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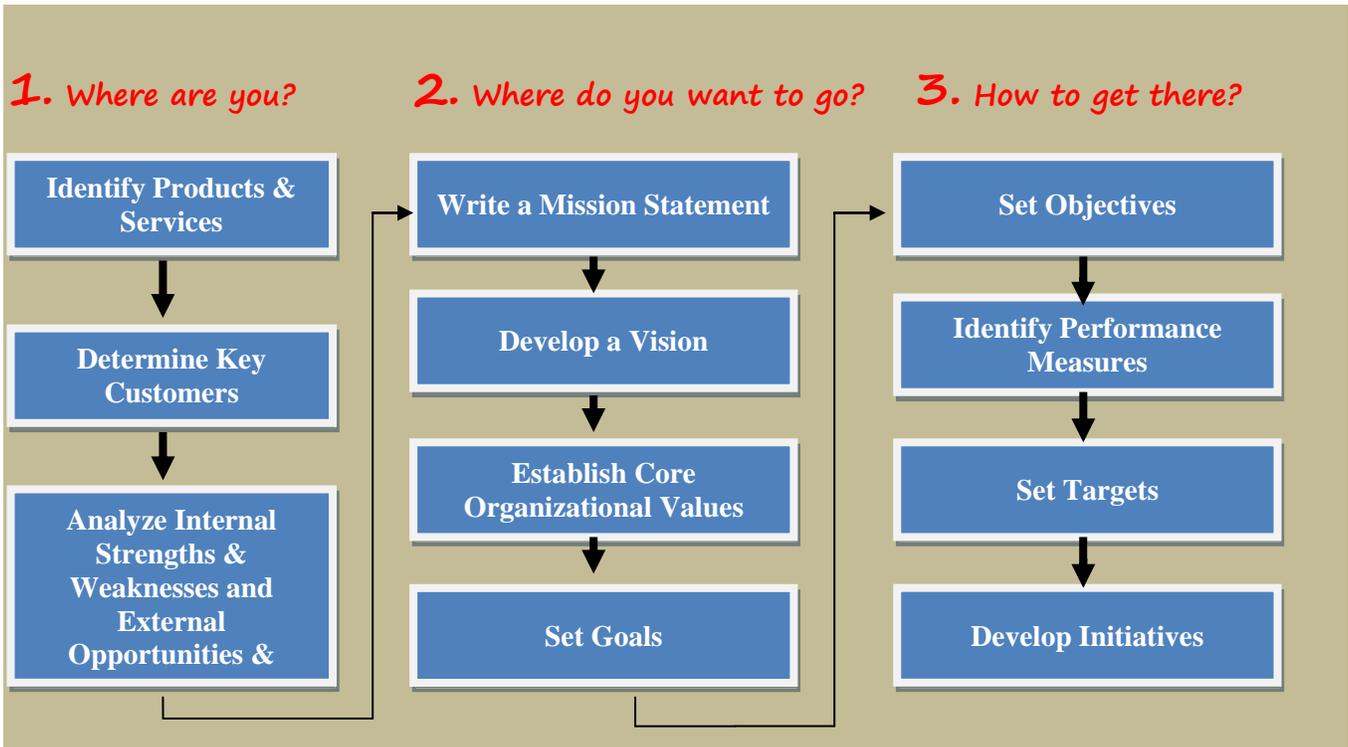
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- Appendix A: Community Profiles
Appendix B: Stakeholder and Community Outreach Summary
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I. Strategic Prioritization Planning

A Strategic Prioritization Plan sets the direction for activities in order to achieve specific objectives. Otsego County developed this Plan to assess the delivery of services and develop a strategy to navigate a path toward a better future and more effective county government. This Plan characterizes a countywide vision based upon input and feedback from the Board of Representatives, the County’s municipalities, the public, and other key stakeholders. This Plan identifies the key action items to achieve the County’s goals and prioritize actions for at least the next five years.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS



How will this Plan be used?

This Plan is intended to achieve the identified goals through the implementation of priority action items. These actions represent a significant countywide collaboration among partners. Many of the Action Items involve forming ad hoc and other organizations such as a Task Force. These organizational structures are necessary in order to assign responsibility for action as well as provide a forum for a variety of partners from government and the private sector to develop initiatives collaboratively. These organizations can measure progress using the rubric created for this plan. This will enable a measure of accountability for the process, and allow a holistic measure of progress.

Otsego County Strategic Prioritization Plan

March 4, 2016

How was the Plan developed?

The development of the Otsego County Strategic Prioritization Plan includes input from residents, municipal and county officials and department heads, local businesses, economic development leaders and educational institutions. The Plan sought participation from each community within the County to identify common missions, goals, and trends. The County, with the help of the planning team, constructed the scope of the Plan and coordinated outreach to the community leaders, business owners, and residents. Because of the very short timeframe for developing this plan, a very compact and structured outreach schedule was created and adhered to.

| Outreach Schedule | | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------------|---|
| Date | Location | Time | Event | Attendees |
| November 5, 2015 | Meadows Building | 10:00am-11:25am | Roundtable Discussions | Town & Village Clerks, Tax Assessors, Bookkeepers |
| | | 11:30am-1:00pm | | Highway Superintendents, DPW, Water & Sewer |
| | | 1:10pm-2:30pm | | Fire Chiefs, Public Safety, EMS |
| | | 2:30pm-4:00pm | | School District Superintendents |
| | | 4:00pm-6:00pm | | Town Supervisors & Mayors |
| | Four Locations* | 7:00pm-9:00pm | Public Workshop | Otsego County Residents |
| November 10, 2015 | Meadows Building | 10:00am-12:00pm | Interviews | Otsego County Department Heads |
| | | 12:00pm-1:00pm | Roundtable Discussion | Police: State Troopers, NYS Park, 911 Dispatch, Sheriff, Oneonta, Cooperstown, SUNY |
| | | 1:00pm-4:00pm | Interviews | Otsego County Department Heads |
| | Four Locations* | 7:00pm-9:00pm | Public Workshop | Otsego County Residents |
| November 13, 2015 | Meadows Building | 9:00am-10:30am | Roundtable Discussion | Otsego County Local Business |
| | | 10:30am-12:00pm | | Chambers of Commerce, Startup NY, SUNY, Hartwick, County Planning, Otsego EDC |
| | | 1:00pm-4:00pm | Committee Meeting | Strategic Prioritization Plan Steering Committee |

*Workshops held simultaneously at Edmeston Central School, Richfield Springs CSD, SUNY Oneonta, and Unatego Junior & Senior HS.

Otsego County Strategic Prioritization Plan

March 4, 2016

Prior to the project kick-off meeting, a request for information was sent to the elected official of each municipality and each County department head. The data obtained from these requests helped outline the future interviews and roundtable discussion agendas and was compiled to identify community needs. The response rate from municipal elected officials was approximately 50%.

The kick-off meeting took place on September 24, 2015 with members of the Advisory Committee. During this meeting, the requested material from municipalities and County department heads were reviewed, countywide stakeholders were identified, and dates for the public workshops and roundtable events were set. The Advisory Committee and the planning team collaborated through conference calls and emails to finalize interview schedules, roundtable agendas, and public workshop content for the two-day outreach event.

The first day of outreach was held on November 5, 2015. Interviews and roundtable sessions were held during the day at the Meadows Building in Cooperstown and the public workshop was held from 7pm-9pm at four locations simultaneously throughout Otsego County. These public workshop solicited input from residents to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) within their communities and to share ideas on how to make the County a more desirable place to live, work, and visit. This information was collected and analyzed prior to the next public workshop.

The second day of outreach was held on November 10, 2015. Again, interviews and roundtable sessions were held during the day at the Meadows Building in Cooperstown (See Workshop Schedule in Appendix B) and the public workshops were held from 7pm-9pm at the same four locations simultaneously. This workshop presented findings from day 1 of the outreach process from all four locations and participants were able to add more input to the SWOT and Vision analysis. After the review, participants were asked to prioritize projects and strategies that were identified from the data obtained to date.

The third day of outreach was held on November 13, 2015. An economic development roundtable was held in the morning with local businesses, chambers of commerce, and educational institutions to identify workforce and educational needs within Otsego County. During the afternoon, findings from the outreach effort were presented to the Advisory Committee for review.

This Otsego County Strategic Prioritization Plan incorporates the input received from the three days of outreach; public workshops; information gathered from community leaders; current municipal, County, and regional plans; demographic trends; and economic needs and goals.

II. Demographics and Trends

This section highlights a number of trends within Otsego County including population, age, housing, education, and income. Comparisons to New York State demographics have been made where appropriate. These comparisons provide the context to understand growth patterns for Otsego County. The information is gathered primarily from the 2000 U.S. Census, 2010 US Census Data, and 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Data from previous Census reports is utilized where appropriate to show the progression of trends over time.

The following are demographic highlights:

- The total population for the County of Otsego was 62,029 in the year 2013; an estimated population decrease of 0.4 percent since 2010.
- The population of Otsego County has increased 4.8 percent from 59,075 in 1980.
- The residents of Otsego County tend to be slightly older than those of New York State, with the median age 41.4 years old.
- The median age of communities within Otsego County range from 21.9 in the City of Oneonta to 53.2 in the Village of Morris.
- The households in the County are 62.4 percent families as compared to 37.6 percent non-family households.
- Approximately 78.5 percent of Otsego County's housing units were occupied (not vacant), which is lower than the State average of 89.2 percent.
- Otsego County's residents have a higher high school graduation rate at 89.6% than the New York State rate of 85.2%.
- 26.8 percent of Otsego County's residents have a post high-school degree. The New York State average is 33.2%.
- The median household income in Otsego County is \$47,765. The New York State average is \$58,003.
- The Town of Middlefield has a higher median income of \$60,000 than the State average of \$58,003.
- 25.5 percent of Otsego County households earn less than \$25,000 per year. The New York State average is 23 percent.
- The poverty rate for the County is 15.5 percent, slightly higher than the State's 15.3 percent.
- Over 5,000 people commute into Otsego County to work every day.



