



# VIEWS OF THE FUTURE - TOURISM 2.0 IN SNOHOMISH COUNTY

## Coastal Communities Region

SCENARIO-BASED THINK TANK WORKSHOP

June 21, 2018



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## Coastal Communities Region

### Scenario-based Think Tank Workshop

June 21, 2018

This report summarizes the scenario planning session held in the Coastal Communities Region of Snohomish County, Washington, on June 21, 2018. Approximately 50 Snohomish County stakeholders participated in the Think Tank and developed the scenarios presented in this report. This report has been produced as part of the Snohomish County sustainable destination development process, which aims to produce a Sustainable Destination Development Regional Action Plan that will guide regional tourism activities for the next five years.

REPORT PREPARED BY:



THINK TANK HOSTED BY:



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*The Coastal Communities Region Think Tank was an exciting opportunity for area stakeholders to take a 'deep-dive' into thinking about future tourism industry development and potential impacts.*

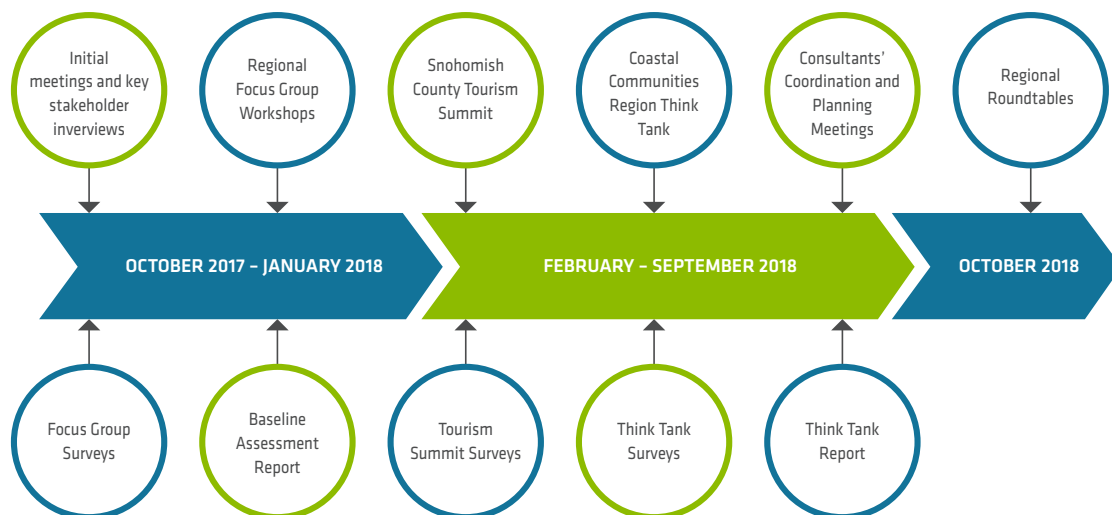
## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Think Tank workshop was organized to allow stakeholders to explore hypothetical scenario for the future of the tourism industry in Snohomish County. This scenario-based Think Tank report summarizes the Coastal Communities regional planning session that took place in June 2018. The Think Tank Workshop was conducted as part of a project to implement the 2018-2022 Strategic Tourism Plan (STP) by the Snohomish County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT) and the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau (SCTB).

Some highlights of recent work include:

- Identification of visitor regions (November 2017)
- Baseline Assessment Report compiling the results of Regional Focus Group Workshops and surveys (January 2018)
- 2018 Snohomish County Tourism Summit (May 2018)
- Four industry-based regional Think Tanks (June 2018)
- New branding for County Tourism – Seattle NorthCountry (August 2018)

### 2017-2018 Project timeline





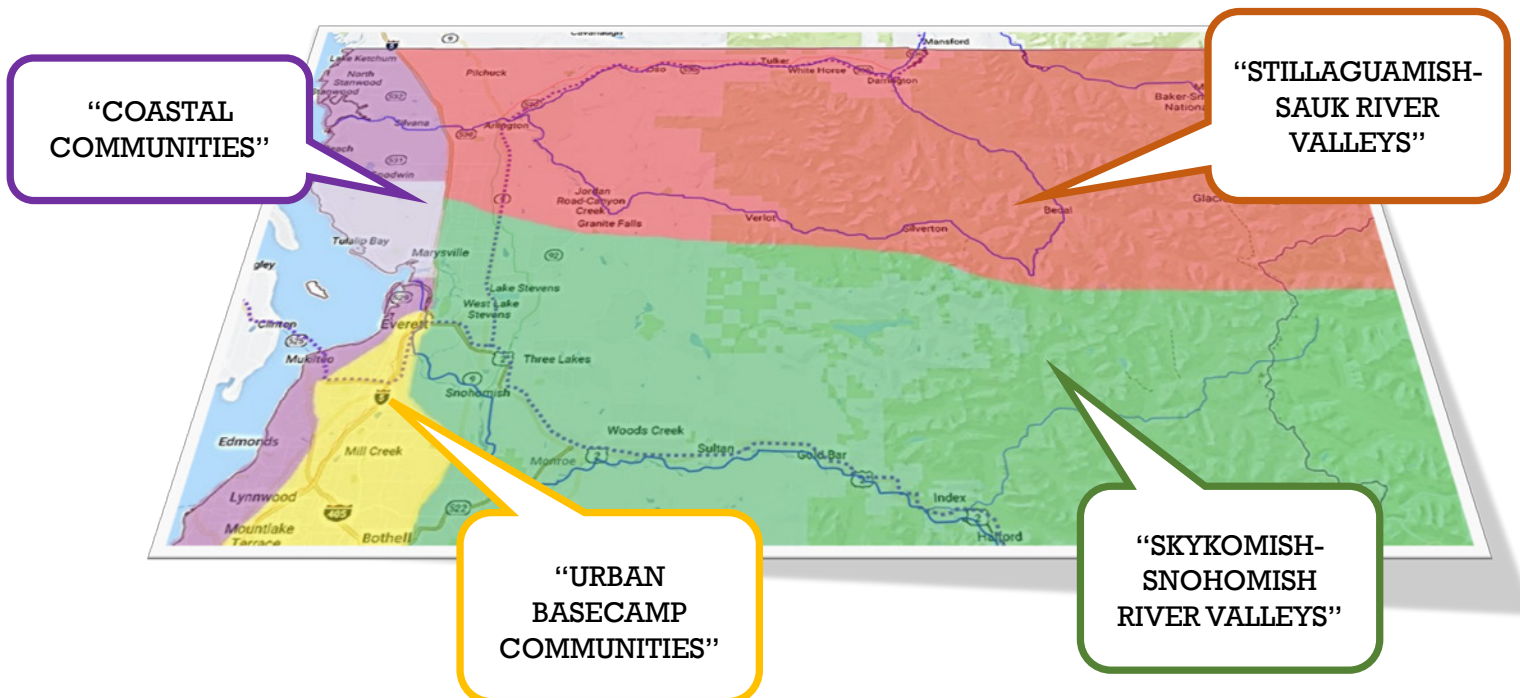
*Tourism development in Snohomish County operates on two principles: sustainability and a regional approach. The regional approach allows local stakeholders to 'get their arms around' and guide their local destination development activities.*

## 2.0 COASTAL COMMUNITIES REGION

In late 2017, regional focus group workshops were convened throughout Snohomish County and participants were asked to identify what they believed are the most natural regional boundaries in the county, from a tourism development and visitor perspective.

