

Southern Tier

# Regional Plan

July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2025

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## Regional Service Strategies

- a. Identify regional plan strategies and specifically provide detail on how regional plan strategies relate to the workforce needs of local businesses as well as the priority projects from the Regional Economic Development Council (REDC).

According to the 2019 Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council Progress Report, prior to the pandemic, the Southern Tier includes a strong foundation of target industries, higher education institutions, the nonprofit sector, and government agencies. The report says, "the Southern Tier will take a collaborative, regional approach to attract talent and investment for the development of industry clusters, especially advanced manufacturing, healthcare, food and agriculture, and tourism."

As of 2020, these industries were in-demand for the region: advanced manufacturing, food and agriculture, and tourism business development.

A particular focus will be on increasing the size, quality, and prosperity of the region's workforce through new business creation based on high-technology discoveries and other entrepreneurial activities.

The report states that at the time of the report, the New York State's Jobs Express lists 5,500 openings throughout the Southern Tier in a range of industries and levels of skills, with the largest number of openings in Healthcare Practitioner and Technical (854); Office, Clerical and Secretarial (611) and Sales and Related (609). Most of the positions listed in these fields require specific, higher-level skills.

Challenges include: A shortfall in affordable childcare, Lack of low-cost public transportation, Elevated number of potential workers unable to pass a drug test, Prior convictions leading to employer bias, Safety Net Cost/Benefit Analysis: potential financial disincentive for families and/or individuals on safety net assistance to accept lower-wage employment, Retention of young professionals/millennials, Aligning Human Capital with Career Opportunities: effectively marketing job opportunities to the regional workforce and addressing skills gap issues.

According to a 2019 New York State Department of Labor report, industry categories designated as "significant" in the Southern Tier include: Construction, Manufacturing, Transportation and Warehousing, Professional and Business Services, Educational Services, Health Care and Social Assistance.

REDC says that according to NYS Department of Labor statistics, serious workforce shortages remain that threaten to slow the economy and hinder growth. Two of the largest challenges to this workforce shortage remain: 1) increasing opportunities for women with children in the workplace and 2) increasing the skills of currently unemployed or underemployed workers to match the skills needed by employer.

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The need to fill 58,000 jobs over the next ten years resulting from a combination of retirements and newly created positions. The issue is further challenged by the ability of the region to attract workers to jobs where the wages are not competitive with other regions in New York State.

The Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB) of the Southern Tier region are committed to providing seamless delivery of services to our customers, recognizing that continuous improvement is critical to the goal of a truly seamless delivery of services. The LWDBs of the Southern Tier agree to provide WIOA Career Services to all Adult and Dislocated Worker customers regardless of which American Job Center they visit to access services. Registration will be completed through the One Stop Operating System (OSOS) and all staff will input customer activities and regular case notes in a timely manner. This coordination of service delivery will assist businesses, jobseekers and employees in times of business growth as well as businesses downsizing or closing. Additionally since the start of the pandemic, local workforce offices are offering virtual services (for help with job placement, resumes, interview preparation and more), free skills training via online platforms for unemployed or under employed individuals and businesses, and virtual job fairs.

- b. Provide a list of executed cooperative agreements where applicable and define how local service providers, including additional providers, will carry out the regional strategies.

The Local Workforce Development Boards of the Southern Tier (STLWDB) works closely with the STREDC to coordinate strategies that align with the work of the REDC. The STLWDB Directors attend the REDC meetings and participate in their committees when possible. Our demand occupations are aligned with the goals of the REDC and we work closely to find and match the skills of employees needed by employers (new and existing) that work with the REDC. In addition we work closely with eligible training providers to provide the kind of skills training that match with the needs of employers especially those new to the area that work closely with the REDC.

Each local area has executed a MOU process with their partners, which have either been approved or is waiting on approval from NYSDOL.

## Sector Initiatives for In-demand Industry Sectors or Occupations

- a. Identify in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

The LWDBs of the Southern Tier will continue to work collaboratively with each other and the Regional Economic Development Council and its committees to align workforce strategies. The Southern Tier Regional Business Services team (which includes all Executive Directors) meets quarterly and discusses strategies for growth sectors along with current workforce events within each local area.

