Skagit
County WA

Economic Development Strategic Plan

February 25, 2016

Why Do a Strategic Plan?

- Change is inevitable – question is do we want to direct and influence how it happens, or be passive and reactive?

- Luck is not a strategic plan

- Must have a roadmap and a way to evaluate whether we are making progress; fix what isn't working

- This is how we can achieve multiple goals and objectives – with coordination, planning and collaboration (clear roles and responsibilities): being pro-active

How Did We Do This Strategic Plan?

- Began immediately – last August – and assembled a 28-member Steering Committee representing diverse parts of Skagit County and its economy

- Hosted two Town Halls (Nov. 17 and Jan. 20) and received input from nearly 200 participants (additional input via email, surveys and EDASC website)

- Extensive further review by Steering Committee and EDASC Board, SCOG (will serve as CEDs)

What Will This Plan Do?

- From this county-wide plan EDASC will derive our work plan for the next 3 years, with goals, objectives and strategies

- The work plan will outline EDASC's efforts both in programs (projects) and in community-wide capacity-building

- We will develop metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of what we do, measuring both inputs and outcomes, check-lists and quantifiable measures

Guiding **Principles**: Rules to Remember!

- Don't assume! Because you hear one thing and not another, don't assume there's an exclusion. No black/white, win/lose, no absolutes!

- Primary industry defined: make the pie bigger

- Diversification important here just as in your 401k

- Modesty is appealing except in economic development

- Good jobs, healthy and sustainable environment in every sense

- Collaboration is the word!

# Business Retention and Expansion: Focus on Existing Businesses

NEW

- **Survey** existing businesses to determine their needs, obstacles, plans, and networks (i.e., to generate recruitment prospects that would benefit the companies)
- **Visit** with companies to provide support and connect with appropriate resources (e.g., export promotion, classes and seminars, networking, other non-profits that provide assistance, local, state and federal agency assistance)
- **Work** to maintain critical mass for identified key sectors to ensure continued market viability (agriculture, advanced manufacturing, marine, resource-based industries)
- **Serve** as a resource, connector and facilitator for businesses to interact with governments and agencies to resolve issues efficiently

Business **Recruitment**:
Diversifying Skagit County's "Portfolio" with **New Businesses**

NEW
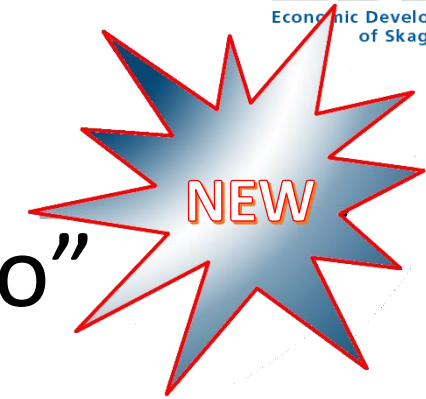
Create a professional, pro-active, targeted, research-based global business recruitment program for Skagit County

- Focus primarily on established business clusters first: advanced manufacturing, maritime, aerospace, agriculture and forestry

- Domestic and International marketing using research and leads from existing companies and other sources to identify good prospects

EDASC **Website** is Key

- Revamp website to launch an effective site search function and library with data layers useful to prospects and the local community: all available sites and buildings, demographics, geography, utilities, transportation, etc.

- Invite each of the localities, Ports and other related agencies to submit their individual economic development plans to EDASC for inclusion on the website, and convene a group annually at least to review, discuss and improve collaboration on individual and collective goals under the auspices of EDASC's county-wide economic development strategic plan

Marketing: What, How & Whom

- Launch a branded marketing program serving all of Skagit County and its cities, towns and ports

- Identify and improve the availability and of parcels and buildings for marketing, including adaptive reuse and brownfields redevelopment

- Generate a program to seek out opportunities that fit Skagit County generally and its constituent cities, towns and ports individually, according to their plans and assets

Building Community **Capacity**

NEW

EDASC as convener, facilitator to collaboratively address community-wide issues impacting the economy and our ability to attract and retain good jobs

EDASC
Economic Development Association
of Skagit County

Areas for Community-wide Collaboration

- Work to ensure that the entire County has access to **fiber** for ease of commerce and communication

- Convene all partners, public and private, to pass the **Tourism Promotion Area (TPA)** and develop and house the County's tourism attraction program serving all communities and sites

- Promote **identification of available properties** and, by extension, properties for conservation, so prospects and residents alike can benefit

- Develop ongoing **relationships with higher education** in the region to collaborate in the areas of workforce development, research and commercialization, international business and strategies to enhance specific business sectors

More areas for community collaboration

- Serve as an **active promoter for Skagit County's economy**, educating and speaking on issues that affect the County and its businesses and workers, and contributing to the development of policies improving opportunities for all, with special focus on our targeted industry sectors and agriculture/natural resources

- Highlight and **provide data on the economic implications** of issues such as housing shortages, educational needs, healthy communities, and others that impact the County's well-being, in collaboration with appropriate partners

- Work towards a more **equitable** Skagit County in collaboration with involved agencies and groups, where all have the opportunity to succeed and lead a healthy, productive life

To Accomplish All This, EDASC Must…

- Re-focus to undertake activities unique to economic development organizations, making sure to avoid duplication of effort and the vacuums that duplication creates.

