

Creative & Knowledge Economy TRC Report

Executive Summary

The five recommendations of the Creative and Knowledge Economy TRC all depend on widespread availability of broadband, high-speed Internet access. Whether it is to expand markets, improve technology links, promote existing businesses, or attract new knowledge workers for Creative and Knowledge-based businesses, none of our action items can succeed without broadband. Therefore, our first recommendation is to ensure access to high-speed Internet connection throughout Coos County. We envision that the development of the Creative and Knowledge sector of Coos County's economy will require a coordinated effort to develop creative spaces within our communities, increased marketing of creative and knowledge-based business opportunities, enhanced workforce development and training opportunities, and targeted improvements in community leadership and support of place-based cultural values.

Additionally, we assume that once the work of the TRC is complete and accepted by the steering committee, the "champion" organizations will need ongoing steering committee(s) to implement our recommendations. The successful completion of these action plans is predicated on the existence of the following:

- A compelling vision statement, mission statement and strategic plan for economic development in Coos County
- Effective governance structures and related improvements in organizational infrastructure
- Diverse resources mobilized to carry out the action plans, including coordinated fundraising efforts and business planning
- Both staff and volunteer leadership development as integral sustaining components, including direct support for collaborative efforts
- Ongoing, embedded evaluation for effectiveness, outcomes and sustained focus
- Systematic and effective administrative procedures and clear and accurate financial practices and record-keeping
- Increased networking opportunities across sectors and across community boundaries, both within Coos County and beyond our borders

Action Plan #1 Support existing Creative and Knowledge businesses in Coos County with county-wide access to high-speed Internet and a “NorthSource Network.”

In order to both support existing creative enterprises and attract new ones, countywide access to high-speed Internet is required.

Action Statement:

Convene a meeting with NCIC, Linc, NCES, AHEAD, SAUs, hospitals, clinics, prisons, and Fairpoint to identify county needs for broadband and determine how to achieve countywide broadband in the near term.

Create a “NorthSource Network” that electronically connects Creative and Knowledge companies and organizations in the North Country to share knowledge, resumes, promotional opportunities, and access to markets. Use the NorthSource Network to increase the percentage of NorthSource businesses that win state, federal, and international contracts.

Funding source:

There is broadband funding available from a variety of sources, including affordable housing grants, tele-medicine grants, and educational grants. In other regions of the country, states have provided access to broadband. If we pool these resources, we believe that there will be sufficient funds to accomplish this goal.

Justification of Recommendation:

A recent University of Maine study revealed the synergies between creative economies and high-technology clusters. In essence, the study showed that without the presence of high-tech business and knowledge workers, the economic advantages of a creative economy were minimal. “A creative cluster includes non-profit enterprises, cultural institutions, arts venues and individual artists alongside the science park and the media centre. Creative clusters are places to live as well as to work, places where cultural products are consumed as well as made . . .” says Simon Evans, a cultural entrepreneur and Director of *Creative Clusters*, an innovative UK company.

When competing for “High-Tech/high-per-capita income” jobs, towns with unique quality and character of life -- including natural beauty, strong sense of place, and authentic historic buildings -- are extremely attractive. According to a World Bank Study, sites “aspiring to become the creative hubs...tend to be heavily biased towards infrastructure provision. Although this is necessary, the heavy emphasis on hardware has and can lead to underinvestment in developing the talents and skills needed for the emergence of creative industries.” The burden carried by our

rural communities is to support the growth of these cultural clusters through access to broadband, street signage, tax incentives, live/work spaces, lighting, bicycling trails, and off-street parking access. Most Coos Towns have lost manufacturing plants that in the past carried the majority burden of property tax funding for schools and road repairs. As towns wrestle with diminished tax revenues, we need to find sources out side of the local tax base to fund creative space infrastructure investment.

One key premise of long-term sustainability is keeping dollars local. Whether used to purchase local food, local art, or local materials, the more dollars that remain within the county the healthier the economy of the county becomes. There already exist hundreds of creative and knowledge workers (including artists, supporting businesses, remote knowledge workers and high-tech consultants) within Coos County. We must do whatever is needed to support and encourage these existing businesses so that they can not only survive but also thrive. This support must include not just broadband access, but education and training necessary to use the Internet to expand one's market and promote one's businesses in an on-line world; how to start and run knowledge businesses; and how to promote the availability of Coos-grown resources.

