



## **Aroostook County Economic Cluster Report Part 2: Marketing Strategy**

**For: Northern Maine Development Commission  
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## **Introduction**

The following is a list of 34 specific marketing activities that Aroostook County government officials and businesses can take to enhance the critical clusters of forest products, food, tourism, information technology, and precision manufacturing. Of the 34 activities, 14 top priorities are in larger font and italicized within the tables.

The rationale for this strategy is provided in detail in Part 1 of the Aroostook County Economic Cluster Report of 2003.

Each action is highlighted in bold letters in tables accompanying the text. For each action, the following information is provided in the tables: the specific product to be produced, who is responsible for the action, the reason the party should take action, how it can be started, who should organize the effort, what special resources are needed, and who the partners are.

The Northern Maine Development Commission is a party to nearly all of the 34 actions within. But it is rarely the only party. Industry groups, education institutions, local governments, state government, and even Canadian government, must also be involved.

The lesson of this study is that the economic health of northern Maine will not be sustained by any one business or organization acting alone. It will take a concerted effort. This marketing plan provides a first step.

## A. Forest Products Marketing Plan

<b>GOAL</b>	<b>I. Improve business conditions in the County for the Forest Products Industry</b>		
<b>Desired Action</b>	<b>A1. Support reform of state's forest and tax policies</b>	<b>A2. Tax relief for local forest products companies</b>	<b>A3. Measures to assist local companies through down cycles</b>
Product	Legislative actions next session	<i>TIF, Empowerment Zone benefits</i>	Wood Product Stabilization Fund
Who takes action	Industry with NMDC support	<i>NMDC with local communities</i>	NMDC
Reason for party to take action	Improve business conditions	<i>Reduce cost pressures in near term</i>	Innovative steps to assist industry
How to get going	Attend Blaine House conference in November	<i>Regular contact with companies and towns</i>	Feasibility analysis
Who organizes	Industry	<i>NMDC</i>	NMDC
Resources needed	Existing	<i>Existing</i>	\$25,000
Federal or State Partners	Dept. of Conservation DECD	<i>Dept. of Conservation DECD</i>	Maine Forest Service U.S. Forest Service

<b>GOAL</b>	<b>II. New business formation</b>	<b>III. Use underutilized species to expand business opportunities</b>	<b>IV. Preserve rail infrastructure</b>
<b>Desired Action</b>	<b>A4. Increased utilization of Loring Technology Center</b>	<b>A5. Increase utilization of cedar in the County</b>	<b>A6. Generate demand for rail shipping</b>
Product	<i>Mailing to potential entrepreneurs</i>	Mailing to wood manufacturing businesses statewide	<i>Increased shipping volume</i>
Who takes action	<i>LTC with NMDC assistance</i>	NMDC	<i>NMDC</i>
Reason for party to take action	<i>Look in new places to find entrepreneurs for LTC</i>	Tap existing business for new markets	<i>Loss of rail service affects industry and County</i>
How to get going	<i>Prepare mailing to MWPA and other groups</i>	Prepare mailing – may be combined with LTC mailing	<i>Calls to companies that ship bulk commodities</i>
Who organizes	<i>LTC</i>	NMDC	<i>NMDC, with support from MM&amp;A</i>
Resources needed	<i>Existing</i>	Existing	<i>Existing</i>
Federal or State Partners	<i>Maine and Company</i>	Maine Forest Service, DECD U.S. Forest Service	<i>MDOT</i>

## **Notes:**

### **Action A1.**

Many of the issues facing the forest products industry are statewide in scope, rather than regional in nature. Costs for taxes, health insurance and workers compensation can only be addressed at the state, rather than the regional level. Stable state policy toward harvesting and production is also essential. Therefore state government should be encouraged to develop a coordinated long-term strategy and policy for maintaining the health of the forest products industry.

1. The Governor and Legislature are the key groups in reforming statewide tax, workers comp. and health insurance policy. The administration is also aware of the potential impacts of forest use policy on the forest products industry. The Governor's office has recently taken a leadership role in tax reform and in making Maine a more attractive place to do business.
2. Many of these issues will be in the forefront at the upcoming Blaine House Conference on Forestry, Farming and Fishing on November 17, 2003. This is the time when strategies for reform will be developed for consideration by the Legislature this winter. NMDC as well as forest industry leaders in the County should take this opportunity to advocate for reform and innovative measures that can help the industry. This can be done using existing staff and resources.

