

MOOSEHEAD LAKE REGION

**STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN**  
**“HOME OF AMERICA’S CROWN JEWEL”**

This report presents the action plan developed to create an 8-10 month economy, increase the regional population, and put Moosehead Lake on the map as a great place to visit, live, work and raise a family, while maintaining the natural and cultural character of the of the Moosehead Lake Region, Maine, USA

# Moosehead Lake Region Strategic Action Plan

## “Home of America’s Crown Jewel”

This report presents the action plan developed to create an 8-10 month economy, increase the regional population, and put Moosehead Lake on the map as a great place to visit, live, work and raise a family, while maintaining the natural and cultural character of the Moosehead Lake Region, Maine, USA

This report has been prepared by Future iQ as part of the development of the Moosehead Lake Region Strategic Action Plan, which is based on stakeholder interviews and input from the Future Think-Tank workshop with the Moosehead Lake Region community.

**September 2017**

PREPARED BY:

future→iQ



**MOOSEHEAD  
LAKE**

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Strategic Action Plan is a continuation by the Moosehead Lake Region Economic Development Corporation (MLREDC) and area leaders to address their community and economic development trends. Consensus is that the area is trending towards the potential loss of key community cornerstones unless existing trends are reversed.

The economic development work was initiated by a Branding, Development and Marketing Action Plan prepared with the consulting company, Roger Brooks International. The key recommendation from the plan was the declarative tagline of “America’s Crown Jewel”. Building on the branding work, the MLREDC established a set of key goals for the development of the Strategic Action Plan.

- Create an 8 - 10 month economy that is sustainable;
- Grow the population of the region by 25% with a strong emphasis on younger residents (ages 20-45) and families; and
- Maintain the natural and cultural character of the area

“Our actions may be impeded...but there can be no impeding our intentions or dispositions. Because we can accommodate and adapt. The mind adapts and converts to its own purposes the obstacle of our acting. The impediment to action advances action. What stands in the way becomes the way.”

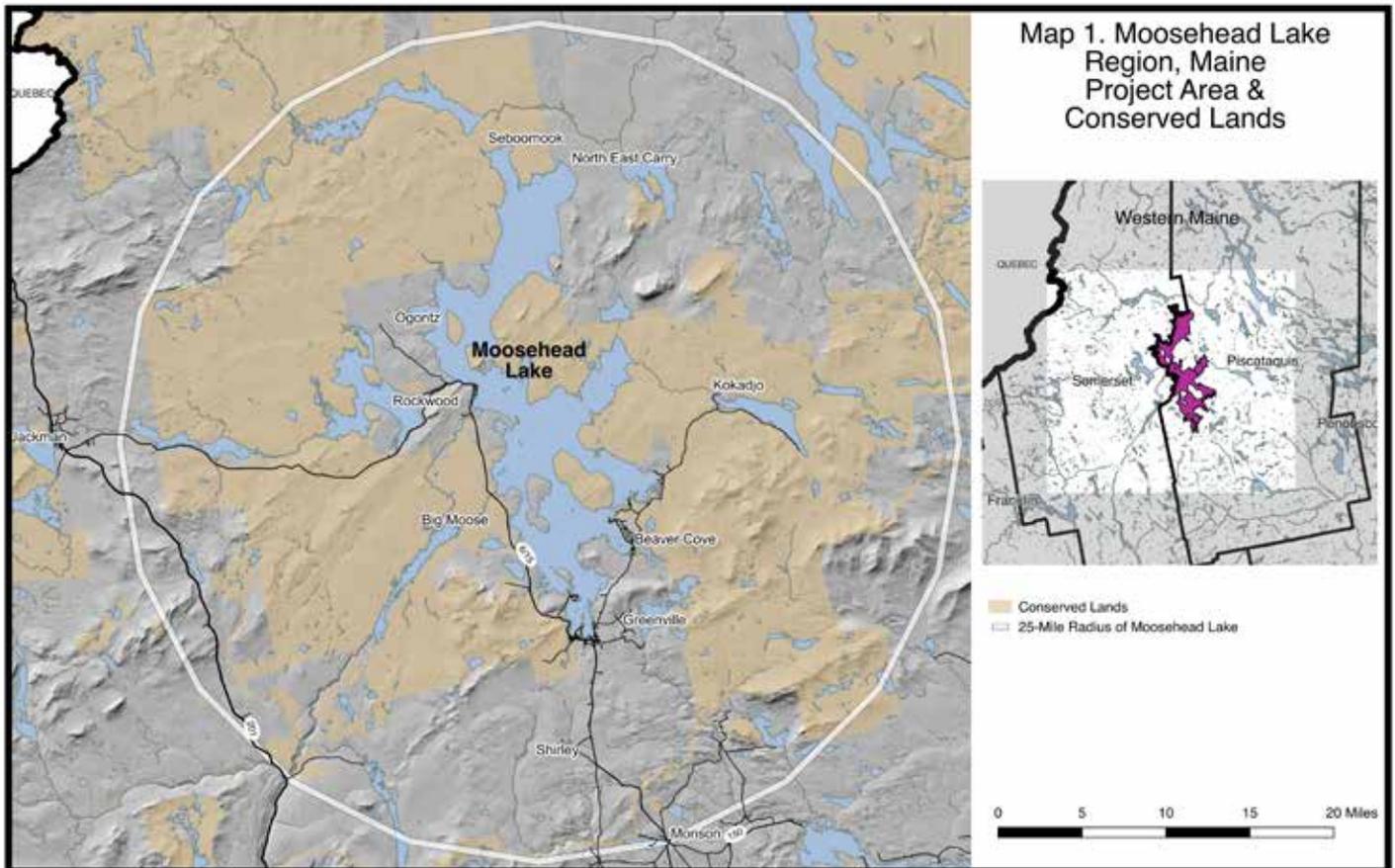
- Marcus Aurelius

The Action Plan is not intended to represent the ‘final solution’, but aims to identify a strategic framework with a series of focused actions that can be achieved over the next decade. In most cases, they are intended to be catalytic, such that they provoke new ideas and actions, and begin the process of economic innovation and systemic change within the regional economic system. Recommendations are targeted to specific local actions that can help steer the region towards the preferred future.

The Action Plan is based upon a set of core principles that have been synthesized from interviews, a Think-Tank held in March, and other interactions with individuals and groups in the area:

- The Moosehead Lake Region is a special place, and has created strong emotional relationships and priceless experiences with residents and visitors for generations.
- America's Crown Jewel is the region's environment consisting of the conservation land base and bodies of water, which are preserved and open to public access in perpetuity, creating the Moosehead Lake Conservation and Recreation Area.
- Visitation by guests and seasonal residents is critically important in generating new economic value.
- The Moosehead Lake Region has a concentration of knowledge assets that potentially have new and long-term economic value.
- A regional collaborative organization approach must be established, and sustained for success.
- Great effort has been expended by community leaders, and The Moosehead Lake Region Strategic Action Plan builds upon previous and current planning processes such as the Grenville Downtown Plan, Plum Creek Concept Plan and region-wide Branding Initiative.

The Moosehead Lake Region Strategic Action Plan covers an area defined as a 25-mile radius from the center of Moosehead Lake. This area is defined in Map 1 by the white circle. The plan recognizes that the white outline on the map is not a sharp boundary but rather an area of focus that acknowledges the role and complementary efforts currently underway in Jackman and Monson. The project area covers parts of Somerset and Piscataquis Counties, including, Greenville, Rockwood, Kokadjo, Beaver Cove, Shirley, and Seboomook, and the unorganized territories.





## 2.0 BUILDING ON EXISTING MOMENTUM

It is important to note that the Action Planning Process aims to build on the substantial existing activity in the region. Over recent years, there have been considerable efforts by many people and groups to stimulate community and economic activity. This is building new momentum, and it is very encouraging to witness the deep commitment and capacity within the region's leadership. The broader region is also attracting new interest from investors, funders and support agencies.

The following list highlights examples of some recent projects and successes, both large and small. These efforts and projects are helping build the existing momentum within the region.