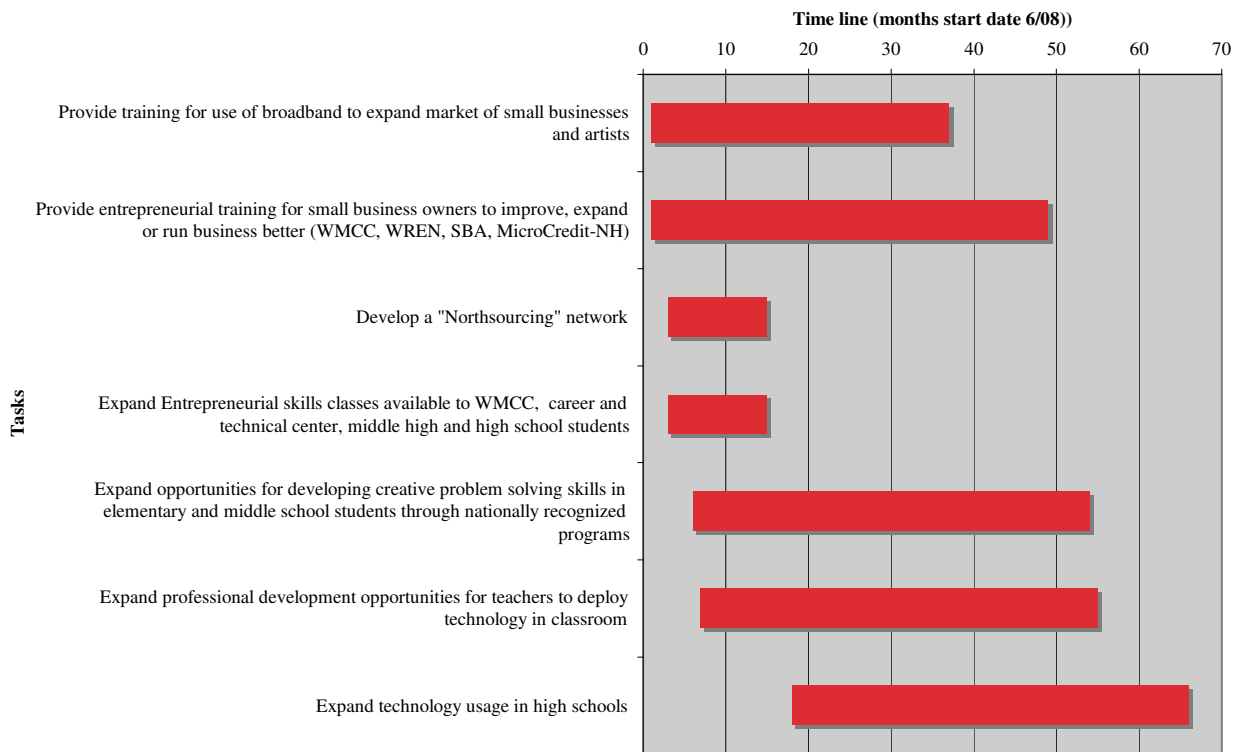
Who:

NCIC, Linc, North Country Education Services, AHEAD, School Administrative Units, hospitals, clinics, prisons, and Fairpoint

Timeline for Implementation:

Expand broadband access to all in the county by the end of 2009. During 2009 and 2010, provide free workshops on using the Internet to promote connections both locally and nationally and internationally. Expand the number of entrepreneurship-skills classes available throughout the county in 2008. Expand the number of technology-trained professionals in the region to handle the burgeoning demand that having broadband will create, through programs at the local career and technical centers in high schools, NCES, WREN, WMCC and Granite State College. Explore ways to improve student exposure to creative problem solving and critical thinking skills in elementary and high schools, for instance by expanding the funding for *Destination ImagiNation* and other nationally recognized programs.

Gantt Chart of Creative and Knowledge Economy Plan Action Plan #1



Major Measures of Success:

- Universal access to broadband by 2009
- Regular training for new on-line marketing techniques available throughout the county by 2009 by WREN, SBA, Micro-Credit, WMCC, and Granite State College
- Increase in number of “creative workers” in labor force

Resource:

Currently the career and technical centers can apply for Federal Perkins Grants to provide Information Technology training. Each site needs over \$100,000 per year for three years to fund the new program equipment, materials and staffing requirements. NCES currently offers grant-funded professional development training for public school teachers in information technology. WREN also provides partially grant-funded programs throughout the county on technology deployment in small businesses. WMCC and Granite State College provide specialized training and college credit courses in information systems and technology. JobPro can arrange employer-requested technology training to the emerging work force. There are new grant sources to create new work force housing with broadband access.

Action Plan #2: Develop and Support Creative Spaces and Creative Clusters and Coordinate and Promote Creative Economy Activities

Action Step Statement:

Survey and inventory existing and potential “Creative Spaces” throughout the region, align these spaces with existing and projected future needs, and work to develop and support these spaces – and the resulting “Creative Community Clusters” – through coordinated activities that connect them with one another. The long-term goal of this work is to maintain a permanent Creative Economy network serving residents and visitors, and to support, attract and retain creative/cultural workers who will contribute to both economic development and quality of life throughout the region. (Note: “Creative Spaces” are specific buildings or sites that can serve as centers for cultural, innovative, and creative activity in the region and offer rich opportunities for community economic development. These may include mixed use space, artist live-work space, artist-run business space -- and community space for creation, performance, exhibition as well as for cultural education.)

Justification of Recommendation:

In light of rapid de-industrialization and consequent job loss throughout the county, there is a pressing need to build a new kind of broad-based economic engine around certain precise and discrete core elements. The seeding or nurturing of an active, growing artistic and creative population and its allied businesses and entrepreneurial efforts is one such element. The first step in this process is identifying sites suitable for the development of creative industry spaces as incubators for the designed expansion of a permanent working artist and related small-business population. Such spaces would incorporate capacity for common public arts involvement and applications, including performance, rehearsal, exhibition, education, and service spaces. This work is based on findings throughout the country that attracting and retaining qualified workers is enhanced by the presence of a recognized and supported creative sector, including a dedicated population of cultural workers.

In her February discussion, Dr. Ann Markusen affirmed that the first step in development of a successful regional Creative Economy is to complete an inventory of current activity and to pair an inventory of existing and available space with a full space needs assessment. Given similar and highly competitive interests in the other New England states (including bordering towns in Vermont and Maine) as they pro-actively seek to champion a 21st century creative economy and to embed a "creative class" within all sectors of their economies, it is imperative that northern New Hampshire define its potential in this dynamic as part of its economic development plan. A community's economic prospects depend on a flexible, well-trained workforce, access to technology and capital, cultural and natural amenities, and a strong civic infrastructure, including relationships that facilitate problem-solving and collective action within the community and the

region. Strategic cultural development is a key component in creating and supporting an expanding economy.

