



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES REPORT 2022

Prepared for the Washington County Government

Submitted by Sunrise County Economic Council

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

### *Family Futures Downeast*

FFD programming continued with 62 families receiving two-generation supports during the year. Of those, 27 were new families who joined Cohort 7 in the fall semester, 20 of whom have attempted college in the past without receiving a degree. Four parents received bachelor's degrees from UMM – 3 who are now working locally and one who has opened a child care facility and two completed associate's degrees at WCCC, both working locally at area nonprofits. Housing shortages continued impact of opioids on the community, and long-lasting impacts of the Covid-19 public health emergency for children are some of the biggest issues families have faced this year. But even facing many financial and emotional barriers, 87% of students have completed 3 or more goals in their goal-plan. FFD-sponsored training offered by the CCC reached 77 staff people employed at one of the 6 partner agencies last year.

### *Startup Downeast*

The first cohort of Start Up Downeast students completed work at WCCC, including 4 students who graduated with a Certificate of Plumbing Technology. SUDE students are also enrolled in certificate and associate's degree programs in Business and Entrepreneurship, and have participated in the Pathways courses with SCEC staff. In addition to academic and personal goals set with their coach, students also complete additional business and financial coaching. This year, students worked on individual financial goals, like improving credit scores, as well as business planning. Six students completed business plans through work with SCEC, CEI/Women's Business Center, New Ventures, and WCCC. Three participants received seed grants to support their new business endeavors, including one student who has opened a brick-and-mortar shop in Calais.

### *Scholarships*

With support from an anonymous donor, SCEC approved 21 scholarships, totaling \$8,800 for working age adults during 2022 to help pay for training they need to make them employable or help them advance in their careers. 86% of the scholarships were for healthcare related training.

### *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. 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. Over the next three years, we will work to develop and implement strategies to meet this goal. In May of 2022, Matthew Dana was hired as the Partnership Director for WCC. In July, the Working Communities Challenge hosted a Cultural Competency Training at the Bear Lodge at Indian Township for invited employers and partners involved in the WCC. The training, administered by Elizabeth Neptune, focused on Passamaquoddy Tribal history and sharing of cultural understanding. In October several Partners attended the WCC New England Summit in Boston, MA.

## Entrepreneurship

### *Entrepreneurship & Small Business Center*

The construction of the MaineStreet Business Building began in Q1 and was 95% complete by Q4. SCEC will begin coordinating furniture, equipment, and technology purchases (funded through the USDA RBDG grant program) that will offer members a secure, professional, high-quality work environment at 19 Main Street, Machias. In December 2022, SCEC closed a \$350,000 loan with Genesis to help round out construction costs.

### *Entrepreneurship Pathways*

Throughout 2022, SCEC's entrepreneurship and innovation programs reached and connected 80 individuals across 24 businesses; 44 individual program delivery partners across 30 statewide organizations; and provided more than 750 hours of 1:1 business coaching. Programs consisted of accredited, online small business startup incubator and accelerator programs as well as innovation-themed industry programs (re: Exploring Careers in Aquaculture). During small business programs and coaching, SCEC served more than 25 individuals in minority and underserved populations and continued collaborative development of workforce and entrepreneurship programs in Maine marine living resources, financial literacy, and value-added agriculture

### *Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC)*

Since January 1, 2022, the PTAC program at SCEC currently has 101 active clients in Washington County. In this time, the PTAC counselor has provided these businesses with 539 hours of one-on-one counseling. Over the last 12 months, clients have reported \$9,393,128.01 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](http://motpartners.com/programs-services/destination-development) to learn more.

## *National Heritage Area*

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 and Collins presented legislation to congress to designate Downeast Maine as a NHA site, and designation was approved in December of 2022. In the coming months SCEC will work with partners and community members across Downeast Maine to begin the planning process for development and promotion goals of the NHA.

