

Aroostook-Washington Economic Development District (AWEDD)



Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) April 2015

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I. Introduction

July of 2011, Washington and Aroostook Counties were combined as one of seven Economic Development Districts (EDDs) in Maine. The purpose of this realignment was to better represent natural economies. The linkage between Aroostook and Washington counties has many similar attributes and unique assets – some of them with great promise and some with serious challenges.

Aroostook Washington Economic Development District (AWEDD) has great potential to leverage its natural resource base and environment, its hardworking people, its proximity to Canada and Europe, and its inherent economic resiliency. Those that live here are individuals and families that have become “survivors” – doing whatever is necessary to secure adequate food, shelter and clothing in a very rural location with an extreme winter climate. However, mere survival is not good enough and regional leaders are committed to a transformation that will reverse the economic and social decline of the past three decades.

Although the region has seen some economic setbacks in the retail industry and potato production, manufacturing, specifically in the forest products sector, has rebounded. With two new mills in the Ashland region and a third to begin operations in the spring of 2015. Other economic investments, which are in line with this CEDS document, in the past two years are depicted on these two charts compiled by the Aroostook Partnership for Progress.



2013 Goals Progress

<u>Name</u>	<u>Investment</u>	<u>New Jobs</u>
• McCain’s CNG Upgrade	\$13M	
• TIGER Rail Upgrade	\$ 3.8M	14
• Louisiana Pacific	N/A	35
• Inn of Acadia Hotel	\$ 1.1M	8
• AMERIDIAL Startup	\$400K	85
• TAMC CNG Conversion	\$300K	
• Cary CNG Conversion	\$600K	



2014 Goals Progress

<u>Name</u>	<u>Investment</u>	<u>New Jobs</u>
• First Wind (Oakfield)	\$100M	15
• New Irving Sawmill	\$32M	65
• New Ecoshel Mill	\$7M	35
• Emera Infrastructure	\$ 14M	
• UMFK’s Biomass Conversion	\$ 5.5M	
• Smith Farms Cooler	\$ 4M	
• ReEnergy Reopening	\$ 2M	25
• Naturally Potatoes Expansion	\$ 8.5M	15
• Gateway Motel Remodeled	\$ 300K	30

Opportunities and Challenges that drive our strategy

Opportunities:

- Very active international border with Canada that offers significant economic opportunity for business expansion and more meaningful cross-cultural engagement.
- Expanded shipping opportunities at the Port of Eastport (deepest port on the U.S. east coast), especially to European biomass market.
- Available (and increasing) tillable cropland, much of it suitable for organic use.
- Expanding and diversifying value-added wood products that will leverage the most concentrated wood resource in the U.S.
- Utilization of our renewable and alternative energy resources in wind, tidal, biomass and compressed natural gas.
- Expanding value-added processing of crop and marine resources
- Potential of mining in Northern Maine
- Expanded utilization of higher education resources
- Rail car manufacturing at the Loring Commerce Centre

Challenges:

- Lowering energy costs for business and industry
- Mitigating distance to market through more effective/efficient transportation.
- Limitations on local economy’s ability to support more businesses/service providers.
- Inability to capture more transiting tourism visitors.
- Reversing the prevalent negative mindset and aversion to risk-taking/trying something new.
- Lack of rail infrastructure connection to Port of Eastport
- Small number of “leaders” in the region
- General lack of business acumen/sophistication and lack of entrepreneurial training and assistance
- Accessing Canadian market

II. AWEDD Regional Vision

Our region is a place of abundant natural resources that is reflected in the beauty of our landscape and the potential for economic and social prosperity it offers. We value the individuality and endurance of our people while recognizing the strong sense of community and place that sustains us. We will create economic growth by focusing on sectors that best leverage these assets and by working to develop policies that promote private sector investment; while at the same time, retaining the quality of life that makes the region special.

III. AWEDD Regional Goals

A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) must be more than a description of the region accompanied by broad aspirational goals that allow a wide-ranging list of designated “priority” projects to qualify for federal funding sources.