Development of this Creative Economy component as part of a strategic regional economic plan requires long-term commitment and careful, thoughtful coordination with other sectors, including tourism, education, and workforce development. A permanent, staffed regional Creative Economy task force devoted to this task is essential for the success of this effort.

Several Coos towns have the beginnings of creative clusters. Some of these examples (by no means all) are:

, Berlin has a walkable area including St. Kieran Center for the Arts, the Junior High Auditorium, the Moffett House Museum, St. Anne's Roman Catholic Church, and the Northern Forest Heritage Park, as well as individual creative businesses (sign makers, high-tech enterprises, photography shop) and retail spaces including florists and restaurants.

Gorham is renovating its Town Hall stage, within a short walk of Chapel Arts Center, Grand Truck Museum, the Family Resource Center, Wonder Land Book Store, and the high school.

Whitefield's downtown includes a renovated gazebo, art studio, new quilt shop, and several restaurants, all within a short drive of the Weathervane Theater and the Mountain View Grand Hotel.

Colebrook has a new Heritage Cultural Center in close proximity with the Shrine to Our Lady of Grace and the Balsams Grand Hotel.

Carroll has the Mt. Washington Hotel, Bretton Woods ski resort, the Alpine Hut system of AMC, the town bandstand and an airport in close proximity to each other.

Lancaster Fair Grounds brings together crafts people as well as first class agricultural producers, tree farmers, livestock managers, and the County Extension Service in the town to markets. Weeks State Park, Readers Theater, Colonel Town Players, and Centennial Park bring people from around the county together to explore natural beauty, create theater, or share music

Efforts are under way in other communities, including Groveton and Stratford, to expand the creative economy.

Who: Organization(s) identified to play lead role:

Arts Alliance of Northern New Hampshire

Timeline for Implementation:

During the next three months, the Arts Alliance will be developing an inventory of current and potential Creative Space sites throughout the region, identifying buildings available for development as well as other adaptable facilities, including public spaces. The inventory will also include a listing of current creative enterprises. In addition, AANNH will survey local artists and creative businesses to assess their space and technical assistance needs, in order to pair up the existing spaces to those needs and to plan for future development. This survey information will allow facilitators of established creative spaces to have greater awareness of artists' needs and artists to become aware of existing resources. Data from the survey will also aid in planning for future creative spaces and necessary resources to support them.

The Creative Spaces steering committee will develop a draft plan with specific recommendations and suggested actions. They will present their findings to local and state government leaders, economic development directors, Main Street development directors, and the public. The conversation will identify where creative incubator space exists and where – and how -- new spaces can be developed. The process will urge leaders to embrace dynamic cultural communities while honoring the critical, heritage-based sense of place in our towns encouraging cultural entrepreneurs to develop their work using new technologies. Property tax incentives and zoning for live/work spaces and other arts centers will be researched and evaluated.

By October 2008, AANNH will have identified those communities and individuals in the county that are most ready to take the next steps and invest in creative space development, as well as available spaces for this work. A permanent task force with dedicated staff will coordinate this network, offering communication, technical assistance, and appropriate programming. Work within the network and with partners and consultants will begin, with the goal of systematically developing the most promising identified sites. Within five years each of our creative communities will have successful creative spaces with artists and entrepreneurs, men and women, young and old working side by side.

Major Measures of Success and Milestones

Initial recommendations report broadly disseminated to stakeholders as well as to politicians and local civic leaders by summer 2008

Identification of at least one potential “creative space” in each of the primary community regions

Opening of at least one new creative space in 2009

Incorporation of Creative Spaces inventory and plan in economic development activities throughout the county

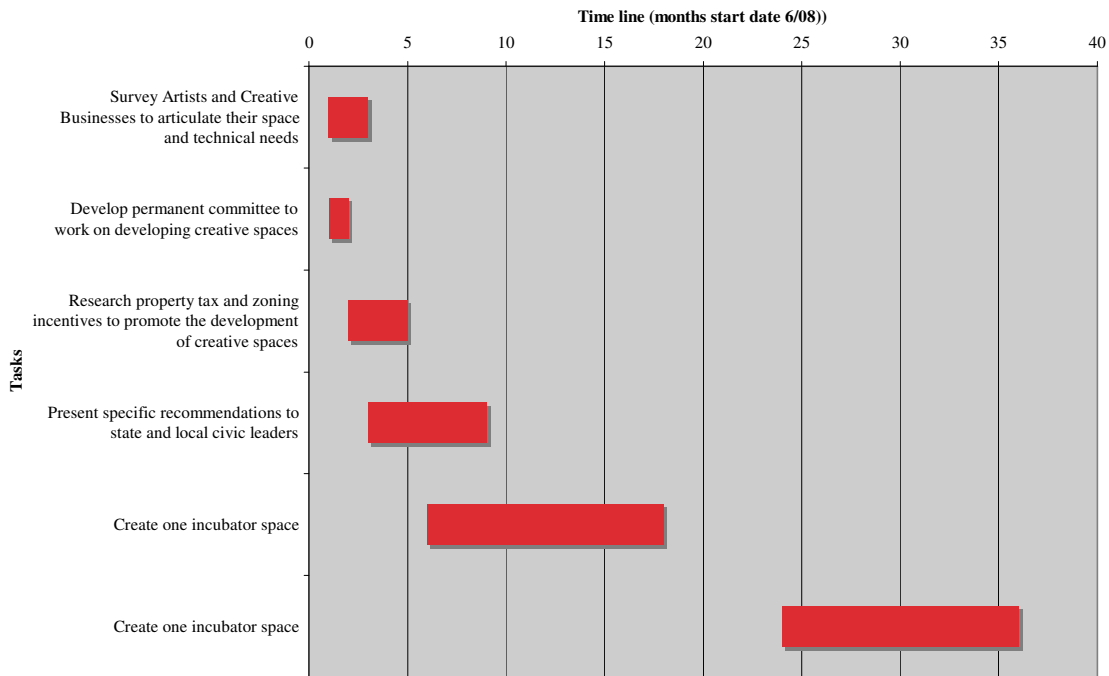
Active Creative Economy task force develops regional festival and promotes linked Creative Economy activity across the county by 2010

