

**A Game Plan for
NEW ENGLAND FUTURES**

DRAFT

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I. Introduction

A growing number of voices from a wide variety of individuals and organizations throughout New England believe the six New England States will be more successful in the 21st century if they work together on several key issues. One of the strongest voices pushing for regional collaboration is the Partnership for New England, a diverse group of organizations representing business, government, nonprofits, communities, and universities. The partnership is co-chaired by the Institute for Sustainable Communities (www.iscvt.org) and the New England Council (www.newenglandcouncil.com).

The Partnership for New England has produced a series of articles of the key strategic issues facing New England in the 21st Century. The series ran in 28 newspapers throughout New England. In addition, the New England Council has produced a report, “**Sustainable Prosperity: An Agenda for New England,**” which presents a sobering analysis of New England’s economic future and proposes a plan of action. There are a number of other regional initiatives underway addressing such issues as higher education, energy independence, and transportation. But these initiatives are not well connected nor is there any guarantee that they will get the attention and support they deserve over a sustained period of time.

The purpose of this game plan is to stimulate a focused discussion on the steps needed to finally get action on several regional issues and to sustain support and collaboration on these issues over time. The choice of issues and specific action items in various areas (energy, transportation, health care, education, etc.) are left to those with expertise in these arenas. However, we believe that coordinated visible attention to New England’s future in any area enhances the paradigm of collaboration which underlies this entire effort.

We welcome your constructive engagement in this discussion. More importantly, we invite you to share insights and opportunities for interstate and/or multi-sector actions that will enhance both the leadership strategy and the creation of permanent capacity to focus on New England’s future.

II. The Interviews

During the course of the last few months, at the behest of the Institute for Sustainable Communities and the New England Council, the author conducted interviews with a broad array of business, civic, political, philanthropic and community leaders drawn from people who were familiar and unfamiliar with the work of the Partnership to date. These interviews provided key insights and helped shape the proposed game plan. A list of those interviewed is included as an appendix to the game plan.

Here’s what we heard:

- *This is a critical moment in time. The economic decline we are experiencing is “job one” for all of us.*
- *We need leaders across all sectors to step up and work together.*
- *We need the Governors to engage.*
- *The Congressional delegation can play a key role, particularly in creating an interstate compact.*
- *Business civic and academic leaders can help carry the ball, but political leaders need to actively participate and set the agenda.*
- *Pick a few strategic issues and focus, focus, focus.*
- *We need to grow without trashing the place.*
- *New England is already a leader in sustainable development and could/should lead the nation and the world in showing how it can be done.*
- *This effort needs to add value to what others are already doing, not take resources and attention away from on-going local and regional efforts.*
- *We should gather foundations and the philanthropic community to create a shared resource and agenda – what about a “Fund for New England.”*
- *We should create a region-wide media resource center which monitors news from each state and makes it available to all parties.*

- *Data from all sectors should be integrated into a set of regional indicators which are refreshed regularly and made available to all parties.*

III. The Vision

Without question, there was a unity in the voices of those interviewed. New England is a special place, full of history, natural beauty, outstanding environmental, social, political and economic resources, a richly diverse demography, and a sense of pride in where we've been and where we could go from here. Underpinning this vision, however, is a palpable angst that the things we cherish are at risk. To make the vision real, leaders from all sectors need to engage in a dialogue about sustaining the vision. We have an enduring commitment to a strong quality of life for example, yet our transportation system needs an overhaul to provide efficient and sustainable infrastructure to maintain and grow a prosperous economy. Moreover, we need a strategy to create and sustain a highly adaptable workforce capable of meeting the demands of 21st century firms. Finally, although we boast the finest educational and medical institutions in the country and the world, we need to rise to the challenge of providing innovative and cost effective strategies to make these resources available to all.

IV. New England's Future as Currently Described

A. New England Futures Project

The Partnership has worked thoughtfully and carefully for the last year and a half to develop the New England Futures project. The project is based on the belief that New England as a whole will be more successful in addressing critical issues like energy independence, transportation, education, and health care if its states, communities, businesses, and nonprofits cooperate more effectively.

The New England Futures project is supported by business and academic leaders, a wide variety of nonprofits and leaders from every major constituency. This group wants to put aside partisan differences and reach across the six state borders to develop solutions for the benefit of the whole New England region. Other multi-state regions, such as the Western Governors Association, work closely together on economic growth strategies. We believe that New England already has the institutions that if strengthened and empowered could also accomplish cross-jurisdictional, cross-sectoral strategy development.