AWEDD is employing ViTAL Economy’s S.M.A.R.T. CEDS principals for the development of this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

These principles include the following key elements:

Process – Based on Best Practices for Regional Community Economic Development (CED) and Collaboration

Regional Focus – Enables regions to compete against other regional, national and international strategies

Asset-Based – Indigenous assets grow more durable economies

Diversified – Makes for a more nimble & resilient economy!

Measurable Strategy – Responsive to trends...relevant to region

Disciplined & Consistent – All ideas are not equal...priorities matter

The AWEDD CEDS with key strategies and implementable action plans linked to S.M.A.R.T. Goals will become the playbook for a collaborative, region wide transformation for regional prosperity.

AWEDD Goals:

AWEDD	Baseline 2010	2017 Goal	Change
Population	104,726	108,841	4,115
Employable Population (16 and older)	86,700	90,660	3,960
Labor Participation Rate	58.09%	59.50%	1.40%
Total Employment (Line 3 X Line 2)	50,368	53,939	3,571
Average Wage per Job (BEA CA30 line 300)	\$35,581	\$36,481	\$900
Total Region Wages (BEA CA30 line 190)	\$1,792,151,948	\$1,967,756,750	\$175,604,802
Per Capita Income (BEA CA30 line 110)	\$31,019	\$34,067	\$3,048
Regional GDP	\$4,633,000,000	\$5,042,715,000	\$409,715,000
Bachelors Degrees 25 & Over	11,776	12,776	1,000
Regional Specific Goals			
Increase younger population 20-44	27,867	32,460	4,593
Associate Degrees (25 years & older)	8.60%	8.90%	0.30%

Note: These goals were established by convening regional business, governmental, and educational leaders to discuss basic economic and socioeconomic indicators for the region. From those discussions, these goals were agreed upon as aggressive, but achievable, targets for regional growth over the next five years.

IV. Sense of Urgency

To accomplish the transformation from a condition of survival to one of sustainable prosperity, we must address two critical issues.

First, our young people continue to leave for work (and lives) in other parts of our state and region, while we bitterly complain about that reality. This is the source of the region’s economic and social challenge; the critical imperative we face. The 20 to 44-year-old age cohort is the workforce lifeblood and is hovering at 30 percent of the total population; a level below which economists tell us our local/regional economy is no longer sustainable. When the pool of younger workers drops below this 30 percent threshold, companies struggle to find the workers needed to operate their business eventually causing them to either close or relocate.

Second, we must alleviate our energy cost burden that is a major constraining factor for both business growth and household stability. The region’s citizens and businesses “survive” in a region with twice the national average cost burden for energy. Since energy is the primary input to life and economic performance, our region faces a greater barrier than many regions in the U.S. The cost burden is driven by an 80 percent use of heating oil, 16 cents per Kw for electricity and a low household income as a result of an aging population on fixed incomes and lower wage jobs.

Therefore, the challenge is clear. We must reverse this long-term trend of our children leaving us for work elsewhere by promoting the good-paying jobs that do exist, while at the same time creating new jobs and opportunity in our regional economy. Mobilize Maine, an asset-based strategic planning process, offers the best hope of accomplishing this positive change. By engaging local and regional business leaders in establishing measurable goals that are then linked to assets (natural, business and human resources), job creation and business expansion is accomplished from within the region. The foundational premise is that business, municipal and

nonprofit leaders have the capacity to lead economic change if it is based on regional assets that are in our control.

Regional Mindset Modification - We need to get serious about where we are heading. Aroostook and Washington counties have been trending downward in population, median age, median household income and percentage of total population in the workforce for the past four decades. All of these issues are directly related to the continuing out-migration of young working-age people (20-44-year-olds) from the region that results in 1) loss of business due to recruitment issues, 2) less entrepreneurship, and 3) loss of services (healthcare and schools, most directly). Immediate actions need to be taken to retain our young people and lure others to the region; and it must be an initiative that includes and engages all aspects of our communities – business, educational and governmental.