### **Moosehead Lake Region Economic Development Corporation (MLREDC) recent projects:**

- Hired nationally known expert, Roger Brooks, to lead a year-long branding effort for the region. A survey was conducted with over 1,400 responses from people who love the Moosehead area.
- Recruited and engaged an enthusiastic and energetic brand leadership team of over 20 members to begin to carry out the action steps resulting from the branding study. This team has worked tirelessly in partnership with the MLREDC to accomplish a long list of achievements in the last two years.
- MLREDC accomplished Wi-Fi access for most of downtown Greenville working through the local library.
- MLREDC reviewed multiple proposals and hired Future IQ to help the region engage in a master planning process in 2017, including a "Think-Tank" that allowed for citizen input into the process.

### **Brand Leadership Team - Projects Completed and Underway:**

- Wayfinding: New blue directional signage has been erected in the DOT right-of-way in and around the Moosehead region. So far 17 signs are installed with more coming this fall. Phase

1 and 1A will be completed by the end of 2017, including a few trailhead signs and some back country directional signage to key visitor sites. There will be several different sign designs for various directional functions.

- Downtown Experience:
  - Memory benches have been located throughout downtown Greenville and at Rockwood Landing with plaques commemorating loved ones. More benches are available for purchase.
  - New flower pots and trash bins are also helping to enhance the appearance of the community.
  - The Moosehead Garden Club has planted and is maintaining all of the plants in Thoreau Park, in planters along the boardwalk, at the gazebo, and in the new bench planters.
  - Three colorful artisan cottages are available for lease by the week to artists who meet the criteria established by the working committee. When artists are in residence, cottages will be operating from 12 noon – 8pm to add evening activity to downtown. Summer, 2017 was a soft launch of this program with a number of local artisans utilizing the cottages. Next summer a full schedule is anticipated with two more cottages planned. A sign is being created for the entrance to the village.
  - One of the new cottages is a public restroom facility to add a comfort station at the other end of the downtown area.

- Beyond the Chamber of Commerce funding for Gazebo Concerts held on Thursdays in July, MLREDC funded three additional Gazebo Concerts, extending this program on Thursday evenings through August.
- A new series of performances called “*Thoreauly Entertaining!*” performed in Thoreau Park typically on Friday or Saturday evenings. These performances include juggling, guitars, banjos and much more.
- A very successful first annual funding appeal went out to area residents last summer (2016) with the second appeal underway.
- New print materials are currently being created to promote the region as a place to live and work and to promote the new Moosehead logo wear.
- The new Moosehead Lake logo and style guide has been made available to businesses for their use in promotional efforts by simply filling out an easy usage agreement.
- Moosehead logo clothing and items are available for purchase by the public. Proceeds from sales go to assist in the economic development efforts. A link is found on [mooseheadlake.org](http://mooseheadlake.org) under “Wicked Good Stuff”.
- Public Outreach - Representatives are hosting ‘coffee shop talks’ to reach our summertime residents.
- Holy Family Catholic Church in Greenville begins an exciting \$2.1 million building campaign, “Beginning A New Century of Faith”. Replacing the nearly 100 year old former Church, the new Church will be on one level, feature many of today’s new building products and technologies, include a 150 seat Community Hall, and new staff offices as part of the project. Bishop Robert P. Deeley of the Diocese of Portland is scheduled to be in Greenville on March 4th 2018 for the Sanctification Ceremony. Everyone is welcome!
- The new Kineo Station Coffee Shop is a very popular gathering place, and just celebrated one complete year of operation.
- Northwoods Gourmet Girl has a new food truck that will be located near the Community House.
- Stress Free Cafe has completed their new addition with a new deck upstairs. This nearly doubles their seating capacity. This is in addition to outdoor seating in the back of the building.
- The Puckerbrush Restaurant is under re-construction with plans to open in early 2018.
- The Town of Greenville has added new docking space for boats to tie up in the downtown allowing more lake access to town.

## Other project examples:

- Construction in the Town of Monson is being carried out by the Libra Foundation. Monson will be a new Gateway to Moosehead Lake. There is already an Appalachian Trail Information Center open in the Historical Society building.
- The old Monson school on the hill is being made into artists’ residences and studio space.
- Monson general Store has been rebuilt to be a mini Pinelands Marketplace, selling local food/ garden products.
- Libra bought a farm on the North Guilford road to grow hay to support Pineland grown livestock.
- Bartley Event Center is located between Greenville and Greenville Junction on Rt. 15. The Bartley family is hosting small events (up to 100) in this facility that used to be a marine store and boating operation. The facility has been used locally for several events this year, including the *Future iQ Think-Tank*.
- Blair Hill Inn has opened a new spa in one of their barns. A wide array of spa services are available to the public by reservation as well as to Blair Hill Inn guests.
- Moose Mountain Music Festival was held in August
- Maine Office of Tourism has hired a well-known consultant to assess the Moosehead Lake visitor experience, to offer feedback and suggestions for making the experiences more memorable, engaging, transformative and world-class.



### 3.0 ACTION PLANNING PROCESS 2016-17

The overall Action Planning Process developed for the Moosehead Lake Region during 2016 and 2017 included several major principles:

- **Future Orientated.** The objective was to ‘peer’ into the future and design a process that draws together strategic foresight and identification of preferred future outcomes in the region.
- **People Focused.** The process aimed to offer maximum opportunity for local stakeholders to engage in meaningful and thoughtful discussion about the future. A series of interviews, workshop and surveys were conducted to provide structured input.
- **Data Driven.** The planning work has been underpinned by exhaustive analysis and modeling of regional population trends, workforce size and economic impacts. In addition, detailed mapping of the region has been conducted to visualize where and when developments could occur.

The planning process was developed and implemented in partnership with the Moosehead Lake Region Economic Development Corporation (MLREDC).

The following reports have been prepared as part of the Regional Strategic Planning process:

- **Moosehead Lake Region Scenario-Based Think-Tank Workshop**
- **Moosehead Lake Region Economic and Demographic Analysis**
- **Moosehead Lake Region Asset Inventory and Assessment**

Timeline for the Moosehead Lake Region planning process.





## 4.0 SCENARIO PLANNING – EXPECTED AND PREFERRED SCENARIOS

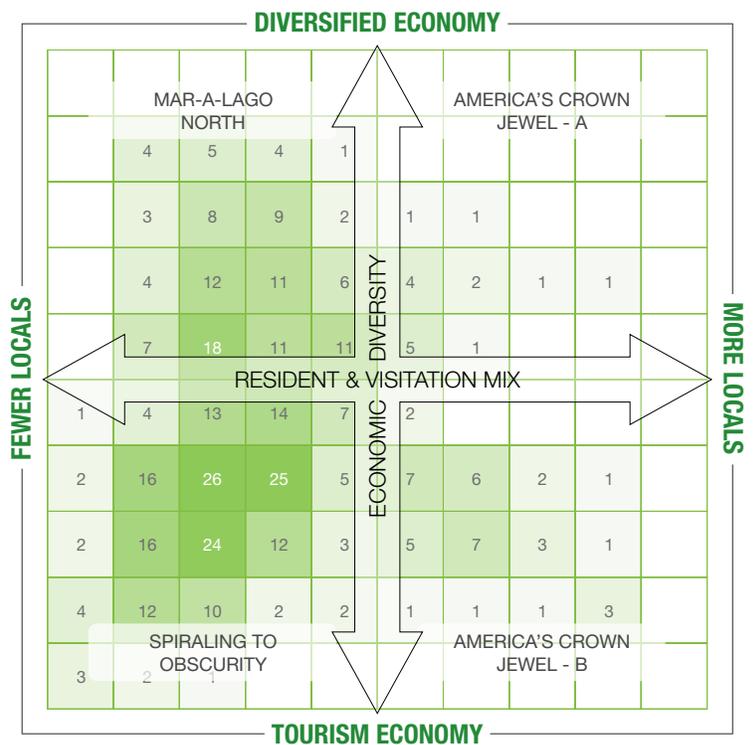
The scenario planning work was conducted with the Moosehead Lake Regional Economic Development Corporation (MLREDC) and stakeholders from the Moosehead Lake Region in Greenville, Maine on March 9 and 10, 2017. This 1.5 day workshop was attended by approximately 110 stakeholders from across the region. This workshop was part of the stakeholder engagement for the development of the Moosehead Lake Region Strategic Action Plan for the MLREDC.

