

A LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR DIOMEDE



Workshop Participants

Patrick Omiak	IRA President
Dennis Soolook	Resident
Peter Ahkvaluk	IRA Parliamentarian
Alois Ahkvaluk	Resident
Ruth Milligrock	Elder's Advisory Committee
Herbert Milligrock	Resident
John Iyapana	IRA Sargent-at-Arms
Helen Iyapana	IRA Secretary
Etta Menadelook	Tribal Coordinator
Darlene Ahkvaluk	Diomedé Joint Utility
Edward Soolook	Resident
Patrick Soolook	Resident
Mary Menadelook	Resident
Raleigh Ahkvaluk	Power Plant Operator

Top Economic Priorities

1. Get adequate housing
2. Prevent Erosion
3. Improve Sanitation
4. Increase Transportation
5. Search & Rescue Training
6. Repair & Maintain Trails
7. Preserve Our Heritage & Language

Creating Local Economic Development Plans

Local Economic Development Plans (LEDPS) analyze local conditions, identifies problems and opportunities, sets goals, designs strategies to achieve these goals, coordinates activities to implement the strategies, and evaluates accomplishments. The mission of each Local Economic Development Plan is to:

- Foster a more stable and diversified economy
- Create and sustain employment opportunities
- Strengthen the skills and qualifications of our workforce
- Improve living conditions throughout the Region

The Bering Strait Region has one of the highest unemployment and poverty rates in Alaska, and several non-profit, state and federal agencies are currently attempting to alleviate economic distress in the Region. By creating Local Economic Development Plans for each community in the Bering Strait Region, local governments and entities will possess a tool that identifies community needs and provides development strategies. A LEDP facilitates a consolidated effort to implement economic development strategies that will subsequently decrease unemployment and welfare dependency. Without LEDPS, a duplication of efforts may occur in various projects and programs, and hinder the ability to improve the economic and social well-being of each community.

How were the LEDPs Developed?

To create LEDPs, Kawerak staff adhered to US Department of Commerce's "Guide for Area Overall Economic Development Program," as well as the USDA Rural Development's "A Guide to Strategic Planning for Rural Communities." Both publications emphasized grassroots involvement to assess and maximize local resources, and provided outlines for creating a strategic plan. Kawerak's Community and Economic Development (CED) staff began the process by incorporating previous strategies and studies into the plan, then facilitated planning workshops in 13 communities throughout the Region. Representatives from native corporations, tribal and city councils, local businesses, and interested residents identified community strengths, concerns, goals, and specific projects associated with economic development. The result is a consolidated record of economic needs and activities for our Region. Each LEDP analyzes local conditions; identifies problems and opportunities; sets goals; designs strategies to achieve these goals; coordinates activities to implement the strategies; and evaluates our accomplishments. Because local residents developed it, this document truly represents how each community will improve their economy.

Each workshop began with the distribution of workshop packets and introductions; a description of the Overall Economic Development Plan, the Bering Strait ARDOR Board, and Kawerak's CED program activities; followed by the purpose of the community workshop. Worksheets were given to each participant with instructions to identify the community's most critical economic issues. Once completed, every participant voiced his or her concerns by reviewing his or her list with the other participants, and their thoughts were

written on a flip chart. Participants were then asked to approach the flip chart to identify the top three economic issues/concerns in their community. While priorities were tallied, workshop participants determined as many local strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOTs) as possible.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

SWOT identifies community strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats brought about through economic and social change. Strengths and weaknesses identify current issues, while opportunities and threats focus on those in the future. Strengths represent positive activities in the community, and are the foundation for community and economic development. Weaknesses on the other hand, are challenges the community needs overcome, and paves the way toward improvement. Identifying opportunities offers a chance to brainstorm on activities that will benefit their community, and to determine benchmarks for future development. And finally, identifying threats helps community and economic developers prevent or reduce the negative impacts of continued economic and social change. Discussing community values and concerns provides the opportunity to expand an individual's perspective to ideas never considered before. While one individual may identify an issue as a strength or opportunity, another may perceive the same issue as a weakness or threat. When clarifying these differences is conducted in a positive manner, the process can be a healthy experience for a community and spark the potential for growth.

The organization of SWOT lists and regional priorities are based seven economic foundations developed by the Committee for Economic Development, an independent research and educational organization of over two hundred business executives and educators. The CED believes the important role for state and local governments is to invest in economic foundations that enable the economy to grow, adapt and compete. These foundations include a capable and motivated workforce; sound physical infrastructure; well-managed natural resources; knowledge and technology; enterprise development; an attractive quality of life; and fiscal management. (Committee for Economic Development 1986) Additional categories included in our analysis to reflect the needs of our communities include geography and climate, and community capacity. Basing our analysis on this framework enable us to determine how we should spend our limited resources in the most cost-effective manner.

Strengths

Quality of Life

- Our children don't see a lot of alcohol abuse.
- It's safe here; people can visit one another anytime.
- Our children are protected because we're isolated from the mainland.
- We have cultural ties in native dancing, ivory carving and food preservation.

Natural Resources & Environment

- We have a lot of native foods.
- We are connected to our land.
- Hunting our own food makes us independent & healthy.
- We don't have traffic & pollution.

We can harvest many greens & berries.
We have many forms of hunting; many animals migrate through here.
Our community has three meat holes that we fill in the summer time.

Weaknesses

Labor Force

Some residents are unable to meet job qualifications.

Business & Industry

We have a high rate of unemployment.
We can't barter arts & crafts to buy goods & pay bills anymore; people need cash.
We have very low cash flow into our community.
Our summer & fall mail service is only once a week.

