

Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council

Preliminary Opportunity Agenda Strategy

6-27-13 Amended

Overall Approach

The Southern Tier is committed to embracing the objectives of the Opportunity Agenda to move impoverished populations into the workforce, revitalize distressed communities in our region, and encourage projects and activities designed to overcome challenges preventing poor communities from fully participating in the region's economic revitalization. The Southern Tier will take a regional approach, with a focus on communities in the region that have concentrated pockets of poverty and distress in the urban cores.

Elements of the Strategy to Advance the Southern Tier's Opportunity Agenda

- Integrate the Opportunity Agenda strategy into the Southern Tier's overall economic development plan and its strategic objectives including Healthcare, Energy, Transportation and Economic Development Backbone (downtown and waterfront revitalization, workforce development, business development, technology transfer and tourism).
- Target job categories that are both linked to the Southern Tier's economic strategies and have been identified as growth areas by the NYS Department of Labor. These include jobs in: Agriculture (food manufacturing); Healthcare (home health care, personal care, registered nurses, nurse aides, administrative assistants, clerks, physicians, licensed practical nurses, supervisors and managers, medical assistants, and cleaners); Energy (energy inspections, weatherization and installation of renewable systems); Transportation (manufacturing and assembly); Travel and Tourism (clerks, waiters and waitresses, landscapers, janitors and cleaners, cooks, and operations managers).
- Target geographic areas in the Southern Tier Region include those areas with the highest concentration of poverty demonstrated by low household incomes, high rates of poverty and unemployment, and a high percentage of residents receiving public assistance. Target areas include communities with census tracts representing concentrated distressed areas, as well as sub-census tracts in rural areas with a population of 5,000 – 25,000 that exhibit chronically distressed conditions. Based on data available from the US Census, target census tracts within municipalities include Binghamton (2, 5, 11, 12, 13), Corning (9625, 9627), Elmira (1, 2, 6, 7, 10), Endicott (134, 135, 136, 137), Hornell (9608, 9609), Johnson City (139, 140) and Norwich (9703, 0704). Sub-census tracts in rural areas meeting the prescribed qualifications also are urged to submit projects that meet the program's objectives.
- Encourage and support projects and initiatives that:
 - Involve joint efforts between educational institutions, employers and community organizations.
 - Will move impoverished people living in the targeted geographic areas into employment, preferably in job categories identified by the Southern Tier's Regional Council.
 - Are designed to ensure residents of target areas have the tools to secure and retain jobs in targeted job categories while meeting employer hiring needs.
 - Will remove barriers to employment such as transportation, child care and lack of education and training.
 - Revitalize distressed communities by creating businesses and job opportunities.

Examples of Projects

- Training and apprenticeship programs developed in collaboration with major employers that are hiring, particularly those identified as priority projects by the Regional Council of the Southern Tier.
- Linkages between incubators and other business development programs/centers in poverty areas where these facility might also become more closely embedded with meeting the needs of the neighborhood.
- New business development in targeted areas that generate employment opportunities as well as meet a need of the impoverished population; i.e., child care centers.
- Extension of public transportation lines to reach employment locations.
- Creative solutions to barriers such as transportation; i.e., "car share" programs.
- Volunteer based one-on-one mentoring projects modeled after successful programs such as the Ithaca-based Learning Web.
- Life skills training.
- Collaboration between communities and businesses to create employment opportunities in distressed areas.