### **Action A2.**

In the short run, cost pressures at certain local wood products businesses might be alleviated by an aggressive use of Empowerment Zone and Tax Increment Financing incentives.

1. Expansion of the Empowerment Zone is a key issue. Both U.S. Senators are committed to this, and Senator Snow has been pressing this issue in committee. Letters from affected companies to the Senators are useful for this effort.
2. It is not clear that all qualifying area businesses are aware of the Empowerment Zone tax benefits or are taking advantage of them where applicable. NMDC should coordinate with local ED directors to ensure that the benefits are used to the fullest extent. A mailing of information to all qualifying business owners could provide the needed contact.

### **Action A3.**

Innovative financial solutions such as a Wood Products Stabilization Fund should be explored. The availability of Empowerment Zone funding, along with overall concern for the wood products sector, makes this a good time to consider more radical solutions to the cyclical problems of the industry.

1. Should NMDC wish to develop such a fund, this concept would require further evaluation to determine feasibility. Research on similar funding strategies used in other states would provide guidance. An evaluation of the potential market for this fund would be needed, and parameters defined for price thresholds and other criteria.

#### **Action A4.**

Additional marketing efforts should be undertaken to more fully utilize the Loring Technology Center and business assistance programs.

1. The LTC and Small Business programs in the region should market themselves to potential entrepreneurs statewide in areas such as craft manufacturers and wood products companies that are members of the Maine Wood Product Association. Some companies may have employees with new business ideas who lack the capability to test them, so efforts to reach beyond existing business owners are needed.
2. A number of wood product manufacturers of flatwood and turned wood items in the state have closed or are threatened due to overseas competition. While these traditional businesses may no longer be viable, some experienced business owners may wish to develop new businesses in light manufacturing. These individuals, who can be reached through MWPA, would make good potential tenants for the LTC. Training in marketing would be important.
3. Development of a simple brochure and mailing to a large potential audience may reach entrepreneurs that are unaware of what LTC and the County can offer. LTC and NMDC have the staff and resources to undertake an effort in this area.

#### **Action A5.**

The County has far more northern white cedar than any other part of the state, and it is underutilized. Cedar is increasingly popular for rustic indoor and outdoor furniture, and it holds up well in outside applications. Ways to exploit the abundant supply of cedar in the region to promote woods products businesses should be explored by the Northern Maine Development Commission.

1. The availability of an abundant supply of cedar can be marketed to the same wood product companies (MWPA) as the above action item. Information on the cedar supply and potential markets should be provided.
2. NMDC should contact in County businesses using cedar directly to determine which businesses would be complementary to existing firms, thereby building strength in this niche market.

**Action A6.**

County officials should work with area businesses and state officials to generate demand for rail shipping. This would be an important step in stabilizing the local rail system.

1. NMDC has initiated action in this area but the cooperation has been erratic. State level meetings with DOT and rail managers should be initiated to ensure coordination and cooperation.
2. Area businesses that ship significant volumes of bulk commodities should be targeted and contacted directly by NMDC staff.

## B. Agriculture and Food Products Marketing Plan

<b>GOAL</b>	<b>I. Increase Potato Grower Investment in Water Source Development and Irrigation Equipment</b>		
<b>Desired Action</b>	<b>B1. Conduct detailed, practical, Aroostook oriented cost benefit study of irrigation investment</b>	<b>B2. Prepare brief informational brochure</b>	<b>B3. Conduct informational meetings with growers</b>
Product(s)	20 +/- page Tech Memo with local examples and an actual cash flow analysis	Tri-fold brochure for distribution to growers	<i>Informational meetings w/ growers</i>
Who takes action	University extension service or independent consultant	NMDC & Maine Potato Board	<i>NMDC &amp; Maine Potato Board</i>
Reason for party to take action	Logical follow-up to survey of grower reasons for not investing and proven benefits of investing	Need to respond immediately to grower investment attitudes	<i>Need to respond immediately to grower investment attitudes</i>
How to get going	Research grant to pay for study	Committee of growers	<i>Schedule</i>
Who organizes	NMDC & Maine Potato Board	NMDC & Maine Potato Board	<i>NMDC &amp; Maine Potato Board</i>
Resources needed	\$10-\$15,000	Printing costs	<i>Meeting space, food</i>
Federal or State Partners	Maine Dept. of Agriculture USDA	Maine Dept. of Agriculture USDA	<i>Maine Dept. of Agriculture USDA</i>