Quality of Life

We don't have anymore contact with our Russian relatives; we need to increase communication.
Search & rescue has a slow response rate.
Kawerak doesn't have funding for a VPSO.
We need to increase community participation.

Infrastructure

Our dumpsite is near the community and the animals don't come as close anymore.
Our community trails are in poor condition.
Trail erosion causes us to lose our access to greens.
We don't have a heavy equipment garage.
Our homes are old & inadequate; as many as 7-8 people live in 1 house.
We don't have sewer & water in our homes.
We don't have a landfill.

Opportunities

Business & Industry

Market the celebration of the 2000 New Year on both islands.
Create employment.
Create an ivory co-op.
Expand our arts & crafts market.
Increase summer & fall flight service to and from Diomedes.
Increase cash flow into the island thru a revolving fund & job training.

Quality of Life

Help relocate our Russian relatives back to Big Diomedes.
Open the waters between both islands to increase economic opportunities, subsistence activities & cultural visitation.
Secure funds & equipment for search & rescue.
Obtain equipment & training for Diomedes's fire department.

Infrastructure

We should support the purchase and use of Big Diomedé.
Get new homes.
Install water & sewer.
Obtain housing in Wales and Nome for patients & family while in town for appointments. Designate a dumping sight, or create a landfill on Diomedé.

Threats

Natural Resources & Environment

Hunting regulations restrict our subsistence way of life.
Loss of subsistence rights to the state and federal governments.
The Island's permafrost is melting & our island is shrinking.

Quality of Life

We're losing our native language; not many young people speak Eskimo.
We're losing our culture to television, video games and gambling.
Breakers cause erosion.

STRATEGIC PLANS FOR DIOMEDE

PRIORITY #1: HOUSING

Goal: Get Adequate Housing

Objective #1:

- It's been 26 years since the Bering Strait Housing Authority has provided any housing to Diomedé residents. Diomedé residents have completed housing applications on two occasions, but haven't received a response. Pat Omiak will ask the IRA Secretary Helen Iyapana to invite Wayne Mundy BSHRA Director to attend Diomedé's annual meeting scheduled for April 11, 1999 to meet residents, and assess housing circumstances for himself. Wayne will be asked to give a presentation about when Diomedé can expect to receive housing assistance. Ask when BSRHA will have their next board meeting.

Timeline: Friday, April 2, 1999

Person Responsible: Pat Omiak, IRA President.

Objective #2:

- Invite Frank Tadda, Kawerak HIP Director to attend Diomedé's annual meeting, to observe housing conditions for himself, and to give a presentation concerning HIP services.

Timeline: Friday, April 2, 1999

Person Responsible: Pat Omiak, IRA President.

PRIORITY #2: INFRASTRUCTURE

Goal: Prevent Erosion; Create a Harbor, Dock, Gabion, or Breakwater.

Objective #1:

- Ask IRA Council Secretary Helen Iyapana to call Senator Steven's Office to obtain more information about the Denali Commission, where it will be located, and to find out if Diomedede would qualify for funds to prevent erosion & to expand transportation infrastructure on the Island.

Time line: Provide information at the upcoming joint-meeting scheduled for mid-September, 1999.

Person Responsible: Helen Iyapana will contact Senator Steven's Office.

Objective #2:

- Matilda Larson will help draft a resolution for the joint-council meeting to give to Senator Stevens concerning community's needs, and request the use of Denali Commission funds.

Time line: Fax to IRA office by September, 1999.

Person Responsible: Matilda Larson, Kawerak CED.

PRIORITY #3: SANITATION

Goal: Improve Sanitation through Water & Sewer, and Waste Disposal

Objective #1:

- Follow up on water & sewer issues after Diomedede has addressed housing issues with Wayne Mundy, BSRHA and Frank Tadda, Kawerak HIP.

Objective # 2:

- Follow up with Sterling Gologergen & Ted Meyer (Kawerak Planning) about hiring a grantwriter for Diomedede. Advertise for a community grantwriter on the scanner to receive training.

Time line: Find a grantwriter by April 15, 1999.

Person responsible: Patrick Soolook.

Objective #3:

- After training, have the grantwriter work on a grant application for an incinerator. Diomedede IRA office has information about incinerators.

Time line: Grant application should be complete by the joint-meeting scheduled for mid-September.

Person responsible: Patrick Soolook will oversee the grantwriter's task.

Objective #4:

- Patrick Soolook will submit the imminent threat grant narrative to HUD that will begin the erosion project.

Time line: Project narrative (SF-272 or 269) will be submitted to HUD before July 1999.

Person Responsible: Patrick Soolook will submit the narrative to HUD.

PRIORITIZATION #4: TRANSPORTATION

Objective #1:

- Designate a Diomedes Resident to attend the Kawerak Freight Conference scheduled for April 15-16 1999. Possible candidates include Chuck Menadelook, Gabriel Ozenna, and Pat Omiak. The IRA will also advertise for a conference participant on the scanner, and Pat Omiak will travel if no one else can. This conference gives the opportunity for Diomedes residents to network with agency representatives associated with Freight issues.

Timeline: Travel scholarship application due one week before April 15.

Person responsible: IRA staff.

PRIORITIZATION # 5: TRAIL MAINTENANCE & REPAIRS

Objective #1:

- Pat Omiak will look into the BIA road budget to determine if funds can be allocated to work on the trails this summer. Funds will be used to purchase equipment including shovels & picks, and to hire local labor to work on the trails.

Time line: See if funds can be allocated for trail repair and maintenance by June 1999.

Person responsible: Pat Omiak, IRA President.