



NMDC NEXT GENERATION STRATEGIC PLAN

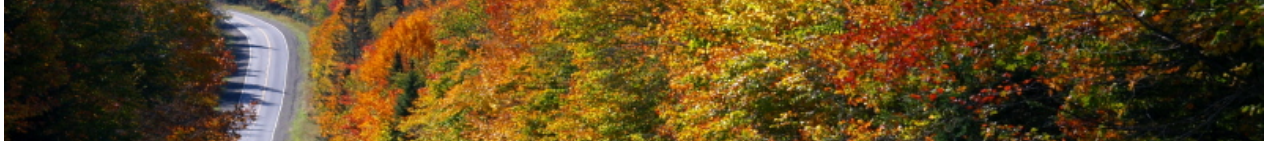
2018-2022

Presented by ONE Group and CultureWorth

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I. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Jim Haguewood, ONE Group and Sheila Jans, CultureWorth, extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to Robert Clark, NMDC Executive Director; Jon Gulliver, Director of Investor and Community Relations; and the NMDC Board of Directors for their confidence in selecting us as the consultant team to craft the Next Generation Strategic Plan.

We acknowledge the vision and commitment of NMDC staff and Board of Directors to proceed with an organizational evaluation and new strategic direction. We are grateful for their honest and candid views of NMDC today and vision of a preferred future. Many thanks also to the regional community and economic development leaders who gave so generously of their time and insight for interviews and workshops. Foresight with an unwavering commitment to NMDC's service area of Aroostook and Washington counties are critical ingredients in achieving the vision and priorities of this plan.



II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The service area for the Northern Maine Development Commission (NMDC) covers a region that spans the entire northernmost and southeastern part of the State of Maine. This is the land of Aroostook and Washington counties – a place of abundant natural resources with vast forests, fertile agricultural land, rich marine waters, and a clean, outdoor environment. The area contains nationally award-winning education and healthcare institutions that enrich the quality of life for the people who call these counties their home. The region also includes many major employers that recognize the significance of a dedicated workforce and a culture of entrepreneurship.

The Aroostook and Washington counties region possess many positive attributes but continues to face monumental social and economic forces that challenge the area’s viability. These forces include an older demographic, consistent out-migration of population, global market pressures on traditional industries, high rates of poverty, and decades of economic stagnation. Regional economic development agencies have accomplished much over the past decade, but these critical challenges continue. NMDC is the federally designated planning and economic development nonprofit agency leading many of the programs and efforts to respond to these forces.

In early 2017, the NMDC Executive and Board leadership recognized that the organization needed to assess its performance and recalibrate its strategic priorities and direction. The result is the *NMDC Next Generation Strategic Plan 2018-2022*, an organizational strategy developed with broad public, private, and non-profit sector input, staff and board perspectives, as well as critical analysis and application of proven rural community economic development principles.

The prevalent desire is for NMDC to generate “greater impact” in the communities and economy it serves through the deployment of its resources. Achieving “greater impact” on behalf of NMDC is the key premise that has informed the design and priorities of the Next Generation Strategic Plan. The research findings revealed that five target impact areas that must be influenced to address the forces and alter the adverse trends. Fundamentally, the retention and attraction of people (population) is the core factor for the future viability of communities and the economy of Aroostook and Washington counties.

Target Impact Areas

POPULATION – ECONOMIC VALUE – QUALITY OF PLACE – INFRASTRUCTURE – MINDSET

The Northern Maine Development Commission envisions a treasured place with a vibrant quality of life and a thriving economy. The NMDC mission is to strengthen economic resilience for all communities in Aroostook and Washington counties through impact financing, technical assistance and collaborative planning. It is dedicated to serving its customers and communities to the highest standards of integrity and professionalism, and strives for productive relationships, innovation and responsiveness. NMDC values one another in its organization and is committed to sustainability and the efficient use of resources.

The purpose of this plan and its strategic framework is to positively influence the impact areas, build upon the strengths of NMDC, and provide an agenda for effective partnerships. Also identified are five strategic elements, building blocks that are interdependent and reliant on the success of one another. They provide the critical structure for the goals, strategies, and actions articulated in the Strategic Roadmap.

Strategic Elements and Focus Areas

Community – Municipalities, community services, destination, quality of place, arts and culture

Finance – Access to capital, mission-driven lending, technical support, entrepreneurship

Partnerships – Alliances with customers, organizations, agencies, communities

Communications – Audience appropriate messaging, more advanced delivery, collaboration

Organization – Programming, operation and structure, professional development

The Strategic Roadmap is a five-year guide for NMDC to set priorities, formulate yearly work plans, and evaluate performance over the plan's term. It is a tool that NMDC can use to fortify strategic partnerships and achieve the overall vision and preferred future for the service area. Each of the strategic priorities includes a goal statement, strategies, and actions. The following is a summary outline of the Strategic Roadmap.

Strategic Roadmap Summary

Strategic Priority – Vibrant and Prosperous Communities

Goal - By 2023, Aroostook and Washington counties will have a reliant mix of over 100 vibrant and prosperous communities delivering efficient and effective municipal services to 105,000 residents and yielding \$2.4B in total wages.