The map below defines the four major 'regions of collaboration' which were viewed as the logical building blocks for regional destination development and marketing from both an industry and visitor perspective. These four regions formed the geographic basis for the Think Tanks that took place in June 2018. The Coastal Communities Region was the fourth of the four to take place on June 21, 2018.

### Snohomish County Experiential Visitor Regions



Note: Urban Basecamp Communities name is provisional



*The scenario planning process allows Coastal Communities regional stakeholders to examine the implications of choices about future direction.*

## 3.0 THINK TANK WORKSHOP

Future IQ's Scenario Planning process provides a method to explore plausible futures, and consider the implications of various future scenarios. This scenario planning process is an ideal way to help people explore the future and think about potential impacts and opportunities. The Think Tank workshop aimed to:

- Deepen the understanding and examination of how external events and local conditions could shape decision-making
- Identify and understand the key influences, trends, and dynamics that will shape the Coastal Communities Region over the next 10 to 15 years
- Create and describe four plausible long-term scenarios for the region
- Explore alignment around a shared future vision for the region
- Begin initial strategy and action planning

The scenarios developed during this Scenario Planning process and outlined in this report are important to provide a framework to discuss future possible outcomes and implications for tourism development. In addition, the Think Tank deliberations can assist in identifying key actions for the region and in exploring how various groups might best contribute to future tourism development. The design of the Think Tank Workshop included a presentation and discussion about key forces shaping the future at a global and local level. These exercises and work were aimed to build a robust basis for the scenario formulation.

The participants were then guided through a Scenario Planning process to develop four hypothetical scenarios for the future of the Coastal Communities Region. The process involved exploration and discussion of global, regional, and local trends and forces of change; development of a scenario matrix defining four plausible scenario spaces for the future; and, the development of descriptive narratives of each scenario. The event concluded with discussion of the scenarios, selection of a preferred scenario and first steps to determine the strategic actions required to create the preferred scenario.





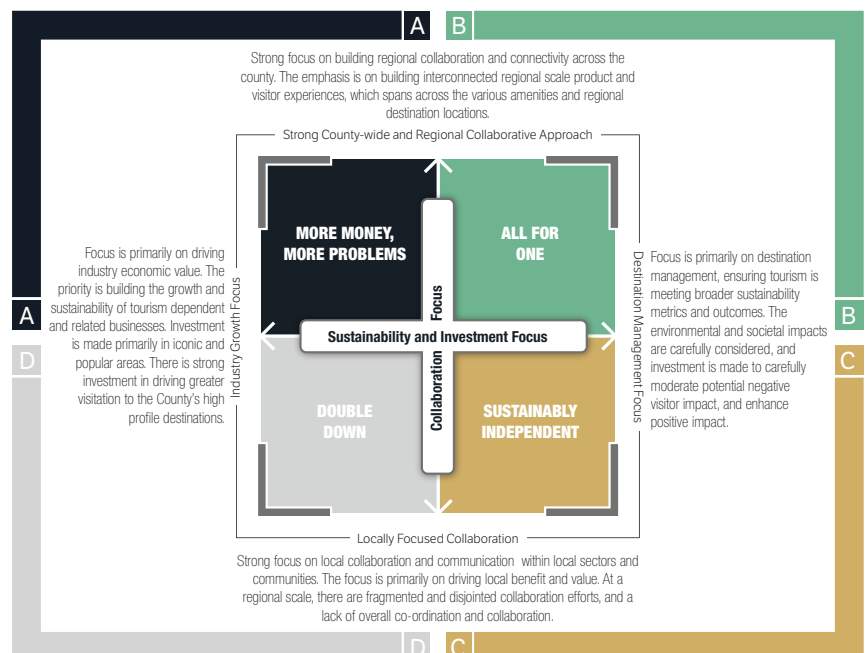
## 4.0 CREATING THE HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIO FRAMEWORK

Based on the Pre-Think Tank survey responses and key input from the SCPRT and SCTP leadership team, themes were identified to become the basis for two axes on the scenario matrix. The two axes identified were 'Sustainability and Investment Focus' and 'Collaboration Focus'.

Think Tank participants were presented with the scenario matrix, defined by the two major axes of 'Sustainability and Investment Focus' and 'Collaboration Focus' (see diagram). Brief descriptions were also attached to the end points of each driver axis. Participants were divided into four groups to develop a narrative for each scenario. Each group was asked to describe the characteristics of the Coastal Communities Region in 2030 under the conditions of the scenario quadrant that they had been given:

- Visitor Profile and Experience
- Destinations and Communities
- Tourism Industry Profile

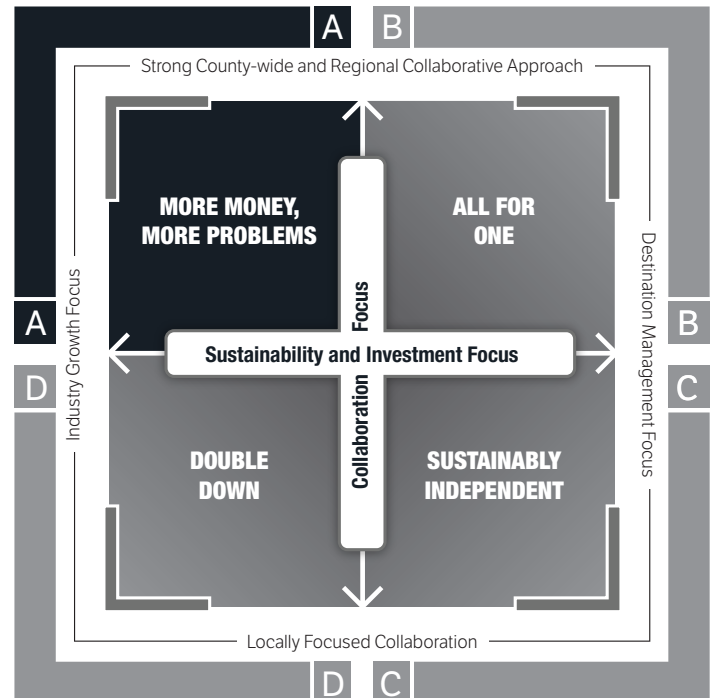
After the characteristics were established, Think Tank participants were asked to devise major events or headlines of how the scenario occurred using the years 2020, 2025, and 2030, and to give their scenario a descriptive name. Narratives and descriptions of each scenario as developed by the workshop participants are included in the following sections.



