

1. Impact (35 points)

A description of the scope, magnitude and severity of the identified problems – 7 points

How the problems were identified – 7 points

The manufacturing sector has traditionally been one of the largest sources of employment in Piscataquis County. However, in the past decade, layoffs and closings have rocked this sector, Moosehead Manufacturing in Monson/Dover-Foxcroft and Pride Manufacturing in Guilford being just two examples. These job losses have had a direct effect on the income levels of the surrounding communities, contributing to an increase in the number of LMI families. Piscataquis County's LMI rate now currently stands at 48.7%, the second-highest among Maine's sixteen counties. Tourism, which has now become the State's largest industry, has to a limited degree mitigated these losses.

Piscataquis County, as part of their comprehensive economic development strategy, endorses tourism development as a critical part of its plan for the future, and it is currently occurring throughout the County. For example, Brownville is reviewing plans for a 23,000 square foot conference center and a 250-room resort with an 18-hole golf course. The Plum Creek concept plan documents a comprehensive plan for the management and development of the greater Moosehead Lake region. The State of Maine sponsored a comprehensive plan by Fermata, Inc. to develop nature-based tourism in the Piscataquis County-Maine Highlands region and the Piscataquis County Economic Development Council ("PCEDC") has endorsed this plan and has taken additional steps to implement it. The Maine Highlands, one of the State's designated regional tourism agencies, is providing financial support to market some of these new "tourism products."

Additionally, the small rural downtowns or "villages" of Piscataquis County have been recognized as a potential tourism asset. A countywide volunteer effort has created a "Villages of Piscataquis County" itinerary and tour. Another project is "The Waterfalls of Piscataquis County," aimed to identify and assess significant waterfalls in southern Piscataquis County for tourism potential, and to compile them on CD. Finally, the work of the Cultural Heritage & Eco-tourism (CHET) Committee continues on cultural tourism projects such as the *Piscataquis Cultural-Heritage Directory*.

The problem facing Brownville and the other communities that have endorsed this CPG proposal is that tourism development plans across Piscataquis County are not unified in a distinct and complete tourism development *investment* plan. The potential looms for inefficient and poorly-planned public and private investment, as future investments may not be properly coordinated.

Past efforts to deal with the identified problems – 7 points

In 2005, the PCEDC established the Piscataquis Tourism Task Force (PTTF), a volunteer committee of the PCEDC. It prepared a Piscataquis Tourism Plan in December 2005. The plan was implemented in part during 2006, as the PTTF took on the challenge of implementing the state-endorsed plan presented by Fermata. In 2006, the PTTF identified 18 priority sites for future investment, while at the same time the Villages project and CHET prepared and implemented their plans. This project will help re-connect and identify a wise plan for these important investments.

Impact of the problem on LMI persons or slum/blight conditions – 7 points

This project will result in a comprehensive, long-term, county-based tourism development plan that marks out the costs and timing for tourism investments. Tourism investments of the scope we are anticipating (several millions of dollars) will help position Piscataquis County as a world-class destination. In turn, those investments will spur additional private and visitor spending and have a direct impact on the many small tourism operators across the County, and their employees, many of whom are likely LMI individuals.

Why CPG funds are critical for the project – 7 points

CPG funds are critical to avoid inefficient investment by State, County, Municipal, and private investors. The PCEDC cannot afford to fully organize such a plan without them.

2. Development Strategy (35 points)

A description of the planning tasks proposed to solve the identified problems and specific use of CPG funds – 8 points

We propose to create a unified and widely-endorsed *Tourism Development Investment Plan* for Piscataquis County. This plan will be compiled by the PCEDC, working in partnership with the towns, and will be completed by:

1. Holding two or three public forums across the County, for communities and tourism stakeholders, which would engage and inform about county tourism planning, and provide a forum for additional assessment, fact finding and feedback about tourism development investments.
2. Collating existing and planned/proposed investments (private and public).
3. Identifying additional anticipated investment needs from agencies, private land owners, and other organizations engaged in tourism product development, including, but not limited to: multi-use trails, parking, signage, and other visitor sites.
4. Seeking input from agencies or organizations planning the investments.
5. Reviewing State agencies' (BPL, Conservation, DOT, Agriculture, Tourism, DECD) plans for investments on public lands, to determine the scope, focus, and extent of their investments in nature-based tourism in Piscataquis County.
6. Identify potential funding sources to make additional investments.
7. Establishing "policy statements" for the endorsement of public funds in tourism development projects for use by the PCEDC, for defining public-private partnerships, and for how to best assist communities in assessing their own tourism assets.
8. Establishing standards for tourism sites to be added to PCEDC-endorsed nature tourism or other loops.
9. Establishing, in coordination with the Chambers of Commerce and The Maine Highlands, an investment plan that matches their tourism marketing plan(s), including, but not limited to uses of new media information products.
10. Holding a coordinating and planning event that results in a final *Tourism Development Investment Plan* for Piscataquis County.