<b>GOAL</b>	<b>II. Develop contracts for potato rotation crops</b>		
<b>Desired Action</b>	<b>B4. Identify best prospects: canola; broccoli, barley, sunflowers, etc.</b>	<b>B5. Meet with processors to identify contract requirements (volume, quality, etc.)</b>	<b>B6. Facilitate contract negotiations</b>
Product(s)	Series of one-page descriptions of market demand and production requirements	List of processors and volume each can purchase	Production contracts
Who takes action	University extension service or independent consultant	University extension service or independent consultant	NMDC & Agricultural Bargaining Council (ABC)
Reason for party to take action	Covering costs of rotation crop is best way to pay for maintaining potato productivity	Need to respond immediately to grower investment attitudes	Need to respond immediately to grower investment attitudes
How to get going	Research grant to pay for study	Committee of growers	Schedule
Who organizes	NMDC and Maine Potato Board	NMDC, Maine Potato Board & ABC	NMDC Maine Potato Board & ABC
Resources needed	\$2,500 - \$5,000	Phone/travel costs	Meeting space

Federal or State Partners	Maine Dept. of Agriculture USDA	Maine Dept. of Agriculture USDA	Maine Dept. of Agriculture USDA
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<b>GOAL</b>	<b>III. Prepare Information to Convince French fry manufacturer to invest in Aroostook County</b>		
<b>Desired Action</b>	<b>B7. Following model of information used to sell TIF for McCain's, develop information needed to justify investment in new French fry plant</b>	<b>B8. Prepare brief informational brochure with key data</b>	<b>B9. Develop contacts with Simplot and Lamb Wesson</b>
Product(s)	Concise list of reasons Aroostook could support a second major French fry plant: land, irrigation, storage, productivity trends, proximity to market	Data base with key information ready to be updated upon demand	Informational meetings w/ growers
Who takes action	Independent consultant	NMDC	NMDC & MFX
Reason for party to take action	French fry market will recover; Aroostook should be prepared when one of the giants decides to increase capacity	Be prepared <i>before</i> company asks for information	Get to know key company decision makers
How to get going	Marketing grant to develop message materials	Initiate informal contacts with Simplot and Lamb Wesson	Initiate informal contacts with Simplot and Lamb Wesson
Who organizes	NMDC & Maine Farmers' Exchange (MFX) which had JV w/ Simplot	NMDC & Maine Potato Board	NMDC & Maine Potato Board
Resources needed	\$2,500 - \$5,000	Printing costs	Phone & travel
Federal or State Partners	DECD, MITC Maine and Company	DECD, MITC Maine and Company	DECD, MITC Maine and Company

<b>GOAL</b>	<b>IV. Increase "stocker" raising of beef calves in Aroostook County</b>		
<b>Desired Action</b>	<b>B10. Develop contracts with breeding farms to the south</b>	<b>B11. Develop contracts to raise bull calves not needed by Maine's dairy farmers</b>	<b>B12. Conduct informational meetings with Aroostook farmers</b>
Product(s)	<i>List of farms looking for feedstock space for calves.</i>	List of farms willing to sell bull calves.	Agreement to raise calves for beef
Who takes action	<i>NMDC and Wolfe's Neck Farm</i>	NMDC & Maine Dairy Association	NMDC
Reason for party to take action	<i>Costs of raising cattle in Aroostook over spring/summer much less than in West</i>	As many as 10,000 to 20,000 bull calves are not needed by Maine dairy farms; they could add to Maine's feedlot operations	Beef production is a productive use of Aroostook farm land
How to get going	<i>Talk with Wolfe's Neck Farm about calves they could bring to Maine</i>	Talk with Dairy Association about calves they could sell	Schedule meetings with farmers and Maine Beef Producers Council
Who organizes	<i>NMDC &amp; Wolfe's Neck Farm</i>	NMDC & Maine Dairy Association	NMDC & Maine Beef Producers

