

The Region's Challenges

There are six major issues that are significant challenges over the next ten years.

1. The region is remote. This is a region that requires a destination brand and spirit to attract new visitors and residents. Many seasonal visitors have historical family connections. The Town of Danforth has basic services but is not an active “destination” community with tourist amenities and attractions.
2. The region is sparsely populated. This may have advantages during a pandemic, but undermines the need for a robust, reliable workforce for existing businesses, and a strong volunteer network to carry forward the economic and community development priorities.
3. The region's demographics are aging. This trend also impacts workforce availability and volunteer engagement. Most importantly, it underscores the requirement to invest in East Grand School and all the youth in the region. Providing opportunities to learn more about local careers, providing the means to apprentice, and investing in their entrepreneurial aspirations is essential to maintain their interest in becoming long-term residents.
4. The natural resource-based economy is declining. The value chain for lumber and other timber-based products continues to fluctuate. New product ideas are a priority in the Maine's economic development planning but if and how forestry businesses can remain viable remains an open question.
5. The region lacks high-speed communications and broadband infrastructure. This is a priority infrastructure need for services during pandemics and extreme weather events. It also is a requirement for attracting new residents interested in remote living and careers. Without this utility, future economic development in the region will be impossible to sustain.
6. Collaboration across the region is a work-in-progress. This plan is the first step to bring the residents and towns across the region to discuss a unified approach to improving the economic and community well-being for all. Continued investment by committed individuals and institutions is required to solidify the collaboration and begin demonstrating tangible outcomes.

These challenges and threats are the motivation to leverage the region's strengths and opportunities. The chart on the following page summarizes the relationship between the four variables. Together, they provide the backdrop for the goals outlined in the economic development plan.