



KENNEBEC VALLEY
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
Regional service, local results

Kennebec Valley Economic Development District
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
2017 - 2022



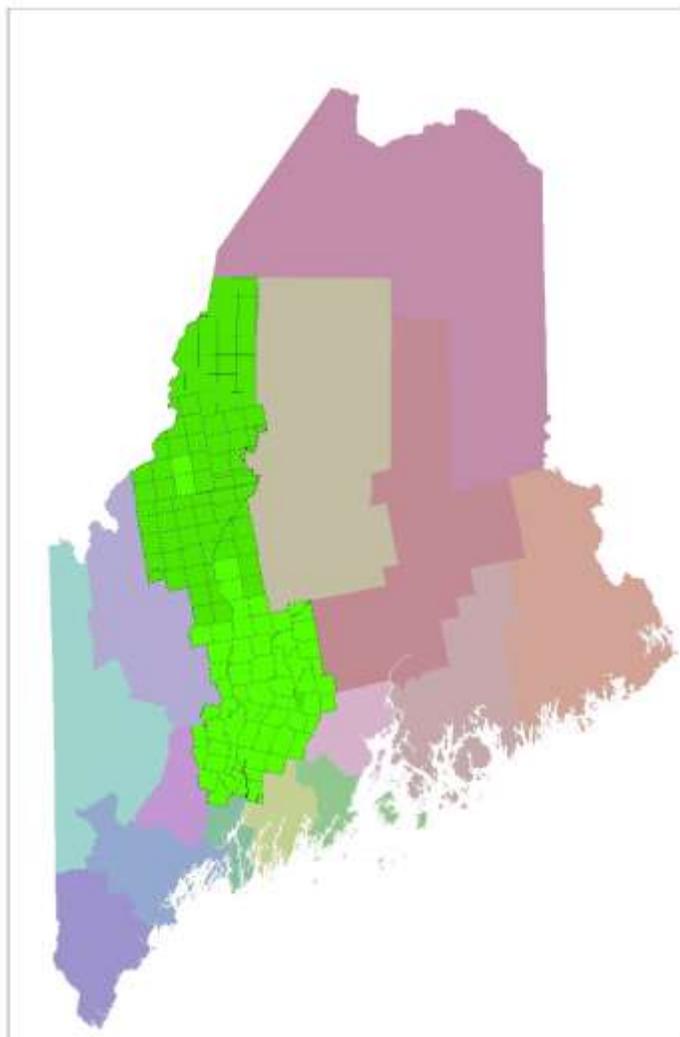
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Our Region

The Kennebec Valley Council of Governments (KVCOG) Economic Development District encompasses Kennebec, Somerset and western Waldo counties. It is comprised of 62 municipalities, several unorganized territories and 5,251 square miles with a population of approximately 181,000. It includes the state capital of Augusta as well as the cities of Waterville, Gardiner and Hallowell and many rural towns. Municipal population ranges from 42 to 18,972.

KVCOG works for the benefit of its member municipalities. It is a leader and catalyst for local and regional economic development and planning, supporting and expanding the capabilities of local government through regional collaboration and trust. KVCOG acts as a convener and facilitator of local, inter-local, and regional initiatives and programs designed to enhance the quality of life in the municipalities it serves.



5,251

Square miles

62

Municipalities

181,000

Total population

Our Vision

The region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) covering the five year period from 2017 through 2021 incorporates the region's vision for a robust economy. The CEDS adopts an asset-based strategy to promote economic growth, to expand prosperity, and to foster both a resilient and sustainable regional economy. It incorporates the goals and performance benchmarks established by the statewide CEDS process and KVCOG CEDS Committee. The strategy is matched to an evolving implementation framework that is results oriented, focused on aligning and leveraging regional assets/resources, and inclusive of public, private and non-profit sector leaders.

Reviewed and updated annually, the CEDS both tracks and anticipates the changes in the region's economy. The CEDS integrates the familiar needs-based approach with the process of identifying and leveraging existing regional assets as the basis for future economic prosperity.

The list of strategies and projects outlined are by no means exhaustive. The list reflects the region's current efforts and is continually updated as new projects emerge and existing projects are completed. The CEDS is meant to be a dynamic and emergent process. KVCOG sees the CEDS as a major component of its strategic plan and, through partnerships and collaborations, expects to achieve many of the following key goals and projects.

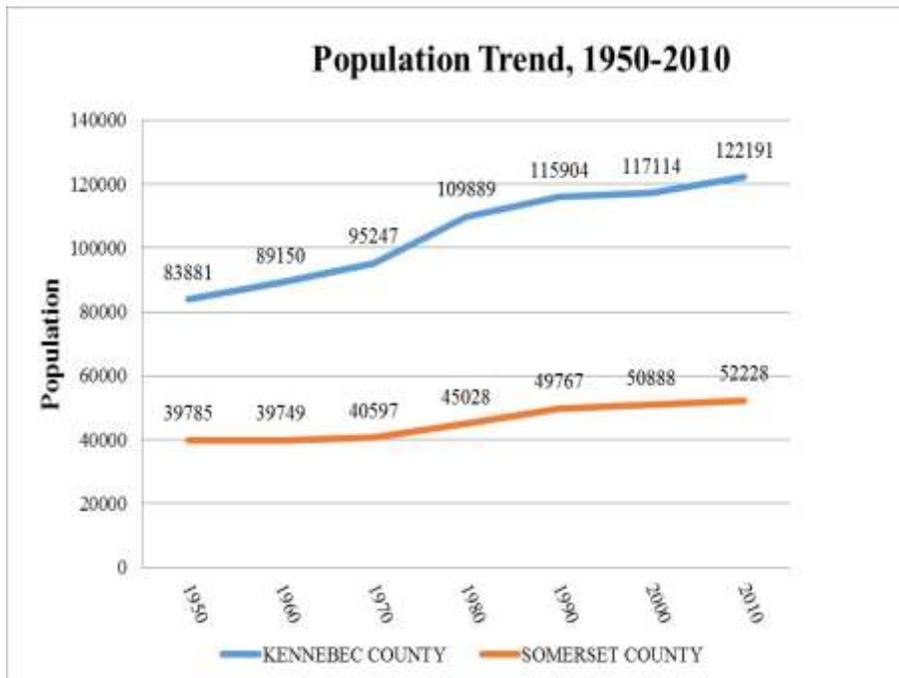


Our Goals

The basis for the strategies in this document is the ability to measure our progress. The below regional goals have been established to guide direction in this process. Our progress will be measured by comparing the identified baseline data points to goals set for 2022. As regional teams and partners move ahead and prioritize decisions, the goals provide a clear starting point to ask “Will this action move us toward our goal?”

