



**Rural Communities Initiative  
Economic Development Strategic Plan**

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## Rural Economic Development Roundtable

Hosted by:



## Portland, Maine

June 8-9, 2009

Sponsored by:  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Office of Family Assistance



## Rural Communities Initiative Economic Development Strategic Plan

### Background

Rural America is home to about 17 percent (50 million) of the Nation's people, comprises over 2,000 counties, and accounts for 75 percent of the Nation's land. But, the 2001 recession caused rural income growth to slow and poverty and assistance payments to creep back up.



Evidence points to lower rural educational attainment, less competition for workers among rural employers, and fewer highly skilled jobs in the rural occupational mix.<sup>1</sup> In the last 13 months, the number of unemployed people living in rural America has increased by 297,000. All but 15,000 of those jobs were lost in one month, December 2008. The jobs lost in rural counties in December 2008 dwarfed the losses of the previous year. During the first 12 months of the current recession — from December 2007 through November 2008 — rural counties lost just fewer than 15,000 jobs. The largest

percentage increases in the number of unemployed workers can be found in counties in the Great Plains.<sup>2</sup>

### The Rural Communities Initiative Economic Development Roundtable

Rural communities have specific challenges in responding to changing economic structures, forces, and challenges. Understanding change and adapting to altering economic landscapes can allow rural communities to be fully engaged in the growing economies of the 21st Century. Their unique assets coupled with innovative strategies can allow rural communities to prosper in an ever-changing world, especially with the current state of the economy. As a result of the OFA Rural Communities Initiative Academy and as part of the resulting individual technical assistance plans, several rural sites expressed interest in learning more about effective strategies to create jobs, improve local economies, and increase opportunities for rural residents.

The Rural Economic Development Roundtable will feature innovative practitioners and recognized academics in the fields of rural economic development, job creation, strategic planning, and other topics identified by the Rural Communities Initiative Technical Assistance (TA) sites as critical to serving rural TANF participants. This specialized event will provide TA sites with a hands-on, interactive opportunity to work with expert faculty to learn more about economic development, introduce new and effective models and tools, and facilitate the sharing of information between TA sites. Attendees will be provided with tools, potential promising practice models, and guidance on designing a strategic economic development plan to improve the employment opportunities for TANF participants becoming more self-sufficient.

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Emphases/Rural/> (Accessed on April 29, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.dailyonder.com/job-losses-explode-rural-america/2009/02/25/1953> (Accessed on April 29, 2009).



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Economic development is necessary for a community to renew itself and thrive. Many rural communities are losing populations, jobs, and quality of life due to economic instability and changing markets. During the Rural Economic Development Roundtable, Rural teams will have the opportunity to hear from experts and stakeholders, as well as peers as they develop a strategic outline for improving local economies.

**Participant and Content Faculty Introductions**

During this session your team will hear from other Rural Communities Initiative teams that are also interested in economic development. Also, you will hear from Federal, State, and Regional representatives from various agencies and programs assisting low-income-serving populations. Lastly, you will hear from a set of national technical assistance specialists and economic development experts who have years of experience working with rural communities, low-income populations, and other stakeholders in the development of strategic economic development activities. Below, you can take notes of any important items that you hear that you will seek additional clarification on. Also, prepare a set of questions for each expert that you will ask during the Roundtable and that improve your teams strategic planning process.

Content Faculty Member	Key Points	Follow-Up Questions
<i>Jim Richardson, Executive Director, National Rural Funders Collaborative</i>		
<i>Deborah Markley, Managing Director and Director of Research, RUPRI, Center for Rural Entrepreneurship</i>		
<i>Lionel J. (Bo) Beaulieu, Director, Southern Rural Development Center</i>		



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Content Faculty Member	Key Points	Follow-Up Questions
<p><i>Karen Elzey</i>, Vice President and Executive Director, Institute for a Competitive Workforce, U.S. Chamber of Commerce</p>		
<p><i>Diana Hinton-Noel</i>, Director-Rural/Economic Development, National Conference of State Legislatures</p>		
<p><i>Eva Greenwalt</i>, Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED), Community Jobs Initiative</p>		



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Content Faculty Member	Key Points	Follow-Up Questions
<i>Elizabeth Ehrlich, New York City Parks Opportunity Program</i>		
<i>Denise Tolbert, New York City Human Resources Administration</i>		

**Economic Development for Rural Communities**

Economic development in rural communities varies differently from economic development in urban areas. Rural communities must take advantage of local resources such as location, geographical setting, financial resources, citizens, and other special “things” that make them different from any other area.