The regional stakeholders explored the future and developed plausible future scenarios, looking out as far as 2030.

### 4.1 ‘EXPECTED’ FUTURE SCENARIO – SPIRALING TO OBSCURITY

The ‘expected’ future is the one the stakeholders deemed most likely to occur if there is ‘no change in what we are currently doing’. This ‘expected’ future would see:

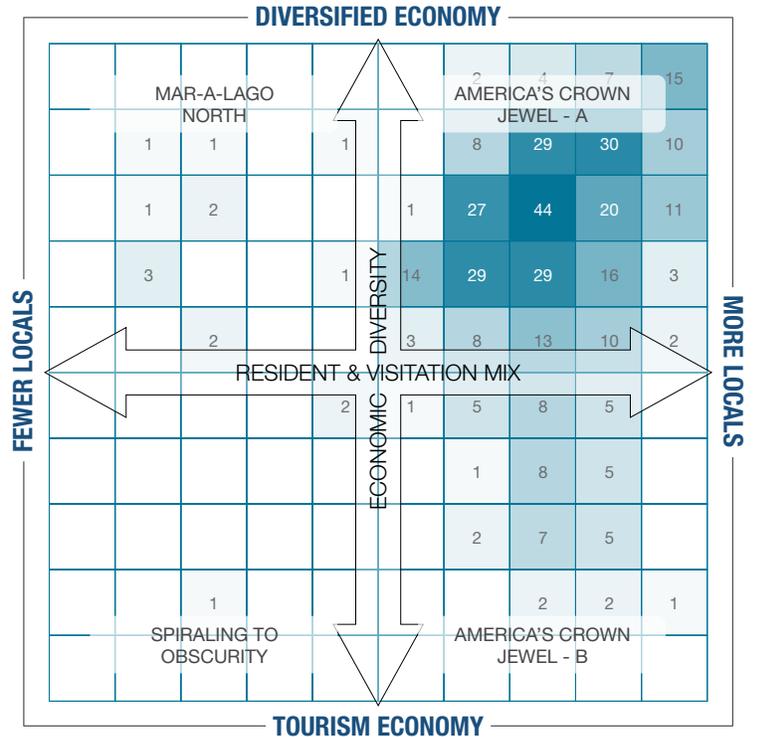
*Decreasing population, dilapidated infrastructure, and disjointed communities result in few resources for building a strong tourism economy. The towns and villages in the region wither, with aging populations, declining industry, and no incentives for businesses to come to or stay in the region. The hospital and school close. The reliance on tourism results in higher seasonal peaks, and a lower and longer off-season, and the economic base is vulnerable to broader economic trends and climatic changes. Fewer locals mean fewer opportunities, and a loss of community feeling.*



## 4.2 PREFERRED FUTURE SCENARIO – AMERICA’S CROWN JEWEL – A

The ‘preferred future’ represents the desired outcome for the region. The ‘preferred future’ would see:

*The Moosehead Lake Region offers a high quality of life for residents and an outstanding experience for visitors. The regional population has grown, while it retains its small town charm and beautiful natural resources. Development has included a full season resort at Big Moose Mountain, smaller resorts, hotels and motels, a range of housing types, a new hospital, and a museum and arts center. The regional infrastructure has improved to provide a range of visitor opportunities. Businesses have grown, and a diverse range of new businesses have started, providing services for both visitors and residents, and entrepreneurial activities are thriving. The school has increasing enrollment, and an excellent college extension program. Committed groups of people from across the community have joined together to build critical regional infrastructure, strengthen the quality of life, and create opportunities for local people to thrive.*





## 5.2 REGIONAL INDICATORS - TRACKING PROGRESS

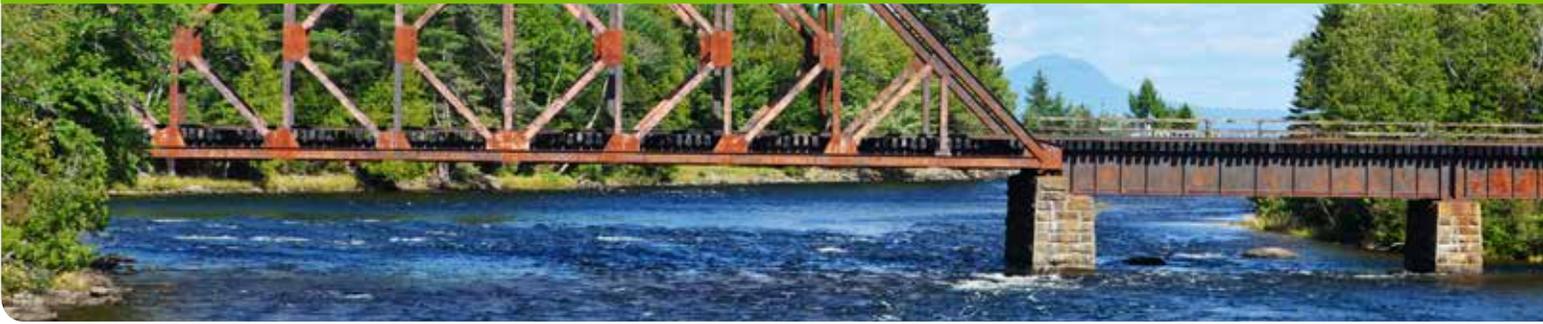
The following table summarizes some key indicators and targets to achieve the preferred scenario, 'America's Crown Jewel - A'. These indicators are used as a dashboard to observe the overall direction and dynamic of the regional economy. The indicators have been developed from a range of sources, and include some simple predictive modelling to better understand how local economic drivers will combine to produce regional outcomes. This is particularly important as there are multiple desired local outcomes, including economic vitality and population size and make-up. The action plan steps are designed to accomplish these targets.

### Summary - Regional Indicators and Targets (2015 - 2030)

Indicators	2015	2025	2030
Population	5,291	5,600	6,050
25-44 Year Olds	1,136	1,617	1,949
Jobs	2,217	2,566	2,786
Average Wage	\$37,725	\$50,770	\$58,775
Visitation (Day/ON)	210,000	300,000	400,000
Visitation Spending	\$44.9M	\$58.9M	\$78.3M
Seasonal Residence as % of Population	41%	40%	37%
School Enrollment	206	230	260
Poverty, All People	20.90%	18%	15%

SOURCE: ACS, US Census, American Community Survey; BEA, Bureau of Economic Analysis





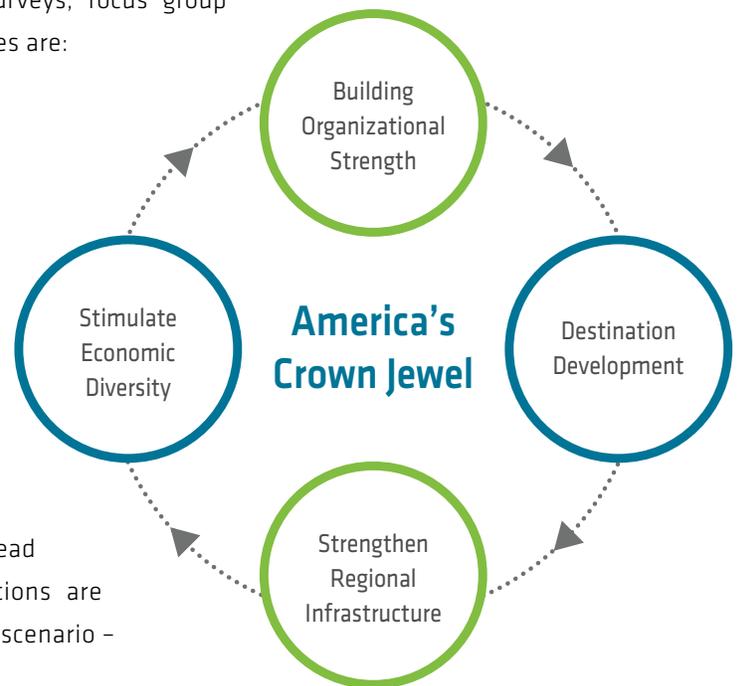
## 6.0 STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN FRAMEWORK

The ideas and recommendations outlined in this Strategic Action Plan have been drawn directly from the planning and engagement process. The suggested actions are intended to complement existing successful activities within the region, such as the Branding Initiative, Downtown Greenville Master Plan, and the work of the conservation land managers. High quality work is already taking place within the region, and the action plan is designed to add strength and cohesiveness to these existing efforts.

