

Introduction

In October 2010, the USDA Forest Service awarded the Juneau Economic Development Council (JEDC) a contract to complete an Economic Development Asset Map and a Strategic Plan for Southeast Alaska that focuses on actions to strengthen key industry sectors in our region, and includes two deliverables: (1) a Southeast Alaska Asset Map identifying the human, financial, institutional, and natural assets of Southeast Alaska, as well as strategic relationships among assets; and (2) an integrated plan for economic diversification to promote job creation for Southeast communities. For this work, JEDC has partnered with Southeast Conference, Sheinberg Associates, Alaska Map Company, and consultants Brian Kelsey and Ted Lyman, a collaboration that brings regional, national and world-renowned expertise to the project.

Today, many smaller communities in the Tongass are still struggling while the three largest cities have stabilized, partly due to population shifts from smaller villages to these larger communities. Most of the region's land and resources are within the Tongass National Forest or adjacent in local waterways; and, although not all change in the region is due to decisions regarding the Tongass and its resources, management of the forest plays a significant role in defining the economy of the region. Recognizing this, the USDA Forest Service organized listening sessions in Southeast Alaska in 2009 and is actively pursuing dialogue with Tongass interest groups, participating in the Tongass Futures Roundtable consortium, and partnering with the US Economic Development Administration to create a Tongass Transition Framework for Economic Diversification with an interagency project implementation team. In addition, the Forest Service is working to secure American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and other funding for dozens of projects in the Tongass that support sustainable economic activity, and has issued this contract to develop a Southeast Alaska Asset Map and Strategic Plan, which we refer to as the Southeast Cluster Initiative, to help focus US Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs and support for sustainable economic development throughout Southeast Alaska.

Phase I – Asset Mapping

According to the Council on Competitiveness, “Asset mapping is an important first step in understanding the resources that a community can leverage to support integrated workforce and economic development initiatives.”¹ In this Asset Mapping phase of this contract, JEDC identifies key regional assets, linkages, business attitudes, and the overall business climate. Assets, in this context, include the following main categories: human capital including workforce and educational institutions; research and development institutions or capacities; financial capital; the industrial and resource base; organizations that support and provide connections between entities; the legal and regulatory environment; physical infrastructure; and quality of life. Asset Mapping

¹ Illuminate, Page 5. Council on Competitiveness

provides an understanding of the geographic organization of economic clusters of activity and infrastructure, and an understanding of labor market needs and resources in the region. Targeted stakeholder input is sought throughout this data collection and evaluation phase. As a result of the Asset Map, strategic economic clusters emerge as the focus of the second phase of the project, the development of a Southeast Alaska Regional Strategic Plan focusing on actions strengthening key industry sectors in our region.

The Southeast Alaska Economic Asset Map that is represented in this document follows closely the format and methodology presented by the Council on Competitiveness in the document, Illuminate, subtitled: "Asset Mapping Roadmap: A Guide to Assessing Regional Development Resources." In the time available for this work (90 days), we deliver Version 1 of the Asset Map. This document is meant to be a foundation piece for engaging stakeholders in a discussion of how to enhance prosperity in Southeast Alaska. We anticipate and hope that as stakeholders review the information in this Asset Map and share their insights/suggestions, this resource will improve over time. As noted by the Council on Competitiveness, the "true value of an asset-mapping project will be judged by how the output is utilized to advance regional efforts to build an innovation-based economy."² We look forward to the next phase of this initiative.

Phase II – Southeast Alaska Strategic Plan (Cluster Development)

The second phase of the project, running from January through April 2011, will focus on assembling Southeast Alaska's public and private industry leaders to create Cluster Working Groups for select established and emerging industry sectors identified in the asset mapping phase. JEDC will facilitate the development of a shared economic vision for each cluster. Each group will collaboratively develop an actionable regional roadmap for job creation and expansion for their industry. This plan will guide the USDA Forest Service and Rural Development in its programs to promote economic development for Southeast Alaska. The JEDC will provide intensive working group facilitation, including meeting support and ongoing follow-up, sharing of work and feedback among the different cluster working groups, frequent small-group or task-oriented meetings to consider research, and industry experts to develop nascent opportunities and help the clusters overcome barriers to growth. The JEDC believes that a Cluster Working Group approach to regional economic development will serve as a catalyst for private-public partnerships that create better communication and close working relationships.

² Ibid, Page 10.

Partner Profiles

Juneau Economic Development Council

The mission of the JEDC is to foster a healthy and sustainable economic climate in Juneau and the Southeast Alaska region. JEDC has a local presence since 1987, and a staff of economic development specialists with knowledge of regional economic development issues and with experience in participating and leading long-term planning efforts, both locally and state-wide.

Southeast Conference

Southeast Conference is a regional nonprofit corporation that advances the collective interest of the people, communities and businesses in Southeast Alaska. Members include municipalities, native corporations and village councils, regional and local businesses, civic organizations and individuals throughout the region. Its mission is to undertake and support activities that promote strong economies, healthy communities, and a quality environment for Southeast Alaska.

Sheinberg Associates

Sheinberg Associates is a community and strategic planning firm that has been providing these and facilitation services for 21 years in Southeast Alaska. Firm principal, Barbara Sheinberg, is a certified planner (AICP) with 27 years experience conducting a wide variety of planning and analysis efforts.

Alaska Map Company

Alaska Map Company is a Kenai Peninsula based Geographic Information System (GIS) consulting firm that has been a key contributor in Geospatial Mapping Projects throughout the State of Alaska for the past nine years. Gary Greenberg, owner and senior GIS Analyst, specializes in supporting small and remote Alaska communities with high quality and low cost GIS consulting.

Theodore R. Lyman

Mr. Lyman has more than 30 years of consulting experience, nearly all of it focused on assisting government and private sector leaders with policies and action initiatives aimed at enhancing economic development. His global experience has brought Mr. Lyman acclaim as one of the world's experts in the development and implementation of cluster-based strategies for enhancing regional economic competitiveness. Mr. Lyman was inaugurated as a Fellow in the World Academy of Arts and Sciences in recognition of his contributions to civil societies around the world.



Brian Kelsey

Brian Kelsey, consultant, was Director of Economic Development at the Capital Area Council of Governments in Austin, Texas, serving a region of 10 counties, 60 cities, and 1.8 million people, until October 2010. Previously, Mr. Kelsey was a research associate with the Council on Competitiveness in Washington, DC. Mr. Kelsey co-authored *Measuring Regional Innovation*, a guidebook on regional economic development funded by the Economic Development Administration.