Mrs. Pitcher holds a BFA in Acting and Directing. She is a teaching artist, theater director, playwright, actor, and Adjunct Theater Professor at The University of Maine at Augusta where she created both the *UMA Interactive Theater* and *CREATED EQUAL Theater Programs*. Jeri has completed well over 100 theater residencies, creating original theater in Maine schools in her 25+ years of experience.

**Jasen Richardson, English Teacher**, (see CV in application attachments) will oversee the implementation of a school radio station. Mr. Richardson holds a BA in English with a minor in film studies and secondary education, and is working towards his MA in English. He taught 8th grade English and directed a middle school drama department for seven years in Tennessee. At Snow Pond Arts Academy, he teaches 9-12 English and a new film studies course.

Please see section (h) for overall school-related and post-grant sustainability information.

#### **(e) Parent and Community Engagement Strategies**

**Parent Involvement.** Parents play a very important role as partners in developing the school, with many volunteering their time and expertise. This year, a formal structure was created for families to be involved in the school through a parent organization. Monthly meetings are well attended (averaging 12 parents per meeting) and work is focused on meeting students' needs, fundraising for trips and supplies, and promoting communication within the school. Parents also participate in legislative initiatives, public presentations and contribute financially to the school.

Bi-monthly, the school hosts a Performance Recital for an audience of 250 parents, extended family, and community members. These Recitals offer a sampling of the school's various dance, music and voice programs, and aid in building awareness of the importance of

music and the performing arts and how they support learning, skill development and overall wellbeing, and serve as a platform for growing partnerships in the community.

Student/parent/teacher conferences are held twice per year to: review academic progress and headway made towards meeting proficiency; hold deeper conversations about the arts and goal setting; and ensure parents are aware of the many arts activities and competitions in which the academy students can participate. Upwards of 80% of parents attend. Parents have access to the school's grading platform and receive six academic progress communications annually.

Parent volunteers support the school's participation in the State *One Acts Festival*, the *All States Festival*, *Kennebec Valley Music Festival*, *10-Minute Play Dinner Theater*, Master Classes and many other activities.

The school board structure includes parent and student representatives, as non-voting members, who provide valuable insight into the impact of programs on the students' learning, and strategies with respect to implementing the educational program to support positive outcomes.

An annual parent survey provides additional input opportunities for all Snow Pond families. The data is used to make academic and organizational improvements and the results are provided to the charter authorizer as a part of the year-end report and made public.

**Community Involvement.** Community involvement is an integral part of Snow Pond. Each week, the students hear a guest speaker from the community during the *Forward Thinking Fridays* session, such as professors from Colby College and Bates College, state representatives, arts professionals, a financial literacy specialist, college admissions representatives and others. This program element has shown positive outcomes by expanding student knowledge, exposure

to post secondary options, and building supportive relationships between the school, students and the community.

Snow Pond students perform throughout the community to gain public performance experience, and to continue to foster community connections. Students have performed for and displayed art at several senior residential living facilities, local chambers of commerce, libraries, restaurants, and art galleries.

Snow Pond is a member of *Let's Go*, part of Inland Hospital of Waterville, Maine's nutrition and wellness program. The program collaborated with the school to write a wellness plan that is viable and supports the students and staff to lead healthy lives.

Students have completed internships at the Waterville Opera House, performed in plays and taken master classes with a national touring music group, The Bella Electric Strings. The school and the Opera House are collaborating on an upcoming musical performance. The Opera House is also providing workshops for a four-part technical theater class in 2019.

Colby College and Snow Pond have continued to build a robust relationship that includes: visits to the College science lab working directly with Colby students; Colby professors of various backgrounds and disciplines have visited the school for a variety of programming; and the college has donated thousands of dollars in science equipment and desktop computers.

Activities such as these, are an integral part of life at Snow Pond and cultivation of these relationships provides meaningful engagement opportunities for students and valuable partnerships within the community, raising awareness of the importance of music and the arts in the in the development of all students.

#### **(f) Student Transportation Needs**

The school is required to provide transportation within its 15-mile catchment area, but

travels outside these boundaries to ensure access for enrolled students—presently, buses travel in a 40-mile radius. Students who live outside of this area must rely on their own means of transportation to access a bus stop or drive directly to the school. Efforts are made to coordinate carpooling, when families are willing to ride-share. In the first year of operation, students traveled from 37 different towns. In year 2, over 47 towns were represented. Based on projected enrollment figures, the third year of operations will serve students from 63 different towns. Students travel an average of 31 miles and as far as 71 miles (one-way) to attend Snow Pond. Currently, 77% of the students are transported via standard large buses, which are not full, making this is a costly form of transportation. Flexible and low-cost transportation services are especially important to meeting the needs of students. Transportation is one of the most significant barriers for students in rural areas due to weather, long distances, and many times families have only one vehicle. Funding for school vans will provide solutions by bringing a less-costly and more flexible method of transportation and increased access to opportunities.