The first phase of the project focused on identifying and disseminating news articles prepared by Neal Peirce and Curtis Johnson of the Citistates Group on the key strategic issues facing New England that would benefit from regional collaboration. The article series, entitled "***New Century, New Game,***" appeared in 28 newspapers and featured the following lead stories:

- "New England: Six Teams, Or One"
- "Taking the Offensive on Energy"
- "Playing the Education Card"
- "Growth Gamble"
- "Connect to Compete"
- "The Consumer as Captain" (Health Care)

The articles set the stage for a broad regional dialogue, contributing substance and strategy to the quest for a coherent strategy for New England's future. These articles are on the NEF website www.newenglandfutures.org and have been packaged into a widely distributed monograph which is available free of charge.

B. A Growing Consensus

Important corroboration for NEF's agenda comes from the New England Council, which, in 2005, issued a report entitled "***Sustainable Prosperity: An Agenda for New England.***" With the support of AT Kearney, a consulting group with offices in Cambridge, MA, the Council focused on the competitive challenges New England faces against increasingly aggressive competition from other states and in a global marketplace. Emphasizing the cost structure in New England, the report focused on five challenges which, if managed properly, could create significant synergies to enhance the region's strengths and minimize its weaknesses. These included:

- Infrastructure and Structural Costs
- Education (Particularly Higher Education)
- Regional Networks and Collaboration
- Regional Brand
- Demographics and Immigration

The overlap of issues between this report and the Partnership's report is significant. From two divergent and strong voices in New England, a broad set of strategic issues have emerged.

Other regions of the country are way ahead of New England in making investments in workforce development, education, and transportation that seriously threaten our region's competitiveness. Yet New England has some amazing assets to build on.

C. Competitiveness in a Global Economy

Through the years, New England has survived by building on our entrepreneurial businesses and our academic and research institutions, which have generated the next wave of "technological change" that has spurred innovation and productivity. This is a strong foundation upon which to build, and our economic future depends on a renewed commitment to collaboration.

The future prosperity and quality of life in New England will be defined by how the region responds to key strategic issues, such as transportation, education and job training, energy and health. Our states face common challenges: huge dependence on imported energy, aging populations and youth flight, high costs of doing business, inadequate transportation and telecommunication links, and a growing demand for knowledge workers. The region continues to lose population, particularly our 20-to-34 year olds, who are increasingly important to our economy.

The New England Futures process has identified these critical issues:

- Transportation, Telecommunications, and other Infrastructure
- Energy
- Health Care
- Education
- Regional Brand
- Growth and Demographics
- Higher Education

The interviews conducted over the last few months identified other issues that need to be addressed as well. These include:

- Place-based Economic Strategies
- Workforce Readiness
- Affordable Housing
- Preparedness (Natural and Man-made)
- Creative Economy

While it is not within the scope of this report to prioritize these issues, it is clear that there are many initiatives underway in each of the areas described. One of the interviewees suggested that our collective effort could become an umbrella for the many highly successful activities already underway, thus providing visibility, resources and additional leverage to maximize success. Another suggested that our combined efforts identify lessons learned from these existing that can inform our next steps.

V. Strengths and Weaknesses

There are a number of actions we can take now to preserve and protect our region's vitality and strength in the areas in which we lead the country and the world. The interviews conducted suggested that New England's quality of life is the region's greatest strength. Importantly, we have a potent mix of new and established leaders in the political, business, academic, and civic arena who are committed to this vision of a sustainable future and who are equipped to carry it out. Following are other strengths identified by interviewees.

A. Strengths

Regional Identity

The six New England states have some of the most widely recognized geography in the country. From the Currier and Ives countryside to the rugged individualism and Yankee ingenuity which sustained us through earlier challenges, New England has a cachet that resonates with people around the country and around the world. Rather than nostalgia for a time past, the New England Council and interviewees regard New England as a vibrant brand that embodies innovation, diversity, and sustainability—a brand that should be described and promoted. As one interviewee stated, "We will grow only if we don't wreck the place in the process. This must be our ethic."

Historic and Cultural Assets

Each of the six states has contributed significant cultural and historic assets to the New England identity. We can attend a world-class university in any of the states, experience urban and rural lifestyles, attend a major sports or cultural event with little effort, and be in the mountains, the lakes, or the seacoast on any given day. One person interviewed said, "I was in a Midwestern city for a conference and as we looked for something to do in our downtime, there were two notable sights. In our region, conferees would have 40 or 50 venues across all types of interests."