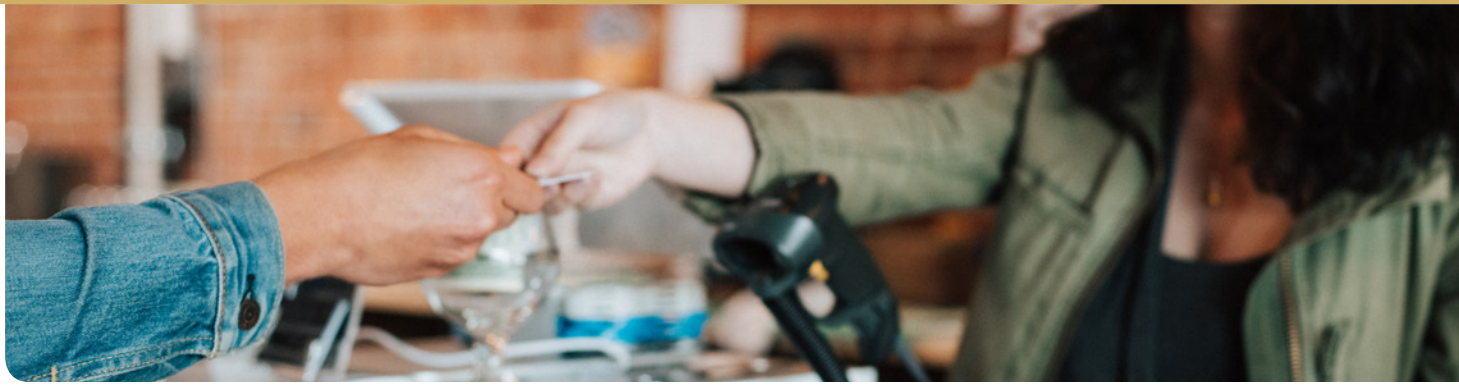


## 4.1 SCENARIO A: MORE MONEY, MORE PROBLEMS

This scenario forecasts a future where improved transportation infrastructure and “We Have It All” packages dramatically increase visitation and revenue to the region. Concentrations of wealth and development around iconic attractions grow local economies, but create a ‘have’ and ‘have not’ context that excludes smaller communities. Iconic attractions focus on aviation, outlet malls, waterfront/ferries, casinos, outdoor recreation, I-5 corridor, sports events/fairgrounds and the urban basecamp communities. Authentic experiences are reduced and homogenization of locations takes place. Urban ‘hub and spoke’ travel encourages day trips to rural areas for leisure activities, but lack of connectivity to rural creates increased congestion on roads. Visitor profile is diverse including Urbanites, millennials, gen X, West Coast, Asia Pacific, high tech and regional weekenders. Iconic attractions include aviation, outlet malls, waterfront/ferries, casinos, outdoor recreation, I-5 corridor, sports events/fairgrounds and urban basecamp.







## POTENTIAL SCENARIO CHARACTERISTICS - 2030

### Visitor Profile and Experience / Characteristics

- Iconic attractions – aviation, outlet malls, waterfront/ferries, casinos, outdoor recreation, I-5 corridor, sports events/fairgrounds, urban basecamp
- Urban to leisure, millennial, gen X, West Coast, Asia Pacific, high tech, regional weekenders
- Satisfaction – marginal
- Lack of authentic experiences, homogenized experience
- Alienation of urban locals
- Have/Have Nots; Concentration of wealth
- Initial increase, future flatline

### Destinations and Communities / Characteristics

- Improved transportation infrastructure (Paine Field, light rail)
- Still congested, lack of connectivity to rural communities, parking issues
- Local push back
- Environmental impact
- Smaller communities – How do I benefit?
- Clear message - education necessary

### Tourism Industry Profile / Characteristics

- "We have it all" packages
- Developed, concentrations of wealth
- Increased day traveler to rural areas
- Hub and spoke
- Small communities can maintain identity
- Tech based marketing
- Active lifestyle
- Increase retail, restaurants, hotels in core



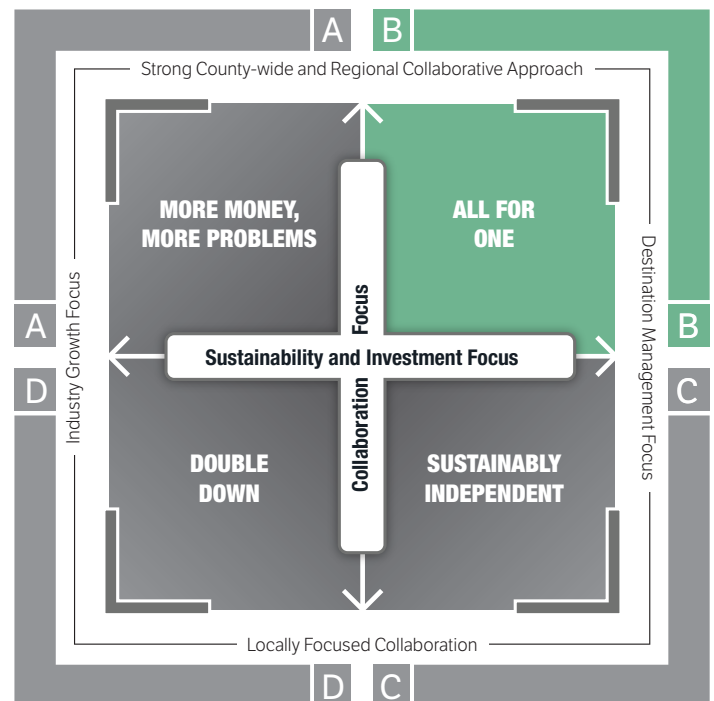
## MORE MONEY, MORE PROBLEMS – HEADLINE NEWS

	2020	2025	2030
<b>Visitor Profile and Experience</b>	"Weekend destination awaits / Paine Field, We have it all!"	"Experience the outdoors with the comforts of home"	"We speak your language"
<b>Destinations and Communities</b>	"Paine Field increases flights & visitors"	"Visitors flock to Snohomish County"	"Urban community revolts"
<b>Tourism Industry Profile</b>	"PNW-Up and coming destination"	"Perfect package destination"	"Positive economic impact supports regional infrastructure development"



## 4.2 SCENARIO B: ALL FOR ONE

This scenario forecasts a future where packaged travel options and destination management practices preserve quality of experience and place. A strong regional collaborative approach and education around transportation options provide for easy movement throughout the area including travel by boat, seaplane, and trains. Local acceptance of the tourism industry is high as efforts are made to emphasize environmental stewardship in the region as a whole. A broad range of experiences are marketed attracting a diverse profile of visitors, in particular international and business travelers, locals and a younger demographic.