The private sector, workforce development officials and educators have come together to address the needs of the future workforce through the Aroostook Partnership for Progress “Education to Industry” initiative. Retention and attraction of younger workers is critical to the effort. A jobs/resume posting website, www.opportunitiesaroostook.com, was launched, as well as supporting social media. The initiative also stresses the importance of job shadowing and internships as a way of exposing students to emerging jobs in the region.



The creation of new jobs, either through business expansion or business startups, has been faltering and one of the key factors is the high cost of energy (2 times the national average). The whole Northeast is a high electrical cost region, but the AWEDD area has some of the higher rates and that, coupled with our excessive heating costs, creates a huge operating cost challenge for business and industry. What results from this circumstance is that products and services are less competitive in the marketplace, businesses in the region are less stable and business startup and expansion is depressed.

Utilizing the Mobilize Maine process, we have identified the economic sectors that offer the best opportunity, and are investigating, defining and initiating business activities in those clusters that will improve wages and create new jobs to achieve the goals we have established.

V. Measuring Progress - Moving Forward

Why having a path forward counts

Economic development in Maine and in our region has traditionally been either reactive (someone calls with a “the greatest business opportunity in a decade”) or needs based (if we only had that new technology park, the phone would ring off the hook). For the past few years, the Northern Maine Development Commission (NMDC) has been utilizing an innovative and more logical approach to community economic development; asset based. The Mobilize Northern Maine (MNM) – and now, Mobilize Downeast Maine (MDEM) – initiatives employ a community-based collaborative process that engages businesses and community organizations to develop sustainable, specific and measurable goals for the region. These goals are benchmarked to the current economy and form the evaluative backdrop to determine if economic initiatives are working. An essential aspect of the Mobilize Maine process is to identify the human, natural, educational and social resources present in the region and leverage them to create jobs and expand opportunity. The paradigm shift from the old economic

development model is the creation of a collective mindset of regional independence and self-determination that builds on the resources already in our control. This reliance on “what we have” as opposed to “what we need” is a liberating approach that develops strategies that build on regional business clusters and their relative competitiveness in the global economy. In addition, these strategies underpin the initiatives that NMDC carries out to help regional businesses expand and new businesses form. This progressive approach, involving business and community interests, creates an economic path forward that has direction, focus and commitment.

The Six Economic Drivers for Growth and Prosperity

- Asset Based Cluster Development
- Entrepreneurship and Innovation
- Education and Workforce Development
- Access to Capital
- Infrastructure and Environment
- Leadership

Asset Based Cluster Development

AWEDD’s approach to asset based economic development focuses on the regions competitive strengths and opportunities. Systematic regional asset mapping has been completed in nine categories including tangible and intangible assets; natural, human/skills, knowledge, cultural/historic, geographic, excellence, infrastructure, government and innovation. The exploration and analysis of the regions assets has included a prioritization process consisting of a determination of assets that are “truly unique and indigenous” and that can be leveraged to reach the measureable economic vision. Output from this analysis resulted in priority regional assets, targeted industry clusters, strategies and specific industry sectors for value chain mapping.

AWEDD’s priority industry clusters are ***Alternative Energy, Manufacturing, Agriculture, Forest Resources, Tourism and Marine Resources***. We will be paying particular attention to the crosscutting role that educational institutions and workforce training can play in addressing structural change in job requirements to better support these clusters.

Asset Based Cluster Development Goal Statement. By focusing on six asset-based industry clusters the region will realize 3,571 new jobs by 2017, 3,214 @ \$36,500, 357 @ \$40,000 and total employment of 53,539.

Alternative Energy Goal - Realize 236 jobs in the Renewable Energy Economy strategy by 2017.

Strategy 1. Establish an active and integrated industry cluster leadership in Aroostook and Washington County by December 2013, to implement and achieve the cluster goals.

Action Item 1. Leadership work plan to be developed by Q1 2014

Outcome:

A linkage has been formed between the Aroostook Alternative Energy working group and the Eastport Affordable Energy group to continue to explore energy cost reduction in Aroostook and Washington counties.