#### **(g) Student Retention and Discipline Practices**

**Student Retention Strategies.** This year, Snow Pond's student retention rate is 95%. Several methods are used to support students to foster engagement and provide support in academic, social, emotional and physical wellbeing, such as:

1. The design of the academic program focuses on increasing engagement, promotes individualized learning, encourages students to explore subjects from many perspectives and embraces experimentation with ideas and applications to foster creativity. Arts integration into core academic courses promotes learning, retention, and engagement.
2. AP classes and college courses are offered for students who are ready.

3. A strong team of faculty and staff who implement RTI and special education services to support a broad array of options adapted to meet the individual needs of learners.
4. Counseling services are available to any student in need.
5. Staff and faculty training in Restorative Justice (to be conducted Summer 2018) to build internal capacity to facilitate student communication and problem solving.
6. Encouraging and formalizing student (and parent) access to the campus and the surrounding community.
7. Student involvement in planning and implementing events, such as displays of student learning (public performances, etc.), and fostering an open atmosphere where everyone's input is valued and respected. Since its inception, students have had a voice in creating and evaluating school policy. A network of Snow Pond Ambassadors have played a significant role in promoting open houses, guiding tours, and raising funds to support theatre projects. (See also section (d), Objective 1 activities for additional examples of the range of opportunities that students may access. These serve as significant retention incentives.)

**Discipline Practices.** Snow Pond works to create a school community that is safe and welcoming for everyone, encouraging open communication among students, families, and faculty.

1. Snow Pond has required **policies and procedures** that guide staff, faculty and students in behavior expectations and response to specific incidences, including: Student Discipline; Use of Physical Restraint and Seclusion; Suspension of Students; Expulsion of Students; Disciplinary Removal of Students with Disabilities, Student Wellness; and Administering Medication to Students. Staff and faculty receive annual training in these policies.
2. To ensure a positive school community, a **Code of Conduct** is stated in the student

handbook and discussed during orientation, includes guidelines/expectations around: use of language and images; dress; cell phones; respect of others; defiance and disobedience; behavior on school transportation and trips; bullying and prohibited behavior.

3. A **tiered system of intervention** is implemented to address disruptive behaviors, and maintain focus on the needs of all parties involved.
4. Whenever possible, **Restorative Practice** techniques are used to redirect behavior and to help all parties develop an understanding of the impact on the school community. Using this approach helps students build positive relationships and partner with other individuals to find ways to “right the wrong” as required.
5. The **Responsive Classroom** focuses on engaging academics, positive community, effective management, and developmental awareness.
6. As an **alternative to suspension**, strategies are adapted to each situation in order to assure logical consequences. Conversations with students follow the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system.
7. Internal **interventions** are utilized prior to the referral process. Examples of interventions may include: apology, loss of privileges, or implementation of a behavior contract.

#### **(h) School Autonomy over Budget, Operations, and Personnel Decisions**

Maine's charter regulations provide that all approved charter schools in Maine exist as separate and distinct Local Education Agencies. Charter contracts also identify each school's rights and responsibilities, including financial, operational and personnel management (see attached charter contract and section (b) defining the school's performance measures).

**School Finances.** Funding for Maine charter schools is accomplished in two ways: through state allocations of education funds, and by additional fundraising activities performed

by each individual charter school. The board's Marketing & Fundraising committee is responsible for the fundraising necessary to support the financial health of the school, and works with a comprehensive fundraising plan with a multi-pronged approach.

**State Funding.** By law, the school is entitled only to state education funds for each of the following categories: number of students attending; low income/disadvantaged students; special education utilization; ELL students; and, transportation. Maine charter schools are not allowed to receive local tax funds, which is a primary funding mechanism for traditional public schools. State-level funding provides only a portion (generally 70-75%) of the revenue needed to operate the school, with an average of \$9,600 provided per pupil compared to an average of \$12,600 per pupil for other Maine public schools. Analysis shows that sending municipalities spend considerably more to educate their local students, some spend as much as 50% more than Maine charter schools receive.