POPULATION GOAL: Overall population growth of 0.4 percent per year (4 percent per decade).

Trend:



2016 Kennebec:
122,093

2016 Somerset:
52,134

2000 KVCOG: 174,573

2010 KVCOG: 181,856

2016 KVCOG: 181,729

*Source: US Census,
2016 KVCOG estimates*

Rationale:

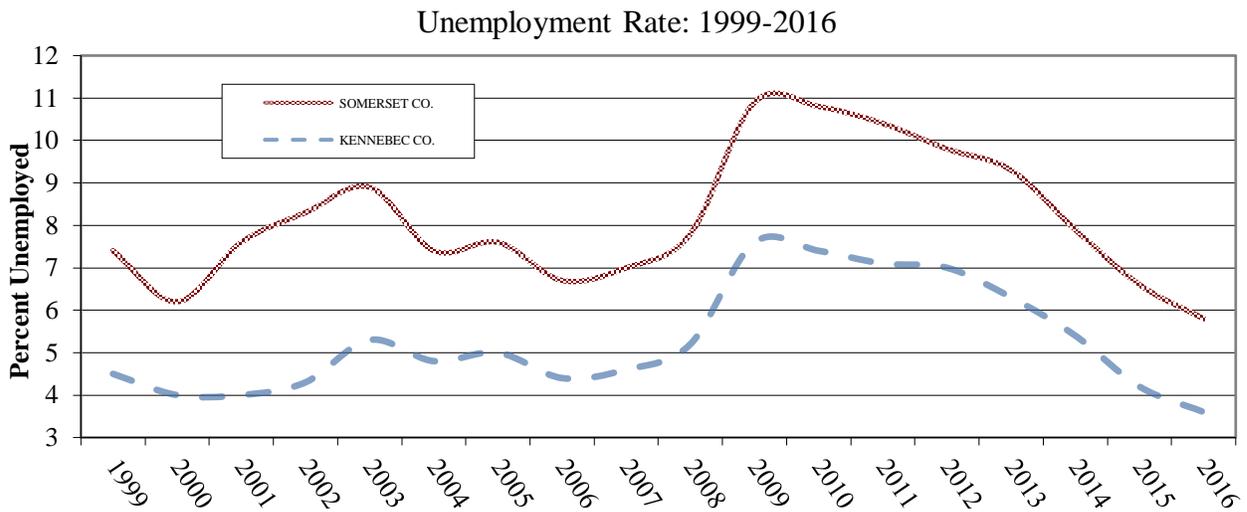
A growth rate of 0.4 percent per year would result in a 2022 population of roughly 185,500. The growth rate would be the same as 2000-2010, but would be contrary to the trend of the past seven years. Population growth is contingent on housing capacity, and the growth goal would require the establishment of roughly 3,000 new housing units (rate since 2010 is about 275 per year.)

Population growth is the result of two factors: birth rate and migration. The birth rate is dropping and will continue, as the baby boom is no longer having children. Migration is the combination of outflow and inflow; in-migration will be essential to meeting this goal.

A secondary goal should be to retain current population levels in service center communities. 2010 was the first census year since 1960 in which both Augusta and Waterville gained population, but also the first since 1970 that Skowhegan lost population. Service center towns (Augusta, Gardiner, Waterville, Pittsfield, Skowhegan) tend to have greater capacity to absorb new housing and job growth without growth in infrastructure and public service costs, leading to net gains in economic activity.

EMPLOYMENT GOAL: Increase the number of employed persons by 2,000 over five years.

Trend:



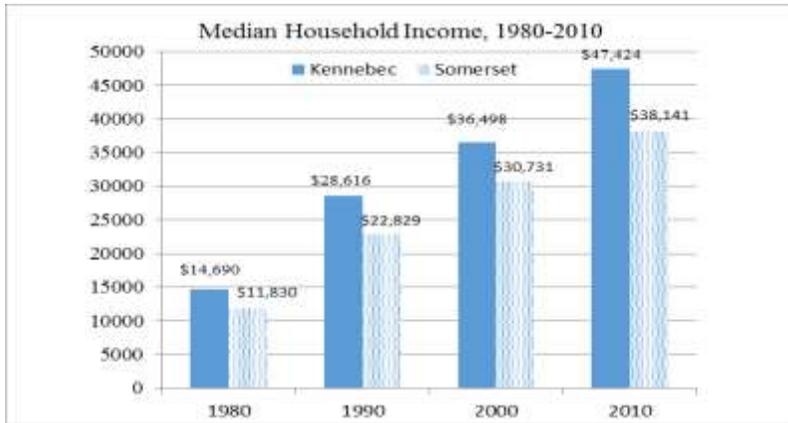
Rationale:

Annual average employed in Kennebec and Somerset Counties in 2016 was 82,227. Between 2010 and 2016, Kennebec County gained 1,900 jobs and Somerset County gained 300. An increase of 2,000 constitutes 0.475 percent increase per year, consistent with population growth goals.