12% increase in visits to events and attractions as part of link among creative spaces and resulting cultural tourism activity

Resource:

AANNH has an EDA grant funding the inventory development, needs assessment, and initial Creative Spaces planning process. A Tillotson Fund grant supports a part-time Creative Economy coordinator who is working on this initiative through the fall. Next October, new resources will be needed to support implementation of the Creative Spaces plan and to expand the outreach necessary to coordinate the effort and help individual communities develop identified spaces. It is estimated that \$75,000 would be needed in the initial year and \$50,000 per year from 2009 through 2013 to continue and expand the Creative Spaces work and community modeling, to develop the technology and communication systems that will link and support local efforts, and to offer technical assistance to communities in their work on identified projects and spaces. Please see Gantt chart for additional details and timeline.

Gantt Chart of Creative and Knowledge Economy Plan Action Plan #2



Action Plan #3 –Approve and fund a county-wide marketing plan to promote Coos as a place for creative and knowledge businesses

Action Statement:

Review, modify if necessary, and fund the Coos County Marketing Plan developed by KDPaine

and Partners to assist county and state economic leaders. Funding should include resources to manage the business promotion of the county, in conjunction with ongoing tourism efforts.

Justification of Recommendation:

Coos County is an undiscovered gem, more frequently positioned as “beleaguered” than “beautiful,” more “troubled” than “talented.” While those who live north of the Notches understand its value, relatively few New Englanders make it north of the mountains to see and appreciate the county’s assets. County needs to undertake a complete repositioning in both earned and paid media, in word of mouth, online and off-line, to change the existing perceptions so that creative and knowledge workers as well as paying visitors want to come (or come back) to the area.

Who:

A permanent Coos County marketing committee including representatives from DRED, the chambers of commerce, WMCC and PSU, Main Street programs, and various economic development groups such as CEDC and NCIC. The focus of the committee should be exclusively promotion and marketing.

Timeline & Milestones:

Extensive work was conducted last year by the Coos County Marketing Steering Committee to identify assets and create a marketing plan. The plan has been widely circulated but remains unfunded. Revisions to the marketing plan could be completed by June 2008. Funding and implementation could begin by summer of 2008. Completion of implementation would be by end of 2008.

Implementation steps include Northsourcing, promotion directed to female entrepreneurs, print and promotional materials, web site development and a blogging presence.

Measures of success:

Increase # of inquiries to local chambers/AVER etc for space

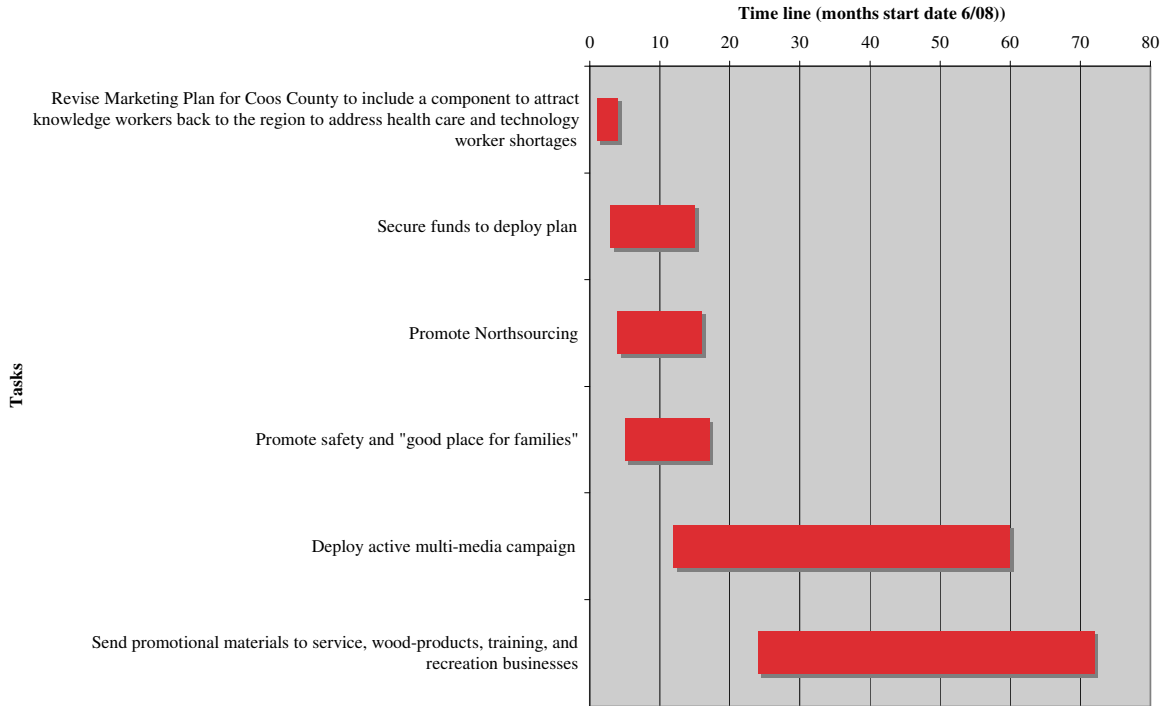
Increase traffic to local chamber websites for information

Increase downloads of maps and documents from web sites

Resource:

A regular source of funding for this effort should be developed at the county tax level. State matching funds from DRED could provide incentive for this countywide investment.

