

# Growing Economies in Indian Country:

Taking Stock of Progress and Partnerships,  
Summary & Opportunities for Further Engagement



September 20, 2011

## *Growing Economies in Indian Country: Taking Stock of Progress and Partnerships Workshop Summary & Opportunities for Further Engagement*

In an effort to continue the dialogue generated by the recent [Growing Economies in Indian Country Workshop](#), the Organizing Committee has summarized workshop-evaluation comments that capture the themes of the day and point to specific opportunities for ongoing dialogue, engagement, and action. This document is not intended to be all-inclusive but to provide readers with a snapshot of perspectives from the forum held in Bangor, Maine on September 20, 2011.

For those who completed the evaluation, we thank you for your valuable input. Overall, we achieved a response rate of 41%. Below, we summarize the response rate by sector as a percentage of the total completed evaluations.

1. Economic Development – 26.67%
2. Federal, State, and Local agencies – 26.66%
3. Tribal Government – 11.11%
4. CDFIs – 8.89%
5. Banking – 6.67%
6. Workforce Development – 6.67%
7. Other – 13.33%

Overall, 95.5% of the participants rated the workshop as either “Excellent” or “Very good.”

### ***What if any “take-aways” did you learn from the event?***

- A heightened understanding of Tribal leaders' goals in Maine.
- The need to increase intertribal communication, coordination, and collaboration.
- The need for a permanent economic development coordinator to coordinate services to Maine's tribal economic and planning professionals.
- Federal, state, and local services providers need to extend their reach into Native communities.
- Federal, state, and local service providers need to coordinate their efforts more effectively to maximize impact.
- Current and future workforce development efforts need to be aligned and supportive of traditional tribal cultural values and interests.
- Gaps continue to exist in programming and services provided to Maine's tribal communities.
- There is a need for increased cultural sensitivity.
- There are an abundance of opportunities and resources that Maine's tribal communities could benefit from if provided the appropriate information and resources.

### ***What lessons shared today do you believe are applicable to your community, tribe, or work?***

- How to position available funds when discussing agency opportunities.
- The challenges of working with Native communities expressed by non-Native participants.

- As a service provider, the workshop opened my eyes for opportunities to collaborate with tribes and other service providers to increase the impact of the assistance we provide.
- Collaboration among federal, state, and local service providers is essential in advancing the economic development of the tribes.
- There is a need for unrestricted matching dollars, extra support for innovation (particularly when addressing barriers), and the development of soft skills in the workforce.
- Trust building is essential.
- Understanding the role of culture and the barriers native people face within their own communities.
- Remembering that economic development is an ongoing process and a lot of hard work requiring everyone's involvement.

*What would you like to learn more about?*

- Financing on tribal/trust lands.
- Community development projects that leverage and incorporate the assets of colleges and universities to benefit tribal communities.
- Potential for tribes to host Small Business Development Center staff.
- Types of services and programs currently offered by tribal governments and what they require from the state and local systems.
- How do we put what transpired at this workshop into action?
- A better understanding of Native culture - how that affects communications, decision-making, and future projects.
- The level of collaboration among the tribes; what types of efforts they currently work together on and what they don't.
- The types of programs available that encourage more financial institutions to become involved with tribal community and economic development activities.
- How tribes are governed and what community development programs exist to meet their unique development challenges as well as those programs where they must compete.
- How to better navigate the federal system when seeking program assistance.
- Workforce Investment Act funding for tribal communities.
- How we can help educate youth on the reservation and support them while they receive their education in an effort to close the current skills gap in this state.
- The importance of planning and community-driven strategic planning that addresses previously defined problems or issues rather than pursuing available funds without a well-thought-out plan.
- Specific information on grant and loan programs for Native American entrepreneurs.
- The issue of bonding and collateral in Native American communities when interfacing with nontribal-organizations.
- Food-based economic development
- Hub zone certification, 8(a) status, and the Small Business Administration.

*Would you like to see follow-up activity from today's event and if so what kind?*

- A follow-up gathering in six months to discuss progress, initiatives taken, successes achieved, barriers encountered, etc.
- Follow-up on how nontribal CDFIs can be more of a resource to each tribe.
- The opportunity to discuss tribal engagement with regional and local economic development organizations and how better synergies can be realized.
- Same format next year ... more packaged solutions presented.
- Increased opportunities to interface and meet with additional United Southern & Eastern Tribes (USET).
- Smaller meetings focused on the topics highlighted in each breakout session.
- An online public forum.
- Specific breakout/follow-up sessions held on the reservations so people can see and feel the issues and challenges being discussed.
- Increased opportunities for tribal economic development professionals to meet and learn from one another.
- Listserv connecting Maine tribes and service providers.
- Detailed action/plans that promote the self-sufficiency of tribal entities.

In closing, this document captures the major themes of the day and is not intended to represent an all-inclusive document of all that transpired throughout the workshop and individual breakout sessions. The authors would like to thank [Four Directions Development Corporation](#) for the leadership they provided the Bangor workshop and for their continued efforts at creating equitable economies and sustainable communities within Maine's indigenous communities.