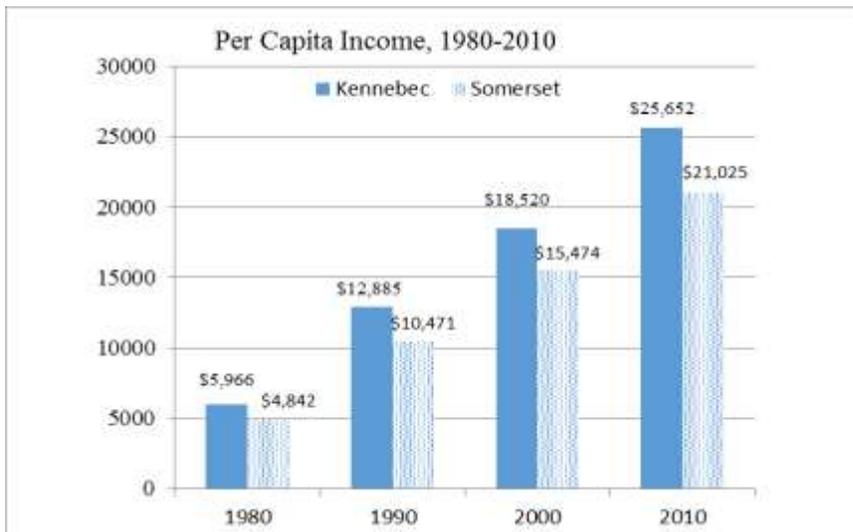
However, the recent gain in employment did not stem from population increase and merely resulted in a lower unemployment rate. The unemployment rate is not likely to continue downward, and in fact is at record lows for the state and due to increase. That trend may be balanced in part by an increase in the number of retirements by baby boomers.

INCOME GOAL: An increase in per capita income and average wages exceeding inflation.

Trends:

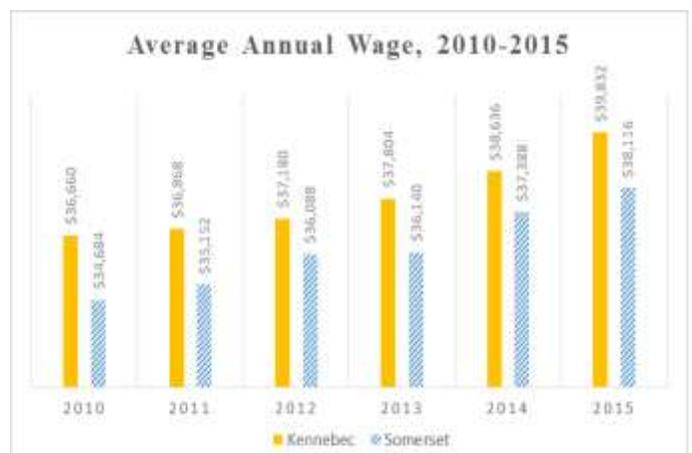
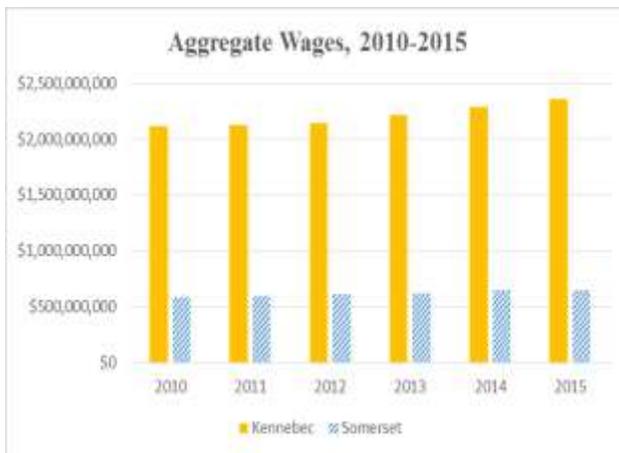


2015 Median Household Income:
 Kennebec: \$51,335
 Somerset: \$39,504
 2 Counties: \$47,814
 Inflation rate 1980-2015 = 2.88 (288%)



2015 Per Capita Income:
 Kennebec: \$25,957
 Somerset: \$21,729
 2 Counties: \$24,691

Source: US Census, American Community Survey



- Aggregate Wages: 2015 11.4 percent increase over 2010 (2.2 percent/year before inflation)
- Average Wage: 2015 9.25 percent increase over 2010 (1.79 percent/year before inflation)
- Inflation 2010-2015 = 8.7 percent (1.68 percent/year)

Source: Maine Department of Labor

Rationale:

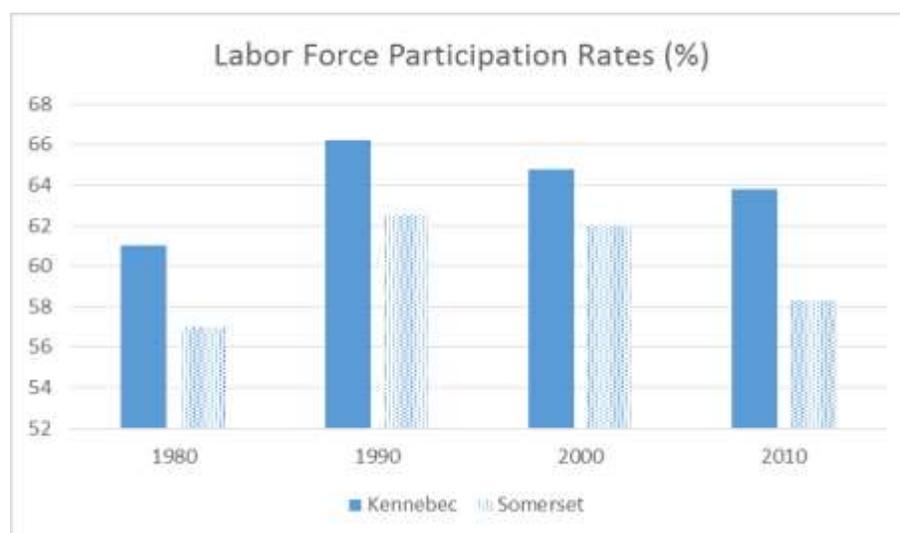
In real dollars, median household incomes grew by only 0.4 percent per year in Kennebec County between 1980 and 2010, and 0.1 percent per year in Somerset County. This is primarily due to increased participation per household. Over the past six years, the average wage has increased by 0.1 percent total.

Per capita income growth outpaced inflation in the decades of 1980-1990 and 2000-2010; it fell behind in 1990-2000 and is lagging behind since 2010. Future prospects are not good: The increase in the number of retiring baby boomers who will convert wage income to retirement income will result in lowered net income to the region.