Resources needed	<i>Staff time to contact breeders</i>	Staff time to contact Dairy Farmers	Meeting space, food
Federal or State Partners	<i>Maine Dept. of Agriculture USDA</i>	Maine Dept. of Agriculture USDA	Maine Dept. of Agriculture USDA

<b>GOAL</b>	<b>V. Develop Aroostook County as a positive brand name for organic food</b>	
<b>Desired Action</b>	<b><i>B13. Meeting of Aroostook organic growers</i></b>	<b>B14. Develop materials for Aroostook organic growers</b>
Product(s)	<i>Discussion of desirability of common marketing plan</i>	Brand images and concepts
Who takes action	<i>NMDC and Maine Organic Farmers and Growers Association (MOFGA)</i>	Independent marketing consultant
Reason for party to take action	<i>Growth of organic market and consumer willingness to pay higher prices</i>	Growth of organic market and consumer willingness to pay higher prices
How to get going	<i>Call organic growers</i>	Organize meeting of organic growers
Who organizes	<i>NMDC &amp; MOFGA</i>	NMDC & MOFGA
Resources needed	<i>Staff time to contact growers</i>	Grant for marketing consultant
Federal or State Partners	<i>Maine Dept. of Agriculture USDA</i>	Maine Dept. of Agriculture USDA

**Notes:**

The major opportunities for development of Aroostook County agriculture are:

1. To increase potato yields through investment in water sources, irrigation equipment, potato storage facilities and rotation crops;
2. To strengthen and diversify the processing industry;
3. To grow the beef-producing sector, initially through growing calves bred elsewhere and selling them to Aroostook feedlots; and
4. To promote Aroostook County as the organic agriculture capital of northern New England.

Each of these opportunities has been known but not exploited for a variety of reasons. The marketing message and materials described here are intended to address these obstacles.

Irrigation has been demonstrated to yield positive economic benefits, yet a survey conducted for the Maine Potato Board last winter indicates that a majority of growers do not believe that such investment will pay. Thus, the need to direct a marketing campaign to growers with regard to the practical, easily demonstrated benefits of irrigation.

For a generation, French fry production could not keep up with demand, and new investment in production facilities was a constant throughout the world. The past recession saw the first slowdown in French fry consumption. However, the market is not showing signs of revival. To be ready when one of the giant producers seeks to increase capacity, Aroostook County should have a tightly organized, to the point, set of marketing materials conveying the message that “We’re ready when you are!” It should show the increases in irrigation, storage facilities and productivity so as to make clear that the County has the capacity to meet increased demand for potatoes.

Currently, major slaughterhouses in the Northeast draw from an area extending from Maritime Canada to Michigan to North Carolina. At some point, the demand for meat products will support additional investment in slaughterhouse capacity. For the foreseeable future, however, Aroostook County simply does not have a sufficient number of head of cattle to justify such an investment. Therefore, the best intermediate step is for the county to increase its purchases of calves bred elsewhere and utilize its high quality grazing space to raise these calves from 8 to 18 months to supply to feedlots. To promote this investment, the County should identify sources of calves and facilitate contracts between breeders and potential County grazing farms.

More and more consumers are willing to pay higher prices for certified organic foods. Some Aroostook growers have ridden this trend to financial success. More could if the certification requirements and marketing avenues could be made more available. Developing an “Aroostook County means quality organic” brand image could enable more growers to exploit this growing opportunity.