Objective

This session will allow you to outline specific emerging economic strengths and challenges in your local community and with the content faculty. Sites will highlight the key considerations of economic development, entrepreneurship, small business development, and workforce development. Content faculty will discuss and share applicable tasks and activities that have been used throughout the country to assist sites design preliminary plans. Using the “points to ponder” section you can jot down notes and information that you gain from the presentations. You will also have an opportunity to ask questions of the content faculty that you wrote down earlier.

Content Faculty

- Jim Richardson, Executive Director, National Rural Funders Collaborative, Texas
- Deborah Markley, Managing Director and Director of Research, RUPRI, Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, Nebraska
- Lionel J. (Bo) Beaulieu, Director, Southern Rural Development Center, Mississippi



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Points to Ponder:

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Deborah Markley

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Lionel J. (Bo) Beaulieu

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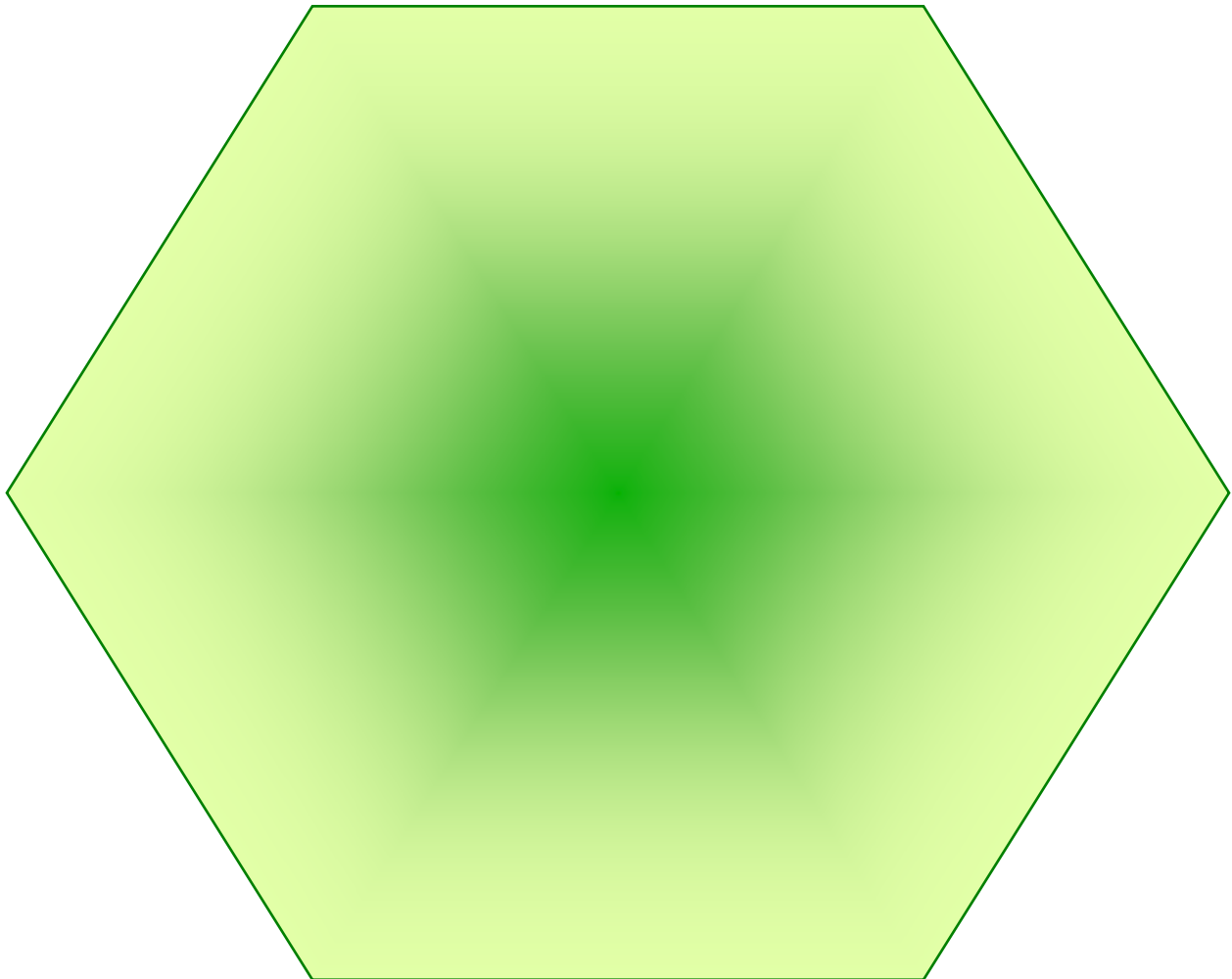
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**Reflections- Day One**