Strategy Focus Areas – Community, Livability, Destination, Digital Literacy

Strategic Priority – Strategic and Impactful Finance

Goal - By 2021, NMDC will have a \$20M sustainable capital fund delivering impact lending as a certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) and coordinating a high performing entrepreneurship ecosystem that creates jobs, wealth, and economic value.

Strategy Focus Areas – Capital Fund, Impact Investing, Technical Expertise, Entrepreneurship

Strategic Priority – Dedicated and Productive Partnerships

Goal - Beginning in 2018, NMDC and stakeholders in Aroostook and Washington Counties, will actively engage in productive and rewarding partnerships that will contribute to building prosperity, fostering a thriving economy, and achieving mutually beneficial goals.

Strategy Focus Areas – Aroostook Partnership, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), Washington County, Priority Partnerships

Strategic Priority – Effective and Transformative Communications

Goal - Beginning in 2018, NMDC will lead the design and execution of a transformational communications strategy to build an internal and localized sense of confidence and self-determination while positively shaping and impacting external investment. By 2020, core elements of the plan will be utilized by over 30 partners.

Strategy Focus Areas – Regional Narrative, NMDC Identity, Internal and Partners, Reporting

Strategic Priority – Proactive and Skillful Organization

Goal – By 2020, NMDC will be a financially stable organization, with over 50% of revenues from non-grant sources, producing positive impacts from proactive investments, with a highly skilled and motivated staff and an enthusiastic Board of Directors.

Strategy Focus Areas – Financial Sustainability, Personnel, External Contacts and Participation, Board of Directors

The key to success or failure of the Next Generation Strategic Plan will be leadership focus and disciplined implementation of the actions over the next five years. The plan provides an implementation schedule based upon the service area's current community economic environment and NMDC organizational priorities. The implementation schedule recommends the following six actions as the highest priority to achieve:

- CDFI designation and capital funding plan
- NMDC portfolio of municipal products and services
- Destination development planning and initiatives
- Digital literacy and technology plan
- Aroostook County narrative and communication plan
- Washington County partnerships

III. INTRODUCTION



As Northern Maine Development Commission (NMDC) celebrates its 50th year in existence, the Executive staff and Board of Directors recognized the need to revisit its strategic priorities. Not unlike rural regions throughout Maine and North America, NMDC's service area of Aroostook and Washington counties continues to face monumental forces that challenge the viability of its communities and public, private, and non-profit entities. NMDC is responding to a consistent and simmering sense of urgency with greater understanding and strategic action.

Adapting and changing to meet conditions is not new to NMDC, as it began as a regional planning commission, then shifted in the 1990's to a development commission with greater focus on economic development. The Next Generation Strategic Plan is a five-year strategy designed to meet current and future trends by generating "greater impact." It is intended to focus and strengthen NMDC as a leader and resource center. As a living document, this strategic plan is like an operations manual to guide NMDC staff and its Board. Regular review and necessary adaptations are essential to ensure not only that the goals and strategies of the plan are being achieved, but also that they, and the plan as a whole, are still relevant and reflective of the organization.

The NMDC Next Generation Strategic Plan planning objective was to create a strategy that is comprehensive, measureable, and galvanizing. The approach for research, interviews, group sessions, and workshops was based upon on three principles:

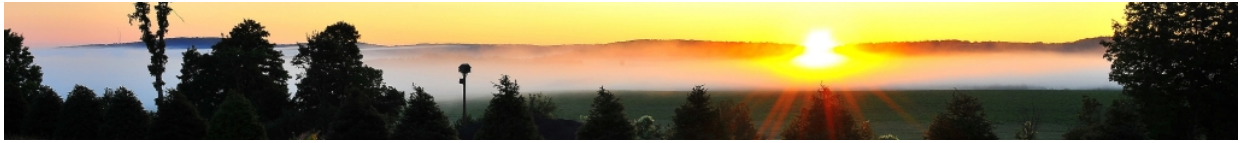
- ***Be predictive of the future*** to help identify and understand primary obstacles and opportunities;
- ***Be innovative with an entrepreneurial mindset***, creating a solid theme for a next generation plan;
- ***Integrate an Open Systems Planning Model***, allowing for unbridled thought and ideas to enter the development process and assessed against community economic development priorities.



Multiple components were involved in the strategic planning process, including research and extensive engagement with staff, board, and stakeholders throughout NMDC's service area. Over several months more than 50 internal and external consultations took place through direct one-on-one interviews, conversations, and workshops.

A Situation Review and Key Findings Brief presented in late summer provided a glimpse into what was learned through research and interviews. This included feedback of primary challenges, assets, opportunities, and preferred future for Aroostook and Washington counties; observations about NMDC's identity, potential, and impact; and an overview of NMDC's current programs and services, and staff expertise.