The action plan is structured around four key themes. These represent the themes that repeatedly emerged throughout the surveys, focus group sessions, and Think-Tank workshop. The four key themes are:

- Building Organizational Strength
- Destination Development
- Strengthen Regional Infrastructure
- Stimulate Economic Diversity

The action plan is not intended to solve all of the challenges in the immediate short term. Rather, it presents a series of strategic actions that can be achieved in the short to medium term, which will produce long term results. They are intended to produce systemic and catalytic shifts that will drive the future economic growth and vitality of the Moosehead Lake Region and attract new investment. The actions are designed to build the future pathway to the preferred scenario – America's Crown Jewel.



## SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC THEMES AND ACTION AREAS

Strategic Theme	Action Areas
<b>Building Organizational Strength</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Launch a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) to be the primary tourism marketing and communication entity for the region and to drive tourism product development</li> <li>2. Refine the mission of the Moosehead Lake Region Economic Development Corporation (MLREDC) to strengthen the focus on business retention and expansion, and relationships with investors and funding agencies</li> <li>3. Formalize a Conservation Land Collaborative of key stakeholders to coordinate opportunities and use for the 1.5 million acres of conservation land</li> <li>4. Establish the 'Crown Jewel Foundation' as a funding mechanism to support tourism and economic development in the region</li> </ol>
<b>Destination Development</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify and articulate the unique "America's Crown Jewel" experience and lifestyle</li> <li>2. Create a strong regional marketing and communication program</li> <li>3. Build third-party recognition of the Moosehead Lake Region.</li> <li>4. Implement a Destination and Product Development Program</li> </ol>
<b>Strengthen Regional Infrastructure</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue to build-out recreation access points</li> <li>2. Increase accommodation capacity and options to support visitation and residents</li> <li>3. Support efforts to redevelop Big Moose Mountain into a recreation facility</li> <li>4. Encourage the ongoing revitalization of Greenville's downtown.</li> </ol>
<b>Stimulate Economic Diversity</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage new businesses that reflect the "America's Crown Jewel" experience and lifestyle</li> <li>2. Maintain a sufficient commercial and industrial land base for future opportunities</li> <li>3. Support the community healthcare infrastructure</li> <li>4. Create a Center for Environmental and Conservation Science - secondary / collegiate level education</li> </ol>



## 6.1 BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH

Having strong local organizations is critical to building sustainable community and economic development. The Moosehead Lake Region faces the challenge of a small population base, and therefore limited human capacity. Therefore, organizational focus and function must be very targeted and coordinated. The region has built a strong track record of collaborative success in recent years. For example, the Moosehead Lake Region Economic Development Corporation has been able to draw together numerous key stakeholder groups and undertake impressive planning and development work in recent years. This is complemented by the wide range of projects being undertaken by other groups, entrepreneurs and agencies.

The action plan aims to build on existing organizational strength, and refine the role and function of some existing key groups. This will help sharpen the organization focus and capacity to execute the next phase of regional activity, and to be able to assemble the resources required. To fulfil on the promise of the 'America's Crown Jewel' scenario, there are four key organizational roles and capacity issues that need to be addressed:

- Build a strong destination marketing and development capacity
- A focused economic development and regional advocacy role
- Strengthen collaboration between land management groups
- Create a sustainable funding mechanism to support destination and economic development

These roles and capacity therein are required to undertake the 'heavy lifting' necessary to build momentum on the future pathway. The initial focus is on boosting the visitation economy and the local product development, as this is the economic engine that will build the regional population and vitality. It is proposed that a natural evolution occur in existing anchor institutions and organizations to fulfil some of the roles. In addition, several new coalitions and organizations are proposed.

### THE KEY PROPOSED ACTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS THEME INCLUDE:

#### **1. Launch a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) to be the primary tourism marketing and communication entity for the region, and to drive tourism product development.**

Substantial progress has been made by the existing efforts of the Moosehead Lake Region Economic Development Corp., the Brand Leadership Team and other local groups. It is now time to strengthen and formalize this role and form a regional Destination Marketing Organization (DMO). This model has proven to be highly effective in other parts of the world, and helps provide the organizational support to the local brand. The key roles of the DMO would include being the primary marketing and communication entity for the region, and being the champion for the Moosehead Lake brand. In addition, the organization could take the lead on destination development work, and help build the local tourism product to attract in new cohorts and segments of tourists. The three primary functions of the DMO would be:

- Marketplace engagement
- Local product development
- Connecting visitation to economic development

The natural evolution might be to see the existing Brand Leadership Team and the Moosehead Lake Region Chamber of Commerce merge into the DMO role. This would build on the natural strengths and provide a broader mandate to the organization.

## **2. Refine the mission of the Moosehead Lake Region Economic Development Corporation (MLREDC) to strengthen the focus on business retention and expansion, and relationships with investors and funding agencies.**

The MLREDC has been a driving force in economic development in recent years. It has had a pivotal role in helping focus the region on the tourism economy and the opportunities presented by the vast tracts of conservation land. A key medium-term issue for the regional economy, as outlined in the scenario planning work, is to build economic diversification. This will require significant long-term investment in business development to leverage new opportunities. This economic diversification spans well beyond the tourism and natural resource industries. It is proposed that the MLREDC mission and role be strengthened to:

- Focus on attracting and expanding businesses based on tourism and other promising growth areas
- Lead efforts to fill service gaps in the existing regional economy
- Build the regional economy to strengthen its attractiveness to the 25-44 demographic
- Convene local, regional, and national development agencies and investors, helping build collaborative approaches to strengthen the Moosehead Lake Region economy and community
- Have a strong advocacy role for the region with the relevant State and Federal agencies

MLREDC has had a pivotal role in convening local institutions and stakeholders to build collaborative approaches within the region. It is now time to broaden the focus and for the MLREDC to become the convener of external partners and potential funders and investors. The fulfilment of the 'America Crown Jewel' future is going to require substantial outside capital and investment in new business ventures and public / private infrastructure. The MLREDC is well placed to be this regional champion.

## **3. Formalize a Conservation Land Collaborative of key stakeholders to coordinate opportunities and use for the 1.5 million acres of conservation land.**

The fundamental underpinning of the Moosehead Lake Region assets, and the 'American Crown Jewel' Brand, are the extensive areas of conservation lands. This conservation status creates permanently protected vistas and recreational landscapes that are of national significance. There are numerous stakeholders that represent management and interests associated with these conservation lands. As visitation tourism grows, the demands on these lands will grow, as well as the complexities of managing public access issues. Given the central importance of these conservation lands, it is proposed to formalize a Conservation Land Collaborative of the key stakeholders. The role of this collaborative would be to work together to:

- Achieve long term sustainability of the conservation land and infrastructure
- Help create a combined vision of the key stakeholders
- Encourage cooperation and collaborative approaches to planning and use
- Help co-ordinate public access and manage associated infrastructure issues

The proposed collaborative would also create a mechanism to help stakeholders and the region strategically plan for a diverse array of future possible uses of these conservation lands. The MLREDC is well placed as the organization that should initially facilitate and convene key stakeholders to explore the formation of a Conservation Land Collaborative.

#### 4. Establish the ‘Crown Jewel Foundation’ as a funding mechanism to support tourism and economic development in the region.