Legacy of Leadership

New England has accounted for a large share of our nation's leaders in all sectors of society throughout its history. But our leadership comes not just from the past: Governor Deval Patrick's election in Massachusetts and Congressman John Larson of Connecticut bring new energy and perspectives. Business, civic and academic leaders continue to provide critical innovations in industrial, medical, and research that serve the entire world.

Culture of Innovation

Living by one's wits is a wise survival strategy in a region with few natural resources (coal, oil, natural gas). New England leads the country on issues of intellectual property, patents, copyrights, and other measures of creativity by continuing to show a penchant for synergy and collaboration. Moreover, this culture of innovation doesn't happen by accident, but through networks where creative people interact with other creative people in their same or different disciplines.

Sustainability Ethic

New England's extraordinary quality of life is the result of thousands of daily conversations and actions by local, regional, state, and federal officials. They set high standards for efficiency, sustainability, and

quality. A majority of those interviewed emphasized that any collective actions we take to focus on the region's future should sustain this quality of life. As one put it, "Without it we'll look like all those other places...those who would have chosen to come here, will find some other place that didn't forget what they had as they created something new."

State Houses

A significant group of those interviewed were enthusiastic about the opportunities to reinvigorate the New England Governors Conference, which has suffered from a lack of support from key states in recent past. With the election of a new governor in Massachusetts, who has already declared his interest in regional cooperation, there is an opportunity to seek and encourage new leadership from this important sector.

Further, the legislatures in each of the six states offer a strategic opportunity for coordinated dialogue and action. One former legislator mentioned a New England State Legislative Caucus. While we were unable to confirm whether such a group currently exists, there is significant interest in creating a similar group.

Congressional Dynamics

The November 2006 elections brought significant changes in the Congress as well. Twenty-one of the 22 congressmen from New England are now in the majority party in the house. One member of Connecticut's delegation, John Larson, is now deputy caucus leader for the House Democrats. A number of the region's congressional delegation are in leadership positions in key committees. The Senate has a more diverse political mix with a number of the Senators in both parties with significant seniority. This bodes well for any strategy that requires specific actions from the delegation. One of the major recommendations of the game plan is to create a permanent capacity to monitor, sustain, and adjust the action steps; this is a moment in time that requires concerted and coordinated action with all 34 members of the delegation.

B. Weaknesses

Political Fragmentation/Clout

While the number of legal and taxing jurisdictions in is some dispute among political scientists, there is no doubt that the 1,500 municipal jurisdictions with their individual police, fire, public works, and school departments create a challenge for New Englanders. We are not alone. For example, Pennsylvania has over 2,500 inside its borders. While we have a revolutionary bias against strong central government, there are important competitive challenges we face as we defend our "small is better" paradigm.

The clout issue is historical and has some ebbs and flows but the facts remain. In 1900 we had 27 congressional seats and California, Texas and Florida had 22 between them. In today's Congress, we have 22 seats, which is less than either California or Texas. More importantly, we are donor states in the overall analysis of federal funds flow. The three states with the largest economies – Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Connecticut – each get back less than \$.75 on the dollar.

Intra-regional Competition

The most significant weakness in our effort to create a unified New England is our internal definitions of competitiveness. States adopt various strategies for plundering one another's industries, jobs and people. While this is human nature at its worst, the Citistates report was particularly strident on the call to a "New Century" and a "New Game" with one team rather than six.

Competitiveness

The New England Council report mentioned above provides a stark backdrop to the economic challenges we face in our region. Our costs are high as we compete for our continuing share of the 21st century economy. A number of the interviews spoke to this harsh reality and the threats we face. Our workforce faces new learning curves as we attempt to fill jobs in the knowledge cluster. Kip Bergstrom, head of the Rhode Island Economic Policy Council, sets a goal of leading the country in changing new immigrants to

knowledge workers at a pace faster than any other state. Housing costs are at unsustainable levels as supply is continually restricted by local regulations while demand has remained steady. Energy costs, transportation bottlenecks, and aging infrastructure each contribute to the dilemma making one of our national commentators, Curtis Johnson, wonder if our best days are behind us.