Population



Local population growth and decline is dependent on several factors including economic expansion, environmental capacity, housing suitability, age-driven needs, and regional desirability. According to

U.S. Census data, Otsego County’s population decreased from 62,259 in 2010 to 62,029 in 2013. This reflects a 0.4 percent population decrease; however, the population of Otsego County has increased 4.8 percent from 59,075 in 1980. During the same period, the total population of New York State grew at a larger rate of 10.4 percent. Population counts are presented in Table 1: Population Trends.

Table 1: Population Trends

| Year | Otsego County | | New York State | |
|------|---------------|--------|----------------|--------|
| | Number | Growth | Number | Growth |
| 1980 | 59,075 | -- | 17,557,000 | -- |
| 1990 | 60,517 | 2.4% | 17,990,455 | 2.4% |
| 2000 | 61,676 | 1.9% | 18,976,457 | 5.48% |
| 2010 | 62,259 | 0.9% | 19,378,102 | 2.12% |
| 2013 | 62,029 | -0.4% | 19,487,053 | 0.5% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2009-2013

Age Distribution



According to the ACS 2009-2013, 35.1 percent of the total population in Otsego County is under 25 years of age. This trend is slightly higher than the State average of 32.3%, respectively. The

next largest age cohorts in the County are 45-54 years of age (14.5%) and 55-64 years of age (13.9%). The County has a larger percentage at 11.1 percent of college aged residents (20-24 years of age) when compared to the New York State average of 7.3 percent. The percentage of County residents in the 65-and-over age cohort (17.2%) is higher than the State (13.8%) in the same age cohort. This difference is reflected in the median age for the County 41.4, which is slightly higher than the median age for New York State 38.1. See Table 2: Age Distribution (2013).

Table 2: Age Distribution

| Age | Otsego County | | New York State | |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|
| | Total | % | Total | % |
| 0-14 | 8,923 | 14.4% | 3,520,327 | 18.2% |
| 15-19 | 5,976 | 9.6% | 1,334,705 | 6.8% |
| 20-24 | 6,889 | 11.1% | 1,420,961 | 7.3% |
| 25-34 | 5,531 | 8.9% | 2,716,456 | 13.9% |
| 35-44 | 6,459 | 10.4% | 2,576,903 | 13.2% |
| 45-54 | 9,007 | 14.5% | 2,856,403 | 14.7% |
| 55-64 | 8,637 | 13.9% | 2,365,915 | 12.1% |
| 65-74 | 5,717 | 9.2% | 1,426,716 | 7.3% |
| 75+ | 4,890 | 8.0% | 1,268,667 | 6.5% |
| Total | 62,029 | 100.0% | 19,487,053 | 100.0% |
| Median Age | 41.4 | | 38.1 | |

Source: ACS 2009-2013

Household Composition



The U.S. Census Bureau provides information on house-hold composition, which details the structure of the individuals and families living within the County. According to Table 3: Household Composition (2013), 62.4 percent of occupied households in the County are families with the remaining 37.6 percent being non-family households. Non-family households also include individuals living alone. Otsego County has a higher percentage of non-family households than New York State (35.9%) and the County has a larger percentage of vacant housing units at 21.5 percent than the State’s average of 10.8 percent. The average household size in Otsego County is 2.31 persons, which is lower than New York State’s average of 2.57 persons.

Table 3: Household Composition (2013)

| | Otsego County | | New York State | |
|--|---------------|------------|------------------|------------|
| | Total | % | Total | % |
| Total Housing Units | 30,663 | 100 | 8,113,270 | 100 |
| Vacant Housing Units | 6,585 | 21.5 | 878,527 | 10.8 |
| Total Households (Occupied Units) | 26,058 | 100 | 7,234,743 | 100 |
| Family Households (% of Occupied Units) | 15,025 | 62.4 | 4,637,470 | 64.1 |
| Nonfamily Households (% of Occupied Units) | 9,053 | 37.6 | 2,597,273 | 35.9 |
| Average Household size | 2.31 | | 2.57 | |

Source: ACS 2009-2013



Educational Attainment

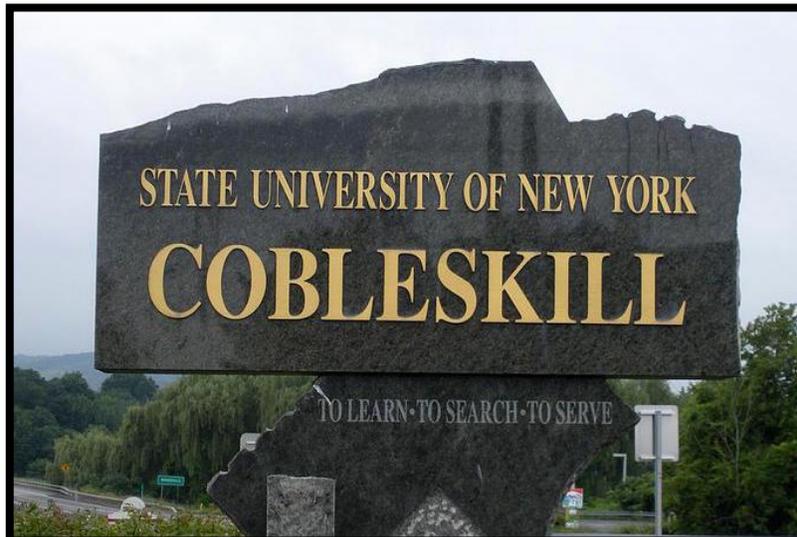


It is of interest to note that Otsego County residents have a higher percentage of high school graduates or higher at 89.6 percent than the New York State average of 85.2 percent yet the County’s percentage of only 26.8 percent of residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher is lower than the State average of 33.2 percent. In comparing Otsego County and the State, the County has a larger percentage of residents over the age of 25 who have obtained a high school diploma or equivalency and 55.6 percent of County residents have some college or an associate’s degree or higher compared to the State’s 58 percent. Approximately 63.7 percent of residents between the ages of 18 to 24 years have some college or an associate degree while the State average is much lower at 45.9 percent. See Table 4: Educational Attainment (2013).

Table 4: Educational Attainment (2013)

| | Otsego County | New York State |
|---|---------------|-------------------|
| Total Population 18-24 Years | | |
| Less than High School Graduate | 7.8% | 14.2% |
| High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency) | 23.2% | 25.4% |
| Some College or Associate’s Degree | 63.7% | 45.9% |
| Bachelor’s Degree or Higher | 5.3% | 14.5% |
| Total Population 25 Years and Over | 40,241 | 13,211,060 |
| Less than 9th Grade | 3.2% | 6.9% |
| 9th - 12th Grade, No Diploma | 7.2% | 8.0% |
| High School Graduate | 34.2% | 27.1% |
| Some College, No Degree | 17.8% | 16.4% |
| Associate Degree | 10.9% | 8.4% |
| Bachelor’s Degree | 15.2% | 18.9% |
| Graduate/Professional Degree | 11.7% | 14.3% |

Source: ACS 2009-2013



Income



Household income is the total income of all members of a household regardless of their relationship to each other. The amount of income is an indicator of the local economy. Understanding the income characteristics of the community is also important in determining a community’s health as well as the ability of residents to maintain their housing, contribute to the local tax base, and participate in the economy.

Table 5: Household Income (2009-2013), demonstrates that the median household income in Otsego County is lower than the average of New York State. According to the ACS 2009-2013, the median household income in Otsego County is \$47,765, while New York State is \$58,003. Approximately 25.5% of Otsego County households earn less than \$25,000 per year and is higher than the 23 percent of New York State. However, households with an income between \$15,000 and \$99,999 are a consistently higher percentage in the County than the State.

Poverty levels are calculated by the Census and are based on a set of formulas identifying the number of persons, rather than households considered to be living in poverty. Poverty Percentages for Otsego County were reported

at 15.5%. Table 6: Levels of Economic Distress shows that at the time of the 2009-2013 ACS, the County’s poverty levels were comparable with those of New York State.

Table 5: Household Income (2009-2013)

| | Otsego County | | New York State | |
|-------------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|
| | Total Households | % of Total | Total Households | % of Total |
| less than \$25,000 | 6,142 | 25.5% | 1,665,061 | 23.0% |
| \$25,000 to \$49,999 | 6,370 | 26.4% | 1,517,456 | 21.0% |
| \$50,000 to \$74,999 | 5,008 | 20.8% | 1,201,783 | 16.6% |
| \$75,000 to \$99,999 | 2,913 | 12.1% | 870,855 | 12.0% |
| \$100,000 or more | 3,645 | 15.2% | 1,979,588 | 27.4% |
| Total Households | 24,078 | 100.0% | 7,234,743 | 100.0% |

Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Table 6: Levels of Economic Distress

| Market Area | Median Household Income | Per Capita Income | Poverty Rate |
|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Otsego County | \$47,765 | \$24,165 | 15.5% |
| New York State | \$58,003 | \$32,382 | 15.3% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Economic Profile

Otsego County is located approximately halfway between the urban areas of Binghamton and Albany. The County is situated along the Susquehanna River and is nestled in the foothills of the Catskill Mountains. Otsego is primarily a rural county, with the exception of the City of Oneonta, and has nine villages and twenty-five townships. The population of approximately 62,000 has been at nearly the same level for many years. The job base has been similarly stagnant.

During the late 19th and early 20th century, the City of Oneonta was the regional center of a prosperous agricultural area, while the remainder of the County was primarily farms and small villages. The City developed into a proud railroad town and functioned as the center of the once powerful Delaware and Hudson Railroad. Hops production, followed by the dairy industry, were the other economic mainstays of the County. As the railroad declined in stature, Oneonta became an educational town with two colleges, SUNY Oneonta and Hartwick College, while the County developed a base in tourism with Cooperstown as the location of the National Baseball Hall of Fame, the Fenimore Art Museum, and the Farmers Museum. The health care industry, including Bassett Hospital in Cooperstown and A.O. Fox Hospital in Oneonta has also added employment over time.

Over the years, manufacturing, agriculture, and transportation in the County have declined steadily. Some industries in the County have closed and others have relocated. Although there has been some offsetting growth, economic gains have not kept pace with economic losses in the County.

