

**10 Year Statewide Strategic Plan
Innovation Subcommittee Kick-off Meeting
March 4th from 2P – 4P
Via Zoom Meeting**

Meeting Attendees:

- Brian Whitney
- Margaret Angell
- Wick Johnson
- Cem Giray
- Jennifer Sporzynski
- Shane Moeykens
- Judy Sproule
- Jake Ward
- Joe Powers on behalf of John Burns
- Melissa Winne
- Liz Trice
- Cassandra Thomas, FEMA
- John Lovett, FEMA
- Martha Bentley
- Kelsey MacKinnon, DECD Staff

Meeting Objectives:

- **Prioritize/sequence the projects in our strategy area**
- **Receive progress updates**
- **Introduction and Overview of FEMA Long-term Recovery (LTR) Solution-Based Team on Innovation in Maine**

Notes:

Item 1: Progress Updates from February 4th Meeting

- Looked at recommendations from the 10-Year Plan and the ERC Report and identified some near term priorities:
 - Maine Seed Capital Tax Credit Program cap is now \$15 million, as the Plan recommends
 - Charlotte Mace/DECD is developing a domestic exports program
 - Reinvigoration of the Maine Innovation Economy Advisory Board (**MIEAB**):
 - 32-person committee with 3 objectives in its statute:
 - Developing Maine’s 5-year innovation action plan
 - Providing annual updates on that plan to see how the state is doing against its goals
 - Serving as the state’s EPSCoR committee
 - MIEAB also provides advisory to the governor and policymakers
 - Brian used MTI’s e-newsletter/blog to put out call for volunteers. 77 candidates as of today.
- Discussed increasing R&D levels in Maine
 - As part of \$1.9 trillion stimulus package working its way through Congress, there is \$10 billion allocated for the State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI)
 - This program first launched in 2010 with \$1.5 billion. Maine received about \$13 million.

- Funds went out through FAME as direct loans to businesses, through EDDs as revolving loans, and through MVF as equity investments.
- This \$10 billion effort would send Maine about \$58.5 million. Groups have started working to think strategically about what a competitive SSBCI proposal would look like.
- We should also have a better sense of the Governor's R&D bonding priorities in the next week or so.

MIEAB Discussion:

- Brian shared MIEAB job description draft with the group
- How do we harmonize MIEAB's innovation action plan with the 10-Year Plan and ERC recommendations? How do we make explicit the connection/alignment between the plans?
- MIEAB can potentially provide coordination between all the various innovation/entrepreneurship activity in the state
 - Could serve as a body to help us understand what we have, what we need, where we're going, and how everything fits with the Strategic Plan
 - Can also be more proactive in affecting policy, but have to consider what level of promoting/advocacy/lobbying is permitted in its statute
 - MIEAB needs to be stronger, more proactive, and data-based; should also be researching what other states are doing in the innovation space
- In addition to the committee itself, we need someone whose job is explicitly to move MIEAB and the innovation economy forward – focused on how we brand ourselves, promoting Maine as a place where innovation happens, providing talking points to the governor, etc.
 - DECD's Director of the Office of Innovation position hasn't had much structural support. Could potentially serve this role if the necessary structure is put in place.
 - If DECD's Innovation position won't be filled, need to consider how we fund a similar position elsewhere (membership fees, grant opportunities, etc.)
- Liz Trice will share more information about MxG's 5 working groups, over which MIEAB could have some advisory oversight

Item 2: Request for Collaboration

- DECD has put out a Request for Collaboration (RFC) and an Invitation to Collaborate (ITC) in connection with the Strategic Plan's implementation
- We're looking to understand what existing and forming collaborations/initiatives in the state align with the Plan. How can we leverage existing networks/energy?
 - We are interested in anything that connects to the Plan at the goals/strategy level, as well at the tactical/action level
 - Want a full understanding of what's happening in the private sector and with private-public partnerships, rather than just within state government
- We're also using a social network mapping model to understand where there are already overlapping/enmeshed networks and where there are networks of people who are completely uninvolved in the Plan's implementation – so we can understand what they're doing and potentially pull them in
- We will host 2 Q&A webinars on the RFC process:
 - March 11 at 3pm – [Register here](#)
 - March 17 at 3pm – [Register here](#)
- We will also continue to build out our FAQ, found here: www.maine.gov/decd/strategic-plan/join-us

RFC Discussion:

- We are looking to collaborate with collaborations, rather than with individual organizations

- Want to see networks of activity that are already happening that the state can leverage, amplify, and support
- United Way of Greater Portland's Thrive 2027 is an example of a collaboration we'd be interested in
- We will look at RFCs/ITCs on a rolling basis. If they are submitted by the 2nd Monday of the month, they will be reviewed in that month's Steering Committee meeting; otherwise they will be looked at the following month.
 - Groups will come in and out over the Plan's 10-year time horizon as projects evolve, etc.