Additional funding is needed to support initial implementation and continued operations of the school. Development efforts will always be necessary to insure that Snow Pond and other charter schools in Maine address their operational and capital needs. There is limited funding for facilities, and transportation, and extracurricular activities (including the arts) and none for capital projects in the state revenue allocations.

**Fundraising.** Individual donations comprised \$11,000 in the first two years, and \$125,000 in donations from two Maine foundations to assist in covering start-up costs. During the start up period, and year 1, NEMC Assoc. contributed over \$180,000 in donations and in-kind cost reductions on facilities and support services, and over \$170,000 for the same in year 2. Ongoing fundraising strategies include special events, private donations and grant solicitations from corporations, foundations and government entities. As with most charter schools,

fundraising is critical to the school's operations, especially during scale-up. As student enrollment increases to full capacity (expected to grow to 320 students by 2022), ratios will become more favorable. Importantly, as both awareness and impact of Snow Pond grows, funding sources will increase notably. This grant, as an example, will likely help leverage additional philanthropic support for capital needs, as well as provide for a required match for distance learning technology.

**Sustainability.** Sustainability is a challenge for all Maine charter schools because of the overall lack of funding at the state level. Each school has overcome this challenge with creative local strategies, passionate employees and supporters, and good results for their students and families. Snow Pond's sustainability is greatly enhanced due to a variety of unique local assets, good timing, quality leadership, and talented educators.

- **Local and Unique Assets** including an abundance of colleges that have been very supportive including: Colby, Bates and Thomas Colleges, the Univ. of Maine (Augusta and Farmington locations), and Kennebec Valley Community College (KVCC); each continue to provide support in ways illustrated throughout this narrative which greatly improves the depth and quality of programming available to these students. The New England Music Camp Association continues to expand their campus and programming from summer only to year round. As facilities are added or improved, the Snow Pond Arts Academy benefits from the increased availability of spaces as well as the additional community oriented programming that goes along with these improvements. Many of the summer faculty are available to teach as needed to support the school once the distance learning equipment is in place.
- **Timing** of regional initiatives directly benefit the school. The City of Waterville and Colby College are investing heavily in developing the city into a cultural hub for central Maine.

Waterville Creates, the Opera House, and Colby Museum are expanding programming and reach, which increases the awareness of the importance of the arts. The City of Augusta and Downtown Alliance are renovating the riverfront area with an emphasis on arts and culture.

- **Quality leadership** has inspired confidence with the Maine Charter School Commission and with other partners. Deborah Emery is a well established school administrator, Heather King is a principal with a range of knowledge, including distance learning to advance the school into the future, and the current Board of Directors are talented and engaged. The leadership and the quality results have positioned the school for future success.
- **Talented educators** will have an increasing impact on the entire region. For example, as Snow Pond acquires more arts specialty teachers, these teachers will be available to teach classes/lessons directly or through distance learning technology to support/supplement other schools' existing music staff.

The school expects an increasing amount of support as their reputation grows, and overall awareness of the value of the arts on a child's development increases in the general population, especially in rural regions like central Maine. Support will come in many forms: increased enrollment, more volunteers, more attendance at events, more collaborations with other public schools, and far more philanthropic support.

**Fiscal Monitoring.** As a nonprofit organization, the school is dedicated to maintaining financial strength by creating and maintaining a team of individuals with the knowledge, skills and experience needed to manage finances. The Finance Committee Chair, James "JJ" Jurdak and the Head of School, Deborah Emery, prepare an annual budget that is also reviewed by the authorizer. Monthly financial reports are prepared by finance personnel and presented to the board for review and any actions needed as a result. Minutes of board meetings are posted on the

school's website monthly. The school's finance committee includes the Board Chair and three board members, plus two support staff. A business line of credit supports cash flow needs.

**Personnel.** The Head of School, Deborah Emery, is authorized by the Board of Directors to oversee personnel matters, including hiring, providing professional development, evaluating performance, and initiating termination. The only exception is the oversight of the Head of School, who is directed by the Board of Directors. A Personnel Manual containing policies and procedures guides internal practices, and has been reviewed by the school's attorney, who specializes in employment law, and has verified employment policies and procedures to be in compliance with state and federal employment practices. An employee handbook serves to inform employees of rights and responsibilities. The authorizer receives annual reporting that includes information about the number and qualifications of faculty and staff, in order to monitor compliance with state regulations; the school has the sole responsibility for employee oversight.