## POTENTIAL SCENARIO CHARACTERISTICS - 2030

### Visitor Profile and Experience / Characteristics

- Boeing – International visitors (Asia-Pacific)
- Business travelers
- King County/nearby residents 50+ miles
- Younger generation
- Transportation options: boats, seaplanes, trains, communicate how to get around

### Destinations and Communities / Characteristics

- Managed destinations/quality of experience
- Possible feeling of lack of autonomy/loss of identity for locals
- Transportation options – give options and educate visitors
- Local acceptance
- Destination management preserves experience and place

### Tourism Industry Profile / Characteristics

- Offer additional experiences/alternatives – parts of a whole
- Collaboration
- Provide real time stats/info
- Packaged travel options; private sector component



## ALL FOR ONE – HEADLINE NEWS

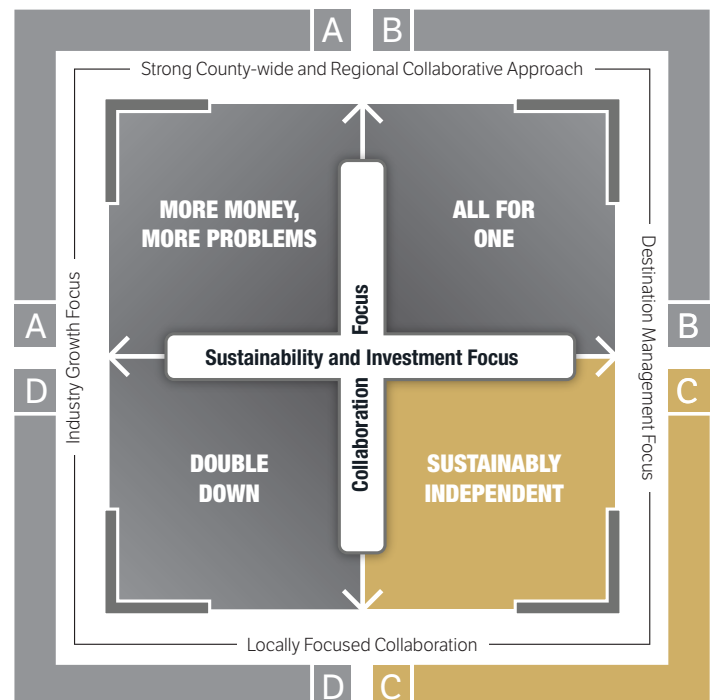
	2020	2025	2030
<b>Visitor Profile and Experience</b>	"Business travellers love Paine Field"	"Visitors up, Revenues up"	"Snohomish County voted top 10 U.S. destination"
<b>Destinations and Communities</b>	"Snohomish County emerging as a top destination"	"Tourism 2nd largest industry in Snohomish County"	"Economy booming, transportation options abound for residents and visitors"
<b>Tourism Industry Profile</b>	"Snohomish County wins national award for sustainable tourism plan"	"Snohomish County tourism booming, Washington State looks to Snohomish County model"	"Seattle envious"





## 4.3 SCENARIO C: SUSTAINABLY INDEPENDENT

This scenario forecasts a future where product type is fully developed and sustainability is focused in the communities. Growth in select areas creates rapid growth of business. Communities are independent and self-sufficient with high-density industry attractions and clusters. Dense areas are at capacity and with no regional dispersion there is a loss of connectivity. The lack of regional connections to the county as a whole creates isolated transportation options that make visitor experiences siloed with no incentive to come back to the region. Marketing narrative is very selfish and industry profile is focused on day trippers. Visitors tend to be young, affluent and diverse and who care about sustainability and align with sustainable brands.





## POTENTIAL SCENARIO CHARACTERISTICS - 2030

### Visitor Profile and Experience / Characteristics

- Young, affluent visitors, more spending power by visitors
- International (Asian), diverse (Seattle focused)
- Care about sustainability, align with sustainable brands
- Experiential experiences take focus
- Visitor experience would be a limited experience
- Experience would be siloed, no incentive to come back
- Dense areas will be at capacity, no regional dispersion, loss of connectivity

### Destinations and Communities / Characteristics

- Around industry attractions and clusters, density
- Communities outside dense areas will be underdeveloped
- Independent communities, self-sufficient, sustainably developed on transportation amenities but on a very local level
- Infrastructure impacts - Isolated transportation development, less development in East County
- A focus on restoration

### Tourism Industry Profile / Characteristics

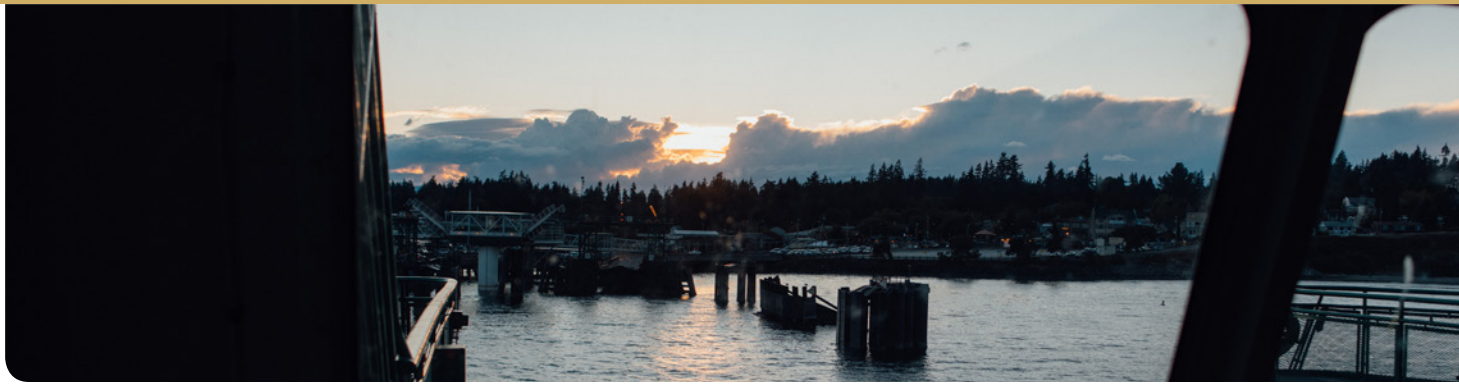
- Marketing narrative is very selfish
- Product type is fully developed & sustainability focused in the communities
- Great growth in select areas, more small businesses, financially healthy
- Industry profile will be very focused on day trippers, will only attract international travelers with a primary focus on Seattle vacations or experiences
- The resources of marketing profile is so individual it's not diverse enough to attract the international traveler