DISINVESTMENT AND BUSINESS CLOSURES:

Disinvestment and business closures in Otsego County have impacted all sectors of the local economy in recent years. In the manufacturing sector, the closure of Paragon, Inc. in Oneonta (a local diaper manufacturer) resulted in the loss of 125 jobs, while the closure of Sentinel Polyolefin in Richfield Springs resulted in the loss of 75 jobs early in the decade. These losses have not been offset by any

major industrial expansion projects in recent years. Small industries including; Custom Electronics Inc., Ioxis, and Andela Products Ltd. have worked to retain and expand jobs by undertaking economic development projects in recent years. Projects such as these are critical to the future economy of Otsego County.

Nearly all of the village centers have seen the loss of commercial businesses and services. The City of Oneonta and Village of Cooperstown downtowns are the exception. Oneonta's downtown is an eclectic mix of commercial, residential, professional, health, and government uses. It has evolved through the years from a retail center to a center of commercial diversity. Meanwhile, Cooperstown has developed an economy based on tourism. In the 1980's, a concentrated effort was made to encourage the acquisition and re-development of vacant buildings and convert vacant upper floors of downtown commercial buildings to housing, which greatly improved the downtown.

The economy of the County is now more and more service based. Major employers include SUNY Oneonta (965 employees), Bassett Hospital (2615 employees), New York Central Mutual (1000 employees), County Government (850 employees), A.O. Fox Hospital (741 employees), Hartwick College (436 employees) and the Oneonta Job Corps (370 employees). Manufacturing is a smaller, yet still important, component of the economic base. The Chenango-Delaware-Otsego Workforce estimates the three county labor force at approximately 81,000. Tourism is becoming an increasingly important component of the economy. Local, regional, and national soccer, baseball, beer/wine and natural attractions bring several hundred thousand visitors to the County each year.

LABOR FORCE:

The unemployment rate for Otsego County for October 2015 was 4.3 %, slightly lower than the NYS rate of 4.5% out of a total work force of 30,658 (2014 American Community Survey). While total number of persons in the workforce has decreased in the past few years, it is actually above 1990 levels as show here in Table 7.

The needs of the Otsego County labor force are becoming increasingly service-oriented as two major hospitals, two colleges, small businesses, tourism and a large retail sector dominates the local economy. Manufacturing jobs in the City and County account for less than 10 percent of the jobs in the area. While the County needs to expand their existing, but limited, manufacturing and industrial base, they also need to support small business, agricultural, and service sector jobs, where these jobs are threatened or have an opportunity to expand.

Nationally, the number of people who work from home has increased in recent decades. In Otsego County, however, that number has declined slightly. While the reasons for this are unclear, the lack of access to broadband infrastructure may be a limiting factor in home-based employment. Table 8 shows the number of County residents who work from home.

The largest employment sector in Otsego County is “Education, Health Care, and Social Services”. Over one third of all residents are employed in this industry. This more than doubles the retail workers, which account for the next highest industry. Since 1990, manufacturing jobs have dropped from 12.5% of the labor force to only 9%. This drop is not as precipitous as other regions of New York, however, Table 9 shows the percentage of employment by industry since 1990. Please note that some changes in employment categories may result in anomalies with 1990 data.

| Year | Number |
|------|--------|
| 1990 | 28,712 |
| 2000 | 31,687 |
| 2010 | 32,454 |
| 2014 | 30,658 |

| Year | Number | % of workforce |
|------|--------|----------------|
| 1990 | 1,650 | 5.7% |
| 2000 | 1,467 | 4.6% |
| 2010 | 1,520 | 4.7% |
| 2014 | 1,629 | 5.3% |

| | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 | 2014 |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Mining | 5.7 | 4.4 | 2.6 | 2.6 |
| Construction | 6.9 | 6.6 | 6.3 | 6.2 |
| Manufacturing | 12.5 | 10.5 | 7.5 | 9.0 |
| Wholesale Trade | 2.7 | 1.9 | 2.0 | 1.0 |
| Retail Trade | 17.3 | 11.9 | 12.9 | 13.8 |
| Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities | 5.0 | 3.2 | 3.8 | 3.5 |
| Information | na | 2.3 | 1.8 | 1.2 |
| Finance, Insurance, Real Estate | 5.0 | 5.3 | 5.2 | 5.8 |
| Professional, Scientific, Mgmt, Waste Mgmt | na | 4.7 | 4.6 | 5.1 |
| Education, Health Care, Social Services | 27.9 | 31.8 | 34.1 | 34.1 |
| Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Food Svc. | 1.1 | 9.0 | 11.0 | 10.7 |
| Other Service | na | 4.0 | 4.2 | 3.9 |
| Public Administration | 3.6 | 4.3 | 3.9 | 3.1 |

Source: US Census Bureau

Commuting Patterns

When analyzing employment opportunities and trends of a community it is important to observe the commuting patterns of residents. A large percentage (52.7%) of Otsego County residents commuted less than 20 minutes to work in one direction. This is most likely the result of the many top employers of Otsego County being located near Cooperstown and Oneonta. Residents also commute to the nearby population centers of Albany, Binghamton, and Utica. 26% of commuters travel over 30 minutes one-way. In New York State as a whole 16.2 percent of residents travel 60 or more minutes to work, as opposed to only 5.7% of Otsego County residents. The combination of short commuting patterns and lack of long distance commuting patterns are positive attractions to potential residents, businesses, and employers. On the other hand, approximately 1 out of 4 people are apparently travelling outside of the County for work. Approximately 6.2% of Otsego County’s residents reported working from home. This percentage is significantly higher than New York State (3.9%), see Table 10: Commuting Times. This is somewhat unexpected given the limited broadband in the County.

Table 10: Commute Times

| Workers 16+ by Means of Transportation to Work | Otsego County |
|---|----------------------|
| < 10 | 23.4% |
| 10-19 | 29.3% |
| 20-29 | 19.9% |
| 30-44 | 16.2% |
| 45-59 | 5.6% |
| >60 | 5.7% |
| Average Travel Time | 21.7 |
| Worked from Home | 6.2% |

Source: U.S. Census 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



III. Overcoming Challenges

This Plan seeks to establish a strategy for Otsego County government and the community for approximately the next five years. This plan is concerned with Otsego County government, as well as local governments who were asked to participate in the development of this plan. The community also participated in the process and they contributed their perspective. The alignment of government initiatives with the community is imperative to success. As the outreach portion of this plan's development demonstrates, these challenges and issues are interrelated and mutually dependent between government, private business and individuals all making their highest contribution to further the health and well being of Otsego County.

Upstate communities like Otsego County have the people and capacity for change. The shifts in demographics, preferences and requirements of an aging population and any efforts to accommodate these changes are confounded by further external challenges. These include tax caps, support at the State level, insufficient infrastructure in a variety of areas, stagnant transportation policy and funding on top of low/zero growth in the population and the economy. This plan sets out a strategy with priority recommendations to prepare the county to adjust to these changes. With this plan, the County will be able to take those critical first steps and build the internal capacity to better manage and adjust to change. This will require the support within government to build capacity and within each community to provide the leadership and vision to be the best Otsego County possible. This plan also provides prioritization of projects, policies and strategies. This will enable Otsego County to pursue funding opportunities from state, federal and private sources to help address many of the County's needs.

External Challenges

The County faces many external challenges as evidenced in Section II. There are many factors the County can do little to control: demographic trends and shifts, interest rates, global economic forces, etc. The County needs to be prepared to manage its resources and to adjust to changing conditions. External influences often do not have an immediately noticeable impact. This is fortunate in some respects, but can make it difficult to know what actions to take in order to adjust to changing times. This Plan is being undertaken at a good time with regard to external influences as the economy grows stronger, and overarching demographic trends and the resulting impacts are, unfortunately, only beginning to reverberate through the County.

- **Rural County.** Otsego County is uniquely isolated and it is critical the County continues to provide a leadership role. As a very rural county, the external challenges facing the County are unique in upstate New York in that the County is dependent on the efforts and success of multiple small local governments. This is in contrast to many counties that are organized around one major city like Syracuse, Rochester, or Binghamton. It is important that the County reach out to and work with the rural counties around it. The isolation and self-reliance are two reasons this Plan includes an analysis of each municipality. It is also a reason government efficiency, whether shared services or consolidation of function need to be explored and considered. During the process local leaders were asked, "If you were to start from scratch, would you organize your governments and functions the same way they exist today?" The answer, unequivocally, was "No."
- **Broadband.** The need for better broadband resources in the County was shared by everyone participating in the plan. Our systems grow increasingly dependent on our data infrastructure. Business and government alike are fully dependent on the ability to receive and transmit data for almost every operation. The County IDA, Otsego Now, contracted and completed a very comprehensive study of all broadband options for County wide coverage. The cost is estimated at \$30M with recovery of costs through subscriptions described in the pro forma included in the study.

- **Community College.** Community College. The need for a Community College in Otsego County was repeatedly identified as a strategic priority. During the course of outreach and workshops with local leaders, the public and school administrators repeatedly expressed the need for adult education for recent graduates, but especially for established workers. Before this plan was written, the press reported this emerging strategy and the President of SUNY Cobleskill indicated they would be interested in fostering this idea and working with the County to help.
- **Housing.** The issue of housing stock was identified as a leading challenge in economic development. The County's housing stock is aging and there is very new development being constructed. The older housing stock, while often habitable, is not desirable for many professionals, young families, or retirees. The housing stock sought is more modern and does not require a large investment to achieve the quality of life desired. A range of housing affordability is a large gap in the County to attract a range of professionals that would consider relocating to the County with the proper housing stock.
- **Aging Population.** Another significant external challenges facing upstate communities is indisputable: the increasing age of the population. The baby boom generation is getting older, and this trend is felt most acutely in smaller towns and villages in upstate New York because there are fewer new citizens coming into and staying in these communities. The overall growth in the region is slight, and job creation is likely to result in long commutes for workers who can't afford to move where the jobs are. With this in mind, one of the major external challenges facing the County is retaining families, and attracting those who commute into the County to live here. County and local governments may have the greatest influence over this factor. As noted in Section II over 5,000 people commute into Otsego County to work every day. If half (2,500) of those people moved to Otsego County, that would increase the population by 4%. If all of those people were a household of at least 2 people, that would be an increase of 8%. This would reverse the predicted trend of a decreasing population into a trend of increasing population which creates new opportunities for communities.