**Operations.** Snow Pond is responsible for daily operations of the school. Data regarding the state of building compliance is required in annual reporting and the school must assure that all buildings and grounds are maintained in compliance with federal, state and local ordinances. Annual monitoring reports detail the element of the schools operational performance measures, which include Adequacy of Facilities Maintenance, Transportation and Food Service.

**(i) Recruitment, Enrollment, and Retention of Students, Including Children with Disabilities, ELs, and Other Educationally Disadvantaged Students**

**Enrollment Notification.** By Maine statute, each year, all charter schools in Maine are required to post a public notice detailing information about the school, deadlines for enrollment, and the date for a lottery (if needed). The following methods are used to inform the community of enrollment opportunities, which provide particular focus on distributing information using

methods most likely to reach eligible students and their families in rural areas: posters distributed throughout the central Maine region (at libraries, recreation facilities, non-profit and civic organizations, town offices, etc.); Facebook, website and newspaper postings; radio stations and magazine ads; monthly open house events; and, Monday shadow days for prospective students.

Snow Pond is a co-educational school and does not limit enrollment in any category of students; the only exception is—a student must be a resident of the state of Maine.

**Admissions/Lottery Process.** Any student residing in the state of Maine is eligible to apply and enroll, given space limitations. Should demand for enrollment exceed available spaces, a random lottery selection process is instituted. All prospective students are informed about enrollment opportunities and the lottery selection process, which is open to the public. These processes follow strict guidelines under education and charter school statutes. According to Maine charter school law, a limited group of students is given preference in enrollment, including children of school founders, board members and faculty/staff, and siblings of enrolled students. If space is not available for one of these students, they rise to front of the waiting list according to grade level and date of application and may fill a slot when it becomes available.

Applying students should have an interest (and some aptitude) for music, dance, and theater, however no student is denied entry (within space limitations and subject to lottery). Students are expected to actively participate in the arts portion of the curriculum.

**Student Retention.** This information is provided in section (g) above (*Student Retention Strategies*), and section (j) below (*Compliance with IDEA* for students with special needs).

#### **(j) Compliance with IDEA**

Maine charter regulations provide that all charter schools in Maine exist as separate and distinct LEA's. With established policies/procedures and management systems, a team of staff

and faculty skilled in helping students with a variety of challenges, including learning disabilities, and its focus on activities that support success for all students, Snow Pond has systems in place to ensure compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

**Policies/Procedures & Management Systems.** The Special Education program approval is a part of a comprehensive approval process required by the Maine Department of Education to set up and operate a public school in Maine. As public schools, all charters schools must successfully complete this process prior to opening. Other steps are required to ensure ongoing compliance with federal and state laws and regulations specific to special education, including: 1) Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 USCA (IDEA); 2) Title 34 CFR (federal regulations); 3) Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA); 4) Title 20-A, Maine Revised Statutes Annotated (Maine statutes for education, which has with three chapters specific to education of children with disabilities-chapters 301, 303 and 304; and, 5) Maine Department of Education Regulation, Chapter 101/Maine Unified Special Education Regulations. Each school must have comprehensive policies and procedures in place; establish and maintain an education data collection system; provide the Maine Department of Education with regular reports, as is required of all public schools; and, submit to onsite inspections.

The following policies/procedures were approved by the Snow Pond Board of Directors: Individualized Education Program (Least Restrictive Environment); Referral/Pre-Referral (General Intervention); Child Find; Grievance Procedure for Persons with Disabilities; Use of Physical Restraint and Seclusion; Disciplinary Removal of Students with Disabilities; Notification of Rights Under FERPA; and Mandatory Reporting. The school has an approved English Language (EL) Plan and a home language survey, to ensure that students with limited English proficiency (LEP) are identified and receive support for learning in all academic areas.

These comprehensive policies and procedures help guide staff to ensure all students receive appropriate and required services in a timely fashion to promote growth and development.

**Staff Qualifications & Responsibilities.** Snow Pond's Head of School and Special Education Director ensure compliance with all state and federal regulations relating to the education of students with disabilities. Parents of all students with special needs are afforded all procedural safeguards and are an integral part of all special education processes. Staff meet with the school's Special Education Director to ensure all appropriate steps are taken. Snow Pond also has a comprehensive non-discrimination policy in education and employment, which is assured by the Board of Directors and senior management.

**Inclusion of Exceptional Students.** Snow Pond conducts "child find" activities for the full student population so that students who may need special education services and/or accommodations are appropriately identified and, if necessary, referred for evaluation, as required by federal and state laws.