Retail Economy

One economist, Ross Gittell at the University of New Hampshire, states that New Hampshire has the largest retail concentration per capita than any other state in the nation. Prime industrial locations at highway interchanges all over the region have been re-zoned to retail to capture the markets. Older industrial buildings in cities that were the backbone of 19th and 20th century New England are boarded and shut as housing abutters fight any re-start of manufacturing or other NIMBY uses, or are being converted to office and residential even faster than in the greenfield countryside.

Other Regions Are Organized

Our region is missing out on millions of dollars of dedicated federal funds flowing to other parts of the country that could be used for critical social and physical infrastructure investments.

At the present time, 28 states participate in federally supported multi-state compacts. The grandfather of these regional agreements is the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), created in 1965 by Appalachian Regional Development Act. This multi-state group includes all of West Virginia, and parts of Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia. Thirteen states and 410 participating counties are partners with the federal government in the ARC.

In 1967, as part of Title V of the Public Works and Economic Development Act, New England was given the capacity to create a Regional Commission (NERCOM). In the early 1980s, President Reagan eliminated NERCOM and all of the other regional commissions except ARC. However, a new cluster of multi-state agreements began to appear in the late 1990s. Beginning in 1998, Congress authorized the creation of the Denali Commission, the Delta Regional Authority, and the Northern Great Plains Region. Just this year proposals moved through Congress for the South West Border Authority, Southern Black Belt Authority, and the SouthEast Crescent Authority.

These new regional compacts foster a strong federal/state partnership with dedicated funding from Congress. The compacts allow these special allocations to be used to leverage other federal funds as match and as supplemental authority. The governance structure is built around the governors of the participating states who contribute their own time and state financial resources to the compact. The President also appoints a federal co-chair who has the authority to bring resource personnel in from federal agencies as needed.

The compacts foster regional economic development through a strong federal/state partnership combined with an effective regional (sub-state) planning and programming component that insures local sensitivity and effective targeting of resources for critical needs.

Two other regional organizations, the Western Governors Association and the Southern Growth Strategies Board, originally came to New England to see what we were doing to be successful. Well-staffed and funded, they left to create their own politically sophisticated organizations with integrated public and private sector actors and an integrated federal/state/local partnership that assures coordinated and sustained action.

VI. Five Years from Today

The next phase is to develop an action agenda that has broad support across the region for making New England more competitive and successful. Our goal is to make the region more prosperous while

protecting and enhancing its quality of life. We believe that we need stronger regional institutions to identify, support and advocate for multi-state efforts.

A. A Vision of Excellence

A wise person once suggested that there was a more excellent way available. While the context of that statement was different, there is no reason why New England should not continuously strive for excellence across all sectors. The strategy for sustainable prosperity called for in the New England Council report and described in the articles of the New England Futures project is essential for the region's future. Other places are growing at a pace that devours the countryside, replacing natural and historical assets with another shopping center or large tract residential subdivision. We can and must do better. In fact, we have no choice if we believe that our quality of life is our critical asset.

Adopting an asset-based strategy for the future rather than a deficiency model requires a vision for leadership that actively engages citizens in its promulgation and delivery. This vision requires a constant dynamic dialogue across all sectors of the region. Regional development analyses and policies are increasingly focused on dynamic clusters and regional innovation systems. These approaches mix elements of competition and cooperation, demanding customers and ambitious policy goals, foundational and specialized strategies. They are about enhancing what a region already does best and creating conditions for emerging new strengths. Separately, the New England states have pursued some of these policies, but their interdependence demands more interaction as well. These models can work in the larger context of regional dynamics if we are willing to create a pathway to excellence.

B. A Unified Strategy

When New England faced a serious threat in the last Base Realignment and Closure report, which would have devastated the entire regional economy, leaders from all sectors came together to challenge the Commission's assumptions and analysis. As a result, many of the initial recommendations were overturned. We need to rekindle this same energy and interaction among leaders across all disciplines, and sustain it over time, if we are to achieve a robust economy (less dependent on military spending) while protecting our quality of life.

1. Economic Integrity

Our economic competitiveness and vitality is essential to our future. Whatever we choose to do over the next period of time, the underpinning of every strategy must recognize the economic imperative. Our Citistates commentators wonder who will keep the lights on in an "old, cold, and blue" region in a "red hot America." One of those interviewed commented that New England, or at least his state, has been running on 150-year-old strategies and finances that are about depleted.