An increase in average wage to exceed inflation will mean an increase in real buying power. Combined with an increase in the number of employed, it will result in an increase in aggregate wages. One positive development is that the mandated increases in minimum wage will immediately raise the low-wage cohort. However, the rate of inflation is expected to rise over the coming five years; wage increases usually lag inflation change.

LABOR FORCE GOAL: Maintain labor force participation rates at 63 percent for Kennebec and Waldo Counties and 58 percent for Somerset County.

Trend:



2015 LF Participation:

Kennebec: 62.9 %

Somerset: 58.3 %

2 Counties: 61.5 %

Source: US Census, American Community Survey

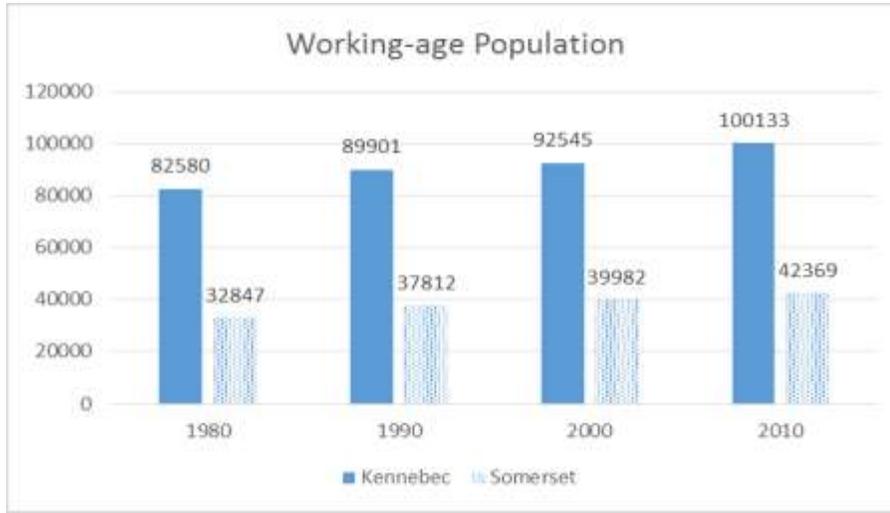
Rationale:

The labor force participation rate is based on a calculation that every person aged 16 and over is in the labor force. That includes persons that are functionally students, stay-at-home parents, retired and disabled. The jump in participation rate from 1980 to 1990 (and prior decades) reflects the increase in working females, but the decline since then – and for the next few decades – is attributable to the

retirement of the baby boomers. This trend cannot be altered within the current population. The only remedy is to attract a younger profile of in-migrating population.

WORKING-AGE POPULATION GOAL: Stabilize the decline in percentage of population 25-44

Trends:

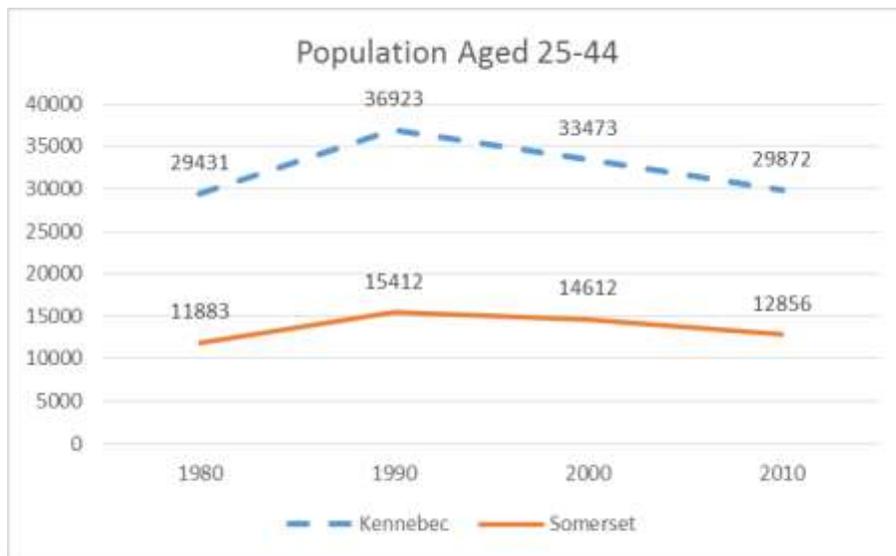


2015 Working Age Population:

Kennebec: 99,631

Somerset: 42,349

Source: US Census, American Community Survey



2015 Aged 25-44:

Kennebec: 27,977

Somerset: 11,760

2 Counties: 39,737

Source: US Census, American Community Survey

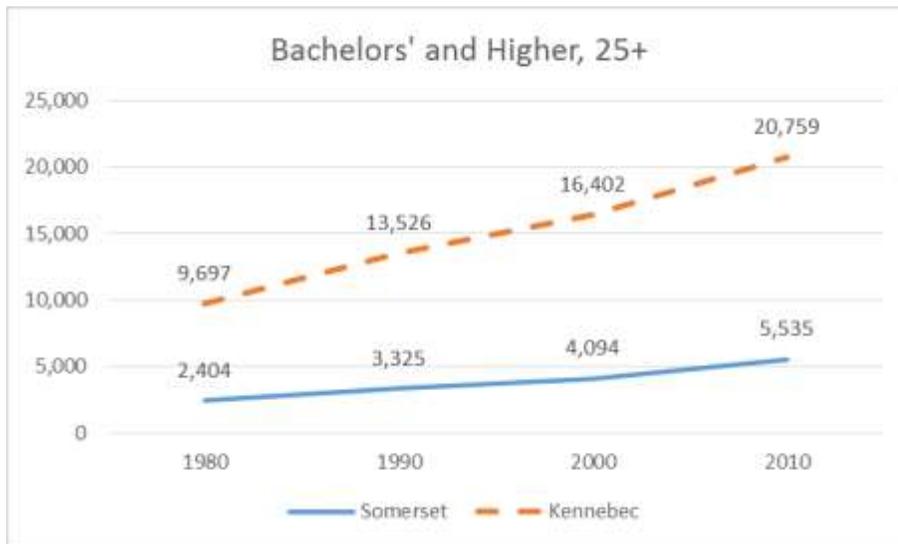
Rationale:

The working age population has been growing slowly, but that is an illusion, as the growth is all in the 55+ age cohorts. For purposes of the economy, the important cohort is the age 25-44. Within this cohort, the percentage of population was 26.7 in 1980, rising to 31.7 in 1990, then dropping steadily

to 23.0 in 2015. This is the period of “baby bust” in this age group, so the trend is for the percentage to continue to drop. Within the current population, this is irreversible until it runs its natural course in another decade or so. If the goal is to stabilize the percentage in this cohort, the strategy must be to encourage in-migration of young adults. However, this will also put pressure on existing school systems as an unintended consequence.