## SUSTAINABLY INDEPENDENT – HEADLINE NEWS

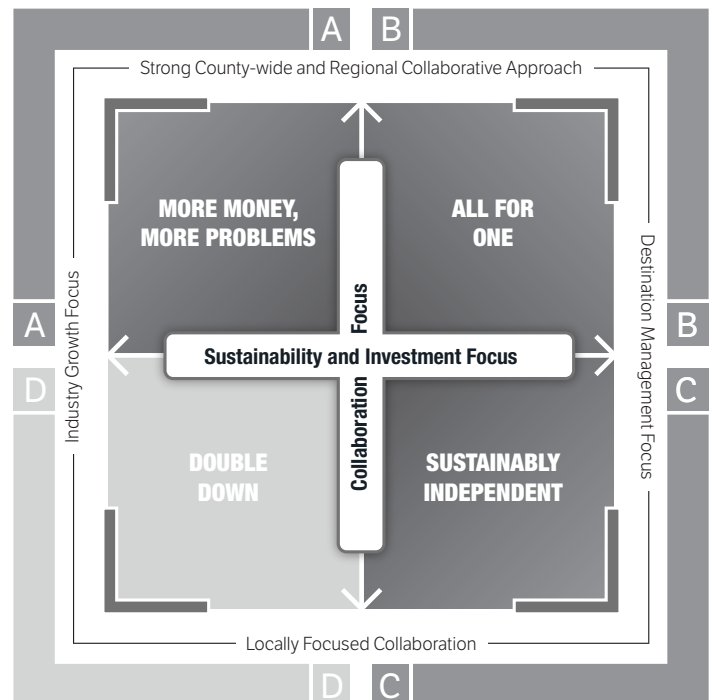
	2020	2025	2030
<b>Visitor Profile and Experience</b>	"Edmonds Art District Takes Off"	"Shoreline Access Increases Tourism"	"Day Visitors Wanted Only!"
<b>Destinations and Communities</b>	"More Artists Moving to Downtown Core"	"Highway 99 is the New Downtown Core"	"Edmonds International District Develops International Week / Marysville wins Sustainability Award"
<b>Tourism Industry Profile</b>		"WSDOT Spends 124 Million to Keep Traffic Moving"	"State Increases Local Funding for Outdoor Recreation"





## 4.4 SCENARIO D: DOUBLE DOWN

This scenario forecasts a future where tourism destination development is focused locally on specific areas and attractions. Growth of Seattle brings a significant increase of Seattle visitors, business travelers and the Asian community. Paine Field contributes to visitation levels and hotel needs and Tulalip expands rapidly. Transportation solutions are localized making countywide coordination and collaboration fragmented and difficult to maneuver. Most popular visitor activities are Gaming, sports, arts and hiking. Significant growth occurs in the restaurant industry to support added visitation.







## POTENTIAL SCENARIO CHARACTERISTICS - 2030

### Visitor Profile and Experience / Characteristics

- Seattle visitors – huge growth in Seattle
- Light rail and additional transportation
- Tulalip growth important (Coastal County will grow Tulalip)
- Asian community
- Business traveler

### Destinations and Communities / Characteristics

- Airport at Paine Field
- Focus on our specific areas (s) and attractions
- Localized transportation solution
- Local collaboration instead of Countywide
- Tulalip expansion
- Fragmented collaboration: Tulalip to Edmonds
- Especially in Arts – Social benefits

### Tourism Industry Profile / Characteristics

- Gaming, sports, arts, hiking = Restaurants
- 50% at coastal cities for business, will stay the same or increase
- Paine Field; flights only 2x a day so hotels important
- 'Coast' important "Coastal Cities"
- Asian countries visit Future of Flight



## DOUBLE DOWN – HEADLINE NEWS

	2020	2025	2030
<b>Visitor Profile and Experience</b>	"Airport Pays Off"	"North light rail traffic increases / Tulalip bigger attraction than ever"	"Everett is the New Ballard / Increased Urban Hubs in Coastal Communities"
<b>Destinations and Communities</b>	"Paine Field Aerospace 2nd Gate / Hotels at Capacity"	"Rail Revolution"	"NGA Announced Expansion into Everett"
<b>Tourism Industry Profile</b>	"Everett Waterfront Development in Full Swing"	"Big on Leisure"	"Tulalip is New Vegas North with New Theme Park"



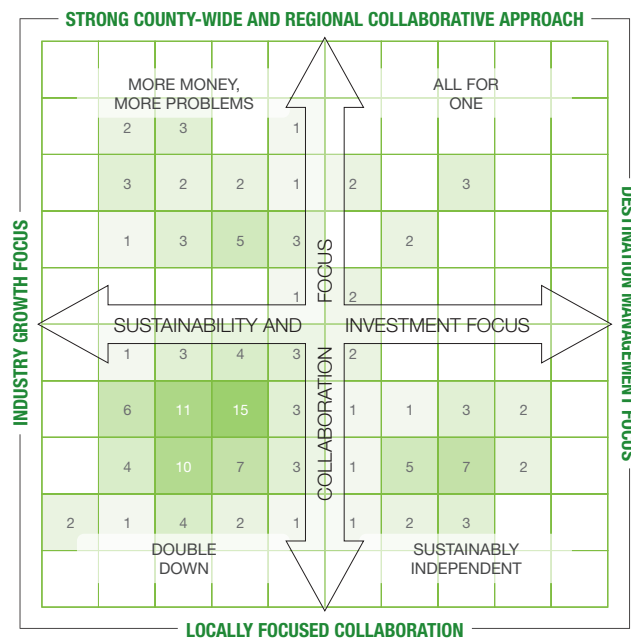
## 5.0 EXPECTED AND PREFERRED FUTURES

### 5.1 EXPECTED FUTURE: SCENARIO D – DOUBLE DOWN

The 'Expected future' is one that can happen without proactive collaboration for destination management of Snohomish County tourism development.