All classrooms are full inclusion classrooms. In addition to the regular classroom instructional personnel, there are 3 educators with certification in Exceptional Student Education (ESE) or are employed as special education resource teachers (1 ft spec. ed. teacher, 1 ft spec. ed. technician and 1 pt spec. ed. director). These educators help the classroom instructional personnel plan and implement appropriate instruction and accommodations and write the IEPs for exceptional education students. They also assist the classroom instructional personnel in planning for and implementing instruction for EL (and as guided by the school's LAU policy and procedures) and other special students. The resource teacher(s) may teach classes and/or work with individual students or groups of students, and/or refer to services outside the school, should they be needed as identified via the assessment, evaluation and planning process.

Since these exceptional education students remain with the same class as regular education students, they have the same opportunities that all other class members have to feel part of the group. Being a member of a school with a range of activities increases the likelihood of academic and social success.

Snow Pond supports the early identification of needs to support better educational outcomes for each individual. The child find process includes obtaining data on each student, through direct assessment and observation, or by indirect means of an examination of the student's academic performance, gross and fine motor skills, receptive and expressive language skills, vision, hearing and cognitive skills.

School staff, parents/caregivers, or representatives outside the school may refer students to the resource teacher if they believe that the student, because of a disability, may be in need of special education and supportive services in order to benefit from regular education. An appropriately certified school psychologist participates in the initial evaluation and all subsequent re-evaluations of the student. Final identification of students with disabilities and programming for such students occurs only after an appropriate evaluation is conducted and a determination has been made by the multidisciplinary team. This team includes, at a minimum, a Licensed Clinician, resource teacher, classroom teacher and others, as appropriate. If it is determined that the child requires special education and supportive services in order to benefit from regular education, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) shall be developed for the student in accordance with federal law. Policies and procedures ensure the confidentiality of the activities used to evaluate students with disabilities.

**RTI and 504.** Programming provides a tiered system that addresses students who are not demonstrating mastery of standards. At the lowest level, Tier 1, teachers use varied instructional

supports and strategies to support students who are not meeting standards. If students continue to demonstrate low achievement levels, parent meetings are held and academic / behavior plans are used to track data. If a student is placed on a behavior plan, then they are moved to Tier 2 which could include after school or day-time support. If progress is still not being made, then a teacher, administrator, or parent can refer a student to be evaluated by special education, or in the case of a medical or some other concern, a 504 meeting takes place. Students with a 504 are referred by self, parents, or teachers, and evaluated according to IDEA by the 504 administrator and team. Snow Pond has a Student Support Team and is building a RTI tracking system. A discipline ladder system conveys clear expectations and provides supports for struggling students.

**Existing Special Needs Students.** Students who enter the school with an existing Individualized Education Plan (IEP) from another school and in compliance with Maine state statutes and rules will automatically be scheduled for a transition conference to review the student's existing IEP, and appropriate services and procedures will be implemented.

For students with mental health concerns, staff reviews the student's file to determine if the need for special education services has been considered and makes such a referral or re-referral if warranted. In some cases, a student is referred to a licensed social worker to assist the team in determining needed services. For students with developmental disabilities, as a result of evaluation completed as part of the pre-referral process and/or the IEP process, students with a defined disability have, as appropriate, either a 504 Plan or an IEP written and monitored in accordance with state and federal guidelines. For students with physical disabilities, all buildings are accessible. When indicated on IEPs, speech, occupational and/or physical therapies are provided by licensed professionals contracted by the school, as is any assistive technology.

**Educational Philosophy Supports All Students.** Music and the Arts and a cooperative social environment form the foundation of Snow Pond's learning approach and are important for all children, including meeting the educational needs of ESE children. It is especially important for learning to be relevant to students' lives and results to be forthcoming and complete.

**(k) Charter School Definition, Autonomy and Flexibility**

Autonomy and flexibility of the charter school is addressed in sections (b) and (h) above and afford the school all rights and responsibilities of operating a charter school under Maine charter school law. The school meets the definition of charter school pursuant to Maine educational law, and is approved and monitored by the Maine Charter School Commission.

**(l) Single-sex Educational Program**

Snow Pond is a co-educational charter school. Enrollment is open to all students.

**(m) Waiver Requests**

Snow Pond Arts Academy is not requesting any waivers in this application.

**(n) Logic Model**

The School / Project Logic Model is attached to the application.

**(o) Audited Financial Statements**

Independently audited financial statements are attached to the application.

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