EDUCATION GOAL: Increase the number of college-educated adults in the two-county area to 31,500 by 2022.

Trend:



2015 BS+:

Kennebec: 21,615 (25%)

Somerset: 5,769 (15.4%)

2 Counties: 27,384

Source: US Census, American Community Survey

Rationale:

The goal figure is based on an extrapolation of growth between 2000 and 2010 of roughly 22 percent in the numbers of college-educated adults. Based on current cohort estimates and a goal of 0.4 % per year growth in population, this would result in a college-educated rate of 24.2 percent. The two-county rate of BS and higher rose from 12.9 in 1980 to 22.1 in 2015. Maine in 2015 was 29.0 percent, and this would bring us a step closer to that. This would mean an increase in the college-educated population of roughly 570 per year.

PRIVATE EMPLOYERS' GOAL: CREATE 400 NEW PRIVATE EMPLOYERS BY 2022.

Trend:

In 2016, there were 4,762 private employers in Kennebec and Somerset Counties. This represents an increase of 102 (2.1 percent) from 2015 and 194 (4.2 percent) from 2012. Since 2006, total private employers in the two county area have increased by 275 (0.6 percent per year).

Rationale:

Growth in the number of private employers between 2006 and 2016 was affected by the recession in 2008-09. Although that recession was significant, it cannot be discounted, as another one is due within the next five years. An increase of 400 employers between 2016 and 2022 represents a growth rate of approximately 1.35 percent per year, slower than 2015-2016, but substantially faster than previous periods. Achieving this goal is possible only without another national recession.

Employers with fewer than 10 employees accounted for 75.6 percent of all private employers in 2016, up from 74.5 percent in 2006. Small employers are more likely to be on a growth curve, but also more likely to be on uncertain business footing.

Sense of Urgency

Though there has been some rebound in the regional economy, we still have a long way to go. By first quarter 2015, the U.S. had regained all of the jobs lost since 2008. Maine had recovered just 51%. This is attributable to several factors: soft demand for wood products, pulp, lumber and paper, flat tourism, continued decline of manufacturing, and a relative lack of talent to support an expansion of professional and business services (the strongest growth sector in Maine and the U.S.). Yet, in early 2017, Maine reported the lowest monthly unemployment rate on record, highlighting the presumption that it is a lack of qualified labor force holding back the economy, not a lack of jobs.

a. Challenges

The most pressing issue facing the region and the state as a whole is an aging population with lack of growth in younger workers. The 2010 U.S. Census found that Maine has the highest median age population and is the “oldest” and least racially diverse state in the nation. The number of people aged 0-44 fell to just 51.6% of the total population in 2015. In Somerset County alone, 49.5% of the population is over the age of 44. *The 20- to 44-year-old age demographic is the workforce lifeblood and is currently hovering at just over 28%: A level below which economists tell us our local economy is no longer sustainable.* When the pool of younger workers drops below 30%, companies struggle to find the workers needed to operate their businesses, eventually causing them to either close or relocate.

The average unemployment rate for the region was 4.2% in 2016, while the state average was 3.9% and the national average was 4.9%.

The region also had declining Labor Force Participation, sitting at a rate of 61.5% in 2015. This compares unfavorably to Maine, Northern New England, and in each of the other six EDDs but for the Androscoggin Valley EDD. A low level of participation is an indicator of a population profile impeded by demographic factors such as a high proportion of retired or disabled, or students.

The educational attainment of people over age 25 is a critical element of workforce development. Higher educational attainment is reflected in higher earnings. In the region, educational attainment for people 25 and older with a BA or higher trails that in the U.S. and Maine. However, the region is a leader in the number of people with an Associate degree, leading the U.S. and Maine.

b. Opportunities

The Kennebec Valley has:

- A Quality of Place unparalleled in Maine and New England
- Six public and private post-secondary education institutions
- A growing technology cluster that is attracting new young talent
- An integrated health care delivery system
- Four National Trust for Historic Preservation Certified Main Street programs and one Maine Downtown Center Network municipality
- One large Paper Manufacturing firm anchoring the manufacturing and Forest Products industry
- Expanding availability of natural gas
- The State Capital
- An abundance of regional and municipal industry and business parks
- A growing spirit of regional cooperation
- A robust and diversified 4 season tourism infrastructure
- An expanding agriculture cluster that is attracting new, younger entrants
- A geographic location that is a nexus for transportation that supports economic expansion (I-95, rail, Kennebec River, regional airports at Augusta, Waterville, Pittsfield, Jackman and Norridgewock, and possible east-west transportation improvements)

The economic data suggest that KVCOG and its economic development partners need to transform the way we work in order to improve outcomes in terms of incomes, education, workforce and the very challenging population dynamics.