Day one of the Economic Development Roundtable has been quite productive. This session will allow you an opportunity to ask content faculty follow-up questions on topics discussed during the previous session. This session will also lay the foundation for the Strategic Planning session on Day Two and also allow your team to think more about strategic planning around economic development and what you seek to gain from content faculty on Day Two.

Using the space below write down some key points from Day One and any items that you want to make certain that you get further information about on Day Two.





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### **Developing Local/Regional Economic Clusters**

Developing local/regional economic clusters is an effective strategy for improving economic development, especially in rural communities. Economic clusters assist communities add value close to home and create jobs in the process. Economic clusters can be a group of related stakeholders, businesses, nonprofits, policymakers, etc., with common interests, similar products, and similar customers. Economic clusters have been used in regions throughout the country with marked success. The cluster concept involves more than geographical proximity, but they incorporate the development of relationships between neighboring locations that allow for them to feed off of each other. Regional groups of industries that share common markets, suppliers, or workforce skills can assist in stimulating economic development in rural areas. This session will provide participants strategies, tools, and resources for developing regional business, education, and economic clusters.

#### Objective

Content faculty will outline key components of successful economic clusters and participants will be able to ask questions as they continue to develop individual economic development plans. Using the “points to ponder” section you can jot down notes and information that you gain from the presentations. You will also have an opportunity to ask questions of the content faculty that you wrote down earlier.

#### Content Faculty

- **Sally Cutler**, Executive Director, North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, Wisconsin
- **Jerry Conover**, Director, Indiana Business Research Center
- **Christina Sklarz-Libby**, Director, North Star Alliance Initiative, U.S. Department of Labor- WIRED Program
- **Susan Swanton**, Executive Director, Maine Marine Trades Association, Co-Chair, Maine WIRED Program

#### Points to Ponder:





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**Sally Cutler**

**Jerry Conover**

**Cristina Sklarz-Libby**

**Susan Swanton**



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### Partnering with Education and Economic Development Stakeholders

Establishing and strengthening key education and economic development stakeholders is a key component of ensuring that your residents are prepared for potential economic growth. Educational institutions like community colleges, trade schools, and universities serve as pipelines for skilled work forces that will provide your local community with brain power and a marketable base of professionals.

#### Objective

This session will outline strategies for engaging local educational and economic stakeholders such as community colleges, Chambers of Commerce, policymakers, and local government in working with TANF and other low-income individuals in rural communities. This session will allow attendees to discuss strategies, tools, and resources needed to establish a working relationship with various stakeholders in their rural communities and regions. Using the “points to ponder” section you can jot down notes and information that you gain from the presentations. You will also have an opportunity to ask questions of the content faculty that you wrote down earlier. Also, using the “Economic Development Partnership Profile” will allow your team to outline key partnerships, potential partners, and how that partnership could benefit your long-term goals.