Slow growth, an aging population, and the loss of young people to more robust economies is compounded by the increasing need for communities to provide resources and amenities sought after by today's retirees and young families alike. If any upstate community is going to challenge the demographic trends they must learn to provide the quality of life people not only require but demand. As baby boomers age, they decidedly do not want to have to drive for basic needs such as groceries, or socializing.

- **Economic Development.** As part of the planning process, a variety of businesses and not for profits were brought into the discussion to share the challenges of economic development and job creation and retention in the County. Economic development is constrained by physical infrastructure challenges of operating small and large businesses in the County. As part of economic development, the County should continue to pursue higher wage jobs. The lower unemployment rate in the County is predicated on a large number of tourism and service industry jobs, many of which are seasonal and/or do not pay a high enough wage.

Internal Challenges

Examination of the structure of Otsego County government and local governments revealed internal challenges. Addressing these challenges is necessary in preparation for better managing the external challenges facing the County as well as preparing for and creating new opportunities. In order to manage external challenges, the County and the communities within it must constantly strive to improve service delivery in the most efficient manner possible. The internal challenges are often harder to recognize than the external challenges. In general, these internal challenges included:

- **Communication.** The public shared its perspective of the County during the workshops as well as their overall vision for Otsego County. These workshops provided a unique viewpoint, and echoed the need for broadband, jobs, and better communication within the County. The message at many of these workshops was also that people were generally happy with the quality of life but desired some important improvements. The most important of these was by far the need for better broadband resources, including cell phone reception and data. The public also indicated a desire to share their communities and the natural beauty of their communities with visitors. Micro agricultural enterprises also featured during these meetings.

Local government representatives shared this call for greater communication during the outreach events. As a County of small communities, the willingness to work together is not surprising, but the resources available to optimize collaboration are often limited.

- **Leadership.** This leads to the identified need for both leadership, and resources. Across the board, the government officials and County department heads that participated in the process were all natural leaders. But leadership requires resources and support. Leadership training and facilitation throughout the organization is an important strategy. This will increase confidence, reinforce a sense of mission, and facilitate creative problem solving across organizational boundaries.
- **Financial Challenges.** Financing local and county government operations is a challenging balance of resources that has direct ramifications on service delivery. The current financial model in Otsego County is heavily dependent upon sales tax revenues, little to no increases in the property tax rate, relatively stable fund and reserve balances and stable to lagging state and federal aid. The issue with this model is that it is highly dependent upon retail prices, activity, and growth. As demonstrated in this Plan, the County currently experiences very modest if any population growth. Recent gas price reductions have had a dramatic impact on sales tax revenue. The 2016 budget for the County describes the current measures as an “austerity approach in order to reestablish the appropriate level of fund balances to buffer the County from dramatic shifts in costs and revenue fluctuations.”
- **Public Safety.** The provision of public safety services such as emergency communications (including 911), law enforcement, fire protection, emergency medical services and emergency management is an essential role of government. In Otsego County, services are provided by a network of providers. The County directly provides emergency communications for all areas of the county (except calls directly to Oneonta Police) and law enforcement for most of the County (except the City of Oneonta and Village of Cooperstown). The New York State Police also have jurisdiction. The County is responsible for all emergency planning, and plays a key role in providing education and training for all public safety professionals. The County convenes advisory committees for both fire and EMS. Fire protection and EMS is provided through local organizations; either local municipal departments or private organizations funded primarily from property taxes. Outside the City of Oneonta, all fire and EMS services are primarily provided by volunteers. A commercial ambulance service transports most inter-facility transports and responds to 911 calls when other services are not available. The commercial ambulance service is often requested to provide advanced life support when volunteers are unable to provide a higher level of care. The County has recently completed a substantial investment and upgrade related to emergency communications with the installation of a new 911 Dispatch Center and Back-Up Facility and the initial build out of a new radio system.
- **Emergency Service Volunteers.** Many of the challenges identified focused on providing the appropriate amount of training for the County’s volunteers, and retention and recruitment of volunteers in general. With an aging population, as well as the trends for families to need two incomes to function, and possibly one member commuting longer distances, the narrow field of physically capable and willing volunteers becomes extremely thin. Also, training requirements and standards increase faster than funding can be provided to improve facilities and resources up to the new standards.

Overcoming the Challenges – Strategic Priorities

Overcoming these challenges is the key to successfully preserving the character and quality of life that both residents and businesses of the County share. A Strategy is needed to guide and prioritize action. The following Strategy narrative addresses these external and internal challenges.

External Strategy

Broadband, Housing, Higher Wage Jobs, Community College, Collaboration and Efficiency

One of the findings found in this plan is an unemployment rate of approximately 4.5%. Considering that full employment is realistically considered to be achieved at 3-4% this is a very good sign, and something to build off of. Unfortunately, when looking at the demographics data, like much of the nation, many people are under employed. This means that there are jobs, but many of them do not pay enough to make a living in the County. One immediate priority is to expand higher paying jobs and provide training for people in the County to be eligible for higher paying positions. The need for a community college was identified as a gap and is needed to advance adult education and training. As reported in this Plan, over 5,000 people commute into the county every day for work. Over 5,000 people commute out of the county as well. Capturing and retaining population in the County is not only as important as creating new jobs it will create new jobs in the process.

Housing

In order to build value, reduce costs to the community, and attract and retain families and seniors more compact neighborhoods have to be built. Like many communities in upstate New York the housing market in Otsego County is not creating neighborhoods with smaller lots within walking or bicycling distance to services. One of the challenges in the County is creating land use codes favoring a more compact neighborhood development, with lots ranging in size from 1/8 to 1/2 an acre and if possible with public water and/or sewer. Preferably these neighborhoods will be near existing population centers like the many villages and hamlets in the County. This will bring vibrancy and local business opportunities in these areas. This approach also adds far greater value in the community relative to the increase in tax base as compared to larger lots spread out through the County.

In August 2009 the County completed an Integrated Housing Needs & Opportunities Study. The analysis and the recommendations in the 2009 study are still applicable. The County should take the following actions regarding housing:

- Form a Housing Committee and follow and implement the Action Items in the 2009 Housing Study.
- Assist local governments in updating development regulations such as zoning and subdivision to enable housing projects that add value and vibrancy to population centers, and do not result in sprawl.
- Strategically build water and sewer infrastructure, or add capacity to existing systems, in population centers and transit corridors to encourage housing development.
- Implement broadband projects in line with potential areas for new housing.

Why a Community College?

Community Colleges provide an affordable alternative to a traditional four year school. They fill a unique niche in the education system as an extension of High School education, as preparation for baccalaureate programs and providing adult education for career preparation. In these roles, community colleges provide not just an extension of the statutory public education, but a center for adult learning and training in a variety of careers. From nursing to nanotech, community colleges provide the opportunity to learn valuable knowledge and skills to prepare a workforce for 21st century careers.

Community college roles were independently stressed as needs within Otsego County. High School Advanced Placement programs are only effective while a student is in high school. There are reportedly large numbers of young adults who cannot find adequate work, afford to live independently, and/or commute to the nearest community colleges which are in Utica (Mohawk Valley), Binghamton (Broome County), or Schenectady (Schenectady County). All of which are not very viable as commuting options depending upon where a prospective student lives in the County.

Adult workforce education was repeatedly identified as a need within the County. Travel to existing programs is prohibitive. This is especially true for someone in-between jobs, or the employed and under employed who are looking to train for a new career part-time.

Distance learning opportunities are hampered by the lack of broadband access throughout the County. This increases the need for establishing a Community College within Otsego County, as well as expanding the availability of broadband resources.

With these needs, the County should take the following actions to work toward establishing a community college:

- Establish a community college task force or other ad hoc organization made up of school superintendants, County representatives and partnering institutions (Cobleskill, area community colleges, etc.) to develop a vision and plan for what the college could be, locations, cost, organizational structure etc.

Higher Wage Jobs

Increasing the amount of attractive affordable places to live and increasing the quality of life within the County is as important as attracting better paying jobs. With this in mind, the County should take the following strategy for attracting and retaining these jobs in the County:

- Increase the overall quality of life in the County by: developing attractive centers of activity in existing villages and the City of Oneonta.
- Expanding broadband throughout the county, but especially in those areas where new housing is planned.
- Establish community recreation programs for adults as well as younger residents.



- Plan and create trail systems to connect communities.
- Support local entrepreneurs. Reward success, and support building off of local successful businesses.
- Create an infrastructure Task Force to strategically assess opportunities for new or expanded water and/or sewer infrastructure in the County to support housing and other business opportunities.
- The Infrastructure Task Force should conduct an assessment of the electrical capacity and grid stability within the County.
- Coordinate and help establish consistency of local government efforts at planning through the County Planning Department – This includes training programs, funding opportunities, regional projects, new technologies etc.

Economic Development Delivery

During the late 19th and early 20th century, the City of Oneonta was the regional center of a prosperous agricultural area, while the remainder of the County was primarily farms and small villages. The City developed into a proud railroad town and functioned as the center of the once powerful Delaware and Hudson Railroad. Hops production, followed by the dairy industry, were the other economic mainstays of the County. As the railroad declined in stature, Oneonta became an educational town with two colleges, SUNY Oneonta and Hartwick College, while the County developed a base in tourism with Cooperstown as the location of the National Baseball Hall of Fame, the Fenimore Art Museum, and the Farmers Museum. The health care industry, including Bassett Hospital in Cooperstown and A.O. Fox Hospital in Oneonta has also added employment over time.