Six Drivers of Success

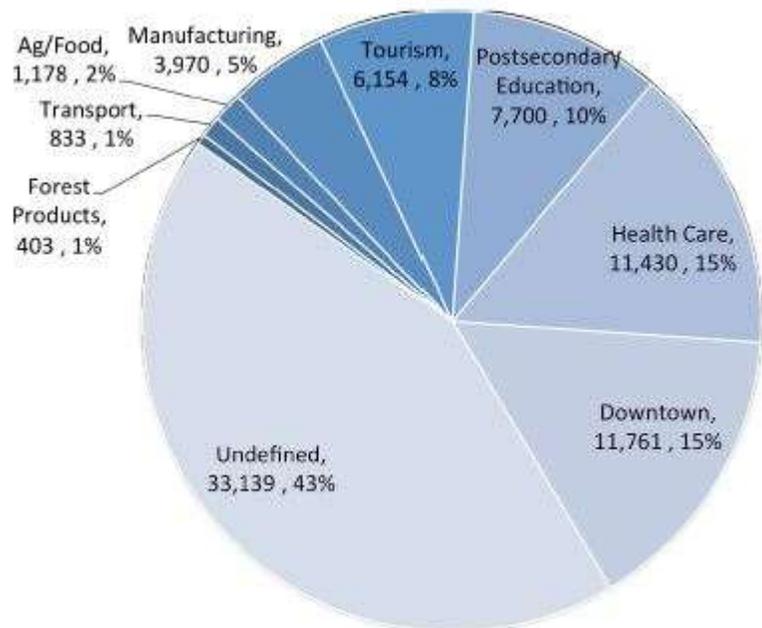
Our statewide and regional economies are being transformed by economic drivers. These drivers are vital to our long term growth and prosperity. Each is linked by KVCOG's regional, overarching, identified goals – increasing population and number of employers. Collaboration with regional partners leverages, connects and expands existing resources and implements economic development priorities.

1. Asset-Based Cluster Development

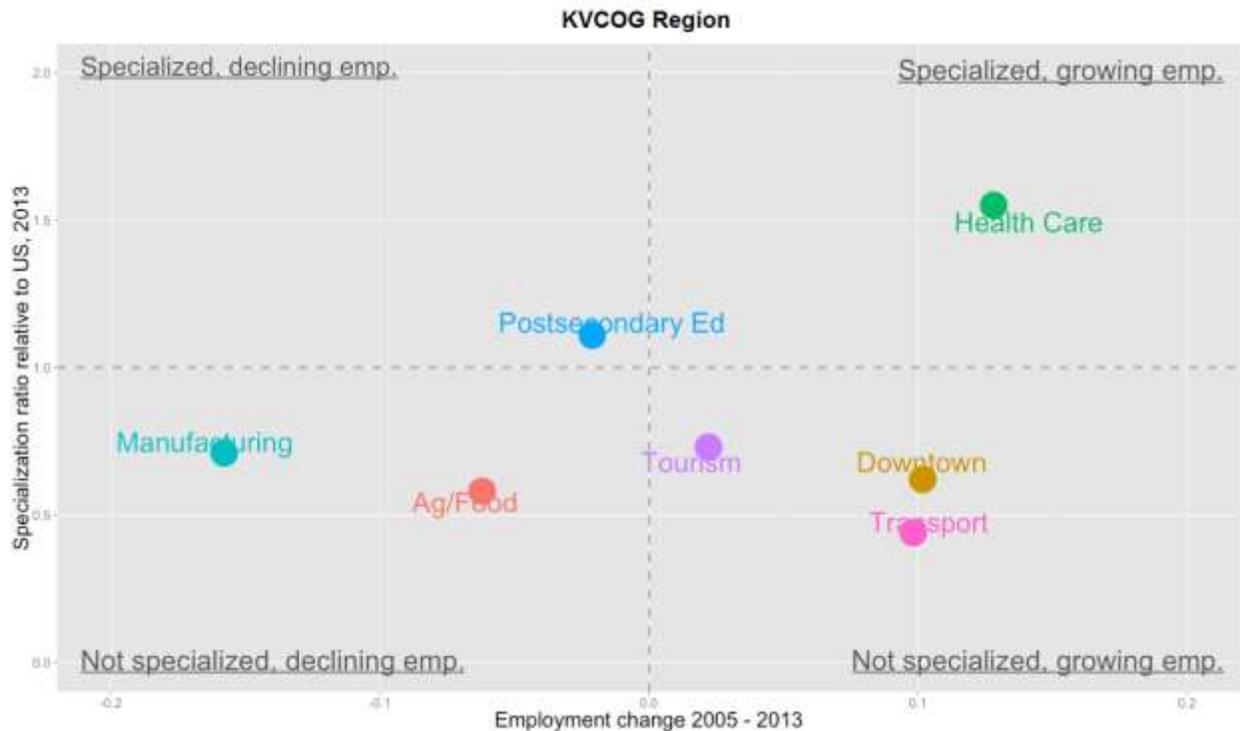
The process of asset-based cluster development involves mapping regional assets, incorporating specific goals for expanding the economy and promoting prosperity and benchmarks to measure progress toward those goals, and leveraging these regional assets to drive an expansion of the regional economy.

Employment in the Kennebec Valley region totaled 76,568 in 2013; an increase of about 900 jobs since 2005. The chart at right shows the 2013 employment distribution across broad sector groupings. Firms in the eight focus sectors employ roughly 57% of total regional workers, which is much lower than the statewide average. This simply indicates a large share of the region's base is grounded in industries not defined by the focus sectors in the statewide CEDS initiative, which include a large share of wholesaling activity across a range of industries.

Employment distribution in focus clusters



The downtown and health care sector employ the largest number of workers, both of which have experienced employment growth between 2005 and 2013, at 10% and 13% respectively (see chart below).



These rates are significantly higher than statewide averages. Tourism and postsecondary education also comprise a significant share of total regional employment (18%), although employment in either sector did not change significantly over the study period. In addition, the Transportation sector grew by 9.8% since 2005, despite its relatively low specialization in the region.

The forest products sector remains highly specialized in the region relative to the nation (9.51) despite its relatively small size and severe employment losses since 2005 (-21%). This cluster has been and continues to be an important part of the economy in the Kennebec Valley region and there is still value and demand for wood, opportunities within this industry and within the forest economy supply chain.

Strong diversity and growth in downtown oriented industries may provide revitalization opportunities in the region's cities, as well as marking a transition to a more service oriented industrial base. However, declines in key export industries translate into lower demand for local goods and services and may present challenges for downtown revitalization efforts.

Likewise, growth in several wholesaling industries and freight transportation and warehousing suggest possible opportunities to investigate through interviews with regional firms and supporting institutions.