Building funding models to support long term economic and tourism development will be a critical sustainability issue. A foundation model provides a recognized mechanism by which private, corporate or philanthropic interests can invest in the America’s Crown Jewel concept. It provides an innovative way for the regional community to build the necessary funding base for the long term. Such a regional foundation can provide a stable pool of funds that can be leveraged and deployed as a match for additional external funding opportunities. The role of such a Foundation would be to:

- Provide funding for economic and tourism development in the region.
- Create a mechanism to attract new funding streams and philanthropic interest in the region

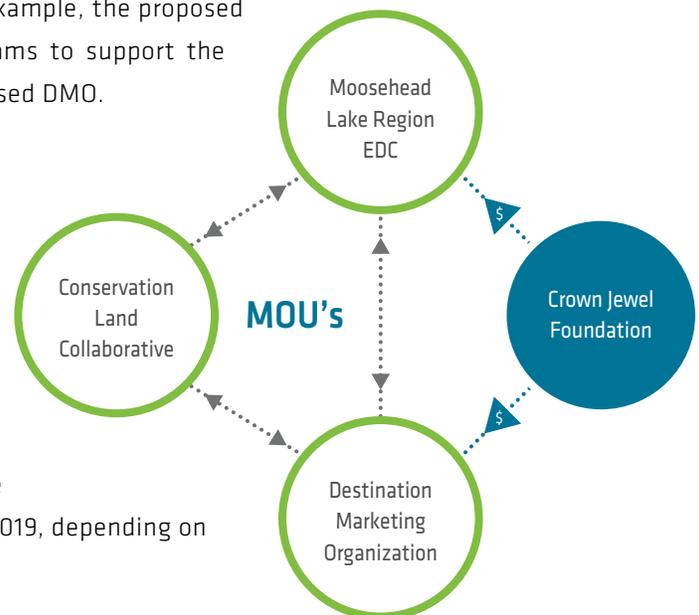
Such a locally controlled foundation mechanism could be housed within existing larger entities, substantially reducing the administrative costs. The proposed foundation should be under the guidance of local stakeholders who have the expertise and experience to both help build the capital funds, and who can apply those funds to maximum catalytic impact in the region.

## BUILDING A COLLABORATIVE FRAMEWORK

The relationship between the four entities covered by this Action Plan theme will be critical. They all serve important but highly interdependent roles. Building this collaborative framework can be done by a series of interconnected Memorandum of Understandings (MOU’s) that define the relationship, roles and points of collaboration. For example, the proposed Crown Jewel Foundation can provide the funding streams to support the important long term work of the MLREDC and the proposed DMO.

## POSSIBLE COLLABORATIVE FRAMEWORK

The building of organizational strength and focus is an important initial step in executing the Action Plan. It is realistic to target the formation of the DMO and the Conservation Land Collaborative by the end of 2018. The role of the MLREDC can also be refined as these organizations build momentum. The Crown Jewel Foundation could be in place by the end of 2019, depending on various administrative hurdles and requirements.



## 6.2 DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

This portion of the Strategic Action plan deals with the Destination Development theme. It is proposed to establish a Destination Marketing Organization, and the actions outlined in this section aim to frame the work of that group.

‘America’s Crown Jewel’ brand and scenario provides a compelling platform to build an authentic and intriguing reputation for the Moosehead Lake Region. There is no question that the region offers remarkable natural landscapes and unspoiled beauty. This creates the basis for building a potentially very empathetic and vibrant tourism industry. The region has the natural assets and capacity to support a strong outdoor recreation and ecologically orientated tourism industry.

A well planned and effectively executed marketing and communication plan is the primary ingredient for any successful tourism region. The region also has a reasonable base of seasonal visitors and property owners that provides a community which can promote the messaging and images of the region’s positive future. Today, and in the future, the cost of communicating with target audiences can be done at a very low cost through social media and other platforms. The time is right to build a comprehensive marketing and communication plan to extend the message about Moosehead Lake Region.

### THE KEY PROPOSED ACTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS THEME INCLUDE:

#### 1. Identify and articulate the unique “America’s Crown Jewel” experience and lifestyle

Moosehead Lake Region has had a distinctive emotional attachment with people for generations. ‘People fall in love with the place’. This is a critically important ingredient, as it will help convert future visitors into residents – a step that will be critical to fulfil on the promise of the ‘America’s Crown Jewel’ scenario.

Clearly articulating what is the unique ‘America’s Crown Jewel’ experience and lifestyle will be essential in building compelling, authentic messages and communication plans. The natural environment, history, culture, and community values can be refined into an experience and lifestyle description that can be used to attract new visitors and potential residents. Also, such a clear identity and characterization can provide additional opportunities for branding by businesses, products and other interests. The Maine Office of Tourism is currently supporting work that will help define the Moosehead Lake visitor experience, and offer feedback and suggestions for making the experience more memorable, engaging, transformative and world-class. This will be valuable foundation work for defining the America’s Crown Jewel experience, and should be completed in 2017-18.

“That without experimentation, a willingness to ask questions and try new things, we shall surely become static, repetitive, moribund.”

– Anthony Bourdain

## **2. Create a strong regional marketing and communication program**

Gaining attention, interest, and investment in the Moosehead Lake Region is critical to achieving the preferred future. The proposed marketing and communication plan will be developed and implemented by the proposed DMO. It has a purpose which is more important than driving short term visitation. Such a communication approach has three main objectives:

- Attraction of additional day and overnight visitors, and extend the visitation season
- Deepen the connection with seasonal residents
- Communicate the attractiveness and opportunities for investment and making “America’s Crown Jewel” your home.

Such a plan should deliver the message that the Moosehead Lake Region is a “work where you live” lifestyle product. In addition, it can emphasize the seasonality and promote the variety of experiences including the range of offerings (soft to extreme; primitive to relaxed luxury). Such a plan should be developed to be rolled out in 2019.

## **3. Build third-party recognition of the Moosehead Lake Region.**

Today’s world of social media, shared economy and instant communication can rapidly build a widespread profile for destinations. In addition, people increasingly love to find the ‘next big thing’. In many ways, Moosehead Lake Region is a well-kept secret, and poised to be ‘discovered’. It is suggested that the DMO and MLREDC pursue a deliberate strategy of gaining third-party recognition. This means being listed on third party “Top-Ten” and “Best-of” lists. These can achieve high value profile for a low cost, and raise awareness about the region, driving additional visitation. Targeted lists might for example include the following terms or criteria; outdoor recreation, natural beauty, hidden adventures, lifestyle, trail systems, scenic views, fall foliage, lakes, hiking, snowmobiling, camps, boating, fishing and rivers. This could be an easy, quick ‘win’ for the region, and could be accomplished in 2018.

## **4. Implement a Destination and Product Development Program**

The longer-term more complex part of this theme is building the tourism and destination product. This requires significant resources and effort to build a multi-dimensional tourism industry and visitor experience. However, there has been growing investment in the region for some time, with numerous businesses offering new amenities and experiences. The regional trail network is now very extensive and is being expanded, and the trailheads, parking and connection to the regional trail systems creates exciting world-class opportunities. These investments offer the potential to attract new types of tourists seeking nature-based outdoor adventure. The redevelopment of the downtown Greenville area has reached a perceivable tipping point where a boutique unique identifiable experience is emerging. In addition, the region has four unique seasons in respect to climate, activities, natural surroundings and experiences that provide an exceptional product mix.

It is proposed that a deliberate destination development program be implemented. This would work with existing and potential tourism industry businesses and groups to build new tourism businesses and products. Features of such a program could include:

- Expand the features and attractiveness of the area's major events/festivals.
- Develop new regional products based upon the "America's Crown Jewel" lifestyle and experiences.
- Build capacity and skills for new industry participants such as tour guides and outfitters.
- New tourism sectors such as cultural tourism, eco-tourism and mountain bike tourism.
- Continue the Downtown revitalization which could include culinary tourism aspects.

Building the 'next generation' of tourism product to attract future visitors is an important component of this Action Plan. Such a program could be started as early as 2018, and could provide important forums to build collaboration between tourism operators. In addition, it can help the region build the connectivity to the activity in adjacent areas such as Jackman and Monson.