Gantt Chart of Creative and Knowledge Economy Plan Action Plan #3



Action Plan #4 - Workforce Development and Training

Action Step Statement:

Our recommendations run parallel to those made by a project funded through WMCC in 2008 that outlined priorities for workforce development in Coos County. The recommendations include:

- Change the language in Workforce Opportunity Grant legislation to foster entrepreneurship training to laid-off workers
- Expand opportunities for developing creative problem solving and collaborative work skills in elementary, middle and high school (as expressed in Action Plan #1)
- Provide training for use of broadband to expand the markets for small business and artists (as expressed in Action Plan #1)
- Provide entrepreneurial training for small business owners to improve and expand their businesses. (As expressed in Action Plan #1)
- Expand professional development opportunities for teachers to deploy new technologies in classrooms. (As expressed in Action Plan #1)
- Provide training that addresses development of cultural workers – in the areas of administration, management, creative and production work, dissemination and marketing.
- Include arts/culture/creative expression as elements of education, training, and workforce maintenance for the overall workforce – incorporating creative problem solving and hands-on, experiential training.

Justification of Recommendation:

Job loss is increasing as firms seek to lower their costs through automation and the use of cheaper labor outside the U.S. In rural America, workers in manufacturing were hardest hit—from 2001 to 2003; one in ten displaced workers were employed in manufacturing. Clark and Oswald (1994, p. 655) summarize the impact of deindustrialization as follows: “Joblessness depresses well being more than any other single characteristic including important negative ones such as divorce and separation.” Di Tella, MacCulloch, and Oswald (2003) show that aggregate unemployment decreases average reported life satisfaction even if personal unemployment is kept constant. The cumulative costs of unemployment are substantial. Communities experiencing

shocks of high unemployment are subject to high crime rates, depressed workers salaries, reduced leisure time for citizens, lower life satisfaction, loss of social networks, and necessary adjustments in consumption habits.

Northern New Hampshire's pulp, paper, and wood products industries have lost over 1000 well-paid jobs since 2001. The economy in the North Country is shifting away from paper and wood products and toward industries such as tourism/hospitality, healthcare (particularly eldercare), green power, creative and knowledge based businesses and light manufacturing. Most of the individuals affected by the mill closings, however, are ill-prepared to make the transition into these industries, and almost none of the businesses in these areas are prepared to provide the kind of job-skills training that could help. Additionally, studies suggest that a gap exists in general training and education that leaves North Country non-college bound youth unprepared to join the entry-level workforce in many of the county's businesses.

Looking ahead, workers with only a high school education, regardless of the industry in which they work, are especially vulnerable. Job loss has devastating impacts on families and children. The lack of security that accompanies displacement creates severe stress on the previously employed individual. Loss of a long-held job and limited prospects for immediate reemployment create economic insecurity for the family and can lead to a loss of self-esteem, declining health, increased marital discord, a reduction in the ability to parent, an increase in abuse of alcohol and other substances, and an increased likelihood of divorce (Jacobson, LaLonde, and Sullivan, 1993; Ruhm, 1991; Stevens, 1997). In families where an unexpected loss of a long held job occurs and reemployment is slow, children experience a decline in school performance, increased anxiety and emotional maladjustment (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, and Klebanov, 1994; Duncan and Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Kalil and Zoil-Guest, 2005).

As the regional economy changes, it is important that people's skills and ways of thinking develop with it. While a good high school education is a critical first step in preparing for the modern workplace, it is often no longer enough. In some cases, the most appropriate post-secondary education may be technical or focused on the skills necessary to perform a specific job or to work in a specific industry. In other cases, it may be oriented toward new ideas and ways of thinking. Whichever the case, the skills and capacities gained through post secondary education contribute to people's ability to participate in the workforce, to earn a good living, to think critically and creatively, and to contribute to their communities. Coos County has less than half the rate of 4-year college degree attainment of the other counties in the state. Access to college level course work has improved in recent years through the collaboration of Granite State College, Plymouth State University, and White Mountains Community College, but remains out of reach for many citizens.

Educational attainment has been chronically low. The teachers in our school systems have noticed a major change in readiness for school over the past two decades. Our school-aged children are requiring more educational intervention services. Of an estimated 6,000 school-age

children in Coos County in 2002:

- More than 70% of Public School students qualify free or reduced-price lunches — a measure of poverty.
- Only 500 attend kindergarten, yet we have 2400 in grades 1-5; 1440 attend grades 6-8; 1830 attend high school.
- 1170 students about 20% are enrolled in special education. About 98 do not speak English as their first language.
- 62% of our children are covered by children's health insurance offered through the state (which is being reduced in the current state budget)

Who:

AVER Educational Committee, WMCC, NCES, Arts Alliance of Northern New Hampshire

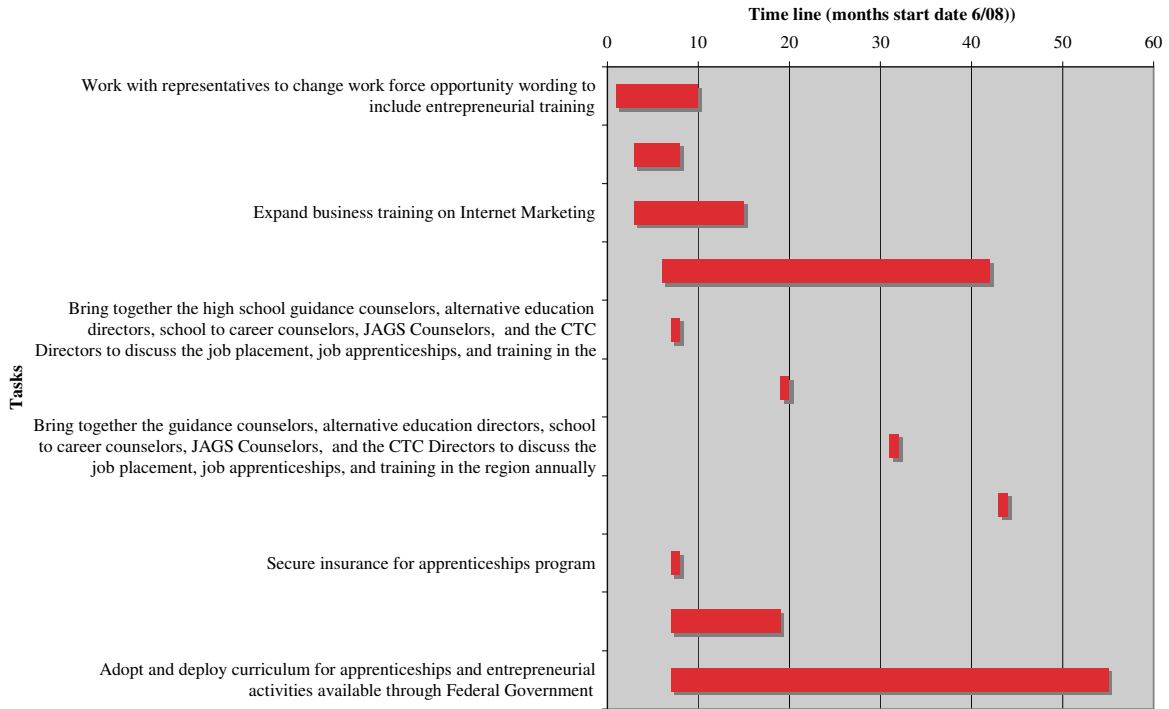
Major Measures of Success:

- % Employment/unemployment rate in Coos County.
- Change wording in Work Opportunity Legislation to include entrepreneurial and creative enterprise training
- Graduates of work force development training, JobPro, WMCC, Granite State College, secure a new and better job upon completing
- Higher percentages of high school graduates attend secondary training or college programs.
- Employers report entry-level job readiness, creative problem solving and conflict resolution is improved.

Resource:

WMCC received a planning grant from the Tillotson Fund of NH Charitable Foundation to assess the training and workforce development needs of the existing businesses in Coos County. They are committed to seeking other funding once their planning process is completed and reported to the community to continue to lead this effort to improve work force readiness. AVER Education Task Force is also committed to seeking additional resources and volunteer assistance from within the county.

Gantt Chart of Creative and Knowledge Economy Plan Action Plan #3



Action Step #5: - Community Values and Leadership Development

Action Step Statement:

Foster a community-wide focus on the hope, transformative vision, and celebration of the strengths of Coos County people. Empower the large percentage of people in Coos County who align themselves and their values with organized religions, by initiating an Inter-religious Council that would work collaboratively with other community-based organizations strengthening community culture, gender equality, and address effectively the root causes of poverty in Coos County.

Justification of Recommendation:

Throughout the country, Inter-religious Councils empower people to find solutions locally to common community problems such as violence against women, family conflicts, crisis, lack of affordable housing, illegal trafficking of drugs, homelessness, and many other quality of life issues. Surveys show that although surrounded by immense natural beauty, the people of Coos County are concerned about: violent and property crime; manufacturing and sales of illegal drugs; lack of affordable housing; too-rapid development or sprawl; substandard schools; lack of job opportunities; lack of recreational opportunities; poverty and homelessness; declining population; inadequate health and social services; high property tax burden; and, loss of forestry and manufacturing jobs.

Anecdotal evidence and cultural memory support the assumption that Coos County people find their resilience, courage, way forward, and reason for living abundantly. **Through**, through their religious organizations, fraternal or local neighbors clubs From the Humanitarian Club at the High School to the traditional places of worship and socialability, North Country folks “lift up their eyes unto the Hills, from whence cometh our help.”

In light of the nation-wide economic crisis, and the local judgments that “things will get worse before they get better,” we need a focused, community-wide effort to remind people of our “present help in trouble” ---a community wide “potage” of reassurances in a variety of forms which are morale-building, vision sustaining, hope inspiring, and actively organizing towards community celebration and compassionate reaching out in aid to neighbor and stranger in our midst.

People who have low life satisfaction will convey those doubtful feelings to people exploring our region as a possible home for their family. People, who fear for their next meal, or lack heat for their homes or gas to get to work, are not going to take risks or think creatively. Many Coos County people are understandably risk adverse. Work must be done to help create a base from which these citizens can grow and prosper.

Throughout the world, Inter-religious Councils have significantly changed the outcomes of their communities. Some operating standards make this possible:

1. They respect religious differences
2. Their work is based on deeply held concerns and widely shared values
3. They honor the different ways religious communities are organized
4. They are guided by principles of representation----, recognizing that a person or group of persons can represent the concerns of a larger community. Access to spiritual, moral, and social assets of a religious community relevant to the common good must be made “through” widely held respect of diversity in unity. Thus, we must engage a range of already existing religious expressions that contribute to the rich spiritual resources of our communities.
5. They are committed to cooperative action for peace and well being of the community.
6. They further equip their own religious community for cooperative action.
7. They enter into partnerships with other stakeholders in their areas, such as political, civic leaders and other non-profits working toward a common goal.
8. They seek an end to sexual violence.
9. They develop leadership-training opportunities particularly for youth and women.
10. They work together, drawing on the strength of the people to solve common problems or local conflicts.

