



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES REPORT 2021

*Prepared for the Washington County Government*

*Submitted by Sunrise County Economic Council*

March, 2022

SCEC's mission is to create jobs and prosperity in Washington County. County government provides essential support to SCEC through a general contract for economic development work throughout the county, a specialized contract for business development work in the unorganized territories, and through its past contribution to SCEC's endowment.

The following is a summary of our major projects:

## Workforce

### Working Communities Challenge

The Working Communities Challenge is an economic development initiative of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston in partnership with the State of Maine and other funders. In early 2021, the Washington County and Passamaquoddy Tribe Team was chosen for the design phase of the Challenge. After several months of design work, the partners agreed to a shared strategy of making coordinated investments in young people and parents that result in living wage careers and reduce rates of child poverty by half over ten years for Washington County and the Passamaquoddy Tribe. The Boston Fed has chosen our team to be one of the six regions in Maine to move to the implementation phase. Over the next three years, we will work to develop and implement strategies to meet this goal.

### Family Futures Downeast

FFD continued at both WCCC and UMM, enrolling the 6th Cohort this Fall. Through innovative applications of technology, families were offered not only online college classes, but also remote early childhood education, college preparation and one-on-one family coaching. Most parents currently enrolled in FFD are working in addition to attending school, and coaches have helped parents get their certifications as BHPs, CRMA, C.N.A. and Recovery Coaching. Four FFD alumni will receive bachelor's degrees in May from UMM.

### Startup Downeast

SCEC launched a pilot project to provide coaching and barrier removal supports for qualifying students at WCCC who have an aspirational goal to start a business locally and need education or certifications as part of that plan. Thirteen students have been part of this first cohort. Their long-term business objectives include Plumbing and Heating, Ecotourism, Aquaculture and Retail in Washington County. This pilot is funded, in part, by the SNAP Employment & Training Program.

### Scholarships

With support from an anonymous donor and The Boston Foundation, SCEC approved 36 scholarships, totaling \$15,445, for working age adults during 2021 to help pay for training they need to make them employable or help them advance in their careers. 80% of the scholarships were for healthcare related training.

## Entrepreneurship

### Entrepreneurship Center Capital Campaign

Sunrise County Economic Council, sponsor of the MaineStreet Business Building formerly known as Machias Valley Center for Entrepreneurship, began a Capital Campaign in 2021 with a goal of \$1.06 million to construct, equip, and launch a small business hub on Main Street in Machias. In December, the campaign finished strong at \$1.3 million through the generous pledges and donations from individuals, small business owners, and foundations. Construction will begin in 2022. Members will have access to open coworking and designated desk workspaces, furnished private office and meeting options, a large conference room, relax zones and river view patios, shared office equipment and kitchen amenities, as well as on-site technical assistance, networking, and professional development events.

### Entrepreneurship Pathways

Throughout 2021, SCEC's entrepreneurship and innovation programs reached and connected over 200 individuals across 78 businesses; 61 individual program delivery partners across 38 statewide organizations; and provided 793 hours of 1:1 business coaching. Programs consisted of accredited, online small business startup incubator and accelerator programs as well as innovation-themed industry programming (re: Business of Maine Lobster course and Wild Blue Winemaking 101 workshop). During small business programs and coaching, SCEC served over 35 individuals in minority and underserved populations and continue the collaborative development of workforce and entrepreneurship programs in aquaculture, financial literacy, and value-added agriculture.

### Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC)

Since January 1, 2021, the PTAC program at SCEC currently has 77 active clients in Washington County. In this time the PTAC counselor has provided these businesses with 433 hours of one on one counseling. Over the last 12 months clients have reported \$5,886,170.93 in government contracts brought to Washington County.

### DownEast Acadia Regional Tourism

SCEC and DownEast Acadia Regional Tourism (DART) have partnered with the Maine Office of Tourism and Maine Woods Consortium to host a Community Destination Academy for Way DownEast communities (Machias to Calais). The Community Destination Academy (CDA) is a series of workshops and training sessions designed to help achieve tourism goals and grow innovative strategies specific to these communities. The CDA prepares a regional team of businesses, municipalities, and organizations to collaboratively implement locally identified tourism-based projects for growth and management of the tourism industry in Washington County. Visit [motpartners.com/programs-services/destination-development](https://motpartners.com/programs-services/destination-development) to learn more.

# Entrepreneurship cont.

## ***National Heritage Area***

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The National Heritage Area (NHA) Feasibility Study was submitted to the National Park Service (NPS) in October 2021. The NPS requested additional information, which was submitted in March 2022. Senator King's staff will present legislation to Congress for the proposed Downeast Maine National Heritage Area in April, to be considered for NHA designation during the 2022 Session. If designated, partners and community members across Downeast Maine will begin a planning process for development and promotion goals of the NHA. Meanwhile, SCEC continues to work with community members to understand the region's important heritage assets and goals for preserving and expanding our heritage story.