### C. Tourism Marketing Plan

GOAL	I. Cross market the Biathlon event			II. Build organizational capacity		
<b>Desired Action</b>	<b>C1. Create discount packages to attract Biathlon visitors back the following summer/fall</b>	<b>C2. Create media orientation plan for Biathlon event</b>	<b>C3. Purchase TV advertising for Aroostook County</b>	<b><i>C4. Conduct base line survey and create long-term marketing plan</i></b>	<b><i>C5. Define 5 year vision, goal for Aroostook County Tourism</i></b>	<b><i>C6. Create funding strategy to achieve vision</i></b>
Product	Brochure/web ad	Media plan, tours, discounts	Television ads	<i>Survey results, plan</i>	<i>Consensus of private and public tourism parties</i>	<i>Financing plan</i>
Who takes action	Camps, bed and breakfasts, restaurants, guides, museums offer discounts	NMDC staff leads, business creates tours and events	Aroostook County Tourism – with grant help from Maine Office of Tourism	<i>Empowerment Zone applies for grant</i>	<i>Aroostook County Tourism leads process</i>	
Reason for party to take action	Chance in a lifetime opportunity to build tourism in County			<i>Long term economic growth</i>	<i>Cannot achieve marketing goals without better organization</i>	
How to get going	Phone calls	Committee	Fundraising effort	<i>Write grant</i>	<i>Write grant</i>	
Who organizes	Aroostook County Tourism			<i>NMDC</i>	<i>Aroostook County Tourism</i>	
Resources needed	Brochure printing expenses	Planning, transport, event costs	\$100,000 or so	<i>Initially – grant writing; ultimately -- \$50,000</i>	<i>Initially – grant writing; Ultimately: \$25,000</i>	
Federal or State Partners	ME Tourism Office ME Publicity Bureau	ME Tourism Office ME Publicity Bureau	ME Tourism Office  ME Publicity Bureau	<i>ME Tourism Office ME Publicity Bureau</i>	<i>ME Tourism Office ME Publicity Bureau</i>	

## **Notes:**

### **Goal I. Cross market the Biathlon event**

“Cross marketing” – getting people who come to the County for one purpose to come back for another purpose in another season – is identified as a key strategy in the cluster report. It would be nice to have time to develop such a strategy slowly – but next spring a once-in-a-generation event presents itself and must provide the initial trial run.

The event is the Biathlon. Through this event millions of people in Europe and America will see Aroostook County on television for the first time. Thousands more will visit for the first time. There is no more important tourism priority for Northern Maine than to ensure that attendees and viewers get a positive impression of Aroostook County, and that they want to come back.

There are three actions recommended to accomplish this. The first (C1) is to create a series of “discount packages” to pass out to visitors that provide meaningful incentives for visitors to return in the coming summer. It could be a free night at a campground or free round of golf or a free guided tour of the Allagash. The second is to create and implement a formal media plan for the event. That means providing accommodations for media representatives to come early, to wine and dine them, to provide presentations and background and visits to important places in Aroostook County – so that the stories that they write and film reflect the setting as well as the event they are covering. The third (C3) is the most expensive, but should be part of the strategy. There is no better market for advertising than people who are already watching the region on television. Give viewers a reason to come visit, and a way to make contact – and this can best be done by paid advertising. The Maine Office of Tourism should be approached to participate in such advertising.

All of this will require strong organization and action on the part of Aroostook County Tourism. This, in turn, will help to lay the groundwork for meeting the second goal – building organizational capacity.

### **Goal II. Build organizational capacity**

In the short term – the coming year – all eyes should be on the tasks above. Creating packages, raising money, orienting media, are all part of building organizational capacity.

In the longer run, after the Biathlon event is complete, there are three activities that Aroostook County Tourism can take to build its longer range capacity. These activities are to conduct a comprehensive base line survey of visitors and tourists (C4); define a vision and goals for the organization (C5); and to create a long-term funding plan (C6). In the end any viable organization must be largely self-funding, which is why the funding plan is so important. This will mean that local tourism-related businesses must make decisions about how to distribute their marketing dollars between Aroostook County Tourism, their local chambers and associations, and their private advertising budget.

Right now spending is mostly decentralized, and fails to communicate a strong “brand” for the County. But the funding plan must be grounded in strong research and consensus in order to be persuasive – which is why steps C4 and C5 precede C6.