Project timeline, including a start date, tasks completed to date and how CPG funds will be expended within 12 months or less – 12 points

Task	Start Date	End Date
Hold public forums	11/1/07	11/30/07
Collate existing and planned investments	12/1/07	1/15/08
Identify list of additional investment needs	12/15/07	1/31/08
Seek input from agencies/organizations/private landowners,	1/1/08	2/29/08

review State agencies' plans		
Identify funding sources	3/1/08	3/31/08
Establish policy statements, standards for tourism sites	3/1/08	5/31/08
Establish investment plan in coordination with Chambers and The Maine Highlands marketing plan(s)	4/1/08	6/30/08
Coordination/planning event, final report	7/1/08	7/31/08

How community partnerships including local government, citizens, agencies and local businesses will work together to develop effective solution strategies – 5 points

The PTTF itself is an organized private-public committee of the PCEDC. Representation includes sub-committees of “project teams” that include a diverse mix of private and public volunteers from around the County, as well as individuals from the Maine Office of Tourism, the Department of Transportation, The Maine Highlands, the Chambers of Commerce, and local officials.

How the planning efforts would lead to solution strategies that would benefit LMI persons or alleviate slum/blight conditions - 6 points

This project will result in a plan that will identify and encourage the most strategic private and public investments in tourism infrastructure. That infrastructure investment, coordinated with private, chamber, regional, and state marketing, will result in additional tourism spending. Tourism spending is directly related to LMI family income, as tourism workers often include second-wage earners in families.

Experience of the applicant community with planning projects – 4 points

The plan will be completed by the PCEDC in partnership with the towns of the County. The PCEDC’s Community Development Specialist has been involved in community development projects throughout the County since her start in early 2006. PCEDC can also call on resources from Eastern Maine Development Corporation (“EMDC”). Their staff includes tourism and marketing professionals who combined possess over 20 years of experience, as well as individuals who have been working in these communities and with their various tourism efforts over the last 2-plus years.

3. Project Leverage (10 points- No narrative response required)

4. Citizen Participation (20 points)

How overall citizen participation process directly relates to identification of solution strategies and application development - 4 points

The PTTF is a volunteer citizen committee, and citizens have played an important role in its work since it was created in 2005. In 2006, the Villages project was completed by a citizen group from the Penquis Leadership Institute. In the fall of 2006, the PCEDC held a number of meetings with these and other groups to coordinate tourism development work. This project is a direct result of those meetings. The proposal for this planning grant was also circulated among members of the PCEDC Executive Committee to invite additional comments, as well as among individuals who attended the mandatory public hearing.

A significant component of the development strategy will be the aforementioned public forums (designed to encourage citizen participation, providing a forum for additional

assessment, fact finding and feedback about tourism development investments), and the final coordinating and planning event, which will be another opportunity for public input.

Effective use of any media (newspapers, radio, TV, etc) to further public awareness and participation – 4 points

Tourism development has been a subject that has been covered on a fairly regular basis by a number of area media outlets. This planning grant (and the public hearing for it) was the subject of a monthly column written by the Executive Director of the PCEDC, which ran in *The Piscataquis Observer* and the *Moosehead Messenger*, the County's two primary newspapers, and was also posted on the PCEDC website, along with a rough draft of the proposal to solicit comments on it from the public. This grant was also discussed with Congressman Michaud during a meeting with the PCEDC on July 6th, which was covered by WVII-TV Channel 7 and the *Observer*. The public hearing notice was run in the *Observer*, and that paper, along with other media outlets, were invited to cover the public hearing. Going forward, the Town and the PCEDC will use press releases/briefings, and e-mail to keep the communities informed as to the progress of this project, as well as to encourage citizen participation in the public hearings and the coordinating and planning event.

Relevance of listed meeting/hearing activities/comments (not counting required public hearing) on application and project development – 4 points

The PTTF is a citizen committee with open meetings, and it has met 17 times in the past 19 months in responding to the Fermata recommendations. As a result, the PTTF, with the assistance of the PCEDC and EMDC, has prepared a priority list of 18 sites for its "nature-based itinerary." As part of that work, the PTTF sought additional funds to organize current and future tourism investment in the County, which led to the submission of this proposal.

Involvement of potential LMI project beneficiaries in development of application and project and how the required public hearing relates to the application development and citizen participation process – 4 points

Due to the high percentage of LMI individuals in Piscataquis County (48.7%), and the fact that the PTTF (and the PCEDC) represents a diverse cross-section of residents (including income), there are undoubtedly LMI project beneficiaries among the PTTF and PCEDC membership who helped develop this application. The draft application was also posted on the PCEDC website in order to solicit comments and suggestions from the public, many of which are undoubtedly LMI.

The public hearing served as an opportunity for individuals (LMI and others) to help shape the development strategy of this grant application. The Executive Director of the PCEDC presented an overview of the grant proposal at the hearing, and provided a summary sheet and copies of the narrative for the attendees. Despite there being only eleven people in attendance, there was significant discussion, especially with the Brownville Selectmen, but with overall enthusiastic support for the application.

How other local resources (cash and in-kind) are directly related to the project and the establishment of a cash value equivalent for all in-kind contributions – 4 points

The PCEDC is committing cash resources in the amount of \$3,775 for the implementation and completion of this plan. In addition, an average of nine PTTF members attending two-hour monthly meetings, at a conservative estimate of \$10.50/hour for their time, represents an additional in-kind contribution of \$2,268.