

## SCEC Five Year Strategic Plan (2022-2026) with proposed updates

**Mission:** Initiate and facilitate the creation of jobs and prosperity in Washington County, Maine by working with a consortium of community-minded businesses, not-for-profit organizations, municipalities, and citizens.

### Goals

1. **Workforce:** Develop the Washington County workforce.
2. **Entrepreneurship:** Increase support and resources for entrepreneurs and businesses.
3. **Infrastructure:** Improve and strengthen the natural and built environments.
4. **Capacity:** Scale up the collective ability of SCEC and its partners to leverage investments for the people of Washington County.

### Goals and Objectives

1. **Workforce: Develop the Washington County workforce.**
  - A. Increase family income and reduce the 26% of children living in poverty by half within 10 years in partnership with the Passamaquoddy Tribe, local governments, businesses, and other non-profits.
  - B. Assist 130 Washington County families to attain living wage careers by providing two-generation support through Family Futures Downeast; pursue replication of this model in Washington County and beyond.
  - C. Prepare 120 early-career students for success in developing their own business by working with Washington County Community College through Startup Downeast.
  - D. Assist 50 individuals in recovery from substance use disorder to gain and keep living wage employment by working with partners to implement intensive coaching and experiential learning; develop expanded initiatives with people in recovery and employers.
  - E. Aid 250 residents to gain employment-related training not covered by federal financial assistance with ongoing support from the Sunrise Scholarship Fund.
  - F. Couple higher education loan payment assistance and community volunteerism for 16 recent graduates by co-administering the Gracie Fund.
  - G. Increase broadband adoption for workforce and educational activities.
    1. Increase Affordable Connectivity Program enrollment in Washington County to 62% of eligible households.
    2. Improve access to and awareness of digital skills training (including multi-lingual options) for pre-K through adult students.
2. **Entrepreneurship: Increase support and resources for entrepreneurs and businesses.**
  - A. Support 500 Washington County entrepreneurs to start, grow, or strengthen their businesses with in-person and online services through SCEC's Small Business and Entrepreneurship Program.
    1. Launch, manage, and curate the MaineStreet Business Building in Machias, providing physical and online member co-working spaces.
    2. Deliver programming, including internships and apprenticeships, through the Partners in Entrepreneurial Pathways programs with Washington County Community College, Department of Corrections, Cooperative Development Institute, recovery organizations, small businesses, and others.
    3. Deliver business coaching and learning opportunities that meet the needs of the Washington County small business community, to include individuals interested in starting or acquiring a business, early-stage microenterprises, and established small businesses.
  - B. Support the Washington County entrepreneurial ecosystem.
    1. Coordinate connection across technical assistance providers that support business and employers

across the region.

2. Support Four Directions Development Corporation in developing:
  - a) Entrepreneurship Centers at Sipayik and Motahkomikuk (Pleasant Point and Indian Township) and elsewhere.
  - b) Native Entrepreneurship programming to serve members of the federally recognized Tribes in Maine.
3. Deliver industry-specific technical assistance programs such as supplementing traditional retail with online components; wild blueberry value-added production; and others.
- C. Assist up to 150 businesses in obtaining state, local, Tribal, and federal government contracts through the Downeast Procurement Technical Center.
- D. Promote and support aquaculture, agritourism, and value-added production.
  1. Advocate for the successful development of one or more sustainable land-based aquaculture facilities.
  2. Advance shellfish and seaweed aquaculture demonstration projects in partnership with Downeast Institute and others.
  3. Encourage and assist farmers and value-added producers to integrate agritourism into their business models.
- E. Support hospitality, retail, arts, and recreation enterprises through the development of Downeast Maine as a destination.
  1. Staff the Downeast Acadia Regional Tourism (DART) to manage the Maine Tourism Marketing and Promotion Partnership funds and programs.
  2. Assist communities in destination development and downtown revitalization of Main Downtown Affiliate Communities in partnership with the Maine Office of Tourism, Maine Development Foundation, and others.
  3. Promote preservation and stewardship of our communities' most valued cultural and natural heritage assets through management of the Downeast Maine National Heritage Areas.
  4. Increase connectivity, quality, and resilience of the regional trail network in partnership with the Down East Sunrise Trail, Cobscook Trails, and the Downeast Conservation Network
  5. Support and seek funding for development, promotion, and management of scenic by-ways infrastructure, in particular the Bold Coast National Scenic Byway.
  6. Support tourism-related businesses to access training and professional development, industry news, research, and funding opportunities.
- F. Serve the unorganized territories in economic development planning and nature-based tourism by administering the Washington County government grants program.
- G. Increase the amount of loan capital from \$1.45 million to \$2.23 million that SCEC makes available to small businesses in Washington County and explore how to best meet the needs of startup businesses and emerging sectors.
- H. Monitor and respond to opportunities to create a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI).