IV. KEY FINDINGS



Invaluable information was gathered about NMDC and its service area throughout the planning period. This wealth of input formed a determination of five distinct but interdependent target impact areas for Aroostook and Washington counties. Essentially, these points represent the critical community economic development components that require direct attention to alter the current status and shift major trends. The target impact areas are:

Target Impact Areas



The interdependency of the target impact areas is the primary influence for the priorities and plan emphasis. Fundamentally, the retention and attraction of people is the core factor for future viability of Aroostook and Washington counties. Extreme economic, community and personal pressures are now being felt as a smaller population is carrying the full cost of critical public services and workforce demand. Theoretically, the retention and attraction of population is a result of the effective achievement of the other four; increased economic value, desired quality of place, enabling infrastructure and a mindset.

Key findings were also generated by two planning and management tools that were introduced in an exercise with staff and the board. These were called Strategic Logic Path and Business Model Canvas, which helped to review, assess, and focus the identification of NMDC's

performance and impact, operational priorities, value proposition, and revenue streams. Ultimately, the goal of this exercise was to define how NMDC creates value for itself while delivering products and services to its customers.

A summary of key findings below provides a glimpse into some outcomes from internal and external consultations and the planning exercises. These findings are neither comprehensive nor prioritized nor categorized. Rather, they provide a glimpse into common themes and issues that emerged during planning.

Summary of Key Findings

- NMDC is a leader in building valuable relationships with state and federal agencies for the Aroostook/Washington county region. It is also collaborative in its partnering with municipalities, and regional business and entities in both counties (especially Aroostook).
- External negative perceptions by stakeholders about NMDC, perpetuated over an extended period of time, have a limiting and detrimental effect on NMDC's overall performance and impact.
- NMDC has a respected staff with substantial knowledge about its organization and service area, technical expertise, planning, finance, business counseling, and government policy.
- Though the strategic relationship with Aroostook Partnership is effective and productive, it also produces some confusion in the marketplace.
- Generally, the community and economic development sector in Aroostook and Washington counties tends to be silo-oriented with a lack of strategic collaboration. Disparity exists in focus and priorities between similar community economic development organizations.
- As a regional entity, NMDC struggles to provide substantial and sustained service to Washington County due to challenges with geography, economic variances, established territory with organizations, and traditional approaches and behaviors.
- NMDC considers itself as under-performing in areas around economic value and infrastructure, and strategies around marine resources, advanced entrepreneurial ecosystem channel, business succession planning, and external communications.

- NMDC considers itself average and high performing in areas of population growth, quality of place, and strategies around education to industry, access to capital, social and print media, and internal communications.
- Grant dependency is not a business growth model for NMDC. There is a common internal and external perception that NMDC overextends its function and programming in response to, and driven by, funding availability rather than strategic direction.
- NMDC is considered effective in serving business client needs through access to capital, technical assistance, and business management training. The business finance division has been identified as a self-sustaining business model.
- NMDC is considered effective in responding to local challenges by deploying expertise and capacity in areas such as municipal services, grant writing, and non-profit strategic planning.
- There is general recognition that consolidation and other realignments must take place in the service area for public, private, and non-profits to be effective in the future.

V. VALUES, VISION, AND MISSION



NMDC staff and the Executive Board came together in two separate visioning and strategy workshops to discuss and share perspectives about NMDC's values, vision, and mission. The resulting statements below were shaped from their direct input. Once adopted, staff and board members must be well acquainted with these fundamental aspects of its organization. Ideally, the values, vision, and mission should be reviewed annually to determine relevancy and applicability.

Values

Values are guiding principles that define the traits and qualities of what you believe; they represent your highest priorities, deeply held beliefs, and fundamental driving forces. Values define how you want to resonate with each other in your organization, with customers, communities, and the external world.

NMDC Value Statement

We are dedicated to serving our customers and communities of Aroostook and Washington counties to the highest standards of integrity and professionalism. In all of our work, we strive for productive relationships, innovation, and responsiveness. We value each other in our organization and are committed to its sustainability and the efficient use of resources.

NMDC Guiding Values

Integrity – We believe that our organization has a vital and important role for our customers and communities of Aroostook and Washington counties. We embrace the highest standards of personal and professional integrity in serving them.

Dependability – We maintain credibility and reliability by ensuring that our services and actions are grounded in solid experience, follow-through, and consistency.

Excellence – We strive for innovation, creativity, and the highest level of professionalism and skill, in all that we do. We endeavor to help our partners, customers, and communities build capacity, add value, and achieve success.

Responsiveness – We are proactive in responding to challenges and opportunities to serve our customers and communities better. We are dedicated to being progressive, nimble, and inclusive in our thinking and actions.

Collaborative – We are committed to cultivating relationships that are respectful, productive, and mutually beneficial with our customers and other entities.

Teamwork – We value and respect each other in our organization and encourage self-growth. We are committed to fostering a spirit of openness, collaboration, and a safe and fulfilling work environment.

Vision

A vision is an image of what success will look like in the future – what you want to bring into reality. It gives shape and direction for a desired future and expresses how things will be better or changed as a result of your efforts. A vision statement points to what you are trying to build.

NMDC Vision Statement

We envision a treasured place with a vibrant quality of life and a thriving economy.