#### Content Faculty

- **Jennifer Hilmer-Capece**, Program Manager, American Association of Community Colleges Center for Workforce and Economic Development
- **Karen Elzey**, Vice President and Executive Director, Institute for a Competitive Workforce, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Washington, District of Columbia
- **Diana Hinton-Noel**, Director- Rural/Economic Development, National Conference of State Legislatures, Washington, District of Columbia

#### Points to Ponder:



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**Jennifer Hilmer Capece**

**Karen Elzey**

**Diana Hinton-Noel**



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**Activity #1**

**Economic Development Partnership Profile**

We know that creating effective partnerships with various economic development stakeholders is a key to success. Whether it is educational institutions, workforce agencies, or industry representatives, these partnerships serve as a springboard to systemic economic development. The activity below reflects your opinions and observations about both the quantity and quality of partnerships that you may want to focus on. The Partnership Profile below is a guide to help you understand more about existing local partnerships, think about potential partners, and identify additional partners in your economic development plan and strategy.

Using the activity below, your team will be able to outline the current and potential partners that you may be able to work with. Think about these current partnerships and potential partnerships and what you believe their specific purpose(s) would be. Work together to provide specific examples of you'll develop and utilize these partnerships.

**Partnership Index**

	Education Partners	Employment Partners	Policy Partners	Additional Partners
<b>Who are the current and potential partners?</b>				



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### **Job Creation Strategies for Rural America**

No economic development plan is complete without ensuring that local residents are able to work, provide for their families, and move toward self-sufficiency. Economic development in rural communities relies heavily on equipping managers with skills that would help them adapt to rapidly changing economic conditions. Economic development requires proactive, innovative approaches to creating jobs to underpin all aspects of community development. Many rural communities are using innovative job creation strategies to target their low-income populations. Job creation is an important component of any successful economic development program and this session will provide participants with the opportunity to learn more about successful job creation strategies for improving economic growth.

#### Objective

Content faculty will outline key components of successful rural job creation programs and activities and participants will have the opportunity to ask questions, while developing action steps for improving job creation among their rural communities. Using the “points to ponder” section you can jot down notes and information that you gain from the presentations. You will also have an opportunity to ask questions of the content faculty that you wrote down earlier.

#### Content Faculty

- Eva Greenwalt, Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED), Community Jobs Initiative, Washington
- Susan Wilder Crane, Executive Director, Port Jobs, Apprenticeship Opportunities Project
- Elizabeth Ehrlich, New York City Parks Opportunity Program
- Denise Tolbert, New York City Human Resources Administration



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Eva Greenwalt

Elizabeth Ehrlich

Denise Tolbert



## Rural Communities Initiative Economic Development Strategic Plan

### Rural Economic Development Strategic Planning

Participants will have a final opportunity to meet with content faculty and discuss issues/topics pertinent to economic development at the local level. Sites will have an opportunity to think through strategies for addressing economic development issues in their local communities and will have additional time to consult with content faculty members.

#### Objective

Sites will be able to outline potential areas for economic development and think about additional technical assistance and identify additional resources to address specific topics/issues affecting rural communities.