#### COASTAL COMMUNITIES REGION THINK TANK

EXPECTED FUTURE – 2030



*The four scenarios presented represent a range of plausible outcomes for the Coastal Communities Region. Think Tank participants were asked about their views of the expected and preferred future.*



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#### KEY POINTS TO NOTE

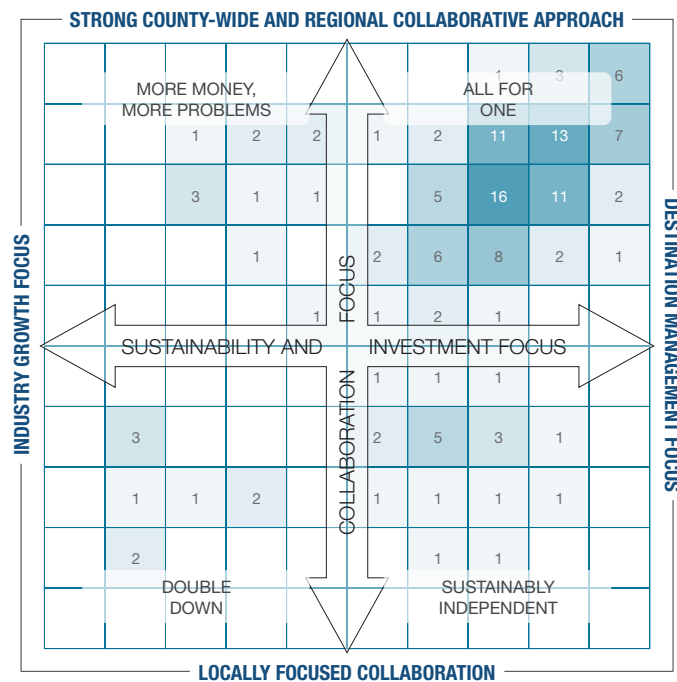
- Think Tank participants understand Scenario D's hyper-focus on Coastal communities' development could eventually overwhelm and isolate the region from the collaborative and sustainable goals of the preferred future.
- New collaborative efforts for changes in County tourism destination development practices will need to be implemented to get to the preferred future.

## 5.2 PREFERRED FUTURE: SCENARIO B – ALL FOR ONE

Think Tank participants expressed a preference for one of the presented outcomes, Scenario B, “All for One”. Discussion centered around how collaborative programs and entities could be created to gain participation of regional public and private stakeholders with the goal of achieving the expected future of Scenario B, “All for One”.

*A definite preference for one scenario gives clarity on the mandate to take actions that support that vision for the future.*

### COASTAL COMMUNITIES REGION THINK TANK PREFERRED FUTURE – 2030



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#### KEY POINTS TO NOTE

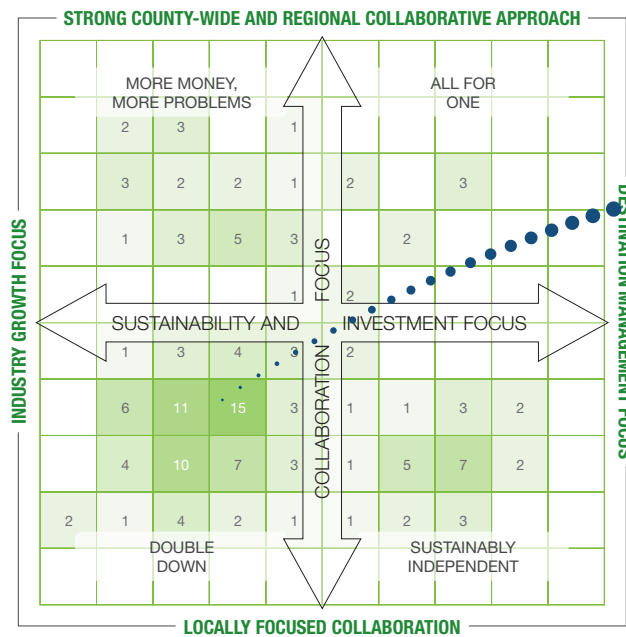
- The tight concentration of color in Scenario B ‘All for One’ indicates a close alignment of thinking by participants around the preferred future.
- Managing destinations through a unified county-wide marketing message will support the collaborative and sustainable goals of the preferred future.



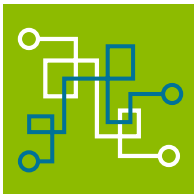
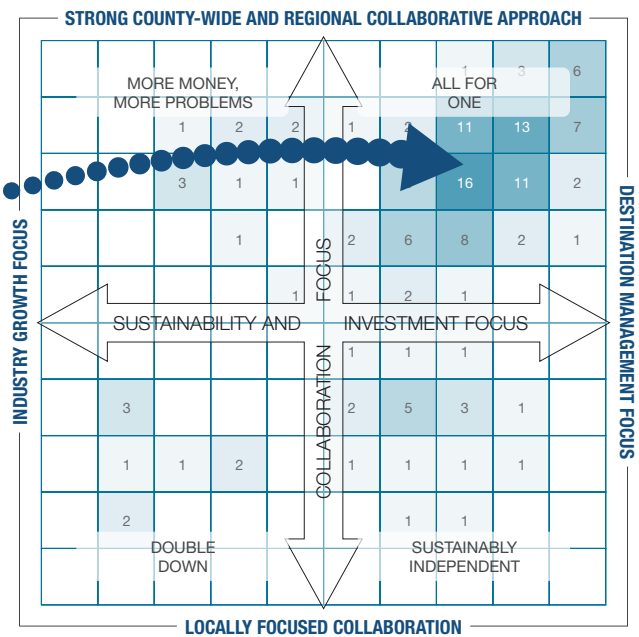
## 6.0 CLOSING THE GAP – GETTING TO THE PREFERRED FUTURE

Think Tank participants discussed the ramifications and implications of failing to achieve the preferred future. There was strong alignment among participants that Scenario B, 'All for One' represented the preferred future scenario for the region, with a recognition that actions must be taken quickly particularly with respect to regional infrastructural connectivity and collaboration. The hypothetical scenario framework created by Coastal Communities Region Think Tank participants gives voice to the strategies and actions that are priorities for the region. It is this framework that will guide Snohomish County as it creates sustainable and collaborative destination development action plans for each of its regions.

**COASTAL COMMUNITIES REGION THINK TANK**  
EXPECTED FUTURE – 2030



**COASTAL COMMUNITIES REGION THINK TANK**  
PREFERRED FUTURE – 2030



### IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- Regional leadership needs to be proactive about the opportunities for connectivity and collaboration presented by Paine Field to help move the region to the preferred future.
- Local destinations must recognize that they are connected to the greater regional tourism industry and work together to forge new alliances that will build sustainability into regional economic development.