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The Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council has identified advanced manufacturing as a priority sector. To provide assistance to the sector the Southern Tier LWDBs working with other regions and with funding from the American Apprenticeship Initiative are educating the business community on the value of recruiting specialized skilled workforce through apprenticeships. New apprenticeship have been written and approved by NYS. Outreach continues to regional training providers and businesses to develop appropriate curriculum needed by employers for the workforce of today. In addition the LWDBs are working with BOCES to develop pre-apprenticeship opportunities that include training, certifications and education about the local opportunities available in the Southern Tier.

The Executive Directors of the LWDBs attend Southern Tier REDC meetings and participate on the Workforce Committee.

Due to the rural nature of the Southern Tier region it is difficult to provide training opportunities regionally but if participants can logistically attend they are able to participate in training opportunities in adjacent counties. The LWDBs continue to explore effective and efficient ways to share training opportunities across a broad geographic area.

- b. Identify and describe sector initiatives that address the needs of the identified in-demand industry sectors or occupations.

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The Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council has identified advanced manufacturing as a priority sector. To provide assistance to the sector the Southern Tier outreach continues to regional training providers and businesses to develop appropriate curriculum needed by employers for the workforce of today. In addition the LWDBs are working with BOCES to develop pre-apprenticeship opportunities that include training, certifications and education about the local opportunities available in the Southern Tier.

An existing and highly successful program is slated for regional recruitment effort. The Accelerated Machinist Program (AMP) is a multi-employer, sector initiative designed to directly impact the need for entry level machinists in the Manufacturing Sector. This program has had over a 95% placement for graduates for the past two years at wages in excess of \$40,000 (on average), was highlighted as a Best Practice by Congressman Reed's Manufacturing Summit, and was funded by the REDC for an additional cohort in 2018. The AMP program was also presented at NYATEP as best practice because of its ability to create effective relationships amongst businesses, training providers, and job seekers.

Apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship initiatives are underway in the region. These programs include: the American Apprenticeship Initiative grant (AAI), the Women in

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Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations grant (WANTO), and the NY College Apprenticeship Network (NYCAN).

The American Apprenticeship Initiative grant helps high school and college students, disconnected youth, unemployed adults, minorities and veterans prepare for and secure apprenticeship opportunities in the manufacturing sector.

The Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations grant helps recruit, train, and retain women in quality pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs, and encourages them to pursue apprenticeships and non-traditional occupations such as Information Technology (IT), Advanced Manufacturing, Trades (Construction, Welding, Carpentry, Masonry, Electrical), Transportation and Engineering.

The NY College Apprenticeship Network (NYCAN) grant works with SUNY and others across the state to provide funding streams to companies and apprentices, and provides case management and supportive services to participants.

A new Rural Healthcare Initiative grant was also recently launched to address rural healthcare workforce shortages in the region and across New York State. The grant aims to increase the number of individuals training in healthcare occupations that directly impact patient care and alleviate healthcare workforce shortages by creating sustainable employment and training programs in healthcare occupations serving rural populations. Targeted occupations include: Substance Abuse and Behavioral Disorders Counselors; Mental Health Counselors; Rehabilitation Counselors; Healthcare Social Workers; Mental Health & Substance Abuse Social Workers; Registered Nurses; Medical & Clinical Laboratory Technologists; Medical & Clinical Laboratory Technicians; Pharmacy Technicians; Licensed Practical Nurses; Home Health Aides; Occupational Therapy Assistants; Physical Therapy Assistants; Phlebotomists.

Virtual Job Fairs are also being held to address worker shortage in industries that are in high demand, including: Healthcare, Hospitality, Tourism, and Manufacturing.

The Executive Directors of the LWDBs attend Southern Tier REDC meetings and participate on the Workforce Committee. Due to the rural nature of the Southern Tier region it is difficult to provide training opportunities regionally but if participants can logistically attend they are able to participate in training opportunities in adjacent counties. Due to COVID, many training providers offer a selection of online programs that allow individuals to participate remotely.

The LWDBs continue to explore effective and efficient ways to share training opportunities across a broad geographic area.

## Regional Labor Market Analysis

- a. Include an analysis of regional economic conditions incorporating the existing emerging demand sectors and occupations, the employment needs of businesses in those sectors and occupations, as well as noting if the information used in the analysis was provided by the New York State

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Department of Labor's (NYSDOL) Research and Statistics (R&S) Division (if not, provide what source was used for complete analysis).