### **3. Infrastructure: Improve and strengthen the natural and built environments.**

- A. **Natural Environment**: Restore and protect the region's natural resources through Downeast Fisheries Partnership (DFP) initiatives and the Community Resilience Partnership (CRP), capturing more than \$50M in investments.
  1. Enhance the economic, recreational, and cultural value provided by the St. Croix River, other major Washington county watersheds, and coastal waters.
    - a) Partner with municipalities and other stakeholders to restore fish passage in the upper St. Croix and other watersheds.
    - b) Preserve St. Croix hydroelectric capacity and improve fish passage at the Woodland and Grand Falls dams.
  2. Revive the productivity and resilience of Half Moon Cove by working with the Passamaquoddy Tribe,

- Eastport Port Authority, and other stakeholders to enhance tidal exchange, ecosystem connectivity, and new traffic and rail routes.
3. Accelerate and implement regional environmental protection, habitat restoration, education, and stewardship projects.
    - a) Explore establishing a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) in Passamaquoddy Bay or another coastal location.
    - b) Enhance K-12 and higher education STEM-based (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) experiential learning opportunities.
    - c) Work with municipal, county, and nonprofit partners to preserve and enhance access to clam flats.
  4. Support the development of aquaculture in Downeast Maine through inclusion in town comprehensive plans, pilot programs such as clam gardening, and commercializing successful shellfish grow-out techniques.
  5. Through CRP programs, assist communities to become more resilient to climate change effects such as extreme weather, flooding, rising sea levels, and public health impacts.
- B. Built Environment: Lead and support initiatives to capture up to \$100M in investments for built infrastructure projects critical to Washington County's economic development.
1. Transportation: Assist with project identification and provide planning, technical assistance, proposal development, and project administration for Washington County communities to secure the maximum funding and successfully execute projects including:
    - a) Port, rail, and intermodal transportation.
    - b) Working waterfronts and harbors.
    - c) Road safety, capacity, and accessibility.
    - d) Public Transportation.
    - e) Bike-ped transportation, especially the Down East Sunrise Trail and Bold Coast Scenic Bikeway
  2. Broadband: Scale up planning, technical assistance, proposal development and project administration for Washington County communities to secure the maximum funding and successfully execute projects.
  3. Workforce housing: Lead collaborative initiatives to address the acute shortage of quality workforce housing.
    - a) Conduct regional assessment of workforce housing needs.
    - b) Partner on pilot programs such as Mano en Mano's Welcome Home Downeast to create affordable rental housing with a pathway to home ownership.
    - c) Support weatherization initiatives
  4. Major business investments: Advocate and directly support proposed large scale business investments that meet SCEC's Guiding Principles for Supporting Development.
  5. Energy System Resilience
    - a) Support appropriate-to-site development of green energy infrastructure in Washington County
    - b) Support community microgrid projects in Eastport and other island and peninsula communities.
    - c) Help reduce community energy costs for heating/cooling, lighting, and transportation.
  6. Other infrastructure: Provide planning, technical assistance, proposal development, and project administration for Washington County communities to secure the maximum funding and successfully execute projects through entities including, but not limited to:
    - a) Community Development Block Grants.
    - b) Northern Border Regional Commission.
    - c) Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.
    - d) Washington County Brownfields Program to fund between 50 – 100 Phase I and II Environmental Assessments and obtain mitigation resources.
    - e) Washington County Development Authority Board including redevelopment of former Cutler

Naval base facilities.

f) Washington County Council of Governments.

**4. Capacity: Scale up the collective ability of SCEC and its partners to leverage investments for the people of Washington County.**

- A. Increase direct advocacy for projects and policies that support economic development.
- B. Expand knowledge of critical county-wide economic development, infrastructure, and environmental data.
- C. Build community leadership capacity through the Washington County Leadership Institute and targeted leadership initiatives.
- D. Build municipal development capacity through:
  - 1. GOPIF Service Provider assistance and Community Action Grants
  - 2. Broadband expansion and adoption
  - 3. Specific training for municipal leaders
  - 4. GIS services for municipal planning
- E. Strengthen grassroots community development efforts by providing fiscal agent and organizational support for initiatives such as Wabanaki Aspirations, Downeast Conservation Network and other efforts.
- F. Provide administrative, bookkeeping, and/or project management support for select economy focused efforts in Washington County such as Greater East Grand Economic Council, Washington County Council of Governments, and Washington County Development Authority.
- G. Implement Diversity Equity Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) assessments and action plans within SCEC and with collaborative partners.
- H. Define metrics for SCEC organizational and program evaluation; implement systems for measurement and reporting, including population level data not readily available.
- I. Ensure capacity to sustain existing funder relationships and act promptly as new opportunities arise for SCEC and Washington County.
- J. Enhance understanding and appreciation for SCEC's strategies, roles, and capabilities among key constituencies and target audiences.
  - 1. Develop, implement, and evaluate annual communications plans.
  - 2. Explore ways to connect new residents with Washington County businesses and service providers through SCEC's website and social media.
  - 3. Demonstrate and promote best practices in areas such as family coaching, entrepreneurship apprenticeships, and collaborative leadership.
- K. Continually address SCEC's necessary scale and adaptability in light of needs, opportunities, available resources, and technological change.
  - 1. Update human resource functions including annual staff professional development plans, talent acquisition and retention, board capacity-building, and readiness for executive succession.
  - 2. Develop multi-year forecasts for finance, facilities, technology, and other organizational needs.
  - 3. Build a capital reserve and opportunity fund.
  - 4. Annually assess this strategic plan and update as needed.