Disinvestment and business closures in Otsego County have impacted all sectors of the local economy in recent years. In the manufacturing sector, the closure of Paragon, Inc. in Oneonta (a local diaper manufacturer) resulted in the loss of 125 jobs, while the closure of Sentinel Polyolefin in Richfield Springs resulted in the loss of 75 jobs early in the decade. These losses have not been offset by any major industrial expansion projects in recent years. Small industries including; Custom Electronics Inc., Ioxis, and Andela Products Ltd. have worked to retain and expand jobs by undertaking economic development projects in recent years. Projects such as these are critical to the future economy of Otsego County.

Nearly all of the village centers have seen the loss of commercial businesses and services. The City of Oneonta and Village of Cooperstown downtowns are the exception. Oneonta's downtown is an eclectic mix of commercial, residential, professional, health, and government uses. It has evolved through the years from a retail center to a center of commercial diversity. Meanwhile, Cooperstown has developed an economy based on tourism. In the 1980's, a concentrated effort was made to encourage the acquisition and re-development of vacant buildings and convert vacant upper floors of downtown commercial buildings to housing, which greatly improved the downtown.

Over the years, manufacturing, agriculture, and transportation in the County have declined. Some industries in the County have closed and others have relocated. Although there has been some offsetting growth, economic gains have not kept pace with economic losses in the County. The needs of the Otsego County labor force are becoming increasingly service-oriented as two major hospitals, two colleges, small businesses, tourism and a large retail sector dominates the local economy. Manufacturing jobs in the City and County account for less than 10 percent of the jobs in the area. While the County needs to expand their existing, but limited, manufacturing and industrial base, they also need to support small business, agricultural, and service sector jobs, where these jobs are threatened or have an opportunity to expand.

Current Economic Development Organization and Activities

Prior to 2012, the Otsego County Economic Development Office managed economic development activities in the County. The County's Director of Economic Development also staffed the Otsego County IDA and the Otsego County Development Corporation (OCDC). This provided a natural connection between major county economic development entities. Upon the departure of the Economic Development Director, the operations of the various organizations moved apart. County economic development management was moved to the Planning Department, the IDA hired its own management staff, and the OCDC is now run by its volunteer Board of Directors. As a result, a level of synergy and coordination among economic development efforts has been lost.

These organizations and a variety of others provide varying levels of economic development assistance to existing and new businesses in Otsego County. These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

Otsego County Planning Department – The County Planning Department is now the official economic development contact for the County. The Department oversees grants related to economic development, including the County's Microenterprise Assistance Programs. These duties have been absorbed by existing staff, and there is no dedicated economic development staff person.

Otsego Now/Otsego County IDA – The Otsego County IDA was rebranded as Otsego Now in the spring of 2015. The goal is to establish Otsego Now as an umbrella under which multiple types of economic development activities will take place, ranging from site development and infrastructure enhancement, to community engagement. Based in Oneonta, they currently have a staff of three. Otsego Now typically focuses on larger County economic development projects. Among other initiatives, Otsego Now is currently focused on three primary areas of concern. These are:

- **Richfield Springs** – Otsego Now has initiated a community-wide comprehensive planning process in partnership with the Village of Richfield Springs and the Town of Richfield and is working to locate and develop a business park in the Village or Town.
- **Oneonta Rail Yards** – In cooperation with the City of Oneonta, Otsego Now is planning for the redevelopment of over 150 acres of former rail yards into a multi-modal, transportation-focused industrial site.
- **Cooperstown** – Otsego Now is working with the Village of Cooperstown to develop a parking lot near historic Doubleday Field and properties along nearby Railroad Avenue into a mix of retail, commercial and industrial development. This is part of a larger plan focusing on seven development nodes in the Village of Cooperstown.
- **Market Street, Oneonta** – This street in downtown Oneonta is the focus of several Otsego Now initiatives, including the development of a Food Hub, which was awarded funding in the 2015 CFA funding round, and a Boutique Hotel, for which a market study is currently underway.
- **Workforce Development** – The organization has established a Workforce Development Center to identify gaps and to tie together business's training needs and educational providers. As detailed below, the Small Business Development Center will soon be co-locating with Otsego Now.

Otsego Now is also in the final stages of creating an Economic Development Strategic Plan in order to better guide and focus the organizational effort. The plan is likely to recommend that Otsego Now focus its resources on regional transformational projects, such as the ones described above. The final plan is anticipated to be completed in the first quarter of 2016.

Otsego County Development Corporation (OCDC) – The OCDC is a Local Development Corporation that operates under a board of directors with no staff. They operate an approximately \$500,000 loan fund that is a valuable source of financing for County businesses and economic development activities.

Otsego County Chamber of Commerce – The Chamber of Commerce is a membership organization based in Oneonta. With a staff of four, they provide a myriad of business services for new and existing businesses including a Leadership Otsego program for midlevel managers, a Young Entrepreneur Program for local high school students, small business seminars, marketing assistance, and business management assistance for issues such as health insurance. They also provide one-on-one assistance and networking opportunities for the business community.

Oneonta Community Development Office – The City of Oneonta’s Community Development Office has a staff of two. They manage the City’s community development activities, including economic development. In recent years, they have invested in downtown building renovations and have operated a Microenterprise Assistance Program. The City is currently undertaking a market analysis related to the Oneonta downtown.

Greater Oneonta Economic Development Council (Go-EDC) – The Council is a volunteer driven, unincorporated organization established to promote commercial economic, and cultural development in and around the City and Town of Oneonta and to advocate for economic development issues. The Council annually prioritizes the most vital and promising economic development initiatives from its strategic plan and then provides leadership towards their implementation. Projects they have fostered include studies for the potential expansion of the hops and barley industries, the development of the River Corporation Commerce Park, and promotion of area sports tourism, to name a few.

Center for Agriculture Development and Entrepreneurship (CADE) - CADE is a non-profit, agricultural development organization serving farmers, cooperatives and agricultural businesses in the Catskill region, including Otsego County. Established in 1991, CADE works to connect producers of specialty farm products to markets. They also conduct research on agricultural opportunities and markets with the goal of building a thriving community-based local food system.

Cooperstown Chamber of Commerce – The membership organization provides many services to businesses in the Cooperstown area, including educational seminars, marketing, promotions and community events, networking opportunities, press relations, and informational services, such as brochure distribution, kiosks, and digital media presence.

Small Business Development Center - New York State has a network of 24 regional Small Business Development Centers (SBDC). Otsego County is served by the Binghamton University Small Business Development Center. A representative of the Binghamton SBDC is housed in the Otsego Chamber of Commerce, but will soon be housed in the Otsego Now offices. The SBDC provides direct technical assistance, business consulting, and training to individuals who want to start, improve or expand a business. They are a resource to entrepreneurs, businesses, and industries in finding solutions to problems.

SUNY Oneonta and Hartwick College - SUNY Oneonta and Hartwick College, both located in Oneonta, have staff members who work on community economic development issues that tie with the schools’ mission. SUNY Oneonta has a designated Economic Development Coordinator who works primarily with the Start-Up New York program and coordinates with other County economic development entities. Hartwick College operates the Center for Craft Food and Beverage, which offers testing services for product quality and improvement, and provides technical assistance and business planning services for craft food and beverage producers.

Internal Strategy

Leadership, Capacity, Support, and Communication

In order to execute the External Strategy, internal issues with County operations need to begin to be addressed. The consultant team spent almost half of the outreach efforts interviewing County Department Heads. From these interviews, the consultant team sought to evaluate the origin and extent of any issues with the function of County government. Otsego County's department heads all show signs of being good leaders of their departments. They all have a healthy frustration with not being able to achieve the potential they can envision. Unhealthy frustration is a sign they are not getting the resources nor have the organizational capacity they need to lead more than manage.

Three related areas that were identified as needing improvement from an organizational perspective are Leadership, Support and Capacity, and Communication. The following strategy describes the steps necessary to break the cycles they create these underlying issues. Without addressing these issues, the External Issues described above will be all that more difficult to address.

Leadership

The first step to leading and fostering leadership is caring. Just as Department Heads care about their department and its mission, they need legislators to care about the success of each and every department and the collective Mission of the County. Leaders need to be resourceful and able to garner resources for their staff and themselves and care how their department and employees perform in order to fulfill the mission of the organization. Interest and caring may be fostered by more frequent communication and first hand experience by the legislators.

The question of whether or not a county manager/administrator/executive position should be created was discussed with mixed opinions. Many feel it would benefit, some weren't as sure. This idea came up on its own in almost every interview and roundtable and should continue to be explored. Identified benefits align with all of the Leadership issues identified. This idea was not only identified internally, but externally as well. Many stakeholders outside of County government felt a strong need for a central point of contact for the County government. Those unsure of the effectiveness of having a County Administrator were concerned with the ability to attract and adequately compensate the best candidate.

Support and Capacity

In many cases a disjointed relationship between Mission – Program – Resources was reported. This disjointed state causes confusion on what resources are needed or necessary, and department heads have to fight too hard for resources (silo effect). This competition is unnecessary and damaging to program delivery in a government setting. Everyone involved is fully aware there are limited resources. The County needs to foster leadership within government in order to address these issues of limited resources rather than appearing to arbitrarily cut resources without explanation. In order to understand the need for resources you need to understand the Mission, and the Program being delivered to fulfill it, and care about success. Departments varied on reporting whether they have enough resources. Equipment and broadband issues were consistent with the overall issues in the County. The departments that depend on these resources for program delivery are affected the most as they need a reliable link with state agencies.

Communication and Transparency

Communication among leaders, with staff and the public is another key factor to successful leadership. Communication was identified repeatedly as lacking within Otsego County government, as well as between local governments and the County. It was reported that there are no inter-departmental staff meetings. Also, meetings and conversation between monthly committee meetings were rare if they ever occurred. Local organizations of Highway Superintendants, Town Supervisors, Clerks, and others rarely if ever had County staff or Representatives attend the meeting.

It is recommended the County pursue funding to form an Otsego County Council of Governments. This format could reduce the need for individual Task Forces and other ad hoc organizations as recommended in this plan. The advantage of a Council of Governments is that it includes local and County government representatives to address issues that don't fall easily into a category for county or local government to address. It also fosters communication among various government and non-government entities, and participants are less politically motivated or constrained. County level Council of Governments has been an effective means of achieving a variety of program and project achievements.