## 6.3 STRENGTHEN REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The preferred future for the region in 2030, forecasts a modest population growth and a doubling of overnight visitations per year. Achieving the goal of becoming an iconic destination will require significant investment in infrastructure. To some degree, the Moosehead Lake Region has retained its natural charm because it is a small community in a relatively remote location. This also creates the challenge of having enough critical mass to trigger significant infrastructure investments. There are important public and private infrastructure elements that need to be addressed over the course of the next decade. One of the challenges is that these assets and investments are not all in the direct control of local stakeholders. This will therefore need a strong collaborative approach to help stimulate and organize the necessary investments.

“Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not: nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not: unwanted genius is almost a proverb. Education will not: the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.”

– Calvin Coolidge

However, encouraging progress is already being made. Numerous businesses have been upgrading and investing in downtown Greenville. The downtown concept planning is progressing, and a vibrant downtown feel is emerging. Local recreation facilities are being upgraded, providing new and unique recreation opportunities. The broadband challenge is on the way to being solved with existing planning and implementation being facilitated by the MLREDC and other local leadership groups. State, regional and local partners are meeting to explore future trail and tourism developments. There is very exciting potential for key accommodation developments in downtown locations and in areas defined in the Plum Creek Concept Plan.

The overarching challenge is how to trigger a succession of cornerstone investments. The suggested action steps in this section are aimed at encouraging and facilitating the necessary concurrent public and private sector investments in key regional infrastructure projects.

### THE KEY PROPOSED ACTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS THEME INCLUDE:

#### 1. Continue to build-out recreation access points

Building the tourism visitation is the top priority to move the region to the preferred future. To achieve this growth, the continued build-out of access to the nature-based and water-based recreation areas will be important. This will require the continued investments in essential infrastructure, to both stimulate and then manage increased visitation. Much of this will be long term planning and investment, but there are also some short-term opportunities. Some of the suggested specific actions that have emerged through the community-based planning process have included:

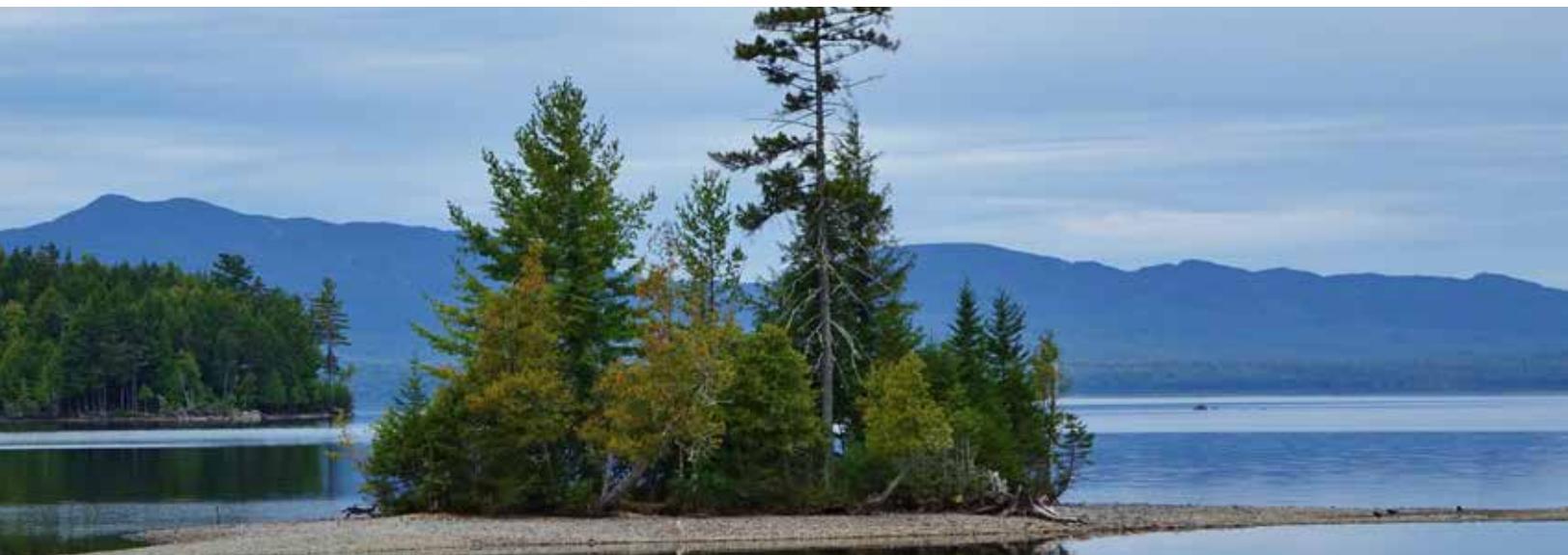
- Expansion of aircraft landing and storage at the airport and on the lake
- Continue the build out and upgrades to the local trail system including linkages with other regional and multi-state systems
- Develop a major gathering spot for large events and festivals for 1,000-2,000 people
- Develop “gateway entrances” to the region near major access points to establish a visual sense of entering a unique and special place
- Improve and expand water access locations on Moosehead Lake, ponds and rivers, including motorized and non-motorized boat launches, docks, beaches and waterside venues

The proposed collaborative framework between the proposed DMO, Conservation Lands Collaborative and MLREDC would be an ideal mechanism to plan and build this access infrastructure. While this work is capital intensive and will require lead time, the payoff will endure well into the future. The region already has a remarkable natural recreation access infrastructure, and expanding this will help create a truly world class experience.

## **2. Increase accommodation capacity and options to support visitation and residents**

Previous work in the region has identified the critical issue of accommodation. This applies to the visitation economy and resident accommodation. There are multiple opportunities for developments to occur that would improve the quality and suitability of available stock. The need for a mid-range hotel is well identified. The potential for higher-end eco-resort style development is clear. The planned increase in the visitation economy will quickly run into limitations for the available accommodation.

There is some potential in using available housing for short term rentals, however the situation demands a larger systemic solution. Triggering quality investments in the right locations will be key. This requires a proactive strategy from MLREDC and other key players, to seek out investors who grasp the regional potential. MLREDC and other leaders will need to help broker land solutions. There are several ideal potential downtown Greenville development sites, which could provide opportunity and locations for catalytic accommodation developments. These could then trigger follow-on investments in support of businesses, workforce housing and so on.



### 3. Support efforts to redevelop the Big Moose Ski Area into a recreation facility

The issue of the Big Moose Mountain is understandably frustrating for residents and local stakeholders. This has been an iconic recreation destination and previously has provided a significant tourism destination, employed a strong workforce, and offered year-round amenities. Its more recent decline and closure has impacted the local economy and community. However, the future of this facility is not in the hands of local decision makers. It has the potential to become a major attraction driver and resident amenity. In addition, there are neighboring development areas associated with the Plum Creek Concept Plan that could come into play. The importance of this facility should mandate that local leaders, led by MLREDC, continue to support the efforts to redevelop this important regional asset.

### 4. Encourage the ongoing revitalization of Greenville's downtown.

The downtown of Greenville is a pivotal anchor point for tourists coming to the Moosehead Lake Region. This location, as the first entry point to the lake, is priceless. The recent improvements, extensions and renovations to the buildings, together with events and additions are creating a vibrant unique commercial district that reflects the America's Crown Jewel theme. The current Downtown Greenville Master Plan work will provide the blueprint for future work.

The preferred future scenario for the region identifies the need to attract 25-44 year olds, and to build a local entrepreneurial culture that will support small businesses and year-round populations. This downtown development work is a key step in making the region attractive and viable for young professionals and entrepreneurs. The Town of Greenville, MLREDC and proposed DMO and all other key groups should rally

behind the implementation of the Downtown Master Plan, and use that catalyst to build-out a remarkable downtown destination experience.



### REGIONAL ASSET LOCATION MAP

The Appendix associated with this plan identifies the physical location of many of the regional asset enhancements that were recommended by community stakeholders through this planning process.

“Travel changes you. As you move through this life and this world you change things slightly, you leave marks behind, however small. And in return, life – and travel – leaves marks on you.”