Mission

A mission statement is a broad description of your organization's fundamental purpose. A mission provides an important framework for decision-making and planning, especially during day-to-day challenges and demands. It helps to keep activities on track and is a reminder of your primary purpose.

NMDC Mission Statement

Northern Maine Development Commission is a nonprofit organization with the mission to strengthen economic resilience for all communities in Aroostook and Washington counties through impact financing, technical assistance, and collaborative planning.

VI. KEY ECONOMIC INDICATORS



Key economic indicators are a set of measurable points that provide a monitoring framework for the Aroostook/Washington County regional economy. The selected indicators are directly connected to the Next Generation Strategic Plan priorities and objectives. Indicators below are shown with a 2015 benchmark. They are a starting point, and should be reviewed by NMDC with its partners on an annual basis to determine economic trends and direction.

Key Indicators	Source	2015 Benchmark	
		<i>Aroostook</i>	<i>Washington</i>
Population	BEA, CA1	70,005	32,191
Employable Population (16+)	ACS, S0101	55,480	26,814
Population (20-44), %, total	ACS, S0101	18,413	8,258
Labor Participation Rate	ACS, S2401	55%	48%
Total Employed	Employable Pop. x Labor Participation Rate	30,514	12,870
Total Jobs	BEA CA30	36,894	17,144
Average Earnings per Job	BEA CA30	\$40,167	\$37,184
Total Regional Wages	Total Jobs x Average Wage	\$1.48B	\$637M
Number of Establishments	Census, County Business Patterns, CB1400A11	2,000	839
Higher Education Degrees, Associates and Above (over 25)	ACS S1501	13,660	6,744
Total Retail Sales	Maine Governor's Office of Policy and Management	\$718M	\$249M

Source: US Census, Quickfacts, American Community Survey (ACS), Bureau Labor Statistics (BLS), Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), Maine Governor's Office of Policy and Management

VII. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



A strategic framework has been intentionally developed to address the target impact areas, the strengths of NMDC, and the environment in which the organization works. Five strategic framework elements have been identified. Like building blocks, these strategic elements are interdependent of and reliant on the success of one another. They form the critical starting point for goals, strategies, and actions that are articulated in the Strategic Roadmap that follows.

Strategic Elements and Focus Areas

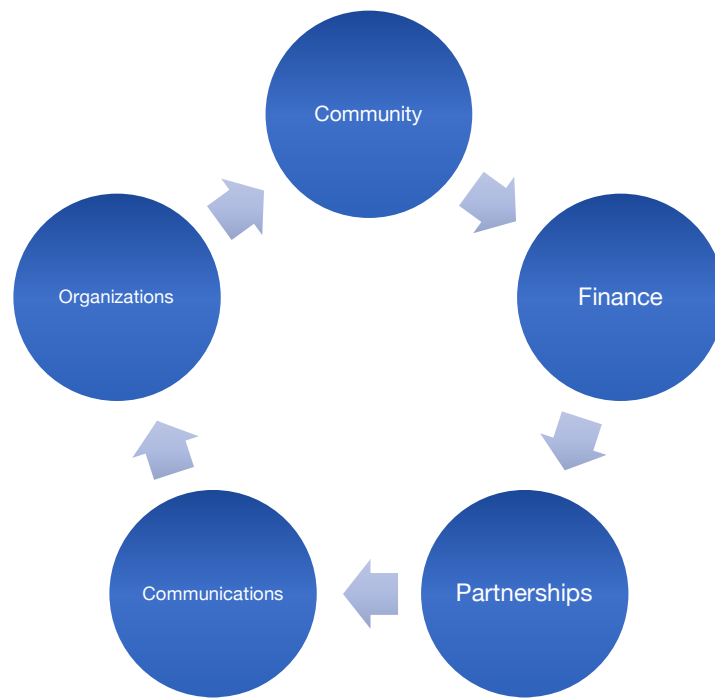
Community – Municipalities, community services, destination, quality of place, arts/culture

Finance – Access to capital, mission-driven lending, technical support, entrepreneurship

Partnerships – Alliances with customers, organizations, agencies, communities

Communications – Audience appropriate messaging, more advanced delivery, collaboration

Organization – Programming, operation and structure, professional development



VIII. STRATEGIC ROADMAP – Priority, Goal, Strategy, Action



The Strategic Roadmap is intended as an internal guide for NMDC to establish priorities, formulate yearly work plans, and evaluate performance over the next five years. It is also a tool to help NMDC strengthen strategic partnerships and achieve the overall vision and preferred future for the service area. We have identified four strategic priorities, which are foundational and fundamental elements for advancing this strategy. Each contains a goal, which defines a future target that can be attained by successful completion of accompanying strategies and actions.¹

Strategic Priority – Vibrant and Prosperous Communities

This strategy priority points to NMDC taking a lead and fostering the creation of vibrant and prosperous communities in Aroostook and Washington counties through focused attention and action on community, livability, quality of place, and destination development.

GOAL 1

By 2023, Aroostook and Washington counties will have a reliant mix of over 100 vibrant and prosperous communities delivering efficient and effective municipal services to 105,000 residents and yielding \$2.4B in total wages.