Listed as "undefined" in the chart on page 22, there are a number of industries in the Kennebec Valley region that are engaged in wholesaling activities which have experienced growth between 2005 and 2013. These include beer, wine, and distilled alcoholic beverage merchant wholesalers, wholesale electronic markets and agents and brokers, and other miscellaneous store retailers; all of which are specialized in the region relative to the nation. These industries are complementary to related wholesale industries that are highly specialized in the region. Furthermore, wholesaling activity, particularly in the form of distribution, place high demands on transportation and logistics industries to deliver goods.

Declines in key regional manufacturing industries pose challenges for the regional economy, much like other areas of the state. The outlook for these industries remains uncertain. However, they may present opportunities for adaptive strategies that focus on the knowledge base of workers in these industries and connecting assets to industries that require similar skills in the region or proximate employment.

In light of these employment trends, understanding how related industries and firms are connected will be critical to determining appropriate strategies for bolstering regional clusters.

Implementation

- Supply Chain Analysis – Examine the existing supply chains, from growth to finished good. Identify gaps within the supply chain and opportunities to fill these gaps, specifically targeting agriculture, forest products and manufacturing clusters.
- Tourism/Natural Resources – Promote tourism and natural resource management efforts in the Kennebec Valley. Identify opportunities for growth. Assist in a coordinated branding and marketing approach of our region as a tourist destination.



2. Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Enhancing entrepreneur training and skill building and creating a robust regional entrepreneurial network is an ongoing effort involving public and private sector partners and Colby and Thomas Colleges in particular. Entrepreneurs, young and older, drive innovation in the development and production of goods and services. A region that fosters entrepreneurship and innovation is especially attractive to people who want to take advantage of our Quality of Place while pursuing their goals to develop new ideas and commercialize new products and processes. To continue to develop and attract a well-educated workforce and compete on a global scale, the region must support entrepreneurship and encourage innovation at all levels of the economy. We must actively encourage partnership between educational institutions and private business in order to create the culture in which innovators will thrive.

Implementation

- Training and education – Catalog and consider education for earlier ages, including junior achievement. Identify agencies providing training and education. Create a regional workshop series to fill gaps in training, specifically targeting rural areas.
- Create innovation hub / incubator without walls – Identify interested entrepreneurs within and outside the Kennebec Valley region. Form partnership with the Foster Innovation Center and Blackstone Accelerates Growth to support these entrepreneurs. Create a “safety net” for beginning entrepreneurs. Build a network around business education, including licensing, marketing, capital, technology, etc. Encourage business education networking to connect interested entrepreneurs with established business owners who can provide information regarding the nuts and bolts of doing business in our region.

3. Education and Workforce

Education - The region hosts six post-secondary education institutions; Colby College, Kennebec Valley Community College, Kaplan University, Thomas College, University of Maine at Augusta, and Unity College. These institutions serve a broad spectrum of students of all ages with a variety of course work that underwrites the development of education, workforce training and skill-building that is essential for the success of public and private sector employers. The institutions serve as centers of economic activity (jobs and investment) as well as drivers of new economic activity, educating new people to assume leadership roles and to underwrite the growth of a well-educated workforce. This concentration of higher education presents a leveraging opportunity to draw people and students, create jobs and drive entrepreneurship and innovation. It is also necessary to increase student retention rates and increase awareness of employment opportunities in the local workforce.



Workforce - Maine has the nation’s highest median age and the lowest percentage of residents under age 18. The Federal Reserve Board noted recently that an aging population means fewer young people starting families and fewer young Americans entering the workforce. Creating, retaining, expanding and attracting stable and diverse businesses that provide jobs with above average wages and benefits is of utmost importance.



Collaboration with Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIB) and related groups is a key component in developing and retaining an able workforce. KVCOG and the Central Western Maine Workforce Investment Board (CWMWIB) are committed to partnering to deliver workforce and economic development to the Kennebec Valley region. The CWMWIB has recently completed its 5 year strategic plan, which includes vision, goals, analyses, strategies and outcomes that have been identified for the future of the region. The key priorities and goals identified by the CWMWIB are listed below:

Improved Communication

- Support and facilitate industry sector development.
- Increase employer engagement in workforce development system.
- Improve educators' understanding of employers' workforce needs/skills requirements.
- Reduce the mismatch between job seeker skills and employer needs.

Balance Supply and Demand of Labor

- Reduce the mismatch between job seeker skills and employer needs and increase the support system for youth.
- Increase employer engagement in workforce development system.
- Improve educators' understanding of employers' workforce needs/skills requirements.

Improve Foundational Learning and Adaptability Skills

- Reduce the mismatch between job seeker skills and employer needs and increase the support system for youth.
- Increase employer engagement in workforce development system.

Implementation

- Attract a younger workforce – Use our region's strengths to attract a younger workforce, particularly within the agriculture and natural science sectors. Market our region's employment opportunities outside of Maine, with a heavy focus on our quality of life. Develop programming to attract former Mainers back to the State.
- Entrepreneurial development – Create programming and marketing strategies designed to attract, retain and develop young entrepreneurs. Continue working to establish the Kennebec Valley region as "business friendly."



4. Access to Capital

The availability of investment capital is essential to economic development, to the start-up firm and to the established company seeking to expand. Access to capital remains limited at the early stages of conceptualization through to product development, which adversely affects the success rate for viable technologies. Debt financing is more abundant and more available. Access is connected to entrepreneurship and innovation. Fostering one attracts the other.

Implementation

- Education – Educate those looking for funding on what is available within our region, including traditional lending, venture capital, grants and public sources. Create a database to house these sources for public use.
- Funding source development – Investigate alternative funding sources, such as Crowdsourcing, peer lending and micro lending. Identify if/where these sources exist, and support the creation or expansion of these funding sources. Initiate legislative changes to make available funds easier to access, specifically Revolving Loan Funds. Identify gaps in funding sources throughout the different stages of the business cycle.



E. *Infrastructure and Environment*

The region's Quality of Place, its unique, special, and distinctive mix of natural and built environment, underwrites its competitive advantage in the contest for people with the skills to drive an expanding and more productive economy. Our Quality of Place is the State's principal competitive advantage in the quest to keep and attract the people with the skills to undertake the high wage, high value jobs necessary to change the State's economy from a stagnant model to a growth model. Downtown revitalization efforts such as the Main Street Program are crucial in supporting Maine's Quality of Place.

