rootEd’s Impact

rootEd was founded in 2018 with the ambitious goal of identifying, investing in, and eventually scaling an innovative model to increase the number of rural Americans going on to pursue an education after high school. Rural schools educate a third of the entire U.S. high school population, but only 29 percent of rural 18–24-year-olds are enrolled in college. With 80 percent of jobs that pay middle-class wages requiring more than a high school diploma, this means a large portion of Americans are destined to end up in low-skill, low-wage employment that will put their families on the edge of poverty for the rest of their lives.

Over the last four years, rootEd has served over 12,000 rural students at 56 high schools across four states. Even with incredible headwinds throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the rootEd model has proven to be highly effective, boosting postsecondary going rates in rootEd schools by 7 percent amidst a 9.2 percent decline nationwide. In this next year, we are taking advantage of a pivotal opportunity to leverage public dollars to scale this work dramatically, quadrupling our footprint to serve more than 200 high schools and 22,000 students per year. Partnering rootEd’s successful model with broader public funding has the potential to help the next generation gain the education and skills they need to break the cycle of poverty.
The rootEd Model

rootEd funds and trains dedicated college and career advisors in rural high schools to help all students chart a path beyond high school. rootEd advisors expose students to college and career opportunities and assist with the steps needed to make their postsecondary goals a reality, such as accessing financial aid, completing college application forms, and visiting college campuses. rootEd invests in comprehensive training and tools to support and oversee the advisors and ensure that the work they do is impactful and effective.

ROOTED ADVISORS HELP STUDENTS:

- FIND & APPLY TO BEST-FIT POSTSECONDARY
- EXPLORE CAREER GOALS & OPPORTUNITIES
- ACCESS FINANCIAL AID

ROOTED ALLIANCE HIGH SCHOOLS

56 rootEd High Schools

6,200 Students reached per year

- rootEd schools
- rootEd state partner schools
Schools with rootEd advisors have significantly outperformed schools without at a time when postsecondary enrollment rates have been declining nationally. Across a series of metrics, including access to financial aid and college enrollment, rootEd students are more likely than their peers to succeed.

The students we serve:

- **50%+** Are from economically disadvantaged backgrounds
- **25%** Are the first in their families to attend college
- **30%+** Are from historically underrepresented backgrounds

In its first four years, rootEd has reached over **12,000 rural students** in 56 rural high schools.

Postsecondary enrollment in rootEd schools has increased by **7 percent** compared with a national decline in postsecondary enrollment of **9.2 percent**.

**25% of college-bound students** said they would not be going to college without the support of their rootEd advisor.

rootEd students are staying in and persisting through college at a rate up to **10 percentage points higher** than their peers.
Looking ahead

rootEd’s model has proven to be highly effective in setting rural students up for success in life. However, the biggest lesson of rootEd’s first three years is that philanthropy cannot address the challenge alone.

There are over 10,000 rural high schools in the US, and so public dollars will be essential to creating meaningful and sustained change at scale. rootEd’s next phase is focused on laying the foundations for this scale in partnership with public dollars.

To do this, rootEd is pursuing two key strategies, including:

Helping rural communities unlock public funding to invest in the future workforce.
In the 2022-23 year, rootEd will quadruple its footprint from 56 to over 200 high schools, reaching more than 22,000 students per year. This scale is possible by leveraging state dollars that provide funding for direct costs, including college and career advisors’ salaries. Philanthropic dollars will be used to train the state-funded advisors and ensure that they are maximizing their impact for rural students.

Creating a supply of skilled college and career advisors.
Training and skills are essential to the success of each rootEd advisor. In partnership with the Harvard Graduate School of Education, rootEd is developing a training program to help rural college and career advisors do this work successfully.
BDT & Company is a Chicago-based merchant bank that provides advice and long-term capital through its affiliated funds to help family- and founder-led businesses pursue their strategic and financial objectives.

For more information, please visit rootEdAlliance.org