- Strategy 2.* Focus on and evaluate a wide variety of alternative energy sources to reduce the heat energy cost burden in Northern and Eastern Maine by \$10 million per year by 2017.
Outcome:
Briefings have been held on current state for renewable energy alternatives.
- Strategy 3.* Produce 45,000 tons locally sourced biomass in the transition of (10) commercial and (1,500) residential units from heating oil to biomass by 2017.
Outcome:
The production of 45,000 tons per year of locally sourced biomass is being achieved. Residential conversion and supplemental heating to biomass sources is continuing and on pace to achieve the 1,500 residential unit impact. Commercial biomass conversion/installation is not as active, but strategies are being developed to increase this.

Specialty Manufacturing and Processing Goal – Achieve 350 new jobs in metals manufacturing, food product manufacturing and natural resource product manufacturing

- Strategy 1.* Continuing consultation with small manufacturers by conducting 50 business visits and delivering five efficiency improvement projects per year.
Outcome:
Through the Maine MEP and outreach from NMDC, APP, SCEC and WCOG those efforts continue.
- Strategy 2.* Identify, research and communicate niche market opportunities to business leaders through newsletters, workshops and summits.
Outcome:
Newsletter distribution includes information on niche markets. In addition, various working groups discuss opportunities.
- Strategy 3.* Develop residential and/or commercial heating appliance manufacturing in the region.
Outcome:
Work continues to develop in region manufacturing of a residential and/or commercial heating appliance. Continued correspondence with manufacturers and attendance at biomass fairs.

Diversified Agriculture Goal – Accomplish 50 new farm businesses/jobs, increase net income to farmers by 10%, expand acres under production by 5,000 and increase value added production.

- Strategy 1.* Establish an active and integrated industry cluster leadership in Aroostook and Washington County by December 2013, to develop strategies and action plans to achieve the cluster goals
Outcome:
Diversified Agriculture working group has been meeting since the fall of 2013 and is developing relevant initiatives for Strategy 2 and 3.

- Strategy 2.* Identify and determine characteristics and primary crop opportunities for the 28,000 plus acres coming out of the conservation resource preservation program.
- Strategy 3.* Build and strengthen distribution systems across Aroostook/Washington counties to east coast markets
Outcome:
Working with GPCOG on connection between the Greater Portland food system and northern Maine as a production resource.

Forest Products Goal – By 2017, increase total value-added wood products manufacturing in Northern and Eastern Maine by 40%.

- Strategy 1.* Establish and support an integrated industry cluster team with Aroostook and Washington County participation by December 2013 to craft and implement a forestry strategy
Outcome:
Forestry working group was formed in 2013 and, with their guidance, a northern forest products industry cluster (NFPIC) is being formed. This work began in January 2015 and an action plan will be developed by the summer of 2015.
- Strategy 2.* Regular review of the legislative and regulatory climate to streamline and improve the forest operational business climate.
Outcome:
This is part of the NFPIC focus
- Strategy 3.* Build a workforce supply pipeline through youth engagement and the establishment of a timber harvesting training program at NMCC
Outcome:
This is part of the NFPIC focus

Marine Resources Goal – Increase marine-related employment by 250 jobs through expansion of research, harvest, processing and marine vessel manufacture.

- Strategy 1.* Investigate and develop a regional business case for increased seafood processing capacity in the region.
- Strategy 2.* Expand marine research capacity in the region by leveraging the unique marine environment and creating connection to interested out-of-region research institutions.
- Strategy 3.* Investigate and develop marine vessel manufacturing in the region.
Outcome:
Millenium Marine has begun manufacture of fishing and pleasure boats in Eastport.

Tourism Goal – Increase overall lodging and dining revenues by 25 percent, employment by 15% and expand or develop five major events.

Strategy 1. Increase event coordination capacity in the region

Outcome:

Facilitated World Acadia Congress, Aroostook Brewfest (new), Work Cup Biathlon

Strategy 2. Coordination of public and private marketing dollars to increase visitor interest and impact.