Who:

Coos County Inter-religious Council and “values -oriented” organizations convened by Catholic Churches of Coos County, the Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, Mormon, Participating Free Churches, and Unites Church of Christ. We hope there will be Synagogues and Mosques also involved.

Timeline for Implementation:

The Council will convene clergy, lay adults, and lay youth in Fall 2008 through a day long facilitated visioning program of transformative outreach. This Council will connect members to resources in the county, such as work force development, drug and alcohol abuse services, and family support programs. They will work toward integrating new comers into the community fabric. The Council will convene small group discussions of their individual community leaders

and youth to explore ways to foster focus on the hope and transformative vision and celebration of the strengths of their church community. They will be involved in planning the second annual Transformation Outreach in Fall 2009. Grants will be secured to cover the event expenses. If the second event is successful then there will be additional annual events proposed.

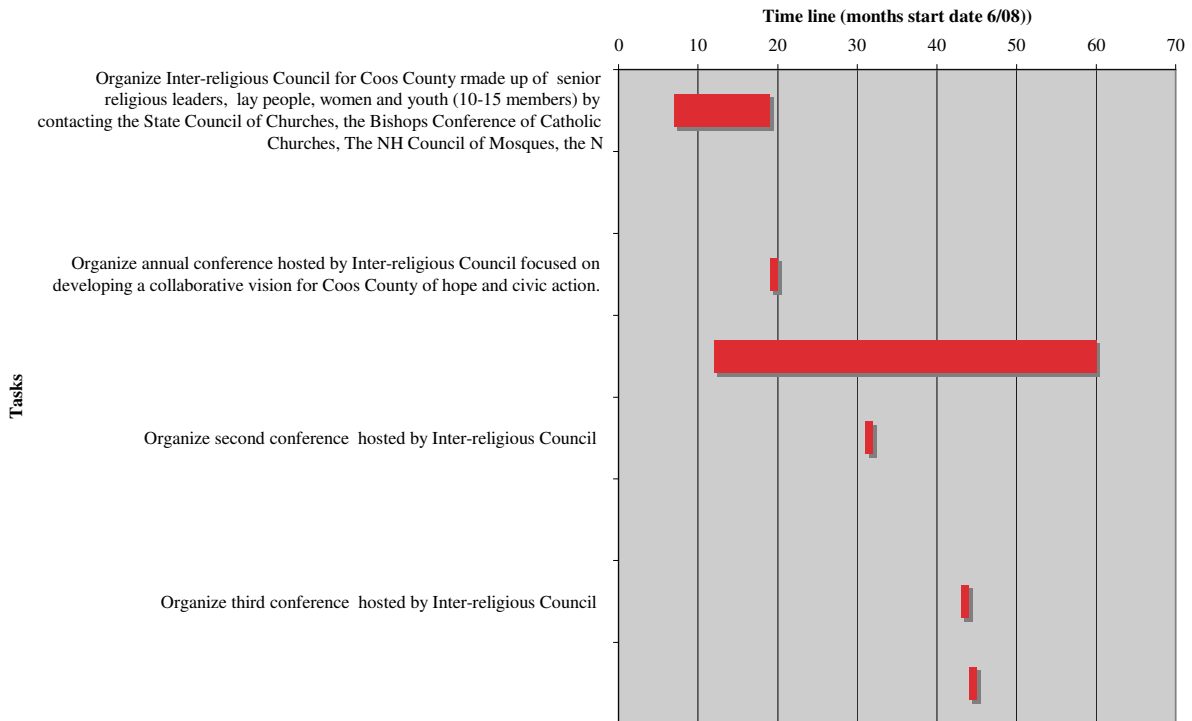
Major Measures of Success:

- Increase in report of life satisfaction
- Increase in report of satisfaction with living in Coos County
- Strengthened religious leaders and lay group interaction with social services and Coos County wide action groups.

Resource:

Initial funding for the visioning program will be secured through support of faith-based organizations in the county. Funding for events and additional outreach programs will be through grant programs such as from the Lilly Foundation and others.

Gantt Chart of Creative and Knowledge Economy Plan Action Plan #3



Appendix A: The Hooks

Tourism

1. Green and Sustainable Development (local foods, local products, local performances, local markets)
2. Use Creative Centers, places, products, people, and activities to attract tourists
3. Focus on not just the historic but also the cultural in brand development
4. Provide cultural tours linked to recreational opportunities and place-based and educational activities

Wood Products

1. Furniture Craftsmen use local woods, use county brand
2. Kiosks and information centers feature wood brand and direct people to opportunities in “North Source.”
3. Encourage enterprises that use wood to come to county

Alternative Energy

1. Green Sustainable Development (local foods, local products, local performances, local markets, local energy)
2. Tie Village Center to Creative Cluster (may not be one and the same)
3. Promote/Educate community through arts: theater, painting, music....

Health Care

1. Main reason give for not being an entrepreneur is lack/cost of health care
2. Improve health and wellness through the arts
3. Primary challenge to existing small business growth is cost of health care
4. Access to quality health care networks is important to recruit new creative and knowledge-based businesses into this region.

Appendix B: Working together – Our Process

The Creative and Knowledge TRC began its journey by discussing the natural champions of the creative economy, creative components of Coos County economy, successful models of new job creation, the importance of cultural inventoring, town master plans fostering the creative economy, and citizens connecting with the creative economy. There is abundant information available about other initiatives throughout the country to promote an economy fueled by artistic, intellectual, tech-savvy enterprises, to which the task force members were linked through our blog created by KDPaine and Partners.