Please visit [sunrisecounty.org/nha](http://sunrisecounty.org/nha) to view the Feasibility Study and provide your feedback online.

## **Infrastructure**

### ***Downeast Fisheries Partnership***

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#### ***A New Emphasis - Priority Watersheds***

In 2021 the Downeast Fisheries Partnership (DFP) sought ways to amplify the impact of our efforts to strengthen Downeast fisheries and our communities that depend upon them. As a result, in 2022 we will place special emphasis on collaborative efforts meant to bring transformative change to three strategically chosen "focus" watersheds: the St. Croix river (including Cobscook and Passamaquoddy Bays); the Machias Valley (Machias-East Machias-Middle Rivers to Machias Bay); and the Union River-Acadia watershed (including Blue Hill and Frenchman Bays). With this new approach, we are committed to enhancing our engagement with communities, management agencies, and key decision makers to restore our fisheries in ways that will strengthen our communities.

#### ***Loans & Grants***

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During the 2021 year, SCEC originated \$222,464 in loans and a \$21,391 grant on behalf of County Government as part of the Washington County Unorganized Territories Tax Increment Financing District. These funds assisted a wild blueberry business and an RV park and campground and helped install a bridge on a tributary of Lower Oxbrook Lake to secure access to recreational camps and public boat landings as well as improve fish passage and aquatic habitat. SCEC originated \$33,000 in loans to three small businesses using its internal loan funds. These funds helped to create four full-time jobs and retain fifteen full-time and six part-time jobs and leveraged an additional \$103,300 investment in Washington County.

## ***Broadband***

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Funding for rural broadband is at an all-time high. SCEC is assisting interested communities to develop working groups and secure this funding for planning and implementation of long-term broadband solutions.

SCEC is conducting a county-wide internet use survey, a survey to learn from young adults, and developed a survey for individual towns to use.

SCEC is currently hosting a six-session Broadband Boot Camp, where leaders from across the State discuss the nuts and bolts of broadband planning and development.

SCEC was chosen for Maine Broadband Coalition's Communities of Practice program, which provides Washington County with 2 volunteers to assist, including a local volunteer who is also a student from the FFD program!

## ***Municipal Assistance & Out Reach***

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In March, the Maine Office of Community Development reallocated funding reserved for the Washington County Council of Governments to SCEC to perform planning activities under the CDBG Regional Community Planning Activity Grant and capacity building at the local level via the Northern Borders Regional Commission's State Capacity Grant.

As most available info was geared toward urban centers and did not apply to rural communities, SCEC hosted an Informational Roundtable on Local Municipal Plans for ARPA Funds and assisted communities with finding additional information as necessary.

To determine how we can best meet the needs of Washington County communities, SCEC hosted a Municipal Gathering for select-persons, city councilors, chambers of commerce, and members of various municipal boards and committees. Strongly noted was the need for technical assistance with identifying and applying for grant funding opportunities, creating/updating comprehensive plans, community-driven broadband, and adaptive planning.

SCEC has contracted with the Town of Jonesport to update their comprehensive plan and five additional communities have shown interest in receiving assistance. SCEC has been in discussion with the Maine Dept. of Transportation and the Dept. of Agriculture, Conservation, & Forestry about the possibility of State contracts, generally reserved for designated Regional Planning Organizations, to assist Washington County towns and cities with planning and project development.

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## ***Organizations and Initiatives***

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SCEC is able to undertake its work in collaboration with the following current active partners: Aroostook Mental Health Center, Axiom Education and Training Center, Coastal Enterprises Inc, College of the Atlantic, Cooperative Development Institute, Community Caring Collaborative, C.O.R.E., Downeast Acadia Regional Tourism, Downeast Community Partners, Downeast Institute, Downeast Public Health Council, Downeast Salmon Federation, Eastern Maine Development Corporation, Eastern Maine Electric Cooperative, Greater East Grand Economic Counsel, GrowSmart Maine, Healthy Acadia, Hancock County Planning Commission, Island Institute, Machias Savings Bank, Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Maine Community Foundation, Maine Development Foundation, Maine Office of Community Development, Maine PTAC, Maine Seacoast Mission, Maine Sea Grant, Maine Small Business Development Center, Mano en Mano, Manomet, National Digital Equity Center, Northeastern Workforce Development Board, Northern Border Regional Commission, Northern Maine Development Commission, Northern Forest Center, State of Maine, University of Maine at Machias, Wabanaki Aspirations, Washington County Community College, Washington County Development Authority, and Washington County Government.

The above activities are a broad representation of economic development services provided by SCEC on the County's behalf over the past year. It is not representative of all on-going projects, programs, and initiatives previously reported on. This report does not include confidential and/or proprietary information related to work with specific businesses or development projects. SCEC is available to discuss specifics in Executive Session at the discretion of the County Commissioners.

**Respectfully Submitted by:**



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**Executive Director**