Item 3: Maine Accelerates Growth (MxG) Overview

- MxG began in 2010 with a grant from the Blackstone Charitable Foundation (originally a 3-year initiative called Blackstone Accelerates Growth)
- Ran out of funding around 2014. MTI provided additional funding and it rebranded as Maine Accelerates Growth.
- MxG initially focused on making grants to organizations in the state doing pitch competitions, etc., and worked to pull together networks/collaborations to avoid duplication of efforts across the state
- Funding for grants eventually went away, so MxG's focus became the networking/collaboration piece
- Liz Trice assembled MxG workgroups that are tasked with coming up with different strategies to promote/support innovation in Maine
- MxG currently has around 75 participants. Liz interviewed most of them to determine what needed to happen in the ecosystem and developed the workgroups based on this feedback.

MxG Workgroups:

- 5 work groups, each with 5-7 members. Most have met almost weekly for the past month and a half.
- Each workgroup is charged with coming up with a proposal that can be completed by this summer, and with putting together a plan for 18 months and 3 years out.
- **Early-Stage Workgroup**
 - [VIRAL](#) levels pre-0 to 2-3
 - How do we fill our entrepreneurial pipeline at the beginning? How do we get more people interested in entrepreneurship?
 - Looking for strategies to increase Maine's culture of entrepreneurship, coordinate our mentor networks, etc.
 - E.g., should we have a joint CRM for organizations who support entrepreneurship across the state to make sure every entrepreneur is being case managed?
- **Growth-Stage Workgroup**
 - VIRAL levels 3-7
 - The businesses have a good product and team, often have revenue – how do they scale? How do they reach larger markets, especially outside of Maine?
 - Workgroup will be reaching out to companies in this segment to identify gaps in resources, then will come up with proposals for closing some of those gaps.
 - Joe Powers of MVF is on this workgroup
- **Communications Workgroup**
 - How do we structure meetings to be useful? How do we fully utilize and promote the state's StartupSpace.app platform (which lists over 300 resources for businesses)?
 - Met with someone who runs the Oklahoma City StartupSpace platform to learn more about their strategies

- Will also set up more cross-promotion – want to publicize resources, opportunities, and successes
- Katie Shorey of Live and Work in Maine and Bobbie Lamont of Maine Angels are on the workgroup
- **Metrics Workgroup**
 - How do we make our work data-based and action-oriented?
 - What metrics should we be measuring specifically for the innovation ecosystem, and how do those fit in with the state’s broader goals?
 - E.g., if the state wants to increase the number of workers and workers’ salaries – how do our ecosystem metrics connect with those goals? How do we track them? Do we need to collect qualitative data, as well?
 - With limited investments, what makes sense to invest in to reach those goals? What role does innovation play?
 - Debbie Strumsky of USM’s MCBER is putting together a dashboard of data for us
 - Need to consider how to communicate this information to broader audiences – want to make sure we’re speaking directly to the entrepreneur/average citizen with an idea
 - We can invite Debbie to attend our next meeting in April
 - Judy Sproule and Martha Bentley are on this workgroup
- **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Workgroup**
 - This topic came up in over 80% of Liz’s interviews. Want to make sure we’re not leaving out large swaths of the population from the entrepreneurial path.
 - Becoming a successful CEO is currently a narrow path for a few people – how do we broaden that, especially for underrepresented groups?
 - Workgroup is looking at how to provide trainings in structural racism, how to evaluate and diversify board compositions, etc.
 - Important to do the pre-work/learning in this space before jumping into action – need to be intentional and mindful
 - Jen Sporzynski and Martha Bentley are on this workgroup

Item 4: Overview of FEMA’s Long-term Recovery (LTR) Solution-Based Team on Innovation

- FEMA is working to support post-pandemic recovery efforts in Maine.
- Brian was asked to lead team on innovation. Hoping to roll that work into this work group.
- FEMA team will tell us more about their work
 - Cassandra Thomas, Federal Disaster Recovery Officer for FEMA Region 1 for the Long-term Recovery Task Force
 - Jack Lovett, Support Liaison for FEMA in Maine

FEMA Presentation:

- FEMA’s COVID-19 Long-term Recovery Task Force helps coordinate access to federal resources in support of state-directed priorities. Can also help identify state, private sector, and non-profit funding opportunities.
- In Maine, these priorities are being guided by the Strategic Plan and the ERC recommendations.
- Our Innovation group should tell FEMA what projects we are hoping to pursue that don’t currently have a funding solution
- FEMA Deliverables:

- Worked with the Global Resiliency Institute last year to do a rapid needs assessment for Maine, identifying industries to focus on, etc. Decisions were mostly based on the Strategic Plan and ERC Report. Innovation was identified as an area for focus with Brian as the point of contact.
- Working on a Mission Scoping Assessment to summarize initial findings and issue recommendations that we'll work through in our solution-based teams
- Final deliverable will be a business plan for the state to implement to address recovery and resiliency
- FEMA has set up and started meeting with solution-based teams
 - Clean Energy and Climate Resiliency
 - Sarah Curran identified clean energy as a priority, focused on workforce development and building out the clean energy sector in Maine.
 - Climate resiliency is mostly focused on infrastructure improvements – offshore wind, control systems for solar, etc.
 - Innovation (this group)
 - FEMA also talked with the Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) about finding funding to expand their program
 - Child Care
 - Todd Landry leading this group
 - Workforce Development
 - Christopher Quint
 - Broadband
 - Andrew Butcher at the Maine Broadband Coalition & GPCOG
 - Marine Infrastructure
 - Island Institute
- Priorities:
 - Equity lens, trying to reach underserved communities
 - Data analysis around outreach for federal programs (PPP, etc.) – how do we reach those underserved communities who need help applying for federal programs?
 - Working on manufacturing/supply chain resilience
 - Workforce development
 - Food security
 - Climate resilience/climate change
 - Broadband improvements and closing the digital divide

FEMA Discussion:

- FEMA does not have its own funds. It helps identify projects that need funding and brings in other agencies to discuss how to apply for whatever funding opportunities are available.
 - FEMA is here to help us marshal federal/philanthropic resources in support of our projects
- Timeline:
 - FEMA team expected to be deployed in Maine for at least another year
 - Teams are encouraged to have drafts of projects/recovery strategies ready by early summer (if not sooner) so we can take advantage of the money that's coming down
- We can share this information with the MxG working groups so they can start to think about what projects we can put together
 - Projects can be focused on infrastructure, workforce development, capacity building, etc.
- Workforce development and workforce housing are potential areas we can focus on – limiting factors for growth for many innovative companies looking to scale quickly
 - A separate group led by MaineHousing is focused on housing. Looking for projects right now, so open to hearing suggestions.
- Is FEMA able to support direct private company investments, as well?

- Fewer levers for private companies, but there are some strategies we can discuss around how to work with private companies and how to structure projects to open more funding doors

Discussion on Potential Projects for FEMA:

- Communications/marketing Maine as a place for innovation
 - Launch Tennessee is an example of a website doing a good job of marketing state efforts and consolidating resources - launchtn.org/. Supported by a staff of 11 or 12.
 - Do we create our own website? How do we market our assets/hubs of excellence?
 - How do we speak directly to underserved communities?
 - Krystal Williams has been speaking with MTI about how to put together panels/resources for BIPOC entrepreneurs, and how to speak strategically with these communities
 - LWM could potentially be the vessel to do this marketing, but it's limited by funding constraints
 - What do we have in terms of existing capacity that is just split up in different places? Could we combine LWM, an MTI marketing person, and someone from DECD to work cohesively on these efforts?
- Current resources are fragmented – many smaller efforts across Maine are working in this area.
 - Union River Center for Innovation
 - Midcoast Regional Development Authority's Tech Space at Brunswick Landing
 - Digital economy project by Colby/Waterville/Central Maine Growth Council
 - MTI provided funding for many of these projects – MTI could help develop central messaging around these efforts and show how they're aligned
- Key pieces to consider:
 - **Marketing** of the innovation ecosystem
 - **Coordination** of the organizations within the ecosystem
 - Can consider a joint CRM, but have faced challenges around confidentiality with similar efforts in the past
 - **Strategic** piece – how do we actually move the needle? Need to identify which metrics we want to impact and strategies to do so.
 - E.g., if we want to change a workforce metric, we could have a small funded competition for people to actually move the metric

Item 5: Next Steps

- We will give thought to FEMA projects to propose in the coming months
 - Can share with MxG workgroups so they can think about projects, as well
- We'll invite Debbie Strumsky to our next meeting in April to learn more about the data dashboard she is putting together