Financing Strategy

The County is pursuing a strategy to stabilize the County budget by continuing to fund reserves and fund balance to acceptable levels. The County essentially receives three sources of funding; reimbursement from the State for mandated services, federal assistance, and other income from fees etc., sales tax and property taxes. Property taxes are directly affected by the amounts of the other income sources.

The system for assessment in the County is not efficient, and it is difficult to perform a reasonable analysis. This is not as challenging for professionals, but creates a very non-transparent system for the public. If the desire is to have a stable tax rate, not overly rely on sales tax, and keep up with increasing costs the value of the County has to grow and the current value has to be maintained. This requires the housing and economic strategy to build new structures and foster investment. It also requires a consistent means of property assessment. The County and the many communities must seriously consider a more consistent means of assessing property values.

IV. Vision, Goals & Priority Actions

Vision

Otsego County is committed to developing a prosperous and economically friendly environment for current and prospective businesses and residents, while preserving the rural qualities that make Otsego County unique. Otsego County is dedicated to providing retention, expansion programs and attractive incentives for businesses, strengthening the quality of life, and providing a full range services. Through the planning process, Otsego County has made a concerted effort to look both internally for organizational success, as well as externally throughout the county as part implementing services and programs that will benefit the community as a whole.

The County held four public workshops around the county, and people were asked for a 3-5 word vision for their community. The most frequently used words were Jobs, Vibrant, Growth, Community Oriented, Prosperity, Prosperous, Retired, and Sustainable. Using this and other input from the meetings, the following represents a Vision Statement for Otsego County:

A charming, productive, natural landscape with vibrant proud centers of activity filled with successful businesses, schools, families, and people who spend their time enjoying the daily process of building and maintaining wealth, happiness and community.



Goals

The following goals have been generated for the Plan using the original intent of the planning process, outreach and analysis, and considering the vision above. Goal setting takes many forms. The Plan goals are far reaching and somewhat vague. Objectives are concrete actions intended to further the goal and are embodied in the Priority Actions. In order to provide a more open-ended format for the Plan that leaves room for new actions the goals are intentionally less specific.

The Goals are grouped by topic area: Employment and Economic Development, Quality of Life, Environment, Government Capacity and Efficiency, Education and Training, and Accessibility. This is intended to organize the Goals by themes developed through the outreach process. Also, these themes match up with the organization of the Priority Actions Table in the Strategy section.

Employment and Economic Development:

- Expand the number and diversity of businesses and business opportunities throughout the County to increase the quantity and quality of employment.
- Provide opportunities in the County for the training and development of a 21st century workforce.
- Create 21st century infrastructure including Electric, Gas, Data, Water, Sewer, Transportation.
- Grow the agricultural economy based upon diversity and innovation.
- Update local codes to encourage and ensure compact efficient development and housing options to attract and retain residents employed in the county.

Quality of Life:

- Reinvigorate communities and housing options to attract and retain families and businesses.
- Solve the County's homeless, drug and other social issues.
- Increase and continually improve transportation mode options – transit, multi-use trails and other infrastructure.

Environment

- Maintain the ecosystem services that enable a strong agricultural economy, forestry, clean air and water and natural beauty.
- Build and utilize infrastructure that will enable compact development, protect natural resources and reduce resource consumption.
- Create places that are nurturing and safe for people of all ages.
- Create housing that is compact, attractive, sustainable, and constructed in efficient locations.

Government Capacity and Efficiency

- Foster and maintain a well managed network of governments and other organizations in Otsego County that have a shared mission, and a need and desire to work together toward a common goal: the health, support and well being of the public.
- Continually reach out to and communicate effectively with all levels and functions of government as well as the public.
- Work relentlessly to do “more with less” rather than “less with less” by collaborating and consolidating services and functions wherever possible.
- Expand and leverage limited local funds by pursuing State, Federal and private funds whenever possible.

Education and Training

- Provide learning opportunities for students of all ages in preparation for a wide variety of careers and continuous learning.
- Continually seek ways to integrate schools and learning opportunities into the County's communities.
- Invest in training and training facilities for staff and volunteers to enable them to best serve Otsego County.

Accessibility

- Expand transportation mode options for all residents.
- Utilize and improve existing road, rail, and air resources to their fullest potential.
- Provide affordable reliable broadband internet access, using a variety of sources (wireless, cellular, cable, fiber optic).
- Encourage a variety of housing options close to transit, jobs, and infrastructure to improve affordability and quality of life for residents.

Priority Actions

The first priority is to plan implementation. The process of planning itself provides great value. This is especially true when meaningful extensive participation is incorporated into the process. From the participation, the people involved feel a sense of ownership of the plan and will often advocate for its implementation, or at least take away from the process action items of their own to pursue. The very first priority action of this plan is:

Form a Strategic Prioritization Plan Implementation Committee or Task a Current Committee

This committee should review the action items monthly and begin to incorporate the actions into County work plans and budgets. The committee will also need to reach out to the many stakeholders that participated in the Plan development to ask for their assistance in furthering the Goals of the Plan. This committee will be responsible for reporting on implementation progress quarterly both to the Board of Representatives *and* the public. This function may be performed by the proposed Council of Governments, but the County Government specific objectives should also be consistently addressed internally.

In keeping with the public and stakeholder input combined with a review of existing plans, the following are key steps in advancing the implementation of this strategy:

- The County should apply for a grant to form a Council of Governments to implement this and other plans, as well as initiate new projects.
- The Council of Governments should fund, through a grant a study to develop a means of providing more consistent property assessments Countywide.
- Require each department to develop a mission statement and provide the resources and training to make this happen. If a department has a mission statement, have them reassess it and make any revisions.
- Use recent staff reductions to work with Department Heads to reassess and reorganize. Starting with the mission of each department, and then limiting responsibilities to those that fit the mission, and dedicate resources accordingly. Through this process it may be found that workloads can be more evenly divided, and better suited to the personnel in specific departments. This process requires patience and consistent leadership.

- Create a leadership training plan with a qualified firm, and identify monthly and quarterly activities and training throughout the government organization that will assist in a self-led organization. Consider the role of Human Resources and whether or not a Human Resources staff position is needed, or a consultant working with a committee and/or Department Heads collectively.
- Consider hiring a County Administrator. This could lead to a County Executive structure of County government, but an Administrator fits the current County government model.
- Use dispute resolution services from other counties or non-profits to settle any disputes. This would require a specific policy and procedure for disputes that requires use of this type of process. An alternative might be establishing a County ombudsman.
- Encourage mandatory regular department head meetings with a rotating chair. Hold the meetings at least bi-monthly.
- Staff and/or elected officials should attend regular meetings of Supervisor, Highway Superintendants, Clerks and Emergency Services agencies and report back to their committee or the Board of Representatives.
- Support the recruitment and retention of volunteers for Fire and EMS by local agencies including for county special operations teams.
- Enhance the support for advanced life support training by both volunteers and paid providers.
- Improve the availability of training for firefighters and EMS providers by leveraging state supported training with local course offerings.
- Invest in a substantial renovation and improvement of the fire training grounds and sheriff's firing range.
- Establish consensus performance standards for EMS and fire responses including response times to scene based on type of emergency, the minimum training level of responders and the number of responders.
- Provide or enable access for technical assistance to volunteer fire departments to enhance their operations and improve administrative tasks.
- Enhance County support for law enforcement investigations with additional training and staff for sheriff investigation personnel
- In coordination with social services and the health department, develop a strategy to assist county residents in accessing treatment for substance abuse and addiction.
- Evaluate the existing county jail for long term viability.

In addition, the County should better define the government role in economic development with particular attention to grant management internally, as well as grant applications. This definition should allow for better communication of expectations and roles among departments, contracted services and "front desk" assistance to those who are seeking economic development financing.

- Use Council of Governments to advertise and solicit grant applications from municipalities, businesses and ad hoc groups that will be then managed by the appropriate organization.
- Possibly use funds from unstaffed NGO organizations to fund or assist in funding a dedicated County staff person in the Planning Department. This staff person would be responsible for administration, but also coordinating all the NGO organizations and acting as a "front desk" person for taking in funding requests, and routing those requests to the appropriate organization(s), as well as possibly packaging multiple funding sources.

Collaboration, Consolidation, and Efficiency Strategy

An initiative of this plan was to identify the existence of and potential for shared services, consolidation, and other efficiency measures related to delivery of government service. Because this strategy initiative inherently requires intergovernmental cooperation this strategy is being labeled as an External Strategy. Of course, in order to effectively partner or share, the internal operation of an organization must be in good working order.

During the outreach, it was discovered there is a good amount of sharing, and a strong willingness to work together among various government departments and agencies. Sharing of equipment and even personnel is common, if not well documented.

There was evidence of an issue with expectations relative to service. Generally, the hierarchy of government services is intentional. State level resources need a higher frequency or standard of service in order to ensure that the larger system can continue to operate and deliver for the smaller systems. County level resources, which are often State funded programs administered at the County level, are necessary to ensure that county level systems can continue to operate. And finally Local services, which are just as important, but are dependent upon the levels above them operating in order to function. This means that the infrastructure relative to each level is designed to a different standard of use. This is true for many types of infrastructure such as transportation networks, computer networks, electrical grids, natural gas distribution, even wastewater treatment and other types of service delivery. There are opportunities for sharing of facilities, equipment, and specialized personnel that are not affected by level of service. Finding and sorting which opportunities might work requires a concerted effort.

A fundamental requirement of sharing and collaborating is relationship building. This is inherently easier to achieve at the local level, but is certainly possible between different levels of government. The difficulty is taking or leading the initiative to make it happen. With this in mind, this plan recommends the following strategic actions for increasing the potential for sharing services and equipment and facilities. It is important to remember that the New York Department of State offers grants for furthering efforts for government efficiency and sharing. The following strategies should be considered as part of this effort:

- Facilitate the concept of sharing and efficiency in existing ad hoc organizations such as: Highway Superintendants, Clerks, Town Supervisors, Emergency Services, and School Districts.
- Use this Plan's recommended Council of Governments to supply grant services to individual municipalities and ad hoc groups and serve as a grant clearinghouse and administrative agency.
- Use the Action Items Table as a work plan menu for existing and proposed ad hoc organizations.

Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development Plan

The Mohawk Valley Region developed the MV500 to compete for the NYS Upstate Revitalization Initiative (URI). The MV500 is a plan to support the region's commitment to economic development and is committed to channeling future investments to three core industries: STEM Intensive Industries, Agribusiness, and Tourism. The plan renewed emphasis and focus on creating vibrant communities and a commitment to expanding educational and entrepreneurial opportunities for all of our citizens. The MV500 aims to maximize the impact of Upstate Revitalization funds by ensuring the success of initiatives made possible by New York State's Regional Economic Development process and by achieving a critical mass of investment in industries that have the potential to build a new economy that will sustain the future of the Mohawk Valley region.

The MV500 plan has three strategies for *Economic Development and Wealth Creation* along with two *Community Development Drivers*. These strategies and drivers are as follows:

STRATEGY 1: STEM Intensive Industries

Build new regional wealth on our technological and STEM-related industries in the areas of nanotechnology, cyber assurance and security, and unmanned aerial systems. Leverage STEM intensive industries to increase overall employment, grow population, and dramatically increase region's per capita income.

STRATEGY 2: Agribusiness

The relevance of this sector to our regional economy is dramatically increasing. Our industrial base has kept pace with dairy processing expansion and innovation, churning out products for local, downstate and global markets. We are well positioned to serve a burgeoning demand for sustainably produced craft foods and beverages to domestic and international markets. Our region's proximity to major global consumer markets heralds a remarkable expansion that will grow jobs and enhance wealth in our communities.

STRATEGY 3: Tourism

The Mohawk Valley is one of the top three destination engines statewide. Our diverse tourism ecosystem accounts for \$1.67 billion in direct spending in the Mohawk Valley and employs more than 25,000 people. Our strategy builds on these assets, to expand external revenue and wealth transfer to our region.

DRIVER 1: Opportunity Agenda

The Mohawk Valley has adopted an opportunity agenda that focuses on securing a rewarding and affordable quality of life for all residents. This will, in large part, be carried out through education, job training and workforce development initiatives that support at-risk populations, as well as outcome-driven services for groups that have been challenged in participating in the region's economic revitalization. Given the diverse geography of the Mohawk Valley region, strategies must address the practical challenges of rural and urban poverty, including transportation, childcare, access to education and workforce alignment.

DRIVER 2: Vibrant Communities

As our region transforms to an innovation-rich, knowledge-based economy, we need to sustain appealing communities to encourage people to settle in the Mohawk Valley. A job isn't enough; people need pedestrian-friendly downtowns, diverse amenities, resilient food systems, and neighborhood-connected waterfronts. These are the building blocks of healthy urban areas. We must revitalize our region's population centers and core neighborhoods through area-wide brownfield redevelopment, the activation of waterfronts, and the adaptive reuse of vacant, abandoned, and underutilized anchor properties. Resources will be focused on the Mohawk Valley's historic manufacturing communities, many of which lie on the banks of the Mohawk River and New York State Barge Canal. Our goal is to transform the physical landscape of the Mohawk Valley from a series of isolated, tired Rustbelt municipalities into a connected region of vibrant communities.

The following are the acronyms for funding sources.

- CDBG: Community Development Block Grant
- DASNY: Dormitory Authority of New York
- ESD: Empire State Development Corporation
- Market NY: Offered through ESD
- NYMS: New York Main Streets Program
- NYSA&M: New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets
- NYSDEC: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- NYSDOH: New York State Department of Health
- NYSDOL: New York State Department of Labor
- NYSDOS: New York State Department of State
- NYSDOT: New York State Department of Transportation
- NYSEJ: New York State Excelsior Jobs Program
- NYSERDA: New York State Energy and Research Development Authority
- NYSHCR: New York State Housing and Community Renewal
- OPRHP: New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
- OtsegoNow: Industrial Development Agency
- SBDC: Small Business Development Center
- SUNY: State University of New York

Priority Action Table

In addition to the objectives outlined above and throughout the plan, the outreach process identified a number of action items and initiatives. While the overall Strategy describe the critical first steps for implementing this plan, the following table includes the action items identified in all of the outreach and information gathered. These are organized into the areas of Accessibility and Housing, Education and Training, Employment and Economic Development, Environment, and Quality of Life with some overlap of actions. These are linked to the Plan Goals, as well as the Goals of the MV500 Plan and an initial indication of funding sources is provided. The last column indicates the timing of the Action Items. Timing here indicates when the action is needed OR when the County should have addressed Initial Challenges enough to have the capacity to address the issue.

| Number | Priority Actions | MV500 Goals | Possible Funding Sources | Implementation Immediate, Intermediate, Long Term Priority |
|------------------------------------|---|-------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Accessibility & Housing | | | | |
| AH 1 | Provide affordable & reliable broadband internet access, using a variety of sources (wireless, cellular, cable, fiber optic). | Driver 1 | ESD, USDA, Otsego Now | Immediate |
| AH 2 | Implement action items from the County's 2009 Housing Study. | Strategy 1 | NYSDOS, NYSHCR, NYSERDA, NYMS, CDBG | Immediate |
| AH 3 | Expand Public Transit opportunities and link affordable housing, especially rental housing, with transit routes. | Driver 2 | NYSDOT, NYSERDA | Intermediate |
| AH 4 | Create quality Affordable Housing model ordinances. | Strategy 1 | NYSDOS, NYSHCR, NYSERDA, NYMS, CDBG | Intermediate |
| AH 5 | Establish a hamlet planning assistance program to coordinate with NYSDOT and County on development, sidewalks and other mobility issues. | Driver 2 | NYSDOT, NYSDOS, ESD | Intermediate |
| AH 6 | Conduct a parking study in Cooperstown to assess the need and feasibility of a parking structure to better accommodate summer crowds without taking up valuable land. | Strategy 3 | ESD, NYMS | Immediate |
| AH 7 | Create model housing and development ordinances for local municipalities. | Driver 1 | NYSDOS | Intermediate |
| AH 8 | Create a County Complete Streets Policy and Design Manual for Communities. | Driver 2 | NYSDOT, OPRHP, | Immediate |
| AH 9 | Utilize and improve existing road, rail, and air resources to their fullest potential. | Driver 2 | NYSDOT, ESD | NA |
| AH 10 | Strategically build infrastructure (water, sewer, electricity) to support housing growth in population centers and corridors. | Driver 1 | ESD, CDBG, WQIP | Intermediate |
| AH 11 | Create a homeless housing policy that is more effective and affordable. | Driver 1 | CDBG | Immediate |

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| Number | Priority Actions | MV500 Goals | Possible Funding Sources | Implementation Immediate, Intermediate, Long Term Priority |
|--|---|-------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Education & Training | | | | |
| ET 1 | Establish a community college task force made up of school superintendants, County representatives and possible partnering institutions (Cobleskill, area community colleges, etc.) to develop a vision and plan for what the college could be, locations, costs, organizational structure etc. | Strategy 1 | SUNY, DASNY, ESD | Immediate |
| ET 2 | Create a Community College as a product of the Task Force | Strategy 1 | SUNY, DASNY | Intermediate |
| ET 3 | Provide affordable & reliable broadband internet access to support distance learning opportunities. | Driver 1 | ESD, USDA, OtsegoNow | Immediate |
| ET 4 | Create state funded Pre-K programs in all school districts. | Driver 1 | NYSED, NYSOCFS | Long-Term |
| ET 5 | Form a task force to examine the potential for school consolidations: districts and administrative tasks. | Driver 1 | NYSDOS | Intermediate |
| ET 6 | Form task force to examine feasibility of privatizing or developing shared services for administrative tasks among local & County government and school districts | Driver 1 | NYSDOS | Intermediate |
| ET 7 | Develop a comprehensive training strategy for Fire and EMS. | Driver 1 | NYSDOS, NYSDOL | Immediate |
| ET 8 | Expand Public Transit and link to education & training centers | Driver 2 | NYSDOT, NYSERDA | Long-Term |
| ET 9 | Increase communication between local government, schools, & county | Driver 1 | NYSDOS | Immediate |
| Employment & Economic Development | | | | |
| EE 1 | Provide affordable & reliable broadband internet access to support growing businesses, housing initiatives and online training opportunities. | Driver 1 | ESD, USDA, OtsegoNow, | Immediate |
| EE 2 | Create 21 st century infrastructure-Electric, Gas, Data, Water, Sewer, Transportation, and Alternative Energy-to support economic growth. | Driver 1 | NYSDOT, NYSERDA | Intermediate |
| EE 3 | Expand technical and financial assistance to entrepreneurs; utilize surplus public facilities to establish business incubator(s). | Driver 2 | ESD, EJP, SBDC, CDBG, NYSERDA | Long-Term |

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| Number | Priority Actions | MV500 Goals | Possible Funding Sources | Implementation Immediate, Intermediate, Long Term Priority |
|--------------------|---|-------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| EE 4 | Create coordinated tourism and marketing plan for Otsego County. | Strategy 3 | OtsegoNow, Market NY | Immediate |
| EE 5 | Support diverse and innovative local Agriculture with distribution to larger metro markets. | Strategy 2 | USDA, ESD, NYSA&M | Immediate |
| EE 6 | Expand Public Transit to link housing with job centers. | Driver 2 | NYSDOT, NYSERDA | Long-Term |
| EE 7 | Create a dedicated grant writing position and/or planner at County level to work with local communities as well as the County – Council of Governments model. | Driver 1 | NYSDOS, CDBG | Immediate |
| EE 8 | Create Alternative Energy Program for solar and small wind. | | NYSERDA | Long-Term |
| EE 9 | Collaborate with OtsegoNow and other organizations to establish streamlined economic development assistance countywide. | Strategy 3 | ESD | Immediate |
| EE 10 | Support the Constitution pipeline and the Leather Stocking pipeline | | NYSDEC, NYSERDA, USDA | NA |
| EE 11 | Towns without a town center or village should pursue funding for town center planning efforts. | Driver 2 | ESD, CDBG, NYMS | Long-Term |
| EE 12 | Implement action items from the County’s 2009 Housing Study. | Strategy 1 | | Immediate |
| Environment | | | | |
| E 1 | Create a County Complete Streets Policy and Design Manual. | Driver 2 | NYSDOT, OPRHP, | Immediate |
| E 2 | Develop and promote existing trails and outdoor recreation resources. | Driver 2 | NYSDOT, OPRHP | Intermediate |
| E 3 | Create an Alternative Energy Program for solar and small wind. | | NYSERDA | Long-Term |
| E 4 | Create 21 st century infrastructure-Electric, Gas, Data, Water, Sewer, Transportation, and Alternative Energy. | Driver 1 | ESD, USDA, OtsegoNow, NYSDOT, NYSERDA | Intermediate |
| E 5 | Solid waste - increase recycling programs. | Driver 2 | NYSDOT, NYSERDA | Immediate |
| E 6 | Create a dedicated grant writing position and/or planner at County level to work with local communities as well as the County – Council of | Driver 1 | NYSDOS, CDBG | Immediate |