The regional economy of the Southern Tier, including the eight counties of Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Delaware, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga and Tompkins, was severely affected by COVID-19, however the labor market is improving. As the number of total jobs has decreased, the numbers of available workers in the labor force of prime working age has also declined, leading to an increasing demand for labor, particularly in the advanced manufacturing, health services, transportation and warehousing and hospitality and food service sectors. COVID-19 has also created shortages of workers across most occupations in the region. The current labor force stands at 307,385.

These sectors have been targeted by the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council's comprehensive strategy. In collaboration with the New York State Department of labor's Southern Tier New York labor market analyst, the regional demand list was compiled to support these sectors. Part of the overarching goals of the Southern Tier strategy was to create opportunities for and increase labor participation rates of segments of the population that have experienced barriers to employment by actively engaging those who may have given up on actively seeking employment. Balancing the skills and abilities of the available workforce with the specific needs of individual employers in these sectors requires a diverse approach. Everything from work readiness training, including soft skills preparation, basic mathematical competency, computer and technological literacy to highly specialized technical training is currently in high demand.

Opportunities exist across the skilled trades, transportation and warehousing, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing due to the rapidly aging and retiring workforce.

According to the New York State Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Market Information Division of Research and Statistics' 2019 Significant Industries Report of the Southern Tier:

Twelve industries are designated as "significant" in the Southern Tier. Eight of these industries experienced an increase in employment between 2013 and 2018. In addition, half of these industries employed at least 8,000 during 2018. All significant industries shared one or more of the following characteristics: rapid growth (percentage basis); large growth (absolute basis); high wages (average annual wage above the regional average of \$49,200 in 2018); or strong expected growth through 2026. A broad set of industries were identified for this report. They fall into six major industry groups: construction; manufacturing; transportation and warehousing; professional and business services (which primarily sell to other businesses); educational services; and health care services.

According to the New York State Department of Labor's Research and Statistics June 2021 Newsletter: The COVID-19 pandemic inflicted serious damage on the Southern Tier's labor market last year. In February-April 2020, the region lost over 43,000 jobs (not seasonally adjusted) and the Southern Tier's unemployment rate more than tripled to 15.5%. Fast-forward to April 2021, and the region's labor market has improved greatly. The number of

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nonfarm jobs in the Southern Tier grew by more than 22,000 over the past year and continues to trend upward. In addition, the region's unemployment rate dropped significantly over the past 12 months, standing at 5.4% in April 2021. Manufacturing plays a key role in the Southern Tier's labor market. In 2019, the sector was responsible for 15.9% of private sector jobs in the Southern Tier, the highest of any region in the state and almost three times the statewide average. Moreover, factory jobs in the region tend to pay very well. On average, manufacturing workers were paid over \$70,500 per year in 2019, which was 50% higher than the average for all private sector non-factory jobs in the region. Two manufacturers in the region – Corning Inc. and Imperium3 New York Inc., have developed innovative products that are expected to create many high-paying jobs in the coming years, which in turn will help drive the Southern Tier's economic recovery.

According to the May 2019 Employment in New York State newsletter, a diverse set of developments are poised to contribute to the future economic growth of the Southern Tier region: Hemp-based Opportunities Growing; Eco-Friendly Public Transport; Rise of Craft Brewing and Farm to Table, and Work From Home opportunities.

According to the Department of labor, Labor statistics: The Southern Tier's private sector job count grew by 14,500, or 7.4 percent, to 209,800 in the year ending June 2021. The largest gains were in leisure and hospitality (+7,800), educational and health services (+2,100), trade, transportation and utilities (+1,700), other services (+1,000), manufacturing (+900), professional and business services (+700) and natural resources, mining and construction (+400). Government jobs increased by (+400) over the year.

The May 2021 (most recent available data) unemployment data for the region was 5.1%.

The Workforce Development Boards' review statistical analyses provided by the NYSDOL Labor Market Analyst and anecdotal data provided by local employers concerning available jobs unfilled due to a lack of trained job seekers. The Local Workforce Development Board's review and discuss the reports provided to confirm that the proposed In-Demand Occupation List meets the needs of the local business community.

- b. Describe the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to meet the employment needs of businesses in those sectors and occupations.