Outcome: Coordination with Aroostook County Tourism and DownEast Acadia Regional Tourism to market region.

Strategy 3. Improve the quality and quantity of basic tourism information about customer demands and regional tourism products to guide improved visitation and spending.

Outcome: See Strategy 2

Entrepreneurship and Innovation

AWEDD employs a holistic ecosystem approach to assessment and further development of the region's entrepreneurship and innovation framework. This ecosystem includes businesses – both traditional and technology driven; knowledge transformers and idea igniters, including universities and other education/research centers; change agents; public agencies and the nonprofit sector; and multiple levels of investors.

The strength and measurement of this driver will be determined with four metrics (the 4 P's):

Pipeline – the number of active ideas generated and pursued

Participation level – the number of active and engaged innovators and entrepreneurs;

Prototypes – the number of products or services developed and entering the market;

Portfolio – the mix and success rate of ideas.

The AWEDD region is very rural in nature and the distance to typical generators and supporters of vibrant innovation and entrepreneurship can be an isolating factor. Therefore, the region is pursuing a “right sized” innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem, utilizing existing in-region assets while building partnerships with external capacity resources to fill local gaps. This approach will result in forming a Venture Development Organization devoted to qualified entrepreneurs seeking assistance.

Entrepreneurship and Innovation Goal Statement. By 2017, the region will improve the overall business acumen and increase business starts to over 400 per year and grow overall total number of firms by 10% (+1,102) to 12,129.

Strategy 1. Complete a regional innovation strategic plan by December 2013 to guide the direction and priorities through 2017.

Outcome:

Planning for an innovation event continues.

Strategy 2. Increase the regions interest and capabilities to start new businesses by providing one-on-one consultation, startup workshops and trainings.

Outcome:

See Strategy 1.

Strategy 3. Focus a part of the Education to Industry initiative to include business ownership and entrepreneurial concepts and opportunities.

Outcome:

An Education to Industry working group has been formed and has held summits to explore career paths and business ownership.

Education and Workforce Development

Human capital is a top priority for the AWEDD region, and regional leaders recognize that development, retention, and attraction of sufficient quantity and quality workforce are essential to a sustainable Northern and Down East Maine economy.

AWEDD has taken multiple steps to reinforce and leverage the resources and tools within economic and workforce development. AWEDD is one of a few federally recognized regions in the country that have merged the regional Workforce Investment Board (LWIB) with the regional economic development district (EDD). Consequently, discussions, strategies and actions undertaken in the region meaningfully integrate workforce issues with industry needs. This is particularly the case with a new emphasis on “industry partnerships” that will link specific sector training needs to training resources. In the K-12 school system, there is growing focus on an “Education to Industry” initiative that seeks to engage middle and high school students in a variety of programs that will give them more direct work experiences. School superintendents are working with regional business leaders to change how students connect to and become aware of the availability of good jobs. Efforts will be increased to better connect research and development in private/public institutions in the aquaculture, farming, forestry and renewable energy sectors with companies that can leverage that research into business opportunities.

Education and Workforce Development – Goals developed by Area 1 Workforce Investment Board

Goal #1: Resource Integration – Continue to build capacity in established workforce development system, which expands and leverages public, private and nonprofit resources with a common vision. In five years, the regional system will have at least 20 active workforce stakeholders resulting in a 2 to 1 leverage of funds.

Goal #2: Industry Engagement –The workforce system partners have engaged with private and public employers to increase participation in regional industry sectors.

Goal #3: Human Capital Development – To align and support Mobilize Maine, in five years, the workforce development system will help build a robust workforce pool by increasing population, growing the 25-44 age group, increasing bachelor’s degree attainment and Associate Degree attainment of residents.

