



**Core Leadership Team of Acadia of the Lands and Forests
Northwestern NB – Témiscouata, QC – Northern Aroostook, ME**

Context

During the last five years, the Organizing Committee of the Congrès mondial acadien (CMA) successfully put together a unique structure to host the biggest event to take place in Northwestern New-Brunswick, Témiscouata (Québec) and North of Aroostook County, Maine. The thought of bringing together people of the three territories to organize such an event was ambitious, but the success of the CMA 2014 proved that Acadia has no boundaries and that the undeniable will of our people to come together and to work towards a common goal is stronger than all the natural, administrative, linguistic, legal and historical boundaries that forged our identity throughout the years.

Over the past two years, an important economic component of the CMA 2014 came up with an ambitious work plan, supported by about a hundred partners and business people with the financial support of many contributors and government bodies. Consultations, focus groups and public meetings were held, regional tools were developed, promising projects were initiated, but most importantly, business relationships and exchanges multiplied.

In March of 2014, a Core Leadership Team of people was put together to continue the economic development¹ after the CMA. The group - mainly composed of business people of the three territories, municipality representatives, young people, various economic and education sectors, economic development agencies and the Native communities – to set and achieve promising short-term,

¹ The definition of economic development adopted by the CLT includes an economic community development and sustainable development perspective. That is to say, the approach takes into account not only economic issues but also social and environmental issues in order to constantly improve the quality of life in general.

medium-term or long-term goals and to strengthen the collaboration within the territory. For this group, the CMA 2014 wasn't an end, but the start to consolidate and realize their vision for the economic development of Acadia of the Lands and Forests.

This document constitutes the strategic plan of the Core Leadership Team of Acadia of the Lands and Forests for the period ranging from 2015 to 2018. This plan is based on the findings from the Vital Economy analysis, the initial action plan of the Core Leadership Team, the recommendations of the CMA 2014 Economic Summit and the results of a questionnaire completed by the Core Leadership Team members in November 2014.

Economic Context

The inventory produced by Vital Economy showed that the Acadia of the Lands and Forests region faces several challenges, however, many opportunities arise as well. This section summarizes these challenges and opportunities:

Challenges

- Little or no sense of regional belonging
- No real sense of urgency in the region
- The language is a significant barrier to trade
- Lack of leaders with a regional vision
- Significant brain drain
- Decrease of entrepreneurship across the region
- Shortage of skills and knowledge
- Fragmentation of tourism between the territories
- International Boundaries (geographical and political) limit the mobility and exchanges
- Important differences between economic structures and regulations
- Lack of a common regional economic vision
- Lack of vision regarding forest management legislation for Crown Lands and Public NB and QC

Opportunities

- Establish an undeniable sense of urgency
- Building the future of the Acadia of the Lands and Forests region by focusing on (the):
 - Development of natural resources
 - Alternative and renewable energy
 - Research and Development (R & D) in companies
 - Development of creative and specialized products and services
 - Combination of natural and cultural specific aspects through multi-dimensional tourism
 - Collaboration with First Nations members on projects of common interest
 - Link between space and culture to provide a common ground to create more interaction beyond borders

Intervention Model

Vision

Following the consensus of the January 21 2014 meeting, the sentence that best sums up the shared vision is: "We can succeed here." This vision is reflected in the desire of Acadia of the Lands and Forests to be:

- A vibrant and prosperous place in which to live, work and play.
- Visionary and daring, embrace and leverage our region's rich heritage and unique assets, retain and attract talent.
- The Atlantic Gateway to international opportunity.
- Recognized and valued for our richness in natural resources and access to our first class transportation and logistics networks.
- An innovative international cross-border incubator.
- A model for how a boundary-free regional economy unleashes and creates unlimited economic prosperity for all.
- A multicultural, cross border regional economy, beyond politic borders, that prospers economically while also increasing our quality of place.

Mandate

The Core Leadership Team of the Acadia of the Lands and Forests acts as a think-tank and action group on economic regional issues. It stimulates and facilitates regional collaboration by mobilizing stakeholders to leverage the strengths of the entire region and face common challenges. It implements a strategic plan that focuses on priorities for action and measurable concrete results in order to ensure the economic development of the region.

Founding Principles

At the end of the CMA 2014 Economic Summit, the CLT members presented a declaration. They solemnly committed to:

- **Keep the stimulus and the legacy generated by the 2014 Congrès mondial acadien** vibrant and sustainable for our region's economic development of Acadia of the Lands and Forests;
- **Establish an effective and efficient effort of cross-border cooperation** for economic development between all Acadia of the Lands and Forests communities;
- **Ensure that the private sector plays a leading role** in the running and the realization of the cross-border initiatives which come from this effort;
- **Gradually increase and multiply the number and variety of economic, social and cultural stakeholders** likely to contribute in a positive way to this effort, based on the successes obtained by its implementation;
- **Ensure that the effort constantly fulfills the needs and aspirations of all** Acadia of the Lands and Forests communities;
- **Report to the public and the potential financial backers** the progress resulting from this effort.

Throughout the implementation of this strategic plan, this commitment will serve Core Leadership Team members as guiding principles.

Membership

The Core Leadership Team is mainly composed of business people of the three territories, municipality organizations representatives, youth, various economic and education sectors leaders, economic development organizations and the Native communities representative of the Acadia of the Lands and Forests.

Operating Model

Board of Directors

The Board is composed of a total of ten member, the chair, three representatives of Northwestern New Brunswick, three representatives of Témiscouata, Québec and three from the Northern Aroostook County, Maine. They are appointed by the members of the CLT and responsible for the governance of the organization in respect to its bylaws.