- Operate more as an "Alliance" than an "Association" – identifying the highest values of collaboration and progress and serving as the economic development umbrella for all of Skagit County and its constituents

- Employ nationwide best practices in economic development, both programmatic and operational

- Focus on existing Skagit business and also companies outside Washington and even perhaps outside the US (Canada first) that would add to and diversify our economy.

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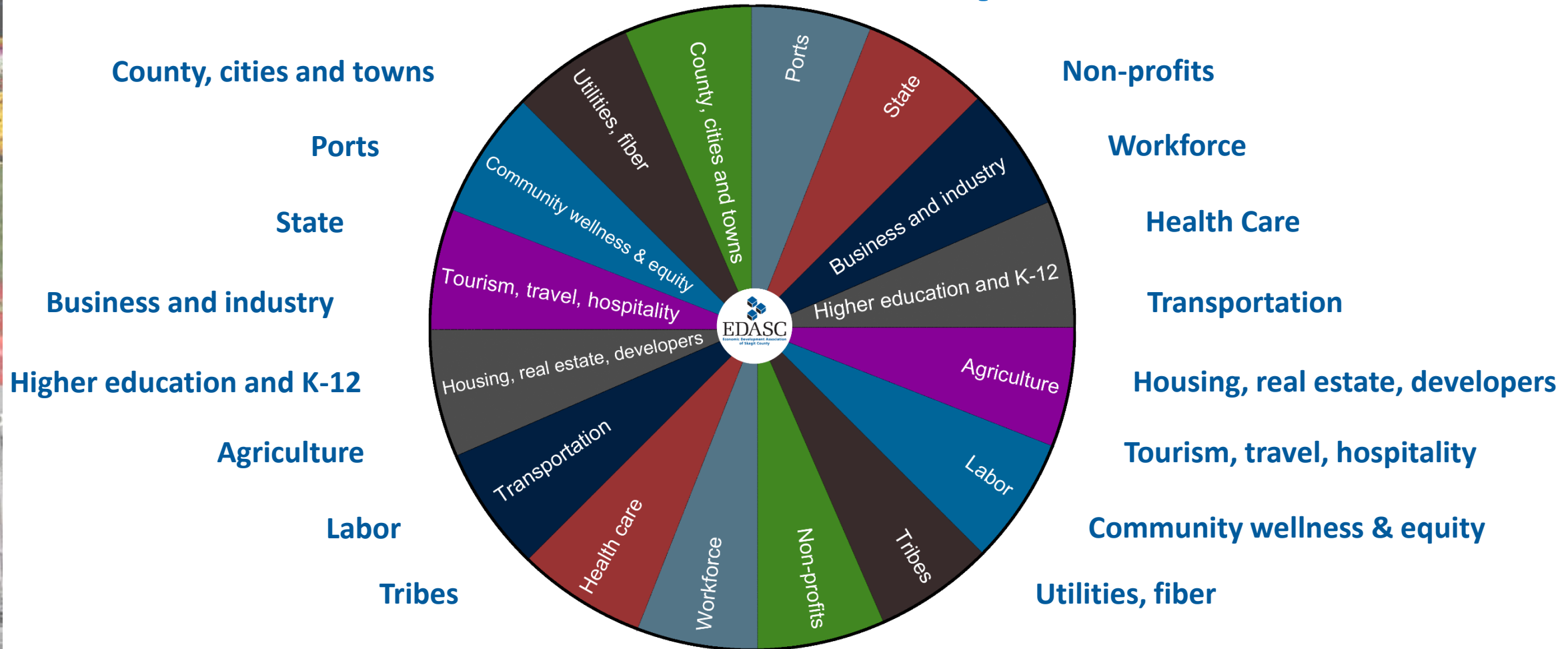
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- Articulate the value proposition that will garner increased investment (rather than relying heavily on membership and fundraising asks and events) from the public and particularly private sectors to fund economic development activities in a way that is long-term and sustainable

- Make clear the value proposition of the economic development efforts under EDASC's umbrella not only to the investors but also to the community

To Accomplish All This, EDASC Must...

- Operate at the highest levels of professionalism and integrity, to attract the best and brightest talent dedicated to the advancement of Skagit County

- Provide opportunities for County residents to network, learn and celebrate!!!

Partners in Economic Development

County, cities and towns

Ports

State

Business and industry

Higher education and K-12

Agriculture

Labor

Tribes

Non-profits

Workforce

Health Care

Transportation

Housing, real estate, developers

Tourism, travel, hospitality

Community wellness & equity

Utilities, fiber

Thank you!

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