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## 7.0 BRAINSTORMING REGIONAL ACTION IDEAS

### 7.1 BROAD IDEAS FOR ACTION

With the Preferred Future scenario of 'All for One' as a goal, Think Tank participants were asked collectively to think about strategic actions that could be pursued to take the Coastal Communities Region from an expected trajectory to the preferred future. Participants were asked to break into table groups to discuss and create action items that regional leadership could take to propel the tourism industry towards the preferred future. Each table group brainstormed at least three action items, then presented and categorized the action items as they related to the strategies of the Snohomish County 2018-2022 Strategic Tourism Plan (STP). Not all STP strategies were assigned an idea, nor were these ideas vetted with the larger group prioritized or evaluated in context with other initiatives by civic leaders or other community development groups.

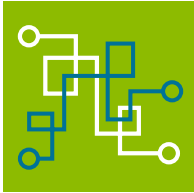
Strategic Tourism Plan Strategies	Ideas for Action
Visitor Capacity planning / Traffic / Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination capacity</li> <li>• Transportation</li> </ul>
Lodging and Facility Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form sister activity/attraction partnerships</li> </ul>
Aviation District & Commercial Air Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convening a Paine Field Airport advisory group &amp; area stakeholders</li> </ul>

## Strategic Tourism Plan Strategies

## Ideas for Action

Other

- Updated inventory of assets
- Agreement on a value proposition "Why come here at all?"
- Gain participation of public & private stakeholders
- Agreeing on collaboration
- Identifying political will (Finding opportunities to exploit within the assets)
- Communication
- Create Informed front line staff
- Experience tourism ourselves
- Form a regional stakeholder group
- More community buy-in
- Regional marketing team
- Create a communication plan for communities



## IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- Actively using tourism destination development as an economic development tool will help bring prosperity to all communities of the region.
- Alignment of all regional stakeholders on the question of "Why come here at all?" will focus thinking on what the region should become and lead tourism development to the preferred future.

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## 7.2 POTENTIAL COASTAL COMMUNITIES REGIONAL PROJECTS

Building on the ideas for action, large group discussion further grouped the ideas into potential building blocks for regional projects that could be pursued to achieve Scenario B, 'All for One'. Think Tank participants were asked to outline each project hypothetically to get a sense of how it would work and how it supported the characteristics of the preferred scenario. Participants tied all of the projects to the characteristics of regional economic development and collaboration. Below are brief descriptions of the four potential regional projects as developed by the Coastal Communities Region Think Tank participants.

### COMMERCIAL AIR SERVICE COALITION

#### DESCRIPTION:

A coalition of stakeholders that meet regularly and focuses on destination management to get visitors from Paine Field out into the County.

#### PURPOSE:

PAE promotes regional collaboration between airport, communities, businesses, and infrastructural players (State, CT, SWDOT, Local, WSF, Metro).

### FIXING DESTINATION CAPACITY

#### DESCRIPTION:

Develop major trailheads with amenities like Wifi, security, parking management, consumables, etc. Apps to book parking, hikes, pay fees, including destination amenities.

#### PURPOSE:

To create safer, easier, more enjoyable and sustainable hiking and backpacking experiences for both locals and visitors. Enhances inter-agency collaboration creating alliances.

### Regional Economic Development and Collaboration

### SISTER CITIES FOR A DAY

#### DESCRIPTION:

A program established by Chamber/Tourism or Economic Development entities where cities mutually agree to reciprocate a 'Day' for a tourist you want to attract.

#### PURPOSE:

To create collaboration and trust throughout the County. Increases understanding of each other's challenges.

### VALUE PROPOSITION

#### DESCRIPTION:

Use focus groups and technological tools to create a shared value proposition that creates inventory and generates a common ethos.

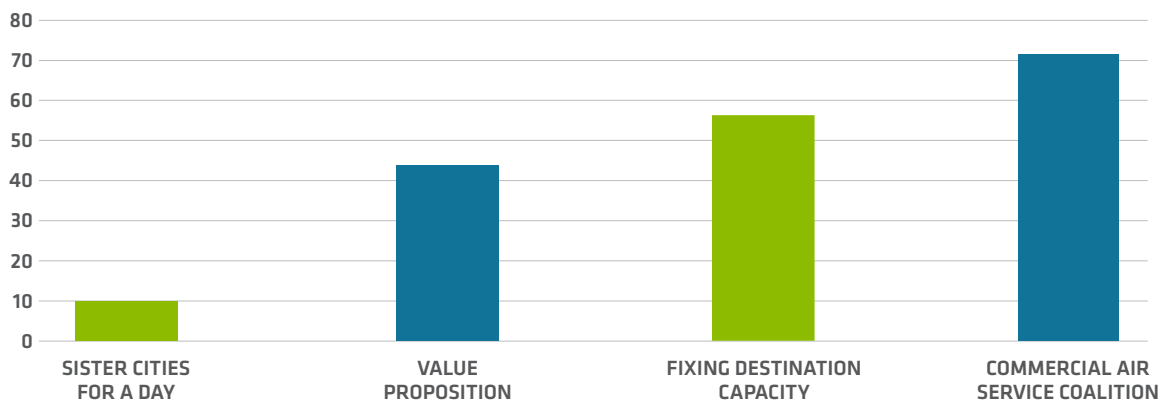
#### PURPOSE:

To gauge existing perceptions on how to increase tourism and to create critical collaboration and buy-in on how to do so.

### 7.3 IDEAS FOR INITIAL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

After creating and presenting the potential regional project descriptions, participants were asked to prioritize each project over the next five years. In a simple workshop exercise, each participant was given ten dots representing a hypothetical \$100,000 each and asked to assign two to each year. The goal of this exercise is to understand what Think Tank participants viewed as immediate priorities for the Coastal Communities Region as it moves towards its Preferred Future of 'All for One.'

#### 2019-2023 Weighted Resource Allocation for Coastal Communities Region Projects (\$100K per unit)



#### 2019-2023 Weighted Resource Allocation for Coastal Communities Regional Projects broken out over five years.

Project Name	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TOTALS
Sister Cities For a Day	4	1	3	0	2	10
Value Proposition	13	12	6	7	5	43
Fixing Destination Capacity	8	11	13	13	11	56
Commercial Air Service Coalition	15	19	18	11	8	71



#### KEY POINTS TO NOTE

- All four of the suggested Coastal Communities projects emphasize regional economic development and collaboration.
- The positive impacts of commercial air service at Paine Field on the regional tourism industry provide an opportune point-in-time to pivot to the preferred future.