Goal #4: Innovation & Entrepreneurship – The regional workforce development system will engage with NMDC, Sunrise County Economic Council, Aroostook Partnership for Progress (APP) and other economic development partners to create a region wide Innovation and Entrepreneurship model. Entrepreneurship and workforce development programs will increase collaboration to embed new strategic and ongoing entrepreneurship programs into workforce services. The workforce development system partners will adopt innovative and entrepreneurial principles to create a system wide culture of creativity, innovation and flexibility in service delivery.

Priorities of focus include:

Communication

- Promotion
- “no wrong door” – all informed
- Contact clearing house
- Employer forums
- Synergies
- Transition services

Higher Expectations

- Positive proactive rapid response for businesses immediate needs
- Wise use of resources
- Opportunities to leverage more resources
- Increase education and skill attainment
- More OJTs, customized training and training for incumbent workers

Support Services

- Transportation
- Housing
- Family care
- Employee health and wellness
- Any and all services for needs to get met

Access to Capital

AWEDD is implementing a strategic lifecycle approach for access to capital. This lifecycle strategy includes the formation of capital sources from microloan/startup financing, debt and equity, growth and public finance. Access to capital strategies are directly linked to the innovation and entrepreneurship, industry cluster development and infrastructure drivers. The region has solid expertise and a variety of revolving loan funds that have performed adequately. The region desires to increase deal flow and provide mentoring and resources to reduce loan risk, improve investment performance and economic impact.

Access to Capital Goal Statement. Increase overall lending in the region by 15% by 2017 including the coordination of capital resources from micro lending to public projects and mature industry finance.

Strategy 1. Active involvement of finance expertise and resources in all phases of Mobilize Maine sector activities.

Outcome:

Regional financial institutions are active in the Aroostook Partnership for Progress (APP) that is the leadership for Mobilize Northern Maine and provides oversight for all the working groups mentioned in the CEDS. Additionally, there is direct engagement in the NFPIC formation.

Strategy 2. Support discussion between SCEC and NMDC lending resources to look at specialty lending products to serve niche market sectors.

Outcome:

- There has been active collaboration between SCEC and NMDC on loan processing activities on an ad hoc basis.*
- Strategy 3. Promote risk reduction of commercial lending through the development of loan products that require more direct involvement in actively monitoring.
- Outcome:*
Little work done on this strategy.

Infrastructure and Environment

Regional infrastructure analysis, needs and priorities come directly from the regional asset based industry cluster activities. Infrastructure projects and priorities are analyzed and developed based upon regional return on investment and impact on industry cluster competitiveness.

Environment is viewed in the context of Quality of Place characteristics. Northern Maine is a region that covets its natural environment as a place for commerce, recreation and a unique lifestyle. Protection and development of the natural environment is balanced and recognized as a priority in a knowledge-based 21st century economy.

Infrastructure and Environment Goal Statement. Starting in 2014 build a strategic community and economic linkage between regional project prioritization and the regional vision and goals.

- Strategy 1.* Beginning in 2014, NMDC will coordinate and facilitate a region wide project prioritization process to inform the CEDS and also build consensus among public, private and nonprofit parties.
- Outcome:*
No work has been done on this strategy.
- Strategy 2.* NMDC will incorporate and leverage the work conducted in the Grow Washington Aroostook initiative to inform and design 2014 – 2017 infrastructure and environment strategies and actions
- Outcome:*
Actions and initiatives in the Grow Washington/Aroostook report are incorporated into the goals and strategies of this CEDS.
- Strategy 3.* Tourism initiatives will incorporate the land and water based trail systems as a quality of place asset with recreational tourism opportunities to support the economic goals.
- Outcome:*
Aroostook County Tourism and DownEast Acadian Region Tourism routinely incorporate land and water based trail systems in marketing the respective regions.
- Strategy 4.* Determine the regional significance of the Port of Eastport; especially in relation to transportation connections to supply and market.
- Outcome:*
NMDC staff has met and continues to engage with Port Director, Chris Gardiner, and strongly beliefs economic

growth in the region is directly connected to the Port of Eastport.