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|---|---|-------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| E 7 | Governments Model. | | | |
| | Establish municipal planning and ZBA training program through Planning Department to encourage sound and effective planning practices. | NYSDOL | | Intermediate |
| Quality of Life | | | | |
| QL 1 | Create 21 st century infrastructure-Electric, Gas, Data, Water, Sewer, Transportation, and Alternative Energy. | Driver 1 | ESD, USDA, OtsegoNow, NYSDEC, NYSERDA | Intermediate |
| QL 2 | Create a County Complete Streets Policy and Design Manual. | Driver 2 | NYSDOT, OPRHP | Immediate |
| QL 3 | Develop and promote existing trails and outdoor recreation resources. | Driver 2 | NYSDOT, OPRHP | Intermediate |
| QL 4 | Assist in the establishment of an indoor sports facility (soccer, lax, tennis, hockey etc.) | Driver 2 | | Long-Term |
| QL 5 | Establish a hamlet planning assistance program to help coordinate with NYSDOT and County on sidewalks and other issues. | Driver 2 | NYSDOT, NYSDOS, ESD | Intermediate |
| QL 6 | Identify existing and expand public WiFi with hot spots. | Driver 2 | ESD | Immediate |
| QL 7 | Expand Public Transit opportunities and link affordable housing, especially rental, with transit routes. | Driver 2 | NYSDOT, NYSERDA | Intermediate |
| QL 8 | Create quality Affordable Housing policy to own and rent. –create model ordinances for local communities. | Strategy 1 | NYSDOS, NYSHCR, NYSERDA, NYMS, CDBG | Intermediate |
| QL 9 | Create a Community College as a stand alone or satellite institution to provide affordable education. | Strategy 1 | SUNY, DASNY | Immediate |
| QL 10 | Investigate opportunities in housing and education credits to partner with private funding sources to create incentives for college age, or near college age students to return to Otsego County to live. | Driver 2 | | Intermediate |
| QL 11 | Support and Improve Social Mental Health Services. | Driver 1 | NYSDOH | Intermediate |
| Government Capacity & Efficiency | | | | |
| GCE 1 | Reorganize County government to include a County Administrator position to act as a central point of contact. | All | | Intermediate |
| GCE 2 | Create a web-based information clearinghouse for information and data. | Driver 2 | NYSDOS | Intermediate |
| GCE 3 | Study the possibility of countywide property tax assessment. | Driver 1 | NYSDOS | Long-Term |
| GCE 4 | Budget for and hire a management and/or HR consultant to provide | | County | Immediate |

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| Number | Priority Actions | MV500 Goals | Possible Funding Sources | Implementation Immediate, Intermediate, Long Term Priority |
|--------|---|-------------|--------------------------|--|
| | regular leadership and management training for department heads, and committee chairs. | | | |
| GCE 5 | Develop a strategy to increase communication between local government(s), schools, County. | | NYSDOS | Immediate |
| GCE 6 | Finalize and implement emergency services communications system. | Driver 1 | CDBG | Immediate |
| GCE 7 | Establish a Council of Governments type body to address needs not able to be addressed by official County Government. | | | Immediate |
| GCE 8 | Develop a comprehensive training strategy for Fire and EMS. | Driver 1 | NYSDOS, NYSDOL | Immediate |
| GCE 9 | Conduct Geographic Information System model study to optimize plow routes for the County and local governments. | | NYSDOT, NYSDOS | Immediate |
| GCE 10 | County provided technical assistance and guidance regarding government efficiency and consolidation. | | NYSDOS | Intermediate |
| GCE 11 | Investigate a Health Insurance Consortium - local & County government employees | Driver 1 | NYSDOH | Long-Term |
| GCE 12 | Countywide equipment/service sharing & purchasing—develop agreement to purchase/ lease services & equipment through County. | | NYSDOS | Immediate |
| GCE 13 | Pursue a records management grant to update process and infrastructure for Towns, Villages and County. | | NYSDOS | Intermediate |
| GCE 14 | Countywide software and cloud IT to centralize & share resources including email & records management. | | NYSDOS | Intermediate |
| GCE 15 | Establish municipal planning and ZBA training program through Planning Department. | | NYSDOL | Intermediate |
| GCE 16 | Study feasibility of Highway pooling raw leftover materials - sell instead of storing. | | NYSDEC, NYSDOS | Immediate |
| GCE 17 | County Highway Department should facilitate efficiency studies between municipal Highway Departments. | | NYSDOS | Immediate |
| GCE 18 | Create a long term Corrections Strategy to assess need for consolidation or sharing of jail services and facilities. | Driver 1 | NYSDOS | Immediate |

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| Number | Priority Actions | MV500 Goals | Possible Funding Sources | Implementation Immediate, Intermediate, Long Term Priority |
|---------------|--|-------------|----------------------------------|--|
| GCE 19 | County Staff/Directors need to participate on various coordinating bodies – i.e. County Highway Association, Supervisors, etc. | | | Immediate |
| GCE 20 | Apply for Government Efficiency Grant to help with highway services, and facilitate the planning for the sharing of services and facilities countywide. | | NYSDOS | Immediate |
| GCE 21 | Apply for Government Efficiency Grant to establish a full time shared service webmaster/marketer/tourism/resource coordination for County, local governments, and departments. | Strategy 3 | NYSDOS, Market NY, Otsego Now | Immediate |
| GCE 22 | Legislate job protections for Fire and EMS volunteers. | | | Intermediate |
| GCE 23 | County should provide a presentation on the benefits and pitfalls of consolidation and dissolution studies to all local governments. | | NYSDOS | Intermediate |
| GCE 24 | The Council of Governments should secure grants funds to conduct a study to consolidate property assessment functions throughout the County. | | NYSDOS | Immediate |

V. Evaluating Success

Evaluation Rubric

The success of a plan can be evaluated on many levels in many ways. There are benefits from the planning process and the shared experience of stakeholders meeting together and discussing common issues. There may be new programs that are initiated, programs expanded, even projects constructed. The following is a rubric, which allows for the evaluation of strategy and action items in a multi faceted manner.

The left column; Organization, Recruitment, Measurable Progress, Collaboration/Relationship Building describes the relative success of the organizational aspects of a project or program. The top row; Regular Meetings, Policy/ Planning/Projects, Approval/Adoption, Tangible Results measures the

level of formality and thereby the increasing capacity. Some tasks only require meeting. For example, if Highway Superintendants meet each month as a group or as an association and talk, that would fulfill the first square under Regular Meetings. If they hire or use a note taker or facilitator, they move down a block. If their discussion results in some measurable success such as an agreement between two towns to work together they move down another block. Finally, if new partnerships or teams are formed from the meetings they have achieved the last block. As you move right, you increase in formality and tangibility. The ad hoc organization may be happy to stay that way and operate on consensus, or they may agree they need bylaws in order to increase formality and, with that, capacity.

| | Regular Meetings | Policy/Planning/ Projects | Approval/ Adoption | Tangible Results |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| Organization – Ad hoc, Committee, Task Force, etc. | The program or project is initially organized, and regular meetings are held and attended. | New Plans, Policies and Projects are created from Organization. | Plans/Policies are approved and/or adopted. | Plans, policies and Projects are implemented. |
| Recruitment – People, Resources, Funding | Meetings have enabled greater dedication of resources to the process. | Plans have recruited new members and increased buy in. | Plans/Policies/ Projects are adopted by more than one entity, replicated. | Plans/policies are implemented by more than one entity. |
| Measurable Progress | Meeting products have inherent value. | Plans/Policies have value and are followed. | Plans, Policies, and Projects are Publicly Supported. | Plans/Policies and Projects have measurable or noticeable impacts. |
| Collaboration/ Relationship Building | Partnerships and new projects initiated from meetings. | Plans/Policies and Projects lead to new partnerships. | Plans/Policies and Projects serve as examples. | Plans, Policies and Projects result in quantifiable or tangible results. |

As the rubric moves across the top, the complexity and capacity of the organization increases. This capacity and organization is first created within the organization in Policy/Planning/Projects, and then seeking ratification from other organizations, such as an inter-municipal agreement, or adoption by an official body of a plan or strategy or project. Finally, this increase in capacity and organization results in Tangible results, officially adopted plans, or built projects.

The intent of this rubric is for organizations, departments, municipalities, teams etc. to use this rubric annually or semi-annually to measure their relative success based upon the intent of the initiative. Some initiatives only seek to increase communication

or relationship building and are not intended to move beyond that, but do seek to create partnerships, or increased communication among parties. Other initiatives may intend to result in the construction of something tangible. If at the end of 6 months to a year, they find they are stuck on square one, within this rubric they can evaluate what needs to happen in order to move to the next square. It might be staff, legal assistance for agreements, a grant, or any number of barriers. Alternatively, square one may be exactly where they feel they should be.

This rubric should be used annually to assess the needs and direction of a given group or organization, and for framing periodic discussion and communication of the current state and intent of implementation efforts.