For many employment opportunities in the Southern Tier Region, a minimum of a high school diploma or high school equivalency is required. For positions within the health care field, the required certification or license is required for each of the positions noted above. For advanced manufacturing, the required certification for positions listed is needed and in many cases some relevant experience. For hospitality and food service, many customer service positions require a high school diploma or high school equivalency, however many management positions may require an associate degree. For

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transportation, the required license is needed. For skilled trades, the required certification is needed and in many cases some relevant experience, or acceptance into an apprenticeship program. For public administration, an associate or bachelor's degree is required. For engineers, associates, bachelor's degree, or advanced degree is required. The region has been experiencing growth in the hospitality and food service sector. Most occupations in this sector do not require educational attainment beyond high school and can provide excellent advancement opportunities. Successful preparation for these positions requires a high degree of work place readiness and soft skills.

- c. Provide an analysis of the regional workforce.

According to the CDO Workforce 2020-2022 Strategic Plan, approximately 50% of occupations in all industry sectors require either a higher education degree or technical skills level training, increasing the retention and recruitment challenge. In terms of education attainment.

Prior to the pandemic, challenges identified by the Workforce Development Work Group include: A shortfall in affordable childcare • Lack of low-cost public transportation • Limited housing stock • Elevated number of aged/neglected properties • Affordability a challenge • Computer/Internet access and adequate user ability • Elevated number of potential workers unable to pass a drug test • Prior convictions leading to employer bias • Safety Net Cost/Benefit Analysis — potential financial disincentive for families and/or individuals on safety net assistance to accept lower-wage employment • Retention of young professionals/millennials • Aligning human capital with career opportunities — effectively marketing job opportunities to the regional workforce and addressing skills gap issues.

## Regional Spending Plan

- a. Include a regional spending plan that includes administrative cost arrangements between LWBDs and the pooling of funds where applicable.

The Southern Tier Region Workforce Development Boards are in the process of collaborating on strategic opportunities for identifying and sharing specific administrative costs that may be available; specifically, discussing areas such as procurement or AP/AR processes that might be able to be shared across the region.

## Supportive Services

- a. Describe how supportive services will be coordinated throughout the region.

The Southern Tier Region Workforce Development Boards focus their collective effort on key industry sectors vital to the sub-regional economics of the respective Workforce Development Board, while exploring areas for future regional initiatives such as Advanced Manufacturing and Healthcare. The Workforce Development Boards in the Southern Tier

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are moving to share key training and supportive service costs in support of business needs across county lines.

## Economic Development

- a. Describe how economic development and workforce investment activities will be coordinated in the region and specifically provide detail how continued coordination can further relationships between the region and its respective REDC.

The LWDBs of the Southern Tier Region strive to align our initiatives and strategies to the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council. We work closely with our local economic development organizations, Industrial Development Agencies and our local chambers of commerce. That coordination comes in many shapes and sizes as across the region there are many organizations that are inclusive of the above entities. Across the region collaboration includes joint employer recruitment activities, reciprocal board representation, co-location, joint planning, business attraction strategies, collaboration, etc.

In addition, when economic development agencies bring in site selection teams to view potential sites, LWDB Directors and/or their staff is available to meet with the teams to provide information on the local and regional workforce and training opportunities available through the LWDBs and their partners.

## Performance Accountability Measure Negotiation and Reporting Agreement

- a. Include an agreement concerning the Performance Accountability Measure Negotiation and Reporting. Performance Accountability Measure Negotiation and Reporting may be negotiated by LWDBs individually, involving strategies and methods collaborated on at the regional level. If this is the case for the region, include a statement that reflects that the measures were negotiated individually and any collaborative efforts devised and agreed to by the region.

The Workforce Development Boards in the Southern Tier agree to review quarterly performance reports to identify issues of performance and to develop performance improvement plans that benefit not only each individual LWDB's performance, but the region's as a whole. Once performance improvement plans have been developed, this information will be shared with workforce staff to give them a better understanding of how the delivery of services may impact performance. The boards will discuss performance measure negotiations prior to negotiations with NYSDOL, to ensure coordination and collaboration between the LWDBs.

## Public Comment

- a. Describe the process used by the region to provide a period of no more than 30 days for public comment and input into development of the plan by representatives of business, labor organizations, and education prior to submission.

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The draft Southern Tier Regional plan will be sent to partners, stakeholders, mailing lists and posted on the local websites and social media, if applicable.

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