Working Groups

The implementation of the activities from the strategic plan will be made by working groups that include both CLT members and other key players in the intervention field. Within the strategic plan adopted by the CLG, each group will be responsible for identifying and prioritizing its activities and means to achieve results. The CLT will, when possible, support its working groups.

Coordination

To ensure permanence, a resource person will be assigned to the support and coordination. The coordinator will be responsible for:

- Supporting the CLT in all their efforts to establish of a network of business people and communities in the region;
- Promoting and coordinating the development of economic initiatives as proposed by the CLT in its action plan;
- Acting as administrative and technical support to the CLT;
- Supporting the CLT in the implementation of this strategic plan.

Areas of Intervention

- Area 1: Planning, canvassing and organizational support
- Area 2: Economic development and entrepreneurship
- Area 3: Access to information and to communication tools
- Area 4: Human capital and cross-border workforce mobility
- Area 5: Cross-border life and exchanges
- Area 6: Tourism, culture and quality of place

Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes from the implementation of this strategic plan must show a relationship between long-term outcome expected in the next 5 to 8 years (final), the medium-term outcomes expected in a horizon of 3 to 5 years (intermediate) and short-term outcomes expected in a horizon of 1 to 3 years (immediate). Note that although this strategic plan is part of a very short-term period, resulting actions must be part of a longer-term vision.

The **final outcome (long term 5 to 8 years)** expected from the implementation of this strategic plan is:

The Acadia of the Lands and Forests region economy is growing.

The **intermediate outcome (medium-term 3 to 5 years)** expected from the implementation of this strategic plan are:

Area 1: Planning, canvassing and organizational support

After the CMA 2014, a group of economic and community leaders is brought together in order to pursue exchanges and actions on a long-term basis mainly in the field of economic development and community development as well. The Core Leadership Team drafts a strategic plan and ensures its implementation.

Area 2: Economic development and entrepreneurship

Acadia of the Lands and Forests economic development stakeholders are working together on common economic regional issues and entrepreneurship is increasing.

Area 3: Access to information and to communication tools

The Acadia of the Lands and Forests region has access to information and regional communication tools and the region is recognized for its economic leadership.

Area 4: Human capital and cross-border workforce mobility

The Acadia of the Lands and Forests population has access to jobs in the region and companies benefit from the labor required to meet their needs.

Area 5: Cross-border life and exchanges

The Acadia of the Lands and Forests population is developing a sense of regional identity and develops regional reflex to take advantage of opportunities, products and services available throughout the region.

Area 6: Tourism, culture and quality of place

The Acadia of the Lands and Forests region is a tourist, cultural, and settlement destination known for its attractions and quality of life by the local population and by people from outside the region as well.

The **immediate outcome (short-term 1 to 3 years)** expected from the implementation of this strategic plan are:

Area 1: Planning, canvassing and organizational support

1. The Core Leadership Team is pursuing its involvement and actions in economic development after the CMA 2014 and ensures the implementation of its strategic plan and action plan.

1.1: The Core Leadership Team is an independent organization that implements its strategic plan and action plan and achieves concrete, measurable results.

Area 2: Economic development and entrepreneurship

2. Acadia of the Lands and Forests economic development stakeholders are working together on common economic regional issues and entrepreneurship is increasing.

2.1: Acadia of the Lands and Forests's Economic profile and business directory are developed and promoted in order to obtain an asset mapping of the region.

2.2: Businesses in Acadia of the Lands and Forests main economic sectors (ex: forestry and manufacturing) are connected.

2.3: Existing "buy local" campaigns in Acadia of the Lands and Forests are connected and reinforced.

2.4: The feasibility for the establishment and promotion of the Acadia of the Lands and Forests as "Exceptional Economic Zone " is performed.

2.5: Efficient transportation solutions are explored.

2.6: Entrepreneurship is on the rise and companies seeking succession find buyers.

Area 3: Access to information and to communication tools

3. The Acadia of the Lands and Forests region has access to information and regional communication tools and the region is recognized for its economic leadership.

3.1: A virtual collaborative platform and tools for information sharing between Core Leadership Group members, sub-working groups and public are developed.

3.2: Success stories from Acadia of the lands and forests are promoted.

Area 4: Human capital and cross-border workforce mobility

4. The Acadia of the Lands and Forests population has access to jobs in the region, companies benefit from the labor required to meet their needs.

4.1 The Acadia of the Lands and Forests population has greater access to the necessary training for the jobs available in the area.

4.2: Employers have more access to the necessary workforce and skills.

4.3 Acadia of the Lands and Forests population's language skills (French and English) are reinforced.

Area 5: Cross-border life and exchanges

5. Acadia of the Lands and Forests population is developing a sense of regional identity and develops regional reflex to take advantage of opportunities, products and services available throughout the region.

5.1: Increase number of Acadia of the Lands and Forests population who has a passport.

5.2: Increase number of regional activities.

Area 6: Tourism, culture and quality of place

6. The Acadia of the Lands and Forests region is a tourist, cultural, and settlement destination known for its attractions and quality of life by the local population and by people from outside the region as well.

6.1: The region benefits from tours and quality touristic products that showcase the uniqueness of the Acadia of the Lands and Forests.

6.2: Acadia of the Lands and Forests tours are connected to other touristic tours and francophone networks from outside the region.

6.3: Artistic and cultural groups from Acadia of the Lands and Forests are in contact.

Implementation

The Executive Committee will be responsible for ensuring the proper implementation of this strategic plan. Coordination to Core Leadership Team will be responsible for the identification, implementation and follow-up of activities from the action plan. Members of the Core Leadership Team, through their sub-working groups will be responsible for identification, implementation and follow-up of activities under their responsibility.

This strategic plan should be reviewed on an annual or biannual basis by Core Leadership Group, meanwhile, the action plans should be updated on a regular basis by the Board of directors.