"We have been here before," others say. This is true, but our resurgence in the past has been built on our capacity for economic renewal, based in innovation, driven by entrepreneurs, and sustained with a talented and committed workforce. These same factor conditions exist in our region. They can and must be realigned to meet our current challenges. Without the economic fundamentals in place, we haven't got a chance.

2. Leadership in Sustainability

New England does have an edge, both in the country and in the world. We have lived our history and our current lives in conditions that require renewal and reclamation of resources. This ethic of sustainability is an essential part of our strategy going forward. Whether it is in green building technology, bio-mass fuels, renewable energy resources, or managing the landscape to preserve and protect the quality of life we enjoy, New England needs to lead the nation and the world in a culture of protecting the quality of our place as we build an economy for the new century.

3. *Connected for Competitiveness*

The final and most essential piece of strategy is to recognize, honor, and reward the interconnectedness of the region. Our natural tendencies to “best” one another need to be adjusted to allow for the opportunities for interaction and synergy that come from working collaboratively. For example, New England’s transportation network is congested at critical exit and entry points to the region. If I-95 is so clogged with traffic as it leaves Connecticut for New York that goods and freight can’t get in or out of the region, we’re in the type of trouble that only a collective action can resolve. Trucks on that route are destined for Rhode Island and Maine while products from the rest of the country need to get to manufacturers in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. The same strategies are required to move freight on rail, in the air, or out of our ports. The energy grid that connects the Connecticut River Valley to the hydroelectric plants in Quebec needs a significant upgrade in Vermont in order to meet the demands for electricity in Massachusetts and Connecticut.

C. Permanent Capacity for Collective Action

One of the most compelling agenda items for New England is the need for a permanent capacity to continuously monitor threats and opportunities, conduct critical research on these challenges, identify specific actions and actors to accomplish each, analyze the responses to these actions, and make adjustments to create more effective responses.

Other states have found ways to collaborate even when their political and social DNA are completely incompatible. Whether it is through a federally supported interstate compact, a renewed New England Governors Conference, and/or new cross-sectoral partnerships among civil society organizations, this capacity is an essential part of the game plan outlined here.

D. Organized for Action

In 2012, five years from our current perspective, it would be gratifying to look back on this moment in time and realize that the choices we made today created a legacy for the future that was as vibrant and robust as those strategies and innovations that previous generations undertook. However, that requires a specific agenda, a commitment to action, a tolerance for innovation, and an organizational framework that doesn’t exist.

VII. Getting There

With all of the excellent research by the New England Futures project and its partners, there still remains a question: How will all this happen? There are important values that need to be introduced into our collective consciousness in order to differentiate ourselves from other regions and to implement our vision. These include more collaboration, more innovation, better research and analysis, media with a broader view, and the political power of a united New England. Based on the interviews, we offer a game plan that draws on all of the previous work and builds toward a future that allows us all to participate effectively in the creation, implementation, sustainability, and refinement as we proceed.

The Partnership for New England believes the following five actions are critical to developing and supporting regional cooperation on the key strategic issues facing New England in the 21st century.

1. Revitalize New England Governors Conference

The Governors need to take more leadership -- and collaborate more -- on regional issues. The New England Governors Conference is an ideal vehicle for this but it needs resources, staff, and a more substantive focus. Drawing on the work of the New England Futures project and its partners, the region’s Governors need to articulate and embrace a vision and an agenda for New England that focuses on achieving prosperity while protecting the region’s quality of life and social well being. A stronger NEGC can help accomplish this.

2. Establish Interstate Compact for New England

The federally funded compact would support informed action by coordinating and supporting research, education, and advocacy on regional issues. The compact requires a paid staff with political sophistication, strong research capabilities, and a capacity to engage a broad audience on critical issues. The legal framework of the compact needs to ensure that it remains focused on its mission regardless of changing political or economic conditions.

3. Launch a Fund for New England

The Fund would enable foundations, philanthropic organizations, and individuals to coordinate and increase the effectiveness of support to civil organizations working on the key strategic regional issues.

4. Support New England News Forum

The purpose of the forum will be to strengthen the quality and accountability of journalism in New England and to expand the coverage of regional issues across the six states.

5. Support New England Indicators Project

A web based system for monitoring the region's progress in achieving its goals – as well as economic, environmental, and social trends -- will inform priority-setting, inspire course corrections, and enable citizens to hold their leaders accountable.