Strategy 1A: Community

Municipal government services are a cornerstone for communities. NMDC will apply expertise and capacity to support the delivery of critical municipal programs and services.

Action 1A.1

In 2018, develop and introduce an NMDC portfolio of municipal products and services that address the primary and most salient needs of municipal governments based on strategic planning analysis in two categories: dues based services and fee for service offerings.

Action 1A.2

Annually review and assess the municipal service and product portfolio based upon satisfaction, NMDC operational performance, service effectiveness, and consideration of new offerings.

¹ The authors recognize that NMDC's service area includes towns, cities, and territories. For efficiency, we use "community" to represent all three and "municipal government" as the administrative structure.

Strategy 1B: Livability

NMDC will lead the acknowledgement and application of community livability standards in regional planning including, but not limited to key service centers, civic attractiveness, safety, transportation systems, and recreation.

Action 1B.1

In 2018, identify and adopt a list of primary service centers/hubs in Aroostook and Washington counties to focus efforts on preservation and revitalization with partners and funders.

Action 1B.2

In 2019, establish community livability standards and priorities particular to Aroostook and Washington counties to inform municipal planning and initiatives, and help create regional viability.

Strategy 1C: Destination

Starting in 2018, NMDC will lead an enhanced focus on the tourism sector through destination planning for Aroostook and Washington counties. As a result of recognizing tourism and destination development as engines for economic prosperity, by 2023 visitor spending will reach \$200M in Aroostook County and \$250M in Washington County (21% of Downeast and Acadia Region spending).

Action 1C.1

In 2018, organize a regional summit with roundtable discussions in partnership with the Maine Office of Tourism to discuss the “nuts and bolts” of destination development – to gain understanding on the ingredients of successful destinations and how to build them.

Action 1C.2

Secure partnerships and funding to lead a collaborative destination development planning effort in Aroostook County to provide a 5-year strategy for visitor services, lifestyle experiences and demand drivers. The plan will include a practical network mapping and analysis of the events, activities, programs, and groups that are linked or involved in shaping Quality of Place in Aroostook County.

Action 1C.3

In 2019, NMDC will engage Washington County leaders and key organizations to explore a collaborative destination development planning effort, including an introduction to the Aroostook County destination development strategy and Quality of Place findings.

Strategy 1D: Digital Literacy

By 2019, NMDC, Aroostook Partnership, and the Axiom Education and Training Center (AETC) – a 501(c)3 nonprofit with its National Digital Equity Program – will identify ways to raise awareness of the benefits of digital literacy for individuals and community economic development. By 2023, Aroostook and Washington counties will be recognized as a case study for benefits and outcomes from digital literacy/inclusion programs.

Action 1D.1

In 2018, establish a Regional Digital Literacy Action Committee spanning Aroostook and Washington counties with representation from the public, private, and non-profit sectors. The committee's first tasks include a review of best practices for rural digital literacy and to begin development of a five-year action plan with priorities and targets.

Action 1D.2

In 2019, conduct a region-wide community digital literacy and technology assessment with goals and recommendations for improvement and expected outcomes for a Digital literacy and technology plan.

Strategic Priority – Strategic and Impactful Finance

This strategy priority points to NMDC providing strategic and impactful finance as a CDFI to its service areas through four approaches: target financing with a healthy capital fund, impact investment, technical expertise, and supporting entrepreneurship.

GOAL 2

By 2021, NMDC will have a \$20M sustainable capital fund delivering impact lending as a certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) and coordinating a high performing entrepreneurship ecosystem that creates jobs, wealth, and economic value.

Strategy 2A: Capital Fund

Financial capital is the fuel for business growth, individual prosperity and overall economic development. NMDC will target its capital resources to fulfill the priority strategies and actions outlined in the Next Generation Strategic Plan and generate more than \$1.25M funding leveraged by private investors.

Action 2A.1

Upon CDFI designation, NMDC will prepare a capital funding plan to reach \$20M by 2021, from a variety of sources including SBA, CDFI, RMAP, SSBCI and private foundations.

Action 2A.2

In Q1 2018, NMDC will develop the CDFI operational performance metrics framework consisting of capital funding goals and lending metrics that provides capital sustainability and programing capacities.

Strategy 2B: Impact Investing

Starting in 2019, NMDC will target lending to agriculture, small and micro-businesses, technology based service companies, and manufacturer (makers) sectors that have impact on job creation and increased economic value. With a \$20M loan fund, NMDC yield an average of 30 loans per year.

Action 2B.1

In 2018, complete the technical assistance scope of work with the Minnesota Housing Partnership including a feasibility assessment and implementation plan for an Entrepreneurial Support Ecosystem, and farmstead housing and rehabilitation programs.

Action 2B.2

Starting in 2019, NMDC will launch a Makers Network in Aroostook and Washington counties to connect and cultivate production, assist in market development and expand exports from the area. By 2021, the Network has over 50 members doing \$2.5M+ in revenues on a shared marketing platform.