## *Downeast Fisheries Partnership*

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

In July of 2022, the DFP brought on a new coordinator (Brittany Foster) to help the partnership enhance our collaborative efforts and outcomes as we focus our efforts to bring transformative change to our three Downeast priority 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). Later that summer, we began working with the Passamaquoddy tribe to write a successful \$2M grant to NOAA that will enhance fish passage on the river. The grant application was only one in a series of others that were written through a coordinated effort among Maine Dept. of Marine Resources, The Nature Conservancy, and DFP that are now going to bring more than \$20M in habitat and fish passage restoration to the St. Croix (aka., Skutik) River in the next few years. These funds will be used to plan and build improvements that will enhance both upstream and downstream passage of sea run fishes and eels across the river's dams to strengthen the river, our communities, and the Gulf of Maine food web that sustains coastal commercial fisheries harvests.

## *Loans & Grants*

During the 2022 year, SCEC originated \$187,835 in loans and \$512,406 in grants on behalf of County Government as part of the Washington County Unorganized Territories Tax Increment Financing District. Part of the grant money was used as part of an electrification project to run power along a section of Route 9 to accommodate FirstNet's comprehensive first responders' communication system. The additional grant money was used for business expansion and contributed to the Phase 2 Broadband Planning in the Greater East Grand Region. SCEC originated \$271,000 in loans to fishermen and to help with expansion of a vacation rental business using its intern. Through these planning efforts Fidium Fiber received \$8.1 million from the Maine Connectivity Authority to expand high-speed broadband services across the Greater East Grand Region. These funds helped to create four full-time jobs and six part-time jobs, and retain eleven full-time and sixteen part-time jobs, as well as potentially creating five full-time and six part-time jobs in the next two years, and leveraged an additional \$1,892,990 investment in Washington County. SCEC also awarded ten grants totaling \$20,000 to new businesses and businesses who have been in operation less than three years as part of the Seed Grant program. These funds helped to create seven full-time jobs and twelve part-time jobs, and retain fourteen full-time and twenty-one part-time jobs, and leveraged an additional \$24,586 investment in Washington County.

## *Broadband*

Funding for rural broadband is at an all-time high. SCEC has been awarded an MCA grant to support infrastructure planning as well as the creation of a county-wide digital equity plan to ensure that all residents have access to affordable broadband and devices. Such a plan would not be possible without the invaluable input and support of our coalition partners from every corner of Washington County who dedicate themselves to representing the most underserved populations. The county digital equity plan will be submitted to the state for inclusion in the state-wide plan. SCEC has provided support, grant writing, community surveys, and technical assistance to 14 communities and the number of engaged communities continues to grow. SCEC continues to advocate on a state and federal level for fast, reliable, affordable broadband throughout the county.

## *Municipal Assistance & Out Reach*

This year Sunrise County undertook grants from the Governor's Office on Planning, Innovation, and the Future to employ a Climate Resilience Coordinator and to act as a service provider for five towns assisting them in enrollment. Enrolled towns in Washington County also include Indian Township, and Pleasant Point. Five more towns are in the enrollment process. Through the partnership nearly \$275,000 has been accessed by enrolled towns through state Community Action Grants. Two congressionally directed earmarks for projects in Whiting and Jonesport have also been achieved totaling \$4.4 million dollars. SCEC continues to provide technical assistance for the Community Development Block Grant program as well as NBRC programs and is now contracting with the MDOT to provide transportation planning services to Washington County. SCEC completed a "Land Use Technical Assistance Survey & Needs Assessment for Washington County", funded by the Dept. of Agriculture, Conservation, & Forestry (DACF) in May and is now negotiating with the Washington County Council of Governments to provide service and broaden access to DACF funding.

## *Organizations and Initiatives*

None of this would be possible without the help of our partners and supporters. Please go to [www.sunrisecounty.org](http://www.sunrisecounty.org) to see the list in it's entirety.

The above activities are a broad representation of economic development services provided by SCEC on the County's behalf over the past year. 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.