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*The dedication and professionalism of the staff at Snohomish County Tourism Bureau (SCTB) and Snohomish County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT) are big assets for the region's tourism industry.*

## 8.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The tourism industry representatives from the Coastal Communities Region of Snohomish County engaged in the Think Tank workshop and discussions with great enthusiasm. Their passion and interest ensured the discussions were thoughtful, and the outcomes reflective of the region's perspectives. This dedication is reflective of the deep commitment Think Tank participants have to the future of their communities and local industries.

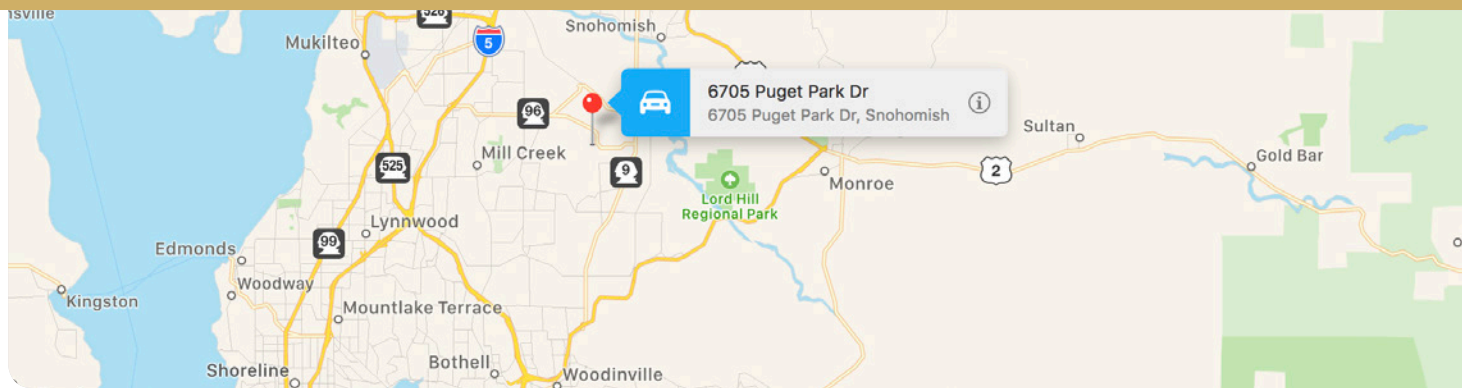
Future iQ would like to acknowledge the substantial support from the staff at Snohomish County Tourism Bureau (SCTB) and Snohomish County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT). The teams from these two key organizations contributed outstanding support to the Think Tank workshops, and helped facilitate and lead portions of important stakeholder discussions.

In particular, the following people are specifically acknowledged:

- Annique Bennett, Snohomish County Parks, Recreation and Tourism and Amy Spain, Snohomish County Tourism Bureau, who both provided strong leadership, guidance and support for this work and who generously shared their unique insight into the local tourism industry.
- Rich Huebner (Tourism Regional Projects Coordinator) and Nicole McMurray (Regional Tourism Projects Coordinator) for their excellent work on providing project support of the Think Tanks.
- Angie Riley, Marketing & Communications Manager, Snohomish County Tourism Bureau, for skilled scenario-group facilitation support.







## 9.0 CONTACT DETAILS

For more information on the Snohomish County Strategic Tourism Plan, or this Think Tank report, please contact:



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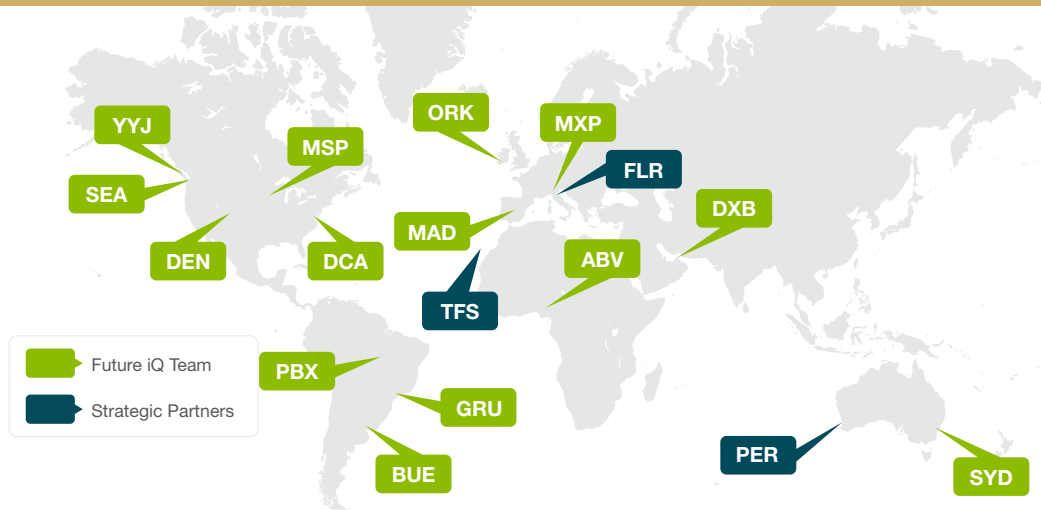
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## 10.0 ABOUT FUTURE IQ

Future iQ specializes in applying innovative tools and approaches to assist organizations, regions and industries shape their economic and community futures. With nearly two decades of experience, the company has a global clientele spanning three continents.

To learn more about Future iQ, and our recent projects visit [www.future-iq.com](http://www.future-iq.com) or by email at [info@future-iq.com](mailto:info@future-iq.com)

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VP Foresight  
Research

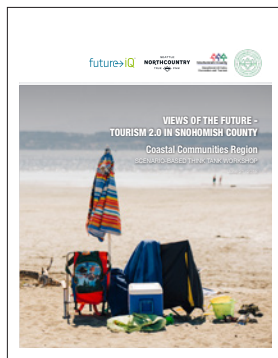


**JIM  
HAGUEWOOD**  
Economic  
Development  
Specialist



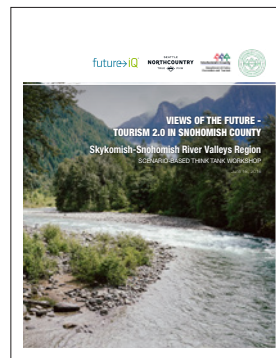
Views of the Future - Tourism 2.0 in  
Snohomish County

Basecamp Communities Region Scenario-based  
Think Tank Workshop  
June 2018



Views of the Future - Tourism 2.0 in  
Snohomish County

Coastal Communities Region Scenario-based  
Think Tank Workshop  
June 2018



Views of the Future - Tourism 2.0 in  
Snohomish County

Skykomish-Snohomish River Valleys Region  
Scenario-based Think Tank Workshop  
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