Early in January, the TRC had its first marathon meeting to develop definitions of the Creative and Knowledge Economy and discuss existing successful programs. As a group, we adapted the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) definition: “The Creative Economy is represented by the 'cultural core'. It includes occupations and industries that are an outcome of cultural expression and focuses on the production and distribution of cultural goods, services, and intellectual property - but specifically intellectual property that has a cultural component. Excluded are products or services that are the result of non-culturally-based innovation or technology. There are at least two views of the creative economy:

- One emphasizes the production of cultural goods and services as a valuable contributor to society;
- The other emphasizes the role of intellectual innovation as an economic driver of particular value during periods of societal transition.”

We also considered how UNESCO describes creative clusters where the creative sector pools resources and bands together: into networks, clusters, quarters, and other kinds of partnership. Silicon Valley is the classic example of a cluster region. The usual definition of a business cluster (Michael Porter's, *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*): ‘...geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, firms in related industries, and associated institutions (for example, universities, standards agencies, and trade associations) in particular fields that compete but also cooperate’. “A creative cluster includes non-profit enterprises, cultural institutions, arts venues and individual artists alongside the science park and the media centre. Creative clusters are places to live as well as to work, places where cultural products are consumed as well as made. They are open round the clock, for work and play. They feed on diversity and change and so thrive in busy, multi-cultural urban settings that have their own local distinctiveness but are also connected to the world,” says Simon Evans, a cultural entrepreneur and Director of Creative Clusters, an innovative UK company.

The TRC members supported emphasis of a theme -- local heritage -- as an umbrella that ties not only the creative centers but also the other economic development initiatives like Tourism and Wood Products and Alternative Energy together. Ross Gittel, from the UNH Carsey Institute, suggests that Coos County has competitive advantages within tourism, education, health care, and technology. Coos County has unique

strengths and attributes that make it particularly appropriate for development of a creative and knowledge economy, specifically:

Unparalleled scenery/views combined with unrivaled access to outdoor recreational opportunities. .

Growth in Healthcare Sector- aging and impoverished population will increase the number of jobs in the Health Care segment of this economy. .

Education- increasingly citizens of all ages throughout New England are accessing local educational institutions to improve their economic outlook.

Art - The very nature of the North Country attracts creativity, as evidenced by the numerous musicians, artists, and craftspeople currently living in Coos County. Their work is on display at WREN, at St. Kieran's, Northern Forest Heritage Park, Old Mill Studio, Colebrook Heritage Center, and in local galleries. While there is no central art market that brings them together, there is no doubt that there is a wealth of talent to draw on. In addition, we have in the Arts Alliance of Northern New Hampshire (AANNH) a developing model for collaborative, creative community organizations and our natural champion for Creative Economy initiatives. The Alliance is focused on supporting local cultural efforts, developing local audiences, to linking individual artists, arts centers, and entrepreneurs to tourism, to efforts to create a sense of place, and to a variety of educational initiatives for residents and visitors of all ages. The Alliance provides collaborative promotion and marketing, offers outreach to businesses, sponsors, and funders, helps integrate the arts and humanities into school curricula, early-childhood programs, senior centers, and professional development opportunities for educators.

Knowledge workers - The basic ingredients of a knowledge-worker economy are in place or almost there. Attractive, family-friendly lifestyle, uncongested towns, high civic engagement, and growing (though still meager) access to high-speed Internet have already lured individuals and a few businesses to the area. Coos County is a community where "relationships count" and is perceived as a "playground" to second homeowners and tourists. Citizens boast their pride in their heritage, close-knit friends and family, fierce independence, and quality of life. Coos County's Location close to the New England Corridor of creative cities and Montreal and Quebec City can make it attractive for both second-home buyers, retirees, and the telecommuting workforce.

In February, TRC members attended a daylong Arts Alliance of Northern New Hampshire (AANNH) program with Dr. Ann Markusen to develop a better understanding of rural creative economy models and the economic impact of Artists' Centers. She noted that in today's world, a community's economic prospects depend on a flexible, well-trained workforce, access to technology and capital, cultural and natural amenities, and a strong civic infrastructure including relationships that facilitate problem-solving and collective action within the community and greater regions.

In March, the committee worked on crafting action plans during another marathon meeting that would not only add jobs, but it would also strengthen the existing entrepreneurial activity, creative communities, and

attraction for new business investment. We were realistic about what the communities could do in the five-year period and focused on building a network necessary to support fledgling programs currently operating in the vast county.

In April, the committee put the final changes onto the Gantt charts and to develop the final report. The Creative and Knowledge Economy TRC, in summary, felt the need to emerge from this process with a collaborative model. The relationship between the Tourism, Wood Products, Health Care, and Alternative Energy TRC action plans as they have been drafted seem strongest when each TRC honors the importance of “green and sustainable development”, authentic heritage spaces” and existing natural resources, as well as the need for more communication both within the county and with the outside world. We must recognize access for all to the Internet is a major leveling factor. We must recognize access to both east/west and north/south highways will immediately improve the economic outlook for all economies in Coos County.

While TRC members began to develop this action plan, individual members of the TRC met with the chair to discuss their vision and understanding of Coos County’s creative economy. Evident from this process is the fact that the Coos County Creative Economy will continue to rely on both the natural beauty and features of the county as well as the heritage of each unique community. In addition, most TRC members believe that through the embrace of the concepts discussed here, Coos County will make a successful transition from being a manufacturing industrial economy to a vibrant creative and knowledge-based economy.