Although a small sector and relatively under specialized in our region, growth in transportation and warehousing has been driven by two specific industries: general freight trucking (moderate growth) and warehousing and storage (very high growth). These industries are complemented by specialized freight trucking, which although experiencing stagnant growth since 2005, remains specialized in the KVCOG region. Warehousing and storage industries have a positive outlook on future growth driven by efficiency improvements and increases in demand in manufacturing, retail goods, and other specialty products.

Basic Infrastructure is in place and has adequate capacity to accommodate growth and development. Most commercial/industrial sites in the region can access water supply and sewage facilities with reserve capacity, gained in part from the closing of some older industrial facilities. I-95 and US 201 bisect the region, accessing the major development nodes and currently carrying relatively low traffic volumes. A robust freight rail system serves the southern part of the region, with multiple routes and industrial spurs available but unused. Both commercial and general aviation airports are scattered liberally throughout the area.

Energy and communications infrastructure must be expanded and diversified to support business investment in new areas. Several initiatives are underway to expand broadband service and PCS services. Natural gas infrastructure is a relatively recent addition to the energy mix in portions of the region, but further expansion has stalled. The region has enormous potential for installation of wind and solar power facilities, but has yet to realize that potential. Transmission capacity is in the process of being upgraded.



Flooding has been determined by the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to be the number one hazard risk in the state of Maine. The Kennebec River, which is the most vulnerable river to flooding in the State, runs through the length of our region. In 2010 each Economic Development District created a Comprehensive Risk Mitigation and Disaster Recovery Plan for businesses within their respective regions. This plan aimed to rank and prioritize economic and business impacts, prepare a risk management model and plan for infrastructure improvements, business training and business continuity should disaster strike.

Other than flooding, The State of Maine is vulnerable to a host of natural, technological, and human-caused hazards, from winter storms, tornados, and hurricanes to pandemics, hazardous materials spills, and acts of terrorism. State Government has responsibility to safeguard the general public by planning for the occurrence of these and other hazards. In accordance with Maine Revised Statutes, MEMA has developed the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan to provide a framework for state-level emergency management activities and to define how State Government interfaces with other emergency management stakeholders, including local, county, and tribal governments, nongovernmental organizations, other states, the Federal Government, and the private sector

Emergency management is coordinated regionally by Emergency Management Agencies in each county. The County Emergency Management Agencies provide support and leadership in preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation to their local, business and volunteer partners.

To bring the planning and response efforts to a community level, KVCOG plans to survey communities in the region to identify existing and future vulnerabilities and strengths. KVCOG will offer to assist them to develop and prioritize actions for themselves and for broader stakeholder networks, and identify opportunities to advance actions to reduce risks and build resilience.

Implementation

- Upper story development – Identify the barriers to upper story development within our region and partner with other regional organizations to make development easier. Assist in educating businesses on strategies to develop within our region’s downtowns.
- Broadband – Coordinate the various regional broadband efforts and devise a comprehensive strategy to improve broadband access in our region’s rural areas. Assess internet speed across our region, and focus on increasing available download and upload speeds.
- Transportation/Logistics – Support legislative efforts to investigate the extension of passenger rail service to our region.
- Transportation – Support a diversity of transportation options to meet the needs of commuters, customers, shippers, including multi-modal facilities, public transit, and bicycle/pedestrian options.
- Energy – pursue a diverse mix of energy production for community resilience within the region, including natural gas, biofuels, wind power and solar power.

F. *Leadership*

The region's leadership cadre reflects the region's demographics; older but with an increasing balance of public and private sector and gender participation. Recruitment of new younger leaders is an ongoing challenge. The accelerating pace of retirements is opening opportunities for new leaders to emerge. Fostering leadership skills and providing opportunities to engage and train emerging leaders is critically important to the maintenance of both existing economic development programs and the development of an asset-based cluster strategy.



There is a need for existing economic development and business assistance providers within the region to work collaboratively on relevant projects. Unique opportunities occur when organizations pool their resources and talents together. Promoting regional leadership and collaboration can help lower costs and provide a more efficient way to deliver services. Limited municipal resources require the region to think collaboratively and employ such tools as shared services and cooperative purchasing of goods.

Implementation

- Communication – Define the key players in economic development in our region. Create an effective mechanism for communication among these groups. Increase the connectivity among groups to decrease duplication of efforts.
- Leadership Development – Connect with local groups to develop programming for young leaders. Investigate opportunities for female leadership development programming. Target nascent leaders for development opportunities.
- Community Resilience – Provide or coordinate training opportunities to instruct local leaders in methods of building community resilience.



High Impact Priority Projects

Top vital regional projects and lead agency, partners, Identified or potential funding source

1. Continue expansion of natural gas and solar development for industrial, commercial and residential customers throughout the region.
 - Private natural gas utilities, private solar, service providers and municipalities
2. Put into place the top recommendations for leveraging the region's unique, distinctive and special assets developed by the four Mobilize Kennebec Valley Action Teams.
 - KVCOG and partners
3. Develop a plan for funding and implementation of the economic development strategy for central and northern Somerset County.
 - KVCOG, the Somerset Economic Development Corporation, and the Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration
4. Plan and execute the second and third phases of the build out of FirstPark.
 - Kennebec Regional Development Authority
5. Develop Industrial road connector between Fairfield and Waterville
 - Town of Fairfield, City of Waterville, private partners

6. Complete the build out of Libby Hill Business Park.
 - City of Gardiner
7. Develop linking segments and connect recreational trails extending from Madison/Skowhegan south to Topsham.
 - KVCOG and partners, Kennebec River Initiative/Network
8. Complete I-95 interchange at Trafton Road in Waterville and continue build out of the development area created by the interchange
 - Maine Department of Transportation, City of Waterville, private partners
9. Invest in equipment to allow a wood products manufacturer to source needed raw materials locally
 - Maine Technology Institute, SEDC, KVCOG, CEI, Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), private partners
10. Upgrade the existing Hartland wastewater treatment facility
 - Town of Hartland, Department of Environmental Protection, USDA Rural Development, DECD, private partners