VIII. Key Initiatives: Next 6 to 24 Months

A. Revitalize New England Governors Conference

The local and national elections have helped to create a moment in time that creates a sense of urgency around the agenda for New England. Governor Patrick of Massachusetts has announced that he will re-join the New England Governors Conference. Governor Douglas of Vermont has been named chairman of the conference and, according to recent reports, the six governors have met under that banner for the first time in several years. The time seems right to take stock of the NEGC and develop a plan for strengthening its role in the coming decades.

Proposed Action Steps:

1. The leadership of the Partnership for New England should meet with the Governors and their staffs individually, and with the current staff leadership of the conference, to discuss these recommendations and advocate for a stronger leadership role.
2. The Partnership should work with the Governors – and other stakeholders – in developing a regional agenda on the key strategic issues with the idea that they would select one or two to get action on immediately, such as addressing transportation bottle necks, universal broad band, or energy independence

B. Establish Federally Supported Interstate Compact for New England

Through the New England Association of Regional Councils (NEARC) and the New England Initiative (NEI) at UMass Lowell, both members of the Partnership for New England, extensive background work has already been done exploring this alternative. With the re-organization of Congress, 21 of the 22 members of the House are from the same party, which happens to be the majority party in both houses. Congressman John Larson of Connecticut has a key leadership position as the Deputy Majority Leader of the House Democratic Caucus. Other members of the New England Congressional delegation are now in important decision making positions as chairs of committees and subcommittees.

Under the leadership of Congressman Larson, the New England House delegation will meet over the next several weeks and months to discuss the various opportunities to initiate a congressional action. Based on the continuing conversations in Washington (e.g. Caucus meetings, New England Council's Congressional Breakfast in March, etc.), the Congressman suggests two additional convenings to test the concept. First, a spring leadership retreat bringing together 30 to 50 key individuals and organizations to explore the issues and challenges that a compact would tackle. Second, a fall forum that brings a broad cross-section of New England citizens together around the broad concept of the compact, but focused on a specific issue, such as transportation or energy, to test the mettle of the six states and their willingness to work collaboratively.

On a parallel track, the Northern Forests Center and its partners – have worked with the three northern New England states – Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont – and New York to protect the economic integrity of that geography. In addition to receiving \$800,000 from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, they have filed legislation in both houses of Congress to create an interstate compact similar to the one under discussion by NEARC and NEI. Senators Snowe and Collins of Maine, Congressman Michaud of Maine, and Congressman Hodes of New Hampshire have taken the lead in bringing the three northern New England states together with New York to create a Northern Appalachian Regional Commission. Legislation is filed in the Senate and parallel legislation will soon be filed in the House. This effort builds on the excellent work of the Northern Forest Center and the Northern Forest Alliance. In my interviews, it was clear that there was an opportunity for collaboration as we move forward.

Proposed Action Steps:

1. The Partnership for New England should appoint a steering committee to organize and manage the effort to establish an interstate compact for New England. The steering committee should include a representative from the following partners: Institute for Sustainable Communities, New England Council, New England Initiative, and New England Association of Regional Councils.
2. The Steering Committee should work with Congressman Larson, Congressman Hodes, Senators Snowe and Collins to identify areas of collaboration between the proposals to create a New England Compact and the Northern Appalachian Regional Commission. Opportunities for collaboration between these two efforts need to be fully explored and encouraged.
3. The Steering Committee should work with the Congressional delegation and other regional leaders to organize the spring leadership retreat and the fall forum designed to discuss and build support for an interstate compact.
4. The Steering Committee should begin immediately to identify the participants for a spring event. An initial list of organizations beyond those on the steering committee would include the Strategic Alliance, the Federal Home Loan Bank, the Northern Forest Center, the Federal Reserve Bank, the New England Governors Conference, New England Board of Higher Education, and the New England Health Initiative. Resources for this event need to be identified and sponsors or other financial opportunities need to be developed and explored.
5. The Fall Forum should be the first of a series of issue-based forums that also includes forums in several or all of the states. These forums could modeled after the Transportation Summits, organized as major convenings at two different times in the 1990s through the leadership of NEARC, NGC, and NEC.
6. The Steering Committee should meet the Northern Forest Center to discuss ways to collaborate on establishing an interstate compact for the region and encourage the Center to become a member of the Partnership for New England.