## D. Information Technology Marketing Plan

<b>GOAL</b>	<b>I. Create IT Identity for Aroostook County</b>
<b>Desired Action</b>	<b><i>DI. Create Marketing Material Specific to Aroostook IT Sector</i></b>
Product	<i>Print and/or electronic brochure that highlights County's, existing IT businesses and activity, IT related education resources, IT connectivity capacity (including high speed Internet accessibility and redundancy), and rural/natural resource assets.</i>
Who takes action	<i>NMDC, Maine Public Service, sub-regional economic development agencies; higher education institutes (NMCC, UMPI, UMFK, University College at Houlton).</i>
Reason for party to take action	<i>Currently there is a lack of awareness both within the County and external to it regarding the County's current capacity and potential for IT sector growth.</i>
How to get going	<i>Develop IT working group that includes IT business leaders, IT faculty, and IT business users to oversee product and assist with distribution of message. NMDC to provide staffing and administration for group.</i>
To whom to market	<i>IT identity, capacity, and potential needs to be communicated to: (1) IT businesses considering locating or expanding in rural areas (NAICS Codes: 5112-software publishers, 5161-Internet publishing &amp; broadcasting; 5181-Internet service providers and web search portals; 5182-data processing, hosting, and related services; 5415-computer systems design and related services). The geographic areas to be marketed to should include the Atlantic Provinces of Canada and Quebec, the Bangor Region, the rest of Maine, and New England. (2) Entities that are heavy IT users within the County should also be marketed to including insurance and financial businesses, business services, hospitals and health services, and not for profits. These entities need to be made aware that firms within the County can help them meet their IT needs and they need not look outside the County for contracting. (3) Entities and individuals involved in economic development including Maine &amp; Co, Maine Department of Economic &amp; Community Development, MESDA (Maine's Information Technology Industry Association), state and federal legislative delegation, and the Governor's office. These entities and individuals are involved in marketing Maine to the rest of the world and can help Aroostook if they know the message and capacity of the region.</i>
Who organizes	<i>NMDC (no other entities exist that represent the IT sector in the County).</i>
Resources needed	<i>Funds for production and distribution of marketing materials, sufficient information already exists in Cluster Study. Resources are now needed to produce specific marketing products to deliver message.</i>

Federal & State Partners	<i>Few federal &amp; state programs exist that provide direct funding for marketing materials. Technical assistance and support for this task should be coordinated with Maine &amp; Co. for the development of an effective marketing message for Aroostook IT outside of the state and the Maine International Trade Center for assistance with developing an effective message for Aroostook IT internationally.</i>
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<b>GOAL</b>	<b>II. Foster linkages between IT companies in nearby Canadian regions and companies in Aroostook</b>
<b>Desired Action</b>	<b>D2. Create programs to stimulate business to business partnerships and possible co-location between Canadian and Aroostook IT companies</b>
Product(s)	Distribution of marketing materials, business to business event/conference that includes networking and training, on-going training for Aroostook business on how to partner with Canadian businesses, loan/grant program for Aroostook business to support market expansion activities.
Who takes action	NMDC initially to engage other partners.
Reason for party to take action	Companies on both sides of the border will benefit by developing international presence and entry into larger market. International presence can be achieved without need for significant travel due to proximity between Aroostook and targeted Canadian Provinces.
How to get going	Develop database of IT companies within targeted NAICS codes (see goal B) located within Aroostook County and the Canadian Atlantic Provinces and Quebec. Engage the Maine International Trade Center to coordinate efforts between NMDC, MESDA, and IT trade associations in the Canadian regions.
To whom to market	IT companies in Aroostook and the Canadian Atlantic Provinces and Quebec within the targeted NAICS codes. The demand and potential benefit seems greatest for small to medium sized IT firms seeking to expand market.
Who organizes	NMDC in coordination with the Maine International Trade Center.
Resources needed	Funds for database development; outreach/marketing to firms, and event.
Federal & State Partners	The Maine International Trade Center can provide technical assistance and coordination with statewide efforts.