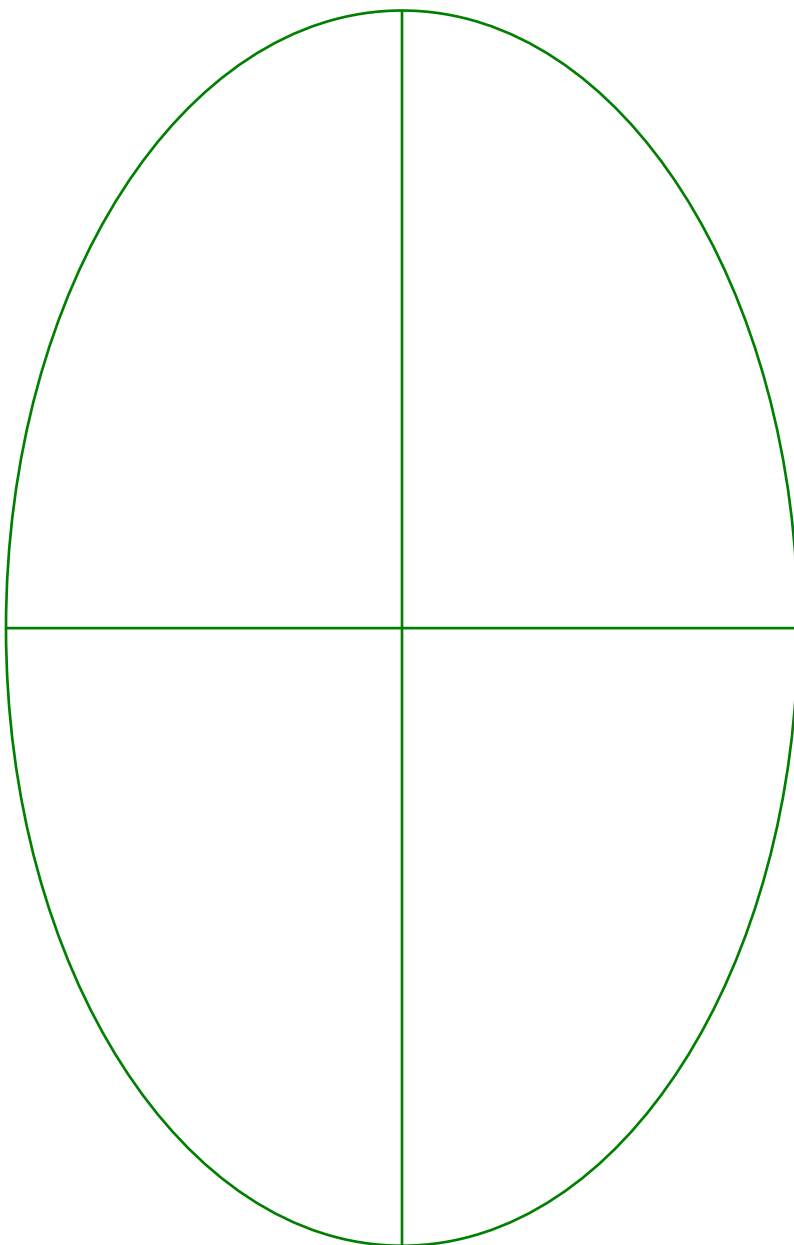
#### *Determining Economic Assets*

The first step in improving the economic strength of a rural community is the need to take inventory of your economic assets and setting economic development goals and objectives. By creating a strategic economic development plan you can springboard your community wealth and well-being.

During this session of the Roundtable your team will begin to think about what makes your region, area, community, special. What is it that you do better than anyone else in the State, in the region, in the country, maybe even in the world?

In the pie chart (Activity #2) think about the four most important things about your local area. Whether its being the blueberry capital of the world or being the biggest apple grower in the Midwest, strategize with your team about what you have to offer to potential businesses and investors.

#### Activity #2







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### *Developing Economic Development Goals*

The intent of your strategic economic development plan is to identify specific actions and programs to enable your local community to achieve your stated goal(s).



Activity #3 will allow your team to begin to understand what (1) strengths your community has and (2) develop a set of goals that you can work with other key stakeholders to improve the economic vitality of your rural community.

An example of an economic development goal is:

To improve the economic viability and attractiveness of Portland, as well as strengthen its status as the blueberry capital of Maine and one of America's most livable rural communities.