C. Launch a Fund for New England

While this concept has been kicking around for a while, first proposed by Hank Foster of the Kennedy School and former Environmental Affairs Secretary for Massachusetts, it has gained some support over the last few years as the Partnership has talked with foundation and philanthropic leaders in the six states. At a recent meeting of the Associated Grant Makers of New England, Neal Peirce proposed this idea again as a way to coordinate and strengthen philanthropy on the strategic regional issues. His proposal was well received and several foundation leaders, including Paul Grogan of the Boston Foundation and Lew Feldstein of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, agreed to help with this idea.

Proposed Action Steps:

1. The Partnership should follow up with Paul Grogan, Lew Feldstein and other foundation leaders about the idea of establishing a Fund for New England.
2. The Partnership should offer resources, assistance, and contacts to these foundations in helping them to develop funding priorities for New England.

D. Support New England News Forum

With a scheduled launch in April 2007, the New England News Forum is a collaboration among journalists, educators and the public to inspire active citizenship through discussion and spotlighting of media issues. The forum aims to increase public trust and deepen public understanding of the news media by promoting the practice of trusted, thorough, and accountable journalism. The forum is supported by a seed grant from John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and is based at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. On the web it will offer journalists, web-news entrepreneurs and active citizens a place to engage in discussion, to share and resolve disagreements over media issues such as privacy, coverage, access, accuracy, bias and emphasis. This topical, web-based, moderated forum will be open to regional public-policy issues that touch on matters of journalistic practice. The forum may also establish a **New England Common** website that provide an electronic news-clipping type service focused on regional issues.

Proposed Action Steps:

1. The Partnership should actively support the efforts to create the New England News Forum.
2. The Partnership should promote the goals of the forum through its networks and offer other assistance as needed.

D. Support New England Indicators Project

For the last several years, the New England Initiative at UMass Lowell, with the encouragement of the other Partners, has been working to create an indicators project for New England. Building on the successful and highly visible Boston Indicators project of the Boston Foundation, the New England Initiative has already created a sophisticated data warehousing and mapping capability that uses open-source software increasing the functionality of this platform allowing many organizations to be “nodes” on the network.

This project is in the process of seeking funding at the local and national level. It can and should be an integral part of the game plan going forward.

Proposed Action Steps:

1. The Partnership should assist the New England Initiative at UMass Lowell in creating a broad-based steering committee to guide the development of the indicators.

2. The Partnership should assist UMass Lowell is seeking resources to sustain the project and to fully integrate the indicators efforts, and information into the on-going New England Futures project.

G. New England Futures Partnership

The Partnership for New England, through its New England Futures Project, has helped set the stage for a coordinated, strategic, and sustained response to the challenges facing the region in the 21st Century. The next steps are critical. The Partnership will need resources to achieve this Game plan and establish the capacity required to carry the agenda forward over time. In addition, the efforts of the last four years to create and build a constituency for New England's future needs to be sustained, enhanced, and built into a broad public education campaign. Regional cooperation is not a natural act. As one interviewee commented, "I have trouble getting two towns to cooperate on building a bridge. I don't how are you going to get six states to work together." Cooperation is only possible if a broad, well-developed public education campaign is maintained as part of the game plan. These are only a few of the opportunities to be explored with business, political, academic, and civic groups. Strategic partners are essential to creating the broadest possible constituency for this initiative and for the creation of a focused agenda for New England.

Proposed Action Steps:

1. The Partnership should seek funding to support the implementation of the game plan over the next 18 months.
2. The Partnership should design and implement a public education campaign to make the case for collaboration on regional issues.

IX. Conclusion

New England is at a crossroads. It can continue its slow decline or it can come together like other regions of the country have done to shape its own destiny. New Englanders are ready to for this important step but they need leadership. Leaders, in turn, are ready to act but they require the capacity and tools to follow through. This game plan lays out a strategy for going forward.

Appendix A: List of Interviewees

1. Neal Peirce
2. Ira Jackson
3. Steve Blackmer
4. Tracy Gay
5. Alan Caron
6. Lew Feldstein
7. Jack Wilson
8. Cheryl Harrington
9. Mil Duncan
10. Kip Bergstrom
11. Steve Cassano
12. Tracy Gay
13. Lyle Wray
14. Doug Fisher
15. Valery Landry
16. Tim Brennan
17. John Fox
18. Sam Merrill (USMe)
19. Anne Stubbs (CONEG)
20. Cong. John Larson (D-CT)
21. Paul Grogan
22. John Harney