Strategy 2C: Technical Expertise

NMDC will supply proactive skilled technical expertise and/or access to capital to 300+ clients per year with an objective to reduce failure risk, ignite job creation, and increase long term business viability through succession planning.

Action 2C.1

By Q2 2018, NMDC will expand staff skills mapping (created during the strategic planning phase) to determine required technical expertise to match impact investing target sectors.

Action 2C.2

Starting in 2018, NMDC will partner with banks, credit unions, and other lending agencies to sponsor two (2) business finance workshops annually with a goal of engaging a total of forty (40) qualified prospects.

Strategy 2D: Entrepreneurship

By 2021, NMDC will be a technology broker and networking agent for a celebrated and respected entrepreneurship ecosystem in Aroostook and Washington counties, generating 100 inquires/contacts per year, 50 qualified prospects, 10 long term clients (minimum 6 months of counseling) and 5 operating businesses per year

Action 2D.1

In 2018, NMDC will complete an innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem network map to identify active partners, determine primary igniters, evaluate and measure the current prospect volume, and determine gaps or weaknesses. The outcome of this action is a short-term action plan to create and strengthen network connections, determine how to improve the performance of existing programs, and identify how to increase overall prospect volume.

Action 2D.2

By 2020, NMDC will have assessed the performance of the short-term plan in Action 2D-1 and develop and launch a partner branded entrepreneurship program focusing on three key areas: 1. Create more interactions between entrepreneurs, funders and mentors, 2. Establish locations as “homes” or “hubs” for entrepreneurs, and 3. Support the entrepreneurship strategy with the digital literacy and communications directions in Strategy 3D of the Next Generation Strategic Plan.

Strategic Priority – Dedicated and Productive Partnerships

This priority underscores the importance of building and maintaining strong partnerships within Aroostook and Washington counties. Four strategies provide direction: 1. Strategic alignment with Aroostook Partnership, 2. Continuing to lead with CEDS management, 3. Maintaining fruitful relationships with Washington County, and 4. Strengthening priority partnerships.

GOAL 3

Beginning in 2018, NMDC and stakeholders in Aroostook and Washington counties, will actively engage in productive and rewarding partnerships that will contribute to building prosperity, fostering a thriving economy, and achieving mutually beneficial goals.

Strategy 3A: Aroostook Partnership

The Aroostook Partnership (AP) is a priority partner for NMDC. It offers private sector contacts, strategic priorities, and critical analysis on community economic development issues. Moreover, AP is an established nonprofit organization recognized for its significant contribution by the private sector in Aroostook County. NMDC, representing the public sector of the Aroostook Partnership, will proactively interact with AP staff, board, and members to advance and refine work plans, align capacity, and leverage resources.

Action 3A.1

Starting in 2018, NMDC with input from AP, will revitalize and enhance a data repository and market research function responsive to business inquiries and communicating valuable information.

Action Plan 3A.1

Starting in 2019, NMDC will design and coordinate an annual “Think Tank” roundtable discussion/workshop with AP to explore how to create greater impact collectively, categorize and analyze current projects, and identify opportunities and issues facing community economic development. The primary outcome of this effort will be to develop a shared list of actions and assignments for NMDC and AP.

Strategy 3B: Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

NMDC, as the federally designated economic development district agent, will be the champion for the collaborative development and achievement of the regional CEDS while building partnerships and aligning resources.

Action 3B.1

Complete a new Aroostook/Washington County CEDS by March 31, 2018 using an active CEDS Strategy Committee with a majority of private sector members. This also includes industry sector representatives, public officials, higher education institutions, workforce development agencies, private individuals, Tribal representatives, and community development institutions. The CEDS will define regional expectations through goals, objectives, and actions with specific implementation roles and leadership assignments of key stakeholders.

Action 3B.2

NMDC will reconvene the CEDS Strategy Committee annually with key implementation stakeholders to assess progress, identify barriers, and define a priority work plan for all stakeholders for the following year.

Strategy 3C: Washington County

Starting in 2018, NMDC will recalibrate partnerships in Washington County, beginning with the Washington County Council of Governments (WCCOG) and Sunrise County Economic Council (SCEC), Washington County Government, and Downeast Economic Development. NMDC's focus is to support their efforts and be a valued resource and partners for their community priorities.

Action 3C.1

In 2018, complete a Partnership Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Washington County planning and economic development agencies that defines values, expectations, and schedule of events and interactions from 2018 to 2023. Annually review and evaluate the MOA terms and conditions for improvement.

Action 3C.2

Beginning in 2019, NMDC will coordinate an annual Washington County "Think Tank" roundtable discussion/workshop to explore how to create greater impact collectively, categorize and analyze current projects, and identify opportunities and issues facing community economic development. The primary outcome of this effort will be a shared list of actions and assignments for NMDC with current and new stakeholders.