- Anthony Bourdain

## 6.4 STIMULATE ECONOMIC DIVERSITY

The path to the preferred future for the region identifies building economic diversification as a critical long-term strategy. This complements the short-term economic strategy of building the existing tourism economy. To identify the opportunities for future economic diversification requires understanding how the world is changing. The advent of technology and knowledge based economies changes the equation for what is possible in a region like Moosehead. People's employment is no longer tied as strongly to location. The emergence of renewed interest in innovative and boutique natural products can play to the regions strengths.

To build a truly diverse and vibrant economy will require bucking the long term economic and demographic trends in Maine, and much of rural America. However, the region's stunning natural environment and large conservation land base offers a unique opportunity. By pairing together the appeal of outdoor recreation amenities with a vibrant entrepreneurial lifestyle, the region may have a winning formula. The key will be creating the environment that nurtures vibrant entrepreneurial lifestyles.

The Moosehead Lake Region Economic Development Corporation (MLREDC), together with groups like the Somerset and Piscataquis County EDCs, have a key role to stimulate economic diversification over the short and long term.

**“Never look back unless you are planning to go that way.”**

– Henry David Thoreau

### THE KEY PROPOSED ACTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS THEME INCLUDE:

#### **1. Encourage new businesses that reflect the “America's Crown Jewel” experience and lifestyle**

The development of the local tourism industry, together with elements like the Downtown revitalization, offer the opportunity for a raft of new businesses. This includes the larger traditional businesses such as lodging, tourism operators, and service businesses. It also includes the more boutique emerging business opportunities such as food and culinary products, craft breweries, arts and crafts, and nature based products. These new business opportunities exist, and need entrepreneurs. This situation will increase as the Moosehead Lake regional economy grows. Aligning with the emerging regional brand can give businesses and products additional strength and exposure.

The MLREDC has already identified numerous business opportunities in the region, based on service gaps. The key challenge will be to connect entrepreneurs and investors with these opportunities. The MLREDC and key partners could accelerate this process with a deliberate strategy of outreach to investors and entrepreneurs to build connection and enthusiasm for the region's economic opportunities.

## **2. Maintain a sufficient commercial and industrial land base for future opportunities**

The future pathway to economic diversification will require maintaining suitable commercial and industrial land assets. The expansive conservation lands protect much natural wilderness, but it also leaves the region's communities somewhat landlocked. Ensuring that industrial land is available is going to be critical for when innovation occurs and new business opportunities become viable. The emergence of the 'maker culture' could have significant resonance and appeal in a location like Moosehead Lake Region. This will require some light manufacturing capacity.

MLREDC and Piscataquis County EDC, together with towns and financial institutions, can be planning and developing suitable approved land for new ventures. Likely the scale will be small, but these employment and business opportunities will be critical for building a year-round resident population that lives and works in the region.

## **3. Support the community healthcare and education infrastructure**

In locations like Moosehead Lake, anchor institutions like schools and hospitals are inextricably linked to community resilience and sustainability. Ensuring that suitable educational and healthcare facilities exist is essential. However, providing a broad range of healthcare infrastructure can also support the further growth of the community, through direct employment and the opportunity for resident to 'age in place'.

Healthcare and hospital services are provided in a variety of forms. To be viable, the region must find the best and most cost-effective model. It is suggested the region undertake a Healthcare Infrastructure and Service Needs Assessment. Matching the needs for a financially viable hospital, with the current and forecast needs in the region, will help define the right-sized healthcare infrastructure.

The MLREDC could partner with the hospital and other stakeholders to undertake a study that can inform the future potential to grow the healthcare sector in the region. MLREDC could also continue to seek ways to support the important educational institutions.

## **4. Create a Center for Natural Resources and Conservation Science**

Throughout the planning process, the concept of using the area's natural environment and conservation regime as a "living laboratory" gathered strong support. Participants in the planning process believed this would be a good fit for the region, and has the potential to attract educational institutions, students and knowledge workers. This concept has the potential to connect very closely with the 'America's Crown Jewel' scenario, and offers a pathway for innovative economic diversification.

The concept needs to be developed further, but initial suggestions include initially establishing a satellite higher education center using existing facilities and capacities such as Maine Fish and Wildlife properties and the Greenville School facilities. This concept could be developed further by a collaborative effort between education and secondary institutions, foundations, regional partners such as NREC and MLREDC, and other interested stakeholders.

*"It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see."*

- Henry David Thoreau

## 6.5 RESOURCES REQUIRED

The Moosehead Lake Region Strategic Action Plan lays out a framework for future short and long term action steps. It is designed to be high level, and points to action areas of high priority or potential.

Fulfilling on some of these action steps will be resource intensive and require investment of significant time and capital. Being able to assemble the necessary financial resources will be an important step. The Action Plan addresses the financial resources needed, by approaches such as:

- Where possible using existing groups and efforts to implement action areas, or the evolution of the action areas
- The proposed Crown Jewel Foundation offers the opportunity for the region to build its own long term funding stream for important tourism and economic development work
- There is a strong focus on building coalitions and collaboration with external agencies, investors, foundations and other potential funding sources.

Much of the investment required will be private capital. This will require the presentation of compelling opportunities and business cases, connected to the future vision of the region. If done well, this could bring early investors to the region, who are attracted by the prospect of being part of a regional economy that is on the brink of strong growth and innovation.

**“There are risks and costs to action. But they are far less than the long-range risks of comfortable inaction.”**

– John F. Kennedy

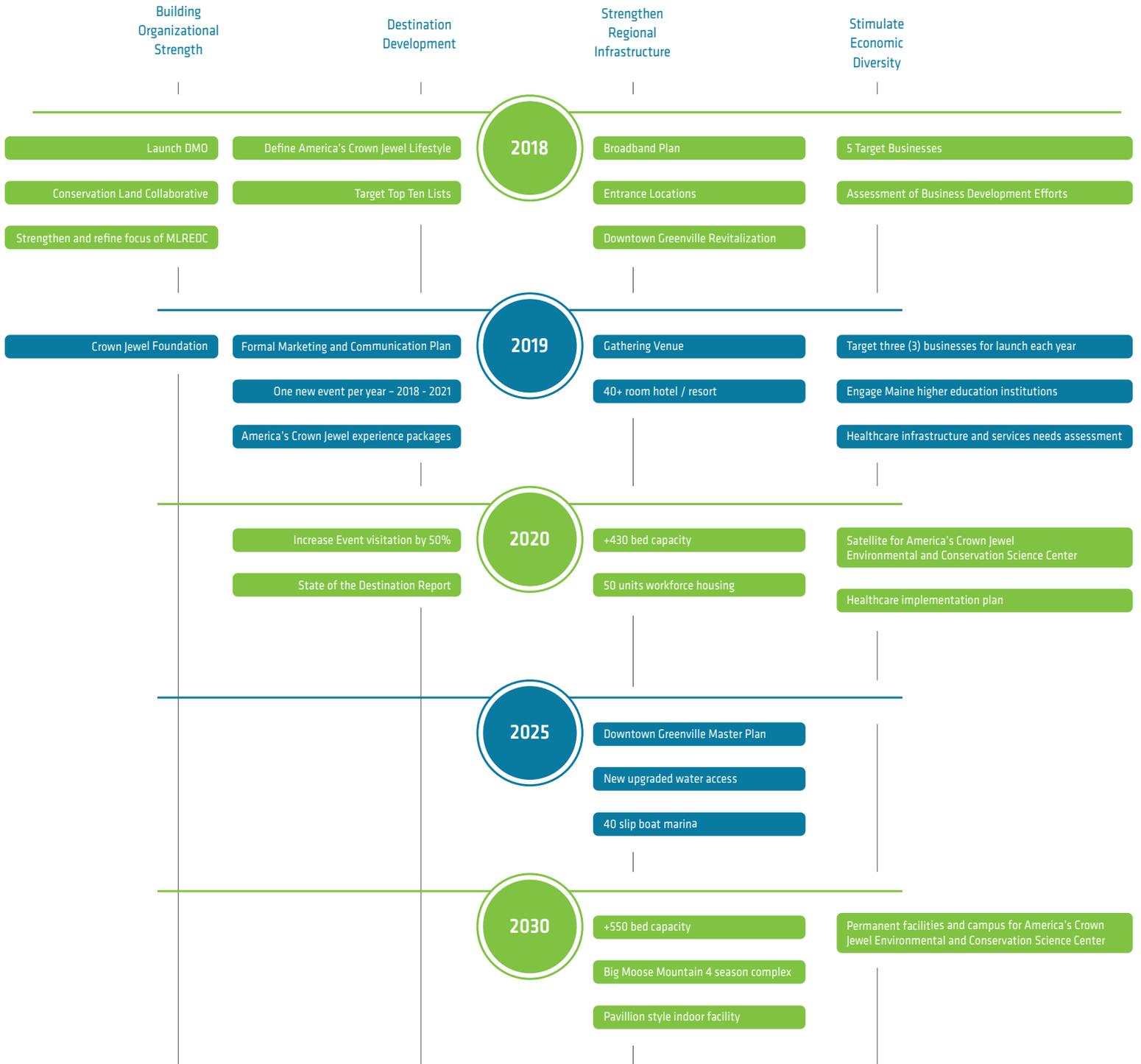
The other dimension to resources is human capital. The work of convening and facilitating progress can be demanding and time consuming. It requires dedicated people who can manage complex human dynamics and build trusting and collaborative relationship. In the action plan, two organizations are identified to play catalytic roles – the proposed Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) and the Moosehead Lake Region Economic Development Corporation (MLREDC). Both these organizations will need to have dedicated staff who will do the ‘heavy-lifting’. The MLREDC has done heroic work with an all-volunteer board, with limited support personnel. This organization now needs to transition and include stronger staff capacity, to strengthen the momentum.