<b>GOAL</b>	<b>III. Increase networking and training opportunities for County IT professionals and businesses</b>
<b>Desired Action</b>	<b><i>D3. Incubate IT industry association presence in Aroostook County to increase products and services available to Aroostook IT companies and professionals.</i></b>
Product(s)	<i>Create professional user groups targeted to specific IT business interests including technical user groups (designed around a particular language or product), business marketing, international trade and project management; increase Aroostook participation in industry association databases and Web sites for statewide IT directory that provides access to Requests for Proposals for IT services (MESDA's CodeME); identify or develop location for teleconferencing to support participation in user groups and training outside of County.</i>

Who takes action	<i>NMDC in Coordination with MESDA, Maine's Information Technology Industry Association, IT related departments at higher education institutions (NMCC, UMPI, UMFK, and University College at Houlton) and the Target Technology Center.</i>
Reason for party to take action	<i>Due to geographic size of County networking among IT professionals and business is difficult, yet demand for networking was expressed by professionals interviewed. Networking would assist IT business and professionals in reducing feeling of isolation in rural county, and provide greater opportunities for partnering and training.</i>
How to get going	<i>Organize initial meeting/mini-conference in which results of IT Cluster Study and Marketing Plan are presented.</i>
To whom to market	<i>Aroostook IT businesses.</i>
Who organizes	<i>NMDC and MESDA.</i>
Resources needed	<i>Funds to support initial meeting/mini-conference; funds to match MESDA efforts for teleconferencing facilities.</i>
Federal & State Partners	<i>MESDA is currently seeking funds from the Maine Technology Institute (MTI) for a Cluster Enhancement Grant to fund extension of its professional user groups program. NMDC and the partners listed above can leverage this effort to initiate professional networking and user group activity in the County.</i>

<b>GOAL</b>	<b>IV. Attract and retain professional IT talent</b>
<b>Desired Action</b>	<b>D4. Pool recruiting efforts among IT businesses and other technology intensive businesses</b>
Product(s)	Annual or semi-annual IT job fairs/events to be held in Bangor and Portland areas to attract talent to region, and a local fair/event at higher education institutions (NMCC, UMPI, UMFK, University College at Houlton) to introduce students to IT careers in the County.
Who takes action	NMDC in cooperation with Maine Department of Labor, Maine Career Centers, higher education institutions (NMCC, UMPI, UMFK, University College at Houlton), and Aroostook IT and technology-intensive businesses.
Reason for party to take action	While recruiting IT professionals in Aroostook is not much more difficult than in other rural areas of state, it is still a challenge particularly for small to medium-sized IT companies desiring talent with proven experience. These are the same companies that often lack resources for recruitment efforts. The IT sector is likely not large enough to be able to pull-off their own events/fairs. Therefore to increase chance for success IT effort should be pooled with other technology intensive sectors.
How to get going	NMDC express desire among potential partners, organize planning session among interested parties.
To whom to market	Exiting IT professionals as well as students in IT related disciplines located in Aroostook, Bangor and Portland regions.
Who organizes	NMDC.
Resources needed	Resources for hosting event and for getting the word out.
Federal & State Partners	Maine Department of Labor would be a natural partner for this activity.
<b>Desired Action</b>	<b>D5. Develop IT internship program</b>
Product(s)	Paid Internship program designed to provide Aroostook higher education students with hands-on experience in IT related job.

Who takes action	NMDC in cooperation with higher education institutions (NMCC, UMPI, UMFK, University College at Houlton), and Aroostook IT.
Reason for party to take action	IT companies indicated that they need workers that not only have education background in IT but also proven IT experience. IT companies particularly small to medium sized, are reluctant to hire inexperienced students and do not have sufficient resource to utilize interns. Therefore, opportunities for students to stay and work in County during and after education experience are limited.
How to get going	NMDC express desire among potential partners, organize planning session among interested parties.
To whom to market	Aroostook IT companies.
Who organizes	NMDC.
Resources needed	Free market currently not supporting enough paid interns. Funds are needed in the form of grant to businesses to offset the costs of hiring interns.
Federal & State Partners	Maine Department of Labor would be a natural partner for this activity as well as the University of Maine and Northern Maine Community College.

**Notes:**

The preceding tables outline a specific action plan to grow and develop the information technology sector in Aroostook County. The plan is designed to address four main goals:

- Create IT Identity for Aroostook County
- Foster linkages between IT companies in nearby Canadian regions and companies in Aroostook County
- Increase networking and training opportunities for County IT professionals and businesses
- Attract and retain professional IT talent

The marketing plan is based on the findings and analysis from Part 1 of the Aroostook County Economic Cluster Report. That body of work provides much of the information and background to support the marketing strategies. Therefore little new information or studies are needed to take the next steps. Resources are needed however to implement and organize the actions and sustain them over time. All of the actions are meant to be ongoing or re-occurring. One-time quick fix actions will have little to no impact on growing the County's IT sector.