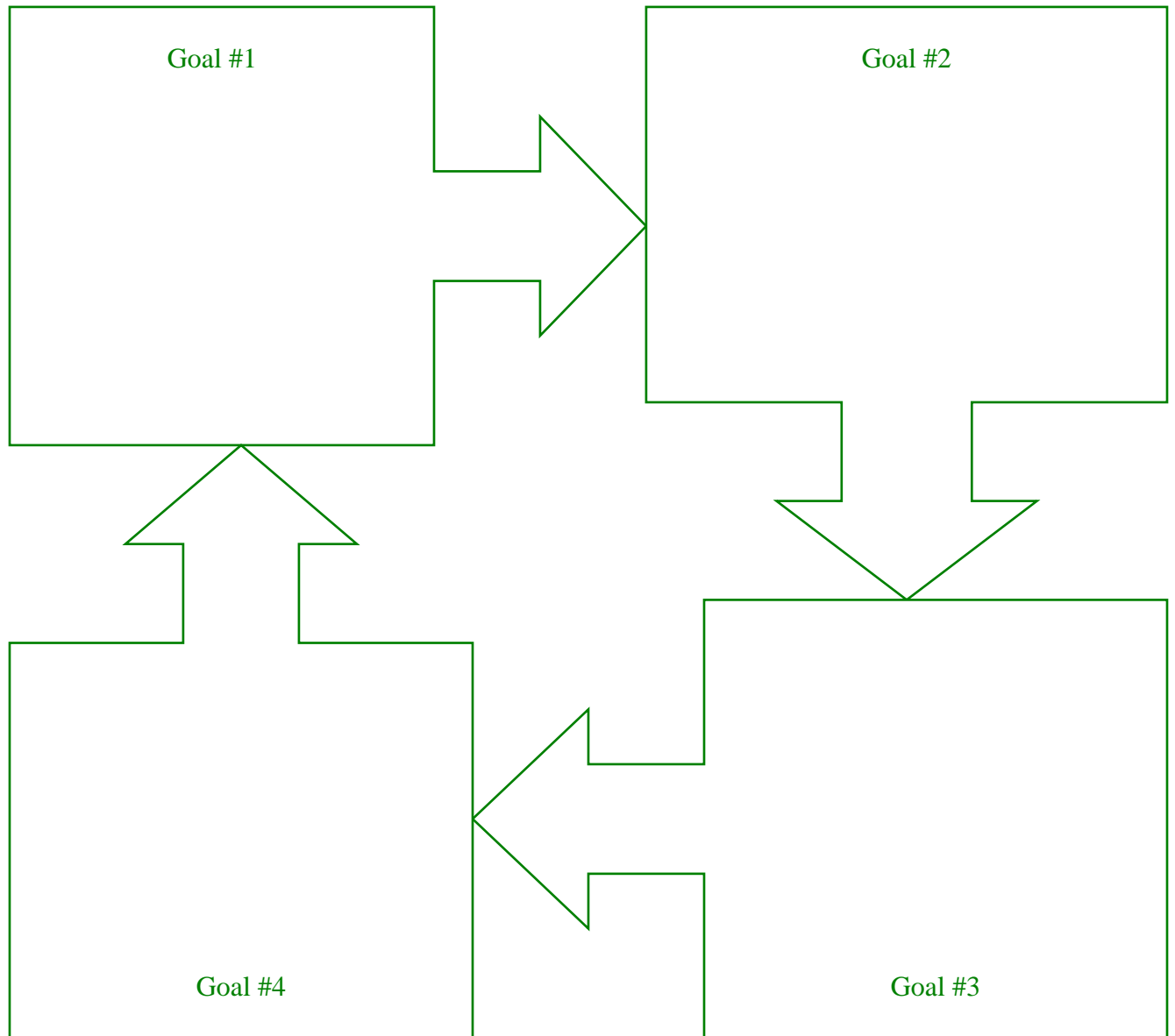
Portland will do this by creatively and realistically utilizing its seasonal blueberry sales strengths and identifiable current and future development opportunities.



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Activity #3





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You have now developed a set of goals for your local area. In Activity #4 your team will begin to organize your Strategic Economic Development Plan, prioritize specific activities, and map out a strategy for implementation. Each goal is followed by objectives, strategies for implementation, and key partners. Each goal also includes defined performance measures and benchmarks. At the end, you should have a desired outcome of your economic development plan.

Activity #4

Goal:				
Objective:				
Objective:				
Objective:				



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<b>Implementation Strategy:</b>				
<b>Potential Partners:</b>				
<b>Performance Measure:</b>				
<b>Benchmark:</b>				



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Desired Outcome				

Notes:

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The Rural Communities Initiative is coordinated by:



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