

## Community Catalyst™ Case Study

### Waterville Area, Maine

Waterville and surrounding central Maine towns constitute an urban-rural community seeking to regain economic vitality after the loss of manufacturing and natural resource jobs. Convened by the [City of Waterville](#) Sustainability Committee, a group of 64 volunteers came together on the stage of the historic Waterville Opera House to create [a vision and plan for Energy Conservation and Sustainability](#) for the central Maine region. The group developed detailed strategic objectives, priorities and projects to achieve their [vision](#) by the year 2020. Participants included a broad range of local citizens, business leaders, students, and municipal officials, as well as academic, nonprofit and governmental experts in various aspects of energy conservation and sustainability.

The [action plan developed during the Catalyst included eight objectives](#). The highest-priority objective, “Generate Renewable Energy and Promote Conservation,” will receive first call on area resources as the plan moves into its implementation phase. Other objectives include “Improve Transportation Efficiency and Choices,” “Build Organizational Capacity and Monitor Results,” “Rethink, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle,” and “Grow and Support Local Food.” Near the end of the workshop, participants volunteered to help lead the implementation of the objectives and twenty-nine projects, and to invite other central Maine residents to work with them.

Using our sophisticated process tools for tapping group intelligence, we created a vision and plan that all the participants signed. This is important because the group represented most of the constituencies that would be affected by the plan. [Getting people to play together intelligently and quickly is critical for success in a fast moving, resource constrained world](#).

In her book, *Regional Advantage: Culture and Competition in Silicon Valley and Route 128 Cambridge, MA*, Annalee Saxenian, dean and professor at the University of California, Berkeley, pointed out that a key reason that Silicon Valley displaced Route 128 in Massachusetts as the technology capital of the world was that Silicon Valley’s culture was more collaborative. While there was competition between Silicon Valley companies, their employees associated, informally collaborated and inspired each other. In Boston, the battle lines were more clearly drawn, secrecy trumped cooperation and no quarter was given.

With that in mind, our approach goes to great lengths to include representatives of all stakeholders in a process that achieves highest common denominator consensus. This assures wise decisions and the fastest possible implementation.