## E. Precision Manufacturing Marketing Plan

<b>GOAL</b>	Assist in establishing NMCC as the premier regional training center for advanced metals technology		
<b>Desired Action</b>	<i>E1. Develop linkages to other in-state companies and manufacturing programs</i>	<i>E2. Market metals program to nearby Canadian companies</i>	<i>E3. Establish liaison with counterpart ED organizations in NB</i>
<b>Product</b>	<i>Bulletin describing program and new equipment</i>	<i>Contacts with Canadian companies</i>	<i>Regular meetings with cross border counterparts</i>
<b>Who takes action</b>	<i>NMCC, assistance from NMDC</i>	<i>NMDC with NMCC</i>	<i>NMDC</i>
<b>Reason for party to take action</b>	<i>Attraction of students and businesses from other parts of state</i>	<i>Attraction of students from Canada</i>	<i>Existing and potential industry clusters span both areas</i>
<b>How to get going</b>	<i>Coordinate activities with NMCC</i>	<i>Letters to companies with program announcement</i>	<i>Organize meeting</i>
<b>Who organizes</b>	<i>Program director - NMCC</i>	<i>NMDC, NMCC assists</i>	<i>NMDC</i>
<b>Resources needed</b>	<i>Bulletin printing expenses</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Existing</i>
<b>Federal or State Partners</b>	<i>MMEP, Maine Metal Products Assoc., DECD</i>	<i>MMEP, Maine Metal Products Assoc., MITC</i>	<i>DECD MITC</i>

### Notes:

#### Action E1.

Assist in expanding networks and linkages for NMCC metals machining program– this will include in-state linkages to metals machining programs at CMCC, and the Maine Metal Products Association, as well as to southern and central Maine metals companies. It should also include cross border linkages to Canadian manufacturers in Carleton County, and to Carleton County vocational programs.

1. There are two major groups to link with – in state trade groups and companies, and nearby Canadian companies, trade groups and economic development organizations. NMCC already has active linkages to several instate groups, but Canadian linkages have yet to be developed. NMDC can play an important role in forming these linkages in partnership with NMCC.
2. At a time when advanced technology is the only edge North American companies may have over competitors in other parts of the world, NMCC can offer advanced training in precision machining that is not available locally for Canadian companies in Carleton County, NB. There may also be indirect

benefits for Canadian companies in providing improved contact with other U.S. and Canadian firms that utilize the NMCC training program.

3. NMDC should initiate contact and develop liaisons with their counterparts in Carleton County, and with provincial ED agencies in Fredericton. There are other similar actions proposed in this report for other Aroostook industries, including information technology and tourism, so these should be coordinated. State ED officials may need to be involved, but NMDC should lead to keep the focus on the County.

### **Action E2.**

Assist in developing marketing and promotional materials for NMCC metals programs. While these efforts may take time to produce benefits, they will undoubtedly strengthen the County's reputation as a center for training, and as a potential location to develop a manufacturing enterprise.

1. NMCC will bear significant responsibility in this area but will need assistance in brochure development and marketing of special training sessions or conferences.
2. As discussed in the first action item, access to advanced technologies and, for Canadian companies, potential access to U.S. markets, are strong points.
3. Solicitation of potentially interested companies in both the U.S. and Canada may be handled by NMDC. NMCC may also solicit directly to both in state organizations and local Canadian companies to develop interest in their training program. NMCC and NMDC should coordinate closely on this.

### **Action E3.**

Expand training facilities at Northern Maine Community College for specialized training for manufacturing and other professions.

1. This a joint effort involving both NMCC and NMDC, and goes well beyond the focus on advanced technologies in metals machining to encompass training for a number of technology sectors for the County.
2. Emphasis should be placed on the current absence of adequate facilities in the County, and the need for increased training to keep area companies competitive.