# 7.0 ROADMAP

Implementing a large multi-year regional action plan can at first glance appear daunting and challenging. However, this plan is spread out over at least 12 years, and incremental steps can build significant progress over time. The following roadmap shows how actions and successes could accumulate. The actual roll-out of activities and projects will depend on multiple variables; and this roadmap is intended to provide an indicative timeline.

## Moosehead Regional Strategic Action Plan Roadmap





## 8.0 NEXT STEPS

The remainder of 2017, and 2018 is a critical period to maintain the leadership energy and to gain traction and short-term accomplishments for the Regional Strategic Action Plan. The MLREDC should be the lead organization in kicking off implementation of the action plan, at least into 2018.

The following are actions that need to be focused on and accomplished before moving to other actions in the plan:

1. MLREDC launch the Regional Strategic Action Plan
2. Establish the Moosehead Lake Region DMO including a plan and timeline for the development of the Communication and Marketing Plan
3. Facilitate the formation of the Conservation Land Collaborative
4. Schedule quarterly meetings with the DMO/MLREDC (BLT)
5. Include a least one more EDC member be on the board of the DMO and vice versa
6. MLREDC will form a subcommittee for the Crown Jewel Foundation
7. MLREDC will update the mission, vision, and goals
8. Begin developing a budget for implementing the report
9. Draft an MOU between the DMO and the MLREDC/BLT



## 9.0 ABOUT FUTURE IQ

Future iQ is a market leader in the development and application of scenario planning; network analysis, industry and regional analysis, and community engagement and capacity building. The company specializes in applying innovative tools and approaches to assist organizations, regions and industries shape their economic and community futures. With over a decade of business experience, the company has grown to have a global clientele spanning three continents.

To learn more about this report, or about Future iQ and our recent projects visit [www.future-iq.com](http://www.future-iq.com) or contact us by email at [info@future-iq.com](mailto:info@future-iq.com)

### REPORT PREPARED BY:



#### DAVID BEURLE, CEO, FUTURE IQ

As CEO of Future iQ, David specializes in creating future planning approaches for the use in regional, community and organizational settings. David has worked in the field of organizational and regional economic and community planning for over 20 years. His work in community and economic development has earned his work international, national and state awards.



#### JIM HAGUEWOOD

With a career in the tourism and hospitality industry, Jim’s focus and impact has been in regional community economic development initiatives in more than five areas in North America in the past decade. He served as Executive Director of the Clallam County Economic Development Council crafting a national recognized regional initiative called Clallam netWorks, and as Board Member of 7 Cedars Resort & Casino of the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe.



#### LEHNA MALMKVIST, MANAGING DIRECTOR, FUTURE IQ CANADA

Lehna works within multi-disciplinary teams across a wide range of projects, and uses her skills to ensure that innovative, whole-system approaches are integrated into projects. Lehna is an accomplished facilitator who uses her expertise to guide planning processes to develop a common understanding of fundamental issues and create solutions as a unified team.



## 10.0 MOOSEHEAD LAKE REGION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The MLREDC is a Greenville, Maine-based 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. Established in 2013 by local business and community leaders, the MLREDC was formed from a critical need to grow the local economy, reverse population decline, and increase prosperity for area residents through development of a year-round sustainable economy. Over the MLREDC's first three years, all of its work and significant accomplishments have been driven by its all-volunteer board which is made up of businesses, non-profits, community leaders and MLREDC project consultants. Members have donated a substantial amount of their time.

The mission of the MLREDC is to grow and sustain local businesses, attract and create new jobs, and enhance the economy of the Moosehead Lake Region. The MLREDC's vision is that "The Moosehead Lake Region will enjoy a robust, diversified and sustainable economy that leverages the region's unique character, heritage and spectacular natural resources."

### 2017 MLREDC Board of Directors

- Luke Muzzy, President - Senior Land Asset Manager, Weyerhaeuser
- Donna Moreland - Destination Development Specialist, Maine Office of Tourism
- Drew Watson, Co-President - Owner, Symonds Appraisal Services
- Joe DiAngelo, Secretary - Owner/Broker, Century 21 Moose Country Realtors
- Amanda Hunt, Vice President - Owner/Founder, Northwoods Camp Rentals
- William M. Fletcher, Esq. - Partner, Fletcher, Selser & Devine
- Geno Murray, Treasurer - CEO, C.A. Dean Hospital
- Angela Arno - Executive Director, Moosehead Lake Chamber of Commerce
- Steve Levesque
- Karin Tilberg - Forest Society of Maine
- Craig Watt - Co-owner, Indian Hill Trading Post
- Rebekah Anderson - Owner, Lakeshore House in Monson
- Paula St. Laurent - Branch Manager, Camden National Bank



## 11.0 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Throughout the planning process, many hundreds of people from across the region have given generously of their time and expertise to the creation of the Strategic Action Plan. We acknowledge their desire to see a better future for the region.

- Luke Muzzy (Co-President of the MLREDC) provided the vision, drive and leadership to initiate the Regional Master Plan Process.
- MLREDC Board of Directors for their commitment to launch a visioning process for the Moosehead Lake regional economy and involvement in every aspect of the process.
- John Cleveland for his MLREDC staff support in coordination of events and activities and being the primary consultant team interface.
- State of Maine agencies and staff for their support and active participation in the events and making themselves available for interviews and informational discussions.
- The Future iQ team including David Beurle, Jim Haguwood, Lehna Malmkvist, who facilitated the planning process and undertook the surveys and report preparation.

## 12.0 FOR MORE INFORMATION

**For more information on this report and the regional planning process, please contact:**

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[www.future-iq.com](http://www.future-iq.com) or [www.mooseheadlakeedc.com](http://www.mooseheadlakeedc.com)



**Moosehead Lake Region Economic and Demographic Analysis**  
February 2017



**Moosehead Lake Region Scenario-Based Future Think-Tank Workshop**  
March 2017



**Appendix 1: Action Mapping From Moosehead Lake Region Think-Tank**  
March 2017



**Moosehead Lake Region Asset Inventory and Assessment**  
April 2017



**Appendix 2: Asset Inventory Maps**  
April 2017



**Moosehead Lake Region Strategic Action Plan**  
September 2017



**Appendix 1: Strategic Plan Projects Map**  
April 2017



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