Strategy 3D: Priority Partnerships

Beginning in 2018, NMDC will identify and enhance its priority partnerships with organizations, foundations, and other entities that can support the achievement of the Next Generation Strategic Plan. Partnership prioritization helps NMDC staff and Executive Leadership focus resources to assist in achieving the objectives. Besides AP and the Washington County entities identified in Strategy 3C, it is important for NMDC to strengthen its relationship with other priority partners such as Aroostook County Government and relevant entities in the neighboring Canadian provinces of New Brunswick and Québec.

Action 3D.1

Beginning in 2018, NMDC will work with the County Administrator and Board of Commissioners to establish a set of priority actions and programs that help achieve the strategies and actions included in Strategic Priority 1: Vibrant and Prosperous Communities. Annually evaluate and assess this partnership to adjust performance.

Action 3D.2

Beginning in 2018, NMDC will increase the connection and participation with relevant community and economic development entities situated in New Brunswick and Québec (e.g., Core Leadership Team, Acadia of the Lands and Forests). The goal of this action is to build and strengthen relationships that border NMDC's service area (south and northwestern New Brunswick, southeastern Québec), and to execute plans and programs that strengthen the entire cross-border region.

Action 3D.3

By 2019, NMDC will establish a list of primary partnerships with Maine agencies, foundations, and entities that can engage in the improved delivery of NMDC services and pursuit of the goals and objectives of the Next Generation Strategic Plan.

Strategic Priority – Effective and Transformative Communications

This priority focuses on the importance and value of a comprehensive communications program that influences hearts and minds about the combined region of Aroostook and Washington counties. The strategic components are a regional narrative, reinforcement of a NMDC identity, internal communications and consistent reporting.

GOAL 4

Beginning in 2018, NMDC will lead the design and execution of a transformational communications strategy to build an internal and localized sense of confidence and self-determination while positively shaping the external viewpoint. By 2020, core elements of the plan will be utilized by over 30 partners.

Strategy 4A: Regional Narrative

An authentic and cohesive narrative is required to reinforce positive attributes and change misconceptions about Aroostook and Washington counties. NMDC will lead in shaping this narrative, which becomes the core for a communications blueprint used and adapted by other public, private and non-profit entities.

Action 4A.1

In 2018, NMDC will bring together key public, private, and non-profit partners to create and adopt an Aroostook County narrative using a four-step process: 1. Define issues, opportunities, and current state, 2. Define desired outcomes and future state, 3. Develop narrative strategies and options, and 4. Create the

narrative activation plan. In 2019, determine Washington County interest and commitment to developing a narrative.

Action 4A.2

Launch in 2019, a NMDC managed communications blueprint that is strategic, incorporates partner organizations, and addresses the priority issues and opportunity topics identified in Action 4A-1.

Strategy 4B: NMDC Identity

Beginning in 2018, NMDC will have a staff and organization priority to be an effective nexus for regional community economic development across Aroostook and Washington counties, by reinforcing attributes derived from the organizational values in communications, actions and partnerships.

Action 4B.1

In 2018, NMDC Executive staff, with Board of Directors and office staff, will create an implementation plan and policy to integrate the NMDC Value Statement and Guiding Values into the organization's day-to-day operations and how to make them evident externally.

Action 4B.2

By the end of 2020, NMDC Executive Staff will evaluate the progress of the Next Generation Strategic Plan to determine the value of rebranding the organization, including but not limited to the logo, images, website and communication materials.

Strategy 4C: Internal and Partners

Given that effective communication between staff and with partners and customers is a leading contributor to NMDC's effectiveness, NMDC will focus on improving internal and external communications.

Action 4C.1

In 2018, NMDC executive staff will establish Internal and Partner Communication Standards formed around four basic principles: 1. Listening, 2. Know the Audience, 3. Getting to the Point, and 4. Responsiveness. These principles will be utilized by the staff and Board of Directors in improved communications.

Action 4C.2

In 2019, NMDC will investigate with staff and partners about collaborative platforms for communication, which include mechanisms for group chats, multiple conversations by topic with an overall goal of empowering staff, and better exchange with partners.

Strategy 4D: Reporting

Starting in 2018, NMDC continues its commitment to honesty, transparency, and accuracy in statements and reports about the organization, communities, and regional economy.

Action 4D.1

Starting in 2018, NMDC will prepare a communications piece focusing on Aroostook and Washington counties, their economy, communities, and people. The primary purpose of this publication is to highlight and reinforce the communication plan priorities.

Action 4D.2

NMDC's 2018 annual report will include a progress assessment on the Next Generation Strategic Plan, financial status and statements, success stories, key partners, and primary challenges facing the organization.

Strategic Priority – Proactive and Skillful Organization

This priority concentrates on the quality and stability of NMDC enabling the delivery of capability and resources to create positive impacts to the region and communities. The priority strategies are financial sustainability, excellent personnel, strengthening external relationships, and engaged Board of Directors leadership.

GOAL 5

By 2021, NMDC will be a financially stable organization, with over 50% of revenues from non-grant sources, producing positive impacts from proactive investments, with a highly skilled and motivated staff and an enthusiastic Board of Directors.

Strategy 5A: Financial Sustainability

NMDC financial stability is the key ingredient to address the issues and opportunities facing the communities of Aroostook and Washington counties and funding partners. Firm financial sustainability will be reached by 2021, consisting of four (4) months of operation funding reserve and reduced exposure to variations of one time grant awards.