Leadership

NMDC views leadership as an immediate requirement but also a long-term priority to guide and drive the regions comprehensive economic development strategy forward. We recognize the role and value of private sector leadership and involvement in economic development through our experience of the Mobilize Maine work. To that end, NMDC has purposefully combined and streamlined boards and committees to increase efficiency and effectiveness. Private sector leadership and advisement is being provided through the Aroostook Partnership for Progress and the Sunrise County Economic Council (SCEC). We recognize and support the other community groups that sustain the identification and development of new and future leaders. These include Leaders Encouraging Aroostook Development (LEAD), Momentum Aroostook, SCEC Leadership Institute and Washington County One Community. It is vital that these programs be expanded and that new programs be developed to grow the development of informed new leaders in the region.

Leadership Goal Statement. By 2017, NMDC and its community economic development partners will expand the regional and Mobilize Maine leadership to 500 active participants.

- Strategy 1.* NMDC will coordinate and facilitate under the Mobilize Maine initiative the strategic alignment of community, economic and workforce development entities, along with the private sector, focusing on the achievement of the regional goals.
Outcome:
This is an active and ongoing process led by the Aroostook Partnership for Progress (APP) Executive Board and the APP President
- Strategy 2* Continue to expand the role of the private sector in the design and leadership of the regional economic development strategy.
Outcome:
This is an active and ongoing process led by the Aroostook Partnership for Progress (APP) Executive Board and the APP President
- Strategy 3.* NMDC will develop and implement a coordinated internal and external communication strategy designed to reinforce the purpose and progress of the regional strategy.
Outcome:
NMDC maintains a number of communication processes from electronic newsletter to a printed municipal newsletter. CEDS progress is also chronicled in new releases, social and traditional media.

VI. High Impact Project priorities

Project Selection

The criteria for project selection will be revised over the upcoming year to reflect the new goals outlined in this CEDS. There will be a challenge in relating project information to each and every goal component, so it is anticipated that the project rating system will rely more heavily on new jobs, wage level, and related benefits to determine priorities. One of the tools that will be used for

project selection and impact will be the Northern New England Economic Model, a credentialed model developed by Connect Northern New England and Vital Economy. This model will be used to determine the economic impact of job creation in various sectors and how those jobs assist in accomplishing the regional goals. Currently, the only project that has been identified as a priority project is the “Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership” project that seeks to establish heating appliance manufacturing in the AWEDD region. Our regional experience is that projects that might need EDA funding come up quickly and spontaneously and we have mechanisms in place to react quickly to these circumstances (see Priority Project Amendments below). Additionally, projects that fall under the focus cluster areas of *Alternative Energy, Manufacturing, Agriculture, Forest Resources, Tourism and Marine Resources* will receive more weight and attention; while, at the same time, the emphasis for any project will be the job and wage impact for the region.

Priority Projects:

Priority Project 1 - Acme Monaco Expansion on Presque Isle Industrial Park

Acme Monaco is the largest manufacturer of orthodontic appliances in the world with additional capabilities for manufacture of medical assemblies, such as surgical staples, guidewires and stylets. The company has had a manufacturing presence on the Presque Isle Industrial Park for more than 26 years and currently leases two City-owned buildings at that location. Currently production and distribution are accomplished at two different facilities with production at the Presque Isle location and finishing and finishing/distribution at their New Britain, CT headquarters. Acme Monaco is working with the City of Presque Isle, the Presque Isle Industrial Council and NMDC to consolidate all facets of their manufacturing, finishing and distribution into a single facility located at the Presque Isle Industrial Park. This would retain 72 existing employees and provide new jobs for 23 more positions.

Priority Project Amendments

If and when a significant project is proposed that needs to be added and/or moved on the priority list, NMDC staff members will prepare a project-scoring sheet that will be circulated to the LWIB CEDS subcommittee members who will be polled on the proposed action. The poll may be taken by telephone, in person or in writing (including email). The person taking the poll shall record each Council member’s vote in writing. Any action taken by a majority of the Council shall be deemed the action of the Council, provided that no Council member expresses objection to informal action being taken without a meeting at the time of the poll. If there is an objection, a special meeting will be called.