Action Plan 5A.1

Starting in 2018, NMDC will target and investigate securing contract services for State and Federal agencies that support the goals and objectives of the Next Generation Strategic Plan. An evaluation model will be developed to determine cost effectiveness, impact in the area and ability to perform the work at a high standard.

Action Plan 5A.2

Starting in 2018, NMDC will recognize potential opportunities to launch or accept for profit ventures that support the goals and objectives of the Next Generation Strategic Plan.

Strategy 5B: Personnel

NMDC must maintain and enable a talented, motivated and productive staff to generate the impacts and results expressed by the Next Generation Strategic Plan. Preservation and turnover of personnel will have limited impact on the performance of NMDC due to capacity building through cross training, steady professional development and application of technology LEAN office principles.

Action Plan 5B.1

NMDC will maintain a tuition reimbursement policy/program to support the personal and professional development of the staff. This program will promote advanced education through traditional academic degrees and certifications that support the mission and goals of NMDC.

Action Plan 5B.2

By 2019, NMDC will conduct an internal talent assessment to project current and future personnel needs to fulfill the mission and goals of NMDC. The assessment will include a review of current job descriptions, identification of skills and knowledge required to implement the Next Generation Strategic Plan and a preparation of a succession plan.

Strategy 5C – External Contacts and Participation

NMDC has a priority role to be a conduit and connection to State/Federal agencies, associations and other national organizations that support the mission and partners interests. NMDC will proactively disseminate and distribute relevant information about best practices, innovations, major trends and opportunities.

Action Plan 5C.1

NMDC will continue to be an active participant in national industry associations that relate to the core functions of NMDC; planning, community economic development, CDFI lending, destination development, and entrepreneurship.

Action Plan 5C.2

NMDC, with the Aroostook Partnership, Sunrise County Economic Council, and Washington County COG, will work to maintain strong and meaningful relationships for the region with state and federal elected officials, and their staff, and pertinent agencies administrators.

Strategy 5D: Board of Directors

Starting in 2018, NMDC will regularly clarify and reinforce the role, responsibilities and significance of the Board of Directors. In 2018, the organization will adopt a new organizational structure with representation to match the CDFI designation and NMDC service area enabling the execution of the Next Generation Strategic Plan.

Action Plan 5D.1

Upon designation as a CDFI, NMDC will establish an Advisory Board with representation from Aroostook, Washington, Penobscot and Piscataquis counties. The designation will include a clearly defined Board of Directors Standard Operating Procedures.

Action Plan 5D.2

Beginning in 2019, NMDC will supply an annual Board of Directors Evaluation Questionnaire as a tool to improve governance performance and leadership strength of the organization. In 2018, the Evaluation Questionnaire and implementation plan will be developed by staff and Board representatives for launch in 2019.

IX. NMDC Next Generation Strategic Plan Implementation Table

Vision	<i>We envision a treasured place with a vibrant quality of life and a thriving economy</i>									
Target Impact	Population									
	Quality of Place - Infrastructure		Economic Value		Economic Value – Infrastructure Quality of Place		Mindset		All	
Strategy Focus	Vibrant and Prosperous Communities		Strategic and Impactful Finance		Dedicated and Productive Partnerships		Effective and Transformative Communications		Proactive and Skillful Organization	
Strategy Areas	Community	Livability	Capital Fund	Impact Investing	Aroostook Partnership	CEDS	Regional Narrative	NMDC Identify	Financial Sustainability	Personnel
	Destination	Digital Literacy	Technical Expertise	Entrepreneurship	Washington County	Priority Partnerships	Internal and Partners	Reporting	External Contacts and Participation	Board of Directors
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NMDC portfolio of municipal products and services Destination development, regional summit Establish regional digital literacy committee/best practices/assessment and five-year action plan Identify and adopt a list of primary service centers/hubs 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CDFI, capital funding plan Staff skill mapping and assessment Business finance workshops Innovation ecosystem mapping and short-term action plan CDFI operational performance metrics Design Entrepreneurial Support Ecosystem program 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CEDS and Strategy Committee Washington County agency partnership MOA Aroostook County strategic implementation partnership with AP Enhance data repository/market research Cross border relationship through Core Leadership Team 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and adopt an Aroostook County narrative NMDC communication standards Annual Aroostook/Washington communication document NMDC Annual Report 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tuition reimbursement policy/program NMDC/CDFI Board of Directors framework Securing contract services Launch for profit ventures 	
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish community livability standards Aroostook County destination development plan Annual assessment of NMDC portfolio of municipal products and services 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makers Network 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual CEDS assessment NMDC/AP Aroostook County Think Tank Washington County Think Tank List of primary external partnerships 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managed communication blueprint NMDC integration of values and guiding principles NMDC communication platforms 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Board of Directors evaluation questionnaire Internal talent assessment for future plans Participant in national industry association State and Federal connections 	
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Washington County destination development plan 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation of NMDC rebranding 			